

and a Song' in Folio *Julius Caesar* (TLN 2278), thought to be a prompt-book text, but supplies neither.⁸ It is conceivable that in the copy-text from which *Merchant* was set, the contents of the scrolls were similarly absent and supplied to the printer from separate theatrical documents, so that the speeches in the prompt-book were rendered:

Por. What no more, pay him six thousand . . .
THELETTER

Por. O loue! dispatch all busines and be gone.

Whether or not this is the case, the prompter's main concern was with the identity of the speaker both before and after the scroll (rather than the scroll itself) – hence the second speech-prefix. For it might be the case, as frequently happened, that a new speaker was to take over the dialogue once the scroll had been read. A further example of the repeated speech-prefix after a scroll can be found in the Folio's text of *As You Like It*, also thought to have derived from a prompt-book.⁹ Amyen at TLN 936 has a continuous part consisting of speech-song-speech which is rendered:

Amy. Thus it goes.

If it do come to passe [. . .]

Amy. What's that Ducdame [. . .]

Prompt-book convention does, as these and following examples illustrate, seem to have consistently dictated that the person whose speech flanked a scroll also read the letter or sang the song – unless there is clear indication otherwise.

The use of the repeated speech-prefix straddling a letter also occurs twice in the more ambiguous text of Quarto 2 *Hamlet* (1604). In the first instance (E4^a), the letter is both reproduced and given its title 'Letter'. Polonius reads out Hamlet's letter to Ophelia and then speaks:

Pol. Good Maddam stay awhile, I will be faithfull.

Doubt thou the starres are fire, Letter.

Doubt thou the Sunne doth move [. . .]

Pol. This in obedience hath my daughter showne me . . . [. . .]

Horatio similarly has a repeated stage-prefix following on his reading of the letter from Hamlet (I2^b–L3^a). I have suggested that repeated speech-prefixes after scrolls are generally features of prompt-book texts, and that undesignated letters are features of foul papers

and scribal copies. In this much, Quarto 2 *Hamlet*, thought to derive from foul papers,¹⁰ displays superficial prompt-book qualities. This raises the slight possibility that the Quarto 1 *Hamlet* foul papers were themselves briefly used or marked-up for use as a prompt-book, though given that Shakespeare appears to have been unsystematic in the preparation of his text I am wary of pursuing the argument too far. What is clear is that the *Hamlet* examples also show consistency with *Merchant*: the speaker whose speech-prefix occurs before and after each scroll is also that scroll's reader.

Having Portia in *Merchant* snatch the letter out of Bassanio's hands (as she must do to read it herself) is undoubtedly more theatrically satisfying than simply allowing Bassanio to read out the text. Portia has shown great curiosity about the letter and the effect it is having on Bassanio – 'There are some shrewd contents in yond same Paper, / That steales the colour from *Bassanios* cheekes'. She bombards Bassanio with questions about Antonio, and learns that an intense friendship exists between them. She finally snatches up letter and reads it, after which it becomes forcefully clear to her that she cannot fully possess Bassanio while his 'vnquiet soule' keeps him in thrall to his 'dearest friend'. For this reason, she dispatches her lover and hatches a plan to defend Antonio herself – by so doing she succeeds both in saving Antonio's life and in freeing Bassanio from his moral (as well as financial) ties to another.

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¹⁰ Wells and Taylor, *Textual Companion*, 396–402.

'WILL YOU GO, ANHEERS?'
THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR,
II. i. 209

GENERATIONS of editors of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* have puzzled over the Host's question to Shallow, 'Will you go, Anheers?' (II. i. 209). F1 and 2 and Q3 read *An-heires*, which is rendered *An-heirs* in F3 and *an-heirs* in F4. The term has had a colourful history: editors have proposed emendations that range from variations on the Dutch *heer*

⁸ Wells and Taylor, *Textual Companion*, 386–8.

⁹ Wells and Taylor, *Textual Companion*, 392.

(see Theobald and Hammer, *Mynheers*; Warburton, *on, heris*; Onions, *mynheers*) and the English *on, sirs* (Halliwell), to the Orientalist *Ameers* (Hart). Rather more imaginative conjectures include the affectionate *on, hearts* (Steevens); the literary *Anchises* (Munro); and the martial *cavalieres* (Boaden). More recently, Patricia Parker has suggested that it is a version of *heirs* – and refers to the play's concern with the inheritance of Anne Page.¹

It seems most likely that the Host is engaging in some kind of poly-linguistic word-play. *Ameers*, for the Turkish title *emir*, would suit the play's international lexicon, and Hart cites a 1592 occurrence of it; however, there are no other Arabic loan-words or cultural references elsewhere in the play. The employment of the Dutch *myn heer*, which sounds like the German *mein Herr*, makes better sense considering the later appearance of German cousins and Caius' reference to a 'duke de Jamanie' (IV. v. 82), a possible allusion to the Duke of Württemberg who was elected to the Order of the Garter in 1597. This alternative, however, does not account for the misreading of *An* as *Myn*.

I submit that *Anheers* is an Anglicized form of *asnier* or *ânier*, a French term for 'muledriver'. This word was often used to insult one's intelligence; cf. Wartburg's *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, with several offensive uses.² It is translated as 'stubborn knave' in Claudius Hollyband's *A Dictionarie French and English* (1593).³ Randle Cotgrave develops this definition more copiously in *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (1611): 'a iolthead, blockhead, loggarhead; a fellow of a heauie mettall, grosse capacitie, dull spirit'.⁴ Shakespeare uses an English translation of *asnier* in *1 Henry VI*, when Talbot cries 'base muleters of France' (III. ii. 68). It is much more fitting, at that particular moment, for the sardonic Host to puncture the vanity of the foolish Justice, 'Robert Shallow, Esquire' (I. i. 4), by calling him a stupid muledriver,

than for him to address him politely in Dutch. Moreover, the French term has a strong tie to the concerns of the play as a whole: *The Merry Wives of Windsor* specifically opposes English against French in the search for an appropriate match for Anne Page. To call Shallow an *a(s)nier*, which puns on Anne's name, compares Shallow's efforts to secure Anne's hand for his kinsman Slender to the unexalted task of muledriving. In fact, immediately following his use of *Anheers*, the Host remarks, 'the Frenchman hath good skill in his rapier' (211), referring to Slender's rival, Caius the French doctor, whose unsuitability as a husband for the terribly English Anne is confirmed by his irate lapses into French.

Asnier can also be of help to us in solving another old Shakespearian crux. In *1 Henry IV*, Gadshill includes *Oneyers* in his list of men with whom he is not ashamed to keep company: 'but with nobility and tranquility, burgomasters and great onyers' (II. i. 75). If we read this as *âniers*, the joke is really the same in both plays: it juxtaposes middle-class pretensions, represented by Gadshill's burgomaster and the Host's Justice Shallow, against more rustic affiliations with the ass-keeping sort – precisely the kind of connection that both would prefer to suppress.

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THE LORDS HOWARD'S MEN AT THE ROSE AND ON TOUR IN 1599

THOMAS PLATTER's account of his trip to a South London playhouse on 21 September 1599 to see a 'tragedy of the first Emperor Julius Caesar' might be an eyewitness account of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. It might, however, be something rather less interesting: an account of an unknown play at the Rose.¹ In determining which playhouse, and hence which play, Platter visited, it would be useful to know what the Rose players were doing in the summer and autumn of 1599.

Gary Taylor argued that Platter probably went to see Shakespeare's company at the Globe, rather than the Lord Admiral's men

¹ Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins* (Chicago, 1996), 122.

² W. von Wartburg, *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, XXV (Zbinden, 1988), fasc. 149, 434–5, s.v. *asinarus*.

³ Claude Desainliens, *A Dictionarie French and English* (London, 1598), fo. Di.v.

⁴ Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London, 1611), fo. Fvi^r.

¹ Ernest Schanzer, 'Thomas Platter's Observations on the Elizabethan Stage', *N&Q*, cci (1956), 466–7.