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## “Whan Foly cometh, all is past”: Revisiting the Drama of Fools in *Magnyfycence*

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John Skelton's *Magnyfycence* was probably written 1519–20, and was published by William Rastell in 1530. The play dramatizes the fall and recovery of the allegorical prince Magnyfycence, who is persuaded by a string of disguised vices to abandon his advisor, Measure; loses Welthfull Felicite and Lyberte; is driven to the point of suicide by Dyspare; and is rescued by Good Hope and re-established in prosperity by Redresse, Sad Cyrcumspeccyon and Perseveraunce. The political satire of *Magnyfycence* has been extensively discussed: Wolsey appears to be the target of much veiled attack, and, as Greg Walker has demonstrated, there are numerous allusions to Henry's minions who were expelled from court for exerting corrupt influence over the king.<sup>1</sup> The play appears to offer advice to princes—it is perhaps a warning to the young King Henry VIII from the man, Skelton, who had been his tutor.<sup>2</sup> The play is also of considerable interest to any narrative of the development of English theatre: it combines the allegory and fall-and-rise

- 1 See Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, pp. 88–91; also Skelton, *Magnyfycence*, ed. Walker. Quotations from the play will be from this edition, by line number.
- 2 For discussion of different possible audiences and venues for performances of *Magnyfycence*, see Scattergood, “Skelton's *Magnyfycence*”, and Evershed.

plot of medieval morality drama with the political satire of Tudor interludes, and it hints, in its characterisation of the eponymous prince, at early modern tragedy. Furthermore, it provides intriguing examples of theatrical fools: Folly and Fanny at least, and possibly all the vice figures, may be represented as stage fools. But what does it mean to play the fool in *Magnyfycence*? How would we recognise the theatrical fool in an English play of *circa* 1520?

As Peter Happé has pointed out, few surviving theatrical fools pre-date *Magnyfycence* (p. 427). He considers as precursors to Skelton's play the English moralities *Wisdom*, *Mankind*, *Mundus et Infans*, and *The Castle of Perseverance*, in all of which folly is shown to be simply evil and destructive: however, only *Mundus et Infans* and *The Castle of Perseverance* feature Folly in their casts, as an allegorical figure, and it is by no means clear that an allegorised figure of Folly is the same thing as a fool. Happé suggests that the fools in *Magnyfycence* have more in common with those of the French *sotties*: they are characters acting foolishly rather than allegorical embodiments of folly.<sup>3</sup> Action which is typical of the *sottie* includes fools' costumes worn under the characters' clothing, and gradually revealed; "double act" scenes, in which pairs of fools compete with each other; scenes in which false learning is parodied. The prominence of all of these actions in *Magnyfycence* provides compelling evidence for the influence of the *sottie* on Skelton's play, and, since all of the vices in *Magnyfycence* become involved in actions of this sort, all of the vices must be considered as potential *sottie*-style fools.

But Skelton has also included "Foly" as an allegorical embodiment, who might perhaps be expected to fit more into the English morality tradition. He appears to be creating generically different sorts of fool within the one play. Skelton's Foly does not simply act foolishly, as *sottie* fools do; nor does he show people to be fools, as later English fools will do;<sup>4</sup> but rather, of course, he *makes* them fools, because he is not just a fool but is, in fact, Folly: he does not simply exhibit traits, he embodies the essence, and so his presence signals man's fall. Thus in *The Castle of Perseverance*, Foly (called Stulticia, though he identifies himself as Folly) needs only to appear, and lead Humanum Genus to the seat of Mundus, for his significance to be clear: "In worldys wyt / Pat in Foly syt / I þynke

3 Distinguishing *sotties* from *moralités* in the French tradition, Arden writes that the *sotties* are "less abstract, more humorous, more concerned with political satire" (p. 9).

4 For example, Feste: "Good Madonna, give me leave to prove you a fool" (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, I.v.57-58).

3yt / Hys sowle to sloo” (ll. 643-46); in *Mundus et Infans*, Folly quickly persuades Manhood to take him into his service, and immediately his fall is complete, as his name becomes Shame. When a protagonist theatrically accepts the company of a vice, allegorically that vice has become an attribute of the protagonist—as Stulticia declares: “3a, couetouse he muste be / And me, Foly, muste haue in mende” (ll. 504-5).

Certainly folly is no laughing matter. In *The Castle of Perseverance*, it is Folly who from the beginning plots to slay man’s soul; in *Mundus et Infans*, as in *Magnyfycence*, Folly is the last and deadliest vice to appear. When Magnyfycence has been redeemed from his fall into corruption, Sad CIRCUMSPECYON characterises this fall as “folly”: “ye repent you of your foly in tymes past”?, he asks. Foly himself notes that he can “use” those who “vertu refuse”, and attributes even the fall of Adam and Eve to folly (l. 1294). The question of how to identify folly is thus intimately connected to the question of how to identify a vice in Skelton’s play.

The identification of vice is not a simple matter at the court of Magnyfycence. Within the Vices-versus-Virtues scheme which we might expect from a morality play, Foly, Crafty Conveyaunce, Courtly Abusyon, Clokyd Colusyon and Counterfet Countenaunce are clearly vices, and Measure, Good Hope, Perseveraunce, Redresse clearly virtues. But the character of Lyberte complicates a simple moral scheme: “For I am a virtue yf I be well used / And I am a vyce where I am abused” (l. 2099-100).

For this personification, then, context—the action of the play—will dictate moral value: of course, this is, in fact, unsurprising, since liberty, like felicity, which is also personified in the play, is more a state of being than a vice or a virtue. Folsy also, as Jane Griffiths points out, is neither a vice nor a virtue according to any moral scheme, but rather is a faculty (pp. 66, 135-36). Folsy, who is perhaps dressed as a fool,<sup>5</sup> and who has the most prolonged, *sottie*-like scene with Foly,<sup>6</sup> is perhaps the most morally complicated of all. He, with his brother Foly, will be the focus of this paper. In focusing on Folsy and Foly, the paper follows Happé’s thorough and illuminating study: it seeks to add to Happé’s work through observations of the play’s effects in performance.<sup>7</sup>

5 See Walker, ed., p. 351, n. 3, and Foly at l. 1045: “What frantycke Folsy, in a foles case?”

6 The exchange (ll. 1042-156) between Folsy and Foly in which the two barter over a dog and an owl, and quote school Latin, shows much *sottie* influence, as Happé discusses (p. 432).

7 *Magnyfycence* was staged by a professional cast at Hampton Court Palace, May 2010, directed by Elisabeth Dutton. The production developed two earlier, amateur productions, by *Thynke Byggly*,

Fansy makes his first appearance as Magnyfycence stands chatting with Welthfull Felicite. Crucially, Measure has just left the scene, and Felicite comments that, if he were not ruled by Measure, Magnyfycence would not be able to retain him long (ll. 249–50). This piece of subjunctive history facilitates not a flight of fancy but a fantasy realised; Fansy appears, commenting that Felicite’s language is vain, and asserting that Magnyfycence should listen instead to “the trouthe as I thynke” (l. 253). Fansy introduces himself to Magnyfycence as Largesse, and presents a letter of introduction which he claims is from Sad Cyrcumspeccyon—he points out that the letter is “closed under seal” (l. 312). To us, it continues to be “closed”: Magnyfycence sends everyone except “Largesse” away, and then:

*Hic faciat tanquam legeret litteras tacite. Interim superveniat cantando Counterfet Countenaunce suspenso gradu qui viso Magnyfycence sensim retrocedat; ad tempus post pusillum rursus accedat Counterfet Countenaunce prospectando et vocitando a longe; et Fansy animat silentium cum manu.*

[Here let him act as if he were reading the letter silently. Meanwhile, let Counterfet Countenaunce come in singing. On seeing Magnyfycence let him retreat on tiptoe, but after a while let Counterfet Countenaunce come again looking about and calling from a distance, and Fansy motions him to be silent with his hand.] (l. 324 SD; translation from Walker, ed.)

Magnyfycence hears Counterfet Countenaunce cry “Fansy”, but Fansy claims that it was “a Flemynge hyght Hansy”, and then that “it was nothyng but your mynde” (l. 330). We never know what the letter says; Magnyfycence declares, “I shall loke in it at leasure better” (l. 332), but accepts Sad Cyrcumspeccyon’s authorship and, on the basis of this, accepts Fansy to his court.

In staging terms, this moment has huge comic potential, and the letter can appear almost as a device to distract Magnyfycence from the comic interplay between Fansy and Counterfet Countenaunce. But in fact this little dumb show is not a separate action, but an allegorical enactment of Magnyfycence’s mental processes as he reads: it represents the encroachment of Deceit (Counterfet Countenaunce), who has not yet gained a voice in Magnyfycence’s head and so can only call out to his “Fansy”.

staged at the Medieval English Theatre conference in Sheffield, March 2007, and Worcester College, Oxford, December 2008.

In thematic terms, John Scattergood (“Familiar and homely”) has suggested that this scene offers a caution against over-much faith in documents: early Tudor drama reflects a sense of unease at the excessive authority granted the written word in an increasingly bureaucratic Tudor court. This is true, but Skelton’s point is subtler. We do not need to know *what* Magnyfycence is reading, because what is important is that we see the error in his reading *process*—he does not read at sufficient “leisure” and so cannot see through the deceitful words. Indeed, only at the play’s resolution does Magnyfycence learn that the letter was not, in fact, written by Sad Cyrcumspeccyon, and Redresse then reprimands him for his “hasty credence”. Documents may or may not be trustworthy, but only the careful reader will know the difference. Skelton’s precise theatrical realization of allegory is here exemplified: the actions—indeed, here only the stage directions—carrying a weight greater than words. Magnyfycence’s careless reading of the written word occurs in the presence of Fansy, who attacks Felicity’s *language* and encourages Magnyfycence to receive “the trouth as I thynke”. Reading hastily, in the presence of the flighty Fansy, is dangerous.

As it is through Fansy that the vices gain access to the prince, this is a crucial moment in the action of the play. Fansy could be characterized as an “access vice”: his primary function, in terms of the play’s action, is to control the access of other characters in the play to the royal protagonist. In this he is like Merry Report in John Heywood’s *Play of the Weather*, who is the first character explicitly designated, in a cast list, as a “vice” figure.<sup>8</sup> Although the vice figure in early theatre is generally understood in relation to medieval schema of “vices and virtues”, in Tudor interludes it becomes clear that a simple equation of vice figures with personifications of sin is inappropriate, and other connotations of the term “vice” are therefore at play. From the Latin “vitium” (“fault”), “vice” has a

8 My argument about Merry Report as a vice figure is presented more fully in “John Heywood, Henry, and Hampton Court Palace” (forthcoming). In Heywood’s play, representatives of various estates and professions petition the god Jupiter for the weather best suiting them: the topic of the weather, an apparently perennial English preoccupation, is used in the interests of political commentary. The play was written between 1529 and 1533, when the issues upon which it touches—the powers of the sovereign, the problems of a rancorous parliament, the conflicting claims of the people, the king’s marriage—were hot topics. See Walker, ed., *Medieval Drama*, p. 456. *The Play of the Weather* was published in 1533 by John Rastell, who was the playwright’s father-in-law. For a full discussion of John Heywood’s biography, particularly his family connections to the Rastells and the family of Thomas More, see Heywood, ed. Axton and Happé, pp. 1-10.

wide range of meanings, including, adverbially, “substitute” or “surrogate”:<sup>9</sup> this sense is of course familiar in the modern English “vice President”, “vice captain”, and the word was in use in this way, as a prefix, by 1497.<sup>10</sup> Is it possible that Latinate writers such as Heywood and Skelton, returning the “vice” to his etymological roots, create a figure who, in addition to controlling access to a protagonist, also takes his place?<sup>11</sup> Certainly, Merry Report not only controls access to Jupiter, but also represents and perhaps replaces him: his theatrical usurpation of Jupiter is sufficient to provoke the Boy’s question: “be not you master god?” (l. 1003). Merry Report, as the play progresses, becomes a vice-god: this sets him in a similar role to that of a king, if kings are divinely appointed representatives of God. He becomes a convenient device for circumspect criticism of the King.

Might Fanny, also, be a vice in the sense of a substitute for the prince Magnifyfence? Skelton gives us strong hints that the drama of *Magnifyfence* is to be read not just as a satire on external political events but also as an allegorical dramatisation of the inner state of the prince. “Thy wordes and my mynde odly well accorde” (l. 1603), Magnifyfence tells Courtly Abusyon, making us suspect that the vices not only speak *to* Magnifyfence but also speak *for* him. But Fanny’s relationship to the prince is particularly marked in this respect. When Magnifyfence, talking to “Largesse” (Fanny), tries to blame him for his fall—“Is this the largesse that I have usyd?” (l. 1863)—Fanny drops the disguise but also attributes responsibility back to the prince: “Nay, it was *your* fondnesse that ye have usyd . . . coulde not *your* wyt serve you no better . . . ? it was I all this whyle / That you trustyd, and Fanny is my name” (ll. 1864-69, emphasis mine).

Fanny seems here to be making interesting claims about his identity. He is not, then, Largesse, but “fondness” and “wit” might well be aspects of “Fanny”—indeed, punning definitions thereof: they are both “yours”—Magnifyfence’s. When Fanny tells Magnifyfence that the cry of “Fanny” which he hears is “nothing but your mind”, he is referring to something we, the audience, have also seen. The drama we are watching is “nothing but Magnifyfence’s mind”, indeed.

9 See the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

10 *OED* cites the following instance, from 1497: “It is thought expedient that the Popes Holynesse comaund the said aide to be published by his vicecollectour.”

11 Perhaps any actor can be understood as a vice figure in this sense—playing another’s part—and perhaps it is for this reason that the vice figure, reaching its apogee in *Iago*, is so consistently fascinating to students of theatre. *Iago*’s elusive assertion that “I am not what I am” (Shakespeare, *Othello*, I.i.65) can perhaps be understood in this light.



In indicating the corruption of a faculty, Fanny, Skelton is perhaps, like Heywood, creating a substitutionary, as opposed to moral, “vice” figure to take the sting out of the criticism of his prince, Magnyfycence, who is himself a figure for Henry VIII. That Fanny nonetheless insists on “your fondness”, “your wit”, ensures that the message comes across.



Foly is a very different sort of vice. Having directed three different actors in the role of Foly, I am struck by the fact that they have all instinctively made him sinister. Dominik Kracmar, who played Foly in the 2010 production at Hampton Court, drew on his LAMDA training in playing different types of bouffon, particularly the “child bouffon”, of whom he writes:

there was generally a knowing quality, sometimes a malicious quality—I played a boy in shorts, with a little toy gorilla, overseeing this unpleasant farm where the animals were tortured. So it was him that I used in Foly. I used a west country accent as it lends itself to the jester role: that west country accent really can have that friendly/malicious quality.<sup>12</sup>

Kracmar’s instinctual use of the bouffon type is perhaps unsurprising, given that the bouffon, though a modern creation of the Lecoq school, sought to develop themes and techniques of medieval performance as Lecoq and others understood them. Eric Davis, one of the most celebrated bouffon artists, writes that the Lecoq school wanted to find a character who could “mock anything”:

Initially, they were looking at the medieval age for models . . . people who were outcasts from the city and then would have the chance at the Feast of Fools carnival to turn that around and make a mockery of the audience. It’s someone who’s a bit of a demi-god, not even of this earth necessarily, a strange mysterious creature who is watching us. I think more of him as that sort of thing, a collective unconscious, kind of poking at their fears and dreams. (Davis, “Red Bastard” bouffon)

Of course, the anachronism involved in applying Lecoq to a discussion of Skelton makes this merely suggestive, but the modern projection of a medieval fool who perceives and who mocks his audience, as well as being a figure of fun, may not

12 Private correspondence. Kracmar draws comparison with Dominic West’s portrayal of murderer Fred West in the ITV miniseries, *Appropriate Adult*: the actor’s capturing of his subject’s West Country accent was praised for its accuracy and was exceptionally chilling.

be entirely inaccurate. The notion of a bouffon Foly who is an embodiment of the “collective unconscious” is particularly suggestive in relation to Foly’s puzzling way of speaking.

Firstly, Foly, strangely, never speaks to the audience. Indeed, part of the problem in interpreting Folly, and the source of some of his sinister quality, may be that he, alone of all the characters on-stage, shows no awareness of the audience’s presence. Other vices all introduce themselves when alone on-stage. They explain what they do: Counterfet Countenaunce tells us that he is part of the plot to trap Magnyfycence, that he enjoys writing fake letters and making false coins (ll. 401-93); Clokyd Colusyon tells us that he spies on people and flatters them into corruption (ll. 689-744); Courtly Abusyon explains his policy of encouraging others to spend money on French fashions rather than help their starving neighbours (ll. 827-909). The vices speak directly and openly to the audience, even as they trick and deceive Magnyfycence. Even Fandy introduces himself in erratic, disjointed Skeltonics:

Frantycke Fandy Serveyce I hyght:  
My wyttys be weke, my braynys are lyght,  
For it is I that other whyle  
Plucke down lede, and theke with tyle.  
Nowe I wyll this, and nowe I wyll that,  
Make a wyndmyll of a mat.  
Nowe I wolde . . . and I wyst what . . .  
Where is my cappe? (ll. 1022-29)

Foly is never alone on the stage. We learn about Foly’s actions when he explains to Crafty Conveyaunce and Fandy about his schools, where he makes fools: he finds work for idle hands; he encourages lechery; he teaches those in authority to be proud and vicious (ll. 1218-50). In this scene he sounds like the other vices, but the effect of his speeches is different because they are never addressed directly to the audience, who thus do not respond to him directly: rather, the audience’s experience of Foly must always be to some extent influenced by his interactions with the characters around him. Furthermore, when he appears with Magnyfycence, he does not seem to be doing any of the things he says he does to corrupt people; rather, he is just speaking nonsense, and sinister nonsense, in which nature is perverted:

And, sir, as I was coming to you hither  
I saw a fox suck on a cow’s udder,

And with a lime rod I took them both together.  
I trowe it be a frost, for the way is slidder.  
See, for God avow, for cold as I chidder (ll. 1811-15)

The riddling and indirect nature of Foly's speeches could indeed resemble dream messages from the unconscious. The fool's language here anticipates that of poor Tom, or Lear's Fool. But Foly, unlike these riddling characters in *King Lear*, does not seem to reveal anything in his riddles: if these were to be considered messages from the unconscious, they would reveal nothing except a confused, perhaps corrupted mind. And when the action becomes serious, when Folsy appears crying, he runs away (l. 1849); he does not, as it were, stay with Lear on the heath.

This is not the first time that Foly has emptied language of meaning. At the centre of the play is a wonderful scene in which Folsy and Folly reminisce about the Latin declensions of their school days, and then turn the remnants of their schoolboy Latin to composing verses about the dog and the owl which they have bartered. Folsy's "declension", *Nil, nichelum, nihil* is, of course, not a grammatical declension at all, but simply a list of alternative forms of a Latin word which he then renders, accurately and decisively, as the English "nothing":

*Folsy.* Yes, yes, I am yet as full of game  
As ever I was, and as full of tryfys  
*Nil, nichelum, nihil, anglice, nyfys.*  
*Foly.* What, canest thou all this Latin yet?  
And hath so mased a wandrynge wyt?  
*Folsy.* Tush, man, I keep some Latyn in store.  
*Foly.* By Cockes harte, I wene thou hast no more!  
*Folsy.* No? Yes in faythe; I can versyfy.  
*Foly.* Then I pray thee hartely  
Make a verse of my butterfly;  
It forseth not of the reason, so it kepe ryme. (ll. 1139-49)

*Magnyfycence* seems in a small way to be doing for classical Latin what *Mankind* and the plays of Bale do for Church Latin: presenting it as suspect and open to abuse by those who borrow its appearance of authority, while mistranslating it or rendering it nonsensical. Latin grammar is here presented as a childhood game. But the scene, though funny, is not one of innocent fun, and while Folsy delights in playing with his declensions, Foly rather plays along with Folsy's belief that he is composing Latin while fully aware that the vacuous verse has rhyme but no reason.

Scattergood suggests that Foly is presented as an “allowed” fool, and Fandy as a “natural” fool (cited in Walker, ed., p. 351, n. 3). The distinction is rather more difficult to establish theatrically than might be expected: phenomenologically, the difference between the two must be one of knowingness and attention—the allowed fool is consciously fooling, whereas the natural fool is acting innocently—but the words and actions of theatre might not easily clarify inner difference, particularly without direct audience address. It is true that Foly is knowing: he talks about the educative methods in his school of folly, and he gets the better of Fandy, in the financial transactions over the swapping of a dog for an owl, and of Crafty Conveyaunce, on whom he plays a trick to make him remove his cloak.<sup>13</sup> But again there is the problem of meaning: the allowed fool’s folly should have a message, but Foly’s has none: he is an allegory of folly who does not just expose folly, but actually makes men fools: there is no possibility of reading him as exposing truths through nonsensical words, but rather it is his theatrical presence which is meaningful. When he has appeared in the mind of the prince, with his talk of cold and disorder in nature, Magnyfycence tries to dismiss him—“Thy wordes hang togyder as fethers in the wynde” (l. 1816)—but Foly’s reply is chillingly definite: “I make God avowe ye will none other men have” (l. 1825). By this point, Magnyfycence is completely fallen, and that fall is Foly. And the audience, experiencing the play from inside Magnyfycence’s mind, are as chilled, lost and fooled as he is.

In comparing Fandy and Foly as fools, it is important to note that Fandy does come good in the end. It is Fandy who reveals the truth to Magnyfycence about the trap into which he has fallen. He does this, importantly, as he interrupts a scene between Magnyfycence and Foly, and his grief at the prince’s undoing (“Let be thy sobbynge”, says Magnyfycence [l. 1849]) is what drives Foly away: “is all your myrthe nowe tourned to sorowe? Fare well . . . ” (l. 1846-47). When Fandy, the faculty, operates to reveal sober truth, Foly is banished.

*Magnyfycence’s* generic mixing of morality play with satirical interlude may thus be particularly traced in its principal fools, Foly and Fandy, an English allegory and a French *sot*. But the play in performance may reveal slightly more subtlety in the portrayal of Foly, also in the light of the *sottie*. Heather Arden writes that there are three aspects of the fool in the *sottie*: the evil-doer, the accuser, and the victim (p. 53). It is clear, as we have seen, that Foly does evil:

13 These are *sottie*-related scenes, as Happé discusses.

we hear him describe his schools for corruption, and we learn that it is folly which Magnyfycence must repent. Though there may be elements of accusation in the words of Fany—“coude not your wyt serve you no better?”—Foly has no accusation to make, and the principal work of accusation is done instead by the figure of Poverty; “ye have deserved this punysshment” (l. 200r), he tells the fallen prince, bluntly, before pointing the contrast between what was and what is: “nowe must ye lerne to lye harde, / That was wonte to lye on fetherbeddes of downe” (ll. 2003-4). Poverty also, importantly, is the principal victim figure of *Magnyfycence*: he appears at the moment of Magnyfycence’s fall, and while the prince laments what he has lost, Poverty articulates what he must now embrace: “A, my bonys ake! My lymmys be sore. / Alasse, I have the cyatyca full evyll in my hyppe” (ll. 1953-54).

Is it significant, then, that the doubling scheme dictated by Skelton’s extensive cast of characters requires that the actor playing Foly also play Poverty? It is, of course, possible to over-read the significance of doubling, but Skelton seems to draw our attention to this theatrical practice, making it something more than pragmatic. He repeatedly writes scenes of explicit recognition of characters through costume, and of obscuring of identity through disguise and false names: for example, Clokyd Colusyon, when he first appears, is unrecognisable to Fany and Crafty Conveyaunce because he is disguised in a cardinal’s cope and biretta (ll. 574-601); Counterfet Countenaunce is concerned that Crafty Conveyaunce will be recognised if he does not change his name (l. 516). In the light of this, the audience cannot but ask themselves, when an actor appears in a new costume, whether he is “really” a new character with a new designation. Furthermore, Foly’s final speech about cold and frost, which, as has been noted, bears no logical relation to the action which has preceded it, might bear some sense as an anticipation of Poverty’s scene to come: “Nowe must ye suffer bothe hunger and cold”; “Nowe must ye be stormy beten with showres and raynes” (ll. 201r, 2015). Is “Foly” already starting to feel the cold which will afflict him when he appears as Poverty? The meanings of the victim and his accusations are not revealed, however, till Foly, or at least the Foly actor, is dressed, not as the fool, but as Poverty.

In the *sottie*, a character is revealed as a fool when his fool’s garments are gradually exposed; this is the process which Fany and possibly Crafty Conveyaunce

undergo.<sup>14</sup> But Foly's fool's garments must instead be entirely changed—a theatrical act of re-dressing. It is perhaps no coincidence that the Foly-Poverty actor must also then present Redresse. The *sottie* tradition, in which Folsy participates, reveals folly, and satirises it; the *sot*, who may be evil-doer, accuser, or victim, may disguise his folly under layers of other costume, but these costumes are revealed as false disguise through the act of undressing. But in an allegorical tradition which represents not a fool, but folly undisguised, the figure of Foly can only be evil, and cannot be satirically revealed, undressed. Instead, Foly as evil-doer must be driven away, effaced, and the work of the accuser and the victim achieved through the re-dressing of the actor in different roles. An actor can play one character disguised as another, but he cannot represent two characters at once. An absolute morality is thus asserted. Poverty and Folly may look and sound like each other, but they are entirely separate and distinct, and the audience are enjoined to study the difference.

14 See ll. 1196-204 for the "louse trick" by which Foly persuades Crafty Conveyaunce to remove his cloak and reveal his fool's motley. The process by which Folsy's costume is revealed or concealed is unclear: Walker notes that "he wears a fool's costume only partially covered by a courtier's clothes" (Walker, ed., p. 357, n. 30), and certainly his fool's costume must be obscured to Magnyfy-cence, while Foly can nonetheless observe that he is "in a foles case" (l. 1045).

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