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# Beautiful Idiots: the embodiment of the fool

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Figure A
Eliot talking to his fool

# Abstract

This thesis considers the fool as a theatrical phenomenon and reflects on the approach an actor might make to playing the fool. The research notes that workshops and literature about this area of performance are scarce as compared to opportunities to train, for example, in clown. This inquiry responds to that gap by exploring the question: how might a twenty-first century actor approach the fool to bring this figure alive for a contemporary audience? It focusses on the work of Robert Armin, Shakespeare's fool, as a major contributor to the manifestation of the fool on the English stage. The researcher identifies six principles that guide Armin's work and undertakes a historical analysis of the fooling traditions which may have informed Armin. Using the six principles, the researcher explores the training to play the fool. Work with masks emerges as a particularly potent part of the researcher's fooling technique. This work utilises an artistic research methodology, locating the actor-researcher as the subject of his own study. It describes an approach for actors wanting to play the fool and provides examples of exercises. The literature review also considers various explanations for the apparent disappearance of the fool from the dramatic canon and society and notes this presents a challenge to the actor – how to give the figure a contemporary significance for a modern-day audience. The researcher considers this question through the process of devising a one-man performance piece: *The doors are open but no one's at home – a parliament of fools*. This performance straddles theory and practice in its content and form, embodying seven fools using seven masks, each mask focussing on one of Armin's six principles and a seventh mask unifying the practice of playing the fool. The research culminates in two outcomes: a written thesis and a performance. The thesis argues the fool is a rich figure that is distinct from other comic figures such as the clown with which it has often been conflated, that the actor's 'fool breath' is key to the playing of the fool, and that the fool is worthy of further attention and embodiment in the theatre of the twenty-first century.

# Prologue

## Preface

I began this research unwittingly at the École Philippe Gaulier, a theatre school located just outside Paris. On a colleague's recommendation, I was taking a clown workshop during the summer of 2008. Philippe, who had previously taught clown for the great theatre teacher Jacques Lecoq, led us through a series of exercises, games and improvisations in which we tried, mostly in vain, to find our clown. Despite being gifted with a decent sense of humour and a good amount of acting training, my clown was very elusive. It required something different from anything I had encountered before. Philippe is uncompromisingly mocking and funny, using a confrontational approach for teaching this work. It is a harsh experience for the student on the receiving end.

I spent much of the three-week workshop in distress at my failed attempts to clown. My embarrassment and disappointment verged on humiliation. As I sat watching another student get her dose of comments from Philippe, my mind began to ponder on Shakespeare's use of the word 'fool' to describe several of his characters and its connection with the work we were doing. When Philippe finished speaking, I asked him what fools were. In a tone of bemused irony, he replied that Shakespeare's fools were not clowns but bouffons.[1] I realised that in an attempt to be more comfortable with myself, I was intellectually searching for answers to clowning. In doing so, I was missing the major point of this work. Clowning asks the actor to embrace failure rather than understanding. As Philippe puts it, 'the clown loves the flop.'[2] The paradox that success lies in failure is at the heart of much of this work. Philippe used the phrase 'beautiful idiot' in moments when this paradox was embodied in the actors' work.

At the end of the workshop, I asked him what the next step was for me. He answered that I should come back the following year and study bouffons. This I did in the summer of 2009. The bouffon was rougher and cruder than the clown. I felt much more at home with these grotesque characters. Philippe remarked to the class that year that 'Eliot is a

[1] Simon Murray and John Keefe in *Physical Theatres: A Critical Introduction* identify the bouffon as a character type re-invented by Lecoq and Gaulier in the twentieth century (2007: 86). Bouffon studies with Gaulier involve a series of exercises exploring the grotesque and physical disfigurement. The bouffon is distinct from, although connected to, the standard English term 'buffoon'. The word 'bouffon' comes from the Latin *buffare* meaning 'to puff'. The word 'Buffo' was used in the theatre of Ancient Rome by those who appeared on stage with their cheeks blown up and who, on receiving blows, would make much noise, thus causing the audience to laugh (Hoiberg 2010).

[2] This conversation with Philippe Gaulier took place during the 'Clown' workshop at École internationale de théâtre Philippe Gaulier (Sceaux, Paris) in July 2008. A description of Gaulier's use of the 'flop' in his pedagogy can be found in Lucy Amsden's article 'Monsieur Marcel and Monsieur Flop: failure in clown training at Ecole Philippe Gaulier' (2017).

natural bouffon' in a way meant not entirely as praise.[3] My question about the fool remained in the background. Was a fool really the same as a bouffon? My knowledge of Shakespeare's texts and the newly experienced bouffons gave me a nagging sense that Philippe's answer was not the full story. The fool could be bouffon-esque but the very existence of the word 'fool' indicated something particular and distinct. My question remained; what was a fool?

My fascination with fools, clowns and bouffons can also be attributed to my affinity with laughter. I have always been drawn to the delight of laughter and the skills required to elicit it in the theatre. Fools embody both the danger and joy of laughter. They both ridicule and are ridiculed. As a theatregoer, I had seen several fools in productions of Shakespeare's plays. The actors playing these parts had taken a variety of approaches; some using techniques from clowning and others inspired by stand-up comedians. I had always found these performances disappointing. I had a sense that the fool could be something more. As an actor, I began to wonder how you would play the fool with as much depth and skill as the other work we had explored with Philippe. This personal history gave birth to this research.

**Introduction**

I began this research by considering the question 'What is a fool?'. I discovered the figure of the fool has manifested in the court, the theatre, folk performance and even the corporate world. It is clear that whilst they were prominent in Europe, fool-like figures appeared in various corners of the world. I also found that whilst for many, fools are entertainers wearing cap and bells, in fact their appearance as well as their function is more varied. 'Fool' is a catch-all term of abuse and, as a result, it is a category into which many different types of people have been put. In history and literature there are frequent overlaps with figures such as the clown, the jester, the trickster and the bouffon, and these terms are sometimes used interchangeably. In publications about theatre history and in theatre pedagogy, this overlap is recurrent.

The fool as a subject of research is problematic because the fool evades easy definition. Fools are more often male but can be female, they are powerless social marginals and yet can advise kings, they are ignorant and yet they can be wise, they are obscene and yet can be holy. Describing fools, we discover opposites are true and they repel easy categorisation. As Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) showed, fools belong to a world that suffers from censorship and resists the constraints of the written word.

Because the term 'fool' is so open-ended, it was important to focus my field of research. The starting place for this research became the actor who originally played the Fool in *King Lear* for Shakespeare – Robert Armin (c. 1563 – 1615). This role is iconic in the repertoire of the fool. Armin did some serious work on the fool both as an actor and a

[3] This comment by Philippe Gaulier took place during the 'Bouffon' workshop at École internationale de théâtre Philippe Gaulier (Sceaux, Paris) in July 2009.

writer. His contemporary John Davies, echoing Viola's words in *Twelfth Night* (II. 1. 60), praised Armin in his collection of satires *The Scourge of Folly* (1611) and noted his significance for future generations of actors: 'So thou, in sport, the happiest men dost school | To do as thou dost: wisely play the fool.' Indeed, as the character Albius in Jonson's *The Poetaster* (1601) suggests, it was a commonplace understanding in the Renaissance that to play the fool required skill: 'I have read in a book, that to play the fool wisely, is high wisdom' (IV. 5. 48-9). Armin did not work exclusively with Shakespeare. Marston's play *The Malcontent* (c. 1603), for example, was produced in 1604 at the height of the stage fool's popularity and included Armin. It was obtained by the King's Men from the repertory of the Children of Blackfriars. Felver gives some of the history of the text and notes that the C Quarto, the version likely to have been produced by the adult company, includes substantial additions. The most interesting of these is the completely new part of Passarello, fool to Bilioso. Armin's fool could not be ignored in a new playtext (Felver 1961: 65-67). I was inspired by Armin and wanted to understand better how he may have worked to bring the fool to life on stage.

I started from the position that the relationship between Armin and Shakespeare was collaborative. Armin is the only sharer, other than Shakespeare, who is a published playwright and poet in Shakespeare's company. As Bart van Es observes, 'it is odd that Armin's work is not included in Shakespeare source books and rarely quoted in introductions to Shakespeare's plays'.[4] Armin and Shakespeare's collaboration is explored by Catherine Henze in '"Wise Enough to Play the Fool": Robert Armin and Shakespeare's Sung Songs of Scripted Improvisation' (2013). Henze proposed there was a 'blurring regarding the songs he and/or Shakespeare borrow and alter for the plays' (2013: 426). As Nora Johnson shows in *The Actor as Playwright in Early Modern Drama* (2003), the relationship between actor and playwright was highly collaborative. Considering the partnership between the playwright Thomas Middleton and the actor William Rowley (another clown/fool performer), Es shows that these sustained collaborations allowed a development to a performer's characteristics over a series of roles. It shows that playwrights 'could develop more complex individuation when they had certainty about the actor who would perform the role' (2015: 177). Armin offered new ways of thinking about comedy: 'Cruelty, insanity, and absurdist poetry would – with increasing complexity – become an element in the drama that Shakespeare produced' (2015: 179). As Thomson has argued in his essay 'Clowns, fools and knaves: stages in the evolution of acting', the fool occupied a position previously taken by the clown and this 'is more clearly discernible in the work of Shakespeare than in that of his contemporaries' (2004: 417). The most likely explanation of this is the influence of Armin. His impact on Shakespeare should not be underestimated. Jonathan Bate (2000) calls Shakespeare a 'foolosopher' and notes an overarching fool-like project in Shakespeare's writing. Bate notes the influence of the writings of Montaigne which

[4] 'How Shakespeare's writing was influenced by his lead actor', a review of Es' *Shakespeare in Company* (2013) available at <http://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2013-02-13-how-shakespeares-writing-was-influenced-his-lead-actor> [assessed 4 April 2019] and referencing Es' article in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 'Pedlar of Print: Robert Armin and the Fool's part in Shakespeare' (2013).

critiqued abstract wisdom in the name of experience. Both Montaigne and Erasmus attacked philosophers and orators who 'attempt to clear the mind of troubles and sorrows by means of elaborate speeches' (2000: 27). This is an anti-intellectual tradition in which they rejected Stoicism and Cynicism. In their place, they understood that only Folly can comfort us and that it does this 'in a flash simply by making an appearance' (2000: 27). The fool, Bate argues, 'is fun and he speaks the truth, whereas wise rhetoricians invert the truth' (2000: 27). The proof that it is only folly which can bring joy is seen when the fool first appears in a play – we in the audience immediately feel our faces light up. Becoming fool-like is the journey Lear must undertake and, according to Bate, it is the key to Shakespeare's 'philosophy'. Armin's contribution to the development of fooling on stage was made in collaboration with Shakespeare: 'Armin sensed what Shakespeare wanted, Shakespeare sensed what Armin could give him' (Lloyd Evans 1972: 150).

From an analysis of Armin's work, I have derived six principles for playing the fool: evoke the playing state; connect to the fool; enjoy duality and paradox; identify authority; work with explosion, liminality and appetite; do not be high-minded. These are explored in relation to Armin's writings and performances in the section titled 'Entrance'. Whilst Shakespeare's contribution must have been significant, these principles I attribute to Armin in recognition of a fellow-actor's work. I have used these insights to guide my investigation into how to play the fool. The exploration of my contemporary fooling practice in relation to the Armin principles is described in the section titled 'Passage'.

In this practice-based research, it was important to locate myself with a particular tradition as an actor. Alison Hodge in *Twentieth Century Actor Training* (2000) explores some different actor training traditions including those of Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Michael Chekhov, Brecht, Strasberg, Adler, Meisner and Grotowski. My training experience at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama meant that I have been influenced by the tradition of Copeau and Saint-Denis whose work informs the curriculum of that school. Their approach, as Evans (2013) describes, was sceptical of naturalism and sought to express theatre's theatricality: 'Copeau realised that the essence of theatre is not literary, but ritualistic and physical. He wanted to return to the sources, to primitive theatre' (Saint-Denis 1982: 31).

Evans notes that the key elements in this training were mask work, silent improvisation, play and gymnastics (2013: 119). He also describes how the legacy of this training was developed by Jacques Lecoq, whose work I encountered indirectly both at the Guildhall School and at École Philippe Gaulier.[5] Lecoq's vision of theatre was based on the physical skills of the actor. Gaulier's is focussed on play. As a result, my approach to playing the fool would be physical, improvised and informed by mask practice.

[5] Gaulier originally trained with Lecoq in the mid-1960s; he then taught for Lecoq in late 1970s before setting up his own school in 1980.

Lecoq gives a very clear pedagogical rationale for the use of masks.

> The performer who wears an expressive mask reaches an essential dimension of dramatic playing, involving the whole body, and experiences an emotion and expressive intensity which, once again, will become a permanent point of reference for the actor. (Lecoq 2000: 53)

Working with masks would facilitate my embodied research into the playing of the fool. Following Lecoq's understanding of mask work, masks would teach me about the level of playing, the emotional and expressive intensity, and the physical skill as is appropriate for the fool. My research became to identify and describe an embodied approach to playing the fool.

My background was also influenced by text-based approaches to theatre. Much of my training at the Guildhall School focused on classical repertoire. I trained with Patsy Rodenburg (2005, 2009 and 2014) at the Guildhall School from 2001 to 2004 and continue a mentoring relationship with her. Her analytically precise and embodied language work made a big impact on my acting. Rodenburg's (2005) renowned work uses the texts of Shakespeare to train the actor. She provides exercises that develop the actor's physical skills in breath, diction and rhythm, and the actor's intellectual and emotional connection to language and ideas. Rodenburg described Shakespeare's text as demanding the actor to be able to think, speak and feel simultaneously in the most extreme human situations. As a professional actor, I had explored this approach when employed at Shakespeare's Globe in a 2007 production of *Romeo and Juliet*. My work on the fool would also be informed by Rodenburg's approach to playing Shakespeare.

The work of Copeau, Saint-Denis, Lecoq, Gaulier, Rodenburg and the texts of Shakespeare framed my approach. These are the major traditions I work in and have informed how I trained using Armin's principles.

I have undergone an actor's training using movement techniques, dance, mask improvisation, breath work and Shakespeare. This embodied work has been recorded using journal notation, video and photography. I have then reflected on this work. I have been watched – something essential for an actor. A number of collaborators have travelled with me through the course of the research.[6] As external eyes assessing what works and what does not, they have offered insights and stretched my physical skills. The reaction of my collaborators has allowed me to question when the fool is most alive.

As I would discover later in the literature review, the fool largely disappeared from the dramatic canon and society after the seventeenth century. My literature review has explored how this happened and I have discovered the fool was gradually sublimated into other forms. The survival of a sublimated fooling tradition, superseding Armin and

[6] These collaborators are: Etienne Champion, Merry Conway, Sue Lefton, Irineu Nogueira, Soren Petter and Marc Proulx. For further biographical details, please see Appendix 1: Collaborators. They have given me permission to discuss our work together in this thesis. Please see Appendix 2: Permissions.

Shakespeare, raised a question about the contemporary relevance of the fool. My concern has not been to recreate the original practices of Armin's fooling but to investigate the performance of the fool today in a way informed by Armin's work. This contemporary focus seemed appropriate to the spirit of Armin's own fooling. This culminated in a one-man performance piece called *The doors are open but no one's at home – a parliament of fools*. This performance straddled theory and practice in its content and form, embodying seven fools using seven masks, each mask focussing on one of Armin's six principles and a seventh mask unifying the practice of playing the fool. I gave each mask/fool a name and a type (e.g. 'a merry fool'). This was inspired by the title page of *Foole Upon Foole*, a text written by Armin in c. 1600 and in which he identifies six fools using the same conventions.

Throughout this research, I have sought to discover how it is possible to play the fool in the twenty-first century, to develop a contemporary language of fooling for theatre pedagogy, and to embody the fool in performance in a way that speaks as powerfully to an audience now as in the past.

With this in mind, I proposed the following research question: How might a twenty-first-century actor approach the fool to bring this figure alive for a contemporary audience?

## Methodology

The methodology of this research uses the principles of the artistic research tradition. This places me, the researcher/artist, at the centre of the enquiry. This approach evolved during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in part to overcome the Cartesian split and the historical devaluation of the body as a site of learning and knowledge. Embodied approaches avoid the fatal separation of feeling and understanding long demanded by much philosophy and academia. They reject the privilege that aesthetics accords to content over form and contemplation over immersion. Dance has led the way in artistic research within the performance disciplines. Dancers have explored improvisation as a mode of composing that is comprehensive and systematic. Improvisation allows the performer to play and generate a continuum of spontaneous experiences. Elena Alexander and her colleagues argue that physical improvisation is a totally appropriate approach to research, involving spontaneity and composability. Alexander describes dance after Merce Cunningham as:

> […] the (self-) reflexivity of movement principles and dance structures, breaking through to autonomous schematologies combining simultaneous logics and interactive body grammars. That these can be systematically open, observable, and coordinative *in and through the acts of* doing, deciding, making, dancing and seeing, is akin to the cognitive acumen necessary for creative problem solving. (Alexander 1998: 117)

Penelope Hanstein and Sondra Fraleigh with other contributors in *Researching Dance: Evolving Modes of Inquiry* (1999) have proposed similar research methodologies for embodied practice in dance. Fraleigh has researched through a descriptive method that tries to 'uncover and describe what is most obvious however hidden or assumed in our perceptions' (1999: 195). She likens this approach to a dance that spirals:

> Decide what you want to find out. Break a coconut (your ego). Write quickly and fearlessly without editing or censoring. Let time pass. Revisit your writing, spiral in to extract the core thoughts. […] This is a way to probe your awareness. Ask what you are conscious of in the experience of the phenomenon you are describing. A phenomenon is anything that appears to consciousness: a person, a feeling, an experience, an event, an idea, a perception, or in the case of research – a question. When your description is complete, you have core existential values that you can expand philosophically. Here thoughts spiral outward from the core as you examine its components and elaborate core values. […] Intuition guides the original spiral into the core. The outward spiral develops theory. (1999: 215)

Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén in *Artistic Research Methodology* discuss Paul Feyerabend's *Against Method* (2010) and his slogan 'anything goes'. They describe this as the 'recognition that things must stay open and potential […] it also underlines that research hardly ever begins with a clarified and stated problem, but instead, kicks off with fooling around with matters, playing around, experimenting and trying things out' (Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén 2014: 5; referring to Feyerabend 2010: 157). These approaches mirror the way actors work in rehearsal. Trying things out, following hunches and improvising are important parts of the acting process.

Stephen Purcell in his article 'Practice-as-Research and Original Practices' (2017) considers such a model as appropriate to the work of theatre research. Referring to the work of Melissa Trimingham (2002), he similarly describes a 'spiral model' for practice-as-research, the central principles of which are that '"outcomes" are provisional, that such research is iterative, and that the questions or hunches with which the researcher starts are likely to lead to new questions, or new hunches' (Purcell 2017: 428). Purcell also describes practice-as-research as collaborative and that:

> Its driving questions and its direction of travel [are] determined just as much by the artists involved as by its academic participants. Theatre historians can only be part of what it does; practitioners and audiences are working in the present, and have present concerns. For the practicing artist, '…how can?' is always the more pressing question. (Purcell 2017: 437)

He observes that for this kind of research, the questions change. He describes this as a 'move from the historical ("How did…?") to the speculative ("Can...?")' (2017: 437).

In questioning whether all creative practice can be considered research, Purcell notes Trimingham's important distinction about research needing to be articulated in clear and unambiguous language that everyone can understand and 'must be for the benefit

of others apart from the researchers themselves' (Purcell 2017; 427, quoting Trimingham 2002: 54). Purcell's understanding of this type of methodology and research output resonated with my own work strongly. My methodology also works with hunches in an iterative process and moved from the 'how did' to the 'how can'. I too seek to articulate an understanding to others, in this case how a fellow actor might approach playing the fool.

Ben Spatz (2015) has argued that exploration through embodiment is research in the same way that a scientific or scholarly approach is research:

> It is even *empirical* in that, as one unfolds an epistemic object, it reveals specific details or contours that could not have been predicted beforehand. Whether the objects of inquiry are songs and movement patterns, proteins and particles, or archival documents and vanished histories, the researcher finds pleasure in establishing contact with something that has its own structure. (2015: 147)

Spatz acknowledges that the notion of research *in* acting as distinct from *on* acting (i.e. that which is historical, theoretical or even neurological) is challenging for traditional academia. However, he argues this is the case because the concept of actor training is insufficient insofar as it suggests the practice and transmission of existing technique and not the development of new techniques. Instead, he promotes research in acting as an alternative for practitioners who would want to avoid the instrumental logic of the marketplace in which they must brand themselves as 'torch-bearers of authentic tradition or as the inventors of a hot new method' (149). Research in acting, according to Spatz, is the means by which sound new techniques will emerge.

Practice-as-research has been championed in theatre and performance studies by researchers such as John Freeman (2010), Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson (2011) and Robin Nelson (2013). They have advocated methodologies that include collaboration, hunches, improvisation and audience engagement as valid parts of research. Baz Kershaw (2012) gives an example of collaborative performance-based research in the doctoral project *Slightly Cloudy, Chance of Rain* by Joanne Whalley and Lee Miller. This project was jointly researched by both candidates and culminated in a performance piece in 2002. They presented it and were examined at the M5 Sandbach Roadchef Service Station. Kershaw describes his experience of examining their work at the service station.

> A corner of the café has been cordoned off and we sit on each side of an aisle surrounded by their families […] facing a makeshift altar with silver vases full of flowers. All is as it formally should be for a reaffirmation of the candidates' wedding vows […] which is done with solemnity tinged with humorous light irony, but also made surreal because the café is 'open as usual' and the public behind us stand watching amazed, amused, bemused by this obviously authentic but out-of-place ceremony. […] The congregation divides into two groups to be taken separately by the happy bride and groom on tailor-made narrated tours of the site, here and there catching glimpses of the ten

> duplicate wedding couples, in full formal attire, also treating this as the best ever place to be for such a happy event. All finally regroup on the newly mown grass between the café and motorway where the serried wedding pairs dance a graceful waltz and the passing trucks loudly honk their klaxon horns and within minutes the traffic in all three lanes is slowed to a crawl as the driving public eyeballs this extraordinary scene. (2012: 109)

This was the first ever fully collaborative practice-as-research PhD in the UK. Despite the unconventional venue and aesthetics, the written thesis was formally conventional, Kershaw reports, beginning with a carefully framed research question. He notes that the 'contrast between a highly focussed discursive inquiry and a creative event that was wonderfully multi-faceted […] serves to illustrate some deep and highly challenging tensions of methods in performance practice as research' (2012: 110). My methodology embraces those tensions and follows Whalley and Miller's work by interweaving discursive inquiry, practice, collaboration and performance.

Caroline Obin's research as the clown Proserpine is another example of a less conventional methodology based in performance. As part of her thesis 'Repenser le clown comme être plastique' (Rethinking the clown as a plastic being), she performed as a clown to the examination panel at the University of Toulouse in 2016.[7] Obin continues to perform in France and further examples of her work can be seen in her blog.

Henk Borgdoff (2012) has described the methodology of artistic research well:

> Characteristic of artistic research in that art practice (the words of art, the artistic actions, the creative process) is not just the motivating factor and the subject matter of research, but the artistic practice – the practice of creating and performing in the atelier or studio – is central to the research process itself. Methodologically speaking, the creative process forms the pathway (part of it) through which new insights, understandings, and products come into being. (2012: 146)

Borgdorff describes the focus in this type of research process being on the practice of creating and performing: 'Knowledge and experience are constituted only in and through practices, actions, and interactions. In the context of discovery, pre-reflexive artistic actions embody knowledge in a form that is not directly accessible for justification' (2012: 148). He defines the outcomes of artistic research as artworks, installations, performances and other artistic practices. This is different from the humanities or social sciences for which the art practice may be the object of the research but not the outcome. Borgdorff acknowledges that this is controversial in traditional academia because it distinguishes itself from other types of research in

[7] Her performance piece was called 'La soutenance de mémoire (Repenser le clown comme être plastique) en arts plastiques – création, théorie, mediation' (The defence of memory (Rethinking the clown as a plastic being) in plastic arts - creation, theory, mediation). A film of this performance is available at <https://vimeo.com/189760530> but is password controlled.

terms of its research object (an ontological question), in terms of the knowledge it produces (an epistemological question) and in terms of the working methods that are appropriate to it (a methodological question). Donald Schön (1982) describes this approach as 'reflection in action'. Borgdorff characterises it as the 'immanent' and 'performative perspective' that does not assume the separation of subject and object, and does not observe a distance between the researcher and the practice of art.

> The artistic practice itself is an essential component of both the research process and the research results. This approach is based on the understanding that no fundamental separation exists between theory and practice in the arts. After all, there are no art practices that are not saturated with experiences, histories, and beliefs; and conversely there is no theoretical access to, or interpretation of, art practice that does not partially shape that practice into what it is. Concepts, theories, experiences and understandings are interwoven with art practices and, aptly for this reason, art is always reflexive. Research in the arts hence seeks to articulate some of this embodied knowledge throughout the creative process and in the art object. (2012: 38-39)

My work is not only research *about* the fool (which would allow me to remain an observer), but it is also sites me at the centre *as* an actor playing the fool. Whilst I make an important distinction between the quest to 'be a fool' and to 'play the fool', nonetheless, as honesty comes hand-in-hand with the fool, it has become clear that in exploring the fool I will make a fool of myself. As there is no precedent for this kind of work, it has been necessary to develop a tailor-made methodology.

As part of my research, I set out to understand the traditions of fooling that informed Armin. Bakhtin (1984) described these traditions manifesting in the folk rituals of Ancient Greece and Rome, in medieval culture, in the Renaissance and through to the early Enlightenment. He acknowledged the variety of forms in which these traditions have appeared in European history: 'the folk festivities of the carnival type, the comic rites and cults, the clowns and fools, giants, dwarfs, and jugglers, the vast and manifold literature of parody' (1984: 4). Bakhtin argued that these forms celebrate a culture of humour, carnival spirit, comic ritual, laughter and the grotesque.

I have undertaken a historical analysis of the fool as Armin may have understood the figure, exploring the traditions he is likely to have drawn upon. This review covers the usage of the word 'fool' in English, the anthropological origins, biblical understandings, and fooling traditions from the classical, medieval and Renaissance worlds. In choosing examples from history, I was confronted with a wealth of content in each period relating to fools. It was not possible to cover all this historical material. I worked with three guiding criteria when selecting what to read and research in further detail: firstly, material that with a reasonable degree of certainty I was sure Armin would have had knowledge of; secondly, material that was of significant historical influence and represents a particularly noteworthy manifestation of fooling in that period; thirdly,

material that has informed and inspired my own fooling practice when training in a studio, working in dialogue with collaborators or preparing the performance piece.

I have made use of JSTOR, International Index of Performing Arts, Early English Books Online, Literature Online, Dissertation Abstracts International and the British Library's EThOS. The purpose of this work was to build a detailed picture of the world of fooling that Armin was working with and to support my own contemporary fooling practice. In later sections, I have drawn upon a broader range of comic traditions, referring to cultures alien to Armin that have helped me perform the fool for a twenty-first-century audience in a way that is current and relevant.

The traditional model of doctoral research uses a methodology to gain data which can be verified and from which meaningful conclusions can be drawn. This has been achieved through the systematic way I have recorded and analysed the insights that emerged from these sources. Through critical evaluation of a range of sources including a literature review and embodied practice, this doctoral thesis presents an original approach for actors to play the fool. In this respect, this research fulfils expectations.

This said, it is important to note that fools dodge methods, systems and processes because they are irrational, contrary, instinctive, disobedient, incorrect, problematic and messy. A methodology that did not acknowledge this trickiness would be in danger of trying to contain that which does not want to be contained. It would be like an analysis of humour that missed the point of a joke. Fools mock our desire to hypothesise. They note that we like to make reality predictable using theory and so reduce our chances of looking foolish. My work keeps the fool ever-present with a healthy suspicion about theory. Armin notes the problem in writing about fools in *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) when he asks his readers to 'pardon my folly, in writing of folly … Wherefore if my pardon may be purchased so, if not, the worst is you will say the Author may keep his six fooles company' (F4). The fool is a problem and how to research the fool has been a problem to embrace.

## Significance

Whilst the fool has previously been explored through historical, sociological and literary critical research, my work is distinct in that it seeks to embody and describe an approach for an actor to play the fool. Central to this approach is the use of masks. This has not been attempted before.

There are writers who have published on clowning technique. Jon Davison's *Clown Training: A Practical Guide* is an example of a clowning manual. He acknowledges that clowning techniques are hard to record:

> Such is an oral tradition, which clowning still is, and that includes its teaching. Most clown knowledge is passed on orally. […] The kind of knowledge which is important here is a memory in the body, the feelings, the imagination and the impulses of the individual. (2015: 4)

There are publications that give insight into the experiences of those who have performed as clowns. *Clowns: In Conversation with Modern Masters* (LeBank and Bridel 2015), for example, provides interviews with twenty famous clowns. They discuss the role of teachers and mentors who have shaped their development and reveal the origins, inspirations, techniques and philosophies that underpin their work.

There are no equivalents for fools. There are negligible details about any training an actor may undertake who wants to play the fool. Today there are perhaps only one or two opportunities worldwide to engage in practical workshops on playing the fool.[8]

Various performances of the Fool in recent productions of *King Lear* have been described in the work of Peter Holland (1997) and Jonathan Croall (2015). Holland notes that, 'Good Fools are dangerous' and observes that Antony Sher 'destroyed Michael Gambon's chances of success as Lear' (1997: 48) in the 1982 RSC production directed by Adrian Noble. In another performance of the role by David Bradley (Royal National Theatre, directed by Deborah Warner, 1990), Holland describes the Fool as 'an unwilling participant' (1997: 49) and that 'it made good sense for Fool to stick a red nose on Lear in I. 5 as a mark of the transfer of folly' (1997: 46). Croall describes Bradley as 'a bitter, laconic, northern comedian, to whom Lear was tied like a child to his toy, caressing and hitting him almost simultaneously' (2015: 226). In Max Stafford-Clark's production (Royal Court, 1993) Andy Serkis as the Fool made his first entrance in drag and Holland describes Serkis' interpretation as a 'camp queen' with 'working-class accent' who in I. 5 'powdered his nose and then, movingly, showed Lear his own reflection in the mirror in the lid of his powder-compact' (1997: 155-56). Mona Hammond's Fool included the 'occasional piece of rap' (1997: 182) which stood out in comparison with the Received Pronunciation of most of the voices in Talawa's touring production in 1994 directed by Yvonne Brewster. Arin Arbus for the Theatre for a New Audience in Brooklyn cast nineteen-year-old Jake Horowitz as the Fool in 2014. Michael Pennington, who played Lear in the production, notes:

> There is little information in the text about the Fool's history, where he comes from, how long he's been with Lear. But one senses that he knows and loves Lear deeply, that like Kent he lives for Lear. I imagined he was orphaned and living on the streets, using his wits to survive, and Lear happened upon him and employed him. So he became a surrogate father to the Fool, and the Fool a surrogate son to Lear. It becomes terribly painful and frightening for him to watch Lear fall apart, and in despair he abandons Lear. There is no place for him in the world, and he knows it. So as the sounds of war are heard in the distance, he commits suicide. (Croall 2015: 213).

[8] Fool workshops are sometimes given by US-based practitioner Merry Conway <https://www.merryconway.com/workshops-classes/>, and by UK-based practitioner Jonathan Kay <http://www.jonathankay.co.uk/events/category/workshop/>.

Croall and Holland give insights into different interpretations of the Fool in performance. Their work does not, however, give an analysis of the acting techniques employed by the actors.

Antony Sher considers his earlier work on the Fool for a 1972 production at the Liverpool Everyman directed by Alan Dosser.

> The solution was to create a character who was unintentionally funny – a rather nervous, twitchy little man in a huge coat, with a shaven head, and a lower jaw thrust forward in an underbite which caused the voice to sound slightly retarded and his wisdom to be trapped in goonish noises […]. By using a speech impediment which appealed to the cruel humour of our (mainly young) audience, we had a character who was being laughed at, and who could then exploit that situation and reverse it. (1988: 154)

Sher then provides an insight into his rehearsal process for the Fool in 'The Fool in *King Lear*' in the 1982 RSC production and notes the challenge of the role.

> Shakespeare doesn't give us any clues to his *character* – his background, his appearance, his age. […] The only reliable fact we are given about the character is his profession – he is a court jester. This leads to the second problem, how to make him believable as a comic performer – in other words *funny*. (1988: 153)

For this production, Sher felt it was important that the audience could believe that the actor is 'capable of doing the job of work which his character has chosen as a profession' (1988: 152). Working with the director Adrian Noble, he focussed on what type of entertainer the Fool should be. Noble suggested they should investigate this by using a system of different devices on successive days: 'a red nose, a mask, a mime-artist's white face, and so on' (1988: 156-57). They began with the red nose and because it was immediately successful, they never felt the need to explore other devices:

> There is something very liberating about wearing a red nose, both externally and internally; you look, feel and sound odd, exaggerated, caricatured. In a way, the red nose is the smallest version of the face mask, a device which is famous for its powers of releasing inhibition; at drama school I remember the mask class producing the most extraordinary breakthroughs of emotion and inventiveness in all the students. (1988: 157)

From this work with the clowning device of a red nose, Sher was able to build his whole performance and other factors such as costume and physicality fell into place very quickly from this moment. He notes that the external image of the Fool was important in his rehearsal process and observes that 'there is a group of Shakespearean roles where it is as desirable for the actor to present a striking physical image as it is for him to do justice to the text and emotions' (1988: 157). Sher includes Caliban, Ariel, Puck, Thersites and Richard III in this list. In rehearsal, Sher tried to make the Fool's

performance style as 'unpredictable as possible, a Lenny Bruce type of comic, often taking the most dangerous subjects as his joke-material […] at the risk of overstepping the mark and suffering the consequences of being whipped savagely' (1988: 161). By the time the production has transferred to London, Sher felt his performance had lost its boldness and he was unable to make the Fool's routines work. He concludes:

> For me the Fool remains one of the most intriguing characters Shakespeare wrote, elusive and difficult to read on the printed page, but very often effective in performance. In some ways you could describe the writing as half-finished, a sketch; for the actor this is a challenge and also flattering because Shakespeare is allowing us to fill in the missing spaces. (1988: 165)

In contrast to Sher's approach, David Tennant for the role of Touchstone in Steven Pimlott's 1996 RSC production of *As You Like It* was keen to concentrate on the situation of the character and the 'motivation for what they are saying', and so attempted to build a convincing psychology of Touchstone.

> It struck me that he was like a manic depressive who suffered periods of melancholia – when Jacques reports his encounter with Touchstone (II. 7) the 'motley fool' sounds far from happy – before bouncing through periods of mild mania. The flights of ideas, the energy of thought and the inability to shut up are all traits of manic episodes in a bi-polar mental illness. It is perhaps an actor's affectation to think of Shakespearian characterization in this way, but it helped me to make sense of some of Touchstone's less easily motivated moments. A heightened libido can also be symptomatic of mania which certainly feeds in Touchstone's attachment to Audrey! (1998: 35)

Tennant makes some similar observations to Sher. Having observed that Touchstone was a court jester or fool, he then considered the categories of 'the clowns and the naturals' (1998: 33). In rehearsal, he worked on 'a collection of characters and voices that he could slip in and out of' (1998: 34) and acknowledged that 'these famous Shakespearean roles can come with a lot of baggage attached' (1998: 36). Tennant notes how problematic it is to apply modern acting techniques to the role. Referring to John Barton's *Playing Shakespeare: an Actor's Guide* (1984), Cockett states that the fundamental question asked by the modern actor in such a Stanislavsky-based approach is, 'What is my intention?' (Cockett 2006: 151 n, referencing Barton 1984: 7). This technique is problematic when applied to fools.

> Stanislavsky's approach assumes that all characters have agency – that is, that they actively pursue objectives. Couple this with Tennant's decision that Touchstone is intelligent, and the actor must attempt to rationalize all his character's speech-acts. Analysis of Tennant's account, however, reveals the limitations of this approach when applied to Shakespeare's fools. While it gave Tennant valuable justifications for many of Touchstone's lines, it did not allow him to 'make sense of those long passages where Touchstone "goes off on one" and strings long chains of thoughts and witticisms together out of thin air'. (Cockett 2006: 151)

The reason that the technique of fooling has received less attention than, for example, clowning is partly due to the influence of Jacques Lecoq (2009). His work informed the curriculum of many theatre schools as well as professional training throughout the world. It is now standard for theatre schools to include classes in clown and bouffon. Louise Peacock in *Serious Play: Modern Clown Performance* (2009) describes the difference between clowns and bouffons in the work of Lecoq and Gaulier. She says clowns have naïve fun, they may appear alone, and we make fun of them; whereas bouffons perform in a more vicious and risky way, they always appear in a gang, and they make fun of us. Peacock notes that bouffons also have strange body shapes. This 'corporeal transformation' she says, 'has its roots in the tradition of the medieval fool' (2009: 32). Elsewhere in the same book, Peacock considers that the fool exists within the world of clown. The mixing up of fool, clown and bouffon is common amongst those who have written about these figures. Lecoq and Gaulier's work, and those practitioners who have followed afterwards do not commonly identify the fool as a distinctive type.

What is a fooling technique? What kind of approach might be appropriate? My research describes a way for playing the fool which, whilst informed by clowning and bouffon playing practices, is distinctive. It takes its inspiration from and is informed by the work of Robert Armin. This fooling technique does not claim to be the only way for an actor to play the fool but offers a considered approach informed by practice, history and theory. A key dimension of this fooling technique concerns the actor's breath. I describe clowning as a technique based on inspiration and playing the naïve. I propose fooling as a technique focussed particularly on expiration. Fooling begins when the actor releases her/his breath, impacting the world, mocking it and playing with it. In a later section, I explore the historical precedents for this understanding of fooling and develop this approach in relation to my own practice.

My work proposes an approach for actors and teachers of theatre seeking to perform a relevant and powerful fool in the twenty-first century. It offers new insights for actor training. In this respect, this research is of particular scope, originality and theoretical interest.

## Ethics

I wanted to explore how fools can be inappropriate and make an audience feel uncomfortable. I wanted an encounter with my fools to feel alarming. The seven fools that I developed and shared in performance did not conform to everyday vocal and physical 'norms'. They had fragmented speech and distorted physicalities, and were comic. I understood that contemporary audiences can feel uncomfortable about these behaviours. Whilst it was my intention that the audience felt challenged, it did raise a question about the fool's relationship with disability and the ethical issues around performing such identities. As Robert Hillis Goldsmith observes in *Wise Fools in*

*Shakespeare*, to modern sensibilities 'it seems crude and even cruel to laugh at the rambling wits of a moron' (1963: 6).

The ethical issues around humour were well known in the sixteenth century. Baldassare Castiglione in *The Book of the Courtier* (1528) considered the gamut of humour and laughter. In Book 2, the courtiers discuss the rules that govern the proper art of jesting. Hostile joking is considered vulgar. The proper demeanour for the young courtier was mildness, deference and hesitancy. Taste and decorum are the key values. Wit, however, is allowed as a means of displaying one's skill for entertaining one's peers. Laughter is understood as a pleasant diversion or a lubricant for defusing social tension. Laurent Joubert in his *Treatise on Laughter* (1560) also explored the ethics of humour. He noted that whilst our first instinct is to laugh at a man who becomes frenzied or maniacal, we must stifle our laughter out of compassion for the suffering he endures. Concerns about the ethics of humour continue to this day. The comedian Chris Rock, for example, is currently questioning political correctness and humour's regulation.[9] In the ethics of humour of the sixteenth and twenty-first centuries, we see the more general problems manifesting that we are experiencing in society. As Keith Thomas observed in 'The Place of Laughter in Tudor and Stuart England' (1977), 'When we laugh we betray our innermost assumptions. […] Jokes are a pointer to joking situations, areas of structural ambiguity in society itself; and their subject-matter can be a revealing guide to past tensions and anxieties' (1977: 77).

Irina Metzler's work in *Fools and Idiots? Intellectual disability in the Middle Ages* (2016) questions categories such as 'disabled' and 'abled'. She considers various pathologies of the brain, philosophies of the infantile and irrational, and laws concerning intellectual disability as articulated through European history. Metzler provides a detailed account of the aetiologies of mental retardation, acknowledging the importance of Foucault's *History of Madness* (2006) that identified a process of change in our attitudes towards madness and idiocy. This began in the classical period and resulted in madness along with other forms of social deviance being shut away in what Foucault called a 'Great Confinement'. Metzler critiques, however, Foucault's notion of the ship of fools as 'real vessels that carried the insane from place to place' (2016: 15), noting that this idea has been debunked.

Considering terms such as 'idiocy', Metzler notes that historical discourses about fools (and all those who are branded 'nonstandard') are problematic:

> Normative texts […] are invariably backed by authority, whether the authority of consensus among group members or the authority of a superior group imposing their normative order on a group perceived as inferior (for instance, self-appointed 'normal' people describing, categorising and labelling the abnormal). (2016: 15)

[9] Liz Hoggart, 'Chris Rock: turning political correctness on its head', *Independent*, 16 March 2006, available at <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/chris-rock-turning-political-correctness-on-its-head-6106613.html>

She concludes that the ontological status of intellectual disability (ID) is ambiguous: 'On the one hand, ID exists as a real state or condition […], but, on the other hand, ID is defined by a fluctuating set of psychiatric and psychological discourses' (2016: 231). The fool takes us into the territory where the binaries of ability and disability, idiocy and wisdom, and the licit and illicit are unsettled. Fools help us expand our understanding of what these categories mean. As Armin/Touchstone observed: 'A fool thinks himself to be wise, but a wise man knows himself to be a fool' (*As You Like It*, v. 1. 30-31). In my performance, the fools should make the audience feel that they themselves are foolish. The intended effect, rather than suggesting the fool is mentally or physically deficient, was quite the reverse, that the fool is the wisest person in the room. This was a tradition that Armin's contemporaries were aware of. It had been exemplified in the character of Folly in Erasmus' *In Praise of Folly* (1515) who showed that those who think themselves wise and powerful are in fact the most foolish.

Sandra Dalhberg and Peter Greenfield in '"To stirre vp living mens minds to the like good": Robert Armin, John in the Hospital, and the representation of poverty' (2016) consider Armin's ethical position in his writing and performances. They pay particular attention to the role of John in the Hospital in Armin's own play *The History of The Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a). Dahlberg and Greenfield identify John in the Hospital as John Smith, a historical person who could be encountered on the streets of London at the time.

> One has to imagine all the physical business that a skilled performer like Armin would bring to the role. With his head on one side, a foot splayed, and dressed in boy's uniform though undoubtedly an adult, John would elicit laughter standing still. When he began to move, limping on the bad foot, slobbering and constantly wiping his mouth with his muckinder [handkerchief], John must have had a powerful comic effect, whatever words he spoke.
>
> Imagining that physical business raises the spectre that Armin's performances of natural fools were exploitative, that they mocked the poverty and disability of John Smith and others like him for the audience's entertainment and Armin's own celebrity. (2016: 55)

Peter Cockett in 'Performing Natural Folly: the Jests of Lean Leanard and the Touchstone of Robert Armin and David Tennant' similarly considers whether more modern readers are alienated by social cruelty: 'the fact that the book [*Foole Upon Foole*] treats the mentally handicapped as figures of fun is the most likely cause for the scant attention it has received from scholars' (2006: 144-45). The perceived cruelty behind the humour leads Martin Buzacott in *The Death of the Actor: Shakespeare on Page and Stage* to describe Armin's book as a 'grotesque pamphlet, filled with gratuitous acts of violence and callous descriptions of amusing suffering' (1991: 78-9).

Cockett counters this description of Armin's work, arguing that his depictions of fools are not contemptuous or callous.

> They may be treated cruelly by today's standards, but, as Michel Foucault established, the keeping of domestic fools was benign in comparison to the confinement of fools in asylums that was to follow. What is clear is that the keeping and enjoyment of natural fools rests on cultural assumptions alien to our own. (2006: 145)

Cockett also notes the careful nuancing in Armin's work. Leanard, for example, is a fool who in one story eats a hawk because his master says it is good, but in another can outwit a journeyman shoemaker: 'This natural, although lacking commonsense and subject to a compulsive desire for food, is not entirely lacking in intelligence and has a degree of command over language' (2006: 148). Armin characterises fools as people who have deviated in some way from the norms of rationality.

> Natural fools could be anything from frantic madmen to simple idiots. It is safe to presume that the forms of insanity known to us today pre-existed modern diagnostic terminology and naturals, therefore, could be paranoid individuals, schizophrenics, psychotics, and obsessive-compulsives of all varieties, in addition to more straightforward simpletons or idiots. (2006: 150)

This way of understanding intellectual ability accords with current thinking about neurodiversity. This is a term that was coined by Judy Singer in her article 'Why Can't You BE Normal for Once in Your Life? From a "Problem With No Name" to the Emergence of a New Category of Difference' (1999). Her view is that we need to change our conversation from talking about syndromes, conditions, disorders and deficits to an acceptance of dyslexia and Asperger's, for example, as normal parts of human diversity and as spectrums on which we all exist in different places.

Attitudes to those with mental disability were mirrored in the treatment of the poor. The late sixteenth century was rife with literature that portrayed the poor as diseased and parasitic. William Carroll in *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare* (1996) examines how the representation of beggars replicated the English public's fears caused by the unprecedented increase in the population of the poor in the 1580s and 1590s. Dalhberg and Greenfield note 'it is not the sight of Tom of Bedlam, but rather the sight of Armin's "houseless poverty" as the Fool in the storm that moves Lear to recognise his kinship with the poor'. They point out that Shakespeare utilised Armin's performative identity to 'remind those who went warm and gorgeous to expose themselves "to feel what wretches [and fools like John in the Hospital] feel"' (2016: 56-57). They show how Armin's concern was to explore the conditions of marginalised lives and how his 'call to charitable compassion as a moral duty is a thread that runs through Armin's known works. It is a feature in them as significant as jesting' (2016: 54).

Carroll examines the phenomenon of con men who adopted the disguise of disability to beg from charitably minded strangers during Armin's time. Armin writes two such characters into *The History of The Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a). Tutch and Filbon are two counterfeits.

> In the process, Armin presented his own dilemma as an actor – how to portray the honest want of the natural fool when as an actor his is unavoidably a counterfeit, an artificial fool. What Armin wants to show his audiences is that the existence of counterfeits like Tutch, and himself, should not blind people to the genuine need of the less fortunate among their neighbours, here represented by John. (Dalhberg and Greenfield 2016: 58)

In the same way that the fool differentiates degrees of foolishness (those who call him a 'fool' prove to be bigger fools), there are also degrees of poverty. Armin's conclusion is that we are all beggars, in the same way that everyone is a fool.

Armin used his skill as a performer to move his audience to see fools as sympathetically as he himself did. John Davies (1611), a contemporary witness, repeatedly described Armin as 'honest' and 'harmless' in contrast to others that sting the subjects of their mirth. Armin's work was didactic, his effect was to 'schoole' and his desire was to inspire compassion in his audience. He recognised what he held in common with John Smith and honoured him with a fool's farewell:

> Then vale Iohn, thee and thy Lady too,
> For lacke of wit both bore away the bell:
> Therefore the most that I can say or doe,
> To thee or her, is to say fooles farewell. (Sig. Fv)

My work was focussed not on enacting disabled identities but sought to explore my own folly. My intention was not to perform the behaviours of others but to explore where I am located on the spectrum of foolishness. When training physically and vocally, I worked on my own limits, the areas where I felt most vulnerable and revealed. The purpose was to perform my own foolishness and I wanted to celebrate folly rather than deride it.

I have understood one of the fool's roles is to mirror society. Using humour, they show us sensitive issues, injustices and the way the ruling group lacks compassion. The fool does not originate injustice. The role of fool has to be undertaken, in my view, by someone who does not have privilege or power. Noting the sheer ambiguity of humour, Terry Eagleton in his study *Humour* argues that it is the most contradictory political phenomenon today, after nationalism (2019: 136). He observes humour's ability to both degrade and reform. Whilst we must be sensitive to and respectful of the lived experiences of others, we should also be aware that morally problematic conversations die when we adopt a police mentality. If, however, we take a real look at what is being mocked and whether the mocker has power, then our conversation can be significant.

## What follows

The content of the following sections draws insights from three types of resources:

1. Literature review: historical, social and theatrical records of the life and work of fools, as well as philosophical debate about the nature of folly that may have informed Armin's practice. I also refer to other fooling traditions that have inspired my own practice.
2. Psychotherapy: consideration of my own relationship with the figure of the fool.
3. Embodied practice: movement, dance, improvisation and mask work.

These are all appropriate resources for the actor, supporting a process based on preparation, rehearsal and performance. The content that follows is divided into three major sections that reflect these stages of an actor's process. The titles of the sections, Entrance, Passage and Exit, take their inspiration from the format of individual exercises I have done on the fool.

'Entrance' considers the work of Armin, distilling six principles for playing the fool from his work. I then consider the various fooling traditions he may have drawn upon. This material is arranged historically, starting with the etymological origins of the word 'fool', considering relevant anthropological and psychological insights, and moving through the classical, biblical, medieval and Renaissance traditions. I then note the process of the fool's gradual disappearance from the dramatic canon and society after the seventeenth century and consider what this might mean for contemporary fooling practice. 'Entrance' represents an actor's research preparing to play a role.

'Passage' records the work done in training. The site of this work is my body as an actor and this section describes my movement and voice whilst doing fooling exercises. It also draws on insights that arose through the process of psychotherapy. This material is arranged according to the six principles of Armin's work. This section is an approach to fooling that can be used by other actors. 'Passage' represents the rehearsal stage of an actor's process.

'Exit' deals with the challenges of making a performance piece that would bring the fool into the present-day. This section invites the reader to exit this thesis and to head towards an embodied encounter with the fool in the theatre. 'Exit' represents the performance stage of an actor's process.

# Entrance

This section considers the work of Robert Armin (c. 1563 – 1615) and his antecedents. He researched and published on fools, as well as performing some of the greatest fool roles in Shakespeare's plays. From an analysis of Armin's work, I have identified six principles that inform Armin's playing technique and can be used by actors today wishing to play the fool. I then trace a range of traditions on which Armin drew. These include etymological understandings of the word 'fool', anthropological origins, biblical and classical influences, and the influence of medieval and early Renaissance traditions. I also make reference to some historical phenomena that have informed my own fooling practice.

**Robert Armin**

According to David Wiles in his *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and text in the Elizabethan playhouse* (2005), Armin probably joined the Chamberlain's Men in 1599 (2005: 138).[10] To appreciate Armin's significance for the playing of the fool, we must note that he was to perform some of the greatest fool parts of the English speaking theatre tradition including Feste (*Twelfth Night*), Thersites (*Troilus and Cressida*), Autolycus (*The Winter's Tale*), Touchstone (*As You Like It*) and, of course, the Fool (*King Lear*) (Butler 2012).[11] It was with Armin that the performance of the fool crystallised with particular dramatic power. It is clear from the plays that were written for him and contemporary references to his work that Armin was highly skilled. The public adored him for his performances as a fool. His fellow actor, Augustine Phillips, remembered him fondly, leaving him a legacy of twenty shillings in his will, only ten shillings less than he left to Shakespeare (London, National Archives, PROB 11/105/387).

Wiles describes the process of metamorphosis from clown to fool on the Elizabethan stage. Armin was instrumental in this. The term 'clown' was originally pejorative indicating a rural simpleton and 'emerged within a neo-chivalric discourse centred on the notion of gentility. […] The "clown", as word and symbol, embraced the negative but excluded the positive aspects of rusticity' (Wiles 2005: 62). The *Oxford English Dictionary* (Simpson and Weiner 1989) shows the word 'clown' originated in the second

[10] David Grote in *The Best Actors in the World: Shakespeare and His Acting Company* suggests that Lawrence Fletcher, a Scottish actor, preceded Armin's tenure as principal comic actor in the King's Men and that, following Fletcher's death in 1608, Armin replaced him. I have discounted this theory as Grote is unable to explain Armin's activity in the intervening years (2002: 126-30).
[11] Coghill notes that Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595-96) fulfils the role of court fool: 'I jest to Oberon, and make him smile…' (II. 1. 44;) and that Trinculo in *The Tempest* (1610-11) is identified as 'a Jester' in the cast list of the Folio edition (1959: 11 and 15). It is unlikely that Armin played either of these roles and we should not think, therefore, that fools are exclusively to be identified with the work of Armin.

half of the sixteenth century and describes it as 'meaning originally "clot, clot, lump", which like those words themselves […] has been applied in various languages to a clumsy boor, a lout'. The word is derived from the Latin '*colonus*' meaning country clod, husbandman or peasant. By about 1590, the term could also indicate the principal comedian in an Elizabethan theatre. '*A* clown' had become '*the* clown'. This understanding that 'clown' refers to the leading comic performer in a company has led some scholars to consider a broad range of roles under the same heading. Bente A. Videbæk in *The Stage Clown in Shakespeare's Theatre*, for example, divides his work into the following sections: rustic clowns, servant clowns, major roles with expanded clown function, court jesters, clown as 'bitter fool', Falstaff as clown and clown characteristics in nonclown characters (1996: vii-viii). It is an assumption of these scholars that the fool was a type of clown and that the comic acting techniques employed by actors in the roles were broadly similar, differing only in so far as the requirements of character necessitated or the skills of the respective performer allowed. My proposal is that fooling is different from clowning and that Armin played a significant part in development of a fooling technique for the theatre.

This usage of the term 'clown' was value-neutral and in Shakespeare's plays was 'never found outside stage directions unless used *of*, or (for comic effect) *by* the character who is designated as the clown of the play' (Wiles 2005: 68-69). The word 'fool' is used with greater freedom in Shakespearean dialogue. In one concordance of Shakespeare's complete works (Shakespeare, Open Source), the word and its compounds is used 663 times. These occurrences are composed of the following frequencies: fool (400), fools (108), foolish (95), foolery (17), fool's (12), fooling (10), foolishly (5), fool'd (3), foolhardy (2); and then single occurrences of: childish-foolish, fool's-head, fool-begg'd, fool-born, fool-hardiness, fooleries, foolish-compounded, foolish-hanging, foolish-witty, foolishness, unfool. The complex history of the original publishing of Shakespeare's plays in Folio and Quarto formats makes these figures a guide only. Wiles notes the word 'fool' was more ancient than 'clown' and remained dominant in everyday speech. He argues, however, that 'playhouse terminology was more precise than colloquial speech, and it recognised a very clear distinction between "fool" and "clown"' (2005: 69). Shakespearean stage directions use the term 'fool' only for the Fool in *King Lear*.

All of the parts in Shakespeare's plays that were played by Armin's clown predecessor in the Chamberlain's Men, William Kemp (? – 1603), had English names (e.g. Launce, Bottom, Launcelet, Costard, Peter, Dogberry). Other than Touchstone, all of Armin's Shakespearean roles bear a foreign name. Unlike Kemp's parts which seem to belong to the lower orders of the social hierarchy, Armin's are not easily identified as being members of a particular class. Guy Butler in 'Shakespeare and the two jesters' says that by 1600 Armin was already 'well-known for a kind of witty foolery very different from that of the traditional rustic clown whose place he had taken (William Kemp)'. He observes that Armin transformed the stage fool and that this has been well 'argued by Baldwin, Felver, Hotson, Bradbrook and others' (1983: 162-63).

Scholars such as these point towards a change in attitude towards clowning in which the playwright sought to control the actor's extemporising and interlocutions with the

audience. Bradbrook, for example, notes that certain sections of the audience were also tiring of this performance style and that 'if the new clown had liked such a style of acting' this would have 'produced a backstage row' (1969: 50). She describes a need for a new kind of comic performer who could be 'interwoven with the central characters and central feelings of the play; they demand an actor ready to play many parts, not just his own brand of clowning' (1969: 50). Bradbrook distinguishes Armin's work from previous clowns according to five characteristics:

1. He attends upon ladies, rather than on lords […]. Touchstone, Feste, Lavache share this trait [Lear's Fool and Thersites do not].
2. He is often contrasted with [or considered as] a knave and he likes to prove that others are either fools, knaves or both, by means of catechism and other marks of the wise Fool.
3. He underlines or calls attention to social graduations; although living outside the social order, he enforces it. […]
4. His wit is bitter and deflationary.
5. He is given to music and song. (1969: 57)

Bradbrook also presents Armin as enriching the clowning tradition with 'rapid and nimble shifts of posture, acceptance of contradictions, flirts and fidgets of wit' (1969: 53). Gareth Lloyd Evans in 'Shakespeare's Fools: The Shadow and the Substance of Drama' describes Armin's fooling language as:

> One moment a broad quip, then a nerve-jolting pun, then a mordant comment, all interwoven with strands of strange verbiage and occasionally decorated with sad lyricism. (1972: 152)

Armin's linguistic skill is exemplified in the sometimes impenetrable banter of *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b). This technique is set in contrast to the work of Kemp who 'displayed his dancing skills as comic materials in themselves to please the audience' (Ishikawa 2011: 189).

Bart van Es in *Shakespeare in Company* (2015) notes Kemp's hostility towards this new style. In Kemp's book *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder* (printed in the same year 1600 as Armin's first known publication), he sets 'blunt mirth', 'merry jests' and 'mad jigs' against 'abominable ballads, 'apish humour' and 'unreasonable rhymes' (Es 2015: 166). Es describes these 1600 publications as 'the old and new comic stars of Shakespeare's company in a public face-off that coincides with a radical shift in the playwright's style' (2015: 167). Es characterises the work of Kemp as 'forgiving and apparently self-confident' (2015: 164) and 'whose naïve persona made him the willing object of jokes' (2015: 167), whereas Armin 'depicts and embodies a cosmic spirit of the absurd' (2015: 164) and is a 'self-consciously witty and irrational figure who directs laughter at others much more than himself' (1015: 167). Kemp provided an image of the common man but, as Bednarz notes, he did not 'use his lower-class persona to rail against the conservative organisation of society' (1998: 276). In his *Nine Daies Wonder* he engages with all classes amongst the audience who watch his dance phenomenon and he presents himself as a symbol of universal appeal. Bednarz observes how Kemp 'was

prepared to treat his dance as a commercial venture, making bets and writing a book to finance it and further ventures'. His work never adopted the role of 'lower-class truth teller and social critic' (Bednarz 1998: 278-79). Armin focussed on fools who were the companions of kings or who functioned as the retainers of aristocrats. Through their association with the great and mighty, Armin presented a more cutting view of the universality of folly. For this, he developed a new type of comic performance in the theatre. As Lloyd Evans argues, Armin's contribution was to create a new kind of *dramatis persona*. This is a figure whose status and function whilst 'virtually that of shadow is, nevertheless, the repository of the most important truths that the play has to communicate' (1972: 155-56).

Many factors may have caused the transition between Kemp and Armin. Andrew Gurr in *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* notes a shift in the Chamberlain's Men's priorities from 1599 in which they concentrated on a socially exclusive audience in competition with the boy companies (1986: 24-25 and 151-53). Gurr argues that the departure of Kemp was linked to this change of direction. As Sutcliffe in 'Kemp and Armin: The Management of Change' describes it:

> In the context of this 'product restructuring', the question of Kemp's position in the company posed a very considerable problem. If the company was to move upmarket, then Kemp's clowning would be a positive hindrance: he did not project the desired image. […] Bluntly, if the company's policy to ensure financial survival in an intensively competitive market was to move with the times and appeal to new, moneyed tastes, then Kemp had to go. (1996a: 128)

Sutcliffe notes that the engagement of a replacement for Kemp as their lead comic actor was vital to the success and survival of the company: 'It was a decision which, if they got it wrong, would jeopardise their livelihoods and ultimately lead to ruin' (1986a: 129). Arguing that such a decision would not have been left to luck, Sutcliffe proposes that Armin was probably promoted from within the company having joined sometime earlier as a singer. If Armin did have a relationship with the company prior to 1599, this might explain why he was able to play some of Kemp's roles such as Dogberry in the later performances of the existing repertoire. Sutcliffe concludes that Armin's promotion would have been 'carefully calculated and managed as conditions allowed' (1996a: 129).

Wiles reminds us that *As You Like It* was probably written in 1599 after Armin had joined the company and he speculates that the audience were encouraged to decipher the name 'Touchstone' as an alchemical alias for Robert Armin, the goldsmith (2005: 146).[12] Armin would function as the audience's new touchstone in truth and folly. Towards the end of the play, Touchstone/Armin encounters a rustic simple-minded character whose name is William. The name William is repeated three times in the

[12] A touchstone is a piece of black quartz or jasper which is used to test gold and silver alloys, the quality of which is determined by the colour of the streak produced when rubbing them together (Hotson 1952: 114, referencing the *OED*). Armin was apprenticed to a London goldsmith from 1580 to 1591 (Somerset 1984: 72).

same scene. Touchstone/Armin refers to him as a clown and then instructs him to 'tremble and depart' (V. 1. 56-57). Wiles notes the significance of this moment in the play's original performance.

> The audience will not miss the contrast between the departed company clown, William Kemp, and the new fool/clown. The traditional simple-minded rustic clown is symbolically dismissed from the new Globe stage. (2005: 146)

Butler describes the situation between comic performers as a battle, a *moromachia*, between Armin's new style of fooling and the tavern fools. In particular, a performer called John Stone (? – 1605) seems to have been Armin's main opponent. Malvolio possibly makes a reference to Armin's competition with Stone when he says in front of Feste, 'I marvel your ladyship takes delight in such a barren rascal: I saw him put down the other day with an ordinary fool, that had no more brain than a stone' (*Twelfth Night*, I. 5. 80-82).[13] Armin, it seems, did not have an easy victory with his new type of fooling.

For his entry into Arden, Touchstone wears disguise. Butler suggests that when he cries, '"Ay, now am I in Arden, the more fool I," he may be quibbling on "fool": more fool, less clown. A twitch or swirl of the motley [a loose outer garment] to reveal the russet [of the clown] beneath would make the point' (1983: 169). Considering Rosalind's naming of Touchstone, Butler notes that the name contains both Tutch (Armin's own character in *The History of The Two Maids of More-clacke*)[14] and Stone (Armin's great rival).

> In making Rosalind give him this name, Shakespeare is articulating in one word what the audience is witnessing: the transformation of a clownish fool – who is twice called whetstone on his first appearance – into a touchstone of wit. Armin, the authority on fools […] is now wearing the costume of the two fools. (1983: 169)

Whilst Touchstone's marriage to Audrey at the end of the play seems out-of-character, it symbolises another union that is taking place between the representation of the fool as a courtly figure and as a member of the rural community. Here Shakespeare presents Armin fusing clown and fool.

Armin showed the distinctiveness of the fool from the clown in a story that he recounts in *A Nest of Ninnies* (1608). He tells with relish how Lord Chandos' players with their fool, Jack, entered a town and encountered Grumball the Clown.[15] Although Jack and Grumball find much affinity in each other, it is clear that they are types to be

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[13] Butler notes an Ordinary was a 'most colourful and democratic meeting place,' that functioned as 'the popular exchange of news and gossip in a society without newspapers or radio' and 'provided an audience for fools and entertainers of various calibre' (1983: 163).

[14] Although *The History of The Two Maids of More-clacke* was not published until 1609, perhaps ten years after the earliest performances of *As You Like It* (1599), Felver in 'Robert Armin, Shakespeare's Source for Touchstone' (1956) argues persuasively that Armin's play was written and acted by Armin before his engagement in Shakespeare's company in 1599.

[15] It seems that Armin was a member of Lord Chandos' players. This was a minor troupe which, as far as we know, never played on a London stage (Somerset 1984: 72).

distinguished. In another episode, Jack has a violent confrontation with a clown of the minstrel tradition which ends with the minstrel receiving a broken skull. Es notes that 'we see not only the fool's desire for public dominance, but also a dark premonition of Armin's confrontation with Kemp' (2015: 173).

The extent to which Armin's contribution was a rupture from or a development of the clowning tradition is a matter of debate. Scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century such as Felver and Hotson argued that the clown's popularity and tendency to improvise off-script was too problematic for playwrights in their desire to create a sealed text and for the audience to suspend their disbelief. This argument came from the literary appreciation of plays rather than the tough performance realities of the Elizabethan playhouse. Thomson notes the experience of modern-day actors at the new Shakespeare's Globe theatre.

> [As they] have quickly discovered, improvising clowns are immediately useful in alerting a turbulent audience to the imminent beginning of the performance (the practice akin to medieval 'whiffling'). Because they have licensed access to the real world of the theatre, and an often-disruptive view of the artificial world of the play, they link the enacted fiction to an actual community event. (2004: 413)

Preiss in 'Robert Armin Do the Police in Different Voices' notes a tautology in the argument that emphasises a shift away from improvisation towards dramatic authorship with Armin. Playwrights continued to operate with a clown/fool performer and if there were tensions, writers 'did not show it […] enough for him utterly to disappear' (2008: 210).

> By periodically refreshing his credentials as clown, Shakespeare extended to Armin its horizon of identification and expectation, so he could reshape it himself. Armin's solo practice […] ensured that an elitist company agenda could be serve by fostering clowning instead of eliminating it. (2008: 211)

Wisker in his doctoral thesis 'Dying Laughing: On the Death and Resurrection of the Clown in Shakespearean Drama' (2018, State University of New York) has similarly noted the clown's rebirth as the fool in Armin's work.

The relationship between clown and fool is complex on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stages. Armin refers to himself as a 'fool' in his *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) but the publication is also subtitled *A Clown's Conceit on Occasion Offered*. Kemp too refers to himself as a 'fool' in his own publication, *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder* (1600). Nonetheless, I propose that Armin's contribution was to bring a gradual metamorphosis from clown to fool in the theatre. As Neil Novelli notes in his essay 'Feste', 'Armin did not submerge his own identity to the extent that many modern actors do, but nevertheless he apparently kept his comedy within the limits of the fictional character and did not intrude into the action as Kemp did' (1998: 186). Armin understood the dramaturgical potential of the fool. Whilst the clown provided a comic alternative to the world of tragedy by mean of a subplot, the fool was an integral part of the court. This

meant that Armin could participate in the central drama of the play. The dramaturgical function of the fool was different from that of the clown. As the rustic clown passed away or was contained by playwrights, Armin performed a resurrection of the figure, returning it to life in the form of complex multi-facetted fool figure. For this, he developed a new performance style, something distinct from clowning, which I label a 'fooling technique'.

I think Armin understood his work in this way. In an early section of one of his publications, *Quips Upon Questions (*1600b) which I return to later for a more detailed consideration, Armin writes an 'Incouragement to the Booke':

> Some fooles make Rules, for the wise to flout at.
> […]
> But fooles have tooles sharpe in season,
> To wound and confound without reason.
> (A)

Here Armin is excusing the task of writing about folly which he acknowledges is in itself foolish. He says, nonetheless, that he believes fools have 'rules' and 'tools' which they can use to impact their audience. Armin worked with a technique. It is noticeable that the effect of fooling is challenging for an audience; it 'wounds' and 'confounds'. This aspect of his practice is distinct from the clowning of Kemp and, indeed, our experience of much contemporary clown work.

Prior to taking up the position in the Chamberlain's Men, Armin had already made a study of fools, the insights from which he published in *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a). This publication comprises sketches of six fools and was revised and printed under the new title *A Nest of Ninnies* (1608). Whilst jest books were popular at the turn of the century,[16] *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) and *A Nest of Ninnies* (1608) are rare, if not unique, because they are accounts of fooling written by an actor who played the fool.[17] Although Armin does not actually describe a fool technique in these works, they do provide insight into the preoccupations of his work. As Cockett notes, 'it is not stretching credibility too far to suggest that it represents the kind of research we might expect today from a committed actor. In studying and describing these material fools, Armin was surely also researching fool material for his performances' (2006: 144).

The term 'jest book' describes a literary genre of a collection of comic tales. Their titles often included the name of a specific performer. The term emerged in the eighteenth century but 'Merry tales' was the general term during the sixteenth century (Ishikawa 2011: 12). P. Zall in his introduction to *A Hundred Merry Tales: and Other English*

[16] Two more were published in the same year and a further five more over the next decade (Preiss 2014: 195).

[17] There is a scarcity of material like this. Documents attributed to other Elizabethan fools are of uncertain authorship. I have only been able to identify one other example of an account of fooling written by a fool and this was written by the German fool, Peter Prosch (1744 – 1804), who published an autobiographic account of his life. This is not available in an English translation and I have therefore been unable to read it.

*Jestbooks of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* provides a useful overview of the history of the genre (1963: 1-10). He describes its origins in classical literature and theories of rhetoric, and subsequent development in the medieval and Renaissance periods. Whilst later publications were concerned to articulate a vernacular jesting tradition, Zall also shows the cross-breeding that occurred from classical, Oriental, Teutonic, Renaissance Italian and English roots. Throughout these periods, he notes two major dimensions of jesting - jests about things done and jests about things said (1963: 2). The themes of verbal and physical, literary and performative remain, as we will see, major characteristics in the work of Armin. *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) and *A Nest of Ninnies* (1608) draw explicitly upon the tradition of merry tales. Naoko Ishikawa in her doctoral thesis 'The English Clown: Print in Performance and Performance in Print' (2001, University of Birmingham) provides a detailed description of Armin's publishing in relation to jest books and other traditions in England and in mainland Europe. Referring to the work of Keith Thomas (1977), she demonstrates an interactive link between the page and the stage in Armin's practice in which comic figures in jest books influenced theatrical performances and visa versa.

Armin's letter *A Pil to Purge Melancholie* (1599), *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) which is a book of Armin's jokes and humorous anecdotes, his surviving play *The History of The Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a) and his poem 'The Italian Taylor and his Boy' (1609b), have similarly provided me with insight into Armin's fooling technique.[18]

From a reading of Armin's publications as well as his work in Shakespeare's plays, the following sections describe his fooling technique. I present Armin's approach under six headings. These, I propose, represent the major dimensions of his fooling practice. The examples I have chosen to illustrate these principles from Armin and Shakespeare's texts are emblematic; their texts are full of such examples. Whilst each principle is considered separately, they are not ultimately to be understood as discrete steps in an acting method. The principles speak to each other and form part of Armin's integrated approach to playing the fool.

**Principle 1: Evoke the playing state**

In his dedication to *A Nest of Ninnies* (1608), Armin makes a simple statement: 'Natural fooles are prone to self-conceit, fooles Artificall with their wits lay waite to make themselves fooles, liking the disguise to feede their own mindes'. This seemingly

[18] *The Valiant Welshman* (1615) is another play that has been attributed to Armin. D. J. Lake in 'The Canon of Robert Armin's Work: Some Difficulties' (1977) explores how other titles are unlikely to be by Armin. Alice Equestri in 'The Italian Taylor and His Boy or what Robert Armin did to Straparola' notes two epistles have also been attributed to Armin (2016b: 254): in C. S.*'s A Brief Resolution of a Right Religion* (1590) and in Gilbert Dugdale's *The Discourses of the Practices of Elizabeth Caldwell* (1604). Whilst these publications are of historical interest, they provide little insight into Armin's performance techniques.

straightforward dedication provides an insight into his playing of the fool. He conveys an unpretentious truth that the actor finds amusement ('liking') in playing the fool.

In writing about six fools, Armin locates himself within a tradition of merry-making. Johnson describes Armin in this role as the 'embodiment of communal pleasures' (2003: 23), reproducing the 'bonds of communal mirth', and acquiring the power to 'guarantee pleasure' (2003: 26). We might question the historicity of some of the events recorded in *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) despite the fact the Armin is keen to impress upon us that he witnessed most of the content. We may also raise doubt about Armin's ethics in making profit through the publication of others' stories. It is clear, however, that Armin saw his work in print and performance as belonging to a tradition of a certain type of performer who 'got rewarded by nothing but pleasure' (2003: 40).

> Armin's non-dramatic writings place him variously along the continuum from thief to philosopher, but whether he is overtly taking credit for his skill at reproducing the jests of others or subtly registering the cultural loss involved in his own commercial endeavours, he remains both resolutely self-promoting and resolutely embedded in communal structures of mirth and pleasure. (2003: 43)

Armin expresses his commitment to mirth in his epistle to the reader in *The History of The Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a). He acknowledges his frustrated desire to perform: 'I would haue againe inacted Iohn my selfe, but *Tempora mutantur in illis* [in these changing times] & I cannot do as I would'. He has resolved, therefore, to publish the play: 'Being requested both in Court and City, to show him in priuate, I haue therefore printed him in publike, wishing thus much to euery one, so delighting' (Liddie 1979: 104). Whether on stage on in print, Armin's concern was with pleasure.

Considering 'The Italian Taylor and His Boy' (1609b), Equestri notes Armin's creation of an alternative ending to Straparola's[19] original 'Le Piacevoli Notti' (The Pleasant Night (1550-1553)) and how this distinguishes the poem from its source: 'Armin neutralises the effect of the macabre ending of the Fox devouring the enemy' (2016b: 267). He achieves this through laughter and the use of a theatrical metaphor: 'All laugh a good, for here the Clowne, His Sceane was now to enter' (1609b: sig. H1v). This represents, Equestri observes, 'the ending of the tragic part paving way for the happy ending' and the power of laughter to relieve the spirit (2016b: 267). Here again Armin explored his role as a laughter-maker.

The importance of laughter in Armin's technique is simply but effectively conveyed in a section of *Quips Upon Questions* titled 'Two Fooles well met' (1600b: B2). Armin recounts how 'Two Fooles well met, each pointed at the other,' they then engage in 'laughing a good to see each others face'. Here we see the fool evoking immediate

[19] Giovanni Francesco Straparola (c. 1485 – 1558) was am Italian writer of poetry and short stories. Straparola is likely to have been a nickname derived from the Italian verb *straparlare* meaning 'to talk too much' or to talk nonsense'. < https://www.revolvy.com/page/Giovanni-Francesco-Straparola?cr=1> [accessed 26 May 2019]

pleasure both in himself and in his audience. They laugh together at shared folly, in the recognition that they are both fools. The story conveys the centrality of laughter in fooling practice and challenges the distinction between laughter at and laughter with.

Another of Armin's early appearances in the Chamberlain's Men may have been as the First Gravedigger in *Hamlet* (Wells 2007: 38). This role delivered a joke at Kemp's expense – the new company fool lifted the skull of a dead fool from the grave. In what has become one of the most iconic Shakespearean moments, Hamlet then remembers the fool from his childhood.

> Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now – how abhorred in my imagination it is. My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now, your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning? Quite chop-fallen?
>
> (*Hamlet*, v. 1. 182-190)

This is an epitaph for a fool and, I propose, looks forward to the new technique Armin would work with. The fool will delight us with kisses, jokes, runs, jumps, skips, dances, songs, joy, laughter and smiling, and remind us of death too. Through this scene in a graveyard, Armin makes an explicit connection between the fool's play and death. The conversation with the gravedigger causes Hamlet to be conscious of mortality. Somerset in his essay 'Shakespeare's Great Stage of Fools: 1599-1607' notes that the fool has an unwelcome but necessary message for Hamlet: 'The message of mortality, of the skull beneath the skin reminding us of our irreducible physical natures' (1984: 78-79).

Here Armin showed that the playing state of the fool is seemingly light-hearted and entertaining but there are consequences of great personal cost for those that encounter the fool. Armin reflects this at the end of *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a), when he considers the fool's attitude to death. The rhyming is playful but the message has gravity: 'Wise men and fools, all one end makes, | God's will be done, who gives and takes' (F4[a]). Armin gives the title 'Who's dead?' to a section of *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b: BI). Using a rhyming scheme of ABABCC, he creates a mocking tone in which he asks how it is possible for a man to die twenty times. The answer is delivered through a pun; the man is a dyer. As well as playing with the language, the effect is also to play with death and to cause us to laugh at it. In this, Armin evoked a weightiness in the subjects which his comic performance addressed.

Coghill notes that the juxtaposition of madman, fool and death is used in comedy to 'heighten horror with surprise' (1959: 8). The connection between the fool and death could be seen in the pictures of Hans Holbein.[20] It had haunted Shakespeare's imagination since he had described in *Richard II* (1595) the antic Death crouching within

[20] Numerous woodcuts in Holbein's 'The Dance of Death' depict fools with the figure of Death. This series was originally produced in Basel between 1522 and 1527 (Holbein 2016).

the hollow crown encompassing a king's head (III. 2. 160-70). 'Antic' in its Shakespearean usage refers to bizarre, mad, foolish or feigned playacting. Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet* (1595), for example, described Romeo as 'cover'd with an antic face' (I. 5. 56) because he wears a mask in disguise. Hamlet describes his intended pretence at madness as 'To put an antic disposition on' (I. 5. 180). Armin's antic playing state, whilst based in the tradition of pleasure-making, also connected to other traditions in which the comic performer evoked madness and an encounter with death.

**Principle 2: Connect to the fool**

Armin showed the fool was an individualised figure based on careful observation. The fool is not a stock type. In *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a), Armin painstakingly described the special turns, tricks and dress of each of the fools he researched. He carefully noted the physical details of the fools he encountered and made a differentiation of one fool from another. He also paid detailed attention to their verbal jests and created individualised voices, each requiring distinctive breath control, speech patterns, pitches and rhythms. The Shakespearean texts that Armin performed required an actor to bring emotional and rhythmic virtuosity; sometimes pathetic and sad, sometimes witty and bitter, sometimes verbal and musical, sometimes pantomimic, sometimes tending to attack natural folly, sometimes revelling in his own nonsense, sometimes artful, sometimes not.

His contribution was to make the fool something sophisticated, individualised, humane and profound. Analysing *Quips upon Questions* (1600b), Charles Felver in *Robert Armin, Shakespeare's Fool: A Biographical Essay* (1961) notes the individualisation of the fool in Armin's work.

> Armin's jests are more serious and show a mind with a certain philosophical bent. The satire they contain is less personal than in the older clown's jests and the questions on which he rhymes are of more consequence. Chiefly in evidence throughout the *Quips* is the highly self-conscious nature of Armin's clowning; unlike his mentor he was not anxious to be a boor or mere jester off-stage or on. […] What he was really doing, of course, was asserting the distinctive nature of each of the roles. (1961: 79-80)

In his work as actor and writer, Armin had reflected deeply on the humanity of the fool. As Felver describes, Armin wanted 'to be as different as possible in moving from one role to another. One of the great contributions of Elizabethan drama, as contrasted with the continental *Commedia dell'arte* tradition in which players improvised on a stock role, was a portrayal of characters simulating real life' (1961: 47). Armin played fools not 'the fool'. His work was interested in the individuality of each fool, the narrative of the play and the universality of folly.

Viola in *Twelfth Night* (1602) gives an insight into Armin's fooling technique when describing Feste:

> This fellow is wise enough to play the fool,
> And to do that well craves a kind of wit:
> He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
> The quality of persons, and the time,
> And like the haggard, check at every feather
> That comes before his eye. This is a practice
> As full of labour as a wise man's art:
> For folly that he wisely shows is fit;
> But wise men, folly-fall'n, quite taint their wit. (III. 1. 60-68)

Here Viola shows how the fool catches the present moment through acute observation. Accurate mimicry of other fools, indeed anyone he encountered, is key in Armin's technique. Armin's fooling involved a refined and subtle eye for spotting the folly of others. This he expressed through the concept of 'simplicity'. In *A Nest of Ninnies* (1608), he uses 'simple' fourteen times, 'simply' five times, and 'simplicity' five times (Ishikawa 2011: 202).[21] Armin employs the word to indicate the guiltlessness and childlike quality of the fools he describes. The word also develops another meaning in the text and is associated with the idea of 'subtlety'. John in the Hospital, for example, is described in the following terms: 'This pleases well to see one so naturally silly to be simply subtill' (sig. Ce$^{v}$). The association of these two final words conveys Armin's understanding of the paradox of refined simplicity. It is through their subtle simplicity that fools can observe the truth and so can achieve wisdom. This quality is conveyed in the portrayal of another of Armin's fool's Leonard, who he describes as 'subtill in his follie'. Fooling is achieved through subtle simplicity of observation.

Preiss (2014) questions the individuality of Armin's fools and considers Armin's publishing of *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) as a performative act in which the figures described are not real character studies. This, Preiss argues, is because Armin is already in character himself when he introduces them. Instead, '"fool" becomes merely the name for an operation of self-disposal' (2014: 195). Preiss describes *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) as giving us the illusion of interactive discourse but is in reality a solipsism. Indeed, solipsism manifests in the very behaviour of the fools Armin's describes.

> Jack Oates plays cards 'all alone,' talks to the deck, and a passing servingman thinks he calls him a knave; Leonard 'lock[s] himselfe into a Parler,' plays shuffleboard with no coins, 'out-sweares' phantom playmates 'with a thousand oaths,' and destroys the room in fits of rage; asked the cost of anything – be it his coat, his cap, or his beard – Blue John always replies 'a groat.' (Preiss 2014: 199)

Preiss notes how Armin utilises numerous dialogic devices including editorial asides, paratexts and rhetorical questions to simulate oral performance. Examples include: 'ye shall quickly heare', 'you shall heare', 'I graunt', 'What should I say', 'as I speake of', 'I

[21] Ishikawa also notes the use of 'folly' or 'follies' twenty times, and 'true' and its derivatives twenty-seven times in the text (2011: 202 and 217). These, she argues, are key themes in Armin's fooling practice.

will let you understand in two wordes', 'Well, to go forward in what I promised you', and several 'I saye's (2014: 268, note 46). Whilst Armin individualises each fool with personal distinctiveness, Preiss notes that Armin 'emerges behind and above them […] their voices now overwritten by his own – a new kind of fool' (2014: 201).

Preiss's conclusion is that the equation of 'fool' and 'author/Armin' is a 'dark enigma' (2014: 199) which serviced Armin's self-promotion. Willeford notes that enigma lies at the heart of the fool's identity:

> And even when the fool loudly and convincingly proclaims that we are fools, too, what the fool is partly remains the fool's secret, though he may pretend to disclose it. (1969: 47)

Armin, I propose, understood a further enigma that exists in all acting. This concerns the question of whether the actor plays him/herself or whether the actor transforms to become another. Armin was intrigued by the specificity of human behaviour and the individuality of fools. He also knew that his performance was centred on himself as fool and therefore could not avoid an element of solipsism. Armin's fooling technique was poised between the performance of self and the performance of another, between the performance of one fool and the performance of many fools. In not seeking to resolve this enigma, Armin kept his work in a dynamic place where questions about acting and transformation could remain alive.

**Principle 3: Enjoy duality and paradox**

The play *King Lear* (1606) contains important insights into Armin's fooling technique. Austin Gray in his article 'Robert Armine, the Fool' argues that in the roles of the Fool and Edgar we see 'Armin's influence on Shakespeare' (1927: 684). Central to the first half of the play is the relationship between Lear and the Fool. In the second half of the play, Edgar replaces the Fool as the king's closest confidant. Southworth proposes the role of Edgar, rather than the Fool, was played by Armin as this part suited the actor better (1998: 134). I, however, follow the view of most scholars that accept the Fool was Amin's role. Edgar and the Fool appear concurrently in some scenes and it is therefore unlikely that Armin played both roles. Nonetheless, Armin's influence can be heard in the many voices that Edgar adopts for his feigned madness as Poor Tom.

> EDGAR Look where he stands and glares! Want'st thou eyes at trial, madam?
> Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me.
> FOOL Her boat hath a leak,
> And she must not speak
> Why she dares not come over to thee.
> (III. 6. 23-28)

In this section, the Fool picks up a rhyming scheme from Edgar/Poor Tom, both characters revelling in the use of ditties and nonsense language. Gray notes that Armin would have regularly passed the famous Bethlehem Hospital as he travelled across the

Moor Fields to the Curtain theatre: 'With his interest in the madmen of this world, he must often have noticed in the villages round London, the Bedlam Beggars (and their dishonest imitators, the Abram Coves)' (1927: 685). In Edgar/Poor Tom we have the life-like energy of the 'tricks and "furious fancies" of these vagabond lunatics' (1927: 685) that held a special interest for Armin.[22]

Through the first three acts, the Fool accompanies Lear in his disintegration into madness and seeks to teach the king about the nature of folly. Lear's situation causes him in exasperation to question his own identity.

> LEAR Who is it can tell me who I am?
> FOOL Lear's shadow.
> LEAR I would learn that.
>
> (I. 4. 121-23)

The king has become his own shadow and so, we could say, he has been fooled. In another instance, the Fool questions Lear about the difference between a sweet and a bitter fool, and implies the king has become a fool.

> LEAR Dost thou call me fool, boy?
> FOOL All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with.
>
> (I. 4. 141-43)

The Fool observes numerous times this doubling of 'king as fool' and 'fool as king', reminding Lear of a paradoxical reversal in his fortunes that makes the king a fool. His fooling technique revels in paradoxical doublings: foe and kin, truth and lies, speech and silence, fool and king, wisdom and folly.

> FOOL I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are. They'll have me
> whipped for speaking true, thou'lt have me whipped for lying,
> and sometimes I am whipped for holding my peace. I had rather be any
> kind o'thing than a fool, and yet I would not be thee,
> nuncle. Thou hast pared thy wit o'both sides and left nothing
> I' the middle.
>
> (I. 4. 173-79)

The parallel between wisdom and folly is extensively explored in Armin's performances and publications. In 'The Italian Taylor and His Boy' (1609b), this is represented in the confrontation between the fox (a symbol of cunning and intelligence) and the cock (a symbol of stupidity and pride). Other examples are numerous and include: Touchstone: 'The more pity that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly' (*As You Like It*, I. 2. 83-4); Feste: 'Those wits that think they have thee, do very oft prove fools: […]

[22] In 1600, Armin's printer, William Ferbrand, published *The Hospital of Incurable Fools* which was a translation from Italian of Tomaso Garzoni's *L'Hospedale de' pazzi incurabili* (1586) and contains a similar interest in variety of fool types. The dedication to this book presents Cato and Erasmus as the champion of wise fools (Erasmus 1971: Introduction). Ferbrand also produced *Jack Dover…his quest of Inquirie…his privy search for the veriest Fool in England* in 1601 and 1614 (Bradbrook 1969: 173).

"Better a witty fool, than a foolish wit"' (*Twelfth Night*, I. 5. 32-35); Fool: 'the fool will stay, | And let the wise man fly' (*King Lear*, II. 4. 79-80); and 'Tis no wonder for me to set downe fooles natural, when wisemen before theyle be unprofitable, will seeme fooles artificiall' (*A Nest of Ninnies*, Lippincott 1973: 46). Armin returned repeatedly to this kind of paradox in his work.

The Fool regularly makes use of puns to express double meanings. The word 'crown', for example, comes to signify both the symbol of monarchy and an empty egg shell (I. 4. 148-54). The Fool also plays with nonsense as a counterpoint to the generally held logic of a situation. Having derided Lear's position in relation to his daughters, the Fool is threatened with whipping. The Fool makes a riposte, the second half of which many editors struggle to explain: 'Truth's a dog that must to kennel; he must be whipped out, when Lady Brach may stand by the fire and stink' (I. 4. 109-11). Lady Brach is, I propose, intentionally nonsensical, highlighting the absurd reasoning that Lear stubbornly sticks to concerning his earlier actions. The fooling technique repeatedly uses images, jokes and nonsense which observe paradoxical doublings.

Armin's dedication of *A Pil to Purge Melancholie* (1599) was to 'M. Baw-waw'. The *OED* gives 'Baw-waw' and 'Bow-wow' as 'nonsense'. Similarly, *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) was given a mock dedication, this time to 'Sir Timothie Trunchion, alias Bastinado'. Sir Timothie was Armin's marotte. The marotte (a foolish face carved on a stick and carried by many fools) was a device which enabled the fool to talk to himself out loud. The effect of the marotte was to create another kind of doubling. These dedications show how important the skill of nonsense making was to Armin's fooling technique. Sir Andrew in *Twelfth Night* supports this view, considering Feste's use of double-talk and non sequitur to be 'the best fooling' (II. 3. 26-30).

Ishikawa notes a possible attack on Kemp in the choice of the name Timothy. She observes that 'Timothy is the name of a character with a tabor and pipe in John Marston's *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (1601), whose entrance is immediately followed by a morris dance. The scene invokes the frontispiece of a morris dancing Kemp with a one-man band of tabor and pipe from Kemp's *Nine Days' Wonder* (Ishikawa 2011: 190). Ishikawa concludes that Armin makes topical reference to rival performers whose technique involves physical prowess (and who perhaps wield sticks or clubs to demonstrate this) in order to show he was aware of their clowning strategy, and to impress upon us that his own technique 'is separate from the existing acting style of comedians' (2011: 191).

Armin revelling in witty language where double meanings and nonsense can abound can be seen in his own play *The History of The Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a). Writing here for his own portrayal of John in the Hospital, Armin uses various doublings. In response to the Boy's question, 'What did a [Dean Nowell] give thee', the following routine ensues:

> JOHN A groat, look here else.
> BOY What wil't do with it?
> [JOHN] Carri't home to my Nurse.

BOY I'le give thee a point Iack, what to do with it?
JOHN Carri't home to my nurse.
BOY I'll give thee a foole's head Jack, what wilt do with it?
JOHN Carri't home to my nurse.
BOY Carry a fooles head, what a foole art thou?
JOHN Should I goe home without it? whose foole now?
(Sc. 7. 191-200)

The banter of this scene relies on repetition of the phrase 'Carri't home to my Nurse' which is spoken three times. This repetition creates a rhythmic doubling. The punchline of the routine relies upon another doubling. Despite being an innocent, John outwits the precocious Boy by using a logic that takes the Boy's provocation literally – the only way to return home without his foolish head would require him to be decapitated. Here Armin/John creates a duality of logic. The paradox that the town fool outmanoeuvres the Boy would not be lost on the original audience.

**Principle 4: Identify authority**

An ability to identify authority was central to Armin's fooling technique. Having detected the source of authority, he would then play with it.

OLIVIA Take the fool away.
FESTE Do you not hear, fellows? Take away the lady.
(*Twelfth Night*, I. 5. 36-37)

Feste's witty reply places Olivia, the person with highest status in the room, in the position of the fool. He fools her, unsettling her authority and making her experience her own foolishness for a moment. Armin made his audience see their own folly. This was something different from Kemp. Authority figures are less directly at risk when encountering the roles played by Kemp. Kemp played his own folly, I propose, whilst Armin highlighted the folly in others.

Jacques[23] in *As You Like It* (1599) describes the fool's freedom to lambast anyone.

I must have liberty
Withal, as large a charter as the wind,
To blow on whom I please, for so fools have;
And they that are most galled with my folly,
They most must laugh. (*As You like It*, II. 7. 47-51)[24]

[23] This is a role Armin probably did not play. He did, however, appear in the same play as Touchstone, another fool.
[24] Jacques here makes a connection between the wind (and so, perhaps, the breath) and fooling. Earlier in the scene, he observes that the fool 'hath strange places crammed / With observation, the which he vents / In mangled forms' (II. 7. 40-42). The word 'vents' is glossed by Brissenden as 'utters' (Shakespeare 1993: II. 7. 40 n). Because of its French and Latin roots, the word may also

Jacques observes it is the fool's privilege to mock anyone, even those in authority. Goneril, observing Armin/the Fool, is shocked by his insolence (*King Lear*, I. 4. 191). Armin recognised the dramatic potential of the 'all-licensed fool' who knew how to identify authority and how to mock it.

Armin's *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) is a series of three-part jokes conceivably based on contemporaneous stage routines. These rely heavily on banter with the audience and their effect is to mock the heckling member of the public. The quips indicate Armin work with improvisation. Catherine Henze in *Robert Armin and Shakespeare's Performed Songs* (2017) notes that Armin's style as song-writer, author and performer became increasingly improvisatory. Henze explores the ways in which Armin was able to achieve *apparent* improvisatory spontaneity through the use of set comic, dramaturgical or musical motifs which were in reality highly crafted. She describes improvisation with the audience as a key part of Armin's technique.

> Armin's singing in Shakespeare's plays is related to his emblematic solo performance style of improvising response, sometimes in song, based on themes from his audience. (2013: 425)

His skill in this allowed Armin to carve out a distinctive new role for himself in the company.

Considering *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b), Preiss argues Armin intended this publication to be both a script and a transcript. It is not possible, however, to identify for sure who is the quipper and who is the prompter because the text contains no consistent rules to enable us to reconstruct the conversation.

> Is he [Armin] the quipper, refereeing with a final trump? Or does he frame the debate, posing the initial question? Which sometimes makes him also one of the internal interlocutors, and sometimes not? Are there as many interlocutors as there seem to be, or fewer? (Preiss 2014: 208)

Henze also notes Armin's use of:

> Multiple voices in ventriloquist acts, which he did with his jester's bauble. These characteristics pervade his acting in plays by Jonson, Shakespeare, and himself, as illustrated by his playing double, interacting roles in *Every Man Out of His Humour*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Two Maids*. Multiple voices are also present in his writing. (2013: 425)

She wonders if this multiplicity of foolish voices from a single actor represents a blurring between actor/author and fools.

Enterline observes the importance of imitation in Elizabethan Grammar schools: 'almost every school required the master to provide an exemplar character for his students. The

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may also contain the sense of 'wind'. In a later section, I consider the etymological origins of the word 'fool' and note that it relates to wind and breath.

ideal of imitating authoritative examples therefore structured the school's hierarchy of personal relations as much as its language lessons' (2008: 176). She describes school ordinances which used the verbs 'declame' and 'play' as virtual synonyms, an intensive training in public performance from memory, and a system of exercises with punishments for those who did not meet the required standards that 'turned the school into a kind of *daily theatre for Latin learning*' (2008: 179). It is interesting to speculate if these educational experiences informed Armin's fooling practice, encouraging him to imitate authority and becoming skilled to perform voices in public. Providing a psychoanalytic interpretation of the impact of such a pedagogy, Enterline notes 'the constant internal movement […] between seeming and being, *persona* and person, address and self-representation; between assuming, whether successively or simultaneously, the positions of writer, actor, and audience' (2008: 179). These psychological dynamics are seen at play in the work of Armin.

Johnson notes a blurring tendency runs through both Armin's theatrical performances and published writings: 'neither the originator of his jests nor the owner of them, Armin is nevertheless an individualised figure. And yet he is individualised precisely because he represents communal forms of production'. Armin presents himself as speaking with a collective voice and yet also emphasises his ability to dominate any situation verbally. Johnson argues that Armin's charisma and reputational significance was due to his position 'at the intersection between the private and the collective' (2003: 17).

Preiss critiques Johnson's interpretation on Armin's authorship, arguing that he does not use a hybrid authorial stance (combining the audience's speech and his own) but appropriates 'the very collaboration he invokes: he acknowledges communal production not to disavow his possession but to cement it' (2008: 215). Preiss describes Armin's fool project as an authorial subterfuge: 'while Armin was encircling his textual identity with performance, he was simultaneously encasing that performance in textuality' (2008: 217). Armin undertook a process in which his identity is both scripted and embodied. This is perfectly expressed in the first stage instruction of *The History of The Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a): '*Enter Tutch the Clowne, writing*'. Here Armin/Tutch (a part played by Armin in the early performances before, due to incapacity, he published the text for others to read and perhaps perform), enters reading and being read.

Preiss' point is that it was never Armin's intention that *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) could be read as having fidelity to historical moments of improvised interaction with the audience in performance. Instead, Armin performed it just as it is, as a solo performance; Armin 'physically acts out all of those parts himself' (2014: 211). The cacophony of the text was embodied in performance by Armin's speaking all of it: 'Elevated to manic, mimetic spectacle, improvising for the crowd thus became an improvisation *of* them' (2014: 211). Preiss concludes that Armin performed himself by performing everyone else and that his performance had the effect of consuming the voices of the audience.

I propose that Armin's fooling technique was at times genuinely interactive with the audience, inviting their vocalised participation and at other times he performed a polyvocality in which he himself voiced the audience. His technique is 'insistently dialogic, constituting himself out of the voices of other real or imagined figures' (Johnson 2003: 33). At the centre of Armin's practice, I propose, is this awareness of the relationship with the audience as fellow fools. He shows his understanding of this in the section of *Quips Upon Questions* titled 'He plays the Foole'. The title makes explicit reference to enacted fooling and the content which follows concerns what it is to play the fool in the theatre. The first stanza, whilst adopting a defensive tone against those who mock his practice, also acknowledges that his function is 'thy folly to content' (1600b: C). In this, Armin sets out the paradox that the audience too are foolish. His writing style is accusatory and abrasive. This, I propose, reflects a performance style which equally would seek to implicate the audience in an uncompromising awareness of their own folly.

Armin's polyvocality is exemplified in his performance in *Twelfth Night* (1602). In Act 4, Armin as Feste performed the role of Sir Topas for which he adapted his voice in order not to be recognised by the imprisoned Malvolio. Armin/Feste as Topas added one more disguise with a false beard and gown. As the character Maria notes, these items are unnecessary because Armin/Feste cannot be seen by Malvolio. Sir Topas is an apposite choice of name for Armin/Feste. The name had been used by John Lyly (in his play *Endymion* (c. 1588) for a character who appears in full armour and carrying unnecessary apparatuses.[25]

Butler in his analysis of Armin's costumes in *The History of The Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a), notes the layers of clothing and roles which Armin worked with: as a servingman in russet clown's garb, as John in an over-sized child's petticoat, as a Welsh Knight, and as a servant to the Welsh Knight. Similarly in *Timon of Athens* (c. 1605-06), the Fool makes a connection to disguise when asked by Apemantus[26] what a whoremaster is, replying:

> A fool in good clothes, and something like thee. 'Tis a spirit; sometime 't appears like a lord, sometime like a lawyer, sometime like a philosopher, with two stones moe than's artificial one. He is very often like a knight, and generally in all shapes that man goes up and down in, from fourscore to thirteen, this spirit walks in. (II. 1. 113-19)

Butler describes how Armin's voluminous costumes allowed him to hide one identity under another (1983: 189-90) and that he had become a master of disguise and quick-change.

Armin's poem 'The Italian Taylor and His Boy' (1609b) describes a tailor's apprentice who learns through the art of necromancy how to change shape. Through the course of

[25] Lyly may perhaps have borrowed the absurd Sir Tophas from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.
[26] Thomas states that the role of Apemantus was played by Armin (2004: 420).

the narrative, he becomes a horse, a fish, a ruby, and pomegranate and a fox. Considering these multiple transformations, Equestri notes:

> The figure of the apprentice becomes nothing but an additional transformation or identity of the Boy. This literary device makes the connection between the protagonist and the author even stronger, as his identity becomes impossible to define. Who is the Boy? Apprentice, steed, fish, ruby ring or fox? None of them. (2016b: 258)

Equestri shows how the Boy mirrors Armin's interest in mimicry. Armin, the son of a tailor and who grew up in a tailor's workshop, writes a character who reflects his own ability to embody several identities in one performance. Equestri also observes Armin's early career as a ballad writer and that 'some long English songs and narrative poems were divided into cantos' with 'perlocutionary lines to suggest performance in front of an audience'. She wonders if 'Armin's poem might have originally been performed as a ballad in instalments' and notes that 'this would explain why its long structure is divided into cantos of roughly the same length, and each of them has a separate introductory argument' (2016b: 269). Armin's understanding of the demands of storytelling in the ballad format would explain his facility and interest in delivery of more than one voice by a solo performer.

At the end of the poem, the narrator awakens and realises it was all a dream.

> Thus as I slept, a voyse did call,
> And wakt me from my Dreame:
> Vpright I set me in my bed,
> And being awake did know
> All these were phantasies in my head,
> And it was nothing so. (1609b: sig. 12r)

This conclusion expresses the impossibility to define the characters' identities; as 'it was nothing so', they are ultimately nothing. Here Armin played enigmatically with the question of identity.

On the title page of *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a), under the two groups of epithets indicating the six fools, Armin writes: '*omnia sunt sex*' (they are six in all). A little further down the page, he includes a byline: 'Written by one […] *Clunnico de Curtanio Snuffe*' (Clown of the Curtain, Snuffe). He conveys both a single identity and six identities. Preiss comments that Armin performs a 'series of self-cancellations and that 'even in the third person, Armin refuses to be fixed as a speaking subject with a stable viewpoint; where we expect to hear him, we hear many' (2014: 196-7). In this Armin simultaneously undermines and impresses upon us the authority of his authorial voice. Armin's fooling technique, I propose, presented his identity as both singular and multiple. He explored this by adding vocal and physical disguises, playing this technique to an extreme even if the effect was gratuitous. He showed that the way to play with authority (even his own authority as an expert fool performer) when fooling was through disguise, that the fool is disguise.

In delivering many voices in his role as the fool, Armin had shown that '*infinitus est numerus stultorum*' (the number of fools is infinite),[27] that we are all, audience included, fools.[28] Verses such as 'Who's the Fool Now', 'He Plays the Fool' and 'Where's Tarlton?' in *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) challenge the distinction between audience and fool. Armin recognised a paradox at the centre of his performance because everyone is a fool; everyone is playing Armin's role and so he cannot play his part. Armin mocks his own authority as professional actor employed to play the fool. Speaking to his marotte, Sir Timothie Truncheon, in the opening section of *Quips Upon Questions*, Armin expresses this: 'and so a thousand times making legs, I go still backward, till I am out of sight' (1600b: A3r). Armin destroys his own agency (and so, authority) through his performance. His fooling technique involves an awareness of a paradoxical inability – he was unable to play the fool.

**Principle 5: Work with explosion, liminality and appetite**

In surveying Armin's work, I identified his playing energy as characterised by three qualities: appetite, explosion and liminality. Armin's previously quoted dedication to *A Nest of Ninnies* (1608) has a significant choice of phrase: 'to feede their own mindes'. In the epistle to his readers in *Quips upon Questions* (1600b), Armin invites us to 'glut with gazing, surfet deference to violence, and relish with reading' (A3). Later in the same text, Armin returns to appetite as the subject of one section titled 'He eats much' (E3). Over-eating and over-drinking are initially treated as subjects of mockery and symptoms of folly; 'He that eates much and drinketh out of measure, | May eate his clothes off and drink hence his treassure' (E3). The speaker, it seems, is moralising against gluttons and drunkards. The final line of the quip, however, delivers a change in tone and the quipper retorts: 'Drinke till he dies, he drinks not out of debt' (E3). The rhythm and alliteration convey a sense of abandon and perhaps suggests an appetite or energy that can carry us insouciantly into death.

In *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) Leanard, a lean fool, decides to eat a hawk perhaps because in an overheard conversation he misunderstands 'good' to mean 'appetizing'. Cockett describes his behaviour is 'a result of his seemingly unquenchable appetite' (2006: 147). In a separate episode, Leanard consumes the content of a dairy.

> This leane greedy foole having a stomack, and seeing the butler out of the way, his appetite was such, as loath to tarry, breakes open the Dairy house, eates and spoyles new cheese-curdes, cheese-cakes, overthrowes creame

[27] This popular saying can be found, for example, inscribed on a map from the time that shows the world wearing a fool's cap. Annonymous, *Fool's Cap World Map*, c. 1590, item number: G2201:1/43, National Maritime Museum, London, available at <https://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/206385.html>

[28] The title page of *Nest of Ninnies* (1608) contains the epigram 'Stultorum plena sunt omnia' (Fools are everywhere).

> bowles, and having filled his belly, and knew he had done evill, gets him gone to Mansfield in Sherwood, as one fearefull to bee at home. (Armin 1600b: D1r)

Chris Sutcliffe (1996b) provides details of the black letter quarto *A Pil to Purge Melancholie* (1599). The title page of the letter contains the following:

> A PIl | To purge Melancholy: OR, | A PREPARATIVE TO A PURGATION: or, | Topping, Copping, and Capping: | take either or whether: | or, | Mash them, and squash them, and dash | them, and diddle come derrie come | daw them, all together. (Sutcliffe 1996b: 171)

Here Armin describes his work as something consumable (a pill). As well as fooling's medicinal benefits, he associates it with that which is eaten.

The language then becomes more aggressive. The medication he provides is to 'mash', 'squash' and 'dash'. Later in *A Pil to Purge Melancholie* (1599) he describes how he will 'stirre up a hart' (Sutcliffe 1996b: 174) and his language becomes yet more energised.

> I Cannot but malign, and with dyre execrations bellow foorth the gorgonian dieresis of your late romensed misprision, whereby you do unkennell your Goatish affections, and let loose the firie codpiece-humor, & Sparror-like dominations calcionated with the modulation of your supposed Arcadian sprightlinesse, to serenize my metaphysicall partes. (Sutcliffe 1996b: 174)

Armin's choice of vocabulary in this text reveals something about his approach. His fooling resulted in bellowing forth, unkennelling and letting loose. His playing energy was explosive. Butler similarly observes an explosiveness in Armin's style. Describing the role of Tutch in Armin's own play *The History of The Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a), Butler notes that he 'lacks the monolithic psychic consistency of a Dogberry or a Bottom. His main characteristic is his inventive volatility' (1983: 184). Es notes a similar facility is required for Thersites who can 'rail with exhausting vehemence': 'Lechery, lechery, still wars and lechery; nothing else holds fashion. A burning devil take them!' (*Troilus and Cressida* v. 2. 202-3), and the speaker of *Quips upon Questions* (1600b) who 'turns rapidly from such self-immolating verses as 'he Plays the Fool' to moral attacks like "Where's the Devil?" and "Why is he Drunk?"' (Es 2015: 180).

The world of the fool as understood by Armin was filled with violence. Jack Miller, a character in *Foole Upon Fool* (1600a), for example, attacks others and is frequently injured in his own frenzies.

> He cracks his head, scratches his face, and breaks his own leg in anger; he eats his master's hawk alive and is nearly choked by the feathers; he sets fire to the barrow that serves as his bed and then burns the faces and legs of the household. (Es 2015: 179)

Es notes the unstable and hot-blooded physical reality surrounding fools in Armin's *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a): 'they are fired at by cannon balls, stung by nettles, drugged, whipped, and burnt' (2015: 179). Armin makes an analogy between jesting and baiting

in ‘Are you There with your Bears?’ (*Quips upon Questions*). Sir Toby in *Twelfth Night* (1602) makes a similar connection when organising Malvolio’s humiliation: ‘To anger him we’ll have the bear again, and we will fool him black and blue’ (II. 5. 9-10). Es describes such moments as opening up ‘the absurd and threatening aspects of fooling’ (2015: 183). The effect of fooling is a mental unbalancing in which those who encounter the fools have their sanity questioned. Feste achieves this in his unanswerable question to Malvolio: ‘But tell me true, are you not mad indeed? or do you but counterfeit’ (IV. 2. 114-15). The fool’s logic is overwhelming and maddening.

Armin explores the relationship between madness and fooling in a section of *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) titled ‘Whers the Devill?’ which is reminiscent of the scene with Malvolio: ‘One askes me where the Devill is? Much I muse | What makes this madd man so his name to use’ (E2). The quipper’s answers are confounding, creating further confusion in the mind of the auditor. Armin achieves this through his acute sense of the semantics and rhetoric of language. The effect is to subvert the hierarchy of the speakers. By destabilising logic, Armin made it more uncertain who is mad – the fool or us.

Cockett provides a useful description of this playing energy when considering David Tennant’s performance as Touchstone for the RSC in 1996. Tennant explored the role as someone suffering from bi-polar disorder. Cockett says we can get an understanding of the performative effect of this disorder by considering the comic routines of the modern-day bi-polar comic Robin Williams: ‘the quick-fire delivery, the dizzying shifts between voices and imitations, the feeling of free association, and the wonderful sense that somehow the comic is not in full rational control of his performance’ (2006: 152). Physical violence and mental destabilisation are not a side-effect of the fool’s chaos, but are central to an explosive playing energy that is required of the actor.

Four of Armin’s major Shakespearean fool parts (Lavache, Touchstone, Feste and Lear’s Fool) are displaced professionals. The circumstances at the beginnings of these plays mean these fools are unable to operate in their normal capacities. Touchstone has followed the court into the forest of Arden; Feste’s master, Olivia’s father, has passed away; Illyria and Rossillon are in mourning; Lear has divided his kingdom and a new power structure is emerging. In different ways, the previous occupations of these fools have disappeared and they are dealing with transition. In this, their status as official fool is put in question and their identity becomes liminal.

In *A Nest of Ninnies* (1608), Armin evokes another liminality, returning repeatedly to the problem of the distinction between ‘artificial’ and ‘natural’ fools. Natural fools were identified as those who, in our terms, might suffer from mental or physical disabilities. Artificial fools were those who counterfeited or played at such behaviours. Both were employed in the royal courts and great households of the time.

Hornback in his article ‘The Fool in Quarto and Folio King Lear’ provides a useful distinction between the artificial and natural fool as they were widely understood in Armin’s time:

> The natural fool was an 'innocent' who was generally laughed at for mental deficiencies, the artificial fool distinguished himself and his fooling with his clever, bitter wit, as he provoked laughter at others. Whereas the natural fool was dependent, and consequently often depicted as sweet and pathetic even when unintentionally insulting, the artificial fool was characterised by his consistent and intentional bitterness. Similarly, while the natural was demonstrably irrational and so was often painstakingly characterised by disjointed logic, the artificial fool was just as clearly distinguished as rational by his ordered, and occasionally even artfully formal, or syllogistic, logic. (2004: 309)

We should be careful, however, not to identify the artificial fool with the wise court fool. Armin describes an artificial fool, a juggler, in unflattering terms (sig. B2v).[29] According to his definition, the natural fool is someone who lacks skills or art acquired through practice; s/he is a simple person lacking malicious intentions. The artificial fool is an individual who employs a talent for entertainment; s/he is not necessarily someone with intelligence who speaks the truth to their master or mistress. 'Natural' and 'artificial' are not terms that Armin uses necessarily to distinguish mental capability.

Armin is aware of the potential for crossover and ambiguity in such classifications. He declares on the title page that his *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) is 'written by one seeming to have his mother's wit, when some say he is filled with his father's foppery'. This phrase suggests the delicate line that Armin explored in his own fooling. He always leaves the ambiguity open, whether he is a congenital lunatic, like the subject of his six sketches, or whether he is an artful performer. His skill lay in suggesting that his foolery might be innate.

The actor David Tennant in his performance of Touchstone for the RSC's production of *As You Like It* in 1996 similarly struggled with the distinction of a natural and artificial fool. With the director he 'decided almost immediately that Touchstone was no natural' (Tennant 1998: 34). Later in the rehearsal process, however, he concluded that Touchstone suffers from bi-polar disorder. As Cockett notes, this is 'a condition that would likely have qualified him as a natural in the eyes of Shakespeare's contemporaries' (2006: 151). Similarly, in the character Tutch in his play *The History of the Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a), Armin plays with the ambiguity of natural and artificial folly. Tutch is not only 'an artificial fool in terms of his identification in the household, but also a natural fool when he assumes a disinterested communicative folly with simple and virtuous intentions' (Ishikawa 2011: 213).

In his performance of John in the Hospital in the same play, Armin wore a blue coat, a handkerchief at his girdle, and included many physical details such as a wry neck, a lame foot and a distorted hand. The performance was based on a real, well-known local man in London. The frontispiece of the published text suggests that Armin's performance was as a simple-minded, natural fool. In the same production, Armin played Tutch who

[29] This individual has been identified as Thomas Brandon, an entertainer who attended Henry VIII (Southworth 1998: 121-27).

uses clever, witty language that shows he is much more closely allied to artificial fools such as Touchstone and Feste. Towards the end of the play, Tutch disguises himself as John and is then revealed as a counterfeit. Es notes how Armin 'revels in such doubling, telling the audience "I am author of this shift, he's where he would be now, I'm where I should be too"' (2015: 181). He describes this as a moment that 'pushes the boundaries of foolish performance' (2015: 172). In this sequence, Armin created a complex layering of realities.

> Armin thus borrows from his earlier writings [John is one of the six fools of *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a)], which appropriated the performances of a mentally handicapped man, in order to stage a play in which he himself duplicates the known routines of that beloved figure, while also appearing as a witty manipulator who makes his own reputation by imitating the same natural fool. (Johnson 2003: 45)

In playing these two roles within the same play, Armin was beginning to make a new synthesis in which the binaries of folly and wisdom, natural and artificial were being dismantled. It was a performance in which he simultaneously occupied two positions. Armin's technique was to leave things open, uncertain and liminal. As Johnson describes, Armin took fooling to 'a new level by a hall of mirrors mimesis' (2003: 45).

**Principle 6: Do not to be high-minded**

The final page of *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) contains a woodcut showing a strangely dressed, shoeless man standing under a tree with four falling branches and a streamer on which is written, 'NOLI ALTUM SAPERE' (Do not be high-minded), a final piece of advice, perhaps, in response to the proverb *Altiora peto* which meant 'Go higher'.

Leslie Hotson in *Shakespeare's Motley* (1952) shows that the 'motley' of Shakespeare's fools was like a homespun or tweed, the threads of which were of divers colours and not the segments. In assessing the etymology of the word 'motley', Hotson describes how the error that took the word to mean parti-coloured gathered strength. He notes that the misunderstanding had taken root by the time Francis Douce wrote 'Dissertations on the clowns and fools of Shakespeare' (1807). Douce was misled by his studies of medieval illuminations and fifteenth century drawings; he imagined the Elizabethan fool's costume comprised the medieval hood, jerkin and long tight hose, all in parti-colour. Subsequent scholars and stage producers 'clung to a nineteenth century anachronistic picture of the Elizabethan fool in medieval costume' (Hotson 1952: 14).

Hotson says that 'in Shakespeare's mind's eye a "motley coat" was an idiot's coarse robe or childish petticoat of a mixed colour' (1952: 16). The long coat had very naturally been borrowed from the contemporary dress of children and used for 'lack-wits', those individuals with learning difficulties who were considered natural fools.

Such a garment can be seen in a portrait of Will Sommers, Henry VIII's fool (Figure B) and a portrait of Armin himself in the role of John in the Hospital (Figure C).

Figure B
*Will Sommers, Kinge Heneryes Jester* by Francis Delaram

Figure C
Robert Armin as John in the Hospital, front cover of *The History of the Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a)

Armin most likely wore such a motley coat in his performances as fools. In *King Lear*, for example, the Fool refers to himself as 'The one in motley here' (I. 4. 140). Hotson observes the significance for the actor of this fool's costume.

> By dressing this character in the coarse, unassuming robe of the lack-wit, Shakespeare gives the player an inestimable advantage. Starting under the humble guise of an ordinary idiot, a common butt and familiar laughing-stock, like the ragged little tramp of Charlie Chaplin, the 'fool' can surprise and

> delight us by deftly and unexpectantly turning the laugh on the laughers. (1952: 15)

The fool's motley was not a gaudy 'clown' costume; it was an undemonstrative vesture of humility. For Shakespeare's audience, an individual in this robe belonged to the contemporary scene. Armin was exploring the humanity of the fool; the clothing was a step towards realism. The use of such a costume was symptomatic of Armin's lack of pretentiousness and the avoidance of 'high-minded' acting choices.

The final quip of *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) provides a clear insight into this aspect of Armin's technique. He concludes: 'As what I doe, I doe not thinke too much' (F4). Despite the competition between wits in the preceding sections, in summing up the work in this way, Armin connects his technique ultimately to the realm of the anti-intellectual and the non-thinking, to instinct and impulse.

Wiles points out Armin's small physical stature and argues that he had a 'deformed body' and 'a physical affinity with dogs in particular' (1987: 148). Thersites is called a 'dog' twice and threatens Ajax's heels when threatened with a beating. Similarly, when Lear threatens the Fool with the whip, the latter retorts 'Truth's a dog that must to kennel' (*King Lear*, I. 4. 109). Butler interprets the phrase 'this poore Petite of transformation' in Armin's dedicatory epistle to 'The Italian Taylor and his Boy' (1609b) as a punning reference to Armin's stature (1983: 183). His nicknames 'Snuff' and 'Pink' are diminutives, Thersites imagines himself as a 'louse' (*Troilus and Cressida* V. 1. 6-7), Passarello means 'little sparrow, Armin's other nickname is Robin, Feste is 'not tall enough to become the function well' (*Twelfth Night*, IV. 2. 61). Hotson considers Armin's small size is indicated by his various nicknames: Pink ('a small ornamental gash or cut'), Snuff, Clown of the Curtain Theatre ('meaning "a miserable flickering candle-end of wit" that needs to be "pinked" or *snuffed* to maintain its feeble flame') (1952: 114). The preface of *The History of The Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a) shows that Armin performed with the Children of the King's revels at the private Whitefriars' theatre. He was operating as a freelance performer and moving between companies. As Wiles notes, 'Armin's appearance as an adult with a boys' company is without parallel' (1987: 148). These descriptions and employment realities indicate a humility in Armin's practice. I propose this was an intentional and necessary part of his fooling technique. To play the fool, despite its demands, requires the actor to maintain an unpretentious disposition.

**Armin's antecedents**

Lloyd Evans notes that Armin's fools have a more identifiable source than other Shakespearean characters.

> Armin […] knew far more about their typical antecedents than Burbage did of the origins of the parts he played. […] He] knew the difference between true fools and clown figures like Gobbo far more clearly than many modern

> directors of Shakespeare's plays who, following a passing mode, seem to wish to put every zany into motley. (1972: 143).

Having explored Armin's practice, I was aware that he was drawing on various traditions of fooling. Alan Hager in his essay 'Lear's Fool' identifies the major sources of inspiration for Armin's fooling as: the medieval court jester, the 'half-wit' uniformed retainers of the feudal era, the satiric poet John Skelton, the wise fool Stultitia in Erasmus' *Encomium Moriae* ('Praise of Folly', 'Praise of More', and 'Self-Praise by Folly', 1515) (Hager 1998: 289). I propose an expanded range of fooling traditions that influenced Armin's work.

Felver (1961) considers Armin's education prior to becoming an actor saying that, 'the apprentice boy must have been well-spoken, well-mannered, and soundly educated in a Grammar school' (1961: 78). Chris Sutcliffe in 'Robert Armin: Apprentice goldsmith' (1994) similarly argues that 'the young Armin may indeed have been educated, one hopes soundly, at the Lynn Grammar School, endowed by William Thoresby in 1510' (1994: 504). Considering Armin's training as a goldsmith, Sutcliffe notes,

> For the son of a tailor from the provincial town, even one as important in Tudor England as Lynn, to have been accepted as an apprentice by such a notable goldsmith, indeed that he should have been accepted by any goldsmith at all, argues that he must have been a remarkable lad – quick, intelligent, dexterous, and personable. (1994: 504)

Armin, through the course of his education and training prior to becoming an actor, would have absorbed a range of influences that spoke to his fooling technique.

Kenneth Charlton in *Education in Renaissance England* (1965) provides evidence concerning the quality and kind of education that went on in the grammar schools at the time Armin attended school. He considers school statutes, time-tables and the masters who taught, and notes that 'contact with Continental Renaissance was direct. Ersasmus' texts […] were widely recommended and used' (1965: 123). Charlton observes the importance during this period of the educational ideas of Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540), the Spanish humanist who had worked with Erasmus and who visited England regularly. Vives promoted a 'thoroughly humanistic approach to the study of the classics' and his influence 'provided much of the theoretical basis for sixteenth-century innovations in English education' (1965: 124). In addition to the Latin, Greek and Hebrew languages and literatures, students also learnt English grammar and rhetoric. Charlton observes that in one school English was taught according to literature, etymology, syntax and prosody (1965: 122). Whilst Charlton acknowledges that standards and curriculum varied extensively across England, it is likely that Armin experienced an education rich in humanist texts.

Roberta Mullini in '"These sixe parts of folly": Robert Armin's Moralising Anatomy of Fools' Jests' notes that *Nest of Ninnies* (1608) demonstrates a strong connection to the Erasmian tradition.

> Armin's language seems to come straight from the mouth of Erasmus' Stultitia or at least it shows the latter's long and powerful legacy, and to be connected to the humanist issue. […] By giving the name 'Sotto' to the main speaker of the frame in *A Nest of Ninnies*, Armin also seems aware of the French tradition of the *sottie*, and – even if it is impossible to ascertain – of Heywood's use of the term as a synonym of "fool". (2014: 29)

Taking the texts Armin wrote and performed, it seems he was skilled in Latin and language and culture, as well as French.

Considering Armin's adaption of a story from Fancesco Straparola's *Le Piacevoli Notti* (published in Venice in 1550-53) into his own poem 'The Italian Taylor and His Boy' (1609b), Equestri suggests that Armin may have worked from a version of the text in its original language of Italian (2016b: 255). Indeed, we know of no English translation of Straparola's work from this period, however, the book was available in Italian in England as is clear from the work of Painter who used one of the stories in his *Palace of Pleasure* (1566/7).[30] Referring to the work of Hotson (1952), Equestri argues that 'Armin was a member of the socially elevated craft of the goldsmiths, his family was probably wealthy enough to ensure him an excellent education, which included tuition in Italian as well as Latin' (2016b: 255).

Armin's use of Latin can be seen in Feste's retort to Olivia: '*Cucullus non facit monachum*' (The hood does not make the monk) (*Twelfth Night*, I. 5. 52-3); and in Armin's own play *The History of the Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a), Sir William Vergir says: '*Tardi venientis* Iohn, you must be whip't. | *Quaso preceptor, non est tibi quid*' (You are late, John, you must be whipped. As your teacher I cannot do anything for you) (Liddie 1979: Sc 6. 137-8). His own publications include snatches of Latin, including several of their front covers. 'The Italian Taylor and his Boy' (1609b), for example, includes on the title page an inscription taken from Ovid's *Heroides* '*res est solliciti plena timoris amor*' (I. 12, 'love is a thing full of anxious fears'). In his prologue to 'The Italian Taylor and His Boy' praises the classics: 'Ovid and Virgill for the Penn, | Homer for his Verse: Plautus, Horace, worthy men' (Armin 1609: sig. B1v).

Equestri has shown Armin's indebtedness to a range of narrative poems including George Turberville's *Tragicall Tales* (1576), Arthur *Brooks's The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Juliet* (1562), Edward *Lewicke's The Most Wonderfull and Pleasant History of Titus and Gisippus* (1562), Christopher Tye's *A Notable Historye of Nastagio and Trauersari* (1569) and Thomas Achelley's *Violenta and Dindaco* (1576) (2016: 268). These texts contain a preface in which the reader is told how the author discovered these stories as well as providing allusions to Classical literature. Armin uses similar devices in his own publications.

Classical and contemporary literary references were clearly important to Armin. He included in *A Nest of Ninnies* (1608) a new paratextual item, an introductory letter 'To

[30] Feather (1972) provides this insight in his introduction to *The Italian Taylor and his Boy* (1609b).

the most true and rightly compleat in all good gifts and graces, the generous gentlemen of Oxenford, Cambridge, and the Innes of Court'. As Wiles observes, this dedication 'establishes the work as a bid for intellectual recognition' (2005: 140). Armin considered his work as belonging to European literary traditions.

Earlier in his career, Armin worked among 'the common pamfletters of London' (Preiss 2008: 214). Although none of these publications survive, Preiss notes that the pamphlet writer's world was one of 'rapid-fire skirmishes where today's attacker was tomorrow's prey, where the power of utterance to outpace its speaker also made it vulnerable to returning carved into ridicule or perverted into character assassination' (2008: 214). This work would have trained Armin's facility with language.

> Armin the pamphleteer would have been attuned to the anxiety of controlling the circulation and reception of a persona that instantly became public domain, and poised to appreciate the tactical value of an idiom whose every locution anticipated, contained and thereby disarmed a counterfactual response. Under such paranoid conditions, the best defence was a calculated schizophrenia. (2008: 214)

Within his formative experiences as a writer, we can see the seeds of Armin's performance technique.

Despite his literary ambitions, however, Armin was remembered as a performer rather than a writer. In the records of his burial he is called 'ffree of the Gouldsmithes and a Player' (Belfield 1980: 159). Contemporaries associated Armin's work with older fooling traditions. Jane Belfield in her article 'Robert Armin, Citizen and Goldsmith of London' (1980) notes how Armin's fooling heritage was understood by his contemporaries:

> In the second part of *Tarlton's Jests*, which was entered in the Stationers' Register on 4 August 1600, there is a tale of 'How Tarlton made Robert Armin his adopted sonne, to succeed him'. This tells how Tarlton took an interest in the boy's natural talent for rhyming, how Armin grew up to follow in his footsteps as a great comic actor, and that 'at the Globe on the Banks side men may see him'. (1980: 158)

The story tells how Armin as a boy went to collect a debt from the manager of Tarlton's tavern, who refuses to pay. Armin chalks a verse graffito mocking the debtor's poverty on a wainscot. Tarlton, on reading the rhyme, admires its wit so much that he writes a reply: 'A wagge thou art, none can preuent thee; | And thy desert shall content thee … As I am, so in time thou'lt be the same, | My adopted sonne therefore be, | To enjoy my Clownes sute after me'. We are then told how Armin loved Tarlton so much after this that he 'used to his Playes, and fell in league with his humour'. Armin became Tarlton's protégé and 'private practice brought him to present playing' (Preiss 2014: 193). Preiss observes that this is a strange story to include in a publication 'premised on Tarlton's uniqueness, subjecting him to replication that potentially renders the book itself

obsolete' (2014: 193). It is possible that Armin had a hand in *Tarlton's Jests*,[31] indeed he may have been its author and used it as an opportunity for self-promotion.

Kemp had also been connected with Tarlton. Thomas Nash dedicated *An Almond for a Parot* (1590) to Kemp, calling him 'Iestmonger and Vice-gerent general to the Ghost of Dicke Tarlton'. It seems that association with the name Tarlton had value for these comic performers. Alexandra Halasz explores the use of Tarlton's name in her article '"So beloved that men used his picture for their signs": Richard Tarlton and the Uses of Sixteenth-Century Celebrity'.

> Tarlton's death [in 1588] makes his name available as a signifier for the activities in which he once supposedly engaged. The representation of Tarlton or the use of his name is imbued with a nostalgia for his performance at the same time as that representation becomes the means of advancing other interests. (1995: 22)[32]

As Preiss notes, the story of Armin's connection to Tarlton 'posits a hereditary structure to clowning' (2014: 193) but it remains unclear when, or even if, the two ever met.

> The intimacy of mentorship, likewise, devolves into the solitude of that curious phrase 'private practice'. [ …] How does one 'practice' clowning privately, when its fundamental prerequisite is an audience? Can one rehearse spontaneous wit? […] It wants to naturalize and validate Armin's theatrical lineage, yet it does the opposite: even in his myth of origin, it is precisely his origin that is questioned. (2014: 193)

Whoever was responsible for the inclusion of this story in *Tarlton's Jests* (1613), it was done to connect Armin with older performance traditions. Armin himself makes an association with Tarlton in *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) when he fields a question 'Where's Tarlton?'. Here Armin verbalises both himself (as Foole) and the questioner (as Asse). After a sequence of absurd exchanges quibbling over the existence of Tarlton in his name's letter, the repartee results in the Foole's declaration that 'But, where's Tarlton? whers his name alone? His name is here.' As Preiss observes, 'here' would signify the theatre and Armin's mouth (2008: 221), and so Armin merges with the identity of Tarlton.

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[31] Anonymous 1613, 1620 and 1638. The Stationers' Register contains an entry in the name of Thomas Pavier titled *Second Part of Tarlton's Jest* and dated 1600.

[32] In her analysis of the various uses of an association with Tarlton's identity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Halasz notes it was connected with the pleasures of quick wittedness, and free and uninhibited speech. She also observes how Tarlton becomes both a celebrity and a representative figure who crosses the boundaries of class and space/geography (1995: 31-2). In this, Halasz argues that 'the figure of Tarlton seems to promise both the recognition and reward of talent with status' (1995: 34). She presents a process in which Tarlton was constructed as a figure of national identity based on a nostalgia for a particular image of Elizabethan England: 'That image of England ruled by a queen who listens to and is comforted by a man of the people […and which] functions reparatively in the years of the disintegrating commonwealth and anticipates a restoration in which the pleasures of consumption in the marketplace are indistinguishable from subscribing to an historic Englishness' (1995: 35).

Johnson explores how Armin plays within the myth of his own origins in *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a). In earlier stories of fools' origins, kidnapping and coercion played an important role. Tarlton, for example, was discovered working in the Shopshire fields by the Earl of Leicester, according to one apocryphal story recorded by Robert Fuller (Billington 1986: 35). The Earl then brought Tarlton to the Queen and so launched his career. As Johnson notes, this story reflects a real economic phenomenon known as 'fool hunting':

> The 'natural fool' could become the ward of anyone who stepped up to take care of him. In the case of the mentally handicapped who possessed property themselves, this policy led to overt exploitation, as 'caretakers' acquired the rights to that property by claiming to look after those who seemed unable to care for themselves. (Johnson 2003: 29)

Armin provides a description in *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) of the interaction between a touring comic performer called Grumball in Lord Chandos' Players (that is likely to be Armin himself) and a local foolish man called Jack Miller. Jack loves the performer so much that he has to be stopped from following the troupe out of town. Armin uses the story to testify to his own comic charisma. McDonagh in his *Idiocy: A Cultural History* notes Armin's clever reversal in this story.

> Jack Miller's desire to emulate Grumball, his belief that this artificial fool, Grumball/Armin, is the epitome of his class, reverses the traditional vector of influence: instead of the 'artificial' fool modelling himself on the 'natural', the 'natural' fool, recognising his social role, looks to the theatre entertainer as his exemplar. (2008: 142)

Johnson shows it is Armin's representation of Jack in *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) that will be passed on and make a profit and that therefore Armin 'stands guilty of a kind of kidnapping' (2003: 37). Armin functions as a fool hunter, building his own identity as an actor and author when he performs the fools' parts and retells their exploits in his publications. Referring to Johnson (2003: 37-8), Equestri says, 'He symbolically kidnapped the living natural fools from the "public property of mirth" and used them to make money with his writings (2016b: 257). As a result, Armin becomes to his audience 'more real as a fool than the fool himself' (Johnson 2003: 41). Equestri notes a parallel in the narrative of Armin's 'The Italian Taylor and His Boy' (1609b) in which the apprentice steals the Tailor's art of necromancy. She observes a link between 'Armin's intellectual attitude and the apprentice's road to success' (2016b: 257). These themes in Armin's work represent a reversal of origins myths in which Armin becomes the one who abducts the fool away rather than the one who is taken. They also reflect a dimension of Armin's practice in which, I propose, rather than stealing and kidnapping, he looked to life for inspiration and sought to embody the fool in ways that were filled with real life. This is a standard part of any artist's practice.

John Astington in 'The Succession of Sots, or Fools and Their Fathers' (2007) argues that what Tarlton admired in Armin was his ability to improvise in verse, and that an aptitude for verbal wit and inventiveness cannot fundamentally be taught. Astington

suggests that training in improvisation is a contradiction in terms and unpicks the idea of a hereditary line from one performer to another. He suggests instead that singing rhymes, jigs and ballads were popular forms that Armin would have absorbed aurally as well as through reading.

> The essential principles of all such forms are regular simple rhythms and repeated phrases, or refrains, in song and verse. If one is using them to be funny, one looks for surprising or outrageous conjunctions or words, phrases, and ideas, or indeed looks to point the way, so that the audience can see the punch line or clinching rhyme word coming. Such techniques were available to anyone, and were employed in lampoons, libels, and mocking games in provincial and rural England as much as on the metropolitan stages. (2007: 232)

Astington describes the influence of common forms of social humour: 'jokes, mockery, and irony, both sweet and bitter' which would have surrounded Armin. He proposes that famous Elizabethan fools adopted stage careers as creative adults on their own account and after 'a great deal of developmental activity' that must have gone on particularly in their teens: 'The fool's training was rooted in vernacular and communal life, and partly "picked up on a street"' (2007: 232). The importance of the skill of rhyming is noted in a section of *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) titled 'Do it, and dallie not' (E4). The quipper notes that the skilful use of it is praiseworthy: 'You rime well in your reason, do ye not?', but that poor rhyming can result in ridicule: 'Because you mocke me for one simple Rime' (E3). It is clear from this section of Armin's work that a performer could stand or fall according to the success or otherwise of his/her rhymes. Indeed, the whole of *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) is a product of Armin's pride in his witty and playful facility with language. This was central to his identity as a performer and to his fooling technique.

A skill in rhyming may be acquired from one's childhood background, it may be an innate personality trait, or may be developed during adulthood from social encounters in which quick fire banter is required. It is not something that in the sixteenth century could obviously be studied or taught. Astington acknowledges that what Armin may have read, however, is worth considering. Not only did Armin possess the right kind of natural intelligence, his work demonstrates rhetorical and intellectual sophistication. He was highly literate. As Astington notes, Armin 'lived in a place where reading material was readily available' (2007: 232).

James Black in his essay 'Shakespeare's Mystery of Fooling' (1984) has identified a fool training tradition in *King Lear* (1606). In I. 4, after Kent and Lear have been 'hired' as fools by the Fool, the Fool continues with what would normally follow in an apprenticeship association, a training programme: 'I'll teach thee a speech' (113). The Fool turns a number of his exchanges with Lear into aptitude tests for the role of fool:

> FOOL The reason why the seven stars are no more than seven is a pretty reason.
> LEAR Because they are not eight?

FOOL Yes indeed, thou wouldst make a good Fool.
(I. 5. 33-35)

As Black observes, 'It is as if, in the Fool's eyes, Lear's answer has indicated a satisfactory level of aptitude or attainment in fooling' (1984: 97). It is a training that may include corporal punishment: 'If thou wert my fool, nuncle, I'd have thee beaten for being old before thy time' (I. 5. 38). Black goes on to note the conditions of employment: 'The king is a shadow of himself and, having a little tiny wit, must make content with his fortunes fit' (1984: 97, echoing Feste and the Fool's song in III. 2. 73-75). From the third act, Lear has become the inheritor of the Fool's 'living and speaker of reason in madness' (1984: 98) and so he begins to understand what the Fool always knew, that world is actually a 'great stage of fools' (IV. 7. 178). The training to be a fool, as exemplified by Lear's journey through the play, is harsh and profound.

In the twentieth century, the clown Grock described his training and relationship with tradition:

> Your clown, just as much as any other artist, is the product of tradition. Just as a painter knows how to use the experience of countless forerunners, just as the author who *is* an author largely owes his existence to the pioneer work of those who have gone before and influenced him, so every clown that is worth his salt is but carrying on the torch handed him by all the eminent clowns who proceeded him or who work with him still. […]
>
> Umberto Guillaume, who goes by the name of Antonet, a leading clown of the Cirque de Paris, was my teacher. (Wettach 1931: 226-27)

I propose that Armin with all his natural ability, like Grock, also worked in relationship to performance traditions. Wiles says that Armin was 'as well attuned to Renaissance notions of folly as to the English folk traditions' (2005: 136). His technique drew on various readings of the fool: fool as an innocent, fool as a degenerate, fool as a vehicle for satire, fool as a Lord of Misrule, fool as a rustic clown, fool as a court jester, fool as a professional actor, fool as universal human characteristic. Armin's technique, whilst being innovative, was also historically informed. As Roberta Mullini notes in her essay 'Playing the Fool: the Pragmatic Status of Shakespeare's Clown': 'cultural cross-currents meet in the figure of the court fool: the tradition of carnival buffoons and of the market place players being grafted onto the insane children of nature' (1985: 99).

It has felt important to investigate the traditions which influenced Armin. I have wanted to know what intellectual frameworks and performance traditions he used. In order to understand the full range of cultural cross-currents that informed Armin's work, my survey begins with the origins of the word 'fool' in classical European languages and continues through to the sixteenth century. I refer to Armin's practice in the following sections occasionally in order to show how the historical influences manifested in Armin's art. I have also included sources of inspiration for my own fooling practice in the twenty-first century.

## Etymologies and definitions

The *OED* notes the origins of the word 'fool' from the Latin *follem*, *follis* meaning 'bellows', and by extension in late popular Latin 'empty-headed person', 'wind-bag'. The word's etymology gives us an embodied sense of the fool that focuses on the breath. It is interesting to speculate if Armin was aware of this when he began to develop his multiple fool voices and if this led to him developing a fooling breath technique.

The more familiar definitions of the fool according to the *OED* are:

1. One deficient in judgement or sense, one who acts or behaves stupidly, a silly person, a simpleton.
2. One who professionally counterfeits folly for the entertainment of others, a jester, clown.
3. One who is made to appear a fool; one who is imposed on by others; a dupe.
4. One who is deficient in, or destitute of reason or intellect; a weak-minded or idiotic person.

The *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* (Merriam-Webster 2005) adds:

5. One with a marked propensity or fondness for something; e.g. a dancing fool; a fool for candy.

The third meaning here is the only definition in the passive voice. The *OED* also notes the usage of the word in some key phrases: To be a fool to (to be every way inferior to, to be as nothing compared to), to play the fool (to act the part of a fool or jester, to act like a fool), to make a fool of (to make someone appear as in sense 1), to put the fool on (archaic, to make someone appear as in sense 1), to be a fool for one's pains (to have one's labour for nothing). There are a variety of collective nouns that have been used for fools including: company, parliament, ship, bassinet, bunch, rush, cabinet, fare, nest, pack, party, Armageddon, parade and fooliaminy.[33] William Empson in *The Structure of Complex Words* (1977) described the development of the word 'fool' in the English language. He identified a range of original meanings and nuances from the thirteenth century onwards as follows:

1. mocked (early)
2. brash, ready to talk (derivation)
3. innocent, inexperienced
4. childish
5. duped (made a fool of) (1440)
6. loved and pitied as dependent (1503?)
7. clown, professional jester and mocker (1370)
8. knave, obstinately and viciously stupid person (biblical)

[33] Sourced from <http://all-sorts.org/nouns/fools>, Sparkes (1975) and various personal anecdotes from my collaborators shared during training sessions.

9. weak-minded or idiotic person (1540)

(1977: 111)

By the time of the Elizabethans, however, the word had taken as its subject the imbecile or clown. Empson noted that the accompanying attitudes were severe and included: one treats them harshly; their condition is somehow their fault; one treats them as tame pets, we laugh at them; they laugh at us, and are critics; they are mad; they speak from outside ordinary life; they are privileged; they impose a situation of mutual mockery; they tell the plain truth which no one else tells.

In exploring the ways the lunatic and the fool are distinguishable, Empson noted that none of Shakespeare's tragic figures who go mad, except Lear, is called 'fool' by others. Nonetheless, there is a clear synergy between these two words. He argued that lunatics are always liable to say funny things, and fools are always liable to make others think that they are half-imbecilic. Both types have a magical aura around them; both were outside society and therefore in touch with wild forces or in a position to criticise society as aliens. Empson also noted the interchangeable use of the word 'fool' in Elizabethan slang with words such as 'rogue' and 'dog' as terms of abuse. This is evident in Shakespeare where, for example, Curtis in *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590-92) attacks Grumio with the phrase 'Away, you three-inch fool!' (IV. 1. 24). Patroclus calls Thersites 'you rogue' (V. 1. 14) in *Toilus and Cressida* (1602). Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-99) complains to Antonio that 'Thou call'dst me dog' (III. 3. 6), meaning 'You insult me'.

The term 'knave' is another Elizabethan insult which was used in connection to fools. On the Fool's first entrance in *King Lear* (1606), for example, he is addressed as 'my pretty knave' (I. 4. 95). Lavache's playing in *All's Well That Ends Well* (1598?) keeps us guessing as to which he is:

> LAFEW Whether dost thou profess thyself – a knave or a fool?
> CLOWN A fool, sir, at a woman's service, and a knave at a man's. […]
> LAFEW I will subscribe for thee; thou art both knave and fool.
>
> (IV. 5. 21-31)

Distinguishing the clown and the fool from the knave, Thomson argues that 'the knave is fully engaged in the plot, and that engagement limits the range of his comedy' (2004: 422-23), whereas the clown and fool have varying degrees of separateness from the plot. The identity of Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale* (1610/11) exists on the threshold of fool/knave. He is a 'snapper-up of unconsidered trifles' and lives on a 'silly cheat' (IV. 3. 26-28). Ishikawa has argued that he contains both fool and knave and notes this as a development in Shakespeare's writing for the fool in this later play (2011: 246). Thomson similarly observes a transition from clown to fool to knave in Armin's work culminating in the role of Autolycus. He considers Lucio in *Measure for Measure* (1603/04) as belonging to the category of knave and speculates if this role should also be attributed to Armin (2004: 422-23). Alice Equestri has explored in detail the knave tradition in relation to Armin's work in *'Armine… thou art a foole and a knave': The fools of Shakespeare's Romances* (2016a), noting an increasing quality of bawdiness, roguery

and the underworld in the later major comic roles. She argues that Pompey in *Measure for Measure*, Boult in *Pericles* (1607?), Cloten in *Cymbeline* (1611), and Caliban in *The Tempest* (1611) were all Armin's roles on this basis.

The fool becomes a knave, we could argue, when s/he flouts the orders of his/her master/mistress. This is well expressed by Sir William in *The History of the Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a) when he attacks Tutch with the line 'your knave, they shuffle ye about, ile deale the cards and cut ye from the deck' (DIV). As Thomson describes, the property of the knave card, which is also known as 'the jack', is its capacity for mischief. The knave in folk tales may steal some tarts but there is also 'a naïvety in his behaviour' (2004: 421). Using Middleton's *The Changeling* (c.1622) as an example of a play that involves knaves at the centre of its plot, Thomson points out that 'the *locus classicus* of the knave is not Shakespearean' (2004: 423). What is key for Armin, however, is that whilst the knave was not the same as a fool, the fool could be knavish and vice versa.[34] We can see this in a section of *Quips Upon Questions* titled 'Whats a clock?'. Here Armin uses the name 'Jack' as an insult, dismissing someone who asks him the time and who therefore implies he is a lowly clock keeper: 'He is a Iacke to think so' (1600b: C3).

Empson proposed the modern use of 'fool' gets its power 'from a suggestion of nausea, which is the stock reaction to the presence of a lunatic' (1977: 110). Whilst I do not accept that revulsion is the only response to a lunatic, the word 'fool' does have an emotive quality that can invoke condescension, irony and distaste. Willeford in his doctoral thesis provides a useful understanding of the definition of the word 'fool': 'there is a widespread form of human experience that conveniently accords with the English word "fool" as it has come down to us, embracing as it does several subsidiary meanings with parallels in languages and traditions other than our own' (1967: 3).

Enid Welsford's *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (1935) is an important study of the figure. She provides the earliest definition of a fool by St. Chrysostom (c. 349 – 407 CE) who states that the fool is 'he who gets slapped' (1935: 314).[35] In Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1606), the Fool refers to receiving many blows (I. 4. 174-76). There is a reported event in which Goneril's gentleman chides the Fool (I. 3. 1-2). Lear's response

[34] Having noted that the knave was rarely '"heavy" enough to be a villain', Thomson also argues that the shift from fool to knave represented a decline in the theatrical and philosophical significance of the folly in Stuart London. With the work of Ben Jonson, for example, the actors 'do not so much share folly with as expose folly to the audience. Foolishness has become shameful, and the Jacobean comedian must accommodate himself to satire' (2004: 423).

[35] Although Welsford states that this is a fundamental definition, she does not reference where in John Chrysostom's writings this appears. Welborn in *Paul, the Fool of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1-4 in the Comic-philosophic Tradition* attributes the quote to Chrysostom's *Poenit* 4.3 (Welborn 2005: 70n; referencing Migne (1864) PG 59, col. 760). Writing homilies in Greek as an Early Church Father during the late fourth and early fifth centuries, Chrysostom describes the fool as one who is 'slapped at public expense'. Welborn, referring to the writings of Martial and Juvenal as examples, notes that 'descriptions of the fool being beaten or slapped, and references to such scenes in literature, are so numerous as almost to defy reference' (2005: 70). The phrase 'he who is slapped' has been used much in relation to clowning and physical comedy. The Russian playwright Leonid Andreyev (1871-1919), for example, adopts it for the title of his play set in a circus, *He Who Gets Slapped* (2007).

is to strike the gentleman. Goneril finds this humiliating and as a result, she locks her father out in the storm. This precipitates his madness and so unfolds the rest of the tragedy. According to the norms of Goneril and her society, it is no offence for a gentleman to abuse a fool.

In the comic world, violence is not exclusively experienced by fools. Those who are familiar with circus clowns will have seen a number of routines in which performers smack each other with escalating violence and all for the audience's delight. Much slapstick and the work of performers such as Laurel and Hardy, Charlie Chaplin and, more recently, Lee Evans are based on this physical abuse. The threat of violence is often present for those who stimulate laughter.

Vicky Janik in her introduction to *Fools and Jesters in Literature, Art, and History: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook* (1998) has considered the etymologies of terms such as fool, clown, harlequin, jester, joker, buffoon, trickster, vice, and even devil and demon. She divides 'the fool' into two categories according to their motivation and behaviour, according to the innocence or wilfulness of their folly. Janik then subdivides these categories into two subgroups based on two criteria: the fool's perception and acknowledgement of his/her own weaknesses or desires, and the fool's perception and acknowledgement of the weaknesses or desires of those around him/her. This produces four categories of fools:

1. **The wise fool**
   A. perceives and acknowledges his own weaknesses and desires.
   B. perceives and acknowledges the weaknesses and desires of others.
2. **The dupe or victim**
   A. perceives and acknowledges his own desires.
   B. does not perceive the weaknesses and desires of others.
3. **The trickster or evildoer**
   A. does not perceive his own weaknesses.
   B. perceives and acknowledges weaknesses and desires in others.
4. **The innocent or holy fool**
   A. does not perceive his own weaknesses and desires.
   B. does not perceive the weaknesses and desires of others.

(Janik 1998: 3)

Using these definitions, Janik includes a range a figures under the title 'fool'. She then provides a list of characteristics that generally apply to all these fools: fools dress and have a body shape which is identifiable and different from the norm, fools refuse identification of their place in time or space; fools are on the margin of their world; fools are difficult to define because they not only point out paradox, but they themselves hold contradicting, vacillating opinions; fools refuse to discover or join the order of their surroundings; fools often have unusual powers characterised by primitivism and magic; fools are the centre of sexual and alimentary activity; fools have strikingly unusual speech that is different from that of the rest of society (1998: 4-13).

Janik's work is useful in the way it categorises the different types of folly figures. It encouraged me to keep open in my practice to inspiration from clowns, bouffons, tricksters and other such figures. The wideness of her definition of 'the fool' reminded me of Stultitia's warning about the absurdity of a definition of foolishness in Erasmus' *In Praise of Folly* (1515). Stultitia begins her text with an instruction to the reader that she will not accept definition or division of herself. Nonetheless, Stultitia's whole text that follows is a classically structured oration, paradoxically bringing us understanding as to the nature of folly. I noted that Armin moved across Janik's categories, sometimes performing as an innocent and at other times taking inspiration from the 'evildoer'. I observed the centrality of the 'wise fool' in his work and that Armin's technique was something different from the clowns who had gone before. As I trained, I began to understand more clearly that fooling is not the same as clowning, for example. Like Armin, my fooling practice allowed me to borrow from the techniques of other comic figures but it had its own quality. The distinctiveness of my approach to the fool was to be found in a particular use of the actor's breath; to rephrase Janik – to breathe in the folly of oneself and to breathe out the folly of others.

In addition to etymological and literary insights, I wanted to explore whether there was a visual definition of the fool and so I sourced an extensive range of fool images. I gathered images that were contemporary with or predated Armin, were either titled with the word 'fool' or contained one of several set visual motifs (e.g. cap and bells, marotte, motley), and came from an English or European context. I was interested to learn about the appearance of the fool as Armin may have understood the figure. Initially, I had hoped to source all fool images that Armin may have seen or were known within his culture. Gradually I realised this was impossibly ambitious. Furthermore, it was difficult to maintain consistent criteria for inclusion or exclusion of images in this bank. For example, the Medici family in Florence had assembled a significant collection by the seventeenth century of live individuals and artefacts of deviant and marginal figures. Many of these paintings and sculptures were assembled for the exhibition 'Jesters, Villains and Players at the Medici Court' at Galleria D'Arte Moderna di Palazzo Pitti (Bisceglia, Ceriana and Mammana 2016). Some of these were labelled as fools. The nomenclature of fool-type figures is problematic and challenged the boundaries of what this image bank should contain.

This said, the images I gathered have confirmed that there was no single visual representation of a fool either in their physical appearance, clothing, footwear, gestures, context or performance. It is not possible to say simply what a fool looked like or did at the time of Armin. The images support insights from written sources showing that the phenomenon of the fool manifested in diverse ways.

I then began to develop the bank of images as an exercise in what other people label 'fool' and how they understand folly. As a result, the collection now contains images from a broader range of periods and cultures. Currently I have 645 images in digital format.[36] Some of these images have informed my practice and have been integrated

[36] This collection is viewable at <https://pin.it/teowcpslpgbc7b>.

into my work in a studio. They have helped to stimulate my imagination as an actor, informing my sense of what a modern-day fool might be.

## The origins of fools

The nineteenth-century folklorist, William Clouston in his *The Book of Noodles: Stories of Simpletons; or, Fools and their Follies* noted the universality of fools: 'It seems to have been common to most countries, from very ancient times, for the inhabitants of a particular district, town, or village to be popularly regarded as pre-eminently foolish, arrant noodles or simpletons' (1888: Chapter II). His work drew attention to the fool's existence within a community of fellow fools. He provided examples from both within and outside of Europe.

Enid Welsford (1935) in her already-cited work on fools gives examples from Europe, the Middle East, East Asia and Africa. She says the history of the fool begins in the royal court of Ancient Egypt:

> The history of the court-fool, if we may include the physically abnormal under that heading, may be said to open with the arrival of a mysterious pygmy called the Danga at the court of Dadkeri-Assi, a Pharaoh of the Fifth Dynasty. Whether the Pharaohs kept real madmen in their courts, I do not know, but it is evident from their tombstones that they loved to surround themselves with ugly dwarfs, who were apparently usually buffoons, but sometimes had confidential positions in the household, the dwarf Knumhotpu, whose statue still exists in Gizeh, being, for instance, a superintendent of the royal linen. However, the Danga (the name is tribal not personal) was probably valued chiefly as a curiosity; the entertainment afforded by his wild appearance and extravagant posturing being much enhanced by the fact that he had been purchased in Puanit, and therefore hailed from these mysterious lands to the south of the country which Egyptians regarded as 'ten leagues beyond man's life', shadowy regions inhabited by ghosts and talking serpents. (1935: 56)

Welsford argues this is the earliest known record of a fool and this Egyptian account takes us as far back as we can go historically in the fool's origins.

Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (1955-58) indexes in six volumes a wide variety of texts by their structures and is considered the international key to traditional material. It contains a large number of stories and traditions in it about the fool and fool-types. Fools themselves form one of the 23 major sections of this catalogue. Within almost 50,000 patterns, fool or foolish behaviour accounts for 454 of these.

More recently, Beatrice Otto in *Fools are Everywhere* (2007) provides an extensive study of the figure and argues for the universality of fools. She states,

> The evidence points to his having existed across the globe and across history, in most major civilisations of the world and many minor ones. And while there

> was certainly cross-fertilisation within, let us say, the European tradition, by and large he seems to have arisen spontaneously and independently within societies without their necessarily being aware of his existence elsewhere, suggesting that he fulfils a deep and widespread social need. (Otto 2007: XVII)

Otto provides examples of fools across a range of centuries from China, England, Scotland, France, Spain, Italy, Senegal, North America, Ancient Greece and Rome, Siam, Germany, India, Persia, Uganda, Russia, Ireland, the Vatican, Egypt, Central America, the Ottoman Empire, Holland, Bohemia, Siberia, Sudan, Mexico and more.

Clouston, Weslford, Thompson and Otto's work is problematic. They borrow uncritically from a range of cultures and they do not define precisely what is meant by 'fool'. Their work suffers from the issue noted in my Introduction; they use the term 'fool' as a catch-all phrase for a range of figures.

C. Todd White in his 'Anthropology of Fools' considers the psychological and sociological patterns of comic enactment as articulated by Julian Steward in 'The Ceremonial Buffoon of the American Indians' (1931) and *The Clown in Native North America* (1921). Todd White notes 'the innate psychological trait of laughter' and the work of sociologists to describe 'the sanctions and taboos that act to either stifle or incite laughter' (1998: 33). He concludes that these are 'universal themes' and that in exploring them 'we will gain a better understanding of how culture and society influence "what is laughable", and, through the process, we may use our perceptions of the fool on the outside to better discern, laugh at, and learn from the fool that is within' (1998: 39, quoting Steward 1931: 187). Here I have been reminded of the importance of laughter in Armin's vision of fools as is portrayed in a section of *Quips Upon Questions* titled 'Two Fooles well met'. Armin describes how two fools, having met, pointed at each other and then engaged in 'laughing a good to see each others faces' (1600b: B2). Todd White observes, nonetheless, that vocabulary such as 'jester, clown, and comic are rare in the indexes of the works that these fields produce' (1998: 33). The term 'fool' similarly remains unconsidered, ill-defined and awaiting further study.

Concerning the 'Tradition of the Fool', Weimann in *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition* argues the Shakespearean fool can be traced back to the mimic fool or *stupidus* in early Greek and Roman drama (1978: 11).

> Through all these transformations [over the centuries] the type retains not simply a continuity of attitude but a dramatic consistency that is associated with a particular social, verbal, and special position which in turn reinforces a special relationship between the play world and the real world. (1978: 11-12)

Weimann notes the dramatic function of the fool is to provide a perspective that counterpoints the attitudes of the heroic and romantic characters. Fools achieve this through their strong capacity of audience awareness, anachronism and social criticism. They reject the assumptions of the 'mythic or heroic theme in favour of the common sense attitude of a plebeian or secularised audience' (1978: 13-14).

Accepting the problem of such universalism, writers like Otto point to some performance traditions which Armin felt connected to. As Johnson shows, Armin understood himself in relation to a range of 'merry-makers' who were:

> Communal figures, informal performers, signifiers of generosity that got rewarded by nothing but pleasure. Finding their exploits merry, or maintaining them as household entertainers, meant an endless series of occasions in which the household, the lord, the queen, or the town displayed its own magnanimity, its willingness to give away time, food, affection. (2003: 40)

Armin's epistles to his readers and other paratexts that accompany his publications show how important it was to him that he was seen in the tradition of the figure who gives communal pleasure. As he states on the title page of *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b), he was 'more desirous to please in it, than to profit by it'.

## Classical antecedents

Armin's humanist education and the literature available to him in London as he wrote and performed, were strongly influenced by ancient Greek and Roman culture. His intellectual references were classical. William Sclater, a contemporary of Armin's, understood that natural fools went back at least as far as classical times: 'the delight which we commonly take in innocents, which were kept in auncient times by great men, partly for spectacles of horror and humility; partly for charity'.[37] This section considers the fool in those early periods.

The first history of fools in English is John Doran's *The History of Court Fools* (1858). His work is indebted to Karl Friedrich Flögel's *Geschichte der Hofnarren* (1789) (The History of Court Fools).[38] Doran explores classical Greek and Roman mythology and notes the presence of a fooling god in their pantheons. Mercury helps to create the first fools on earth and Momus has the role of joker of the gods. Margery L. Brown identifies Hephaestus, Hermes and Prometheus as 'Jesters to the Gods' (1998: 237). She notes that, although powerful gods, they choose to play the fool when direct confrontation will not work. According to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Book 11. 308), Hermes fathers Autolycus who can make 'black look like white and white black'. Autolycus becomes a trickster thief and is the namesake of Armin's role in *The Winter's Tale* (1610/11).

Doran also describes the variety of fool types attendant upon the heroes and philosophers of antiquity. These he divides into several categories:

- *scurra* (a jester or buffoon)
- storytellers
- players
- boasting pedagogues

[37] *A Key to the Key of Scripture* (1611), sig. H4, referenced in Hotson (1952, 99).
[38] This was published in German and is not available in English translation.

- maintainers of paradox
- *morio* (a monstrous imbecile)
- parasites
- slaves
- (comic) poets
- wits.

The Greco-Roman world contained a variety of figures who would receive abuse as part of entertainment. An early study of a fool-like character's profession is found in Athenaeus' *The Sophists at Dinner* (early third century CE). This describes the most famous gate-crashers who haunted wealthy houses in the Hellenic world. He tells us that the term 'parasite' was applied to the associates of priests and magistrates. They attended banquets not by right but by special invitation. By the time of the Middle and New Comedy, the term was being applied in a more degrading sense to those whose position was due to their impudence. According to Welsford, they were classified according to the method they used for gaining free meals:

> Some of them were merely flatterers and with them we are not concerned; others made themselves welcome by a talent for mimicry, repartee, etc. and were practically identical with that type of buffoon whom the Greeks called γελωτοποιός, laughter-maker, and not always easily distinguished from other entertainers such as the πλάνος, clown, comic actor, and the θανματοποιός, conjuror, juggler, acrobat.
>
> Parasites and laughter-makers abounded at the courts of Philip and Alexander and other rich potentates of the Hellenic world. (1935: 4)

In *Stichus, or the Parasite Rebuffed* (200 BCE), the Roman playwright Plautus similarly portrays parasites as beggars or low-life characters looking to earn a good meal, some of whom pay for the food with witticisms (Welsford 1935). Aaron W. Godfrey in his essay 'Plautus' Clowns' notes the influence of Atellan farces, and the Old and New Comedies of ancient Greece on Plautus' portrayal of these parasite figures. He observes their dramatic function as fools:

> In these plays a slave or parasite usually plays the fool because it would be unsuitable for a (Roman) citizen of property to be the obvious butt of jokes or to behave with amoral trickery and self-interested carnality and gluttony. It was not proper for an adult Roman male to be frivolous, at least in public. (1998: 345)

In Plautus's plays, the parasites are catalysts for the play's action. This, according to Godfrey, is 'a conventional fool function' (1998: 346). Considering the opening scene of the play *Mostellaria*, Godfrey notes a further aspect of fooling.

> The scatological language, the violent physicality, and the hyperbolic name calling emphasise the physical, fleshly realm of the fool. The sober Roman world of reason thus temporarily loses its power. (1998: 347)

For Plautus, the parasite causes laughter by admitting his own desires whilst bringing an awareness of the failings of other characters.

In the Roman Empire, it was customary for wealthy men to keep slaves with mental and physical disabilities for the purpose of entertainment. They were known as '*mariones*', '*stulti*' and '*fatui*', words which all meant 'idiot' or 'imbecile'. Welsford (1935) identifies these figures as the classical antecedents of the European fool. She argues that the origins of the fool are to be found in the scapegoats and mascots of the rich and powerful in Greek and Roman society.

The Elizabethans and Jacobeans made an association between parasites and fools. John Marston's *Parasitaster or the Fawn* (1604 - 1606), for example, targets corrupting flattery and the vanity which demands it. Marston uses a ship of fools as his main device and references the flogging of John Stone. Stone, Armin's rival and a tavern clown, was whipped in 1605 for ridiculing the Earl of Nottingham. The Earl had come under criticism for building a lavish retinue to interchange treaty ratifications with Spain. Shakespeare, writing *King Lear* in the wake of this event, was perhaps also inspired by these events.[39]

In the classical world, fools were notable figures in politics and philosophy as well as in domestic settings and performance. Socrates considered himself the only Greek who knew he was a fool. This, he argued, is the mark of true wisdom. Aristophanes' comedy *Clouds* (2002) provides a caricature of a disgruntled Socrates. *Clouds* was originally performed in 423 BCE and this date shows that Socrates had been regarded as a troublemaker for at least twenty-five years before his trial in 399 BCE. David Luljak in his essay 'Socrates as Fool in Aristophanes and Plato' observes how Socrates and philosophy are presented by Aristophanes as 'being out of touch with reality' (1998: 401). Luljak shows how, in contrast, Plato argues that Socrates must be appreciated from the comic perspective in order to understand the man and his philosophy. In Plato's *Apology* (c. 380 BCE), Socrates poses an ethical demand that a true philosopher must play the 'gadfly' with the lazy horse of his fellow citizens (Plato 2010: 49, 30e). This, according to Luljak, is a 'masterful comic "rebuttal" to Aristophanes' treatment of Socrates' (1998: 401). Tim Prentki in *The Fool in European Theatre* (2012) presents Socrates as the person around whom many of the qualities that we associate with folly are established – 'the mounting of social criticism from behind a mask or persona of detachment' (2012: 11). He goes on to describe a figure who,

> Rather than declaring a position, he operates as a conscience, requiring his antagonists to reveal their own positions through responses they give to his questions. He is like a virus that attacks the

[39] Butler notes the similarities between the functions of Stone and Lear's Fool: 'It is true that Stone was not part of Nottingham's household, as the Fool is of Lear's; it is also true that Stone was flogged, and the Fool merely threatened with the whip: but both Stone and the Fool have this in common; each is critical of a vainglorious, oath-taking, heroic old man (Nottingham was 70) who has made a public fool of himself by his love of pomp; expressed in both cases in the size of his retinue' (1983: 200).

> weakest point of the system, forcing breakdown in previously held certainties, or the comedian who forces a confrontation between an audience and its own contradictions. (2012: 12)

Plato's position is that Athens was inevitably hostile to the practice of philosophy and that it was therefore inevitable that Athens killed Socrates – the ultimate slap for a fool.

The figure of Socrates continued to haunt the Platonic Academy as it does the modern academy today. Like Socrates, we may find it an overwhelming challenge to be both loyal citizens of our country and severe critics of its tendencies to be self-satisfied, complacent and self-servingly unjust. When we are tempted to abandon either social criticism or our commitment to citizenship, we are stung anew by the example of Socrates the gadfly who believes in his own duty and his capacity to do public good by living as a dissident citizen in a democratic state. Socrates sets up a grand philosophical tradition that positions the philosopher as society's fool.

Novelli notes how Armin/Feste picks up the classical tradition of fooling when he 'invokes the paradoxical Socratic interplay between humility and wisdom' (1998: 187):

> Wit, and't be thy will, put me into good fooling! Those that think they have thee do oft prove fools: and I that am sure I lack thee, may pass for a wise man. (*Twelfth Night*, I. 5. 31-34)

Here Armin shows his awareness of the great self-discipline that good fooling requires of the performer.

Turning to pagan Rome, the customs of the Kalends and Saturnalia were merry festivals in which foolish figures came to prominence. Lucian (c. 120-190 CE) in his *Saturnalia* (c. 160 CE) describes a short period when slaves and masters swapped places, and a mock-king ruled over society. The New Year festival of the Kalends was a time when people masqueraded, gave into their appetites and played the fool. This has reminded me of the importance of appetite in the section of *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) titled 'He eates much' (E3) in which Armin associates unrestrained eating and drinking with foolish behaviour. Welsford considers if the Kalends customs were survivals from an ancient intercalary period 'inserted into the calendar to fill the gap between the solar and lunar years' (1935: 199). Such a period would have been considered, she argues, to belong outside the course of normal events and therefore a more suitable season for topsy-turvy and comic performances.

Anthony Caputi in *Buffo: The Genius of Vulgar Comedy* (1978) describes the survival of the Saturnalia and Kalends traditions into medieval and Renaissance times. He describes a 'process in which revel activities flourished and fostered dramatic activities of varying orders of sophistication, then partially withered away, with what survived influencing later revel and dramatic activities' (1978: 92). He notes some guiding patterns that resurface in the folk traditions of, for example, the mummers, the morris and the Lord of Misrule. These patterns include: dramatic combat or *agon* (struggles between husbands and wives, or the young and old), destruction of the Old Man, the

stubbornness of stupidity (idiocy, animality or amorality are used to exhibit the resolute intractability of nature and human nature), transformations (often achieved through rebirth or restoration). Caputi notes the ongoing significance of 'the masks, the costumes and important aspects of characterisation', 'the frenzy, energy, violence, and ugliness' and the technique of lampooning (1978: 93) in medieval and Renaissance performance traditions.

This can be seen, for example, in *Twelfth Night* (1602), the title of which refers to such a festival in which a Lord of Misrule was appointed for a night. C. L. Barber's *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom* (1972) devotes a chapter to the play and shows how the patterns of Saturnalia, and holiday customs and entertainment are recurrent in it. Armin/Feste engages in extensive public criticising (lampooning) of Malvolio (the 'Old Man') using ridicule, irony, sarcasm, caricature, burlesque and parody. As noted previously, Armin/Feste's use of disguise is excessive and his behaviour is frenzied; the effect is gratuitous and violent.

Barber's work also shows the survival of these traditions in Shakespeare's work more generally. He argues that the function of Carnival was to provide a Saturnalian release from the rhythms of labour so that order might then be reasserted. Others such as Robert Weimann in *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre* (1978) have argued for a more radical and subversive impact as intrinsic to such performances. As Preiss describes it: 'Vice, Devil, and clown all designate a principle of pluralism in the play, interrogating its ideologies of domination from a scepticism aligned with the disenfranchised audience, with whom the player cultivates a bond' (2008: 208-9). Whether we understand the effect of Carnival and Saturnalia as essentially conservative or revolutionary, Armin's work drew upon these traditions.

## Biblical antecedents

Charlton in *Education in Renaissance England* emphasises the amount of biblical studies that children underwent in Elizabethan grammar schools.

> The immediate and perhaps most important purpose of learning the arts of reading and writing was to enable the child to master the elements of the religious life, the Lord's Prayer, the ten Commandments, the Creed and the Seven Sacraments. (1965: 101)

Numerous Christian texts were prescribed and the various forms of Alexander Nowell's Catechism were 'expressly enjoined upon all schoolmasters in the Canons of 1571 […] and were prescribed in many school statutes of the period' (1965: 101-102). Working in Greek, Latin, English and sometimes Hebrew, children received an extensive education in the Judeo-Christian traditions.

In the New and Old Testaments of the AKJV Bible, there are 189 occurrences of the word 'fool', 42 occurrences of 'fools', 84 of 'foolish' and 20 of 'foolishness'. Armin

would have been well-versed in the fools of the Old and New Testaments. These texts in their original languages reveal various understandings of fools.[40] In the Old Testament, our word 'fool' is a translation of five different Hebrew words. As McDonagh notes, 'That this wide range of terms from the original languages of the Bible could all be rendered as 'fool' in English shows just how versatile the concept of folly was at the time the King James translation was being composed, in the early 1600s' (2008: 150n).

The varied understandings of the fool in the biblical texts continue in Jewish culture of today. In Yiddish, the 'Schlemiel', for example, is someone who spills his soup and the 'Schlimazel' is the person on whom the soup is spilt (Shatzky 1998: 388). Then there is the 'Schlumpf' who is someone who moves laboriously with little grace. Joel Shatzky in his essay 'Schlemiels and Schlimazels' identifies the first mention of the former in a story Peter Schlemiel (1814) by the German author Adelbert von Chamisso. The story concerns a man who 'sold his shadow to the Devil in exchange for an inexhaustible bag of gold' (Shatzky 1998: 388). Shatzky argues that these characters belong to the tradition of the innocent fool who became the stock type for Yiddish humour. Shatzky also observes another tradition in Yiddish culture exemplified by the historical figure Hershel Ostropolier who functioned as 'court fool' to Rabbi Boruch (the grandson of the founder of the Hasidic sect). Ostropolier's brand of fooling involved the 'self-irony of the wise fool' (1998: 392). Isaac Bashevis Singer's short story *Gimpel the Fool* (1981) from the beginning of the twentieth century shows the perseverance of the fool in Yiddish culture.

The fools of the Old Testament can be distinguished as simple, silly, sensual, scorning and steadfast fools.[41] Perhaps the most important word in Hebrew is *nâbâl* which is used in Psalms 14:1 and 53:1. In both of these texts the writer states, 'The fool [*nâbâl*] hath said in his heart, | "There is no God." | They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity; | There is none who does good'.[42] The Psalms are not referring to atheists as we think of them – the modern atheist would be unheard of in the ancient world – but to moral reprobates. Accurately speaking, 'There is no God' is a statement that means evil actions have no real consequences (Strong 2010). The fool of Psalms 14 and 53, the *nâbâl*, is someone who is in moral antithesis to God. This is not an insult or a slur; it is an accurate description of a state of mind, since for the Israelites the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111. 10, Proverbs 1. 7). The psalmist is not making *ad hominem* attacks but is locating the individual theologically. The fool's position is not to deny the existence of God; the fool does not occupy a position of knowledge or opinion. Instead, a fool expresses the inability to fear divine authority.

[40] I have synthesised insights from a biblical dictionary, lexicons and a concordance (Brown, Driver and Briggs 1991; Strong 2010; Kittel and Friedrich 1964-76; Vine, Unger and White 1996; and Thayer 1995) with my own knowledge of the biblical languages and texts from an undergraduate degree in Theology at Cambridge University. Acknowledging the possible risk of individual scholar's misrepresentation, I have outlined the major characteristics of the fool in these Judeo-Christian texts.

[41] See 'Appendix 3: the fools of the Old Testament' for further details.

[42] This and all subsequent biblical references are taken from the Authorised King James Version (AKJV).

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses both *ωρός* (*móros* meaning 'foolish') and *ἄφρον* (*aphron* meaning 'ignorant') to translate the Hebrew words for 'fool', but favoured *aphron*. New Testament writers favoured *moria* (fool).[43] In early Hellenistic literature, *aphron* could mean 'lack of understanding' and might convey 'the secondary sense of "a denier of God" who contemptuously disrupts fellowship between God and man' (Kittel and Friedrich 1964-76: 9.220). In the New Testament, the Greek word *móros* meant 'dull', 'stupid', 'foolish' (Strong 2010; Vine, Unger and White 1996; and Thayer 1995). It is the root of the English terms 'moron, moronic' meaning 'dull', 'insipid', 'flat', 'without an edge', and so figuratively 'mentally inert', 'dull in understanding', 'nonsensical', 'lacking a grip on reality', 'acting as though brainless'. The New Testament Greek brings another range of nuances to the word: 'without learning or erudition', 'imprudent', 'without forethought or wisdom', equivalent to 'empty, useless, impious, godless' (because such a person neglects or despises what relates to God).

In ancient Greek more generally, there are two competing words for 'fool': salós and móros. The former is usually translated 'silly, imbecile' and was probably a slang term with abusive connotations (Metzler 2016: 36). In the Greek of Aeschylus, Sophocles and others, the word probably comes from the base of *musterion* (as if shut up like a hidden thing or secret); and means 'dull' or 'stupid', and so figuratively 'heedless', (morally) 'blockhead', (apparently) 'absurd' (Thayer 1995). The root of the word *mōr-*, according to Aristotle (2011), refers to physical nerves causing one to become dull and sluggish; and so when used of the mind, means 'dull', 'stupid', 'foolish'.

Jaques may connect Armin/Touchstone with this etymology when he calls him 'a material fool' (*As You Like It*, III. 3. 30). As Hotson notes, 'material' also meant 'substantial', 'dull' or 'shallow-witted' (1952: 127). Mullini considers Armin's focus on the physical appearance of his fools in *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a). She notes the publication of Bartholomeus Cocles' *Epytomie of Phisiognomie* in 1556 which enjoyed fame all over Europe.[44] Grounding his statements on Aristotle's *Physiognomica*, Cocles 'analyses the shape of the body and of the head in particular [and] draws his outlines connecting behaviour to physical traits' (Mullini 2014: 31). Cocles attributed the label 'fool' to several types of person with the physical characteristics he specifies, e.g. 'The eyes verye small: declare that manne to bee a foole, weake in strength, applying in maners to the ape: that is, to be fearful, and a deceiver'. Mullini notes it is interesting 'to see how rich in facial and bodily features Armin's portraits are, and this invites us to build a parallel between Cocles' and Armin's fools' (Mullini 2014: 32).

[43] Strong (2010) and Maleski (1998) reveal a number occurrences of the word *móros* and its compounds in the Greek New Testament including: Matthew 5. 22, Matthew 7. 26, Matthew 23. 17, Matthew 25. 2, Matthew 25. 3, Matthew 25. 8, I Corinthians 1. 18, 20, 21, 25, 27, I Corinthians 2. 14, I Corinthians 3. 18, 19, I Corinthians 4. 10, II Timothy 2. 23 and Titus 3. 9.
[44] The first edition was printed in Bologna (1504). It was translated from Latin into English by Thomas Hill, and reworked by Hill into his own physiognomic treatise, *The Contemplation of Mankinde* (1571).

Returning to the New Testament, Jesus himself clearly warns against using the term *mória*:

> But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement: and whosoever says to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. (Matthew 5. 22)

*Raca* means 'empty headed', similar to how we use 'fool' today in everyday speech. The word comes from the Aramaic word *reyq*. That word, in turn, comes from the Hebrew *ruwq* that has a primary meaning of 'to make empty', 'empty out' (Strong 2010). Again, the foolish meaning is figurative. The image is that of a person with an empty head. It seems that Jesus was using an insult that his listeners would be familiar with. A modern equivalent might be *estúpido*. It is unclear whether he is using these words to label a person as morally deficient or whether it is an insult to their intelligence and worth as a person. Jesus also uses *móros* in the same verse.

Elsewhere in the New Testament, the word 'fool' is used in a very different way. Paul asks the early Christian community in Corinth the question 'Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?' (I Corinthians 1. 20). He uses the Greek words *mória* and *aphron*, the latter referring to the idea of 'a foolish Christian worthy of imitation' and the former referring, for example, to 'a foolish Pharisee to be admonished' (Maleski 1998: 317).[45] Paul notes that 'God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise' (I Corinthians 1. 27) and warns that 'If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise' (I Corinthians 3. 18). As Mary Maleski explores in her essay 'Paul the Apostle' (1998), Paul develops his theology in the same letter in terms that describes himself and his community as fools.

> For I think that God hath set forth us apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. (I Corinthians 4. 9-10)

The early Christians are foolish in rejecting the wealth and power of the world because it leads to their persecution and poverty. Paul contrasts the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of the God; Christians will appear as fools according to the reasoning of society. In his second letter to the same community, Paul again describes himself as a fool.

> Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many glory after flesh, I will glory also. For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourself are wise. (II Corinthians 11. 16-19)

[45] In Luke 11. 40, Jesus admonishes a group for their hypocrisy, calling them 'fools' and using *aphron*.

His status as fool allows Paul to speak freely. It is his licence to preach impertinently and yet without pride.

> (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. (II Corinthians 11. 21-28)

For Paul, it is his condition as a fool that entitled him to criticise the sins of the Corinthians. He transformed the sense of the fool from something disgraceful to something the identifies the person with Christ.

John Seward in *Perfect Fools: Folly for Christ's Sake in Catholic and Orthodox Spirituality* (1980), considers how Paul showed that 'the Christian religion has a kind of kinship with folly' (1980: 201). In this tradition, the crucifixion becomes the ultimate act of foolishness and the embodiment of divine wisdom, and Christ becomes the epitome of the fool. Paul gave an argument that later licensed medieval fools to speak without reprisal. Referring to the Proverbs in which Solomon personifies wisdom as female (e.g. Proverbs 8. 1-36), Maleski notes that Paul's idea of the fool also represented a 'masculinisation of the traditionally feminine concept of wisdom' (1998: 324). After Paul, the concept of the fool became commonplace. St. Augustine developed his theology in his *Euchiridion* (Herbert 2008) with the phrase '*felix culpa*', meaning 'happy fall/fault'. It expressed the belief that the Fall of Man was fortuitous because it brought about the incarnation of Christ the Redeemer. Augustine expressed a Christian paradox about the nature of folly and wisdom. Erasmus, who was an extremely well-read biblical scholar, uses *moria* to pun on Thomas More's name and also to reference Paul's message. Erasmus's character Stultitia expressed the significance of the fool for the Christian tradition when she says, 'Christ too, though he is the wisdom of the Father, was made something of a fool himself in order to help the folly of mankind, when he assumed the nature of man and was seen in man's form' (Erasmus 1971: 198-99).

The concept of 'the holy fool' was adopted by a various branches of Christianity. The Franciscans, for example, called themselves 'fools for Christ' and Saint Francis himself was known as 'God's jester'. The tradition of the 'holy fool' also manifested in the Coptic Church of Egypt which had 'fools for God' who wandered the desert. The Greek and Russian Orthodox churches canonised 'holy fools'. The Russian word *blazhennyi* 'implies a kind of gentle imbecile, a feeble-minded person with a silly smile on his face (or a "beatific" smile, as one might say), utterly unable to engage with the world' (Ivanov 2006: vi). It also denotes a form of sanctity.

Armin shows his awareness of biblical texts in *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) when he narrates a story in which John in the Hospital imitates the preaching of Dean Nowell outside St. Paul's: 'It is written says he in the 3: Chapter of Paul to the Corinthians brethren you must not sweare'. Armin presents John as a poor holy fool.

> God is angry if we doe not repent: good friend giue me a pin, or good friend giue me a point as it came in his minde, and so sucking up his driuill and breth together, would pray and make an end. (FV-F2)

John is tolerated as a holy fool by Nowell who gives him a groat. In his proposed epitaph for the grave of John in the Hospital, Armin seems to use a Pauline notion that the wisdom and folly of the world count for little before God: 'Wise men and fooles, all one end makes, | Gods will be done, who gives and who takes.' Armin seems to have drawn on theological traditions in his fooling practice. He makes a significant choice of religious vocabulary for the title page of *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b):

> Floute me, Ile flout thee; it is my profession,
> To iest at a Iester, in my transgression. (A)

Like the fools of Christian history, Armin believed he too should be tolerated. He understood the biblical notion of the fool as an agent of both divine and demonic chaos and he presents the fool as someone who sacrifices himself as the target of mockery. This comes with a warning, however, he in turn will scoff back at those who mock him.

## Medieval antecedents

The development of the iconography of the fool in the medieval period has been well documented by D. Gifford in his essay *Iconographical Notes towards a Definition of the Medieval Fool* (Gifford 1974). He describes the range of clothing and various ways of representing the fool which include: fool as evil prince, fool as Sethian figure,[46] fool as naked or near-naked madman, bald fools, fool as monkish figure, the disputing fool, and fool as courtier. Indeed, this sequence of representations of the fool is chronological and Gifford asks whether there is a direct line of descent from the prince-fool, who is depicted inflicting great carnage on his people, through the other representations to the fool dressed, as we would see them, more conventionally. The final representation of the fool is the familiar image we have with baubles (an inflated bladder on a stick), marottes (a carved head or face on a stick) or plain sticks. These were used as weapons, as puppets or as both. This is also where we see a cap or hood with bell, bells, coxcomb, ass ears or other animal parts.

Towards the bottom of the title page of Armin's *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) there is a small illustration depicting a snail which is balanced precariously on a plant stalk. The snail has two over-sized tentacles which reach back from its head. The symbolism of this

[46] Seth is the god of the desert, storms, disorder, violence and foreigners in Ancient Egyptian religion.

illustration is uncertain but the tentacles are suggestive of the headwear we see depicted in medieval illustrations of fools, many of which included extended animal ears. Titania in *A MIdsummer Night's Dream* (1595-96) makes an association between folly and animal ears when she erotically flatters Bottom:

> TITANIA Come sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
> While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
> And stick musk-roses in the sleek smooth head,
> And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.
> (IV. 1. 1-4)

It seems Armin's contemporaries were well aware of the foolish symbolism of long ears.

Considering this iconographical line of descent, Gifford states, 'they are to my mind all illustrations and iconographical consequences of one particular prototype' (Gifford 1974: 31). Rather than a line of descent, however, I present them as a cycle in which prince/king and fool rotate. This is represented in Figure D that depicts a falling fool with cap and bells, and a risen king grasping the crown.

Figure D
*Wheel of Fortune* by Albrecht Dürer (c. 1494)

Manuscript illustrators depicted fools in many different types of texts but Psalms 14:1 and 53:1 received particular attention. Robert Hornback considers some of these images, giving examples such as that found in an early fifteenth-century portable psalter from the Diocese of Norwich, *Der Stuttgarter Bilderpsalter* (2013: 34-38). The artists explored fools as individuals who were physically inept or whose behaviour was inappropriate. This can be seen in Figure E which is titled 'Naked men and women dancing: public games, foolishness in Rome'. Here the yellow and red headwear of two characters clearly identifies them as fools. The position of their feet and legs, and the

angles of the bodies create a carefree abandonment and momentum in the dance. The nudity heightens the sense of embodied foolishness.

Figure E
Manuscript illustration of public games and foolishness in Rome

The illustrators also portrayed the intellectual shortcomings of the fool as can be seen in Figure F. Here we see King David and the fool decorating the opening of Psalm 51. The fool points to the heavens, a gesture indicating his disbelief in the existence of God.

Figure F
Manuscript illustration from the Ranworth Antiphoner

The mixing of mental and physical folly was common in medieval depictions of the fool. Metzler (2016) notes that 'the boundaries between theology, philosophy and psychology as they are today were non-existent in the Middle Ages' (2016: 96).

Manuscript illustrations depicted fools in costumes of a rich variety of colours. These clothes allowed a fool to play with the distinction between fine and ridiculous. As Michel Pastoureau explores in *The Devil's Cloth: A History of Stripes* (2003), the medieval eye found it disturbing to see a surface in which the background could not be distinguished from the foreground. Striped clothing was relegated to those on the margins of society – jugglers, prostitutes and fools. In paintings, it was often the devil himself who was depicted wearing stripes.[47] Leslie Hotson quotes primary sources

[47] Pastoureau notes how slaves, servants, crewmen and convicts were dressed in stripes in later centuries but that more recently stripes have taken on new positive meanings, connoting

which record that Elizabeth I costumed Monarcho, an Italian fool, dressed in a medieval style with a 'foure quartered Jerken' of red grograin camlet, 'striped down with blewe vellat layed on with copper gold lace' (1952: 129).[48] The painting of the Polish jester titled 'Stańczyk' (1862) by Jan Matejko[49] is an example of the lasting influence of the medieval fool.

The architecture and decoration of the medieval period also show a fascination with the fool. Numerous religious buildings and monuments from the period contain depictions of foolish types. Gargoyles and grotesques were used in abundance. Stone masons designed baboons, apes, simpletons, dimwits, gaping figures and fools (Gaignebet and Lajoux 1985). There is an interesting etymological link between fools and gargoyles. The thirteenth-century Old French word *baboin* meaning 'ape' also meant 'simpleton, dimwit, fool' and 'a gaping figure' (such as a gargoyle). There may be a connection to the Old French word *baboue* that meant 'grimacing', perhaps because it is imitative of the ape's babbling speech-like cries. By the fourteenth century, the French word *babewyn* was in use meaning 'a grotesque figure used in architecture or decoration'.

The *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville (c. 560 – 636) is essential for any linguistic consideration of the medieval sense of the fool. It became one of the most influential books of this period. In his vocabulary section, Isidore derived 'the wise' (*sapiens*) from 'taste' (*sapor*). He defined the opposite of 'the wise' as 'the fool (*insipiens*) because he is without taste, has no discretion or sense' (Barney and others 2010: 228).

> A fool (*fatuus*) is thought to be so called because he understands neither what he says (*fari*, 3rd person *fatur*) himself nor what others say. Some think that the tem 'fool' derives from admirers of Fatua, the prophesying wife of Faunus, and they were the first called *fatuus* because they were immoderately stupefied by her prophecies, to the point of madness. (Barney and others 2010: 219)

Isidore notes that 'idiot' has a meaning close to the Greek origins of the word: 'Naïve (*idiota*), "an inexperienced person"; the word is Greek (cf. *idiôtês*, "private person, ordinary person")' (Barney and others 2010: 222).

> Stolid (*stultus*), rather dull in spirit, as a certain writer says (Africanius, fragment 416): 'I consider myself to be stolid (*stultus*); I don't think myself a fool,' that is, with dull wits, but not with none at all. A stolid person is one who in his stupor (*stupor*) is not moved by injustice, for he endures and does not avenge cruelty, and is not moved to grief by any dishonour. 247. Sluggish (*segnis*), that is, 'without fire' (*sine igni*), lacking native wit – for *se-* means

freedom, youth, playfulness and pleasure. Stripes are revolutionary as can be seen on the French and United States flags.

[48] Monarcho was an Italian fool. Hotson speculates that he was given this name 'because of his fixed idea – in the manner of the insatiable Philip of Spain – that all the ships sailing in and out of London River belonged to him. In stormy weather his tortured anxiety for the safety of his merchant navy was as enthralling as it was pitiful to see' (1952: 100).

[49] Oil on canvas, 88 × 120 cm, Muzeum Narodowe, Warsaw.

> 'without' (*sine*), as *sedulous, sine dolo*. … 248. Stupified (*stupidus*), 'rather often astounded (*stupere*)'. (Barney and others 2010: 228-9)

Metzler proposes that a semantic difference between *staltus* and *fatuus* may have begun during the medieval period. *Stultus* came to signify a person who does something foolish despite the ability not to do so, and *fatuus* indicated someone who is foolish and cannot help him/herself. This differentiation, she argues, reflects the fact that the medieval world had already distinguished between mental illness and mental disability, and 'foreshadows the distinction between "cannots" and "will nots"' in the terminology of modern education policy (2016: 39). We might also see in this distinction Armin's differentiation between natural and artificial fools.

As Bakhtin (1984) showed, the work of Rabelais forms an important bridge between the medieval and Renaissance understandings of the fool. In *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (c. 1532 - c. 1564) he punctuated the pretensions and vanities of European culture and he was not afraid to use linguistic excess to depict the realities of his fellows' behaviour. In his attacks, Rabelais adopts a persona of near insanity in order to deliver his insights. Prentki describes this as 'the presence of folly as a mask' (2012: 14) and presents it as a concept fundamental to both the Socratic tradition and Renaissance humanism. Bakhtin has shown that Rabelais' work epitomised the conception of laughter of this period.

> Laughter has a deep philosophical meaning, it is one of the essential forms of truth concerning the world as a whole, concerning history and man; […] the world is seen anew, no less (and perhaps more) profoundly than when seen from a serious standpoint. (1984: 66)

Rabelais's understanding of laughter was based on antique sources that presented three different theories of laughter. The first was medical. Rabelais had studied Hippocrates from whom he understood the medical benefits of 'a gay and cheerful mood on the part of the physician and patient fighting disease' (Bakhtin 1984: 67). Bahktin notes that Hippocrates had in turn been inspired by Democritus who made his laughter a whole philosophy directed at all the vain fears and hopes concerning the gods and life after death. For Democritus, laughter was a 'spiritual premise of the awakened man who has attained virility' (Bakhtin 1984: 67). Bakhtin notes that Rabelais encountered these ideas at the Montpellier Medical School where he had both studied and taught. It was here that Rabelais also met the work of the famous physician Laurent Joubert who had been a member of the school. Joubert published his *Treatise on Laughter* in 1560, after Rabelais' death. Bakhtin concludes that this treatise was 'a belated echo of the thoughts and discussions that were current in Montpellier at the time when Rabelais attends this school and that determined his concept of the therapeutic power of laughter' (Bakhtin 1984: 68).

The second theory of laughter from antiquity that informed Rabelais was Aristotle's formula: 'Of all living creatures only man is endowed with laughter' (Bakhtin 1984: 98; quoting Aristotle's *De Anima*, Book 3, Chapter 10). In Rabelais' introductory poem to *Gargantua and Pantagruel* he writes, 'Better to write about laughter than tears, | For laughter is inherent to man' (Bakhtin 1984: 68). Rabelais was familiar with Aristotle's

assertion that a child laughs only after forty days from birth and that s/he becomes human at that moment.

The third theory of laughter was taken from Lucian's work 'Menippus, or the Descent into Hades'. The episode in which Epistemon journeys to hell and the image of Menippus laughing in the kingdom of the dead were, according to Bakhtin, particularly influential to Rabelais. Bakhtin describes a Lucian image of laughing at death which gave Rabelais a belief in 'the freedom of the spirit' and 'the freedom of speech' (Bakhtin 1984: 70).

Bakhtin notes that it was through Rabelais that classical attitudes towards laughter entered mainstream Renaissance thought. Bakhtin notes that fools often figure in Rabelais' novel and are symbolic figures in their role as producers of laughter.

> They were the constant, accredited representatives of the carnival spirit in everyday life out of carnival season. […] They represented a certain form of life, which was real and ideal at the same time. They stood on the borderline between life and art, in a peculiar mid-zone as it were; they were neither eccentrics nor dolts, neither were they comic actors. (Bakhtin 1984: 8)

William J. Kennedy in his essay 'François Rabelais' notes the importance of Panurge as 'Rabelais' archetypal fool' and sees within this character the combination of two different attitudes towards fool's identity: laughter evoking folly and 'profoundly disturbing behaviour associated with diabolism and misogyny alongside garden-variety trickery and deceit' (1998: 372). In this we see two distinct and fundamental attitudes to the fool in late medieval Europe: fool as innocent, fool as evil-doer. McDonagh also notes the distinct statuses of natural and artificial fools in much medieval theology. The former were considered to be part of God's creation, to be innocents and therefore incapable of committing sin (and, in secular terms, unable to be legally responsible for crimes they have committed). The latter were held to be knaves performing the devil's work (2008: 136-37).

Societies across Europe enjoyed a broad range of activities in which fools were tolerated and encouraged. The Feast of Fools, for example, was celebrated in lay communities, cathedrals, churches and monasteries. Harris (2013) considers the influence of *Memoires pour servir à l'histoire de la fête des foux* (1741) by Jean-Bénigne Loucotte du Tilliot for our understanding of the tradition of the Feast of Fools. He notes that these collective acts could involve either clerical or lay groups. The former participated in services of ridicule. They performed processional entrances into the church with an ass around which songs were sung (Harris 2013: 76-9), they burned the soles of shoes on the altar as incense (Mackenzie 2011: 98), and they staged religious plays that were obscene and derisory (Harris 2013: 149).[50] In St.-Omer, for example, the 'dean of fools' may have censed a group of clerics in reverse order of rank (Harris 2013: 146). These clerical groups mocked the cathedral chapter as well as the liturgy. The lay

[50] Harris (2013) questions how riotous and burlesque these performances were and argues this has been exaggerated by scholars.

groups took issue with secular authorities such as magistrates, councillors, auditors and tax collectors and made these the focus of their jokes (Harris 2013: 255). They performed farces and enacted mock courts. Harris notes the strong reaction such activities could provoke in local parliaments who saw their authority and dignity under attack. He provides the example of an order of the Parlement of Claremont in 1509 that 'forbade people, on pain of imprisonment, "to play the *jeu de Mommon* [mumming game], in masks and otherwise disguised"' (Harris 2013: 255). The Parlement's order was largely ignored. Harris records a complaint about these 'merrymakers and libertines':

> They mask at the feast of Christmas, in broad daylight, publicly [...]. The masked bands, in fools' costumes and with the sounding of all sorts of instruments, leap, spin, [and] pirouette with lewd and lascivious movements and words. (Harris 2013: 255)

The use of masks is recurrent in many of these fooling traditions.

Simonette Cochis in her essay 'The Bishop of Fools' (1998) similarly records how there was irreverent parody of the Mass accompanied by obscenities and gibberish, priestly dress was mocked using masks, transvestitism, and unholy games. She observes how the donning of masks was used by performers to enact a farce. Cochis observes that with all this irreverence, the Feast of Fools never left the sphere of the sacred (1998: 97). She describes the Feast as belonging to the tradition of ritually performed sacrilege.

Harris questions the historicity of some accounts of the feast such as that provided in a 1445 letter from the Faculty of Theology of Paris to all bishops and chapters of France outlawing the feast. He argues such records were subject to much exaggeration and he questions some uncritical attention from scholars such as Chambers (1967). It is clear, nonetheless, that the Feast of Fools featured as a vivid motif in popular imagination over a number of centuries. Novelli, for example, observes how the atmosphere in the Illyria of *Twelfth Night* (1602) 'is one of festivity carried to excess, self-indulgence, and self-delusion – the Feast of Fools, in short' (1998: 189).

Considering the play further, Novelli observes it takes inspiration from the use of masks in the feast; Armin/Feste assumes a series of masks: first in conversation with Maria below stairs and then when he takes on the role of domestic fool in Olivia's house. Novelli considers how Armin/Feste unmasks in the moments when he is alone on stage playing his tabor, and his final unmasking at the end of the play when 'we are suddenly in the presence not of Feste but of the actor whose afternoon's work has been to create a festive event' (1998: 190): 'But that's all one, our play is done, | And we'll strive to please you every day' (*Twelfth Night*, v. 1. 399-400). The traditions that surrounded the Feast of Fools loomed large in Armin's practice.

There were also Boy Bishops, Lords of Misrule and Feast of Asses traditions. These enjoyed great popularity over a number of centuries. The calendar of activities spread across the whole year with events taking place in both winter and summer, in Lent and at Christmas. There were performances by the skilled as well as activities that provided

opportunity for communal participation. They included songs, dances, plays, puppetry, sports, animal shows, fights and more (Chambers 1967). McDonagh argues that the individuals who participated in such 'fool games took as their mascot the "natural" fool, and in doing so imposed upon him the role of popular critic-satirist' (2008: 136).

Despite many attempts to suppress these holy-day festivities, they continued over a number of centuries. A painting from a slightly later period shows Morris dancers, a hobbyhorse and a fool beside the River Thames at Richmond (Figure G). It gives an insight into some of these customs and their enduring nature.

Figure G
Detail from 'The Thames at Richmond, with the Old Royal Palace' (c. 1620)

Scholars of the medieval and early Elizabethan stage such as Chambers (1903) have explored the importance of the Morris dance and the function of the fool in the mumming tradition. As Alan Garner describes in his introduction to *The Guizer: A Book of Fools*, the Guizer is 'the proper name for an actor in a mumming play. He is comical, grotesque, stupid, cunning, ambiguous. He is sometimes part animal, and always part something else' (1975: 9). He is a fool. Billington (1986) has described the changing function of the fool during this period. She notes the development of their role from leader of games and dances at the beginning of the medieval period, to leader of the scripted action as the Vice (a character we shall return to in a later section). Billington concludes, 'the earlier concepts of evil in pretended stupidity and the innocence of the idiot, which are essential to an understanding of the fool's place in medieval society, never returned' (1986: 31). Clegg and Skeaping, in their analysis of musical comedy on the Shakespearean stage, note the origins of this genre in a definitive type of dramatic performance which, half a century before the playhouses were erected in London, included 'Popular music and balladry, the crude combats of mummers' plays, the semi-dramatized antics of a subversive fool, and the leaping and vigorous stepping of Morris-men' (2015: 1). Here we see how active the fool was in revels, pre-dramatic activities and early forms of English theatre. In these antics, I have been reminded of Armin's description of leaping in a section of *Quips Upon Questions* titled 'Where is Ginking gone?'. Armin associates foolish behaviour with jumping and sexual prowess. Despite the fact that 'Ginking iumpt, and Ginking leapt', he fails to have children and so 'Ginking

weeps, and Ginking mournes' (1600b: B3). Armin showed an awareness of an athletic performance style in fooling, whether it is metaphorical as in Ginking's case or enacted as in the dancing of the Morris-men.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder's painting *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent* (1559) presents the contrast between two sides of late medieval life, as can be seen by the appearance of the inn on the left side, for enjoyment, and the church on the right side, for religious observance. In the centre of the piece, a fool is seen leading away a husband and wife. Bruegel's work depicts, literally, the centrality of the fool in the late medieval and early Renaissance European world (Figure H).

Figure H
*The Fight Between Carnival and Lent* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1599)

An example of communal fooling can be seen in Dutch Rhetoricians' drama which manifested during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Members of literary guilds enjoyed writing poetry and performing drama in public. They competed in drama competitions in groups, known as Chambers of Rhetoric in the Low Countries. Some of these became fool guilds. From 20th to 27th July 1551, for example, Brussels became the site of a festival of fools. Other towns including Mechelen, Leiden and Brabant hosted similar events. Prizes were given for individual and group entertainments, varying from the most hilarious entry in a procession to the best farce in performance. The events in Brussels were overseen by a hunchback called Oomken who ruled from an elevated stage and judged the 'crimes' of his fellow fools. The same stage was also used for performances. During the eight days of the festival, Brussels was inundated with fools and hundreds of people came to witness the event. On the second day, the fools set out to attend a Mass that included songs sung off-key by a choir. It also included a hobbyhorse tournament. W. N. M. Hüsken (1996: 122-25) argues that Oomken promulgated the statutes of the newly established 'Empire of Fools, The Oath of Master Uncle, Prince of Fools, with four Ears,' which were later published in Louvain in 1552. This text resembles a play in that it is divided into three different roles: clerk, king and

audience. The clerk summons the audience on the king's behalf and requires all present to swear an oath to obey the new king. This means they will have to protect eloping nuns, shameful monks, braggart soldiers, noble knights on rented horses, promiscuous women and matchmakers, vagabonds and millers without a mill, quack doctors, brewers, innkeepers, sailors, weavers and several other professions. The king is then invited to say yes or no to these articles. Hüsken describes how 'he must put his fingers on the cobblestone growing behind his ear[51] and pronounce an utterly foolish oath. Thereafter the clerk invites all bystanders to cheer the new king: '*Vive le Roy stultus stultorum*' (Long live the king, fool of fools). Finally, all present must swear to be loyal to him, each and every one of them saying 'yes, no' sticking his finger in his backside, and finally kissing it (Hüsken 1996: 124-25).

In the interactions with a staged audience, I have been reminded of Armin's audience technique. As we have seen in *Quips Upon Questions*, this interaction allowed Armin not only to demonstrate his wit but it also formed part of his belief that the audience shared equally in his folly. As Armin wrote, he saw his function as artificial fool was 'thy folly to content' (1600b: C). The Dutch Rhetoricians' drama was also presenting a world in which everyone was a fool and in which a multiplicity of foolish voices were used to create the dramatic effect. For those observing such performances, the experience, whilst funny, must have evoked an uncomfortable awareness that they too might be fools.

The sottie play was a French equivalent to the Dutch Rhetoricians' drama. It too involved a fool text that was written by fool societies. They were written and performed by groups known as Confréries or Sociétés Joyeuses.[52] Welsford traces the history of the sottie from around 1276 well into the sixteenth century. Their theme generally speaking, was the universal sway of Mother Folly and the structure of these pieces involved a roll call of the different types of fools. This resulted in a *dénouement* in which all the apparently diverse classes of humanity are reduced to one single type – the fool (Arden 1980). The Confrérie Joyeuse known as the *Enfants de Bon-temps*, for example, performed two sotties in 1523 and 1524 that contained very dangerous criticism of contemporary politics. Having previously had one of its members executed and the group been prohibited from performing for several years, this society then staged Mère-Sottie in mock mourning who, on hearing that their member was still alive, summoned her supporters to rally around her. At this moment in the sottie, many fools sprang up from among the audience, mounting on to the stage by ladders, hastened to the side of their mother who told them that they must now play their games. Drinking bouts then ensued. The satirical intention of the piece was clear and risky. Donald Perret in his essay 'The Sottie, the Sots, and the Fols' argues that the performances

[51] This refers to the 'stone of folly' or the 'stone of madness' that was popularly believed to be located in the skull and caused a patient's insanity. The medical treatment of this is depicted in *The Extraction of the Stone of Madness* (c. 1494) by Hieronymus Bosch (oil on board, 48 × 35 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid).

[52] The most well-known companies included: the *Enfants sans Soucis* in Paris, the *Infanteria Dijonnaise*, the *Connards* in Rouen and Evreux, and the *Suppôts du Signeur de la Coquille* in Lyon (Perret 1998: 416).

must have been 'hit-and-run engagements' because the invective and critique of contemporary morals and politics were so strong (1998: 413). Indeed, most of the texts were written anonymously perhaps because the content was so risky.[53]

Perret defines the sot as 'a wise but benign fool […] whose purpose on stage is to reveal and ridicule the madness of the world'. He distinguishes this from the *fol* which 'tends to be a dangerous, malicious character whose purpose is to personify the vices of the moral and social order'. He notes, therefore, two types of fools in the French theatre tradition: one whose role is to criticise folly and the other whose role is to embody folly and describes this as: 'folly as wisdom' and 'folly as vice' (1998: 412). This we can see mirrored in Armin's performances as Lear's Fool and Autolycus.

During the period of French history when sotties were written and performed, the two terms 'farce' and 'sottie' were applied indiscriminately. The sotties and their Dutch equivalents play an important role in the origins of certain dramatic genres which are preoccupied with criticism of society and which achieve this through comedy. Farce, satire, the Theatre of the Absurd and Brecht are among its descendants.

As previously noted, Armin gave the name 'Sotto' to the main speaker in A *Nest of Ninnies* (1608). In doing so, he 'seems aware of the French tradition of the sottie' (Mullini 2014: 29). He was, I suggest, influenced by European fool societies and traditions of communal fooling, and as a result developed a technique requiring himself as solo performer to deliver multiple foolish voice and bodies. Armin cast the fool as both the character and the theme, placing the fool at the centre where art and life meet. As a result of Armin's work, the fool became a figure who could be presented on stage as a character in a play and would immediately be recognisable to the public. I propose that Armin's contribution was to make the fool a comic figure with a distinct performance technique.

Turning to real life historical figures, Billington states that, 'in England in the Middle Ages the word "fool" was more than the abstract term of abuse which it appears today, but placed the owner of the name within a recognisable relation to a figure in cap and bells' (1986: 1). She goes on to describe two of the most famous early historical fools but notes they were not called fool at all. Hitard was jester to the Saxon king Edmund Ironside and was called *joculator*, and Rahere, who belonged to the court of Henry I, was referred to as a minstrel. In discussing the function of medieval minstrels, Otto notes they shared the fool's privilege to judge those whom they served, often composing songs of derision about unpopular matters.

> Like the Scandinavian skalds, Anglo-Saxon bards, and any other itinerant entertainer, minstrels, and jesters were in a position to compare different courts and to convey news between them. This,

[53] Perret identifies the few recognised authors as Pierre Gringore, André de la Vigne, Roger de Collerye and Amédéé Poral who were the leaders of *Sociétés Joyeuses*. Gringore wrote and acted in the most well-known play of this genre, *Le jeu du Prince des Sots et la Mère Sotte* (1512) (Perret 1998: 416).

> together with the information they picked up on their travels, could give them an insight into society that their more settled masters might not have. (2007: 10)

Dario Fo in *Tricks of the Trade* (1991) explored early minstrel pieces such as *Lu Gatto Lupesco* (The Wolf-cat) and shows the crossover between minstrels and fools (1991: 135). William Langland in his late fourteenth century poem 'The vision of Piers Plowman' provides a useful description of a man, Haukyn, who seems to move between the identities of fool and minstrel:

> A wafrer, wol ye wite, and serve manye lordes--
> And fewe robes I fonge or furrede gownes.
> Couthe I lye and do men laughe, thanne lacchen I sholde
> Outher mantel or moneie amonges lordes mynstrals.
> Ac for I kan neither taboure ne trompe ne telle no gestes,
> Farten ne fithelen at festes, ne harpen,
> Jape ne jogele ne gentilliche pipe,
> Ne neither saille ne sautrie ne synge with the gyterne,
> I have no goode giftes of thise grete lordes (Langland 1978: Passus 13, 226-234)

Langland depicts a wandering freelance entertainer. Haukyn bemoans the fact that he lacks the skills in music, storytelling, joking, dancing, acrobatics or farting to entertain a 'great lord'.

Doran (1858) gives a detailed survey of fools as individuals in the service of monarchs. He suggests there was barely a court in England, France, Italy, Spain, Germany or Scandinavia which did not contain a fool throughout the medieval period: 'With all, there was laughter excited by liberty of speech, which must have occasionally fallen like refreshing dew upon the ear of the despot or noble, unaccustomed to listen to aught from others save his own exceeding glorification' (1858: 236).

'King Robert of Sicily' (c. 1390) (French and Hale 1930: 933-46) is a Middle English anonymous poem which explores the relationship of king and a court fool. It survives in ten manuscripts, was composed at the end of the fourteenth century in a south Midlands dialect and is an exemplum of the theme that the proud and mighty are brought low (Hornstein 1963: 453-58). The tale tells how in church on St. John's Day at Evensong, King Robert hears in the Magnificat the words '*Deposuit potentes de sede*, *Et exaltauit humiles*' (He hath put down the mighty from their seats, | And exalted them of low degree) (Luke 1. 52). On learning its meaning, he arrogantly mocks the verse and rejects the possibility that a king can be brought low. He falls asleep there in the church at which point an Angel assumes Robert's appearance and leaves the church with the King's retinue. Robert awakens in beggar's rags to a dark and deserted church. The sexton, responding to the imperious cries for attention and release, assumes that he is dealing with a madman as Robert protests that he is the king. Furious, Robert rushes to the palace. At the gate, he receives blows from an incredulous porter and is thrown into a puddle. Covered with mud, Robert faces the usurper, demands his throne, and insists

that it is he who is the king and his brothers, the Emperor and the Pope, will avenge him. His insults are rebuffed, his threats derided, his claims mocked. Appointed court fool, his hair is shorn; he becomes companion to an ape, and takes his meals with the dogs. Years pass, the Angel attends a family reunion with the Emperor and Pope in Rome. The 'fool' Robert is present as part of the Angel's retinue. The hosts do not recognise their brother and see in his protestations no more than the ravings of a mad 'fool.' In this, I have been reminded of Armin's exploration of the maddening effects of being fooled as seen in his scene with Malvolio (*Twelfth Night*, IV. 2) and 'Where's the Devill' in *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b). In Robert's moment of misery, he understands his plight. Repenting his pride in a moving prayer, he pleads:

> Now am I wel lowe ipult,
> And that is right that I so be.
> Lord, on Thi fool Thow have pité.
> I hedde an errour in myn herte,
> And that errour doth me smerte.
> […]
> Evere Thi fol, Lord, wol I be.
> Lord, on Thi fol Thou have pité. (Foster 2007: 346-65)

At home again, the Angel asks Robert who he is. This time he does not give his usual answer, 'The king,' but responds simply: 'A fol.' The Angel then reveals that he is God's messenger sent to chasten Robert for his pride. Now that Robert is truly repentant, the Angel vanishes in a 'twynklyng of an eye' and Robert is again king.

This was a very popular tale. Martin Walsh in his essay 'The King His Own Fool: Robert of Cicyle' notes that it was dramatized on at least three occasions in the following century and a half; at Lincoln in 1481-82, at Chester in 1531, and at the Jesuit college in St. Omer in 1624. Although these texts are now lost, Walsh speculates that if we had them,

> We would no doubt encounter a theatrical court fool of far greater complexity than the usual capering Vices of fifteenth-century moralities (fool as sinner, pure and simple) or the witty, often musical jester reflecting the Humanist topos of 'all are Fools in the great *theatrum mundi*.' It would be a stage fool that looks forward not to marginal grotesques and entertainers but to title roles, to the heart of the English dramatic achievement, to Richard II, Hamlet, and Lear. (1996: 44)

As part of this dramatic achievement, we should also include the work of Robert Armin.

## Henrician and Elizabethan antecedents

The Renaissance developed its own fascination with fools, inspired by medieval fooling. John Astington in his essay 'Will Sommers' Suit: Illustration of Early Modern Performance' dates the increased interest in the fool during the reigns of Henry VIII and

Elizabeth I back to the publishing of Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff* (1494) (The Ship of Fools) and Alexander Barclay's anglicised version *The Ship of Fools* (1509)[54] but argues it was over the fifty years from 1560 onwards that the cult of the fool grew with especial prominence.

Brant's work was a development of a long tradition of texts about fools in English. As Patrick McDonagh describes, it was preceded by works including Nigel Wireker's twelfth-century *Speculum Stultorum* and John Lydgate's fifteenth-century *Order of Fools*. *The Ship of Fools* (1509) in turn influenced John Skelton's *Boke of Three Fooles* (1568) and *The XXV Orders of Fools* (c. 1570) which is attributed to Timothy Granger. Brant's influence was also to be seen in the more famous *Utopia* (1516) by Thomas More and Erasmus' *In Praise of Folly* (1515). Erasmus in his schooling at Deventer (1475 to 1484) encountered the work of two humanist thinkers who valued Christian folly as a path to redemption: Thomas à Kempis and Nicholas de Cusa. De Cusa in his *De docta ignorantia* (1440) and *Idiota* (1450)[55] expounded the wisdom of the idiot (McDonagh 2008: 131-32). Their work inspired an anti-intellectual tradition in Renaissance Humanism.

Stainton in 'Reason's Other: The Emergence of the Disabled Subject in the Northern Renaissance' (2004: 229) notes that the 'natural fool' never appears as a subject and that the condition of folly represents a moral degeneracy in *The Ship of Fools* (1509). Stainton notes a 'transition from the general medieval view of folly, an attribute of Everyman and represented by the fool in cap and bells, with no direct representation to intellectual or other disability, to a direct representation and association between disability and depravity' (2004: 240). Folly was not only a moral or intellectual attribute, it was also associated with a variety of physical differences:

> [Folly] is not simply an intellectual or moral attribute but is also signified by a wide range of physical differences: hunch backs, dwarfishness, ugliness and so forth. Medieval and early modern folly is difference or deviance, but not exclusively, or even necessarily, an intellectual condition. (McDonagh 2008: 132)

In contrast to Barclay's work, More and Erasmus did distinguish between the natural and artificial fool. More, again like Armin, in recognising this distinction also noted the problematic nature of these categories.

> There chanced to stand by a certain jesting parasite or scoffer, who would seem to resemble and counterfeit the fool. But he did in such wise counterfeit, that he was almost the very same indeed that he laboured to represent: he so studied with words and sayings brought forth so out of time and place to make sport and move laughter, that he himself was oftener laughed at then his jests were. Yet the foolish fellow brought out now and

[54] The title of Armin's *A Nest of Ninnies* (1608) seems to parody *The Ship of Fools* (1509).
[55] The first English translation of the Latin originals of these works were made in 1650 by John Everard and titled respectively *On Learned Ignorance* and *The idiot in four books*.

> then such indifferent and reasonable stuff, that he made the proverb true, with saith, 'he that shootest oft, at the last shall hit the mark'. (Bruce 1999: 31)

More connected fooling with the 'parasites' traditions of classical Greece and Rome. His intention in this passage is to mock performers of artificially folly. The effect of his argument, however, is to conflate the natural and artificial fool and, as did Armin, to challenge to the rigid boundaries between these two types of fools. Considering Armin's use of Erasmus' work, McDonagh concludes that Armin gave folly a human face: 'Erasmian abstractions are now read directly upon the natural fools living in the towns and villages of England' (2008: 148).

Reflecting on the changes between *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) and *A Nest of Ninnies* (1608), Mullini (2014) describes the development in Armin's discourse on folly. In the former he presents a collection of realistic anecdotes with actual fools as protagonists; in the latter he adopts a sermonising tone using the Erasmian idea of a glass through which he shows a sequence of fools. Mullini describes this glass as 'an early modern "translation" of the medieval *speculum* [mirror]' (2014: 37), a tool for satire and an instrument for knowing oneself. Such a literary device had been used by Nigel de Longchamps, for example, who wrote the *Speculorum stultorum* (A Mirror of Fools) in the late twelfth century as a satire on clergy and society in general. Mullini concludes that Armin 'seems to look back at that sort of literature', and that he 'mixes 'the "mirror held up to nature" in *Foole Upon Foole* with the "glass perspective" of moral significance' in *A Nest of Ninnies* (2014: 37). For *A Nest of Ninnies* (1608), Armin supplemented each section with an 'allegorical reading of the fool stories' that are now presented as 'a series of morally beneficial tales' (Johnson 2003: 41). His ambition was to be seen as the moralising fool-philosopher in the tradition of Erasmus. It was Erasmus who had first coined the term 'foolosopher'. Armin, who had picked up this word, integrated this into his performance technique to present a comic vision of the world of fools in the tradition of Erasmus and More.

Prior to Armin's arrival in the Chamberlain's Men, fools had already manifested with vividness on the Henrician and Elizabethan stages. In considering this period, scholars have drawn a distinction between the domestic or court fool (those who belonged to the households of the powerful) and the fools of the theatre. Ahuva Belkin, for example, in '"Here's my Coxcomb" Some Notes on the Fool's Dress' (Belkin 1984) explores this distinction in relation to their dress more than their function. She argues that there was no identifiable uniform for either the domestic fool or the theatre fool other than the basic elements of general clothing in use since the twelfth century. She says that by the fifteenth century,

> The convention of the fool of the Elizabethan stage probably derived from literature and not from contemporary custom. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, with the decline of medieval festivals, the cap and bells were no longer a common sight in real life; instead they were becoming a famous emblem of folly – either negative or ambivalent. The fool's attributes

> used by Shakespeare can thus be traced to widespread visual and literary symbols. (Belkin 1984: 51)

Mary Busby's *Studies in the Development of the Fool in the Elizabethan Drama* (1923) provides an exhaustive survey of English play texts from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that include fools and fool-types.[56] Barbara Swain's *Fools and Folly: During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (1932) is similarly an important study. Peter Happé (1996) in his essay 'Staging Folly in the Early Sixteenth Century: Heywood, Linsay, and Others' has also given insight into particular writers. These analyses show that fools were extensively used in the early drama of this period and it is important to acknowledge Armin's indebtedness to writers such as Heywood, Lindsay and Skelton.

As Busby shows, the influence of the domestic or court fool is strong in some playtexts (1923: 12-13). Skelton's play *Magnificence* that comes from the beginning of the sixteenth century is a good example. The play contains two fools, Fancy and Folly, and they have many resemblances to the domestic fool. Fancy's falcon and Folly's dog would be natural appurtenances of domestic fools. The two characters are distinguished from each other, representing two types of fool. Fancy suggests a natural fool as he acknowledges himself weak-witted. Folly is much shrewder and represents the professional for artificial fool. Skelton shows us that the domestic or court fool could be either a natural or artificial fool. Hager considers the influence of Skelton on the Fool's text in *King Lear* (1606) and notes the Fool's use of 'archaic skeltonics (breathless rhymed trimeters)' (1998: 292). In common with Skelton's verse, the Fool utilises irregular dipodic meter and a tumbling rhyme scheme. Examples of the use of a short meter with rhyming scheme for comic effect can be seen in the following two excerpts:

> Tell you I will,
> If that ye will
> A-while be still,
> Of a comely Jill
> That dwelt on a hill:
> She is somewhat sage
> And well worn in age

[56] Busby observes that all of these characters were male with the exception of Lamia who was the solitary female fool in the English drama of this period (1923: 43). She does not record the play in which Lamia appears. From an extensive search of *An Index of Characters in Early Modern English Drama: Printed Plays, 1500-1660* (Berger, Bradford and Sondergard: 2006), all plays published between 1500 and 1600 on Early English Books Online, and the Literature Online database (LION) concerning texts dated between 1200 and 1578 (the year in which The Theatre opened) with a character named Lamia, I have been unable to identify the play with a character named Lamia who is clearly identifies as a fool. Lomia is listed as a 'natural fool' in the anonymous play called *Common Conditions* (2004). The editor, Roberta Barker, has reviewed the suggestions for authorship but finds none of them convincing. The play was entered in the Stationer's Register in 1576; Barker thinks it was written c. 1570-76. The Lomia/Lamia confusion may have arisen because the sole surviving copy of Q1 (at Yale University) is cropped and the initial letters of speech prefixes are sometimes missing. As a result, we get 'mia' for Lomia; while the speech prefix for Lamphedon is sometimes 'Lam'.

For her visage
It would assuage
A man's courage.
(Opening section from 'The Tunning of Elynour Rumming' by John Skelton, c. 1508)

FOOL Have more than thou showest,
Speakest than thou knowest,
Lend less than thou owest,
Ride more than thou goest,
Learn more than thou trowest,
Set less than thou throwest,
Leave thy drink and thy whore
And keepin-a-door
And thou shalt have more
Than two tens in a score.
(*King Lear*, I. 4. 116-125)

The influence of domestic fools also appears in the plays of John Heywood. Merry Report in *The Play of the Weather* (1534) is a merry-maker with a strong resemblance to the court fool. He enters Jove's service as usher and jests with all the suitors who come to court. Heywood includes characters called Vices and was the first playwright to identify personages as such. In another of his plays, *The Play of Love* (1528/29?), the Vice claims to be a fool (line 721). The Vice predates the work of Heywood. The morality play *Mankind* from c. 1470 (Lester 1981) includes five Vice figures: Mischief, Newguise, Nowadays, Nought, Titivillus. *The Castle of Perseverance* (1405-25) contains an extensive number of Vice characters including the Seven Deadly Sins and Folly (Bale and Skelton 1979). Both texts are anonymous. Commentators such as Billington (1986) have noted the connection between the fool and the Vice. The standard type of Vice has tricks reminiscent of the professional fool including inconsequential answers and quibbling, and in order to lead people astray, the Vice enters their service and so becomes to some degree their fool.

The Vice is often associated with evil and is frequently malevolent. David N. DeVries in his essay 'The Vice Figure in Middle English Morality Plays' considers the key characteristics of the Vice. He argues these characteristics are inspired by other characters and texts in Middle English literature from which, he argues, the Vice draws its energy. Paying particular attention to the morality play *The Castle of Perseverance* (Bale and Skelton 1979), he identifies the major characteristics as: nimbleness of speech (as seen, for example, in *Fasciculus morum*, an early fourteenth-century handbook for preachers which emphasised the dangers of persuasive language, rhetoric and flattery), scatological language (as seen, for example, in Geoffrey Chaucer's Miller), frantic, frenetic activity, and topsy-turvy subversion of the normal (as seen, for example, the Digby *Mary Magdalene*, an early-fifteenth-century drama from East Anglia) (DeVries 1998: 478-480).

Billington (1986) describes the Vice as a well-known social entertainer of the community with special licence at certain festivals. She also argues that until about 1550 the Vice wore fool's dress. After 1560, it appears that distinctions were gradually drawn between the Vice and the fool. Nonetheless, these figures continued to influence each other, the texts and performance styles of later centuries. As Billington notes, 'The wooden dagger, carried by the 1300 naked Fool, was kept by the Vices as a comic property and was so effective that Harlequin in the eighteenth century retained it for his own comic, theatrical battles' (1986: 27). The Vice has mysterious origins in English drama. Although they are found in morality plays, F. H. Mares has argued that the Vice was 'already established as a stage clown before he appears in the morality' (1958: 26).[57] Hotson observes that Armin makes a direct reference to the Vice tradition when he gives Tutch the motto '*hic et ubique*' (here and everywhere) in *The History of The Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a).

This phrase is in the tradition of the knavish fool or Vice of the old comedy, as Ben Jonson's character Iniquity shows in *The Divell is an Asse*:

> What is he, calls upon me, and would seeme to lacke a *Vice*?
> Ere his words be halfe spoken, I am with him in a trice;
> Here, there, and every where, as the Cat is with the mice;
> True *vetus Iniquitas* [old Iniquity]. (Hotson 1952: 116)

Feste connects Armin explicitly with the Vice tradition when he says: 'I'll be with you again, | In a trice, like to the old Vice' (*Twelfth Night*, IV. 2. 121-22). Thomson, however, argues that there are essential differences between the Vice, clown and the fool. The Vice 'however temporarily disruptive, is contained within a moral, homiletic frame, the clown is socially free-ranging. His self-awareness as a performer protects him from the constraints of the dramatic fiction. He has his eye on the audience, not the play'. Thomson notes that the fool similarly is aware of the audience 'but he is aware of the dramatic action too, and this gives him a distance from the audience that the clown would not relish' (2004: 410 and 418).

The role of the fool in the plays of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries evolved during this period. Busby observes, 'As higher dramatic ideals began to prevail, the dramatists seem to have realised that the only way to prevent the clown from spoiling their plays was to develop his part more fully themselves, and to connect it as closely as possible with the main action' (1923: 26).[58] The fool's tendency to improvise was recognised by playwrights. Dramatists learnt how to weave fools more closely into their plots usually by making them the servant of one of the main characters. Apart from the amusement derived from their witty comments on the situation, they could provide comic relief when the narrative became too intense; they could be used to strike a note of common-sense; they could amend the audience's point-of-view; they could act as a connection between the sub and main plots; and their soliloquies could keep the

[57] It is worth noting Mare's uncritical use of the word 'clown' here despite the focus of his work being the fool.
[58] It is worth noting Busby's uncritical use of the word 'clown' here despite the title of her book.

audience up-to-date with the progress of the story. Their role became that of commentator, a role that Coleridge was to compare with that of the chorus in ancient drama (Brandl 1887: 316). The fool was becoming a most valuable dramatic asset.

Busby (1923) unpacks how the traits and skills of the fool developed and influenced Shakespeare. Taking an overview of Busby's work, I have identified the major types of activity that fools undertook in the plays of this period:

- Acrobatics
- Combat, and rough and tumble
- Dance
- Grimace
- Histrionics
- Improvised repartee with the audience
- Poetry
- Song
- Speech in verse and prose (using: proverbial expressions, vigorous vernacular or rustic dialect, grandiloquence, riddling, listing synonyms, and alliteration)
- Nonsense (including: prophecies, proclamations, misunderstandings, mishearings, slips of the tongue, and speaking to inanimate things as if animate)
- Propelling the action forward with the narrative.

It is striking, however, how many of these features occur in Armin's work.

We can be more certain of influence of later Elizabethan fools on Armin and particularly Will Sommers (? – 1560) and Richard Tarlton (? – 1588), favourite fools of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. Astington notes Sommers and Tarlton as examples of 'the rise of the stage fool as a public entertainer, rather than purely a court or household servant' (2011: 69). They created an explicit connection between the fooling of the court and of the theatre. Both were court fools who enjoyed great public popularity and were household names. In court, they attended banquets, sang ballads and made rhymes as well as performed in plays. Metzler observes that the custom of keeping court fools occured at the same time and in the same places as 'the "keeping" of professional intellectuals, the humanist men of letters' (2016: 232). She wonders if the apparent gulf between the fool and the intellectual may be an illusion. Whilst they may have existed on different parts of the cognitive spectrum, they had a common status as dependants. What was important, Metzler argues, was not brain power but economic power.

Sommers had a dramatic afterlife in a now-lost play of The Admiral's Men that was performed by 1598 and featured a Sommers role.[59] Thomas Nashe also included Sommers as a character in an entertainment he wrote called *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (1592) as did the actor-playwright Samuel Rowley in his play *When You See*

[59] Astington notes Henslowe's inventory of the theatrical wardrobe at the Rose playhouse included a 'Will Sommers sewtte' (2011: 73) and so concludes that a Will Sommers role was in existence by 1598.

*Me You Know Me* (1604). The performances of Sommers and Tarlton played a significant role in the growing interest in fools during the sixteenth century in England.

Whilst it has been generally accepted by historians that Sommers was an artificial fool,[60] Armin in *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) refers to Sommers as a 'natural' but does not use the term 'idiot' as he does for most of the other individuals he portrays. McDonagh wonders if the identification of Sommers as an artificial fool is 'a retrospective reading based on Sommers' reputation as a "witty" fool' (2008: 140. Sommers' identity contributes further to a destabilising of the categories of 'artificial' and 'natural'.

Sommers had an ambiguous social status at court. As Armin records, at the conclusion of a riddling session he 'layes him downe amongst the Spaniels to sleep' (Armin 1600a; Lippincott 1973; Zall 1970). Despite this, Sommers was also extremely influential. He is also probably the fool described by the Earl of Leicester who made such a noise calling the new Queen Elizabeth that she came undressed to her window and kept the Spanish and Imperial ambassadors waiting for an hour and a half whilst they jested together (Southworth 1998: 108). The ambiguity of the fool's status is something we can see Armin exploring in his own work. His fools are of low social status and yet are individuals with great influence.

Andrew Vogel Ettin in his essay 'Will Sommers' observes that much of what we know of Sommers is apocryphal. The anonymous *Pleasant Historie of the Life and Death of William Sommers*, for example, was not published until 1676. Armin, who eulogises Sommers, presents him as enjoying rhyming and riddling games with King Henry, and as the only person able to relieve the monarch of a morose mood. Armin seeks to show that Sommers was the friend of the poor and the recently widowed, as well as being beloved at court. Ettin questions how much of this is romanticised and acknowledges that 'later work making use of his name and persona suggest that his image transcended his reality' (1998: 408). In common with Sommers' identity, whether real or imagined, Armin would also develop a stage persona renowned for: linguistic cleverness and an independent moral outlook that combined both cynicism and sincerity. Through this persona they functioned as both comic performers and critics of contemporary behaviours.

Many stories about Tarlton are recounted in *Tarlton's News out of Purgatory* (1590) which is attributed to Armin by J. P. Feather in his facsimile edition of *The Collected Works of Robert Armin* (Feather 1972).[61] Tarlton's stage roles were usually rustic clowns and he was given to improvising lines in addition to those scripted for him. He was able to advise the queen under the guise of the actor at court. Tarlton is a prime example of the actor doubling as court fool and the line between his theatrical and real-life personae seems barely discernible.

[60] Andrew Vogel Ettin, for example, in 'Will Sommers' (1998) describes Sommers in this way.
[61] Lake argues using his analysis of the frequency of words such as 'between' and 'betwixt' in Armin's works that the evidence for Armin's authorship of *Tarlton's New out of Purgatory* (1590) is dubious (1977: 119).

*Tarlton's Jests* (1613) includes many witticisms and pranks that were attributed to him. Published in three sections: 'court', 'city' and 'country' jests, it provides insight into a fooling technique. Tarlton is known to have performed in three types of spaces which somewhat correlate with these sections: the banqueting hall, the stage, the tavern. *Jests* provides a vivid picture of the performer in which we see him drawing upon three traditions. The first was that of the minstrel. Whilst this type of performer had largely disappeared by Tarlton's time and the term had started to become redundant, the minstrel's technique was very much alive, as Wiles makes clear with the example of a minstrel-esque performance in Kenilworth in 1575 (2005: 19). The minstrel's relationship with the audience was interactive and competitive, and the technique is 'broadly that of Tarlton's in the theatre' (Wiles 2005: 20). The second tradition derived from the amateur misrule tradition in which an individual of low status was elected in cities, villages, institutions or great households to be a Lord of Misrule. Wiles argues that Tarlton drew his vitality from this tradition.

> Tarlton's licence to play the fool derives from the assumption that, although being the ugliest, poorest and stupidest member of the community, he is entitled to the office of Lord of Misrule. Tarlton assumes a cover of naïvety, and represents himself as being penniless. He cultivates a reputation for drunkenness. These aspects of his projected character are the frame which lends form to his anarchy. (2005: 21)

The third tradition was that of the Vice. The Vice participated in village May-games as well as played a part within the morris. Whilst the Lord of Misrule served only once, the Vice performed regularly: 'the Lord was an amateur, the Vice/fool was a specialist' (Wiles 2005: 22). Tarlton's originality as a Vice was to exist in a social dimension rather than a moral/religious dimension. Wiles describes it as a response to post-medieval social conditions that played with urbanity and status as opposed to virtue and wisdom.

> His comedy cut across barriers of class, proving acceptable both at court and in the tavern, because most people could accept the proposition that beneath every human exterior there lurked a coarse anarchic peasant. By the end of the century, this proposition was less acceptable. (2005: 23)

Weimann identifies Tarlton as a 'popular' performer and characterises his technique as one in which he generates his entertainment out of the situation he finds and develops (1978: 213). Considering Tarlton's work as a tavern fool, Wiles notes how this became the basis of his theatrical technique which was 'to recreate in the theatre the intimate atmosphere of the table-side, making spectators feel like participants' (2005: 16).

*Tarlton's Jests* was published in 1613 or earlier, but after Tarlton's death. The historicity of the text as a source for Tarlton's performance practice has been questioned by scholars such as Halasz. She notes that at least three quarters of the jests can be traced to earlier books and that therefore they are not specifically Tarlton's jokes. Despite this, Halasz acknowledges that this does not prove that Tarlton did not tell these jokes. She observes in a range of late sixteenth-century publications about Tarlton an ambition to create a 'resemblance of Tarlton' which signifies in part a specific dramatic practice

(1995: 28). Ishikawa has similarly argued that we should question the way Tarlton was profiled in printed material and notes a process involving mythologizing and exaggeration (2011: 11). This accepted, the identity of Tarlton, real or imagined, was an important reference for Armin and provided one of the bridges connecting Armin's work with the medieval traditions.

Whilst it is clear that these posthumous depictions of Sommers and Tarlton cannot be trusted for historical authenticity, nonetheless they reveal the significant relationship between the court fool and the stage fool. Otto (2007) describes a process of mutual influence. This overlap between the stage and the court seems more striking in the English context than elsewhere and Armin played a key role in solidifying the court fool's theatrical identity.

Armin's predecessor in the Chamberlain's Men was William Kemp (? – 1603). David Mann in *The Elizabethan Player: Contemporary Stage Representation* identifies the essential parts of Elizabethan stage clowning technique as exemplified by Kemp (1991: 56-67):

1. 'Peeping out'
   This was a technique to make the audience laugh by thrusting the head out through the curtain. Thomas Middleton through the voice of his character Simon in the play *The Mayor of Queenborough* (1661) indicates this was a widely shared practice. He recalls, 'O, the clowns that I have seen in my time' and the gut-bursting laughter provoked by 'the very peeping out' of performers like Tarlton and Kemp (v. 1. 124-5).

2. Stage business when making an exit
   Three of the scenes associated with Kemp conclude 'with discussion as to the order of leaving the stage'. These can be found in *The Return from Parnassus*, *The Travels of Three English Brothers*, and *Romeo and Juliet* (Mann 1991: 56).

3. Extemporisation
   Five different activities were covered by the Elizabethan term 'extemporisation'. These comprise: performances that take place prior or subsequent to the play-proper; stopping the dramatic action for independent mirth; being unable to remember every detail of the written lines but knowing the general drift, and so substituting on the spot; delivering unscripted dialogue in response to set piece scenarios or lazzi;[62] spaces in the script to be filled in by the actor.

[62] Mann notes that while there was familiarity in England with the performance techniques of the *Commedia dell'arte*, this was generally considered as a foreign practice (1991: 66). He observes the useful definition by L. M. Lea in *Italian Popular Comedy*: 'To a theme the Italians were expected to fit the plot, to the English a rhyme' (1934: 384).

Mann along with Wisker (2018) and Purcell (2016) have observed the impact of clown actors on the development of a script.

> Not only did clowns modify the script through improvisation, sharpening the humour by incorporating what 'works' in performance, but their modifications were subsequently recorded and became part of the working script. (Mann 1991: 68)

Wisker has shown how such a process was adopted between Shakespeare and Armin. Comparing the Folio and Quarto editions of *King Lear*, Wisker suggests that the 'Folio revisions arguably represent playwright and comic actor in consultation responding to the play's earlier performances, and developing the figure [of the Fool] into its fuller potential' (2018: 216). Wisker's work undermines the argument that Armin was totally contained in performance by the playwright's text. Armin drew, to some extent, on the tradition of comic extemporisation.

Considering improvisation in general, Mann notes the power of this as a part of a performance technique:

> Its freshness; its capacity to give the impression that the play was just for that particular audience; the intimate sense that the mirth in which they shared was their immediate *joint* creation. More than a mere adjunct to performance, extemporisation in a sense exploited the quintessential characteristics of theatre: its ability to make things happen, and make them happen here and now, which premeditation, total loyalty to a script, and even rehearsal, threaten to destroy, and are at best only able to simulate. An improvised performance is free to respond and adapt to its audience in a way that a scripted performance cannot. (1991: 63)

Kemp's technique involved improvisation and ad-libbing, and this gave a thrilling immediacy to his performance.

In his time, Kemp was as famous for his stage jigs as for his acting in regular drama. His popularity in these post-show performances has led Thomson to argue that this explains why Kemp's roles 'had no need of dramatic completion [in the play-proper] since the theatrical finality of the jig lay ahead of him' (2004: 411). Examples of these jigs may be seen in the manuscript collection of John Dowland that is kept in the Cambridge University Library (MS Dd.2.11). The jig featured performers in a partially improvised song-and-dance routine. Jigs had plots, often bawdy, but the emphasis was on dancing and physical comedy (Baskervill 1965). Two of Kemp's jigs survive in English, and two more in German. They were demanding routines, requiring physical coordination, strength, balance and musicality. There were particular dances performed in the jig and there are references to certain steps including those of the galliard and the coranto. The galliard with its contra body movements and syncopated rhythms was particularly impressive for an audience to watch. The jig seems not to conform to any one particular dance form, however. Sometimes the jig is described as a sword dance and at other times it appears more like a fertility dance. It was often performed in 6/8

time and there are examples of Kemp's jig in Europe set to the tune of 'Rowland'. The musical accompaniment of the fool's dance was also diverse. Musicians played for jigs but some actors also played instruments. In many instances, the tabor and pipe, or similar woodwind and percussion instruments figure prominently. Sometimes there were composers for these fool dances. At other times, it seems that they were musical improvisations.[63]

Jumps seem to have been important to the choreography of the jig. They are key in dances such as the galliard. The symbolism of jumping as an expression of vigour and athleticism is something Armin picked up in his own description of foolish behaviour. In a section of *Quips Upon Questions* titled 'Where is Ginking gone?', Armin mocks the character Ginking's ability to find a wife. Armin presents Ginking as unsuccessful, despite fervent attempts, though a series of innuendos: 'Ginking iumpt, and Ginking leapt, | Ginking thumpt, and Ginking reapt' (1600b: B3).

Whilst in Kemp's jigs he made use of jumps, there was no singular type of choreography that he employed. Sometimes groups of actors danced; sometimes it was a solo dance. The jigs had a curious function. They acknowledged the whole narrative by bringing Kemp (or other leading comic actor) and other actors on to the stage in an activity beyond the play itself. They moved in rhythm, in sync and in set configuration. The inclusion of short bawdy texts with music made a strong impact. This is demonstrated in the *Middlesex County Record* of 1612 that describes a jig performance that provoked the audience into rioting as they left the theatre:

> […] ill disposed persons in greate multitudes doe resorte thither at th'end of every playe many tymes causing tumults and éages wherebye His Majesties peace is often broke and much mischiefe like to ensue thereby, Itt was hereupon expresslye commanded and ordered by the Justices of the said bench That all Actors of everye playehouse within this cittye and liberties therof and in the Countye of Middlesex that they and euerie of them utterlye abolishe all Jigges Rymes and Daunces after their playes And not to tolerate permitt or suffer anye of them to be used vpon payne of ymprisonment and puttinge downe and suppressing of theire playes. (Baskervill 1965: 116)

The jig was inflammatory and its performance was outlawed.

Early in 1599, an unclear sequence of events removed Kemp from the company (Shapiro 2006). Prior to this, he certainly played the roles of Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598) and Peter in *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1595) as he is identified in the speech prefixes and stage directions with those parts. It has also been conjectured that Costard in *Love's Labours Lost* (c. 1595), Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595-96), and Lancelot Gobbo in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-99) were also his roles. Although he

[63] The tradition of the jig is still practised in part at the modern-day Shakespeare's Globe theatre where the company dance together at the end of both comedies and tragedies as was done in Shakespeare's time. In this modern-day context, the jig functions more as a curtain call and brings the company on stage for the audience's applause.

had been a sharer in the plans to construct the Globe Theatre, he appeared in no productions in the new theatre, which was open by mid-1599. Evidence from Shakespeare's *Henry V*, in which there is no promised continued role for Falstaff, and from *Hamlet*, containing its famous complaint at improvisational clowning (III. 2. 39-46), indicates some of the circumstances in which Kemp may have been dropped or may have removed himself.

After his departure from the Chamberlain's Men, Kemp continued to pursue his career as a performer (Butler 2011). In February and March 1600, he Morris-danced from London to Norwich (a distance of over a hundred miles) in a journey that took him nine days spread over several weeks, often amid cheering crowds. He was accompanied by Thomas Slye, a musician who played pipe and drums, William Bee (Kemp's servant) and George Sprat who is described as an 'overseer' and whose role was to judge Kemp's efforts. Later that year he printed a description of the event in a publication he called *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder* (1600) that was aimed at doubters[64] to prove that the stunt was true. Kemp's danced journey to Norwich was a defiant act of publicity and artistic self-determination. His activities after this are as obscure as his origins. On evidence from *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (Day, Rowley and Wilkins 2000), he is assumed to have made another European dance tour, perhaps reaching Italy, but by 1601 he was borrowing money from Philip Henslowe and had joined Worcester's Men.

Kemp's work was praised and much loved. Thomas Nashe, for example, refers to Kemp in his dedication dedicating *An Almond for a Parrat* (1590) to 'that Most Comicall and conceited Caualerie Monsieur du Kempe'. One contemporary satirist describes the reactions of an elderly citizen to a jig at the theatre where Kemp was then playing. The jig fires his breast and succeeds in, 'making him young again – | Who, coming | from the Curtain, sneaketh in | To some old garden noted house of sin' (Mackay 1841: 97). Armin's predecessor was a popular and highly skilled performer.

## Where did all the fools go?

Whilst Armin was the significant inspiration for this research, I had to acknowledge that fools have largely disappeared from our world. I began to question the causes of this. In reading various commentators (particularly Zijderveld (1982), Billington (1986), Prentki (2012) Stallybrass and White (2012) Rojek (2016)), I began to understand the disappearance of the fool should more appropriately be understood as a process of sublimation in which the fool was absorbed into other areas of culture. It seemed important, therefore, to understand this process of sublimation better. I wanted to be more attuned to how and where the fool might manifest in the world today. The following section considers the disappearance of the fool from society and the dramatic

[64] We might speculate that Armin was among the doubters and note that Kemp's date of publication was the same as Armin's own *Foole Upon Foole* (1600).

canon, focussing mainly on English theatre and history, but drawing on other traditions that helped to shed light on this question – where did all the fools go?

The death of Robert Armin in 1615[65] did not immediately bring about the death of the fool either on the stage or in the court. Armin was succeeded by John Shanke (? – 1636) as the principal comic actor and it may have been Shanke's lewd jigs which were supressed by the Middlesex justices in 1612. As Eva Griffiths in her book *A Jacobean Company and its Playhouse* (2013) shows, fools could be seen in many companies other than Shakespeare's. Thomas Greene is another important example in this respect. He was the fool in Queen Anne's Men at the Red Bull theatre and played a number of fool roles including that of Bubble in *Greene's Tu Quoque* (1611) by John Cooke. William Rowley (c. 1585-1626) was both a playwright and actor who specialised in fat parts. He was a successful member of several major companies in the early seventeenth century. He played the Fat Bishop in Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (1624; the title page of the first edition depicts Rowley in this role), and Plumporridge in *Inner Temple Masque* (1613) by the same playwright. He played similar fat fool parts such as Jaques in his own play *All's Lost by Lust* (c. 1618) and Bustopha in *The Maid in the Mill* (Fletcher and William Rowley 1623) (Grunby 2013).[66] He may also have written the lost play *The Fool Without Book* (1613). He remained active until 1625.

Andrew Cane and Timothy Reade continued a clown/fool tradition until the closing of the theatres in 1642 (Thomson 2004: 413). Fools remained a fascination for audiences for a number of years. Charles Baskervill in *The Elizabethan Jig and Related Song Drama* (1965) has also shown that the influence of the English fools of the Elizabethan and Jacobean stages was strong, spreading throughout Europe in song, dance, music and drama. These remained in vogue well into the seventeenth century. Comic fool-like figures appeared in the plays of Heywood and Dekker but were mainly servants, tradesmen or thieves. These characters occupied a particular social stratum in the way that fools did not (Ishikawa 2011: 249). The death of Armin in 1615 and Shakespeare the following year brought to an end a significant chapter in the fool's history.

The rise of Puritanism and the closure of the theatres in 1642 further brought to an end a golden of age of fools. Billington (1986) recounts the change in taste that occurred over the seventeenth century and the impact it had on fools. By the mid-part of the century, Royalists and Parliamentarians alike were using 'fool' as a term of abuse for each other. Now that dramatists were no longer able to practise their craft openly, they had to find other more surreptitious means of creating performances. Billington argues

[65] Armin's burial is recorded in the Registers of St Botolph's Aldgate as 30 November 1615. He had fathered at least three children (Denkinger 1926: 96). The last theatrical record to mention Armin is the cast list in the 1610 quarto of *The Alchemist* by Ben Jonson. It is thought he played Abel Drugger in this text due to Drugger's question: 'did you never see me play the fool?' (IV. 7. 69) (Belfield 1981: 146). He is not mentioned in the cast list of Jonson's *Caitline* (1611) and it has therefore been speculated that he retired around 1610, perhaps due to poor health. He made his will in December 1614 and it was proved in November 1615. In it, he described himself as 'Citizen and Goldsmith of London' (Bradbrook 1969:72).

[66] *The Maid in the Mill* was first published in 1647 in a folio by Beaumont and Fletcher. The date of composition was 1623.

that the entertaining fool did not disappear; instead, they maintained a recognisable dress and changed their name. These names were inspired partly by the titles of the jigs that continued, in certain circumstances, to be performed by the fools. 'Three names appear most frequently,' Otto observes, 'and by the end of the eighteenth century were interchangeable: Zany – the Italian equivalent of Jonny –, Merry Andrew and Jack Pudding' (1986: 52). Their dress, language and behaviour show a clear line of inheritance from their ancestors, the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama and court fools. Armin himself had frequently used the name Jack for his fools and as a term of abuse: 'One askes me whats a clocke, thinking indeede, | That I am Iacke of clock-house, and can tell' (1600b: C3). Such characters haunted fairs, drolls and other forms of popular entertainment that were enjoying a considerable period of popularity at this time. As Samuel Butler (2010) notes in his description of characters from the late seventeenth century, a performer could one day play a Jack Pudding, a Harlequin the following day, and a mountebank the next.

We find many instances in which these performers took on the function of a fool servant to a mountebank, or played the role of doctor. In such pieces, the 'doctor' preached pseudo-medicine. This was a medieval tradition known as the *sermon joyeux*, a kind of mock sermon that was popular especially in France. In this performance genre, someone disguised as a preacher sermonised in a mixture of French and fake Latin. The content was usually satirical and ribald. Otto gives the example of the English fool Tom Killigrew (c. 1660-85) who:

> Once condescended to act the quack, climbing onto the mountebank's stage to impersonate him for a joke. A gentleman in the audience promised him five guineas if he could cure his servants of two shortcomings: a short memory and a lying tongue. Killigrew concocted two boluses, one to be eaten immediately, the other at supper. (2007: 247-48)

The servant ate the first and immediately exclaimed that it was faeces he had put in his mouth. Killigrew replied saying 'did I not tell you I'd cure him for you? You see the first word he speaks is truth; and I warrant he'll never forget it as long as he lives' (Otto 2007: 248). From the interregnum onwards, the intensity of farce and satire in these types of performances was noticeably strong.

Welsford argues that the fool on the stage evolved into the Harlequin, Joseph Grimaldi and the circus clown,[67] and the comedian of the music hall. Fops in Restoration Comedies took some of the qualities of fools with eccentric dress, use of extreme or odd language, and functioning as a vehicle for the writer to reveal contemporary foibles and vanities. Moira E. Casey in her essay 'The Fop: "Apes and Echoes of Men"' argues that 'The character of the fool resurfaces in the restoration comedy of manners as […] an aristocratic gentleman who comically and overzealously attempts to exemplify the

[67] As Charles Dickens (2012) narrates, Grimaldi worked in London theatres. His performance style had an important influence on later clowns in the circus (Towsen 1976).

height of wit and fashion' (1998: 207).[68] The fop, however, was a member of society in a way that fools never were. Whilst fops were unintentional merry-makers, it would be hard to call them truth-tellers too. There were attempts to reintroduce the fool into plays such as *Thorney Abbey* (1662), *The Comical Revenge* (1664), and *The Prodigall* (1777) in which the fool was played by a woman (Billington 1986: 70). This accepted, the trajectory of these times was clearly going in one direction; theatre was dispensing with the fool.

Willson Disher argues that the fool 'may have been a serving man, but he was a serving-man sitting in his lord's chair.' The nobility of the late seventeenth century, he says, 'wanted to see themselves raised to the sublimely heroic, above the ridicule of the clown' (Disher 1925: 72). Anton Zijderveld describes the fool's relationship with absolute monarchies of the medieval and Renaissance worlds, saying the court fool had a perfect position; 'By his sheer presence, but in particular by his jests at the king's expense, the court fool demonstrated constantly the absolute nature of the monarch's power – he did so contrariwise, in a mirror fashion' (1982: 121). He notes the paradox within this relationship; as fools became institutionalised and professionalised at court, they also began to lose the marginality that was their essential ingredient. So it was that fools grew into just another courtier, changed their foolish nature and became superfluous. Zijderveld also describes how the fool was subjected to a 'bourgeoisification' that came hand-in-hand with the process of modernisation. Natural fools became people to be cared for in specialised institutions or by social workers, someone to be sustained economically by the welfare state.

McDonagh considers how the fools became darker in the Jacobean period but when the theatres reopened in 1660 the fool had all but disappeared. He notes how the themes of folly resurface as an object of satire personified in the image of the idiot. He includes Jonathan Swift's 'Dick's Variety' (1722) and Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad* (1729) as examples of this. Others such as Sarah Fielding in her *David Simple* (1744/53) and Henry Brook in *The Fool of Quality* (1766/72) used the simple man as vehicle to reveal social hypocrisy. Considering the history of the idiot in English literature, MacDonaugh concludes that there was a process in which the '"innocent" is stripped of his "trickster fool" qualities, and at one extreme the idiot becomes an object of pity […] rather than a vehicle for social analysis or critique' (2008: 149). Overall, Otto notes the fragmentation of the fool in modern times and how their function has been compartmentalised: 'the clown for capering and laughable appearance, the mental patient for a disregard of social norms, the journalist as critic, and the cartoonist and comedian as mockers' (2007: 258).

[68] Casey notes that 'Although true fops are men, certain fop characteristics can be found in female characters. [….] Of course, the effeminisation of the male fop does not apply to the female fop, nor can the process be reversed (the female fop is not "emasculinised" by her foppery)' (1998: 212n).

The household fool survived into the eighteenth century in the person of Dicky Pearce, fool to Lord Suffolk, who died in 1728. An epitaph to Dicky can be found in Berkely Church (Gloucestershire) and is ascribed to Jonathan Swift.

> Here lies the Earl of Suffolk's Fool
> Men call'd him Dicky Pearce:
> His folly served to make men laugh
> When wit and mirth were scarce.
>
> Poor Dick, alas! Is dead and gone,
> What signifies to cry?
> Dickys enough are left behind
> To laugh at by and by. (Coghill: 1959: 1-2)

Douce (1807) names Robin Rush as fool to Lord Bussy Mansel in the same century and says that there were people living who still remembered him in 1807. The last recorded instance of a domestic fool being kept by an English family, according to Doran, was in Hilton Castle, Durham. He was retained by John Hilton and died in 1746. His master on returning from London in a newly-acquired gold-embroidered garment was accosted by the fool who boldly inquired, 'Who's the fool now?' (Doran 1858: 234). This, says Doran, is the last recorded joke by the last recorded fool.

Tim Prentki (2012) notes a process through the Age of Reason in which the irrational outsider 'represents a case study in psychosis and offers grounds for social exclusion. Folly has not gone away but a society founded upon class distinctions and pride in its reasoning abilities has repressed folly's manifestations by extinguishing its representative' (2012: 140). Prentki observes a process of fragmentation, marginalisation, sublimation and repression of the fool over several centuries. In twentieth and twenty-first-century drama, folly is worn by characters 'as a mask, behind which they can employ irony, paradox and contradiction to discomfort those who represent and benefit from oppressive regimes that operate by separating people from the sources of their own humanity' (2012: 141). He explores how the fooling in the theatre was reimagined in the twentieth century, making particular reference to the work of Chekhov, Brecht, Fo and Beckett. Prentki describes Beckett's characters and the work of Augusto Boal as 'fooling with existence' and 'fooling with applications' respectively. He argues that fools are now revealed in ways that are less centralised around a specific stock character.

Prentki also refers to the work of Stallybrass and White and states that 'the operation of carnival in the eighteenth century can be extended in scope and historical period to chart the varying fates of fools upon the European stage for three hundred years' (2012: 140). The significance of carnival in modern-day Brazil is explored in the film *Trinta* about ground-breaking designer Joãzinho Trinta. Having transformed the Rio de Janeiro carnival for a new era, he states: 'My intuition always was, after the electric energy, the atomic energy, that a third energy would be discovered: the energy of happiness. […] It can accomplish great things' (Machline 2014). The phenomenon of carnival is one manifestation of the sublimated but powerful energy of the fool.

Otto (2007) traces the continuance of the fool in drama referring to Victor Hugo's *Le roi s'amuse* (1832) that the composer Verdi dramatized in his opera *Rigoletto* (1851). Peter N. Chetta in his essay 'Rigoletto' observes a shift in the portrayal of the fool with Rigoletto: 'the fool looses his entirely emblematic role and gains the tortured humanity necessary for pain and sadness. Thus the fool becomes more nearly a human representative of everyman; he is not merely an icon of chaos but rather an individual who experiences chaos himself' (1998: 385-86).

Otto also observed fool-like figures in George Buchner's *Leonce and Lena* (1836), Frank Wedekind's *King Nicolo* (1901), W.B. Yeats's *The Green Helmet* (1912) and Michel de Ghelderode's *Escurial* (1929). She also notes the genre known as Holocaust drama, plays inspired by the ghettos and concentration camps of World War II. Examples can be found in *The Theatre of the Holocaust* (Skloot 1982) in which Harald and Edith Lieberman's *Throne of Straw* (1972) and Shimon Wincelberg's *Resort 76* (c. 1964) both contain fool figures. In these texts, fools play with the horror of genocide and the madness of Nazi absolutism.

*The Fool* (1976), a play by Edward Bond, recounts the life of the poet John Clare (1793 - 1864). Clare was born in rural East Anglia and suffered from mental illness throughout much of his life. He spent some years in High Beach mental asylum (1837–41) and his writings are characterised by an alienated and unstable self. Through the course of the play, Clare's life falls apart as the woman he loves disappears, the countryside is destroyed by industrialisation, his patrons refuse to print his work, he is accused of radicalism, and he fails to provide for his family. The play was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre in a 1975 production directed by Peter Gill. In his choice of title, Bond connected Clare to the Romantic notion of the suffering fool-poet who is rejected by society, and whose mental instability inspires their poetry. Ellanor Pruitt has also explored the perseverance of the fool as a dramatic figure in her doctoral thesis 'The Figure of the Fool in Contemporary Theatre' (1976, Emory University).

Alina Birzache in *The Holy Fool in European Cinema* (2016) examines the trope of holy foolishness in Soviet, post-Soviet, French and Danish cinema. She examines the critical functions of the holy fool as well as how filmmakers have used the figure to respond to and critique aspects of the modern world. She notes that this traditional figure has captured the imagination of new generations in an age of religious pluralism and secularisation.

In the cinema of the United States, characters such as Forrest Gump (dir. by Robert Zemeckis, 1994) have similarly taken on some of the functions of the fool. James M. O'Brien in his essay 'Forrest Gump: Innocent Fool' identifies Gump as a holy innocent fool because of his 'non-judgemental acceptance and single-minded fidelity that transforms the lives' (1998: 227) of those around him. O'Brien links Gump to Gimpel in Bashevis Singer's novel and notes the essential characteristics of the innocent fool:

> Because he is both unsuspecting and unselfishly loving, he fails to comprehend or acknowledge the politic nature of society, never questioning either his own acts or those of others. He behaves with a consistent goodness that, according

> to the arbitrary rules of the convention, carries him safely through the minefields of the world and drops him into the seat of the victor. (1998: 227)

O'Brien notes a literary genealogy which includes Prince Myshkin in Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot* (1868-69), Benjy in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Lennie in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and Boo Radley in Lee Harper's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960). Describing Tom Hank's performance in the film, O'Brien remembers other intellectually challenged heroes such as Dustin Hoffman's Raymond in *Rainman* (dir. by Barry Levinson, 1988) and Peter Sellers's Chance in *Being There* (dir. by Hal Ashby, 1979) (1998: 226-27). Such characters belong to the tradition of the *idiot savant* (learned idiot), a term first used by John Langdon Down (known for his description of Down syndrome) in 1887.[69]

Orrin Klapp in *Heroes, Villains, and Fools: The Changing American Character* (1962) provides a social psychological analysis of the American character in the twentieth century. His work is an example of the lasting significance of the fool as a symbolic figure for both society and drama. Inspired by American television and film culture, Klapp describes a social structure made up of three key identities: heroes, villains and fools. He identifies fools as those that fall short of norms (1962: 17). The book explores how an individual can manipulate dress, facial expressions, life style and public roles in order to manoeuvre their identity between these three figures and to build a more empowered self.

More recent work in sociology has considered how fooling functions within reality television. Sociologist Chris Rojek in *Fame Attack: The Inflation of Celebrity and Its Consequence* (2016) devotes a chapter titled 'Reality TV: The Return of the Fool' to this. He says the fool is 'the elephant in the room of celebrity culture' (2016: 161). Describing the dynamics between PR strategists, media corporations, celetoids (a short-lived celebrity) and audiences, he notes how contemporary society yearns to place individuals in the position of fool.

> But it is not enough for someone to be a star, or for others to construct, gaze and wax the façade of celebrity, or for still larger numbers to be in thrall to celebrity worship syndrome, narcissistic idealisation and hero worship. Celebrity culture also demands an absolute foil, a butt. The star at the pinnacle of the pyramid requires a negative force at the base to legitimate celebrity prestige and sanction levels of economic reward that would otherwise be regarded as excessive. The star signifies capability, decorum, glamour, intelligence and authority. The fool is an anti-star. He signifies, among other things, incompetence, ineffectuality, indignity and weakness. (2016: 161)

[69] The term '*idiot savant*' is no longer used and has been replaced by categories such as intellectual disability and autism (Miller 1999), and neurodiversity (Singer 1999).

Making comparisons with the *stulti* of Ancient Rome and the court fools of European history, Rojek shows how a fool tradition continues to function, more often taking the role of a scapegoat but sometimes also becoming a naïve voice of truth.

A late twentieth-century example of fooling can be found in the work of Paul Birch who was officially designated corporate fool for British Airways. In 1994 Birch, who was an employee of the company, read an article about the character of the Fool in *King Lear*. He decided he would write his own job description for a company fool, someone who would question authority, promote honesty and approach problems in creative ways. The then CEO Colin Marshall liked the idea and Birch was duly appointed BA's first Corporate Fool. To promote creativity, he encouraged managers to chase one another with water guns. To resolve problems with seat allocation, he proposed a game of 'Giants, Witches and Dwarves' in which customers would be divided into groups of these three characters. Giants would need to wave their hands in the air and shout; witches would need to cast spells; dwarves would need to get on their knees and beat the knees out from other people. The intention was to make customers do foolish things but to do them as a team. In the end, BA redesigned the seating system so that the majority of customers received their allocation at the airport rather than being guaranteed a pre-booked seat. Birch relied on the tolerance of his 'king' and when Bob Ayling took over from Colin Marshall, things changed. Ayling is reported to have said 'You've been taking the piss for the last year and it's got to stop' (Otto 2007: 268). Birch responded that 'taking the piss' was what he was supposed to do but his work was not acceptable and he was sacked.

Management consultants David Firth and Alan Leigh in *The Corporate Fool* (1998) describe fools in the modern-day workplace and show how they fulfil many of the functions of the traditional court fool. They argue the case for businesses to nurture the idiosyncrasies of the fool as a way to overthrow conventional paradigms and facilitate change. They describe a business world beset by market and social pressures and in which staff rotate in a busy, helpless dance – the Jig of Despair – desperately trying to improve the way things are done but constrained by rules. With new technology, open systems and greater connectivity, there is a feeling that things might shift. Firth and Leigh argue this will only happen if we stimulate the dancers to change their steps, to become more open, creative and balanced. A new business professional is essential for this to happen – the Corporate Fool. Firth and Leigh describe the nine guises of the Corporate Fool:

1. Satirist, deflator, pricker of pomposity
2. Alienator, representative of otherness
3. Contrarian, challenger of the norms
4. Jester, entertainer and joker
5. Midwife, generator of creativity and problem-solving
6. Mapper of knowledge
7. Mediator of meaning
8. Confidante of the king
9. Truthseeker, teller of difficult truths.

The Corporate Fool is the only person, according to Firth and Leigh, who can help us break out of the Jig of Despair and usher in the New Fool Order.

Vries in 'The Organisational Fool: Balancing a Leader's Hubris' provides an analysis of leadership theory and notes that the role of the fool in organisations can be adopted by someone who is either internal or external to the organisation. He observes that is generally more difficult for the insider as the role involves great risks:

> Just as the king's fool had to be careful not to transgress too far and forfeit his life, the truthsayer in organisational life plays a role which is also not without risks. Dealing with highly sensitive material and saying how things really are can be dangerous activities for career advancement. (1990: 764)

Considering the role of the external consultant, Vries describes this as particularly fool-like:

> By playing dumb and asking naïve questions, the consultant can further the understanding of a particular organisational problem and take on the role of the agent for change. (1990: 765)

Vries concludes that whistleblowers and others who stand up to authority have taken on the function of the fool to operate as counterpoints to leaders, keeping power in check and ensuring more effective organisational life.

In the twenty-first century, a 2004 article for the BBC noted, 'Tongan court jester faces trial'.[70] Jesses Bogdonoff (b. 1955) is described as a US magnet salesman, who was dubbed 'official court jester' by the Pacific island nation of Tonga's King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV. Bogdonoff, who was due to come to trial in 2004, had been implicated in a missing $24m (£16m) of Tongan public money in the years leading up to 2001. Kira Brekke in her 2015 article 'Welsh Castle Appoints First Jester Since 13th Century' for *The Huffington Post* described the function of Russel Erwood (b. 1981) at Conway Castle who was known as 'Erwyd le Fol'. These individuals are among the last recorded official court fools of modern times.

Scholars such as Louise Peacock (2009) have tended to conflate a range of different types of performance under the term 'clowning'. She describes a number of modern-day clowns who act, and actors who clown. She notes two traditions that can be traced through the appearance of clowns in dramatic texts. One exemplified by Kemp, Armin, Grimaldi and the modern-day clown performer Angela De Castro involves performers being written into dramatic texts. Peacock gives the example of Sarah Woods' *Only Fools (No Horses)* which was commissioned by Angela De Castro and was originally performed in 2003 at the Riverside Studios in London. It takes three of Shakespeare's fools (Touchstone, Feste and Lear's Fool) and uses them 'to make a comment on contemporary society's need for clowns and fools' (Peacock 2009: 87). She describes the work of Dario Fo as a variant of this because he writes texts himself, often in collaboration with his wife Franca Rame, which he initially performs. The second

[70] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/3141297.stm> [accessed 25 September 2018].

tradition Peacock identifies relates to playwrights such as Beckett that have been influenced by clowning and whilst the parts they create are not intended to be performed by clowns, nonetheless these characters manifest behaviours which conform to the conventions of clowning. The blending of fooling and clowning in Peacock's work is, I would argue, unhelpful as it glosses over the distinct acting techniques that each requires.

Dario Fo has made explicit reference in his work to the tradition of the fool. He uses the Italian word *giullare* to describe himself. The closest English translation of this word is 'jester'. When he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1997, the press release descried Fo as 'one who emulates the jesters of the Middle Ages in scourging authority and upholding the dignity of the downtrodden' (Nobel Prize website). The main character of the Maniac in Fo's play *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* (1987) is called Matto in the original Italian. This is the Italian word for 'fool'. In both his plays and his performances, Fo fits within a fool tradition.

Modern-day politics and global capitalism create many arenas in which fooling can be effective and powerful. These forms of performance have often involved political protest, have taken place outside the theatre, and utilised techniques such as lampooning and mockery of authority figures. Despite this, they have most commonly been identified as clowning. Janjira Sombatpoonsiri in 'To Defy a Dictator, Send in the Clowns' lists some recent examples in which these techniques have been used against oppressive regimes including political action by the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship in Thailand and the pro-opposition student group Otpor in Serbia. The Clandestine Insurgent Reel Clown Army (CIRCA) is a further example of a group who have worked outside the normal performance frame. Located originally around the United Kingdom, CIRCA's organisation parodies the language and titles used in the armed forces. They undertook a demonstration called Operation Brown Nose as part of the Make Poverty History March in July 2005. In Operation HaHaHa during the same month, they undertook civil disobedience attempting to disrupt the G8 summit by preventing delegates from reaching Gleneagles (Todd 2005). They briefly forced the closure of the A9 road. Peacock describes another intervention at an Army Recruitment Office.

> The gaggle (comprising of about a dozen clowns) enters the recruitment office and begins milling about. According to the video footage (taken by one of the clowns), it takes less than two minutes for the police to arrive. During this time the clowns have cleaned several soldiers with their feather dusters and asked if they can join the army. When the police arrive, the clowns form a line, shouting 'form an orderly queue, form an orderly queue'. […] As soon as the clowns are out of the office, one of the soldiers pulls the metal shutters down, closing the office. […] The clowns hang a closed sign on the Recruitment Office and set up a table with a 'join here' sign. (2009: 122)

Their techniques, I would argue, site them in the tradition of the court fool. In their now defunct (as of August 2016) website, CIRCA stated its aims were to 'make clowning

dangerous again, to bring it back to the street, restore disobedience and give it back the social function it once had: its ability to disrupt, critique and heal society'.[71] Their 'Clown's Creed' reads:

> I am a rebel clown.
> I am a buffoon in a platoon of fools.
> I serve the children of the world
> and live by the values of CIRCA.[72]

CIRCA spread to numerous countries and adopted a range of political and social issues as their target. They are now represented by the organisation Beautiful Trouble (www.beautifultrouble.org) who have led numerous satirical media campaigns such as 'Billionaires for Bush' (Boyd and Mitchell 2016).

The work of Sacha Baron Cohen (who trained with Philippe Gaulier) in films such as *Borat* (dir. by Larry Charles, 2006) and *Brüno* (dir. by Larry Charles, 2009), and his television series *Da Ali G Show* (dir. by James Bobin and Steven Smith, 2000) and *Who Is America?* (dir. by Daniel Gray Longino and others, 2018) is an example of a modern-day fooling practice. Using a range of characters he has invented, Baron Cohen fools with authority figures. He causes his victims to experience their own folly in ways that are humiliating. Stand-up comedians such as Lennie Bruce, Alexi Sayle and Frankie Boyle have manifested the fool's function of speaking truth to power.

Fisher and Fisher in *Pretend the world is funny and forever: a psychological analysis of comedians, clowns, and actors* (1981) have identified a number of psychological traits in such performers. These include: denying things are as bad or threatening as they seem; being preoccupied with issues of good and bad, virtue and evil; being fascinated by size; being particularly sensitive to smallness, and being sensitive to the dimension of up-down (1981: 35). Fisher and Fisher argue that comics associate these patterns with specific childhood experiences in which they had to learn to take care of themselves from an early age, having learnt that little emotional support could be expected from their parents. As a result, according to Fisher and Fisher, comics by being ridiculous, convey a message of having been treated in a ridiculous way.

> The main dilemma for many future clowns or jesters seems to have been that they were not supposed to be children but were prematurely pushed into the role of adults, although inhabiting the body of children. This lack of congruency between one's own capacity and the expectations of others may have led to the preoccupations of feeling small, powerless, and unworthy. Such concerns are difficult to deal with and hard to accept. Hence, comedians choose a life strategy of denying that which is unpleasant. (Vries 1990: 762)

[71] Part of their official website, <www.ClownArmy.org>, is viewable at <https://en.m.wikiquote.org/wiki/Clandestine_Insurgent_Rebel_Clown_Army> [accessed 15 August 2018].
[72] See previous footnote.

Vries in his analysis of Fisher and Fisher's work concludes this is not just a defence mechanism or means to process anger about personal history. He argues it is also a means for the comic to draw attention and prove to the audience that s/he is not as inadequate as they may seem.

> When they are through with their antics, all differences between good and evil, small and big, adult and child, or up and down are blurred and everyone ends up at the same level. (1990: 762)

Comics, he concludes, are in the business of equalisation.

This psychological profile provides a powerful insight that returned me to Armin's fooling practice. Wiles points out Armin's freakishly small size (1987: 148, see also my own section 'Do not be high-minded'). Feste and Lear's Fool share a song which begins: 'When that I was and a little tiny boy' (*Twelfth Night*, V. 1. 381; *King Lear*, III. 2. 73). The song connects Armin with his childhood. The psychological dynamic of equalisation as described by Fisher and Fisher may be what gives energy to Armin/Feste's line: 'Thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges' (*Twelfth Night*, V. 1. 369). A whirligig, which is a child's toy, has reduced the pompous Malvolio to a state of humiliation. Lavache captures the essence of this psychology of comics when he says: 'I am for the house with the narrow gate, which I take to be too little for pomp to enter, some that humble themselves may, but many will be too chill and tender, and they'll be for the flow'ry way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire' (*All's Well That Ends Well*, IV. 5, 49-54).

Of particular significance to the comic performer's technique in equalisation is the use of disguise. Fisher and Fisher describe how the fool 'uses his costume to advertise his constancy as the silly one. […] He is forever the ridiculous one' (1981: 80). Here Fisher and Fisher distinguish the fool (and the clown or comedian) from the actor. The former, they argue, always plays themselves or, at least, they put on the singular identity of the fool/clown/comedian. Whereas the actor pretends to be someone else by playing the dramatic mask of a character. This said, Fisher and Fisher acknowledge the numerous instances when fools, clowns and comedians have adopted multiple roles in performance. They describe this as a dramatising of the multiplicity of self (1981: 82).

Referring to Willeford's work on the fool (1969), Fisher and Fisher describe this playing of multiples roles as deriving from the energy of the performer's 'longstanding debate with himself whether he is good or bad' (1981: 82-83).

> This represents a split in his identity which disturbs and puzzles him. He tries to understand and defuse the issue by openly confronting and ridiculing it. He gives the message: 'There is nothing terrible or threatening about self-splitting. It can happen to anyone and it's largely a laughable matter. Besides, when you look closely, the split is not very real. The split parts are not truly unlike each other.' [… He is] simultaneously devoted to concealment and disdainful of it. But what is most important to understand is his fascination with it. (1981: 83)

These psychological insights into twentieth-century comic performers have allowed me to appreciate Armin's work afresh. I propose that Armin's work demonstrates a similar fascination with a split self as described by Fisher and Fisher. Throughout his practice I have found he moved between two positions, avoiding a fixed place. His work was both an iteration of self and an enactment of the other. In this he suggests that playing the fool is simultaneously being and becoming. He showed that the fool could be a figure for the theatre who was both in the drama and external to it. He constantly sought an equalisation in which his own performed folly could bring to light the folly of the audience. This is something related to but distinct from clowning because the audience is more profoundly implicated.

This has helped me to find my own connection to Armin and a fooling for the twentieth-first century. I have understood that to play the fool today brings me to an exploration of how I am devoted to and yet conceal my own sense of a split self, of how through disguise I may simultaneously reveal and hide, how I can play the one and the many, and how I wrestle with my own folly in order to expose the folly of others.

The modern-day examples considered in this section show the persistence of fool types and fool functions after the seventeenth century. Nonetheless, I had to accept that the fool as a distinct and widely recognised figure has largely disappeared. No royal household today officially licences a fool. There are very few roles called 'Fool' in the dramatic writing of the last 50 years compared with the texts written for the English Renaissance stage. The word 'fool' is now used as a light-weight term of abuse to identify a figure from the past. Fools have largely disappeared from the theatre and society. This required me to approach my practical work one of two ways – either to explore the fool as an 'original practice' and try to recreate the work of Armin in a historically authentic way, or to investigate the modern-day fool, inspired and informed by the work of Armin where appropriate. The first option was laden with the issues that haunt much original practices work concerning the problematic nature of historical authenticity in contemporary performance. The second option would explore contemporary fool practice for the theatre of the twenty-first century. It would look for the life of the fool, succeeding or failing according to its reception by a modern-day audience. This approach was artistically exciting.

# Passage

Armin wrote and performed different types of fools. As we have seen, he was inspired by the Erasmian fool, the natural fool, the holy innocent, the rustic clown and many other traditions. This section considers my training to play the fool as inspired by the work of Armin and other sources that spoke to my contemporary fooling practice. Having notated my embodied practice over a number of years, here I analyse that work, exploring it under six principles inspired by Armin: 'Evoking the playing state', 'Connecting to the fool', 'Enjoying duality and paradox', 'Identifying authority', 'Working with liminality, explosion and appetite', and 'Do not be high-minded'. In this section, 'the work' refers to my process as an actor training and improvising. It identifies the principles, themes and patterns that have emerged through the course of my training. Its style is closely aligned to writing practices of artistic research that site the researcher at the centre of the experience. The approach is self-reflective and personal.

The fooling technique articulated below is not, in the spirit of Armin, intended as a method to play a particular fool. Indeed, this practice resulted in my own performance piece which included seven different types of fools. Neither do I claim it is the only way to approach the playing of fools. Nonetheless, its offers a rigorous approach to contemporary fooling practice that is distinct from clowning and other acting techniques.

Whilst the training has been systematic and thorough, I have wanted to keep my practice open to the creative potential of chaos and mess. This has felt essential in order for my practice to stay connected to the spirit of fooling. I have understood this as a balance between ritual and anti-ritual in my work. Referring to C. L. Barber's work (1972), Thomas Pettit in 'Ritual and Vaudeville: The Dramaturgy of the English Folk Plays' (1988) identifies a genre of 'Festive Comedy' from the later middle ages and sixteenth century which included jigs, merriments, drolls, pastimes, gambols, mummings and disguisings. Pettit argues that the theatrical origins of the English fool came from the folk drama of such seasonal festivity. He describes in these festivities a highly ritualised pattern of action which involved 'calling-ons' and set sequences of action involving a fool. Within these ritual structures, the actor could enjoy parody, improvisation, contemporary reference and interaction with the audience. Ritual and anti-ritual were present in the earliest English fool plays and performances.

Beatrice Otto (2007) describes the significance of ritual and anti-ritual for the fool.

> Pomp and ceremony were perhaps more prevalent in the past, and yet in a sense our age of apparently greater informality is more awed by ritual and formality, more taken in by it. That a personification of chaos and unpredictability was frequently invited to take part in the most formal and ritualistic occasions as a constant reminder of their

> limits is perhaps testimony to the expansiveness of the people who admitted them. Most people move, speak, and dress differently in a formal situation than they would at home. A jester would not. He would be consistently himself without adapting to external ritual requirements. To allow the antithesis of formality and prescribed ritual to cavort uncontrolled at its centre suggests an ability to keep it in its proper existential perspective. (2007: 262)

The court fool, as a critic of power and privilege, thrives in a society with sacraments, that rests on divine authority and that utilises 'efficacious ritual' (Welsford 1935: 195). As Zijderveld argued (1982), one must run counter to an established order to be a fool. Weimann notes a contradiction in the fool's relationship with ritual. On the one hand, the fool is a descendant of ritual, preserving elements of the oldest miming art and functioning as an 'atavistic agent of the cult'. On the other hand, the fool 'through his mimesis and parody, is a heretic'. Weimann observes a conflict in the fool's genealogy as both 'the heir of myth and the child of realism' and concludes this gives the fool his 'Janus-like status' (1978: 11).

The significance of the relationship between ritual and anti-ritual more generally for performance has been acknowledged in performance studies. Schechner and Turner (1985) described a process of breach, crisis, redressive action and reintegration.[73] They showed how the breach is an inaugurating event in a social drama (a term Turner took from theatre and applied to his anthropological analysis) and occurs in relation to a ritual or ritualised act. Schechner acknowledged the work of the so-called Cambridge Anthropologists who helped to describe the process in which ritual which he understands as a standardised unit of action, gave birth to theatre.[74] Ritual, they argued, is performance or performative. Anthropologists have described the way ritual and anti-ritual energise human behaviour as we negotiate taboos. Mary Douglas (2002), for example, showed how boundary ambiguity is a form of pollution that is kept in check as well as periodically transgressed through ritual. As I would discover, the training to play the fool is positioned powerfully between ritual and anti-ritual, in a practice which has both great discipline and yet also seeks anarchy in the actor.

The research for 'Entrance' was largely conducted alone; it involved extensive reading and some searching online. It was sedentary and cognitive. By contrast, 'Passage' has been primarily conducted in collaboration with a variety of practitioners. It has been physical and aerobic, focussing on what I did in my body, breath, voice, speech, emotions and mind whilst training. Along the way, I have found opportunities to share the work with small audiences and from this critiqued myself. I have kept a written journal and taken videos and photographs. These have allowed me to reflect on my

[73] Schechner gives a useful summary of this process in 'Victor Turner's Social Drama', in *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 2012, available at <https://youtu.be/Pnsw5xFuXHE>.
[74] Schechner gives a useful summary of the historical development in Western European culture from ritual and theatre in *From Ritual to Theatre*, 2014, available at <https://youtu.be/oWVtNVuH8X0>.

embodied work, to record breakthroughs as well as the frustrations when my work has been imprecise.

Throughout the process, I have returned to the literature review to provide inspiration and insight about the fool. As in any acting process, historical research can inform and inspire the actor's imagination. My process has not been sequential, reading first and playing after. I have moved between both spheres and have kept wrestling with the research question: How might a twenty-first-century actor approach the fool to bring this figure alive for a contemporary audience? This approach of combining the intellectual with the physical has brought its own challenges. I had to consider what to prioritise and I have been made aware of my own limits. These limits are: what I cannot do, when I make mistakes, what I do not understand, and when my ego defends my vanity. They are the place where I have encountered myself as a fool. My relationship with my body has been particularly powerful in revealing my limitations. It is where my Anglo-Saxon, white, English, middle-class, privately-educated, academically-secure self feels most challenged and most foolish. This was a further reason why any training should place a particular emphasis on physical work. It is the space the fool demanded I inhabit.

I have sought to move my work from cerebral insight to embodied reality. Sometimes the academic preparation has been overly detailed and has become a way to inhibit myself; at other times, the reading has brought energy and need to the practice. Powerful pieces of knowledge about the fool have become exciting motifs that carry me enthusiastically into the empty space of the rehearsal room. They have made me think, 'Wow, this is what a fool is really like' and 'Ha-ha, this is what a fool could really do', and so 'What is my version of that?' and 'How can I find that in my work?' For example, a tale of a fool ingesting faeces inspired a new exercise for a group of actors. A plastic dog poo is placed in the centre of the space. Each actor is invited to make an entrance into the studio one at a time. The task is to respond to the poo sincerely, exploring speed and rhythm when entering the space, and the relationship with the audience. The exercise encourages the actor to explore taboos. As they experiment with the prospect of contamination of themselves and the audience, the actors also begin to play with the fool's themes of taboo and transgression.

Actors today normally focus on the experiential work of rehearsal, of discoveries made in the moment of playing. Whilst they of course research and prepare, actors are not fundamentally responsible for the overall process or product. That is traditionally the director's role who, however collaborative they may be, takes a position outside the space as a guiding eye. It is worth noting that Armin did not work with a director and that similarly the fooling practices and traditions that he drew upon also functioned without a director, at least in the way that we would understand that figure in the twenty-first century. In my practice-based work, I have swung between these roles and positions. Sometimes I have been a participant-actor working inside the experience. Sometimes I have been a critical-director working externally to it. This has occasionally created problems – how to be both in it and looking at it. Nonetheless, this dual focus has been appropriate to the work of the fool – to be located both in the text and out of

it. This dual focus is something I had noted in Armin's practice and which I return to later in my description of my own approach.

I committed myself to sustained practice both with collaborators and alone. I have spent hours on my own in a studio exploring an improvised fool dance, for example, stretching my body or repeating an exercise I had learnt recently from a collaborator. These have often been hard times; lonely and unfulfilling. Another kind of independent work has been *ad hoc*, snatched moments while travelling on the London underground, while getting changed for bed or when unobserved in my office. Sometimes I was observing myself; at other times, I was watching others. This has contributed to my process. At times, this work has verged on the obsessional. This meant that I found connections to fools everywhere. Everything was relevant and everything was foolish. This, I have come to realise, is how fools see the world – full of folly.

More often, I have worked with others. It is in the nature of actors and their necessity to work socially. I have convened a variety of tailor-made workshops and developed a community of practitioners who can challenge and train me. These relationships have evolved and afforded us a growing sense of trust on a mutual journey into the folly of the fool. I have identified these collaborators in a variety of ways. Sometimes a fortuitous passing comment led to encountering someone new. At other times, I have sought out a renowned practitioner with specific expertise. I have usually met these people one-on-one. Occasionally I have trained with several collaborators together. However we have worked, the skills require sustained and regular practice. With them, I have met my own limitations and resistances. I have begun to see the many ways of accessing my fool through the lens of others' work.

My most important collaborators have been Etienne Champion, Merry Conway, Sue Lefton, Irineu Nogueira, Soren Petter and Marc Proulx.[75] Collaboration has also led to the moment when I have had to look to my own resources and determine what the fool deeply means for myself. In this way, the work described below is again not a method but an investigation.

In the following sections, I describe the actor's skills that I have worked on to play the fool and the historical or theoretical information that has inspired this part of the training. I also chart a process of unlearning as I have sought to find how to reveal my own folly. Assumptions I made about myself as well as physical habits have been challenged. This unlearning has facilitated many opportunities to exist outside my comfort zone. Whilst the training has been rigorous, I have kept reminding myself of the paradox at the centre of this research – the nature of the fool cannot be pinned down and to try to do so misses the point.

[75] For further biographical details, see 'Appendix 1: Collaborators'.

## Evoking the playing state

As I began my training in evoking the playing state of the fool, I was mindful of recent theories about the function of play. Donald Winnicott, a major figure in the development of psychoanalysis in the twentieth century, described the importance of play for mental welfare. 'The natural thing is playing,' (1971: 41) he argued. He saw play as having an essential role in 'the search for the self' in child development. Winnicott's work reflects the philosophical tradition of *homo ludens* as explored by Johan Huizinga that argues we are most human when we play. Starting with Plato, Huizinga traces the contribution of *Homo Ludens*, or 'Man the Player' through medieval times, the Renaissance and into our modern civilisation. Huizinga defines play against a rich theoretical background, using cross-cultural examples from the humanities, business and politics.

> A happier age than ours once made bold to call our species by the name of *Homo Sapiens*. In the course of time we have come to realize that we are not so reasonable after all as the eighteenth century with its worship of reason and naïve optimism thought us; hence modern fashion inclines to designate our species as *Homo Faber*: Man the Maker. But though *faber* may not be quite so dubious as *sapiens* it is, as a name specific of the human being, even less appropriate, seeing that many animals too are makers. There is a third function, however, applicable to both human and animal life, and just as important as reasoning and making – namely, playing. It seems to me that next to *Homo Faber*, and perhaps on the same level as *Homo Sapiens*, *Homo Ludens*, Man the Player, deserves a place in our nomenclature. (1972: Foreword)

Huizinga defines play as requiring structure and participants willing to create within limits. Roger Caillois in *Man, Play and Games* (2001) describes the qualities of play as: free and joyous, fantastical, uncertain, unproductive, governed by rules and involving make-believe. He says that for a game to function two or more of the following principles need to be in place: competition, chance, mimicry and vertigo. For both Caillois and Huizinga, play is the central activity in flourishing societies.

A more recent play theorist, Sutton-Smith has analysed the different theories of play. He identifies seven discourses that describe play as:

- Progress (as in animal and child development)
- Fate (as in gambling and other games of chance)
- Power (as in competition and sport)
- Identity (as in community celebrations)
- Imagination (as in the improvisation of all kinds of literature)
- Self (as in solitary activities such as hobbies)
- Frivolity (as in the activities of the idle or foolish). (1997: 9-11)

Sutton-Smith argues that play is a voluntary activity and that playing to order – as in the work of the fool – is a 'forcible imitation' rather than 'pure play'. As Louise Peacock

explains in describing the clown, however, this rejection of performance (playing to order) as real play fails to take into account several factors.

> This ignores the ability of the clown performer to ready himself for play. It also disregards the mutability of any clown performance in which, whilst an overall structure may exist for performance, a clown will still respond to his audience. The nature of the interaction between the clown and the audience is spontaneous and here genuine play occurs, creating an energy which also affects the planned sequence of the performance. (2009: 9)

Lynne Kendrick in her article 'A paidic aesthetic: an analysis of games in the ludic pedagogy of Philippe Gaulier' (2011) identifies the importance of Huizinga, Caillois and Sutton-Smith in the pedagogy and aesthetic of Gaulier's work on play. She proposes that such play theories can be used for 'a close analysis of pedagogical technique' and that Gaulier's work can 'provide one possible answer to Sutton-Smith's call for a "ludic performance theory"' (2011: 85, quoting Sutton-Smith).

Lecoq and Gaulier explored the playing state through what he called '*le jeu*'. This describes a state of energy like a child's in which the actor follows their imagination and impulses with great commitment and yet without forcing. It is compelling to experience and watch. The actor feels that they are really playing, rather than *trying* to play. Davison in discussing the work of Lecoq and Gaulier notes the centrality of pleasure for the playing state. 'This pleasure comes about as a result of "play", but for Gaulier it isn't just any kind of undefined play, but a particularly performance-related idea of what play means' (2015: 10). Peacock (2009) notes that pleasure to be in the moment can be found in the teaching of Lecoq, Gaulier and, more recently, clown performer Angela De Castro. They would agree with Turner (1982) and Winnicott (1971) that play exists in the space between the real and the imagined. It contains both elements but belongs to neither.

For Gaulier and Lecoq, this type of play requires the performer to be fully aware that they are being watched. Having this consciousness changes the nature of play. Peacock (2009) acknowledges the importance of the work of Victor Turner (1982) in describing 'flow experience' as a core part of play.[76] In addition to flow, Turner identified other qualities of play such as lack of dualism, centring of attention, loss of ego, and pleasure to be in the moment. Peacock challenges the applicability of lack of dualism (which she understands as simultaneously being in the moment and being aware that one is acting) in relation to the play of clowns.

> Whilst Turner contends that the actor cannot be aware that he is aware, I would contend that the clown has to be aware that he is aware, as it is this awareness that facilitates a direct communication with the audience. Interestingly, whilst the clown performer, in common with any other

[76] Turner was indebted to Csikszentmihalyi's *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1980) for this.

> performer, exists in the limen, usually the clown can step over the threshold into reality to acknowledge the audience and can step back again. (2009: 11)

The functioning of an actor's awareness whilst acting is complex. Actors try to be spontaneous and uninhibited (unaware); they must also remain physically safe and attentive to the requirements of the text (aware). Some sort of awareness is important in all forms acting. Nonetheless, the clown and fool, I suggest, play with a heightened awareness (or awareness of awareness) and they use this to bring an even greater truthfulness to the performance.

I was also aware of the idea of 'deep play' and considered this in relation to the playing state of the fool. The concept of 'deep play' was developed by American anthropologist Clifford Geertz from the work of British philosopher Jeremy Bentham (Dumont and Atkinson 1914) who defined deep play as a game with stakes so high that no rational person would engage in it. In his essay 'Deep Play: Notes on Balinese Cockfighting' (1993), Geertz says this Balinese example belongs to deep play because of the extremely high amounts of money and status involved. Deep play was relevant to my work on fools because of my interest in the association Armin made with death and the grave consequences that are at stake for both the fool and those fooled. I have noted that my work has had greatest impact on those watching when the imaginary and real have been present in equal degree whilst I have remained fully aware that I am observed. In these moments, I have felt my work has been alive and I go into a deep play where there is more at stake. Voice and acting coach Patsy Rodenburg describes this as 'playing with gravitas'.[77] I have been struck by the extent to which in my practice I wanted to play with subjects and in ways that were risky. Much of play theory may be applied to all acting. This, I propose, is as it should be because the fool's energy lies at the root of all enacted performance. I took these insights from play theory and then began to understand the specific quality of the playing state for the fool as an intensified version of the state of play. I have experienced the riskiness of my fool's playing state particularly in my relationship with those observing my work. I have noted how my *playing* became *playing with* the audience and that when I have been working in this way I feel the distinctive quality of the fool's playing state. Playing with the audience could be described as mocking, teasing or provoking. I have been aware as I trained that this type of play requires a light touch from me as an actor. This ensures the fooling remains playful rather than becoming purely confrontational. Evoking the playing state in myself in this way has become an important part of the way I have prepared.

The state cannot be immediately switched on. Usually it requires a thorough warm-up during which the body and attention come more alive, something I have explored with Marc Proulx and Irineu Nogueira. Warm-ups with Marc were often loose and free-form. This way of working looks immediately for the game in whatever activity is being undertaken. As a result, I could find a playful spirit. At a later stage in our work, we questioned the necessity of warm-ups as we sought to explore the ill-preparedness of

[77] This insight she offered following a training session in August 2016.

the actor who has to play the fool. Alternatively, the warm-up can be highly structured and technically demanding as when I have worked with Irineu Nogueira. His warm-ups have greatly opened my anatomical awareness. I have sensed new muscles and new centres in the body from which I can move and find power. For example, I have developed greater physical articulation and the ability to isolate movement in sections of my spine. This work has given me greater range in my physicality. Whilst this work may be undertaken for any role, the focus with Irineu has been to extend my expressiveness in the service of the fool. In conversation we agreed that the fool's physical vocabulary required me to go beyond my limits. I have imagined this as a kind of possession in which I gave my body and voice over to the service of the fool. For this to be effective, my body and voice needed to be available to work beyond its normal range of movement and sound. I have experienced my limits particularly in terms of stamina, flexibility, rhythmicality and coordination. I have imagined that the fool wants something extra to the everyday from me. Working in this way has required me to push myself. This then takes me into behaviours in which I discover myself in new ways. My internal experience of this has been a feeling of losing control and a release into a more intensified physical form of play. For the point of view of my collaborators who know my work well, they have immediately recognised when this is present in my work. For other audiences who know me less well, they have responded with laughter or greater attentiveness in such moments, intuitively recognising when I the actor have moved into an unknown area and transgressed some limits in myself. I have been struck by the sensitivity of audiences to when this happens. In informal conversation with those that have watched my work, they would often respond that it was in such moments that they felt they had really seen the fool. I experienced a lot of fear when this work began, a strong feeling that my body might break or that I might go beyond myself. In reality, I suspect that it has been the prospect of discovering my limits that has felt so unbearable.

Inhibition can encourage me to close down and restrict my physical repertoire. I have had to learn to keep going and consequently I have found release and greater freedom, strong in my confidence and potential. When the work has become too serious, collaborators have reminded me that fools work with pleasure. A combination of discipline and never losing my sense of humour, has been something I learnt from Armin's work. I have been struck by the wit and demand of his texts, and yet these texts often start with an apology and continue with an insistence that he was just a fool and that we should therefore not take him too seriously. When I have worked with these two dimensions in my practice, I have felt the fool rising up inside me, daring me to transcend my boundaries. Then I found my fool to be carefree, iconoclastic and provocative as when Shakespeare's Feste sings to and taunts the imprisoned Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* (IV. 2).

Exhaustion can play an important role in this. Irineu has often pushed my physical stamina and endurance. The warm-up with him is aerobic and intense, lasting an hour or more. In this state of exhaustion, a deeper level of challenge has emerged: how to stay connected to the fool when part of me wants to stop and does not find the work at all funny. I have been inspired by the numerous accounts of fools running into court or

on stage in a state of exhaustion and from the many references to their being whipped. Exhaustion creates movement that is semi-deranged. It transgresses the norms of our everyday use of our body. It has required me to stay connected to my sense of humour and to let go of the ego and, imaginatively, to bathe myself in folly. I could see how important this was when reviewing videos of my work. I have been able to see the moments when I let go and gave my body over to greater freedom and foolishness. This kind of preparation into the playing state resulted in much more exciting work in which I went beyond my usual habits.[78]

Figure I
*Der Kasper und sein Ochse* by A. Paul Weber (1972)

The image above has been a touchstone for my work. It captures something important – a dangerous and witty presence emerging from physical extremity and exhaustion.

When working physically to evoke the playing the state of the fool, one of the key issues for me has been licence. This is an ancient part of fooling. The fool is given permission to be completely unrestrained. This is the 'all-licensed fool' (*King Lear*, I. 4. 191). Armin's studies of fools assumed this privilege and he recognised the dramatic potential of this.

I understood my fool could also take licence without permission. In much of my fool work there has been a play-off between what is allowed and what is forbidden; and my fool dances on the boundary of this distinction. I have struggled with my own licence. How do I give myself permission to play the fool? How do I unpick and discard attitudes and behaviours inherited from a culture that sets up all kinds of restrictive rules around this work? How much more can I play in my body, breath and speech? Exercises that focus on working in an uncontained and unappropriated way have tested me.

Appropriation has been a concept I have returned to many times. I use the term 'to appropriate' as it is understood in psychology, describing how we adjust our behaviour in accordance with what we anticipate to be acceptable. Thomas McPartland in *Lonergan and the Philosophy of Historical Existence* (2000) attributes the origins of this

[78] Frank Camilleri provides a detailed account of the complex role of habits in actor training in his article 'On habit and performer training' (2018).

way of thinking about the self to Kierkegaard who considered the self as a paradox – a relation that relates itself to itself. In discussing the work of the philosopher Bernard Lonergan, McPartland describes the self's process of interpretation of what it has been, what it can be, and what it ought to be. This is the means by which appropriation occurs. Appropriation was also explored by Winnicott who developed the term 'the false self' to describe a defensive façade that has the mere appearance of being real but behind which its holders lack spontaneity and feel dead and empty (Winnicott 1965).

When the work is going well, I have felt I am existing in limitless folly. When going badly, my body and attitude have felt trapped in my own unwillingness to take permission and my need to be given it. I have observed how I appropriate myself. This is where I try to deny my foolishness and pretend I do not exist in folly. It is essential to take permission on the deepest level in this work. It has been a central part of any physical preparation to question how far I am really taking licence and to challenge myself in how much further I could go. This evokes a particularly daring quality to the playing state and in which the fooling relationship with the audience is key.

## Connecting to the fool

Actors and directors often talk about the process of connecting to a part. Practitioners understand it in numerous ways and look to achieve it variously. Stanislavski (2013), for example, used the concept of the 'Magic If' to assist an actor in using their imagination to identify with a situation authentically. The director Mike Alfreds (2007) asks actors to write a list of facts about a character and then to reflect on which of these facts are true for the actor personally. The actor Tony Sher (2004) in his record of the rehearsal process for *Richard III* similarly reveals the deeply personal and complex process by which he attempts to embody the character. This process of moving towards a character is detailed; it requires time and practice.

Some years ago whilst I was undertaking this research, I was sitting on a train pulling into London Charing Cross station. My attention was drawn to woman sitting behind me. She was conducting a conversation on her mobile telephone.

> [Strong south London accent] I've got no money. What shall I do? ... I spent it all on the train fare. … No money. … Can't you come and collect me at the station? … [Her voice becomes more desperate.] Come and collect me. … Meet me at Buckingham Palace. … Yes. … It's where my mother lives. She's the Queen, you know. …

I laughed silently. Was it a desperate lie? Was she mad? Was it a joke? Could it be true? My imagination was thrilled by the possibilities. More important than seeking the true meaning of this conversation (postmodernism would ask us to give up the search), my imagination awoke to what it would be to live in such a fantastic world where a small debt might be repaid by one's mother the Queen. It would be a world of economic and

social vulnerability but also with great *esprit* and resilience. This overheard moment captured something that spoke powerfully to my fooling practice.

Such occurrences in daily life are part of the actor's process – random moments that form a nucleus for an actor to work around and facilitate the process of connection. I have explored how fragments like this feel in the body and voice; trying to find what connects to me and what does not. It is a process rooted in observation. I have paid detailed attention to the world around me, listening and looking for how foolishness manifests itself. As well as searching for the foolishness in the world around me, I have also worked introspectively. In this, I have kept alert to when I feel silly and mocked, or playful and daring. In these moments the fool surfaces as something very familiar and the experience feels shocking. It has felt like a (re)discovery of a forgotten part of my nature – childish, irreverent, playful and trouble-making. I feel that the search for the fool is an awakening of the fool who is already there. Unlike one's inner clown which I have experienced as a naïve version of myself, the inner fool is more knowing.

I have also explored what it is to connect to the fool through an ongoing dialogue with a psychotherapist with whom I had already spent several years in therapy. Knowing me intimately, he was sensitive to my personal and artistic journey. He could also be challenging to me. I knew that to question the fool in myself through psychotherapy would be risky. It blurred the boundaries between personal and professional. This was reminiscent of the way that Armin similarly combined things – fool as theme and fool as performer.

Some theatre practitioners would question the use of psychotherapy in an actor's work. Over-identification with the character, they would argue, can be psychologically unsafe as well as restricting the actor to their own experience rather than releasing their imagination and empathy. Emotional recall (Hagen 2008), for example, which is an explicitly psychological approach for an actor, is no longer so widely encountered in British theatre. Those that use actioning, for instance, place an emphasis on less emotional and more practical matters. Actioning is a system of textual analysis derived from the work of Stanislavski that divides the text into a series of units identified by verbs or actions. In this approach, the actor focuses on what the character is doing from moment to moment. The director Max Stafford-Clark and Maeve McKeown (2010) provide a detailed account of this process when rehearsing Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good* (1998).

> I spend the first two weeks of a rehearsal period sitting round a table with the actors finding the 'action' for each line in the script. The method works something like this: firstly, break the scene down into units. Each of these units is determined by what the character that runs the scene wants, and this can then be described in a complete sentence. […] Then, as company, we would find a transitive verb that describes each tactic, or change of thought, that goes towards achieving the unit's objective. (Stafford-Clark and McKeown: 83-84)

Similarly, those who utilise the work of Vsevolod Meyerhold, Michael Chekhov or Rudolph Laban often do so because it offers a technique based on movement rather than the emotions (Braun 2016 and Zarrilli 2002). These approaches see emotions as a by-product of action.

Nonetheless, it has been clear to me that monthly psychotherapy sessions have fed my connection to the fool.[79] Whilst I have kept hold of the focus of this work that is to *play* the fool and not *be* a fool, exploring how I experience the fool in myself is a part of connecting to the fool and this was something I could explore with a therapist. It has raised questions about my identity. Indeed, I have understood a major dimension of my fooling practice is the disturbance of a sense of identity. I have asked, 'How am I a fool? How am I fooled? How do I fool myself? What is my folly? How do I fool others?'. Therapy created a space for these sometimes-painful questions. We noted that my research on the fool was powerfully positioned for me between thought, body and feelings. Whilst, in order to maintain confidentiality, I do not make explicit reference to the dialogue of these therapy sessions, many meanings and connections have arisen for me during therapy and these insights are interwoven into the text that follows. Psychotherapy has often functioned as a reflective space for me to consider the connections between my physical practice, my reading and my identity. This again has resonated with Armin's practice and self-identity as a fool, seen, for example, on the title page of *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a): 'written by one seeming to have his mother's wit, when some say he is filled with his father's foppery'.

I videoed myself following early therapy sessions, trying to capture the major themes of the discussion and the feelings it had evoked. I then researched the mode of transcribing them in order to ensure that verbal and physical nuances were not lost. I looked at the most suitable software to support this including programmes such as NVivo and ATLAS. I also explored qualitative analysis methodologies and considered how to examine this material in a systematic way. This included readings in Grounded Theory (Jones and Alony 2011), Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) and Narrative Method (Riessman 2008). It became clear that in addition to creating a massive amount of work, such a process could be very misleading. Not only would it distract from embodied time in a studio, it would focus my attention in a cognitive and analytical mode of working. My therapist questioned my desire to have such a component in the research. In acknowledging that I had wanted to shore up my work with an explicitly scientific ingredient, I began to see the strength of my desire to understand. I also began to appreciate how strongly I was trying to drive the fool towards language and away from my body. I approached language as something I believed I could control; this was in opposition to my body that contains uncontrollable feelings and functions.

[79] These sessions with Soren Petter took place from April 2014 to August 2018 (London). They were voluntary private sessions which were not exclusively focused for the purpose of the research. Soren utilises an integrative psychotherapy approach which draws upon a broad range of traditions and techniques. For further details of his practice, please see Appendix 1: Collaborators.

This work then shifted in a new direction; I viewed the therapy recordings with no audio. This allowed me to observe the movement of my face and body rather than the spoken words. It showed me moments of embarrassment, awkwardness or disruption. By reviewing these recordings in this way, I have begun to see how misunderstanding and confusion play out in me through facial expressions and physical habits. When I had watched with the audio on, I had missed how extraordinary my behaviour is. This work is akin to the work actors do when people-watching. It has become a way to mirror back to myself my foolishness.

In the German fool tradition, the character whose name is Eulenspiegel combines the German language word for 'owl' (*Eule*) which is associated with wisdom, and the word for 'mirror' (*Spiegel*) which reflects things back as they really are. In another example from history, the Infanterie Dijonnaise, a French fool society mentioned in a previous section, had the motto that anyone who did not want to see a fool should smash their mirror. Holbein's marginal illustrations for Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly* (1515) show a jester looking in a mirror. I have noted the importance of the mirror and mirroring for the fools of history. These recordings have not just documented my work, they have functioned as my own mirror in which I could look more deeply and honestly into my own relationship as an artist and person with the figure of the fool.

Exercises that develop the actor's presence have been important in connecting to the fool. Presence is a kind of attention and focus of energy. It is well known in actor training. It means 'being in the moment'. It is when actors experience how they feel, what they understand and where they are then and there. Patsy Rodenburg's work has made a strong impact on my practice in this area. In *Presence* (2009) she describes it using her concept of the Second Circle. This is a state in which the actor's energy gives and receives in a balanced and fully-open way. The actor does not work with anticipation trying to resolve problems. Instead, the actor works with what is experienced in the present and embraces whatever difficulties arise. In contrast, Rodenburg's First Circle involves energy that is overly internalised and withdrawn, and the Third Circle describes a state in which energy is forced outwards.

Rodenburg gives particular importance to breath when working on presence. She describes how breath trapped in tensions disconnects us from the present moment. This is usually caused by old habits that we have developed as defence mechanisms. Rodenburg (2005 and 2014) also shows how learning a text through the breath creates greater connection for the actor. When working on the fool, I have needed a free and full breath system in order that my fool does not have an unconscious defence mechanism. In my practice, I have worked with the understanding that fools are not compulsively concerned with behaviour that maximises their chances of survival. They laugh at death and do not adjust their breath to the norms of society.

Provine has explored the powerful relationship between breath, laughter and survival in something he calls 'Paleohumorology'. In analysing primate humour, he says that the vocalisation of laughter originated in the 'ritualised panting of rough-and-tumble and sex play, whereby the sound of laboured breathing came to symbolise the playful state

that produced it' (2000: 97). Laughter arose in play fighting where aggression, humour and fear are explored. The physiology of laughter involves the mouth opening wide, the teeth being revealed and breathing intensifying. Until this point in the laugh, much of this behaviour is identical to forms of aggressive display and fight mode. This is followed by a sequence of vocalisations of short vowel-like notes (i.e. 'ha', 'ho', 'he'). Any given laughter tends to have a homogeneous structure (i.e. 'ha-ha-ha') because there are physiological constraints against producing mixed notes although other patterns do occur (i.e. 'ha-ha-ho-ho-he'). These vocalisations release energy and the apparently aggressive physiology collapses into a state of pleasure and surrender. The physiology of laughter contains both the behaviour of attack/danger and relaxation/safety.

Provine describes chimpanzee laughter as 'locked into the cycle of breathing with one pant-like laugh-sound being produced per exhalation and inhalation. Chimps are unable to chop an exhalation into the discreet "ha-ha-ha"s of human laughter. […] Humans laugh as they speak, by the virtuosic modulation of sounds produced by an outward breath' (2000: 85). Provine notes that the evolution of human bipedalism happened sometime after we split from an ancestor we shared with chimpanzees. Evolving the ability to run and walk skilfully in an upright position was critical in our biological and behavioural history as it freed our hands for carrying and gesturing. He proposes that the evolution of speech and bipedal locomotion are causally related: 'The evolution of bipedalism set the stage for the emergence of speech by freeing the thorax of the mechanical demands of quadrupedal locomotion and loosening the coupling between breathing and locomotion' (2000: 87). The common link between bipedalism and speech is breath control. Our physiological development which enabled us to use more complex patterns of breath when laughing is part of the same evolutionary process in which we learnt to walk and talk.

Laughter contains moments of honesty, revelation and release. It is usually a phenomenon that occurs in groups (Provine 2000). Laughter is contagious; it humanises and connects us. During both good times and bad, laughter plays an essential role. It manifests our sense of humour about ourselves and the world, and can release our imagination, resilience and provocativeness. Evoking laughter in others or having it spontaneously happen inside oneself is positive, meaningful and fun. For an actor, it connects to our early childhood desire to entertain. Conversely, laughter can haunt us as a terror. It is one of the weapons of the bully. Laughter may bring humiliation or exclusion, or anxiety at the prospect of it. The phenomenon of corpsing, when the actor laughs uncontrollably and so is unable to continue the scene, can be excruciating. To be laughed at for the wrong reasons is a nightmare many actors share. Laughter can evoke both pleasure and fear.

Questions concerning the nature and function of laughter were known in Armin's time. Laurent Joubert, for example, explored this in his *Treatise on Laughter* (1560) which describes the different types of laughter. He affirmed the idea of a spectrum of laughter. We might include in this different types of laughter such as giggling, snickering, snorting, tittering, chortling, chuckling, cackling, braying, cachinnation (loud convulsive laughter), belly laughing, guffawing, hee-hawing (a loud laugh that sounds

like a horse neighing), howling and roaring. Jacques believes the fool's function is to make us laugh at our own folly. He describes it as purifying: 'I will through and through | Cleanse the foul body of the infected world, | If they will patiently receive my medicine' (*As You Like It*, II. 7. 59-61).

I was inspired by stories of fools' laughter in other traditions. For example, *Cath Almaine* ('The Battle of Allen') describes the unstable political conditions of eighth-century Ireland. Following capture in battle, Úa Maigléine, who is described as a *riogdruth* or king's fool, is executed. Before his death, he was invited to make a 'fool's shout', which is described as 'loud and melodious' and remained with the fools of Ireland from that time on (Radner 1978: 67-80). The fool's shout may have been an explosion of mirth in the face of death (Harrison 1989: 13-20).

I have understood Rodenburg's concept of presence to include the presence of folly. This opens up the actor's sense that everything in and around them is folly – the truth of the present moment is folly. This cannot be described rationally. In my imagination, the actor appears in a shower that soaks everything – the rain of folly. During an exercise exploring laughter, I began to see how my fool looks at the world. For a few moments the world seemed bathed in folly and I stood, laughing my head off, showering blissfully under this rain. In this I have laughed at myself and at the world. I have also found connection to the fool in working on breath in this way.

Laughter exercises with practitioner Merry Conway have opened up a deep memory inside me of my fool.[80] These exercises involve lying on the floor, connecting to an abdominal breath and placing the attention on what is amusing in and around us. It is often practised as a group exercise and moves between hilarity and tearfulness. Many different sorts of laughter emerge as you listen to the room and yourself: titters, giggles, chuckles, snorts, guffaws, hoots and belly laughs. As I moved up and down the scale of volume and physical involvement, I have felt something hysterical and out-of-control. It has reminded me of feelings I had as a child – times when I made jokes with a friend, laughed with abandonment and felt wonderful delight. Merry describes the final laugh as being the laugh over the grave. If practised regularly, the challenge of the exercise becomes to laugh at our own death. This exercise has moved me towards fearlessness and to explore a function of my fool to remind us that all is vanity. Laughter has an immediate effect on the actor, stimulating the senses and quickly evoking the playing state. It breaks our everyday protocols by opening the mouth wider than normal and releasing less socialised sounds. The body starts to shake; we may roll on the ground or slap ourselves. Laughter is a practical way to open the breath. It frees the ribs, flexes the diaphragm and extends the vocal range. I have used laughter much to connect to the fool and have been reminded of the section titled 'Two Fooles well met' in Armin's *Quips Upon Questions* in which two fools on meeting simply laugh at each

[80] I explored these exercises with Merry Conway at her 'Wit and Wordplay' workshop in April 2016 (Theatrelab, New York). The workshop was specially focussed on techniques for fooling.

other in recognition of shared foolishness (1600b: B2). As the story makes clear, laughing is what fools do.

Breath work has led me to discover new ways to connect to the fool. Finding the appropriate breath creates an embodied and concrete connection to the fool because breath is so internal, intimate and real. I started this with work on clown breath. The clown experiences the world naïvely and with awe as a child does. Working on the clown with Merry Conway at a workshop at the University of Calabria in April 2017, I discovered the clown breath in a simple exercise. The actor stands in the space with an open alignment. This means the arms hang relaxed to the side, the feet are about hip-width apart and more-or-less parallel, the knees are not locked, the spine is long but not rigid, the pelvis drops under the body and the weight is evenly distributed. The body needs to be clear of excess tensions while the actor is in this standing position. Releasing the knees a little more to create momentum, the actor then swings the arm in front and upwards. The arms stretch up above the head towards the sky and then out to the sides, coming down to rest beside the torso. The movement feels similar to the breaststroke in swimming but in a vertical direction. The feet remain rooted to the floor throughout. During the exercise, the actor looks out across the space and each time the arms swing up imagines seeing the world for the first time. The feeling of the movement is pleasant and the actor is asked to approach each swing without anticipation and full of innocence. The breath stays full but easy and light. A gentle smile would sometimes play across my face as I experienced pleasure in discovering the world in this way. The gesture in the arms can then be developed imaginatively to involve opening a pair of invisible curtains on the world to see the first dawn. It was important to focus on the in-breath, allowing the breath in and down into the abdomen. This is the inspiration of the clown. During the exercise, my breath became childlike; it was free and I felt very young. This inspiration I associated with our first in-breath when we are born. The in-breath of the clown is connected to life. Some actors find it frightening to breathe in this very open way. It is a state of receiving and has much vulnerability.

From this, I then began to wonder about expiration. In previous work with Merry, I had asked her how she distinguished between clowns and fools. She had spoken about the action of the fool to mock those in power. Often when describing this, Merry used a pointing gesture as if identifying something phoney in front of us. This gesture was usually accompanied by a hissing or an extended sound such as ‘haaaaaa’. The fool is based in this out-breath. The expiration releases something into the world and affects it. The fool sends energy into the world rather than receiving it. The expiration connects the fool to death, to the physiological fact that we end our life with an out-breath.

Of course, clowns and fools both breathe in and out. When working on the fool, I must be connected to life (to the in-breath) to be able to feel the significance of death (the out-breath). It is a matter of emphasis and this for the fool is placed on the out-breath. Working on the fool’s breath reconnected me to the etymological origins of the word ‘fool’. The fool is a windbag and my practice has been to explore how, like such a bag, to

contain and then expel air. I see clown breath as part of fool breath. This means I need to contain clown in order to play fool.

From this work on breath, I returned to consider the different qualities of presence and how these might help me to distinguish the fool from other comic figures. In my practice I have worked with the following distinctions:

- Trickster: the presence of the animal with an attention that is connected with the divine. It is primeval.
- Clown: the presence of the infant with an attention that is receiving. It is naïve and innocent.
- Jester: the presence of the friend with an attention that is focussed on entertaining. It is amusing.
- Bouffon: the presence of the outcast with an attention that is directed on destruction and mockery. It is grotesque.
- Fool: the presence of the idiot confronter with an attention that brings new insights. It is paradoxical.

These classifications have not been applied in a rigid way. As I described above, in my practice, fool contains clown and so these categories can fold into each other. They can be used in practical work to explore different qualities of breath. They allow actors to experience in an embodied and internal way how a flexible breath system can evoke different comic figures.

## Working with duality and paradox

The word 'oxymoron' comes from Ancient Greek: *oxus* 'sharp' and *mōros* 'foolish'. The etymology of 'oxymoron' has suggested something important about fools for my practice – they contain a contradiction.

The performer and teacher Jonathan Kay uses doubleness as a central part of his approach to the fool. He tells the story of a king called 'Thin King' and his twin the fool.[81] Thin King did a lot of thinking. The more he thought, the thinner he became. As he became very emaciated, he also became more convinced that his twin did not exist. Kay says we each contain the twins of king and fool, and that the former works hard to convince us that the latter does not exist. King and fool are an important double in Kay's practice. Kay also plays with 'twins' in language. He jokes that the letter 'w' contains a twin, a double 'u'. Words containing this letter, he says, are tricky. Kay notes the word 'answer' contains a 'w' and that therefore we need to be aware that answers contain a double – a double meaning and an alternative truth. As Kay recounts these stories and makes these points he is already fooling. He has a twinkle in his eye, his demeanour is playful and provocative. His anecdotes are witty and serve to destabilise 'serious talk'

[81] These comments are taken from an informal encounter I had with Jonathan Kay on 31 October 2017 (London).

about the fool. Further examples of Kay's use of duality in fooling can be found in his Ted Talk of 2017.

Iain McGilchrist in *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (2012) has described the functioning of the brain's two hemispheres in a way that was reminiscent of Kay's work. The right hemisphere sees itself as connected to the world and functions with greater breadth and flexibility. The left hemisphere is detail-oriented and prefers mechanisms. This hemisphere, McGilchrist argues, has become dominant, resulting in a society with a rigid and bureaucratic obsession with structure.

> It might be then that the division of the human brain is also the result of the need to bring to bear two incompatible types of attention on the world at the same time, one narrow, focussed, and directed by our needs, and the other broad, open, and directed towards whatever else is going on in the world apart from ourselves. (2012: 27)

McGilchrist's description of the left and right hemispheres explains why there is this dual way of looking at the world – the perspective of the king and the perspective of the fool.

I have taken inspiration from McGilchrist's dual visions of the world and from Kay's insight that fools confound singular answers and are associated with doubles. This has encouraged me to look for one way to play the fool. I have wanted my way of working on the fool to allow there to be doubles and multiple responses to the enigma which is the fool. To aid this, I discovered numerous synonyms for the word 'fool' and these encouraged me to explore a fooling technique in which I could embody a multiplicity of foolish types. In this I was reminded of Armin's use of polyvocality as explored in *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) and as Feste/Sir Topas in *Twelfth Night* (1602). The synonyms have opened up a world of folly for my practice; they are fun to play with and can function for the actor as provocations to the imagination.

| |
|---|
| Addlehead, antic, ass, babbler, baby, badaud, beetlehead, birdbrain, block, blockhead, bonehead, booby, buffoon, bull calf, bull head, bungler, buzzard, calf, changeling, child, chowderhead, chucklehead, clod, clod-hopper, clod-poll, clot-pate, clot-poll, clown, colt, comedian, comic, cotquean, crone, cut-up, dimwit, dizzard, dolt, donkey, doodle, dope, dork, dotard, dotty, drip, driveller, droll, dullard, dullhead, dunce, dunderhead, dunderpate, farceur, funnyperson, funster, gaby, gagman, gagster, gawk, giddyhead, gobemouche, goof ball, goof, goose, goosecap, Gothamite, gowk, grandmother, greenhorn, grosshead, guizer, gull, halfwit, harlequin, henhussy, hoddy-doddy, humourist, idiot, ignoramus, imbecile, infant, innocent, jerk, jester, jobbernowl, joker, jokesmith, jokester, jolterhead, jolthead, knucklehead, lackbrain, lackwit, lame-brain, life of the party, lightweight, loggerhead, looby, loon, lout, lown, lubber, lummox, lunkhead, madcap, madman, man of |

Boeotia, merry-andrew, merrymaker, milksop, mime, mooncalf, moron, mountebank, mummer, muttonhead, natural, nerd, niais, nincompoop, ninny, ninnyhammer, nitwit, nizy, no conjuror, noddy, nonny, noodle, noodlehead, numbskull, numps, numskull, oaf, old fogey, old woman, one who did not invent gunpowder, one who will not set the Thames on fire, owl, picador, pierrot, pinhead, prankster, pretty fellow, punch, punchinello, put, quipster, radoteur, ribald, rube, sawney, scatterbrain, schnook, shallowbrain, simpleton, sop, sot, stick, stock, thickskull, Tom Noddy, tomfool, tony, trickster, trifler, twit, wag, wise men of Gotham, wiseacre, wisecracker, wit, witling, zany,[82]…

As a simple exercise, try to read this list of words without laughing. These words remind us how much we like foolish types and that we celebrate fooling with multiple types. Another exercise asks a group of actors to cross the space in rapid succession whilst someone shouts out words from this list that they have to try to embody in the moment. These words are childish, anatomical and politically incorrect. What is a loon? How might I play a madcap? The words open many possibilities. These words have reminded me that there is not one type of fool and so playing with folly has become key to my fooling technique. I have used these words to make myself laugh, to celebrate the diversity of folly and to take pleasure in the variety of fools within me. I have begun to see more clearly that whilst clowning might be understood to exist in singularity (actors tend to ask 'what is my clown?'); fooling is based on multiplicity (as an actor I have asked myself 'where are my fools?').

When working with international colleagues, I began to note vocabulary from languages other than English. Words such as *narr*, *mat*, *fol*, *sot* and *bobo*, for example, each has its own associations, stories and images. Axel Hoedt has travelled through Europe photographing many of the foolish types who populate the traditions of rural communities. His publications *Once a Year* (2013) and *Dusk* (2015) capture a diverse range of figures who emerge at carnival time and whose appearances and names are less familiar. These images have reinforced my understanding that fools have diverse appearances. I have been struck by the extent to which these diverse figures work with masks.

I have enjoyed the uncertainty that comes with multiplicity. This has helped my practice to relish the problematic nature of truth. Opposites, contradictions, alternatives have become good friends to my fools and make them laugh. I have wanted my fools to show us the duality and paradox of our condition, that there is always another answer. They

[82] I have generated my own thesaurus of terms for working on the fool. Whilst the choice of content may be somewhat subjective, these lists have been useful in my imaginative work. Word lists in this and subsequent sections are formatted within their own boxes and are taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Simson and Weiner 1989), *Oxford Thesaurus of English* (Waite 2009), *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* (Merriam-Webster 2005) and a range of informal personal conversations.

would undermine our desire to have a coherent, singular understanding. My fools are constantly splitting our version of the truth. In my fooling technique, I have to maintain a no-fixed-position. This way of working is physical, intellectual and emotional. First I play one thing and then I play its opposite. In this way, my technique is always splitting. Even the position of playing the fool is not fixed and can split. In this moment, I show I am aware that I am playing the fool and so I explore how I am consciously playing with fooling.

Duality and paradox manifest in my fools' language. They often speak using ditties, sayings, poems, rhymes, puns and patter. These modes of talking are where sense and non-sense collide and meaning is at least double. Here I was reminded of the section 'Do it, and dallie not' in Armin's *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) in which he conveys the importance of the skill of rhyming: 'You rime well in your reason, do ye not?' (E4). Merry Conway leads a range of exercises in her 'Wit and Wordplay' workshop[83] that help to explore language skills.. In one exercise, actors stand in a circle, each speaking a word at a time, working continuously round and around the circle in quick succession. Merry sets the theme for different versions of the exercise. These include:

- words beginning with the letter 'b'
- synonyms of a word
- words for body parts
- antonyms
- building a four-line poem, word by word, with the rhyme structure of ABAB.

Initially when I did these exercises, I was concerned to say the right thing but as I worked, my perceptions opened as I started to be more sensitive to rhythms and sounds. I had rediscovered that my use of words could be playful and uninhibited. This was something I had known as a child. This exercise releases the actor's control over language. Meaning arises with more spontaneity and joy.

Merry has other exercises that take the actor into working with proverbs, sayings and mishearings. These help actors to laugh at their desire to use words to create the illusion of rationality. All of this work shows how the logic of language can slide into nonsense and that nonsense can contain its own truth. Here I have been reminded of Armin/Feste's description of himself as a 'corrupter of words' (*Twelfth Night*, III. 1. 37). I have understood that my fools work with language, could make us feel that we all exist in the world of the absurd. The end effect of this kind of training is to create the sense that the fool's words emerge as slips of the tongue, the language equivalent of pratfalls on banana skins. For this to happen, I have needed to become more attuned to my instincts and perceptions, and to which I then give voice.

This is distinct from the satirist's use of language in which the impact of words is achieved through intention. In my fooling practice, the meaning of the fool's text has

[83] I attended Merry Conway's 'Wit and Wordplay' workshop in April 2016 (Theatrelab, New York). She describes some of this work in her essay 'Playing with language: wit and wordplay' (Conway 2015).

emerged somewhat accidentally. Whilst I have understood from Armin's practice that fools can be satirical and sometimes seem exceedingly concerned to highlight the folly of others (Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida* would fit this description), I have held on to the understanding that fools never lose their sense of their own folly. I learnt from Armin's practice that whilst he presented characters that might be considered very wise, he was also always just a fool. This he makes clear in several of the dedications to his publications in which he articulates lowly expectations of himself. Addressing his marotte, Sir Timothy, he requests: 'Sir Timothie, kind sir Timothie, tough sir Timothie, use me with kindnesse as you will like commence me hereafter' (1600b: Aiii). The first quip of *Quips Upon Questions* states: 'Thou art a foole' (1600b: A) and, as I have noted earlier, it is unclear whether this is addressed to the interlocutor or to Armin himself. This ambiguity is intentional, I propose, because it is Armin as well as the interlocutor who are fools. Satirists, I propose, are not required to present their own foolishness.

I have explored this requirement of the fool to reveal their own folly as well as that of the world by maintaining a dual focus in practical work. I have used a form of 'practice-mantra' to keep this dual focus in mind as I trained: I mock myself, I mock the audience, I mock myself in order to mock the audience, I mock the audience in order to mock myself. Later in this section, I explore this dual focus in relationship to other aspects of the fooling technique I have developed, in particular through breath and mask work.

Duality and paradox play out in the body as well as in language. Shadow exercises have helped to explore this and I learnt this exercise from Merry Conway.[84] Working in pairs, Actor A follows Actor B. While they walk in the space, A tries not to be seen by B who is in front. B can vary the speed, direction and level of movement (by climbing up on a chair or lying on the floor, for example). This makes it increasingly difficult for A not to appear in B's field of vision. The exercise trains A to work with physical dexterity and precision. B is the Master/Mistress and A is the Shadow. The shadow explores what it is to be ever-present and yet hidden. When the exercise has been developed over some minutes, the Shadow begins to explore occasional moments when it reveals itself to the Master/Mistress. These should be sudden manifestations when the Shadow tricks the Master/Mistress by appearing briefly in their field of vision and then disappears again. The actors begin to experience what it is to be both one and two. I have also used this exercise for rehearsal of the Fool's scenes in a production *King Lear* that I directed in 2017.[85] We explored the physical proximity and distance of the Fool from Lear. We also worked on hiding and revealing. The actor playing the Fool found this helpful for creating the Fool's playfulness and connection to the king. It also gave significance to the exchange:

> LEAR Who is it that can tell me who I am?
> FOOL Lear's shadow.

[84] We explored these exercises during a 'Wit and Wordplay' workshop with Merry Conway in April 2016 (Theatrelab, New York).
[85] This took place at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama (London) and was a project with second year actors on the BA (Hons) and MA in Acting programmes.

LEAR I would learn that.

(*King Lear*, I. 4. 221-23)

An alternative to the shadow exercise involves partners mirroring each other; one actor leads the movement and the other actor reflects back an exact physical image. In this version of the exercise, the reflection is visible to the partner. Careful mirroring allows an actor to explore the sensation that two bodies can feel like one. The actors experience a strong synchronicity and the ego surrenders. This is useful for developing the actor's ability to give into flow rather than use intention. The exercise can be used to explore the Master/Mistress's attitude to the reflection. The Master/Mistress experiments with wariness, fondness, revulsion or admiration towards the reflection. The actors will often laugh when they make mistakes and their partner catches them out being inattentive and inaccurate. Partners then swap who leads and who follows. Gradually the tempo of those swaps is increased until it is no longer clear who the leader is and who is the reflection. The actors experience moments when they simultaneously feel control and no control, when both roles of Master/Mistress and reflection coexist in them. This feels paradoxical and the actors often again laugh. It seems that they are constantly being fooled by themselves. This exercise is a simple way for actors to experience how king and fool can be connected as a duality. Shadow and mirror play help to explore in a physical way our duality and what it is to trick ourselves.

My approach to the fool has looked for how language and the body can be out of place and inappropriate. For me, the fool challenges language and also uses challenging language. 'Retard', an example of a word used historically in relation to fools, is now problematic. It is funny but also uncomfortable. It is right for the language of fools to be challenging. The fool abuses, confronts and mocks. As Armin put it, they 'wound and confound' (1600b: A). Fools challenge the body and anything else that would say the truth is singular. They show us, I propose, that the world is not fixed and stable and neither is our ability to function in it. That is why fools fart and belch in public. I see the fool as a challenge to the limits of language and the body. In discussing the fool, we are expressing things that cannot be spoken of; we are engaging in a dialogue with unreason (Whitebrook 2000) and an analysis of our madness (Derrida 1994). A fooling technique should not attempt to prescribe the actor's work through an overly controlling method but needs to point towards fools in their irrationality. In this way, a fooling technique needs to leave room for the paradoxical understanding that there can finally be no technique to play the fool, or that a fooling technique should contain its double – an anti-technique.

## Identifying the authority

My fooling practice has worked with the understanding that one of the key functions of the fool is to speak truth to power and this can be done verbally or physically. Gaulier in a Bouffon workshop I attended recounted a story which captures this aspect of performancei. He told how a group of bouffons, who live in the swamps outside the

village, are allowed one day each year to enter the village and perform in the hall for the Nazi officers assembled there. The dream of the bouffons, Gaulier said, is that the officers will recognise themselves in the course of the performance and will laugh so hard that they spontaneously self-combust.[86] Murray and Keefe describe the truth-telling aspect of Gaulier's bouffon practice and trace this tradition back to the 'subversive and wickedly funny power of the medieval outcasts who had absolutely nothing to lose by their grotesque parody of the powerful, the self-satisfied and the arrogant' (2007: 86).

Whilst I have sought to develop a fooling technique which is distinctive from bouffon work with its emphasis on the grotesque, this story was useful for my practice. It has reminded me that the relationship with authority was something I wanted to explore for my fools. I began to focus my work around the image of the king and the fool. I would create the presence of the king using a large chair as the throne. It became an effective way to keep a physical representation of power in the space. Even in the absence of the monarch, the throne signifies their presence; the throne is never empty. Historically, a range of furniture has been use for thrones from stools in Africa to ornate chairs and bench-like designs in Europe and Asia. They are seats only to be occupied by the sovereign; it is forbidden for anyone else to sit on the throne. 'The throne' in an abstract sense refers to the governing power of a civilisation, nation, tribe or other politically designated group. It implies some sort of authoritarian system.

I could warm-up, move, dance and improvise in relation to the throne and authority. This relationship to power creates urgency in my fool's work. I have worked with the imaginative understanding that the king can execute an unsatisfactory fool at any moment. This has ensured that I keep a clear sense of something serious at stake. The presence of the king raises the sense of risk. Master/Mistress and Shadow/Mirror work can also be played as king and fool exercises. As a result of this work, I have begun to understand how a king needs a fool. The absolute monarch needs a double in reflection in which s/he can see him/herself sincerely. Paradoxically, in being willing to receive the mocking stare of the fool, the king becomes truly absolute by showing s/he is fearless to look at his/her own weakness. This function of the fool has ancient origins and we can see it reflected in the Judeo-Christian tradition in which God tolerated the presence of Satan in the heavenly court (e.g. Job 1. 6); Satan is God's shadow/fool. This may also explain the association sometimes made between the fool and the devil. As I worked, I have understood that the fool is also dependent on the king/authority, constantly needing the existence of that which is powerful in order to have something to reflect back. The king needs the fool and the fool needs the king. It is a symbiotic relationship.

The significance of the relationship between the king and fool has been well described by John Southworth in *Fools and Jesters at the English Court* (1998):

> The curious double act of king and fool, master and servant, substance and shadow, may thus be seen as a universal, symbolic expression of the antithesis

[86] Philippe Gaulier recounted this story during the 'Bouffon' workshop at École internationale de théâtre Philippe Gaulier (Sceaux, Paris) in July 2009.

> lying at the heart of the autocratic state between the forces of order and disorder, of structure and incipient anarchy, in which the conditional nature of the fool's licence ('so far but no further') gives a reassurance that ultimately order will always prevail. The fool, though constrained, continually threatens to break free in pushing to its limits whatever freedom he is given. He is the trickster of myth in an historical strait-jacket from which he is forever struggling to escape. And if the king, as the dominant partner, sets the tone of their exchanges and the fool has everything to gain from a willing acceptance of his subservient role, his participation can never be forced. If, for whatever reason, he should come to feel that his master has reneged on the unwritten contract between them (the rules of the game), it is always open to him to refuse to play, however costly to himself the refusal might prove to be. He thus retains – and needs to retain if he is to achieve the full potential of his role – a degree of independence. Like the actor on stage in a live performance, success is inevitably accompanied by the possibility of failure. It is only the successful fool who lives on in the remembrance of later generations to find his way into the jest-books. The sycophantic, flattering fool produces an inferior type of humour and is soon forgotten; those who take too high a risk and fail the attempt face a grimmer fate in prison or madhouse.
>
> But there was danger on both sides of this balancing act. If the fool risked going too far in his banter and tricks, the king was also vulnerable to the fool's abuse of the licence he was given. In the case of a foolish king and an unscrupulous fool, the danger could be very real. (Southworth 1998: 3)

Southworth gives historical examples of how important the distinctiveness of the role of king from fool is for society. As we have seen previously, however, in such traditions as the Feast of Fools a reversal was regularly practiced (Gilhus 1990). The fool can become king for a day, at least, and the king can be fooled. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1986) have explored the symbolic polarities of the 'exalted' and the 'base' in Western society. They argue that both polarities depend on each other and in certain instances, such as times of carnival, interpenetrate each other to produce political change. As Vries states, 'the power of the king needs the folly of the fool. They are like twins who keep each other in psychic equilibrium' (1990: 759).

The relationship between opposites has also been describes philosophically. Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) proposed the master-slave dialectic as a key element of his philosophical system. The dialectic describes the process in which any two self-conscious entities that recognise the self-consciousness of the other engage in a 'struggle to the death' in which one masters the other. Hegel noted the paradox that such domination makes the very lordship s/he had desired impossible. This is because of the master's dependence on the slave who is not free to recognise the master in any other way. Hegel's dialectic heavily influenced subsequent philosophers and psychologists such as Marx and Lacan.

The literary and philosophical consideration of the relationship between opposites goes back further in history. Bate notes that Erasmus describes Socrates as a Silenus, a box

'which was hideous on the outside but revealed a deity when opened' (2000: 21). Despite Socrates' unattractive appearance and simple language, within there was deep wisdom, 'his wisest insight being that he knew nothing' (2000: 21). Erasmus' word for this paradox is '*praeposterum*' which relates to a rhetorical device or reversal and which we might translate in English as 'topsy-turvy'.

In my research my attention was drawn to the phenomenon of 'enantiodromia' – the tendency of things to change into their opposites. Enantiodromia is a process that has been especially observed as a governing principle of natural cycles and of psychological development. I have explored enantiodromia physically. For example, I have worked on the fool's walk with Marc Proulx. Walking in a large circle, I travelled round the room allowing different rhythms, centres of gravity and tensions to emerge. I have looked for walks that are precise, sustainable and playful. Listening to the body, I have tried not to get stuck in certain patterns and to allow opposites to emerge. This is not done with conscious effort but by staying attentive to what the body wants. When I have been successful in this, the body naturally transforms one walk to its opposite and these transformations seem *juste* – they have their own logic that feels right and are funny for the viewer. I have explored short *lazzi* such as the fool goes to bed, the fool reads a newspaper, the fool gets dressed, etc. I have looked for opposites in the rhythms, attitudes and outcomes of these improvisations. Playing one thing and then its opposite helps to explore the way the fool is anarchic. I have learnt how my fools frequently reframe a situation – the situation was sad, now it is happy, for example. My fools reveal how contraries can both be true. In this way, alternative meanings arise.

Enantiodromia has become part of my fooling technique. I began to explore the nature of inversion in further detail. I have trained in how I can be 'topsy-turvy', to put myself upside down, or in the opposite position, order or arrangement. The following synonyms for inversion became useful in generating new exercises:

> Turn upside down, upturn, upend, turn around, turn about, turn inside out, turn back to front, reverse, flip (over), transpose, …

This could be something simple like walking backwards or dropping the torso down to look in the reverse direction through my legs. I also worked on some acrobatic skills including slides and falls. These could create sudden changes of direction, flips and reversals. They take the body rapidly from high to low, front to back, or left to right. This work requires much repetition to look natural and truly accidental. I then began to apply this work to the throne, exploring ways that physical inversions can allow the fool 'accidentally' to occupy the seat of power. To the audience, it appears that the body has tricked itself and it seems the fool's arrival there was by mistake. This is important; my fools' inversion of the king is not the same as a *coup d'état*. Whilst my fools enjoy the prospect of revolution (as in a physical turning of things on their head), my fools do not intend *a* revolution (as in supplanting one king with yet another).

I sometimes worked with a stool or small child's chair located some distance from the throne to represent the fool's station. This small chair has added to my fool's sense of

unease because it is difficult for an adult actor to sit in it comfortably. It mirrors the throne and I have improvised games in which the fool tries to sit on the throne but is cast back down. This dynamic is reflected in the Judeo-Christian tradition which describes Lucifer being thrown from heaven for daring to occupy the seat of God.

> How art thou fallen from heaven,
> O Lucifer, son of the morning!
> How art thou cut down to the ground, […]
> For thou hast said in thine heart:
> I will ascend into heaven,
> I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: […]
> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
> I will be like the Most High. (Isaiah 14. 12-14)

I have found the ability to use spins and rolls is particularly useful. They allow me to express other types of reversals including U-turns, volte-faces, about-faces and about-turns. A reversal can also be thought of as a setback and this can take the fool's work into hitches, problems, blows, snags, misfortunes and difficulties. These are a major part of the fool's repertoire. My movement practice has shown that my fools thrive on such reversals.

Having worked on inversion, I then began to consider subversion. I have been reminded of Armin's technique to reveal the folly of his audience and to fool with authority. This I have understood to be a subversive impulse. He sought to undermine the power of established systems or institutions. Another word list has helped me to explore different types of subversion. These words inspire many physical and verbal responses in short improvisations. They encourage foolish bad behaviour and facilitate a very playful state in me.

> Destabilise, unsettle, overthrow, overturn, bring down, bring about the downfall of, topple, depose, oust, supplant, unseat, dethrone, disestablish, dissolve, disrupt, wreak havoc on, sabotage, ruin, upset, destroy, annihilate, demolish, wreck, undo, undermine, undercut, weaken, impair, damage, corrupt, pervert, warp, deprave, defile, debase, distort, contaminate, poison, vitiate, …

I have developed subversion in a series of winking exercises that I created. Standing in a circle, actors explore a range of different winks with me: winks of conspiracy and flirtation, as well as tics and twitches. These create much laughter as well as a good deal of nervousness. Winks point to a taboo and something illicit. They become powerfully subversive when used in the right (or wrong) context. In another exercise I developed, two actors enter the space. One begins an emotional soliloquy from a Shakespearean tragedy, the other winks at the audience when their scene partner is not watching them. I also developed this exercise for use with one actor. I use a drum, giving sporadic impulses to the actor. These drum beats cue the actor to pause the text and wink at the

audience. When I have practiced this exercise myself, I experienced a split in my focus and in winking, I subverted myself.

Sometimes I have just looked for subversion in the spirit of the practice I was doing. To do this, I had to keep a strong sense of the part of me that enjoys being in bad taste. It can be a destructive energy to work with. It works against being polite, well behaved, decent and appropriate. Self-subversion must not be used to protect the ego in order to avoid challenging areas of work. The right kind of subversion does the opposite. It attacks the ego's defences and requires the actor to undo their blocks. I have found subversion was a way to fool myself rather than shield myself. In doing this, my fool was revealed to the delight of those watching. For example, during one improvisation I worked unconvincingly with a piece of fabric and a crash mat as if they were a bed. Marc Proulx questioned the sincerity of my playing. I opened myself to the truth of the situation and responded 'I am pretending'.[87] This response felt just right for the fool; it was true and it subverted the improvisation effectively. In this case, subversion was not a defence but opened up another layer of truth in my work. Subversion, properly used, enables the actor to undermine authority, even their own. This has reminded me of Armin's line in *Quips Upon Questions*: 'and so a thousand times making legs, I go still backwards, till I am out of sight' (1600b: A3r). Here Armin self-subverts, noting that despite taking steps he continues to move backwards. I have wondered whether through self-subversion the actor moves 'out of sight' and so the fool becomes apparent.

When working with collaborators, I was aware of their authority in the room. This authority might be due to intellectual or physical expertise. I have used their presence to explore how I might respond and fool them. I asked myself whether I was subservient or craven to them, waiting for them to give me licence to fool, or whether was I able to fool without their permission – an important issue when working with collaborators. Working with movement practitioner Marc Proulx, we used his presence as 'the predator', the person who hunts the fool and threatens to terminate the fool's performance and life at any moment. As we worked, Marc would stalk my bad fooling, calling it as he saw it. He functioned as an ever-present reminder that the passage of the fool is conditional on the relationship with authority. I have observed that my fooling became more dynamic and engaging for those watching when the survival of the fool is not guaranteed.

I have understood my approach as a 'hacking' technique. I have sought to alternate negative for positive, vice versa, muck with hierarchy, and destabilise. This is a process used by graphic designers and artists in other fields (Lhotka 2015). Having identified authority, my fools hack it. Hacking can be achieved in the body and voice through ruptures. I have explored one sense of the fool and then need to break this as another sense of the fool emerges. This work is about allowing many fools to be revealed. In some exercises, I have experienced this as a type of schizophrenic state in which I can

[87] This conversation took place during a training session in May 2017 (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London)

talk to myself. Different voices and physicalities have emerged and have a relationship with each other within an improvisation. Sometimes I have been playing a game such as 'the fool gets dressed for a performance' and then a rupture has occurred in which I have commented on this game. In doing this, my fool creates a new game for himself such as 'the fool confides in the audience how disappointed he is with his costume'. In this approach, I am frequently reframing the fool's game in the present moment of playing. This was reminiscent of Armin's work with polyvocality.

Having developed a rupturing technique, I then began to think about the presence of the fool as a dis*ruption* of the normal order of society. Another word list has helped me to deepen my imaginative sense of what effect the entrance of the fool might have:

> Disturbance, disordering, disarrangement, disarranging, interference, upset, upsetting, unsettling, confusion, confusing, disorderliness, disorganization, turmoil, disarray, suspension, discontinuation, stoppage, obstruction, impeding, hampering, spoiling, ruining, wrecking, undermining, holding up, delaying, delay, retardation, …

I have also thought about the impact of the fool in the space in terms of inter*ruption*:

> Cutting in, interference, intervention, intrusion, obtrusion, disturbance, butting in, barging in, muscling in, sticking one's oar in, discontinuance, discontinuation, breaking off, suspension, stopping, halting, ceasing, cessation, termination, interval, interlude, break, pause, recess, gap, hiatus, …

I have used self-disruption and self-interruption to rupture my own work and to rupture the relationship with an audience. Commenting on my own performance, for example, has changed the audience's connection to my playing. It has given them insight into their own behaviour as an audience – accepting what is boring, being politely attentive or becoming confused – and so the audience has experienced an awakening of their own foolish conduct. In commenting on my own performance, I was reminded of the way Armin's fool roles were able to exist both in the drama and external to it, and his interaction with the audience in *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b).

I have kept these word lists in mind as a lexicon of the characteristics of the fool's passage and I have looked for opportunities to embody them in improvisations and exercises. They have made me laugh and reminded me that I am training in something that is not polite. I have also observed that usually in an artistic process, we hope our work develops. My fooling technique challenges me to regress in myself. Marc Proulx and I have laughed together as we trained in recognition of the fact that the only way to succeed in playing the fool is to fail.

This research has allowed me to formulate a new understanding of an actor's development both as king and as fool. I train physically, intellectually and emotionally to be fully empowered, to be able to take myself seriously, to have authority. This we

could describe as the actor's state as king. I then rupture this. I also have to train to contort, diminish and mock myself. I have to be able to take myself not seriously, letting myself be ridiculous. This is the beginnings of the actor's state as fool. It is a pedagogical model for actor training. It re-expresses the pedagogy of Lecoq (2009: 16-17) which began with exercises for physical imagination and ended with clown.

Whilst Lecoq and Gaulier made use of authority (taking that role themselves as teacher) in their clowning and bouffon work, my fooling technique has explored the dynamic of the fool and king/authority in a more nuanced way. I have understood it as a duality which is internal: where is my centre (king) and how do I rupture myself (fool); what is my truth and what is my folly? It is also external: who is the king/authority and who is the fool? The careful consideration of the relationship between the fool and king/authority raises questions for the actor about his/her relationship with power. I propose this is an important pedagogical issue for actor training in the twenty-first century. In my own practice, the fool/king dynamic has created a playing energy as I trained in which my fools could thrive. It has also allowed me to find greater variety of subversiveness in my fooling, from the gently ironic to the aggressively mocking. The king/fool duality is a key dimension of my fooling practice; its significance for fooling may explain why Armin's most iconic role was played as the Fool in counterpoint to King Lear.

## Working with explosion, liminality and appetite

Sandra Billington (1986) identifies the characteristic of *outré* in the fools of the past as particularly noteworthy. She observes that fools were identified as such because they were considered ugly or physically 'irregular' in some way. As previously mentioned, Armin was noted for is small stature. Furthermore, the title page of *The History of the Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609) (Figure C), which depicts an awkward position for his left foot with his heel failing to touch the ground, may suggest that Armin suffered from a physical disability. *Outré* is a word I have returned to many times. It has inspired me in what the fool might be:

> Unusual, shocking, weird, queer, outlandish, offbeat, far out, freakish, grotesque, quirky, zany, eccentric, off centre, idiosyncratic, unconventional, unorthodox, funny, bizarre, frantic, unusual, extraordinary, strange, unfamiliar, unknown, unheard of, alien, foreign, peculiar, odd, curious, atypical, irregular, anomalous, deviant, abnormal, quaint, out of the way, ludicrous, preposterous, wacky, freaky, kooky, screwy, kinky, oddball, cranky, off the wall, in left field, bizarre, …

Catherine Clément in *Syncope: The Philosophy of Rapture* (1994) explains *outré* identities of those who have been classified as mad or foolish in different historical periods. She pays particular attention to the way such individuals demonstrated frenzied behaviour and notes the sacred nature that was ascribed to epilepsy in some traditions that go back to the ancient world. She shows that what happened to this

illness 'happened to the very word "syncope". [...] Epilepsy, with its paraphernalia, brought together all kinds of symptoms that are now scattered and catalogued elsewhere' (1994: 10). In the ancient world, epilepsy was identified by the fall it brought on in which the body drops to the floor, foams and convulses. Such behaviour was understood as the body becoming the prey of a god.

> There are innumerable scenes where the overwhelmed consciousness disappears in order to let the god speak. It is known that those who are crippled from birth, nature's syncopated beings, are often predisposed to this: epileptics, but also the lame and the cross-eyed. [...] The cross-eyed man really has not one gaze but two, the lame man syncopated his walk, and the walleyed witch had one brown eye, the other blue. [...] Only lame Oedipus, the hero with pierced feet, was able to resist for long his vocation as an inspired cripple; he had to blind himself completely to recover his true status as sacred monster. Where there is a limp, syncope of the spirit is not far behind; there is a twist in the air, and something strange at the end of the path. (1994: 11)

She describes four cycles in the experience of rapture. The first circle involves tremors that are spasmodic: a cough, a sneeze, a hiccup, a gasp, a scream, a sob. There is a suspension of the breathing and in their extreme state this creates a loss of consciousness which is the second circle of rapture. Clément gives the example of a burst of laughter which can lead on to unrelenting laughter. She describes this as an 'insatiable fire': 'Uncontrollable laughter exhausts consciousness and makes it more tractable, more open to entering other landscapes. George Bataille made a frenzied insistence on that, repeating endlessly that laughter is the metaphysical outlet par excellence' (1994: 7-8). The third circle is the circle of ecstasy. The experience is ravishing. Etymologically, 'ecstasy' means 'outside oneself'. It is a state that belongs to the madman and the saint. Clément gives the examples of Tantrics who drink their own urine and live on acorns, or Saint Theresa who shivered with excitement at the angel's arrival (1994: 13). The forth circle comes close to death. Clément uses words such as 'explosion, eruption, earthquake, ascent, rending, bursting, vertigo, and the stars' (1994: 14) to refer to it. Like an orgasm, it seems indescribable.

> Human *jouissance* requires that one loses one's head; that is the foundation. That is the only way to attain the simulacrum, the moment when nature's harbour is reached, where the mooring ropes that hold fast the subject – consciousness, its *cogito*, its history? and through that everyone's history – are cast off at last. (1994: 15)[88]

Clément intentionally blurs the boundaries between the theological, philosophical and psychological discourses about rapture, folly and madness. I have been reminded in this

[88] The translators of Clément's work at this point add an end note: '*Jouissance* can be translated as "ecstasy," "orgasm," or "enjoyment, pleasure, delight"; in other words, it can be physical, intellectual, or spiritual. We use the French word throughout to retain the levels of meaning' (Clément 1994: 265).

of Armin's exploration of madness and fooling as seen in his scene with Malvolio (*Twelfth Night*, IV. 2) and 'Where's the Devill' in *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b). As these texts show, the effect of the fool is to create a magical moment in which through the destabilisation of language our sanity comes into question.

Taking Clément's work as inspiration, my training has sought to extend the shapes and sounds I can make in order to find my own version of *outré*. For example, in one improvisation I tightened my leg muscles and buttocks to create a stiff walk with long strides; I curved my lower back, extending my stomach forward to make my silhouette as obese as possible; I raised my vocal pitch and worked with a hesitant short breath to make my voice younger and more uncertain. In this, I discover myself beyond my normal limits and behaviours.

*Outré* has sometimes felt like a possession. I have worked imagining that the fool takes over and I am estranged from myself and the everyday. At times, my movement has become highly erratic, jerky and fast tempo. I shuddered and twitched as if having a spasm, and I took quick breaths. I have understood from Michel Foucault's work that madness, or apparent madness, can be an important dimension of a fooling technique.

> In farces and soties, the character of the Madman, the Fool, or the Simpleton assumes more and more importance […] He stands centre stage as the guardian of truth […] If folly leads each man into a blindness where he is lost, the madman, on the contrary, reminds each man of his truth; in a comedy where each man deceives the other and dupes himself, the madman is comedy to the second degree: the deception of deception; he utters, in his simpleton's language which makes no show of reason, the words of reason that release, in the comic, the comedy. (1977: 30-31)

Foucault's phrase 'the deception of deception' has been useful. It has reconnected my work to Armin's interest in disguise as a central part of his fooling technique.

I have understood, however, that 'playing mad' is not the same as 'playing the fool'. When working with erratic rhythms and excessive physical distortion, I could have the appearance of someone in severe mental distress. In this state, it has been difficult for me to listen to the audience and also difficult for an audience to keep watching my work because it was very disturbing. When I have worked in this way, it was easy for an audience to interpret my work as psychotic behaviour rather than for them to experience fooling. In response to this, I have developed other forms of *outré*, the rhythms of which are more sustained and in which I can be more attentive to the energy of the audience. This has required a slowing down of my inner rhythm. I have observed that an ability to listen deeply to the audience is important in fooling in order to be able to respond and fool them. I would suggest this type of listening is not functioning in behaviour that is severely mentally distressed. In my practice I have learnt to control my rhythms and frenzied energies so they do not overwhelm me and so I do not become disconnected from those I am fooling with.

Returning to Clément's description of a bursting forth and Armin's use of explosiveness, I have explored what such a playing energy would be like. Working with Irineu Nogueira, we often spoke about the movement of my fools being explosive and we have trained my ability to express explosiveness. We have worked on jumps as a means to physicalize this. Jumps have a long association with comic performance. Marston in *The Scourge of Villanie* (1598) expresses the fear that the orbs celestial will undertake to dance Kemp's jig, revelling with 'neate jumps' (Baskervill 1965: 144). Jumps are another form of rupture, taking the actor from earthbound to flight. The energy of jumps has connected me to being a child and memories of jumping.

> Leap, spring, vault, bound, hop, bounce, skip, obstacle, rise, leap, increase, upturn, upsurge, upswing, spiralling, lift, escalation, elevation, boost, advance, augmentation, hike, start, jerk, sudden movement, involuntary movement, convulsive movement, spasm, twitch, wince, shudder, quiver, shake, …

These words have helped to develop my movement vocabulary. They also have brought me to the edge of my physical ability. In jumping we meet our limit in a very clear way; how high can I jump, how long can I stay in the air? In this, we encounter our foolishness; we want to try again, to jump a little bit higher and maybe this time we will succeed. In this jumping work, I have been reminded of Armin's description of the character Ginking in a section of *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b: B3). Here, despite all attempts to jump and leap, Ginking fails to 'reap'. Armin understood the inherent foolishness that could be conveyed in attempting to jump.

Jumping can happen in the standard way using legs and feet. I have also explored a range of other types of jumps that involve different parts of the body; for example, lying on my back on the floor and then using core muscles to jump the whole body off the ground. This looks as if the body has been electrocuted. As an alternative, this can be done facing the floor or sitting in a chair. The object in each position is to achieve spontaneous and sudden levitation. I have also practiced particular dance steps that include jumps such as the galliard and those from Afro-Brazilian traditions. Jumping has become a simple and effective way to move myself out of the sedentary place that I usually inhabit into greater engagement with space, time and momentum.

Jumps require strength and balance. They bring the actor into an immediate relationship with gravity. Gravity was of interest in my fooling because if my fools could defy it, they might, imaginatively speaking, turn the world upside down. A relationship with gravity can be developed through various types of training. My work has focussed particularly on the relationship with the floor: grounding myself more fully in my alignment and strength by working on my gait and musculature. This, over time, has improved my standing, walking, running and other forms of locomotion. This means I sense gravity in my body better and so am more able, if not to defy it, to seem to subvert it.

The *desire* to jump is important when working on jumps. When training with Irineu, I would jump in response to instructions. This is obedient jumping. It is dull and misses the point. The fool *wants* to jump. It is essential to work from a place of desire, to connect to the love of jumping. When I did not do this, jumping remained a skill without evoking the fool in me. When I became frustrated, I would keep myself connected to the phrase 'the fool wants to have a blast'. This phrase has reconnected me to my sense of humour and this in turn has helped me find appropriate relaxation.

I developed with Irineu three rules for work on the fool's playing energy: 'No protocols. No judgement. Be available'.[89] He has then pushed me to take set movements or choreography towards a performance energy level in which I could find something explosive in them. I have experienced explosion in the body as:

- Breaking through inhibitions
- Uncontained energy
- Unappropriated behaviour
- Release
- Embodying the unpredictable.

Working with explosion has required something extra from me. Irineu often quoted Pina Bausch's words: 'To understand what I am saying, you have to believe that dance is something other than technique. We forget where the movements come from. They are born from life' (Climenhaga 2009: 50). Irineu has asked me to go beyond technique, to dig deeper in myself and believe in something other. Irineu and I trained with an explicit focus on the question of the fool's dance. Whilst Armin was not renowned for his dancing skills in the way Kemp was, I had an intuition that the metaphor of a foolish dance would be useful in developing my fooling technique. It could describe both a literal dance or the way the fool plays with language, 'dancing' with puns, songs and nonsense. The concept of a fool's dance has inspired me to work without protocols and judgement, and to imagine I am making myself physically and mentally available to inspiration and the spirit of the fool. The focus of our work has been to develop skills and techniques (the dance steps) within which improvisation and freedom (the dance's flow) might also be possible.

I have explored an explosive playing energy through training in rupture and spin. As physical disciplines, they set a high bar, constantly demanding more of me. They can never be achieved. Rupture and spin create a chaotic energy. They make us disorientated and dizzy. I have found that to embody them in a sustained way and create a passage that lasts for more than a few seconds requires intensive body work. I have needed to develop my centre to do this. This means a strong and flexible use of the spine, diaphragm, abdominals, pelvic floor and psoas. Combining spin and rupture with a strong centre facilitates my expressiveness and expertise. I have needed to train in both my centre and my ability to spin and rupture. I have worked on the following

[89] These were phrases Irineu used on a number of occasions and with increasing frequency during the training period in October 2018 (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London) as we prepared for performance.

abilities that need to be developed to a high level in order to spin and rupture well as a fool:

- Strength
- Balance
- Alignment
- Coordination
- Flexibility
- Isolation
- Proprioception
- Sensitivity
- Musicality.

Without these skills, my improvisational work could be random and chaotic.

Working on an explosive fool's dance with Irineu has not fundamentally been about choreography. We have worked on particular steps and dance moves but in order to look for how a fooling spirit can merge with these. As my body has expressed itself in this freeform dance, it has become sexualised and provocative. This roots me in a performance mode in which the body's truth speaks. Dance has worked well in my fool training because it has prevented me using my intellect to avoid embodied realities – my messiness, my power and my foolishness. Insights from neuroscience confirm that unconscious experiences are released when the body is creating and presenting in this way (Kemp 2012). I wanted the dance to reveal me as a fool, imaginatively to set the world spinning and to make a new sensation of being to emerge. When I have approached this place, I have felt connected to versions of myself with which I am less familiar. I have felt fully energised by a life force and my work has been characterised by:

> Vitality, vigour, life, liveliness, animation, vivacity, spirit, spiritedness, fire, passion, ardour, zeal, verve, enthusiasm, zest, vibrancy, spark, sparkle, effervescence, exuberance, buoyancy, perkiness, sprightliness, strength, stamina, forcefulness, power, might, potency, dynamism, drive, push, zip, zing, pep, pizzazz, punch, bounce, fizz, oomph, go, get-up-and-go, vim, feistiness, …

I understand my fools ask me to find the ways in which I am most alive. I constantly have to ask myself how much more my work can contain words such as those above. I have been reminded of the extensive creative output that Armin achieved in just a few years from 1599 to 1615.

I have also explored the fool's embodiment of liminality. This is immediately experienced in the actor's uncertainty about how to play the fool and is used in some approaches to clowning. In improvisations with Philippe Gaulier, I experienced moments when disaster occurred and I felt incapable and very uncertain. This is something that stand-up comics also know. US entertainer Andy Kaufman often used it in an extreme way. In a performance at various comedy clubs, he played a record of the

*Mighty Mouse* cartoon show while standing perfectly still, looking very hesitant and lip-syncing only the line 'Here I come to save the day' with great enthusiasm.[90] In this and at other appearances he made in professional wrestling bouts, Kaufman used uncertainty for great comic effect. In clowning, these are the moments when the actor is most revealed to the audience and the clown most clearly appears. Jon Davison observes the importance of failure and mistakes in *Clown Training: A Practical Guide* (2015). As he explains: 'You aim to make the others laugh, from the stage, but this is practically impossible, so you give up, whereupon they laugh; the failure to make others laugh becomes the key to making them laugh' (2015: 49). Philippe explores uncertainty when he asks the actor to embrace the clown's love of 'the flop'.

As with clowning, in fooling the actor is confronted with nothing but a bare stage and an expanse of time and so the actor is challenged to conjure up delightful ways of filling the vacuum. The actor has a genuine encounter, slow and uncertain, in front of the audience with the question of how to play the fool. Embracing the uncertainty of how to play the fool is the first step by which the actor can embody the fool because it connects the actor to folly. It reminds the actor that nothing is to be taken for granted in the world of the fool and that it is folly to play the fool. This can be a useful starting point in a fooling technique. The actor who plays the fool must then be adept at extracting laughter from nothing. This laughter is, I propose, in response to having revealed folly.

In clowning, the actor's technique is to remain with his/her own folly, constantly staying attentive to it and revealing it to the audience. In my approach to fooling, the actor moves from an awareness of his/her own folly and brings attention to the folly of the audience. Whilst doing this, the actor must stay connected to an awareness of his/her own folly, never ignoring this. This requires a dual focus – self as fool, others as fools. I have explored this dual focus through a breathing technique; in-breath for connection to and consciousness of my own folly, out-breath for connection to and awareness of the folly of others. In my imagination, this out-breath would touch the audience and be infected by their foolishness. From these insights, I have developed the following definitions:

- the actor who reveals his/her own folly plays the clown;
- the actor who reveals his/her own folly and the folly of the world plays the fool.

The experience of uncertainty when starting to fool can block my work, making me feel inhibited. However, it can energise my playing state if it is allowed to flow through the body and not be denied. Uncertainty can be thrilling. It is an encounter with liminality. For example, the actor asks: 'Should I go left or should I go right?'. Rather than seeking to resolve such a question, the actor relishes it because unresolved problems disrupt our ability to feel in control of our world. In fooling, the actor also shows us that the question of whether to go left or right is a dilemma the audience shares and in which

[90] The Mighty Mouse number was featured in the premiere of US TV show *Saturday Night Live* (Kaufman 1975).

they too exhibit foolishness. The audience does not only recognise it as something outside themselves, they have an experience in which they encounter and have their own folly revealed. Fooling is, I propose, more uncomfortable for the audience. This has reminded me of Armin's observation that fools have tools 'to wound and confound' (1600b: A).

When I stay with a problem, enjoying its troublesomeness to the fullest extent possible, the experience feels liminal. My fools love to dance on this line. Simple exercises such as standing on the spot, wobbling and seeing where the body wants to fall are immediate embodied ways to explore uncertainty. Another exercise that I have done regularly with Irineu Nogueira made explicit use of lines. Five markers are placed on the studio floor. These markers can be a shoe or item of clothing and they demarcated a zigzag pattern across the space. Each marker identifies a position at which it is necessary to change direction. Starting at the first marker, the actor does a short physical preparation to open up the internal playing state. Then the actor improvises a travelling movement to the next marker. Any type of locomotion is possible but it has to be simple enough to be repeatable. Movement with a clear rhythm is most effective. Having arrived at the marker, the actor then sets off travelling in the direction of the next marker. Each new journey requires a different travelling movement. When the actor arrives at the final marker, the actor takes a moment to review the journeys across the space. Then the actor returns to the starting position and repeats the exercise, taking care to recreate each movement precisely. Over time this has become an exercise that allowed me to explore the fool's relationship with a co-performer, whether a musician or fellow actor. To fool with another in the space required complicity and trust. I began to see the potential for a performance with a partner.

This exercise has been the most concrete way I have used physical improvisation to explore how my fools cross the stage. It has helped to extend my physical vocabulary and to increase my ability to repeat forms accurately. The relationship with the audience, even if that is only a single individual, needs to be maintained and eye contact is important for this. Irineu would shout provocations at me whilst I worked, reminding me when I was inaccurate or when my movement was stuck in a certain pattern. Sometimes he would play a drum or other simple percussion instrument to intensify the rhythmic focus of the work. At other times, he and a musician would both work with me, improvising with a range of basic percussion instruments that I had been collecting for this work. We trained for many hours exploring the relationship with sound. Sometimes I would use my own voice as part of the movement sequence we were developing.

This exercise has made me understand how powerful rhythmic work is for my fools. To establish and maintain a strong rhythm in my body is a fundamental skill. Then, I had to be able to rupture that rhythm and spontaneously create another. Breaking rhythm is what I have understood fools do. I embody what is regular in order to embody what is irregular. I experienced this most strongly in the exercise each time I arrived at the marker which is a liminal moment of transition and rupture. These moments have taught me the power of liminality for my fools' passages. Again, the relationship with

the audience in these moments of rupture is key. It has allowed me the ability to mess with the viewer and through the expression in the eyes to raise a question silently: 'Am I the fool for behaving like this or are you the fool for laughing at me?'

Fools are configured within strong relationships that evoke powerful feelings. I have explored the impact of my work to evoke curiosity, delight, rage and fear in others through the reaction of my collaborators in the room as we trained and through occasional opportunities to expose the work to small audiences. I have looked for the moments when the viewer responded strongly, sitting up, gasping or reacting in some other physical way to my work. I developed a stronger antenna for sensing these responses and this has guided my understanding of when my fools truly come alive for someone watching. This has taught me how to focus my energy, what physical and vocal choices are effective and how to monitor my fooling in the moment of playing.

The reaction caused by fools is described by Henry Peacham who declared that Tarlton, the fool of Elizabeth I, had only to thrust his head out of the tire-house door to 'set all the multitude in such a laughter, | They could not hold for scarce an houre after' (Nungezer 1969: 362-63). David Gitomer (1991: 77-110) in his analysis of the comic body in Sanskrit literature notes the powerful combination of laughter, horror and disgust in the comic role of the *vidūsaka* who functions much as a fool. He and Lee Siegel (1987) have considered the classical Indian aesthetic tradition of the *rasas* and explore the way humour and the grotesque work. I noted from the literature review that Armin and other historical fools often evoke strong reactions in others; sometimes these reactions are characterised by curiosity and delight, and at other times by rage and fear.

Exploring liminality has taken my work into a consideration of boundaries and the thrill of transgressing them. Playing with transgressions and boundaries has been vital for stimulating my playing energy in which my fools can be born. As the historical survey of 'Entrance' demonstrated, Armin would have been aware that fools have crossed many boundaries; they have moved from the folk rituals into professional theatre, from the social realm into art. As we explored in Armin's fooling technique, he moved from improvisation to the delivery of the playwright's text, between character and actor, between technique and instinct, between onstage and off, between being in the play and out of it, and in my terminology between centre and rupture/spin, between king and fool. The position of Armin's fool is liminal. These transgressions are challenging for the actor because they require heightened adeptness in movement and voice work. Armin's dexterity in this respect is something I had gleaned from my survey of his roles and publications. They imply a quickness of wit and a rapidity of response to physical impulse. I propose the rhythm of the fool is faster than that of the clown, requiring heightened dexterity in the body and voice.

I have understood the desire to cross boundaries as an appetite. Otto recounts a competition between the fool Till Eulenspiegel and the fool of Casimir II of Poland (1333-70) which conveys this well. Casimir set up a competition for them to outdo each other in foolery; the winner receiving a new outfit and twenty gelders. Having matched

each other with a range of tales and tricks, Eulenspiegel decided it would take a 'gross roguery' to win:

> So Eulenspiegel went to the middle of the room and took his trousers down and did a pile of shit right there in the middle of the room and took a spoon and divided the pile exactly in two and shouted to the other one saying, 'Fool, come here and make me a delicacy like I've made for you!' Then he took the spoon and stuck it in his half and ate it up and offered the spoon to the jester and said, 'See there, you eat the other half and then do me another pile and divide that so I can have it for desert.' Then said the king's fool, 'No, no way! You take after the devil with your tricks. I would rather spend my whole life going naked than eat your shit, or even mine!' (Otto 2007: 38-39)

I have worked with the understanding that fools distort and amplify appetites. In doing so they reveal the absurdity of the needs that energise us (Maslow 1943). Here I have been reminded of Armin's description of gluttony and drunkenness in a section of *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) titled 'He eats much' (E3). Here we see excessive and distorted appetites. Such appetites are symptomatic of an insouciant attitude towards death which I have learnt from Armin's fooling technique and which I too wanted to explore. Such an attitude towards death has created a level of energy in my playing which is vigorous and heightened.

I have explored the fool's appetite through the idea of the hunter and hunted. Both of these roles are directly or indirectly energised by appetite – the desire to eat/mate or the desire not to be eaten/mated with. I have used this in improvisations. One such exercise invites a solo actor to explore how the fool can chase and then be chased. The actor runs freely in the room exploring one role and then the other. The exercise can then be done with a prop or piece of costume that becomes the antagonist partner – first it is the hunted object and then it is the inanimate object that seems to come alive to hunt the actor. As a final stage of the exercise, the actor explores how to swap rapidly between these two roles. I have found this exercise made my work histrionic or pantomimic. It discombobulated me so I lost control of whether I was the hunter or the hunted. When I have revelled in this confusion, I have felt the fool rising up in me. The themes of 'the hunter and the hunted' reconnected my work to the tradition of 'fool hunting'. As I have previously noted, a fool's origins were often described as taking place in a 'hunt' and Armin configured himself within this tradition too.

I have practiced a similar hunter/hunted exercise with a partner, each taking turns to cross the space proposing a movement. The exercise has become competitive like a Hip hop dance off, releasing frenzy and hilarity. This has felt like a physical version of a battle of wits. This has reminded me of the moromachia or 'fools' battle that existed between Armin, John Stone and other comic performers of the time. My fools love to engage in sparring. Touchtone, for example, initiates such banter as soon as he enters (*As You Like It*, I. 2). I have understood this desire to out-smart or out-fool others as an appetite. It is competitive and energised, and in my imagination I have seen it as 'take

or be taken'. This survival through competitive fooling was something I had learnt from Armin's practice. As he reminds us on the title page of *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b): 'Floute me, Ille floute thee, it is my profession'.

## Not being high-minded

Mullini makes the observation that 'many people put on the mask of folly in order to earn their living at court, thus creating the first level of simulation' (1985: 99). Whilst for Mullini the mask may not be literal, I was struck that Lloyd Evans in his consideration of Armin's development of fooling similarly notes that it is the fool's function to wear the mask of folly. I observed that the function of even a non-literal mask is practical – to facilitate disguise in order to be able to fool effectively and so earn a living. I began to wonder what if this were a literal mask.

Lloyd Evans notes the connection between fooling and acting; in both the performer is a purveyor of illusion and yet 'we know that beneath whatever mask he is wearing something very far from illusion is being communicated to us' (1972: 155). He likens this process to negative capability: 'An actor who, offstage, is completely negative, evanescent, lacking personality can ascend into the highest embodiment of historic invention' (1972: 156). I began to think that mask work would not only facilitate disguise, an important dimension of Armin's and my fooling practice, but would require my work as an actor to focus an embodied practice.

The main reason to use masks was to ensure my fooling practice did not become high-minded. I have been reminded of Armin's insight into his practice at the end of *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b): 'As what I doe, I doe not thinke too much' (F4). Masks are primarily objects for physical playing rather than cerebral contemplation. Bakhtin expresses this characteristic of masks well.

> Even more important is the theme of the mask, the most complex theme of folk culture. The mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to oneself. […] Of course it would be impossible to exhaust the intricate multiform symbolism of the mask. Let us point out that such manifestations as parodies, caricatures, grimaces, eccentric postures, and comic gestures are per se derived from the mask. It reveals the essence of the grotesque. (1984: 39-40)

I was inspired by the fact that fools and other comic figures have enjoyed a long history with masks in many cultures. As Otto records:

> The Ostyaks of western Siberia celebrated the killing of a bear with a night of song and dance during which some people wore masks and adopted mock names, the masks affording them the latitude to mock even visiting Russian officials with complete liberty. In Sri Lanka there is an ancient masking tradition (*kolam*) that affords licence for social satire, while the Pende tribe of

> Zaire had different masks for various village characters, including fools who would mock those who did not fit in. (2007: 42)

Allardyce Nicoll in his book *Mimes, Masks and Miracles* (1963) describes the fool in a range of different types of performances in which masks feature prominently.

Masks have a long history in theatre. The Pronomos Vase,[91] for example, shows actors preparing with masks and dates to approximately 400 BCE (Taplin and Wyles 2010). The theatre form known as *Commedia dell'arte* is famous for its use of masks. As Dario Fo makes clear in *The Tricks of the Trade* (1991), *Commedia* is concerned with fool-types and folly with its Zannies, Arlecchinos, Pierrots, Pierrettes and Pantalones. Masks continue to be used in actor training and some professional rehearsal processes. Lecoq's work showed how a range of neutral and 'character' masks extend actors' expressiveness and provoke them to work with greater risk and imagination. Masks (Lecoq 2009) cover the identity of the performer and through this anonymity, the actor feels free to say and do things that are normally prohibited. The mask is a playful instrument for the actor. They require practice and can evoke a fooling spirit in the actor.

For these reasons, I began a dialogue with mask maker Etienne Champion. Over a number of months from 2014, we met and corresponded about the question of 'what would the mask of the fool be?'.[92] I shared with him stories, anecdotes and historical facts that gave insight into my developing sense of the fool. Etienne occasionally watched me training, sketching my movement and improvisations. I also shared with him personal stories that held particular importance for me. These stories concerned my own relationship with folly and the fool inside me. These included dreams and impressions. We did not discuss mask design, neither its shape (half-mask, full-mask or any other structure) nor its personality. As a result of this dialogue, he created four masks of the fool for me over the course of about eighteen months. These are original pieces. A further three masks came later and were developments of and responses to other masks that he had already made. As a result, there is now a series of fool masks.

The idea of a mask series is not new. Various theatre directors and mask makers have created them for particular texts or projects. Director François Cervantès and mask maker Didier Mouturat, for example, made a series for a production in France called *Masques* in 1993. An analysis of this work can be found in the unpublished doctoral thesis by Jean Gilbert called 'Un théâtre de masques: une analyse de "Masques", spectacle de l'Entreprise' ('A theater of masks: an analysis of "Masks", show of the Company') (Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, 1997). This series included twelve masks, one of which was a fool ('Le Fou'). This is unusual and, as yet, is the only mask series I have been able to identity that contains a fool. The seven masks of the fool

[91] Red-figure with added white paint, dilute washes, volute-crater, 75 cm, Museo Nazionale Archeologico, Naples.

[92] The conversation with Etienne Champion in which I asked him if he would consider making 'the mask of the fool' took place in June 2014 (Theatre National de Strasbourg).

created with Etienne Champion are a significant outcome of the research. To my knowledge, a fool mask series has never been commissioned before.

The training with these masks has become the central focus of my practice. They have challenged me in my physical and vocal skills. I have used other sorts of training that are without masks and previously described in this section to develop my body and voice, and to deepen my actor's sense of what is required to play the fool. All this work I have used in the service of trying to bring the masks of the fool to life. As I have worked with masks, I have begun to see them as key in the fooling technique I was developing. They connected me to many themes in Armin's practice concerning disguise and identity. Their visual strength and theatricality made me feel that I should work with them to deepen my fooling practice and also to develop a performance piece through which I could share that practice with an audience.

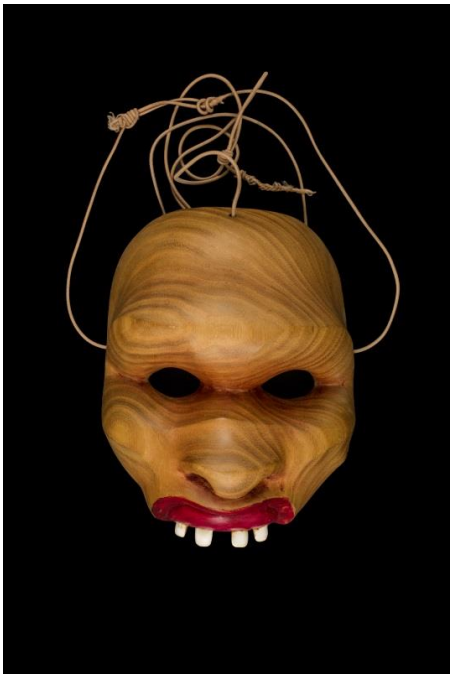


Figure J
Patience  Zero, mask by Etienne Champion

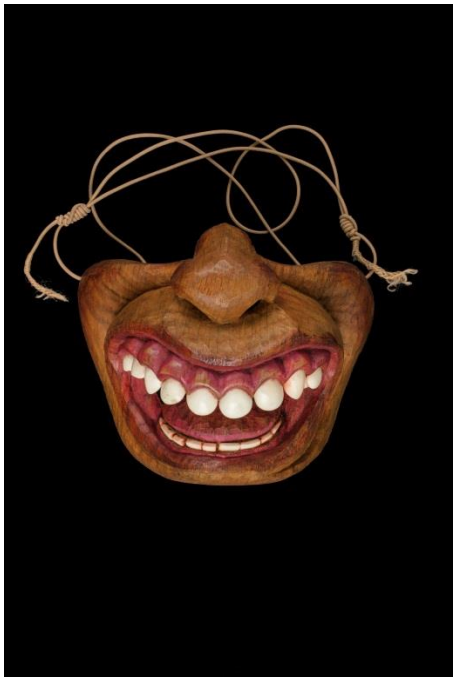


Figure K
Mouther, mask by Etienne Champion

Figure L
Willop the First, mask by Etienne Champion

Figure M
Jungo, mask by Etienne Champion

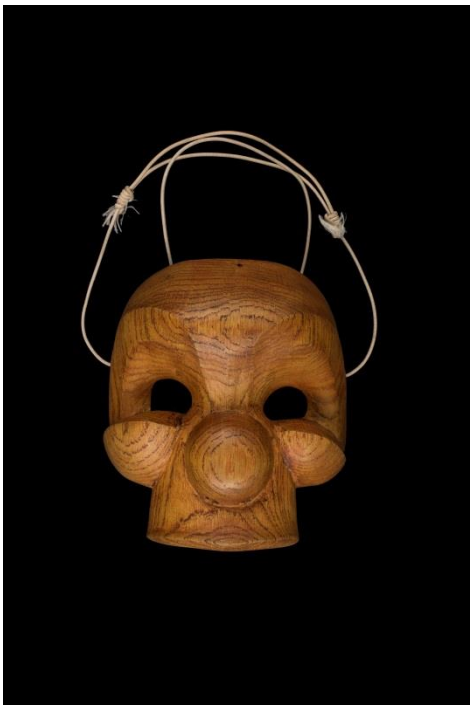


Figure N
Collin, mask by Etienne Champion

Figure O
Boop, mask by Etienne Champion

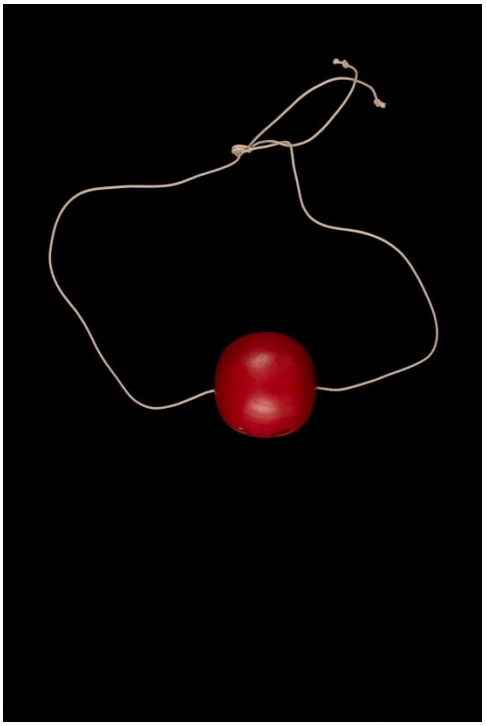


Figure P
Spunge, mask by Etienne Champion

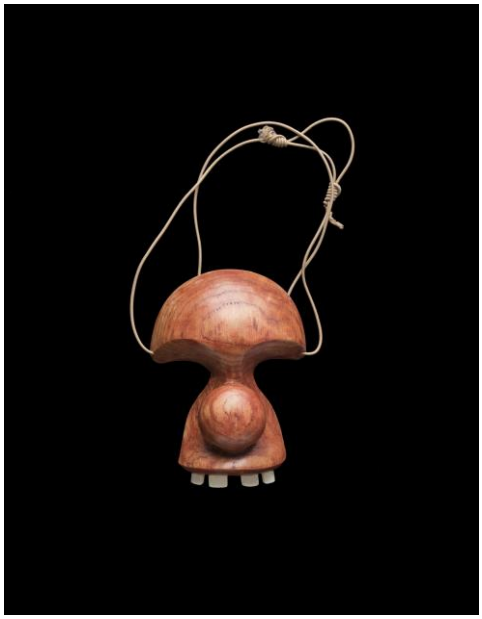


Figure Q
Jônes, mask by Etienne Champion

When I began to work with the first mask (Figure J) in early 2015, I was struck by the strong physical energy it demanded of the actor. I found physical and vocal distortion, and lack of inhibition were essential. Being a half mask, it opened up questions about the sound, voice and speech of the fool. Because the jaw of the actor is free and visible to an audience, the actor must give her/his mouth to the mask and activate the region in the playing. This mask has made me explore disfigurement and the resilience of the fool as an outsider. I had been inspired by Armin's stories in *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) in which his six fools, however much they may have been loved, are also presented as outsiders to the norm. This mask presented a strong visual stimulus to working outside the vocal and physical 'norm'.

The second mask (Figure K), which could be described as a laughing mask, also challenged the level of energy I brought to it. I started to work with this mask in the summer of 2015. It has a raw animalistic intensity and it connected me back to research I had earlier done on the medieval fool's connection with baboons, gargoyles and with the grimace. Etienne's focus on the mouth in both this mask and the mask in Figure J has reminded me of the power of appetite – the desire to consume *in extremis*. I have also found insatiable laughter and the disturbance this creates through the mask in Figure K.

The third mask (Figure L) with its distorted eye alignment[93] and open-mouth position evoked a different playing energy. I received this mask also in July 2015 when doing an

[93] In medical terms this is known as exotropia and refers to the condition in which one eye looks directly at the object of viewing and the other eye is misaligned outwards. It is a variation of the condition known as strasbismus which occurs when the two eyes fail to maintain proper

intensive training period at Théâtre National de Strasbourg with Marc Proulx. This mask has led me to pure joy and celebration. Through this work, I began to connect to my fool's optimism. It has also kept my work light-hearted. This has been a useful counterpoint to some of the suffering and violence I was exploring in the other masks. The eyes of this mask with their double vision reconnected my practice to the work of Clément (1994) on syncope and Armin's fascination with duality.

The fourth mask (Figure M) emerged in response to my thinking around the slave position of the fool. I had noted the frequency with which Lear's fool deals with the threat of whipping (e.g. I. 4. 109-11). King Lear addresses the Fool as 'my pretty knave' (I. 4. 95) and threatens him with the whip before he has spoken ten lines. There are six references to the whip during the short period of comparative calm at the beginning of the play, of which at least two are threats. William Empson in his analysis of the Fool in *King Lear* (1606) states, 'The position of Lear's Fool is clearly meant to be a miserable one; we are to believe him when he says "I would rather be anything than a fool, and yet I would not be thee, nuncle"' (1977: 130). Despite this, the Fool is humorous and remains witty throughout his journey in the play.

I had begun to imagine the fool/king relationship as a version of the slave/master relationship. Black slaves had been masked during and after deportation from the West African coast. Ana Lucia Araujo explores this in *African Heritage and Memories of Slavery in Brazil and the South Atlantic* (2015). Examples of these masks and illustrations of their use exist in various collections such as that displayed in the Museu Afro Brasil in São Paulo (Figures Q and R).

Figure R
Slave masks, Museu Afro Brasil, São Paulo

alignment and work together as a team. In the stage of early onset, this condition creates double vision. Later the brain ignores the visual input from the misaligned eye in order to prevent the double vision. Further details can be found at <https://www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/strabismus.htm> [accessed 31 May 2019].

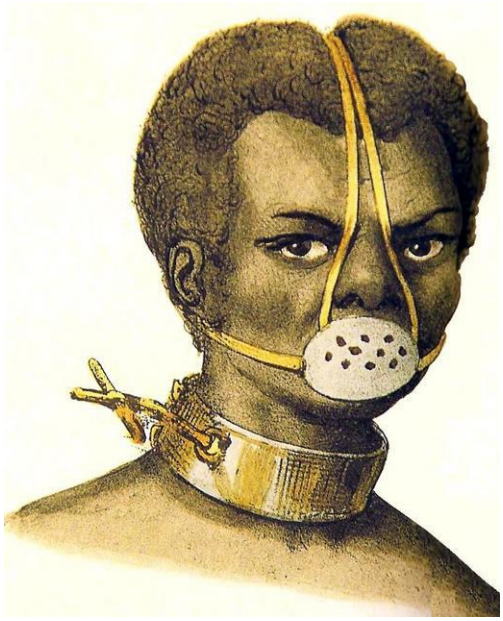


Figure S
Punishment for slaves, 1839, Museu Afro Brasil, São Paulo

These masks were used to restrain the slaves and to prevent biting, spitting or eating. They were also a way in which the slave owner tried to silence the slave.

I had wanted to understand the physical and psychological reality of the enslavement process better and to see how I might draw from this in my exploration of the fool as a slave. Stephanie Smallwood provides a harrowing account of enslavement in *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (2008). I was struck by the irrepressibility of the slaves. They survived imprisonment, torture, forced labour, starvation, disease and great loss eventually to establish a rich and influential slave culture (Stuckey 2013). Anya Kabir has explored this irrepressibility in the propagation of Afro-diasporic rhythm cultures from the plantation to the dance floor. She states:

> Since at least New York's Jazz Age, people the world over have filled urban social spaces (dance halls, dance clubs, the dance floor) to enjoy themselves through partner dances that evolve from the fusion of African-derived percussive rhythms and body movements on the one hand, and European melodies, instruments, and courtly dance styles on the other. The dances originated through the colonization of Africa, the forced displacement of African peoples, their enslavement on plantations throughout the Americas and the Caribbean. Despite their traumatic origins, they have become synonymous with the kinetic, somatic, pleasurable dimensions of urban modernity. (2014: 106)

I have felt the irrepressibility of the slave could be mirrored in that of the fool. The fool and the slave have this in common: that they experience the threat or reality of violence, and they embody phenomenal reserves of resilience and life force.

The historical connection between the slave and the fool is explored by Robert Hornback in his article 'The Folly of Racism: Enslaving Blackface and the "Natural" Fool tradition' (2007). He describes how the Devil and the fool were associated with each other and how the masking tradition of 'blackface' used either masks, soot or some other substance for makeup to achieve a strong dramatic effect for Devil/fool in performance;

> The cycles' and interludes' masked Devil was a type of natural fool whose blackness connoted not simply (or even primarily) evil, as critics assume, but folly. Such a conclusion is supported by historian of theology Jeffrey Burton Russell who notes that the Medieval Devil, though sometimes clever, was also 'a total fool,' 'the personification of…our own foolishness,' 'at bottom a fool who understands nothing'. (2007: 51)

Hornback notes the rise of the black-masked Harlequin in Italy and records Dario Fo's assertion that *Commedia dell'arte* originated during a 'revival of slavery' (Fo 1991: 42). Hornback also states that the tradition of the blackfaced fool in England became especially pronounced alongside the expanding slave trade in Europe, particularly with the development of an English slave trade. He does not suggest a direct influence of Harlequin upon the blackfaced fool tradition of England (2007: 59); Harlequin did not appear in England until well after a number of English plays had featured blackfaced fools and the first recorded performance of Harlequin in London was by Drusiano Martinelli in 1578. The links in this chain concerning the fool as slave are complex but through them Hornback is keen to show a process of rationalisation of blackfaced folly. He shows the ways in which terms for fool, devil, animal (usually monkey, ass, bird or goat), lunatic and black ethnicity became exchangeable. From this, he argues, a long and pervasive tradition developed which informed the growth of racism in Europe. This influence would later inspire figures such as 'Sambo' and the 'minstrels' of nineteenth and twentieth-century North America. Joseph Boskin explores some of this later history in his *Sambo: The Rise & Demise of an American Jester* (1986). This history gave me an awareness of the rightful sensitivities around an association I might make between my fools and slaves.

An alternative reading of the fool's connection with the slave that does not identify a racist cause can be found in the Afro-Brazilian religion known as *Candomblé*. This faith was introduced to Brazil by African slaves taken there by the Portuguese between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. During one training session, Irineu Nogueira described Exú as the fool figure amongst the *orixás* (spirits) of *Candomblé*.[94] As Paul Williams notes: 'Exú may be described as *o chefe* [the master] but he is also referred to, paradoxically, as *escravo* (slave). […] The priestly hierarchy […] look upon Exú as a slave sent to liaise between man and the gods (1974: 115). Williams notes a process of syncretism in which Exú has been linked to many figures in Christian mythology such as the saints Michael, Peter and Gabriel, as well as the Devil. He also observes the dualism

[94] This conversation took place in March 2018 (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London).

inherent in Exú's character whereby he can be both a constructive and destructive force: 'as both *chefe* and *escravo*, as power in his own right, as mediator and even subservient messenger between the human and the divine spheres, manifesting in all those roles an infinite capacity for mutation' (1974: 119). In *Candomblé* there is a syncretism between the figures of the slave and the fool in Exú. Far from implying something demeaning, this character is powerful and highly respected in this tradition.

Using the fool's connection to the slave, I developed the idea of the fool's *impossible resistance*. The fourth mask (Figure M) was Etienne's response to that. When he delivered this mask, it was noticeable that it was the first piece with a closed, or nearly closed, mouth. Here was a suppression and attempted silencing. This mask is dumbfounded. It meant that my fooling could no longer be achieved through words. My work was forced to return to my body and to dig deeper in the fool's embodiment. The expression of this mask has required strong physical rather than verbal work. The previous masks often came to life when I was working with laughter and vocalisation. This fourth mask has challenged this and has asked what happens after all laughs have ended. Positioned under a chair and being restrained in the body, I have explored impossible physical conditions. I have tried to mirror in part the condition of the slave. Rather than playing the victim, however, I have explored rhythms in the body that resist the constraints of the physical situation. I have imagined the oppressed slave who knows they can be killed at any moment and then finds another type of laughter, a laughter at their own death. This mask has required such a laughter to be silent but help expressively in my body. I have trained to create a body full of resilience. For this, laughter comes not from neurosis but from fearlessness. The challenge of this mask is to find the way it can play freely and with joy despite an impossible context. I have remained aware that exploring the connection between the fool and the slave in my practice could be accused of cultural appropriation. I therefore have avoided dramatizing the slave condition in an explicit way. Instead, I have sought to explore how as a white man I meet and can sometimes overcome my limits, opening the space in my body and in the room to express new physical freedom and a great resilience

Having explored the connection between the slave and the fool through the mask shown in Figure M, I wanted to take my practice into an African context and develop a dialogue with practitioners from this very different tradition. I was introduced to the École des Sables, the world's preeminent African dance and movement training centre that is located in Senegal. This school was founded by Germaine Acogny, a renowned dancer and teacher who systematised an approach to body training that captures African techniques and knowledge. Her work is described in her book *African Dance* (1980) which conveys a pedagogy and aesthetic about body, dance and movement that is very different from European traditions. I spent three weeks training, observing, teaching and exchanging in her school during August 2017. It was a challenging and inspirational time as I explored the fool with dancers, actors, musicians and other teachers. It became clear that the African traditions passed on there had a lot to teach me about how we become inhibited by the habits and restrictions of our own culture. The fool gives licence to the actor to blast open these constraints. The African body has taught me a lot about physical freedom, spontaneity and play.

Many of the students at the school worked with these masks. When playing and dancing the fool, they showed me many types of fools I had not seen before. Much of this work revealed the importance of flexibility in the spine, coordination and musicality. I also worked with local actor Patricia Gomis in her theatre. We explored a sequence of exercises and improvisations. For example, having divided the space in half, two actors run in a circle around their respective halves. The actors aim to arrive in the centre at the same moment. Each time they meet each other it is as if by surprise and they make a jump. Having landed, each actor takes their turn to physicalize and vocalise an explosion. The actors then run again in the circle. The sequence is repeated numerous times so that the actors eventually run out of ideas and they are forced to respond in the moment. The exercise becomes an explosion competition. Patricia and I noted how powerful it is to work with the fool across cultures, traditions and ethnicities. I saw how fools and fooling techniques are recognisable to practitioners outside of my own culture and tradition.

Working with the masks in different cultural contexts (see Appendix 5: Dissemination and Impact) brought my attention to the motif of 'the journey of the fool' that I had found in my research about the fool of the tarot tradition. In the tarot, the fool is interpreted as the protagonist of a story and the other cards are the path the fool takes through the great mysteries of life. This path is known traditionally as 'the Journey of the Fool' and the other cards are the main human archetypes. This concept of the 'journey of the fool' has been an inspiration for generations of artists. David Cornford in his essay 'The Tarot Fool in English and American Novels' (1998b) notes a range of writers in the twentieth century who have continued to be inspired by the symbolism of the tarot Fool.

Approaching the tarot fool as a subject of cultural analysis, I wanted to undertake a consideration of this esoteric tradition. I wondered if the tarot traditions might offer a useful insight to connect the different masks in the series. As explained by Anthony Louis in *Tarot Plain and Simple* (1996), the fool card comes at either the beginning or the end of the series. The fool in tarot facilitates the telling of a story – the narrative that is created in a card reading. The fool encounters and may become these other archetypes on their journey. The fool should not be understood as one archetype among many but as containing all archetypes. Taking inspiration from the tarot, I have understood that playing the fool invites me to embody many modes that human beings can adopt such as warrior, magician and emperor. This has reconnected me to Armin's use of polyvocality in his fooling technique.

The Visconti-Sforza Tarot (fifteenth century) depicts the fool as a ragged vagabond, wearing ragged clothes and stockings without shoes, and carrying a stick on his back. He has what appear to be feathers in his hair. The Rider-Waite Tarot (1909) shows the fool as a young man, walking unknowingly towards the brink of a precipice; he has a small dog, and holds a rose in one hand and in the other a small bundle of possessions. In the tarot, as in many esoteric systems of interpretation, the fool represents a stripping down to our irreducible core and warning that significant change is coming. The Joker in a standard set of playing cards is either discarded and of no value or can be wild, taking

any role in the game and so becomes the most powerful card. The fool signifies in these traditions taking action where the circumstances are unknown, confronting one's fears and taking risks. It represents the flesh and the sensitive life, and depicts folly at the most insensate stage of a developmental process.

Johannes Fiebig (2014) describes the significance of the number zero on the fool card in tarot in his commentary on Salvador Dalí's tarot designs. Zero is a missing number. It stands for nothing. It defines the personal starting point, the site of unity within yourself, at the very core of your being. He compares it to the initial point of a coordinate system; the fool card represents the beginning of everything that makes you an individual. The fool is depicted as looking into the future but in such a way that does not have any role models; he acts into the blue. The fool can represent the feeling that there is something you long for and are missing out on. Fiebig says, 'The fulfilment and the banishment of deep-seated fears are a priority. The fool represents a state of unadulterated bliss' in which you are open to experiment and free to learn from all experience. David Cornford in his essay 'The Tarot Fool' (1998a) has observed that Jung is considered the 'patron saint' of modern tarot studies. The journey of the fool represents a process in higher individuation. Jung's understanding of archetypes as universal, archaic patterns and images that derive from the collective unconscious (Jung 1985: 140) is now questioned and can be accused of both mysticism and metaphysical essentialism. Nonetheless, his ideas on archetypes 'remain important icons of modern thought' (Cornford 1998a: 455).

As Cornford (1998a) notes, the origins of the tarot date back the horror of the Black Death, the erosion of papal authority and the demise of the Scholastic system in the fourteenth century. These forces, he argues, all contributed to the development of a powerful occult symbolism. The iconography of the tarot deck designed by the first Renaissance artists included trump cards, of which the fool was one. Perhaps Armin and Shakespeare also knew of the fool's esoteric symbolism as a zero and the mystical belief that everything comes from nothing and then returns to nothing. Lear's line 'Nothing will come of nothing' (*King Lear*, I. 1. 90) seems to indicate such an awareness. The Fool response to Lear in a later scene is suggestive of this symbolism: 'Now thou art an O without a figure; I am better than thou art now. I am a fool, thou art nothing' (I. 4. 183-85).

The tarot fool has been a powerful concept in my own creative process. It has allowed me to understand that in my playing of the fool I could present many different types. The tarot tradition also taught me that the fool comes from and returns to zero. This has become a part breath technique for mask work – starting from and returning to zero. Each time I have approached a mask, I kept in mind that I knew nothing and that my body should not allow previous patterns of work to inform the present. The discipline was to avoid accumulation of skills and answers and to stay open to things that were as yet undiscovered in my fooling practice. Marc would remind me when

taking the mask and starting to play, that we did not know if the fool 'would come',[95] that we must sincerely question if the fool appeared in my playing, and be prepared to accept that many times 'the fool does not arrive'. As I have taken a mask to play it, I have placed the wood on my face using an in-breath. This I have understood as the inspiration of the fool's birth. Paying attention to whatever rhythm or speed of breath I was using when the mask arrived on my face, I have given that breath to the character of the fool. This first breath has been important, physicalising a way to 'practice' the fool beginning from nothing each time I take a mask. This way of working has connected me to the idea that the fool comes from zero. This breathing technique has become central to my fooling practice.

At the end of a passage with a mask, I have practised the means of releasing the playing energy from my body. Marc would say to me, 'Check through all the body and let him go'.[96] In these moments it has felt as if the fool was leaving me as the high levels of energy required for playing the mask subsided. I have paid particular attention to achieving this through my breath, ensuring that I returned to my everyday breath pattern. My fooling technique has become to listen more carefully to my breathing, when it became forced, tired or out-of-control, has become an important guide to determine the life-length of a fool's passage. It was through my breath that the fool would exit. Using breathing in this way has connected my work imaginatively to expiration and death. As I have removed the mask, breathing out has released the fool into death. I have understood this as the fool returning to zero.

Working with the masks, I developed greater awareness of the role of breath for my fooling practice. This is not something that mask practitioners have previously written much about. Sears Eldridge in *Mask Improvisation for Actor Training and Performance* (1996), for example, makes little reference to it. I have found that listening to my breath (its speed, depth, rhythm and ease) has enabled me to modulate the energy of my performance. This has become the central part of my fooling breath technique for mask work. It has reconnected my practice to Armin's association between fool, breath and death (the final exhalation), and my own identification of the clown's connection to inspiration and the fool's connection to expiration. This mask technique requires me to listen playfully for the death of my fool through close attention to my breath, and in the meantime until that death arrives, to play as provocatively and sincerely in the mask as I can. I have been reminded of Armin's playfulness with the theme of death in a section of *Quips Upon Question* titled 'Who's dead?' (1600b: BI) when he puns on dying and dyeing and so turns death into a laughing matter.

The three following masks (Figures N, O and P) explored the fool's relationship with the clown and were developed in response to mask designs that already existed. Two further masks were created in early 2018 and now belong to the collection of the National French Theatre School in Strasbourg. These two masks are developments of

[95] This was a phrase Marc used on a number of occasions and with increasing frequency during our training period in October 2018 (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London) as we prepared for the performance.
[96] See above.

Etienne's work on clown/fool shapes. I worked with one of these pieces (Figure Q) sporadically during 2018. The work with this piece returned to the theme of 'the outsider'. This theme arose partly because I was not able to access the mask regularly because of its location in Strasbourg. In one improvisation, Marc and I thought about unemployed or retired individuals who dress every day in order to maintain the appearance of going to work.[97] This created a useful foolish situation for me to exist within. Although I have done much less practice with this mask, the work was immediately vivid and full. In it, we met another type of fool who was urban and socialised. This mask has reminded us of the fool's humanity. Rather than being strange creatures from another world, fools are real people. This fool's name 'Jônes' came unplanned during an improvisation. In this, the mask pronounced his own name in a muffled dialect which made the consonants less specific. Later, I was stuck how close this was to 'Jack', a name which has a long history in fool-like figures and which Armin used for his one of own fools. In *Quips Upon Questions*, Armin used the name Jack as a term of abuse that sought to humiliate and exclude the person to whom he spoke: 'He is a Iacke to think so' (1600b: C3). I began to see Jônes as a 'Jack', someone who is judged unfavourably by society and for whom there may be questions about his honesty, and so is treated as an outsider.

All of the masks have received names. This has been a way of naming the different fools I have been working on: Patience Zero, Mouther, Willop the First, Jungo, Collin, Boop, Spunge and Jônes. Some of these names arose whilst I was improvising; other names were found when discussing the masks with Marc Proulx. Marc compares this process to the naming of children. He says names are necessary in order for them to develop and grow up well.[98] In this, I have understood that Marc is describing the actor's process of working with a mask over an extended period and as a result deepening his/her expressive power with that mask. There are historical precedents for this; Armin's fool name was Snuffe, as is recorded on the title pages of his publications *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) and *Quips Upon Quips* (1600b).

Mask work is key in my approach to fooling because masks persistently return my attention to my body and breath. This has prevented me from mentalizing[99] too much. The masks challenge and inform the improvisation work. Any ideas that I consciously or unconsciously planned in advance are revealed as largely unhelpful or insincere. Masks have constantly reminded me that in a fooling technique one seeks spontaneity. When working in the mask, I have needed to be attentive to the present moment and have a great responsiveness in the body. I must be able to respond immediately and honestly, and not to appropriate the body. The skill is to express perceptions, sensations and

[97] This conversation took place during a training session in February 2018 (Centre Chorégraphique, Strasbourg)

[98] Marc Proulx introduced me to the practice of naming masks when we worked together in July 2015 (Théâtre National de Strasbourg).

[99] I use the term 'to mentalize' as it is used in psychology to indicate the process by which we make something mental in nature rather than physical. The sense is different from that of 'rationalising' which suggests a thought process based on rational or scientific principles. The term was first used by Fonagy (1989).

feelings as they arise. My technique is to embody everything I sense in myself and the space. In this, my inner state mirrors the room and the audience, and also shows itself. To reveal one's inner state to the world might be considered an act of folly in normal society but the actor who plays the fool intentionally does just that. In my fooling technique I have come to understand that I show my inner state and I also show the inner state of the audience. This is different from clowning. As a result of fooling, I propose, the audience are more implicated in the performance and may therefore feel more uncomfortable.

This understanding of the relationship with the audience has reconnected me to an observation Armin makes in the section titled 'He plays the fool' of *Quips Upon Questions*. He notes that when playing the fool his function is to content the folly of the audience (1600b: C). I have understood this as an insight into his technique in performance. Armin showed that in fooling the audience shares equally in being foolish. Maintaining eye contact with the audience and breathing with them in order to sense their energy has become a central part of my fooling technique. These ensure I keep a close connection with the audience.

I have had to remind myself constantly of the three principles developed with Irineu: there is no protocol, there is no judgement, and be available. Without these, my fool work has stayed superficial and the fool remains a silly character with little at stake. Because the possibilities of the mask are so thrilling, so full of potential, the mask has invited me to try again. When playing the fool's mask, I meet myself in powerful ways. Another kind of truth arises through mask work. We could describe this truth as dramatic truth – that which is sincere and compelling in the present moment of performing, and is quite different from the realm of ideas.

The masks have worked as a mirror reflecting back my limitations and showing me where I have blocks. I have used videotaping, photography and feedback from my collaborators to critique my work. For example, Irineu Nogueira showed me that when I walk in the mask my body did not earth itself properly because of the way I used weight transition between my steps.[100] Similarly, in the voice, Marc Proulx pointed out when my vocal range became stuck or my breath became forced in the mask.[101] The masks have revealed the lack of sincerity or play in my body and voice, and challenged me to respond authentically. Masks reveal those moments when I am false in playing the fool.

When the playing of the mask has been supported by authentic movement and Irineu's three principles above, I have felt compelled to move, breathe and vocalise according to the demands of my fools. This can be like a type of rapture or possession and has a long history in mask work. There are numerous examples from cultures throughout the world where masks have been used to create an ecstatic state in the performer or

[100] Irineu made this observation during a training session that took place in March 2017 (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London).
[101] This was an observation Marc made on a number of occasions and especially during our training period in October 2018 (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London) as we prepared for the performance.

audience. Tsutomu Oohashi and Noire Kawai (Moerdiyanto and Corens 2001), for example, have observed that throughout Asia many masks play a key role in folk performances and are indispensable for inducing a trance-like state. The function of trance for actors working with masks is discussed by Eldrege (1996). He describes masks as power-generating and transforming objects. In exploring the work of Roger Caillois (2001), he notes how masks seem to dissolve the boundary between the Self and the Other. Eldrege also describes the alternative view of Elias Canetti (1973) that the mask wearer is always conscious of their duplicity. He concludes,

> This question of whether the masker loses awareness of his Self and goes into an ecstatic trance state or is always conscious of himself should be understood not through a bipolar 'either/or' construct but as an experience of convergence – a 'both/and' duality of divided consciousness. (Eldrege 1996: 8)

Masks invite the actor to find the psychophysical connection between the face and the mask, between the actor and the fool.

The question concerning trance in mask work returned my attention to Clément's (1994) description of the state of rapture for truth-telling. Truth-telling is a key function of Armin's fools. Marc Proulx informed me in one rehearsal that in the French language the word '*ravi*' is used of foolish types. It expresses the sense that their mind is taken elsewhere as if entranced. Clément lists rapture's physical manifestations as: coughs, sneezes, hiccups, gasps, screams, sobs, tremors, uncontrolled excretion, foaming at the mouth, facial spasms, tics, squinting, tremors shaking the body, cardiac palpitations, choking, contractions of the rectum, sweating, tears, tears of blood, cold sweats, tingling, pricking, tickling, wheezing, tinnitus, whispering, auditory hallucinations, visions and mutism (1994: 9-10). Whilst I have not sought to work in a state of trance in the mask, I have explored some of these physical behaviours in free-form improvisations. With or without a mask, they have been disturbing for those watching. With training I have learnt to control the level of physical abnormality I create. I have discovered it is important that viewers are not able to classify too easily my behaviour as mad. To play the fool is not the same as to play the insane.

Considering the role of trance in mask work, I began to change my vocabulary and pay more attention to working instead with 'ecstasy'. Masks require the actor to play with great joy and this can move towards the ecstatic.

> Ecstasy, bliss, euphoria, elation, exaltation, joy, joyfulness, joyousness, cloud nine, seventh heaven, transport, rhapsody, enchantment, delight, exhilaration, happiness, pleasure, ravishment, the top of the world, delectation, …

This reconnected my practice to the tradition of the merry-maker which had inspired Armin. Masks are objects in which I could rediscover the pleasure of pretending to be someone else. They have also made me aware that both semblance and dissemblance are functioning in my fooling technique. This has reminded me of Armin's use of foolish

vocal, physical or costume disguises and through which he would reveal the folly of those to whom he spoke. Fundamentally, however, the power of masks has been to provoke delight in me and the audience. A key dimension of my fooling technique has been to keep myself attentive to the *pleasure* of being disguised in the mask. This maintains a mental and physical attitude which is playful. It has prevented me from looking for absolute truths in my fooling technique and has focussed the playing in a way that cannot be high-minded.

I have left it as an open question whether other actors would work with the masks for training and rehearsals only, or whether the masks should be used in performance also. It has been clear to me in my own work that the masks were such important partners that I would want them to appear centrally in a future performance. This presented me with the challenge – how to frame my practice in a piece for a contemporary audience. I turn to this challenge in the following section.

# Exit

As I have previously noted, after the seventeenth century the unseemly fool was banished from serious drama. This can be seen clearly in Nahum Tate's version of *King Lear* which omitted the Fool and which held sway from 1681 until Macready's production in 1838. When the fool did return, actors often adopted an approach which conflated the fool with the clown, as can be seen for Sher's performance in the 1982 RSC production of *King Lear*. Having developed an approach for training in fool that has identified a distinctive technique, I wanted to move my work towards performance. The following section describes my work to create a fool performance piece inspired by Armin's practice and my wider reading in fooling. My intention was that this piece would present the fool in a way that would be potent for a twenty-first-century theatre audience and would reinstate fooling as a distinct acting technique.

## The resurrection of the fool

I began my preparation for the performance piece with the observation that the fool has largely left the theatre. To present this figure for a contemporary audience would require an act of theatrical resurrection. Wisker (2018) notes the recurrence of a resurrection motif in the work of Armin and Kemp. He explores how Tarlton and older comic traditions inspired this. Focussing on the work of Armin in *King Lear* (1609), Wisker concludes that Shakespeare creates a revivified clown/fool figure when he utilises and combines Armin's skill set as a specialist in natural, artificial and court fools.

> The figure of the clown enables Shakespeare to allow indecorousness to work – dramatically and theatrically, but also epistemologically and philosophically, to unsettle often dangerous or harmful fictions of decorum that structure social relations and social rules. [… The] pattern of banished (or disappearing) and resurrected clowns in the Shakespearean canon demonstrates the irrepressible and metamorphic powers of comedy and clowning. The return of the repressed or the resurrection of the newly dead in the form of the afterlife of the clown, moreover, speaks to Shakespeare's longstanding commitment to a politics of inclusion. (2018: iv)

In glossing clown for fool in respect to Armin's work, however, Wisker fails to bring our attention to the different approach that Armin utilised in his performances. I would argue the title of his thesis should more accurately be 'Dying Laughing: On the Death of the Clown and the *Resurrection of the Fool* in Shakespearean Drama'. Clown and fool, though related, require distinctive acting techniques.

Considering Armin's role as Tutch in *The History of The Two Maids of More-clacke* (1609a), Armin/Tutch appears in disguise as John. McDonagh argues this character as both John and Not-John. Tutch finally reveals himself (a kind of self-resurrection) and in this instant John disappears. McDonagh concludes that it is the fool's folly which is able to displace power whilst it is the fool's wit which is able to regenerate the community (2008: 148). He notes the fool's function as a catalyst for the reunions and weddings at the end of the play. As such, Armin/Tutch 'is the image of regeneration and reaffirmation' (2008: 147). I understood that in wanting to stage the resurrection of the fool, I was working in a tradition that Armin too had understood.

I had discovered in the literature review a range of performance traditions that staged comic resurrections. The phenomenon of a ritual return from the dead had been a part of the folk plays from an earlier period. It formed part of fools' performance repertoire as members of travelling groups from the 1500s onwards. The trope of the triumph over death was performed ritualistically in the restoration of St George's head to his body by the Doctor in the Mummers Plays. The morality play *Mankind* from c. 1470 (Lester 1981) includes several references to restoring life and health after a beheading. In the late seventeenth century, the fool performed in fairs, mocking the mountebank and showing him for the quack he was. These performances belonged to a tradition in which miraculous cures were (jokingly or not) claimed.

Shakespeare knew the tradition of a stage resurrection. Falstaff opts to play dead.

> 'Sblood, 'twas time to counterfeit […]. Counterfeit? I lie, I am no counterfeit: to die is to be a counterfeit, for he is but the counterfeit of a man, who hath not the life of a man: but to counterfeit dying, when a man thereby liveth, is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed. (*King Henry IV, Part 1*, v. 4. 112-18)

At the height of his powers at the end of Part 1, Falstaff argues using a fool's wit that despite morality and social mores, playing dead can contain its own truth. In breaking the taboo about imitating the dead, Falstaff escapes all confinements.

> LANCASTER Did you not tell me this fat man was dead?
> PRINCE I did, I saw him dead,
> Breathless and bleeding on the ground. Art thou alive?
> Or is it fantasy that plays upon our eyesight?
> I prithee speak, we will not trust our eyes
> Without our ears; thou art not what thou seem'st.
> FALSTAFF No, that's certain, I am not a double-man: but if I be not Jack Falstaff, then am I a Jack. (*King Henry IV, Part 1*, v. 4. 130-37)

Falstaff's use of doubling and punning on his first name 'Jack' reminded me of Armin's fooling practice. Both set a premium on survival and the defying of time and death.[102]

[102] Falstaff is not, however, a role at Armin is likely to have played.

Mercutio refers to a theatrical tradition of playing dead when he summons Romeo to reappear.

> He heareth not, he stirreth not, he moveth not;
> The ape is dead, and I must conjure him.
> I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes,
> By her high forehead and her scarlet lip,
> By her fine foot, straight leg and quivering thigh
> And the demesnes that there adjacent lie,
> That in thy likeness thou appear to us! (*Romeo and Juliet*, II. 1. 17-23)

Here Mercutio alludes to some stage business in which a baboon or other ape played dead then to be resureected (Strunk 1917 and Dugan 2013). Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern in *Shakespeare in Parts* explore a range of plays from the early-modern theatre in which performing animals and actors lay 'dead' on stage waiting for the cue to be brought back to life. (2007: 85-87). For example, in Carlell's *The Fool would be a Favourit* (1637) a terrible amateur performer, Young Gudgeon, lies 'dead' onstage waiting for his cue. He misses it and so the performance is called to a halt. 'Master, Master, rise, rise', calls the Man. Young Gudgeon replies, 'Thou liest, I must be kis'd first; I will not open mine eyes till I be kis'd' (Palfrey and Stern: 85).

Louise Peacock (2009) describes the more recent phenomenon of clown ministry which began in the United States in 1968 and in the United Kingdom in the early 1980s. This movement uses clowning to convey the Christian message. Quoting from one of the founders of Holy Fools (an association of British clown ministers), Peacock notes the importance of the concept of resurrection for bringing the liturgy to life.

> 'It is a circus tradition that whatever happens to clowns, a bucket of whitewash in the face…an exploding car or a collapsing ladder, the clown always rises again, gets up and continues. For this reason, clowns are rightly seen as resurrection figures'. This approach to the connection between clowning and resurrection highlights the similarity between clown behaviour and Christ's life, death and resurrection. (Peacock 2009: 110, quoting Bain and Forbes 1995: 59)

It is clear from these modern-day examples that resurrection is a recurrent motif for fools and clowns and this is perhaps a mark of their resilience. They have a tendency to reform themselves in response to the needs and realities of their times.

I have taken inspiration from Hyde's provocation about the Trickster and applied it to my work on Armin and the fool.

> 'What is a god?' asks Ezra Pound, and then replies, 'A god is an eternal state of mind.' If trickster stirs to life on the open road, if he embodies ambiguity, if he 'steals fire' to invent new technologies, if he plays with all the boundaries both inner and

> outer, and so on – then he must be among us, for none of these has disappeared from the world. His functions, like the bones of Osiris, may have been scattered, but they have not been destroyed. The problem is to find where his gathered body might come back to life, or where it might already have done so. (1999: 11)

I wanted to resurrect the fool for the twenty-first century. I have taken comfort from the fact that If the fool is dead (or playing dead), that is nothing new. As Otto says, 'the court jester is dead, long live the court jester' (2007: 260).

## Framing the fool: moving towards performance

I began working on the piece in late August 2017 having asked Marc Proulx if he would now help me in its preparation. Over a number of months, we discussed our relationship and agreed that, rather than director/actor, we would continue as collaborators. I was struck by the fact that neither Armin nor the performance traditions on which he drew had involved a director. We met regularly over a number of months and maintained a correspondence via email. We gradually began to shape the piece but decided not to aim for a finished product – uncongenial to the spirit of fools – and to perform a work-in-progress. This would place me in a more vulnerable and foolish position. We shared it with an audience at the end of October 2018. I intend to continue work on it with my collaborators beyond the timeframe of doctoral research and have received invitations to perform and teach this work in a number of countries.[103]

When starting to imagine a performance, I had to acknowledge that for a modern-day audience the fool would be unfamiliar or cliché-ridden. I asked myself: should I ever use the word 'fool'? Perhaps that would mislead an audience and conjure up unhelpful images for them. Should the piece contain characters or situations? Perhaps inventing a foolish scenario would communicate folly most effectively, or perhaps this would put the fool within too restrictive a context. Should there be a narrative? Perhaps this would also fix the fool too firmly within the frame of the piece. Should there be other performers? Perhaps this would be problematic in terms of time constraints and the amount of training that would be required for another performer. These are the initial questions that I struggled with. I was comforted by the insight that all drama can be said 'to begin and end in spontaneously enacted foolishness' (Willeford 1967: 1). The desire to play-act, mimic and transform is inherently foolish because at its most basic level it contains the fantastical belief that what is unreal can be made real. The impulse to act is the fool's impulse so the fool was at hand when I began to make the piece.

Eventually, I drafted a couple of short one-person playlets that contained a mixture of nonsense, the obscene and fragments of Shakespeare's text. I learnt one of these texts

[103] See Appendix 5: Dissemination and impact.

and worked on it alone over a number of sessions. This was unsatisfactory. I had limited experience as a playwright and this work felt like just one piece of a bigger puzzle I was struggling to realise.

Marc and I realised that the key question for the piece was to find the dramaturgical device that would contain as well as release my work most effectively.[104] Such a device might be called the 'playing frame' – a set of rules that make the world of the piece coherent to an audience and fun for the actor to play. Louise Peacock (2009) discusses the nature of these frames in reference to the work of Gregory Bateson's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1973). Bateson had proposed the concept of 'play frames' and 'contends how individuals receive communication depends on the frame in which they receive it. […] A frame can be consciously identified, for example, through words or actions' (Peacock 2009: 13). Considering clown performances, Peacock describes a number of elements and techniques which establish the playing frame: 'The red nose, comments addressed to the audience and the clown's rhythm of looks to the audience all reinforce the playful nature of the performance' (2009: 13). Peacock acknowledges the work of John Wright (2006) in describing the techniques which establish playing frames in clown performances and notes in addition to performance styles, the importance of make-up and costume for achieving this.

As in clown acts, Marc and I were also unconcerned to obey the Aristotelian rules of dramaturgy – unity of place, time and action. Wisker in his concluding comments about the resurrection that Tarlton, Kemp and Armin undertook through their respective performance practices notes the potential for a re-emergence of the spirit of their work in 'all forms of theatre that are not consigned behind a fourth wall unable to speak directly to or to acknowledge its audience' (2018: 251). The frame, for me, would not have a fourth wall.[105] An immediate relationship with the audience was essential for the fool. I wanted to develop my own playing frame that would keep the fool distinctive from other traditions. Marc and I agreed that a way to do that would be to develop a frame that, rather than creating a fictional narrative, would express the journey of my research. Thus the performance (the output) would be a product of the process (the input).

The venue and spatial structure in which a performance takes place is also important in establishing the playing frame. Looking for a space that would help evoke the spirit of the fool, I explored a number of venues for the performance such as church halls and a disused cupola. I also looked for a suitable folly, an ornamental building that has no practical purpose. Marc questioned this approach. He said, 'The body transforms the

[104] The issue of how to structure the piece began to emerge during training sessions with Marc Proulx through 2017 and became particularly prominent in our discussions when working together in February 2018 (Centre Chorégraphique, Strasbourg). In the following sections, the insights, exercises and questions concerning structure come from our conversations during the training session in February 2018 (Centre Chorégraphique, Strasbourg) unless otherwise specified.

[105] The fourth wall is both literally the space which separates the performer from an audience as well as any conceptual barrier between fictional work and its viewer.

space, not the space the body'.[106] This challenged me to ensure my focus was on the embodiment of the fool. As a result, I decided to perform in a black box studio in the Guildhall School where I was both a doctoral student and a member of the teaching staff. This appropriately located my work both within the theatre and a training setting.

We then spent several weeks in a studio experimenting with different games that the actor could play in front of the audience. These staged explicit scenarios in which the actor tries to play the fool. We hoped these games would provide a dramaturgical frame for the piece. An example of such a game follows.

The actor identifies a small number of masks to work with; five is a good number. Having sourced a diverse collection of trousers, jackets, padding, hats and pieces of fabric, the actor experiments with the clothes, building a costume and trying to find the shape that brings each mask most to life. This is done with a partner. The actor observes the responses of the partner to different shapes, colours and textures, and so notes which clothes provoke the imagination of the partner as well as their own internal playing state. Having identified a costume for each mask, a large circle (5-meter diameter is good) is marked on the floor of the studio and each costume is placed as a pile of clothing at regular intervals around the perimeter. The masks are then positioned on top of the appropriate pile. The actor walks briskly around the circle. In the first rotation, the actor acknowledges any observers in the room. During the second rotation and without planning, the actor makes a small trip when passing one pile and so randomly selects a mask and costume. On the third rotation, the actor collects the pile of clothing and mask. Before the third rotation is completed, the actor must dress as much as possible and enter the mask. The game asks the actor to get dressed to play the fool under tight time constraints. The exercise creates an entrance for the fool. The actor then plays a passage, exits the mask and costume, deposits them on the floor, and repeats the exercise with a different pile. Through this I learnt that an entrance need not necessarily take place literally through a doorway. Instead, it can be achieved using the body's state and movement. The same applies for an exit. Working with clothing, I was reminded of the sequence in *Foole Upon Foole* (1600a) when the boy takes the cord which holds up the trousers of John in the Hospital. John struggles with a dripping nose and the scene emphasises the bodily humour as John laughs, cries, his nose runs and his trousers fall down. The fool's clothing seems to have been a preoccupation of Armin's practice.

We developed the game with piles of clothing. Marc would call out from the side of the space 'Call for Mr Shrimpton on stage. Mr Shrimpton, you are urgently required on stage'. This created further panic and disorder. Failing to dress adequately, my body shape would be transformed with the ill-fitting clothes. We began to think about whether a game such as this would provide a device for performance. Marc and I agreed that a series of fool entrances each with a different mask and costume was interesting. The game has allowed me to explore the actor's successful or unsuccessful

[106] This comment was made during a training session in December 2016 (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London).

entrance as the fool. It has allowed me to present a variety of fools in quick succession. It has also allowed me to improvise as the person before and after entering the mask, as 'the Actor' who plays the fool.

This game did not, however, totally answer the problem of how to structure the piece. It did not contain a clear enough logic for an audience – why was the Actor getting dressed repeatedly in this way, what was the role of the clothes for the fool and why was he working with a series of masks?

We developed another game with chairs as an alternative playing frame. The Actor is the only person not to have a seat in the theatre. The Actor brings on stage a chair and places it in order to sit. Unbeknown to the Actor, placed on the chair is a mask and some clothes. As the Actor goes to sit, the mask and clothes possess the Actor and at this moment the fool appears. The chair game was, nonetheless, unsuccessful because the moment of possession by the mask was not convincingly repeatable. It was not believable that the Actor would not notice the items on a chair each time. This game had emerged from my idea about where the court fool is allowed to sit in the presence of the king. I noted how devices that came from an idea were generally unsuccessful and that the guiding principle had to be dramatic truth rather than intellectual conjecture – what works in practice and what works in theory.

Working with chairs has allowed me to explore how it is possible to change the space using different chair configurations. We have then explored the position of the fool's chair/s in the space in relationship to the various possible orientations of the audience. From this exercise I established the circle as the basic shape of my playing space with the audience occupying only a segment of that circle.

I chose this configuration because of Armin's belief in foolishness as a universally shared quality. I was reminded of Armin's interaction with the audience in *Quips Upon Questions* and how his technique implicated those with whom he engaged as fellow fools. I was drawn to Armin/Feste's response to Olivia's request that the fool be taken away: 'Do you not hear, fellows? Take away the lady' (*Twelfth Night*, I. 5. 36-37), the effect of which is to place Olivia in the position of the fool. I decided a semicircle of fool chairs would form part of a large circle of chairs, completed by the auditorium chairs. This arrangement would constantly remind me as I performed that all those present were fools. Later, I introduced a clothing rail as part of the circle and on which I could hang the pieces of clothing for each fool. I was aware that a clothing rail might look theatrical but the priority has been to facilitate quick changes and the rail has helped this. It has also helped to convey the sense we were 'backstage' and were showing the actor's process of playing the fool. Nearer the time of the performance in October 2018, I became aware that the audience would have coats and other clothing which would need to be stored in the performance space. I realised I could use the rail to receive their coats as they arrived in a kind of preshow 'meet and greet' and then wheel the rail into position in the circle. Whilst I only used my own clothing to dress as each fool during the performance, I was aware the audience could see their own clothes hanging as part of the scenography. This provided another opportunity to implicate the

audience as fools and again was inspired by Armin's technique that made everyone present experience their own folly and see themselves as fools.

As well as clothing and chairs, Marc and I struggled with a range of other issues as we attempted to form the piece. Is the piece a spectacle, performance, conference or presentation? Can I move between these forms and play with them as the fool would play with them? How many masks is the optimum to work with for an audience? Wouldn't a smaller number (three?) allow me to do more detailed work? Who is the person who exists in the space between the moments when the masks are played? Can this be 'the Actor' who endeavours to play the fool? Can this person talk about the acting process? Can I adopt a narrator's voice ('the Man') a third figure that could comment on the Actor's work from the point of view of a researcher? When does the Actor start playing the fool – before, during or after entering the mask? How can I explore an unmasking in which the mask of the Actor's face is revealed under the wooden mask? How can we play with the Actor revealing himself as a fool? How can I put on and take off the masks in front of the audience? What techniques or protocols can I use? How can I integrate the fool's dance and realise my long-held intuition that dancing might be innate to fooling? How can I integrate a stunt? What lines of text (Shakespeare or otherwise) can I use?

We had to find a playing frame that would answer these questions, be compelling for the Actor to play, and be immediately understandable to an audience. Over a number of sessions, Marc and I struggled to find this frame. At the end of one improvisation session, Marc asked me 'What are you saying through the fool? What is this about?' These questions focussed my approach to the piece and have connected me both to my original impulse to undertake the research and to the essential insights I have gained about the fool from my study of Armin's work. I responded with the following themes and lines of text:

- We are all fools: 'A Greek invocation, to call fools into a circle' (*As You Like It*, II. 5. 56-7).
- The fool is omnipresent as my double: 'LEAR Who is it that can tell me who I am? FOOL Lear's shadow' (*King Lear*, I. 4. 221-22).
- The fool provokes me to take utmost licence: 'This your all-licensed fool' (*King Lear*, I. 4. 191).
- The fool is the embodiment of my humanity: 'When that I was and a little tiny boy' (*Twelfth Night*, V. 1. 381).
- The identity of the fool is a question and troubling: 'OLIVIA Take the fool away. FESTE Do you not hear, fellows? Take away the lady' (*Twelfth Night*, I. 5. 36-37).
- The fool's presence is like a moment of quickening:[107] 'I knew him, Horatio' (*Hamlet*, V. 1. 182).

[107] 'Quickening' denotes the process of suddenly becoming alive, awake, animated or revived. The final moments before death have often been portrayed in drama as an intense quickening.

- If you meet a fool, it will change your life.[108]

The Shakespearean phrases, from my knowledge of their respective contexts within the plays, contained what I as an artist most wanted to say about the fool to a twenty-first-century audience. They were drawn from my study of Armin's practice. I observed how I had been inspired by Armin in a similar way to his own drawing from the fooling traditions that preceded him. These themes began to guide the dramaturgy of the piece.

Creating the playing frame to share my research with an audience had been the major challenge when devising this piece. Fools resist framing. In rehearsal, it was possible to find superficial answers to these questions and we often developed a game that seemed to provide a solution. This felt unsatisfactory. Marc reminded me that we were not working on a production with its demands to have something ready for the public. My work was research. We agreed that we should use our time to go deeper. As a result, I left some things unresolved and have accepted answers only when they felt *juste*.

In August 2018, I spent two weeks working intensively with Marc in London.[109] During this period, two important insights emerged. Firstly, we started to explore the relationship between six of the masks and the six principles for playing the fool that I had identified in Armin's work. We found a strong connection between each mask and a particular principle. We understood that all six principles applied to the playing of each mask (because all six principles are part of my approach to playing the fool). Nonetheless, we found each principle had a strong resonance with a particular mask. Playing these six masks, then, would be a way to share a spectrum of six different fools and six different aspects of my fooling technique. From this, we were able to decide a sequence for the masks using the order of the principles from the previous sections 'Passage' and 'Entrance'. We felt the emerging structure meaningfully reflected the content of my research. We decided not to include the mask of Spunge because the red nose is a strong sign for an audience and likely to make them associate the work unhelpfully with the clown. I wanted to maintain the distinctiveness of the fool for an audience. We also agreed that a seventh final mask was a useful means to encapsulate and unify all the principles and would express the reality that Armin's principles all lead to the same place. This seventh mask would communicate the circular rather than the sequential nature of the work.

Using the breathing technique for the mask described in 'Not being high-minded', I began to work on a passage through seven masks, which would be a kind of journey through which the audience would encounter seven different fools. I have been reminded of the section in Armin's *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) titled 'He begins well,

[108] This was a phrase used by Irineu Nogueira in August 2017 during a training session (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London).
[109] These sessions took place at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama (London). Subsequent references in this section to conversations with Marc Proulx also took place during these sessions.

but endes ill'. I have been struck by his description of a cyclical life pattern: 'In his beginning, all he did was well: […] | So in the ende, it must of force be ill, […] | Begin at first, and as thou dost begin, | The Middle and the ende shall loye therein' (F4). Armin saw a circularity to life's pattern in which the beginning contained the end. In my imagination, the breathing technique represented the birth and death of seven fools with their first and last breaths. These were beginnings and ends. This has reminded me of Armin's joke question in a section of *Quips Upon Questions* (1600b) titled 'Who's dead?' in which he asks how a man could die twenty times (BI). In punning on the word die for dye, Armin achieves a false resurrection in which a man can live who has dyed/died. Taking this as inspiration, my piece would realise a cycle of repeated lives and deaths. I had understood from Armin the importance of the circle as a structuring device in fooling for both the space and the dramaturgy. I had begun to see the circle, a shape made of a line which curves to its origin, as inherently foolish. This is because it returns to its source and seems not to progress. I have also in my imaginative work begun to understand the circle as the shape of resurrection because in drawing this shape the line returns and repeats.

I then reflected on the protocol we were already using of calling seven fools into the space to express their individual brands of foolishness to an audience. I saw this protocol as a witnessing of folly, as a presenting of foolish statements or questions. This was reminiscent of the 'calling-ons' that were used in early English folk performances that involved the fool as described by Pettit (1988). I remained struck by Preiss' observation that the fool remains an enigma in Armin's practice (2014: 199). I would translate the questions about the nature of the fool into questions *by* the fool. This was more than a dramaturgical concept to help frame the piece. It was deeply connected to the process of the research. It expressed the importance of questioning as part of my practical and theoretical investigation of Armin's fooling. I then considered the kind of spaces where individuals are invited to pose questions and recalled one of the collective nouns for fools – a parliament of fools.

I had already researched the activities of groups of fools (the Feast of Fools in their clerical and lay forms, the Dutch literary guilds, sottie plays, etc.). Whilst I could not find any historical examples of a performance of a parliament of fools,[110] nonetheless, as Hüsken (1996) showed in his description of the performance of Oomken in 1551, there is a long tradition of fool groups parodying the rituals and language of the business of state. My piece would do that too. I discovered a useful example from English stage history in Robert Hill's *Tales of Jesters* in which he reports that Tarleton wrote a ballad for the Curtain theatre of 'the horse-load of fools' (1934: 193). This ballad was a satirical attack on the aldermen of the City of London and 'with each verse he made a gesture of introducing another type of fool or jester, until he conjured up the vision of the unhappy aldermen' (1934: 193). Hill records how Tarleton's ballad was hailed with enthusiasm on the afternoon of its premiere. In Armin's own work, whilst he never explored a parliament of fools, he did create scenarios in which more than one fool was functioning. For example, in a section of *Quips Upon Questions* titled 'Two Fooles well

[110] See Appendix 4: The parliament of fools

met', Armin relates a story in which two fools recognise each other as 'brothers' and engage in banter about a roasted bird (1600b: B2). He provides excepts of their dialogue and this, I propose, shows that Armin had imagined the dramatic potential of fools functioning not only as solo figures but also in a collective.

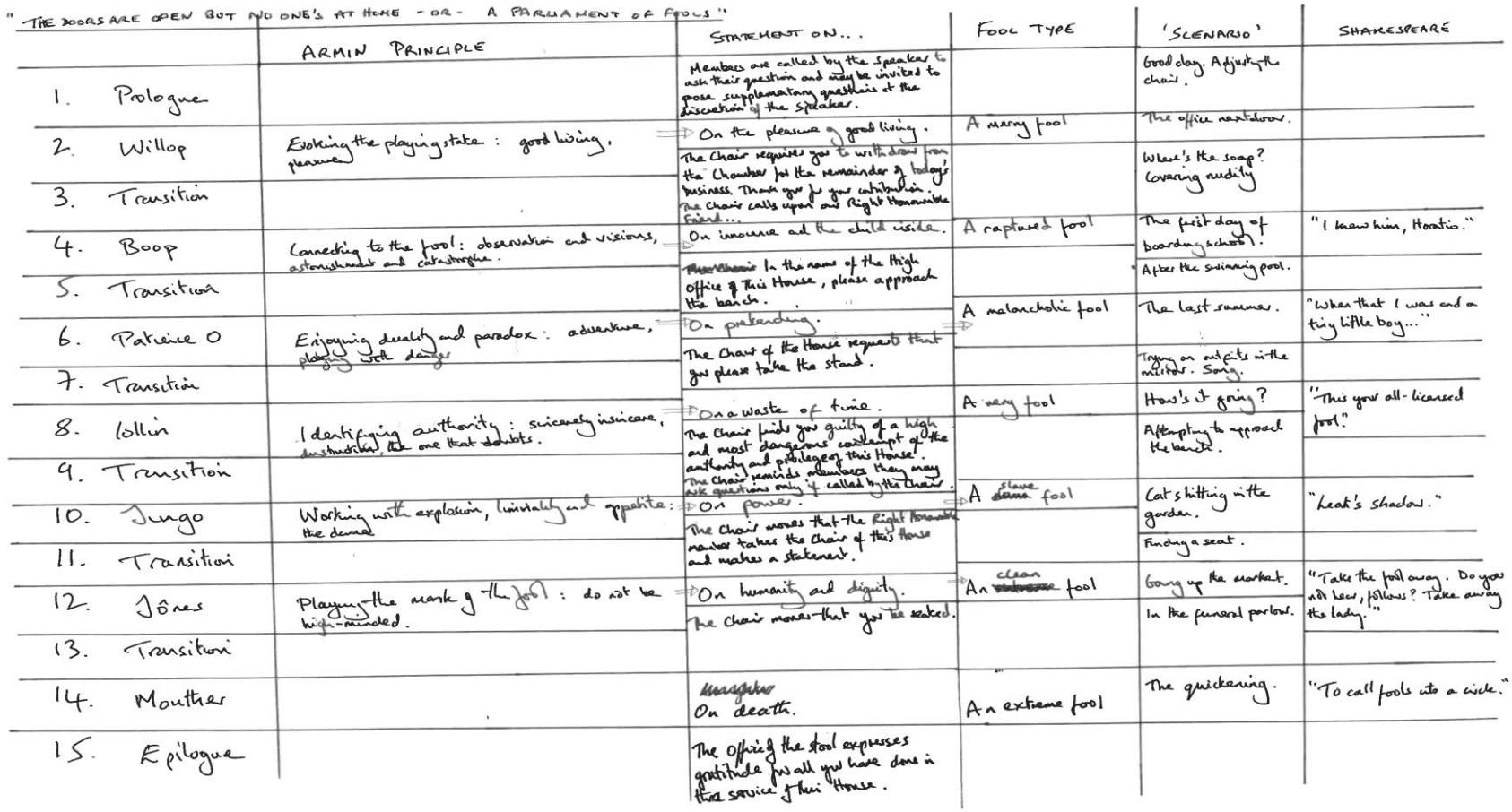
The concept of the parliament of fools suddenly gave me the true frame in which I could create the piece. A parliament would be recognisable to an audience and justify the succession of interventions by fools. Accordingly, for the transitions between the fools, I sourced parliamentary language which would give a key to an audience, making it explicit that we were playing with parliamentary protocols.[111] We developed these fragments of text, editing them to suit our needs. We used these phrases as means of calling a fool forward to make their statement and sometimes to acknowledge a fool who had just departed the parliament. This text was delivered by the Actor to whom we gave the name 'The Chairman'. This name was in reference to the fool chairs that were in the space and also identified him as the authority against whom the fools might play. Maintaining the presence of the Actor, the person behind the masks, was important because it reflected the central thrust of the research - how might a twenty-first-century actor approach the fool to bring this figure alive for a contemporary audience? To this content we added a Prologue and an Epilogue, also delivered by the Actor/Chairman, and so we arrived at an overall structure for the piece. The sections played in the mask, the fool passages, would have a loose structure but would remain largely improvised. This would allow the fools to respond as they wanted in the moment and allow them to be responsive to the audience, a key dimension of my fooling technique.

Figure T is taken from our working notes during this period. It is a mapping of the piece. We have understood it as a text on the fool, containing both original senses of 'text' from Latin - a noun *textus* (the written character or the tissue of a literary work) and a verb *texere* (to weave) (Simpson and Weiner 1989). This 'text' is a threading together of various elements and, as in a woven fabric, contains some elements that are implicit and some that are explicit. This means that whilst for me, the maker, I am aware of all the parts that make up the grid, for an audience certain elements only would be immediately experienced. The *textus*, as Marc and I have started to call it, is a working document and is regularly updated as we have continued to work on the piece.

Reflecting on what we had achieved, Marc and I agreed that the playing frame was playful; it contained the real and the imaginary; it was specific and open. It also contained the potential to release deep play. While we worked, Marc and I often referred to Armin's advice and the sixth principle of his practice: 'Do not be high-minded'. We felt we had found a form that avoided that.

[111] <https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/business/questions/>
<https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-information-office/g06.pdf>
<https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/role/customs/>
https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-information-office/g07.pdf
[All accessed 17 August 2018]

In mid-September, via email we agreed a title for the piece: *The doors are open but no one's at home – a parliament of fools*. The first half of the title had emerged following an improvisation in May 2018. We had joked about what we imagined might be the facial expressions of an audience watching my work and recalled English idioms that describe a vacant look. We enjoyed altering the more familiar phrase: 'The lights are on but nobody's home'. The reference to doors felt apposite; my work was searching for the entrance of the fool in twenty-first-century theatre. Doors, as both literal and symbolic thresholds, made a gentle reference to resurrection. The piece was staging a re-entrance and return to life of seven fools in the theatre. The second half of the title, we agreed, gave the audience a useful key to follow the parliamentary protocols we were exploring.



" THE DOORS ARE OPEN BUT NO ONE'S AT HOME - OR - A PARLIAMENT OF FOOLS "

| | ARMIN PRINCIPLE | STATEMENT ON... | FOOL TYPE | 'SCENARIO' | SHAKESPEARE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Prologue | | Members are called by the speaker to ask their question and may be invited to pose supplementary questions at the discretion of the Speaker. | | Good day. Adjust the chair. | |
| 2. Willop | Evoking the playing stake : good living, pleasure | ⇒ On the pleasure of good living. | A merry fool | The office next door. | |
| 3. Transition | | The Chair requires you to withdraw from the Chamber for the remainder of today's business. Thank you for your contribution. The Chair calls upon our Right Honourable Friend... | | What's the soap? Covering nudity | |
| 4. Boop | Connecting to the fool: observation and visions, astonishment and catastrophe. | On innocence and the child inside. | A raptured fool | The first day of boarding school. | "I knew him, Horatio." |
| 5. Transition | | In the name of the High Office of this House, please approach the bench. | | After the swimming pool. | |
| 6. Patience O | Enjoying duality and paradox: adventure, playing with danger | ⇒ On pretending. | A melancholic fool | The last summer. | "When that I was and a tiny little boy..." |
| 7. Transition | | The Chair of the House requests that you please take the stand. | | Trying on outfits in the mirror. Song. | |
| 8. Iollin | Identifying authority: sincerely insincere, | ⇒ On a waste of time. | A [illegible] fool | How's it going? | "This your all-licensed fool." |
| 9. Transition | | The Chair finds you guilty of a high and most dangerous contempt of the authority and privileges of this House. The Chair reminds members they may ask questions only if called by the Chair. | | Attempting to approach the bench. | |
| 10. Jungo | Working with explosion, liminality and appetite: the denial | ⇒ On power. | A slave fool | Cat's sitting in the garden. | "Keat's shadow." |
| 11. Transition | | The Chair moves that the Right Honourable member takes the Chair of this House and makes a statement. | | Finding a seat. | |
| 12. Jônes | Playing the mark of the fool : do not be high-minded. | ⇒ On humanity and dignity. | An clean fool | Going up the market. | "Take the fool away. Do you not hear, fellows? Take away the lady." |
| 13. Transition | | The Chair moves that you be seated. | | In the funeral parlour. | |
| 14. Mouther | | On death. | An extreme fool | The quickening. | "To call fools into a circle." |
| 15. Epilogue | | The Office of the Stool expresses gratitude for all you have done in the service of this House. | | | |

**Figure T**

Grid from rehearsal notation of 'parliament of fools'

It is important to re-state that as we shaped the work, we did not look to make a show or fully-rehearsed piece. It contained performed elements but was not a complete performance. The piece has remained an arena of research for the enigma of the fool. We left it possible for the Man (the researcher) to talk about the work and to slide from performance into other genres such as presentation. In the spirit of this, I invited a colleague to facilitate a feedback session at the end of the performance using her skills in mentoring and the Critical Response Process.[112] Appreciating the nature of what we had made, I felt it was important to invite an audience of people with whom I had been in dialogue concerning the fool over the period of the research. In this way, the piece would be a performative contribution to an ongoing conversation with those interested in the figure of the fool.

The experience of performing the piece in October 2018 has allowed me to draw some important conclusions about the next stage of its development. Through the feedback I received on the night of the performance and subsequent conversations, I began to understand more clearly that I wanted to develop the relationship between the fools and The Chairman in order to clarify my fools' relationships with authority, and to flesh out The Chairman character more. I also wanted the piece to contain music and at one moment to release into a fool's dance. In the literature review I had repeatedly encountered the phenomenon of the dance of the fool. The earliest known record of a fool's work, according to Welsford, tells of the Danga who were mysterious pygmies at the court of the Egyptian Fifth Dynasty Pharaohs. Particularly notable is their relationship with dance.

> The pygmy was particularly precious, we are told, because he 'could dance the God, divert the court and rejoice the heart of the King'. Apparently to 'dance the God' means that he was able to imitate the dance of Bisu (Bes), the foreign God from Puanit, who was represented as a hideous big-headed dwarf clothed in leopard-skin, 'at once jovial and martial, the friend of the dance and the battle'. (Welsford 1935: 56-57)

Within European culture, various medieval illustrations depict the dancing fool. A fourteenth-century image from the British Library, for example, shows a hooded fool dancing with his marotte, scattering bread or stones whilst the king appeals for guidance to God the Father (Southworth 1998: Plate 9a). Geoffrey Chaucer provides a fool-grotesque in his *House of Fame* that was written around 1384. He identifies one-seventh part of humanity as those who indulge in fool behaviour and he imagined a fools' dance as the nadir of human behaviour. At least one of these characters is dressed in a belled cap and simple, parti-coloured hose. These clothes are not necessarily those of a court fool but are those that an ordinary peasant might afford. Billington, quoting from the writings of fifteenth-century churchman Dan Lydgate, notes the fool's role in social dances. Lydgate's 'Order of Fools' portrays a rowdy fool who 'is a dancer who leads local entertainment; "The tenth Fool may hop upon the ring | Foot

[112] This is a method developed by choreographer and educationalist Liz Lerman for giving and receiving useful feedback. Further details can be found in Lerman and Borstel (2003).

pointed before him and lead the dance properly"' (Billington 1986: 10). The phenomenon of foolish dancing or dancing *in extremis* can be seen in the Strasbourg Dancing Plague of 1518 that seems to have been a case of dancing mania (Waller 2009). Much later, in the 1970's, Peter Cook in his comedy partnership with Dudley Moore wrote a short sketch in which he meets a non-stop dancer and asks, 'Why aren't you dancing?' (Cook and Moore 1977). In doing so, Cook had connected to an ancient image of the ridiculousness of the human condition expressed through dancing. Cook and Moore's sketch is a joke and has been an inspiration for future work I wanted to do on the piece.

Whilst Armin was not renowned for his skills as a dancer, I had begun to see how a fooling technique tends towards a performance style which is dance-like. His practice, it has seemed to me, created a disturbance in the performance space and in the experience of the audience. It was a disturbance achieved through movement and breath which, like a dance, was quick and light, sparkled with pleasure and excitement, and yet also was able to speak poetically and of weighty matters in the human condition. My own fool's dance for the twenty-first century remains the next step in the development of my fooling practice.

## Postscript

In concluding this thesis, I am aware of how my fools exit. I have understood that my fools want to interrupt and disturb resolutions. They teach us it is foolish to seek a comfortable conclusion. After the curtain call when the applause has died down, I imagine my fools standing at the back of the auditorium smiling and being heard, at the very least, quietly coughing. The twinkle in my fool's eye says, 'Oh, you think so, do you?' Grand intellectual statements are most likely to receive this treatment from a fool and, as Armin reminded us, in fooling we should always avoid being high-minded. It can be a disappointment that my fool would not sum things up for me. In evoking disappointment, the fool invites us to face our false selves and accept the world as it is rather than as we would rather pretend it is. It is for this reason, I suggest, that the Fool in *King Lear* disappointingly just disappears in Act 3; he exits inconclusively. Here the fool rejects the idea of satisfaction for either the actor or the audience. As the playwright and theorist Howard Barker says, 'satisfaction derives from resolution' (2005: 25). Theatre's challenge to us is not to be satisfied and in this I see fools as the embodiment of the art of theatre. To work without resolution or foreclosure[113] requires great bravery from the actor. Such work may have a high price because the audience may attack the actor/fool for having broken their life, a life based on false resolutions. As well as the risks, there is much potential in this kind of work and this gives us renewed impetus to play the fool in the theatre of the twenty-first century.

We need fools now. Madoff (2009) in his work on the principles of an artist's education has described 'non-instrumental' use of time as significant to artistic practice. This use of time is an end in itself and therefore it confuses the usual economies of purpose in market-driven social structures. It is, I propose, an essentially foolish use of time. Adorno (1973) understood this when he wrote about Samuel Beckett's characters and Charlie Chaplin's tramp; they exist outside of all economies and normal social functions. Beckett expressed this at the beginning of *Waiting for Godot* (2006); there is 'nothing to be done'. The artist/fool must question how life could be more than the struggle for self-preservation, how the world might be other than the *status quo*. We are placed at the crux of the issue that haunts the myth of Sisyphus – that there is a law of doom thus far obeyed by history – and to which Camus (2005) sought to find an alternative response other than suicide. Camus answered that instead revolt is required. This is, for me, the spirit of the fool.

Throughout this research I was aware that fools can be male or female. Nonetheless, historically there have been many more fools who were men. This is an important consideration when we bear in mind the timely agendas of 50/50 gender casting. The reason there have been more male fools than female, I suggest, is due to the fool's relationship with power. In the patriarchal societies that have dominated much of world history, those with power have most often been men. If the fool's role is to reflect the

[113] I use the term 'foreclosure' as it is used in psychology to describe the process in which an individual adopts traits or qualities and so develops an identity before s/he has explored other options or ideas (Archer and Waterman 1990).

folly of those with power, then this explains why fools have more often been male. As the relationship between power and gender continues to evolve in the coming decades, we can imagine a similarly fluid gender identity for those who occupy the position of fool.

The writer Milan Kundera in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1980) notes that there are two kinds of laughter. The first type is associated with joking, jeering and ridicule. Taking the work of French philosopher Annie Leclerc (2004), Kundera associates this with male energy. The second type of laughter is delight unbounded and comes from female energy.

> After denigrating sexual desire in the male, which, dependent on the transitory nature of the erection, is fatally betrothed to violence, annihilation, and doom, the author [Leclerc] extols its positive antipode – female joy, pleasure, delight – as expressed in the French word *jouissance*, which is soothing, ubiquitous, and uninterrupted. […] And if intercourse is beautiful, it is beautiful because it is the sum of all the individual sensual delights: 'touch, sight, hearing, speech, and smell, as well as drinking, eating, defecating, meeting, and dancing.' Sucking is delight, giving birth is delight, menstruating is delight, that 'mild, almost sweet flow of blood, that tepid saliva of the stomach, that mysterious milk, that pain with the burning taste of happiness.' (1980: 57)[114]

Kundera describes Leclerc's vision as a 'mystical manifesto of joy' and pushes the limits of delight to include Lerclerc's claim that death is 'an integral part of joy that only men are afraid of' (1980: 57). This delight is the energy of the fools that I have searched for and, as Kundera and Leclerc show, it belongs as much, if not more, to women as it does to men: 'that delectable trance of happiness, that ultimate peak of delight. Laughter of delight, delight of laughter' (1980: 57). The fooling of the future should, I propose, work with this understanding of the fool's energy and in this way a fooling technique can speak to female actors as much as it does to male actors in the twenty-first century. Perhaps Armin was aware of the potential for female fools. In a section of *Quips upon Questions* (1600b) titled 'Why Iettes she so?', he notes: 'Gillian doth Iett and brave it with the best' (F2). Whilst the quip ends with a sobering warning to Gillian that her fooling will bring her 'soone up Holborne Hill', there is nothing special in this. The risk of fooling, for both men and women, is not to be underestimated.

With this in mind and body, we should be brave, holding on to the fantastic potential for an encounter with the fool in the theatre. It could change your life.

[114] Quotations of Leclerc's work here and in what follows are taken from Kundera's own translation of *Parole de Femme* (Woman's Words) in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1980).

# Appendix 1: Collaborators

**Etienne Champion**

Etienne Champion is a mask maker based in Strasbourg. After studying traditional masks of Commedia dell'arte and leather technique, Etienne changed his approach and began to carve masks made of wood. He is the favoured associate of Mario Gonzalez who taught mask work at the Conservatoire de Paris for many years. Etienne continues to create masks for that school. He has made masks for companies all over the world including Teater Halland in Varberg, the Bricklayers of Chicago, the Shanghai Theatre Academy and the Regional Ballet of Hubei. He works regularly with mask practitioners Mariana Araoz and Christophe Patty at the 'Collectif Masque' and has been secretary of the association 'Les Créateurs de masques' – a gathering of thirty masks makers living in France. He teaches group workshops or individually at his studio. His approach to mask making takes into account those who will wear them, their anatomy and their energy. He is influenced by various traditions including African sculpture, and Japanese and Cubist art. Examples of his work can be found on his website: <http://www.etiennechampion-sculpteurdemasques.com/>.

**Merry Conway**

Merry Conway is a teacher, performer and installation artist based in the USA. She is a permanent faculty member at Shakespeare & Company and served as its Clownmaster for several years. She has worked with a number of institutions including LA Women's Shakespeare, Stratford Festival Theater, and Denver Theater Center, Carnegie-Mellon, Emerson, NYU and the Leadership Forum of the World Economic Forum at Columbia University. She now teaches workshops with the Linklater Center. Her primary mentor was the legendary movement teacher Trish Arnold.

**Sue Lefton**

Sue Lefton is one of the foremost movement directors in Britain. Her extensive career spanning thirty years has been mainly in live theatre although she has worked widely in film, including the award-winning *Elizabeth* with Cate Blanchett and *The Libertine* with John Malkovitch and Johnny Depp. Sue has collaborated with Adrian Noble over the last twenty years, working closely as his movement director and choreographer during his time as Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company and has worked with him regularly in opera most recently at the MET in New York on his critically acclaimed production of Verdi's *Macbeth*.

**Irineu Nogueira**

Irineu Nogueira is a Brazilian choreographer, dance educator, movement trainer and performance designer. He has worked with important names in Brazilian culture such as José Possi Neto, Suzana Yamauchi, Marcio Aurelio, Iacov Hillel, Guga Stroeter, Mario Gusmão, Jorge Silva, Sergio Simphronio, Firmino Pitanga, Wilson Aguiar, Cao Hambúrguer and Kika Nicolela. His work is often multi-disciplinary and crosses into

opera, theatre, musicals, cinema and circus. He has directed the opening section of samba schools at the Carnival in São Paulo since 1994 and received the Estandarte de Ouro (Gold Standard) in 2008. His approach contains eclectic references and experiences, blending contemporary dance techniques with the diversity of Afro-Brazilian culture to create a unique methodology for the body.

**Soren Petter**

Soren Petter is a Consultant Psychologist with 20 years of experience in the National Health Service, private health care sector and organisational stress management, with international experience having worked in the United Kingdom, Germany, USA and Africa. He offers therapy in both English and German. With a strong academic background, he is also a former faculty member, and now visiting lecturer and doctoral examiner to a variety of UK universities. He lectures on matters of psychopathology and sexual problems, and supervises and publishes research on relevant clinical matters. Most of his publications and clinical work focus on the reduction of shame and powerlessness in people and organisations, the prevention and management of individual presentations of stress, distress, guilt and compulsive patterns to help people feel wholesome and coherent within themselves.

**Marc Proulx**

Marc Proulx is a movement and mask teacher, acrobat and performer based at the École Superieure de Théâtre National de Strasbourg. He appeared in *Des Clowns* directed by Mario Gonzalez in 1989 and *The Tempest* directed by Peter Brook in 1990. He has also worked as a circus artist with Cirque du Soleil. He brings a sophisticated sense of clowning to his work with masks as well as utilising techniques from fine art.

# Appendix 2: Permissions

All collaborators were sent the following email:

Dear xxxx,

I want to thank you again for our extended conversation about the fool over recent years.

Please could I ask you to respond to this email confirming you are happy for me to include in my final written thesis references to you and your practice, and to quote you.

I will then include your email response as an appendix in my thesis.

Kind regards and thank you again for all your support,

Eliot

**Permission from Etienne Champion**

**From:** Etienne Champion [mailto: *****]
**Sent:** 23 September 2019 15:28
**To:** Eliot Shrimpton <*****>
**Subject:** Re: Thesis permission

Je suis heureux et fier que ma participation, bien indirecte, au travail de Monsieur Eliot Shrimpton puisse lui servir à l'élaboration d'éléments de sa thèse sur le « *Fool* » . Par ailleurs je l'autorise à faire toute publication qu'il désirerait se référent à mon travail, qu'elle soit d'ordre photographique ou rédactionnelle. Je lui souhaite le meilleur pour ce méritant travail de longue haleine et l'assure de mon amitié et de mon entière et sincère sympathie.
Étienne Champion

[Translation: I am pleased and proud that my indirect participation in the work of Mr. Eliot Shrimpton can be used in the development of elements of his thesis on the Fool. Moreover, I authorize him to make any publication he wishes to refer to my work, whether photographic or editorial. I wish him all the best for this deserving long-term work and assure him of my friendship and my full and sincere sympathy.]

**Permission from Merry Conway**

-----Original Message-----
From: Merry Conway [mailto: *****]
Sent: 23 September 2019 15:16
To: Eliot Shrimpton <*****>
Subject: Re: Thesis permission

Dear Eliot,
I am thrilled to confirm your wish to include materials from our discussions and my practice about the fool.
I so look forward to reading your thesis and learning much, as well as continuing many conversations and work in the future!!
All best, Merry

Sent from my iPhone

**Permission from Sue Lefton**

-----Original Message-----
From: SUE LEFTON [mailto: *****]
Sent: 24 September 2019 18:13
To: Eliot Shrimpton <*****>
Subject: Re: Thesis permission

Please feel free to use any part of our discussions in your thesis.
Thanks
Sue Lefton

Sent from my iPad

**Permission from Irineu Nogueira**

**From:** Irineu Nogueira [mailto: *****]
**Sent:** 23 September 2019 17:16
**To:** Eliot Shrimpton <*****>
**Subject:** Re: Thesis permission

Hi Elliot,

It was a pleasure collaborating with you over the last years and I am happy for you to quote and reference myself and my practice.

Best regards,

Irineu Nogueira

**Permission from Soren Petter**

**From:** Dr Soren Petter [mailto: *****]
**Sent:** 24 September 2019 00:10
**To:** Eliot Shrimpton <*****>
**Subject:** Re: Thesis permission

Dear Eliot,

Thanks for your email, I hope these words find you well.

I hereby consent to you quoting from our meetings and referencing it to me in your thesis for academic purposes.

With kind regards,

Dr Soren Petter, AFBPsS

BSc, MA, DipPsych, CPsychol, CSci, EuroPsy, DipExPsych, UKCP, HCPC

Registered Psychologist and Psychotherapist

Senior Lecturer in Psychology

Stress Management Consultant

**Permission from Marc Proulx**

-----Original Message-----
From: Marc Proulx [mailto: *****]
Sent: 23 September 2019 16:52
To: Eliot Shrimpton <*****>
Subject: Re: Thesis permission

Dear Eliot,

I confirm that I agree you include references to my practice and quote me in your thesis.

I hope you know how important and stimulating our exchanges and practice together were to me in the past few years.

Kind regards,
Marc Proulx

Envoyé de mon iPad

**Permission from Patsy Rodenburg**

-----Original Message-----
From: ***** [mailto:*****]
Sent: 23 September 2019 16:58
To: Eliot Shrimpton <*****>
Subject: Re: Thesis permission

Dear Eliot, I fully and happily give my permission for you to refer in your thesis to my work.
Sincerely Patsy Rodenburg

Sent from my iPhone

# Appendix 3: The fools of the Old Testament

I have synthesised insights from a biblical dictionary, lexicons and a concordance (Brown, Driver and Briggs 1991; Strong 2010; Vine, Unger and White 1996; and Thayer 1995) with my own knowledge of the biblical languages and texts from an undergraduate degree in Theology at Cambridge University. Acknowledging the possible risk of individual scholar's misrepresentation, I provide further details of the characteristics of the fool in the Old Testamant texts.

**The simple or unreasonable fool:** the Hebrew word for 'simple' is *pethîy*. The root word from which it is derived, *pâthâh*, implies extreme vulnerability, literally meaning 'to be opened up'. Simple fools open their minds to any passing thought and open their arms to any passing stranger. In other words, they lack discernment (Strong 2010). They have an over-simplified view of life and fail to recognize the cause-and-effect sequences that affect every area of life (Proverbs 22. 3). Because the simple fools are not discerning, they are easily captivated by all kinds of enticements and deceptions. They are dangerously immature, extremely gullible and intensely curious (Strong 2010). In the absence of instruction and consistent discipline, simple fools will naturally become more foolish. Simple fools are especially vulnerable to seduction, lacking an understanding of the irreversible consequences of moral failure (Proverbs 7. 6-7). Proverbs provide instruction for the simple fool: 'The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel […] give subtlety to the simple [*pethîy*], | To the young man knowledge and discretion' (Proverbs 1. 1-4).

**The silly or stubborn fool:** the Hebrew word that refers to a 'silly fool' is *'eviyl*. Its definition is 'to be perverse, silly' (Strong 2010). The mouth of silly fools often gets them in trouble. 'Wise men lay up knowledge: | But the mouth of the foolish [*'eviyl*] is near destruction' (Proverbs 10. 14). When things go wrong for silly fools, they become angry, resulting in more damage. 'A stone is heavy and the sand weighty, | But a fool's wrath is heavier than them both.' (Proverbs 27. 3). Silly fools believe that their own way of thinking is right (Proverbs 12. 15), so much so that they react to instruction when it is offered: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: | But fools [*'eviyl*] despise wisdom and instruction' (Proverbs 1. 7; see also Proverbs 10. 21). Argument, persuasion and advice from well-meaning friends fail to convince silly fools of error. Proper correction by authorities, which publicly shames silly fools, will more often be effective in helping them change their ways (Proverbs 29. 9).

**The sensual fool:** the Hebrew word for this type of fool is *kecîyl*, which means 'fat'. One who rejects the correction of parents or other authorities will become a sensual fool. The word denotes a person who seems determined to make wrong choices (Strong 2010). They do not have a mental deficiency, but rather reject the wisdom of God. Sensual fools' focus is on that which brings them immediate pleasure. They glory in that of which they should be ashamed: 'It is a sport to a fool [*kecîyl*] to do mischief'

(Proverbs 10. 23). A sensual fool is unreasonable. As silly fools, their mouth got them into trouble. Now, as sensual fools, their mouth gets them into more trouble: 'A fool's [*kecîyl*] lips enter into contention, | And his mouth calleth for strokes. | A fool's [*kecîyl*] mouth is his destruction, | And his lips are the snare of his soul' (Proverbs 18. 6-7). The Old Testament gives more warnings about the sensual fools than about any other type of fool (Strong 2010). Their motives and methods are subtle. They should be avoided because those who follow them will be led astray: 'A companion of fools [*kecîyl*] shall be destroyed' (Proverbs 13. 20). Severe punishment is prescribed for the sensual fool; 'A whip for the horse, | A bridle for the ass, | And a rod for the fool's [*kecîyl*] back' (Proverbs 26. 3).

**The scorning, scoffing or mocking fool:** the Hebrew word that denotes a 'scorning fool' is *lûwts*. It means 'to make mouths at' (Strong 2010). The scorning fools' facial expressions communicate the disdain and contempt they have in their heart towards authorities, including parents, civil authorities and God. This type of fool not only has rejected truth; they also have embraced that which is abominable to God (Strong 2010). Psalms 1. 1 describes the progression of foolishness, referring to a man who first walks 'in the counsel of the ungodly,' then stands 'in the way of sinners,' and finally sits 'in the seat of the scornful [*lûwts*]'. Scorning fools utterly detest people and ideas that contradict their false thinking, and they express their scorn through derisive attitudes, behaviour and speech. The scorning fool turns a deaf ear to rebuke: 'A wise son heareth his father's instruction: | But a scorner [*lûwts*] heareth not rebuke' (Proverbs 13. 1). Those who attempt to lead scorning fools away from the path of destruction that they seem determined to follow will suffer their wrath: 'A scoffer loveth not one that reproveth him: | Neither will he go unto the wise' (Proverbs 15. 12); and 'He that reproveth a scorner [*lûwts*] getteth to himself shame: | And he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. | Reprove not correct a scorner [*lûwts*], lest he hate thee; | Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee' (Proverbs 9. 7-8). A scorner must be punished for their own sake and for the sake of those whom they can potentially influence: 'When the scorner [*lûwts*] is punished, the simple [*pethîy*] is made wise' (Proverbs 21. 11). The scorning fool will seek out simple fools and try to become their heroes. Therefore, to protect simple fools from the destructive influence of the scorning fool, it is critical to bring swift correction to scorning fools: 'Smite a scorner, and the simple [*pethîy*] beware' (Proverbs 19. 25).

**The steadfast or committed fool:** the most dangerous type of fool is a steadfast fool. The Hebrew word *nâbâl*, which means 'stupid, wicked', identifies this type of person (Strong 2010). The word has a literal meaning of 'to wilt', generally 'to fall away', 'fail', 'faint'. The foolish meaning is figurative. Perhaps the idea is that such a person is corrupt or morally weak. It describes someone who has no perception of ethical and religious claims, and with the collateral idea of ignoble, disgraceful, senseless (especially of religious and moral insensibility), unappreciative of God's benefits, so it is applied of a heathen nation. As a substantive, it implies an impious and presumptuous person (opposed to the noble-minded) and characterized as at once irreligious and churlish, denying God, insulting God and God's servant, with arrogant speech (Strong 2010). There is an assumption that it refers to one who might be expected to have a

contumelious end, of the person who amasses riches unjustly or will prove to be acting immorally or disgracefully. It can be used in the masculine or the feminine. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, *nâbâl* also is translated as 'vile person'. A steadfast fool totally rejects God and his ways. This type of fool is self-confident and close-minded. They are their own god, freely gratifying their lower nature. It is their goal to draw as many others as possible into their evil ways. Attempts to reprove them will be futile and bring frustration to the one who tries to influence them. Only God can successfully reprove a steadfast fool. There are eighteen occurrences of the word *nâbâl* and its compounds in the Hebrew of the Old Testament (Strong 2010).[115]

[115] Deuteronomy 32. 6, Deuteronomy 32. 21, II Samuel 3. 33, II Samuel 13. 13, Job 2. 10, Job 30. 8, Psalms 14. 1, Psalms 39. 8, Psalms 53. 1, Psalms 74. 18, Psalms 74. 22, Proverbs 17. 7, Proverbs 17. 21, Proverbs 30. 22, Isaiah 32. 5, Isaiah 32. 6, Jeremiah 17. 11 and Ezekiel 13. 3.

# Appendix 4: The parliament of fools

John Donne created a mock library catalogue listing of a book called *On the Privileges of Parliament* to which he attributed Richard Tarlton as the author. The *Catalogus Librorum Aulicorum incomparabilium et vendibilium* (The Courtier's Library of Rare Books Not for Sale) was circulated in manuscript and not published until 1650 (Simpson 1930). Parliament has long been a subject of satire. Whilst there is no precise literary or historical precedent for a parliament of fools, two poems shed insight on this motif in a way that has been useful for my own parliament of fools.

Chaucer's *The Parlement of Foules* (1382?) begins with the narrator reading Cicero and hoping to learn some 'certeyn thing'. He falls asleep and travels in his dream through the celestial spheres to a realm where Nature is convening a parliament at which the birds will choose their mates. The poem follows the course of the pledges and debates. Finally, Nature allows one bird the right to choose not to choose. Here Chaucer acknowledged the importance of free will that is a key theme of the poem. The poem ends with the dreamer waking unsatisfied and still hoping to learn the thing he seeks. It finishes inconclusively and leaves the reader with a sense of their own folly in having read the poem and therefore also having looked for a 'certeyn thing'.

The Persian poem *The Conference of the Birds* (1177) by Farid ud-Din Attar begins as the birds of the world gather to decide who is to be their sovereign. The hoopoe, the wisest of them all, suggests that they should find the legendary Simorgh.[116] The birds set out on their journey to find the Simorgh, during the course of which many perish. Only thirty birds make it to the abode of Simorgh where they learn that they themselves are the Simorgh; the name 'Simorgh' in Persian means thirty (*si*) birds (*morgh*) (Attar 2017: 17-18). Attar uses much symbolism. Each of the birds represents a human fault which prevents human kind from attaining enlightenment. Their journey is a parable about human folly and the way we cling to hardened beliefs and dogma. The birds are foolish but eventually achieve enlightenment when they see themselves in a mirror (the ocean) which also reflects the unfathomable Divine (the sun).

Whilst there is no evidence that Chaucer knew Attar's work, there are some important thematic connections. Both Chaucer and Attar used a journey as the means for self-knowledge. In both works, characters present their true personalities through their speeches and their clothes or appearances. These poems are classics in a literary tradition that imagines a debate (in a parliament or at a conference) in which a range of characters appear and express their own particular type of folly.

[116] This creature is sometimes equated with the phoenix and other such mythological birds.

# Appendix 5: Dissemination and impact

This section lists some of the ways I have disseminated this research to the international community of my peers. Workshops and exchanges have taken place with leading practitioners, researchers, and theatre, dance and music schools including:

1. São Paulo Escola de Teatro, Brazil (August 2014 and 2015). I led two three-week workshops on the birth of the ensemble and the birth of the fool.

2. National French Theatre School, Strasbourg (July 2015). Ongoing practice and dialogue with senior members of staff.

3. Núcleos Estaduais de Orquestras Juvenis e Infantis da Bahia (Neojiba), Salvador, Brazil (August 2015). I led a one-week workshop on the musician and the fool.

4. Danish National School of Theatre and Contemporary Dance, Copenhagen (December 2015). Ongoing practice and dialogue with senior members of staff.

5. Duccio Bellugi, actor with the theatre company Théâtre du Soleil (November 2015 and July 2017). We worked intensively together exploring the fool's relationship with the mask over a number of days.

6. Passion in Practice, leading original practices theatre company (November 2015). I participated in a two-day workshop and a fruitful exchange with the artistic director and leading expert in original pronunciation, Ben Crystal and his company fool, Sean Garrett.

7. Guildhall School of Music & Drama (May 2016 and December 2017). I convened international mask workshops for leading practitioners hosted at the School.

8. Prima del Teatro, Italy. I led a three-week intensive training course for students of top European theatre schools. One workshop titled 'Fear of Fools' explored groups of fools inspired by the Feast of Fools tradition (July 2016). Another workshop titled 'Civilised/Uncivilised' explored taboo and performance as provocation (July 2018).

9. National Autonomous University of Mexico (December 2016). I led a one-week workshop with musicians and actors exploring folly in performance.

10. École des Sables, Senegal (August 2017). I led workshops with dancers, actors and other performers at this leading African dance institution. Ongoing conversations are exploring the potential to deliver regular training for Africans and other international practitioners.

11. The Acting Department of the Guildhall School has had a number of conversations concerning the contribution this research might make to the actor training as delivered within the BA and MA Acting programmes at the School. In October 2016 and 2017, I led two-week workshops with 2nd year students exploring some of this work. Colleagues' engagement with the research provides a variety of opportunities to explore the fool and disseminate the work further.

I have ongoing dialogue with a range of practitioners, scholars and institutions who have invited me to lead practical workshops for them in the future. These include:

- Amherst College, Massachusetts
- Athens and Epidaurus Festival;
- National School of Drama, Delhi, India;
- São Paulo Escola de Teatro, Brazil;
- University of Künste, Berlin;
- Dr Eva Griffith;
- Escuela del Actor, Uruguay.

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