*Dutch Proverbs and Expressions in Erasmus' Adages, Colloquies, and Letters**

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The impact of Dutch on Erasmus' works is a neglected aspect of studies on the Netherlandish humanist. This article explores the presence of the Low Countries vernacular in the Colloquia, *the letters, and the* Adagiorum collectanea. *It argues that Erasmus used proverbs of Dutch provenance in the same way as ancient adages, that is, as arguments and stylistic devices. Even though there are relatively few vernacular proverbs in his writings, the evidence gathered here demonstrates that, contrary to established opinion, he valued his native language and freely employed it in various works. To gain a better appreciation of his notion of proverbs and his estimate of their worth, this essay starts with an analysis of his introduction to the Adagia.*

The interaction and competition between Latin and the vernaculars is a fascinating feature of the Renaissance and the Reformation. Many authors were bilingual; the names of Petrarch, More, and Milton spring to mind, not to mention Luther, Hutten, and Zwingli. Erasmus, by contrast, used Latin exclusively and ignored his native language. Or did he?

The impact of Dutch is a largely unexplored aspect of Erasmus' works. My previous study argued that he used proverbs and expressions of Dutch provenance in his *Praise of Folly*.[1] This article does the same for the *Colloquia*, the letters, and the *Adagiorum collectanea*. A search for vernacular expressions leads to interesting results. It throws new light on familiar passages involving proverbs and phrases whose source or provenance has not as yet been identified. Secondly, it yields evidence as to his view and estimate of his native language. The article also deals with passages in the *Colloquia* in which Erasmus uses a common Latin word in a novel sense and the effect of such usage on humanist lexicography. A close examination of passages which commentators have passed over further bears out his artistry in adapting adages and making puns. His fondness for punning on names is well known; and this study includes an attempt to decode the names of characters who have defied identification.

To get a perspective on the question of how Erasmus used vernacular proverbs and what value they had for him, it is worth considering first his discussion of ancient adages.

*I wish to thank Jill Kraye and Clarence H. Miller for correcting my English.

[1]See Wesseling, 1994.

I. Defining the Proverb

Erasmus' essay on adagia is of prime importance.[2] He was the first author since antiquity to discuss the nature of proverbs at some length. His elaborate discussion has no equal in Greek and Roman literature, nor in that of the Renaissance, an age in which proverbs, mottoes, and maxims in general enjoyed a tremendous popularity. It was surpassed in the seventeenth century by his compatriot Gerardus Joannes Vossius (d. 1649).[3] Erasmus' essay, published as an introduction to the *Adagiorum chiliades* (1508), is an extended version of the brief account he provided in the prefatory letter to the original collection, the *Adagiorum collectanea* (1500).[4]

He addresses two questions: first, the nature of proverbs; and second, their prestige, relevance, and usefulness. He begins with a review of definitions given by the fourth-century Roman grammarians Donatus and Diomedes and by Michael Apostolios, a late Byzantine proverb collector (ca. 1420-80). Erasmus discards their definitions as inadequate: they are either too restrictive or too broad. The restrictive definitions assert that proverbs convey a moral or a meaning expressed through a metaphor (some even claiming both features). He admits that proverbs conveying a moral in veiled form are the best in their category; but he rightly refers to the practice of ancient authors, who frequently refer to expressions as proverbial even when they lack these characteristics. He then formulates a definition of his own, which in his view is sufficiently broad and exact to cover the adages in his collection: "A proverb is a saying in popular use, remarkable for some shrewd and novel turn of phrase" (Paroemia est celebre dictum, scita quapiam nouitate insigne). It is noteworthy that Erasmus uses the terms *paroemia*, *proverbium*, and *adagium* indiscriminately throughout his collection. He applies them to a large variety of expressions, ranging from

[2]It was discussed earlier by Balavoine, Beuermann, and Chomarat, 2: 771-77.

[3]See Vossius, 1697, bk. 4, chap. 6; 1696, bk. 2, chap. 6; for a bio-bibliography see Rademaker. Polidoro Virgilio (Polydore Vergil) of Urbino, the first humanist historiographer of England, published a proverb collection (*Proverbiorum libellus*) at Venice in 1498. It precedes Erasmus' earliest collection by two years, a fact which Erasmus was always reluctant to acknowledge. He does not deal, however, with the nature of proverbs. It is only in a later, enlarged edition (Basel, 1521) that he gives a very brief, one-page account entitled "de proverbii finitione" (defining the proverb). Filippo Beroaldo the Elder devoted a lively inaugural lecture to proverbs, entitled *Oratio proverbiorum* (Bologna, 1500); but he merely defines proverbs as "sententiae vulgares" (aphorisms in common use), and then draws attention to their moral and philosophical value.

[4]A recent outline in English of the genesis and growth of the collection can be found in Erasmus, *ASD*, 2, 8: 1-3. Henceforth *Adagia* refers to the *Adagiorum chiliades*; *Collectanea*, to the *Adagiorum collectanea*. The prefatory letter of the *Collectanea* also appears in Allen, *Ep.* 126.

proverbs to phrases, metaphors, and even individual words. In fact, he casts a very wide net.[5]

After discussing the various elements of his definition (chap. ii and iii), he next turns to the awkward task of distinguishing proverbs from related forms of discourse: aphorisms ("sententiae"), apothegms, gibes ("scommata"), and fables[6] (chap. iv). Our focus, however, is his definition. Addressing the question of how sayings came into current use in antiquity, he lists an array of popular sources such as oracles, the Seven Sages, myths, fables, and the works of poets and playwrights (Homer, Pindar, Sappho, Euripides, and Aristophanes; chap. ii). From here it is only one step further to declaring that all the great poetry of the Greeks is proverbial, and he does indeed include a large number of lines from Homer and Sophocles in his collection. He felt entitled to do so on the authority of Macrobius, who says that in his own day scores of Homeric verses were very popular and in proverbial use.[7]

The remainder of chapter ii focuses, not on how certain remarks and sayings gained popularity, but rather on how proverbs originated (e.g., from the result of a trick, from a shrewd reply or a rash retort, from the behavior of people and animals).

The second part of his definition ("remarkable for some shrewd and novel turn of phrase") is rather vague. What exactly does he mean by "novelty" in proverbs and how is it achieved? In addressing the latter question, Erasmus lists a number of factors (chap. iii). Some proverbs, he says, owe their novelty to the thing represented ("ipsa res"). The example he gives is "weeping crocodile tears" (crocodyli lachrimae): a crocodile shedding tears is a strange and curious phenomenon. Other proverbs owe their novelty to the use of metaphors or allegory, of hyperbole and enigma. An example of the last category is "The half is more than the whole" (*Adagia* 895). Some proverbs depend on "allusio" (a veiled reference): they allude to a line or passage from a well-known author.[8] Presumably their novelty arises from the capacity to evoke their original context. At least in this case, "novel" simply means "striking," and nothing more.

He next distinguishes a category whose proverbial character depends not on a figure of speech, but on purely semantic properties. In a proverb of

[5]See the commentary on *Adagia* 3874, entitled "Madusa," *ASD,* 2, 8.

[6]After all, a number of proverbs originated from fables (see below). Such proverbs, says Erasmus, are fables in abridged form (*ASD,* 2, 1: 52, line 151).

[7]*Adagia* 2701-2975 are all taken from Homer; 4085-4106, from Sophocles, *Antigone*; 4126-4136, from *Electra*. Erasmus refers to Macrobius (*Saturnalia* 5.16.6) in the introduction to the series of adages from Homer.

[8]See also chap. xiii, *ASD,* 2, 1: 68, lines 503-13.

this type, novelty is inherent in "a word or expression itself," more precisely, in "its particular connotation" (αὐτὴ διάλεκτος καὶ ἰδίωμα, id est verbi proprietas).[9] What he probably means is that the proverbial character of this type of expression depends on a specific application of a word or a name which thereby takes on a new sense: for instance, "tantalizing" from Tantalus. The example he gives is "an Ogygian disaster" ('Ωγύγιον κακόν), where the proper name means "primeval" and "enormous." In the *Adagia* (no. 1850) he points out that Ogygus was the very first king of Thebes in Greece, the ancestor of a royal lineage which was afflicted by huge misfortunes.[10]

Erasmus further refers to semantic ambiguity or *double entendre* as a feature of some proverbs. Novelty can also result from antiquity ("antiquitas"), an archaic flavour due to the remote origin of a proverb. Lastly, he mentions humour and wit ("ridiculum"). Interestingly, he does not refer to metonymy in his account.

Another classification is found at the end of the introduction (chap. xiii). It partly overlaps with the account discussed above. He now focuses not on novelty, but on forms of figurative speech that are typical of proverbs and expressions ("figurae prouerbiales"). Beginning with metaphors, he lists a number of fields from which both they and proverbs derive, such as seafare, war, the human body, arts and trades. He next discusses proverbs which depend on "allusion" or veiled reference. He further classifies proverbs denoting things or actions that are either impossible, inevitable, or absurd, and those which express likeness or opposition ("impossibilia, necessaria, absurda, similia, contraria"). Common stylistic features of proverbs are repetition of the same word and the combination of a word with its opposite (as in the expression "nolens volens"). Some are characterized by a riddling obscurity (the Pythagorean precepts which make up the first part of his collection belong to this class.) He concludes with a detailed classification of hyperbolic expressions.

Erasmus' definition calls for further analysis. In his view, proverbs are characterized by two features: common use and novelty. What does he mean by "nouitas"? Although he does not discuss this term explicitly, it seems to

[9]49, line 105. It seems strange that Erasmus should use such a cryptic phrase. The commentaries in the *ASD* edition and the *CWE* remain silent on this point. I take διάλεκτος to mean "word," "expression" (compare Plutarch, *Alexander* 31). "Verbi proprietas" explains ἰδίωμα, "the particular sense, the specific meaning of a word." In the 1508 edition Erasmus wrote αὐτὴ γλῶττα, which he subsequently replaced (for the sake of clarity) with αὐτὴ διάλεκτος καὶ ἰδίωμα.

[10]See also Chomarat, 2: 774-75. The name somehow appealed to Erasmus: he styled himself Ogygius in a colloquy; see note 168.

be mainly a matter of style and figurative speech (compare "figura nouatum," chap. ii); in other words, a proverb is usually a saying remarkable for its novel phrasing. As noted above, he qualifies the term "nouitas" with "shrewd" (scita), which he explicates as "ancient and erudite" (quod antiquitate pariter et eruditione commendetur). It is this quality, "scitum," which distinguishes proverbs from ordinary speech ("sermo communis," chap. ii). He apparently means to say, first, that proverbs differ from plain, straightforward, direct discourse;[11] and, second, that a true adage bears the stamp of both antiquity and erudition. The "ancient" or remote and archaic origin of a saying enhances its value, for age lends charm and prestige to words, just as it does to wine.[12] His use of "eruditio," however, poses a problem. What about proverbs which did not originate from learned and educated discourse but rather from popular speech? It is unlikely that he intends to exclude them or that he does not recognize them as proverbs. He is aware that Plautus often draws on popular parlance,[13] and he includes many passages from Plautus in his collection. Apparently, his definition is too restrictive on this point, revealing an aristocratic preference for proverbs created by the learned over proverbs of popular origin — a preference which conflicts with his actual practice of selection.[14]

Julius Caesar Scaliger attacked Erasmus' definition on different grounds in his renowned *Poetice* (1561). Without mentioning his name — he is referred to as an ignorant crow[15] — Scaliger gives a step-by-step critique. Having discarded the ancient definitions quoted by Erasmus as unsatisfactory, he also rejects Erasmus' own definition. First, he points out that it is not sufficiently specific, since it applies to any aphorism ("sententia"). Second, he discerns a contradiction between "novelty" and "in popular use"; how, he wonders, can a proverb be new and well known at the same time?

[11] In the preface to the *Collectanea* he contrasts ordinary language ("vulgi, hoc est sordidus, sermo") with the "erudite" style of writing as practised by Angelo Poliziano, who made ample use of adages and related devices (*Ep.* 126, lines 134-43). See also Chomarat, 2: 772.

[12] He also insists on the grace conferred by age ("vetustatis commendatio") in the preface to the *Collectanea*, *Ep.* 126, line 51.

[13] "a vulgi sermone," *Ep.* 126, lines 66-68.

[14] He voices his preference unequivocally in the preface to the *Collectanea*, claiming that he has left out adages that have originated from the common people: "vulgo sua reliquimus, vno aut altero exceptis" (*Ep.* 126, lines 229-30).

[15] "Gracculus," bk. 3, chap. 84, 139. Deitz, however, silently emends it to "Graeculus" in his 1994 edition, apparently regarding "gracculus" as an obvious printer's error. Presumably Scaliger is alluding to the proverb "Nihil graculo cum fidibus" (Ignorant people have nothing

Once a saying has lost its novelty, it is no longer a proverb by Erasmus' own definition ("At quomodo novum sit quod idem tritum esse oportet? . . . Praeterea paroemia desinet esse hoc quod est cum exuerit tempore novitatem"). Scaliger clearly takes "novelty" to mean "completely new," whereas Erasmus was using it in the weaker sense of "surprising, unusual." Furthermore, a common proverb can be striking and novel to those who hear or read it for the first time. Lastly, one might vindicate Erasmus' definition by explaining it in the following way: "A proverb is a remark, notable for some shrewd and novel turn of phrase, which *consequently* has caught on and come into popular use."[16]

Scaliger's own definition runs as follows: "A proverb is an allegorical saying in common use." Allusiveness is its main characteristic ("Proverbium est oratio vulgata allegorica. Sin mavis omnia Latine, pro 'allegorica' ponetur 'alludens' aut 'innuens.'") It differs from a "sententia," he says, in that an aphorism conveys its message in a simple and direct way.

One hundred years later the polymath G.J. Vossius came to Erasmus' defense in his manual on rhetoric (*Commentaria rhetorica* 4, 6). After a careful and balanced analysis, he decides in favor of his definition on the grounds that it is broad enough to cover aphorisms that had come into popular use in antiquity ("γνώμας celebres"). In other words, its inclusiveness is a great advantage, since it does not require proverbs to be distinguished from aphorisms. He further argues against Scaliger that many proverbs are devoid of metaphors and allegory, expressing their meaning through words used in a literal sense, in direct and unambiguous phrases ("proprio sermone"). This was, in fact, an argument advanced by Erasmus himself (chap. i, lines 26-37). Yet, while approving of Erasmus' definition, Vossius criticizes him for having included mere expressions and obsolete words in the *Adagia*.

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to do with poetry), which is quoted by Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, praefatio 19. Had Erasmus been alive, he would certainly have caught the allusion, since he had discussed the proverb himself; see *Adagia* 337. Moreover, Scaliger calls him an old and nasty *crow* ("anus cornicula"), an old parrot ("vetule psittace"), and a boorish Batavian in his oration against Erasmus and the *Ciceronianus* (1531; p. 127, line 1275; 110, 656; 109, 630). "Gracculus" (crow) is also the name of a character in a colloquy by J.L. Vives with the telling title *Garrientes* (1542).

[16]Polidoro Virgilio anticipated Scaliger's objection, for he was careful to avoid the notion of novelty in his definition (ed. 1521, 3): "Est itaque proverbium sententia scita rebus temporibusve accommodata . . . . Quae quidem sententia mox vulgi sermone celebrata fit proverbium, hoc est commune omnium verbum."

II. The Prestige and Usefulness of Ancient Proverbs

In the second part of his essay on proverbs Erasmus defends the validity of his work, insisting on the prestige and usefulness of adages. Proverbs, he argues, were highly esteemed by the ancients, who compiled collections and employed them frequently in their works. He also refers to the Scriptures and to Christ himself (chap. v). Studying proverbs is useful because of their philosophical content. They encapsulate ancient wisdom and ideas, many of which foreshadow the teachings of Christ (chap. vi). Studying them is necessary in order to understand obscure passages in ancient authors, for many proverbs are somewhat enigmatic or quoted only partially (chap. ix). Vehicles of time-honoured truths, they have a pre-eminent and generally acknowledged persuasive power, which allows them to be used as arguments in discourse. Because of their striking pithiness, they pierce the hearer's mind and leave a lasting impression (chap. vii). Their antiquity, charm and wit make them effective devices for stylistic embellishment (chap. viii). Using proverbs properly and effectively is far from easy: it requires artistic skill. This difficulty is another argument in favor of their prestige and dignity (chap. x). It also inspires Erasmus' advice to use them carefully and with restraint (chap. xi). He then demonstrates how a given proverb can be applied and adapted in a variety of ways, depending on one's purpose (chap. xii).

Erasmus' plea for the study of proverbs is compelling and forms an impressive part of his introduction; it is precisely what would be expected from an expert presenting his work to the public. Even so, one wonders whether it was not perhaps a little otiose in an age fond of mottoes, devices, and maxims, an era which saw the rise of the emblem book (1531).[17] This was a time, moreover, when the *Disticha Catonis* went through numerous editions, along with the sayings of the Seven Sages, and when Italian

[17] Erasmus himself draws attention to a device in *Adagia* 3947, entitled "Virtute duce, comite fortuna." This maxim from Cicero, he says, is used by some ("quibusdam") as a device ("symbolum"), referring no doubt to the printer's device of Sebastian Gryphius at Lyon. He discusses the printer's mark ("insignia," "symbolum") of Aldus Manutius in Venice (the dolphin and anchor) in *Adagia* 1001 ("Festina lente," *LB,* 2: 399E-403A) and mentions logos ("signa") as used by bankers at the end of no. 4145, entitled "E neuo cognoscere." His own device ("symbolum") was "Concedo nulli," accompanied by an image of Terminus, the Roman deity presiding over boundaries; he defends it against slanderers in *Ep.* 2018 (Basel, 1528). Erasmus never refers to emblem books (he mentioned only the *legal* treatises of Alciato; see *ASD,* 2, 8: 14). For an introduction to emblematics see Daly, 3-53. The earliest theories of the genre are discussed by Wesseling, 1999.

humanists revered the Pythagorean precepts as symbols conveying arcane and primeval wisdom. Collected and discussed throughout the Quattrocento by Leon Battista Alberti, Antonio degli Agli, Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico, Angelo Poliziano, Pandolfo Collenuccio, Filippo Beroaldo the Elder, Giovanni Nesi, and Giambattista Pio,[18] these *symbola* were awarded pride of place in the *Adagia*.

What, then, is the point of Erasmus' plea? As he often does, he addresses first and foremost traditional theologians, the main opponents of the humanist movement. This is true of the original version, in the preface to the *Collectanea*, which he composed in Paris.[19] There he takes on censorious and sanctimonious theologians who oppose the study of rhetoric and pagan authors and accordingly disdain proverbs as childish trifles ("nugae pueriles"). These scholastics are likewise the target of his *Antibarbari*, a treatise against the Goths of his own day.[20] To refute and silence them, he refers to the frequent use of proverbs in ancient philosophy and in the Scriptures, citing examples from the Old and New Testaments. He also contrasts their quibbling verbosity ("sophistica garrulitas") with the pithy brevity of adages. In the final version of his plea, which he composed in Venice for the Aldine 1508 edition of the *Adagia*, the theologians have faded into the background. His tone has changed as well: there is no longer an invective, just a brief and unspecific reference to "those who despise proverbs as trivial, easy, and almost childish minutiae" (chap. v). He now seems to address a wider audience, if not the world of scholarship at large. The change of tone may be due to his stay in Venice: whereas Paris for him was a stronghold of scholasticism, Venice represented Greek manuscripts and humanism, as he makes clear in his praise of Aldus Manutius and his circle (included in the essay "Festina lente," *Adagia* 1001). Surrounded and supported by generous humanist scholars, Erasmus may have temporarily lost interest in pursuing his long-running dispute with the scholastic theologians.

[18] See Poliziano, xxv-xxviii. For Antonio degli Agli's collection (never printed) see Celenza, 692; Pio's is in his *Annotationes*, chap. 36.

[19] See *Ep.* 126, esp. lines 147-98.

[20] *ASD*, 1, 1; on 72-73 he lets off a volley of adages ("Quid graculo cum fidibus?" and so on) in denouncing their ignorance of the classics.

III. Dutch Proverbs and Expressions in the *Colloquies* and other Works

Just imagine the Colloquies written in the racy Dutch of the sixteenth century! What could he not have produced if, instead of gleaning and commenting upon ancient adages, he had made a collection of Dutch proverbs? — Huizinga (54)

Erasmus never discussed the value of vernacular proverbs. On the basis of his reverence for the ancients and his lifelong devotion to the cause of classical Latinity, one might infer, with Huizinga, that he had no use for them. The opposite, however, is true. In the *Adagia* he quotes — in Latin translation — over 250 sayings of Dutch provenance. A rare and, in fact, unique testimony to his interest in the vernacular is in the *Collectanea* (1500). He quotes and explains a Dutch proverb as an independent item (no. 723), on a par with ancient adages, and notes that he includes it out of respect for the popular speech of his day ("ne nihil a vulgo mutuati videamur neue nostram aetatem vsquequaque contempsisse"). That he includes a Dutch proverb in his earliest collection of ancient adages is certainly surprising. It must have been one of his favorite proverbs. It has all the characteristics of an adage, he says, except that it is neither ancient nor found in a classical author. He quotes the proverb in the following way: "Prospectandum vetulo cane latrante." The Dutch original is "Als die oude hont bast so salmen uutsien" (Beware when the old dog is barking, that is, an old watch dog never barks without good reason). The sense is: when a greybeard gives the alarm, there is real danger lurking.[21] He follows it with two other proverbs on barking dogs. The first, no. 724, "Canes qui plurimum latrant, perraro mordent" (Barking dogs don't bite), may well be of vernacular provenance as well: it is not found in this form in ancient authors nor is it in Walther's dictionary of medieval Latin proverbs. Erasmus notes: "This proverb, too,[22] is used *nowadays* to refer to slanderous and menacing people" (Dicitur hac aetate et hoc in homines maledicos et minaces). The Dutch equivalent is "Blaffende honden bijten niet."[23]

[21] See Suringar, no. 70; and n. 25 below. Petrus Montanus plagiarized this item from Erasmus' *Collectanea* and included it in his own *Adagia* (1504). He appended a piece of propaganda "pro Germania" against the cultural superiority of the Italians. See the commentary on Erasmus, *Adagia* 3535, *ASD,* 2, 8: 43.

[22] "Et" in Erasmus' comment refers back to no. 722, a Greek proverb on the subject of vain threats. It may seem strange that "et" should not refer to the immediately preceding item, but such editorial irregularities are not uncommon for Erasmus, at least in the *Adagia* (for a striking example see no. 3774, *ASD,* 2, 8). I surmise that he incorporated no. 723 into the materials for the 1500 edition only at a later stage.

[23] Sartorius, no. 2778 (3.8.78), quoted by Suringar, no. 34. On the vernacular provenance of no. 724, see also Heinimann's head-note on *Adagia* 2700 (entitled "Canes timidi vehementius latrant"), *ASD,* 2, 6.

His comment on the second, no. 725, "Canes omnibus ignotis allatrant" (Dogs bark at everyone they don't know), is very brief. He merely notes that it applies to people who rebuke what they fail to understand, "in eos qui quicquid non intelligunt, id damnant ac repraehendunt." He undoubtedly took this from Giovanni Pico's famous treatise *Oratio de dignitate hominis* (60). Defending the noble science of natural magic, which explores the mysterious harmony of the universe, Pico concludes: "Et haec satis de magia, de qua haec diximus, quod scio esse plures qui, sicut canes ignotos semper adlatrant, ita et ipsi saepe damnant oderuntque quae non intelligunt."[24] It has gone unnoticed that there is a precise parallel in a saying of Heraclitus, quoted by Plutarch, *Moralia* 787 C: Κύνες γὰρ καὶ βαύζουσιν ὧν ἂν μὴ γινώσκουσι (Dogs bark at everyone they don't know). Erasmus surprisingly never refers to the Greek saying.

These three proverbs do not reappear in the *Adagia*, with the exception of no. 723, relegated to the very end of *Adagia* 208 to illustrate the ancient proverb "Eum ausculta, cui quatuor sunt aures" (Listen to the person who has four ears).[25] Erasmus wanted to limit the enlarged collection exclusively to ancient adages;[26] this also explains why he suppressed his praise for the Neo-Latin authors Pico, Barbaro, and Poliziano in the new introduction. One can only speculate as to why he decided to exclude no. 725, a truly ancient adage, from the enlarged collection. It seems that the passage in Plutarch escaped his attention (he translated several moral essays of Plutarch, but not the one in question).

[24]Erasmus quotes another expression explicitly from Giovanni Pico ("Picus Mirandulanus") in *Collectanea* 466, namely, "Non omnia pari filo conuenit," while expressing doubt as to its antiquity ("e medio fortasse sumptum"). Accordingly, he excluded it from the *Adagia*. (It may have escaped his attention that Pico apparently borrowed from Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 2.340-41: "Debent . . . non . . . omnia prorsum esse pari filo," *i.e.* "It must needs be that not all [atoms] are of equal size.") In the preface to the *Collectanea* Erasmus counts Pico, Ermolao Barbaro, and Angelo Poliziano among the greatest authors ("maximi authores") and praises them for their copious use of adages (*Ep.* 126, lines 127-43). It may be noted here that he modelled the last part of the preface (lines 233-60) on Poliziano's preface to his *Epistolae*. He quotes at least eight proverbs from Poliziano in the *Collectanea* (nrs. 12, 38, 321, 396, 404, 477, 481, 496), but suppressed his name in the corresponding items in the *Adagia*. On his use of works by Italian humanists in compiling the *Collectanea* see also Heinimann.

[25]"Idem," says Erasmus, "nunc vulgus nostratium effert subsordida quidem, sed tamen apta metaphora, cum aiunt: "Prospectandum vetulo latrante cane."

[26]An interesting exception is the non-classical proverb "E cantu dignoscitur auis," which is the subject of *Adagia* 3121, *ASD*, 2, 7; "Refertur et hoc a quibusdam," says Erasmus, "etiam si mihi nondum apud idoneos autores [*i.e.* ancient authors] repertum."

Although the presence of vernacular proverbs in the *Adagia* is quite strong, their role is subservient and instrumental. Erasmus uses them only as a means to clarify or illustrate a given ancient adage, or to demonstrate that it lives on in his own time.[27] In his other works, vernacular proverbs, though many fewer, play a more important part. He uses them as additional evidence or even treats them on a par with ancient wisdom. Originating from and used by the linguistic community of his own day, they can serve as evidence and have a persuasive power in their own right; and so he employs them, like ancient adages, to confirm an assertion or to bolster an argument. He also uses them to lend wit and spice to his style. This can be demonstrated from a variety of his works, ranging from the deeply serious *De contemptu mundi* to the more lighthearted *Praise of Folly* and *Lingua*.[28] An interesting example is found in *Exomologesis*, his treatise on confession (1524), *LB*, 5: 164 C. Inveighing against craftsmen of his own time and their habit of cheating customers, he declares that this practice is so common and accepted that it has given rise to a proverb: "adeo vt prouerbio quoque dicatur vnumquemque in suo opificio furem esse" (so much so that there is even a proverb 'Everyone is a thief in his own trade'). This non-classical proverb is taken from the Dutch or German vernacular. The Dutch version is "Elck is een dief tsijnder neeringe";[29] a German collection has "Alleman ein deif [sic] in syner neringe."[30] The question of Erasmus' familiarity with German is discussed below.

The *Colloquies* contain a few Dutch proverbs, but none have been recognized as such in scholarly literature. Even the team of Belgian scholars who produced the commentary in the *Opera omnia* edition failed to identify them.[31] The same is true of the more recent commentary in the *CWE*.

[27] See Suringar's compilation from the *Adagia*.

[28] See Wesseling, 1994.

[29] Quoted from Sartorius, no. 2697 (3.7.97); it also appears in a Dutch proverb collection of the late fifteenth century; see Harrebomée, Eerste Deel: 130 and Derde Deel: 160; *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal*, s.v. dief, 3: 2519. Erasmus censures the same practice of cheating in his *Explanatio Symboli*, *ASD*, 5, 1: 317, lines 338-40: "Nec ideo molitores, pistores ac vestiarii fures non sunt, rem alienam vel subtrahentes vel vitiantes, quia fit a plerisque." I am grateful to Michael Heath for calling my attention to the proverb under discussion; his translation (and commentary) of *Exomologesis* will appear in *CWE*.

[30] Quoted from Antonius Tunnicius, 1, 73. A native of Münster in Westphalia, he provided each proverb with a translation in Latin hexameters. His translation of the proverb under discussion is "Cleptes in proprio quaestu deprehenditur omnis." See Wander, 1, s.v. Dieb, no. 155; compare *ibid.* 2, s.v. Handwerk, nrs. 23 and 68. See also Walther, no. 32247 e, which is based on Wander.

[31] Yet note the following statement at the close of their introduction: "Nous nous sommes appliqués aussi à relever les néologismes d'Érasme, ses expressions favorites et ses emprunts aux langues vulgaires." *ASD*, 1, 3: 20.

A clear example is found in the dispute between the learned lady and the ignorant abbot, *Colloquium abbatis et eruditae*. Opposed to learning in women, the abbot advances the following objection: "I have often heard the common saying 'A wise woman is twice foolish'" (Frequenter audiui vulgo dici foeminam sapientem bis stultam esse), to which the learned lady sharply retorts, "That saying is common indeed, but it is used only by fools" (Istuc quidem dici solet, sed a stultis). The saying is the Dutch proverb "Een wijze vrouw is tweewerf zot," as I have argued previously.[32] It means: a woman is always a woman, that is, foolish; learning and wisdom are incompatible with womankind.

In *The Profane Feast* (*Conuiuium profanum*, 1522) one reads: "It is hard to accustom an old dog to a leash" (Difficile est canem vetulum loris assuescere . . . . Vetulus canis non facile assuescit loro, *ASD*, 1, 3: 201, lines 2464-65; 49, line 553). This is the Dutch proverb "Oude honden sijn quaet bandich te maken."[33] Erasmus identifies it as a vernacular saying in the *Adagia*, no. 161, where he uses it to illustrate the expression "senis mutare linguam" (to teach an old man a new language), saying: "A popular but nonetheless elegant proverb has it that it is too late to accustom old dogs to leashes" (vulgo quidem, attamen haudquaquam ineleganter dicitur, serum esse canes vetulos loris assuefacere). In the same colloquy he also quotes a metrical variant of this proverb, which he probably took from a medieval Latin source; it appears in Walther's dictionary of medieval proverbs, no. 2936, "Colla canum veterum nequeunt attingere lora."

In the opening scene of *The Godly Feast* (*Conuiuium religiosum*, 1522), Erasmus contrasts life in the countryside with the bustle of the city. He then censures the greed of priests and monks, "who for the sake of gain usually prefer to live in populous cities, following the precept of a certain blind beggar who rejoiced in the jostling of a crowd because, he would say, where there were people there was profit" (caeci cuiusquam mendici cui dulce erat premi turbis hominum, quod diceret illic esse quaestum, vbi esset populus. *ASD*, 1, 3: 231, lines 13-14 = 221, 13-14). Commentators have failed to notice that the same anecdote appears in *Adagia* 2945, entitled "Qui eget, in

[32]Wesseling, 1994, 356-57. See *Colloquia*, *ASD*, 1, 3: 407, lines 133-35. The (non-classical) proverb is not found in Walther. The Dutch equivalent is quoted by Harrebomée, Tweede Deel: 420.

[33]Quoted from *Proverbia communia* (a fifteenth-century collection of Dutch proverbs) by Harrebomée, Eerste Deel: 30; Derde Deel: 115. Suringar, no. 206. An anonymous translation of the *Colloquies*, first published in 1622, reads "'T is swaer oude honden bandts te maecken . . . . Een ouden hondt laet zich niet licht aen den bandt wennen" (337 IK). The early Dutch translations of the *Colloquies* are discussed by Bijl, 273-99. For bibliographical descriptions see *Bibliotheca Belgica*, 2: E 756-63. I have used the translation of 1622 (E 758).

turba versetur" (Those in need should hang around in a crowd). Here Erasmus points out that he took the anecdote from the vernacular ("hodiernis temporibus vulgo iactatur fabula de caeco mendico") and suggests that the saying quoted by the beggar is also of popular provenance ("sententiam populari ioco celebrem, ibi quaestum esse, vbi sit hominum frequentia"). The Dutch saying referred to is "Bi dat volc leyt de neringe" (Business is where the people are).[34] To the best of our knowledge, Erasmus is the only author who associates it with a blind beggar. Later sources put it in the mouth of a fishmonger. Petrus Rabus of Rotterdam, who translated and annotated the *Colloquies* in the late seventeenth century, recalls "the Dutch proverb about the fishmonger who wheeled his cart into church, saying, 'Business is where the people are.'"[35]

In *A Dialogue Between a Liar and a Friend of Truth*, Philetymus remarks that liars are also prone to stealing; "this vice," he tells the liar, "is closely related to yours, as is also attested by a popular proverb" (Hoc vitium esse tuo cognatum testatur etiam populare prouerbium, *ASD*, 1, 3: 320, lines 10-12). Modern commentators hold that the reference is to the medieval Latin proverb "Mendax est furax" (A liar is also a thief), which appears in Walther's dictionary, no. 14643 a. Erasmus, however, quotes a very similar proverb of Dutch provenance in *Lingua*, his treatise on the uses and abuses of language, which was published just two years after the colloquy (1525). There he writes: "Nec temere vulgo dictum est Ostende mihi mendacem, ego tibi ostendam furem" (*ASD*, 4, 1A: 83, lines 893-94). The proverb Erasmus had in mind is "Wijst my een loegener [leugenaar], Ick wijse v en dief" (Show me a liar, I'll show you a thief).[36] Incidentally, it should be noted that the name Philetymus means "friend of truth" (φιλ-ἔτυμον), not "friend of honour" (τιμή). In fact, a scholium in the early editions explains the name Philetymus as "amans veritatis," while interpreting "Pseudocheus" (the liar's name) as "fusor mendaciorum," that is, one who "pours forth" lies; the second part of this compound is apparently derived from χέω.[37]

In *The Poetic Feast* (*Conuiuium poeticum*, 1523), the hilarious host calls his maidservant Margareta names, to which she replies in her down-to-earth way: "I don't care, calling me names won't make me any fatter or thinner"

[34] See Suringar, no. 188, who quotes from Servilius, *Adagiorum epitome* (1545), 219.

[35] "Of gelijk 't Hollandsche spreekwoord is van den man, die met sijn mosselwagen in de kerk reed, zeggende: by 't volk is de nering" (2). See also Harrebomée, Eerste Deel: 393.

[36] *Gemeene Duytsche Spreckwoorden*, 57; Kloeke, ed. *Kamper spreekwoorden*, 32. Harrebomée, Eerste Deel: 131. It is significant that Arnoldus Montanus quotes the same Dutch proverb in the margin of his edition of Erasmus' *Colloquia*, 1658, 244.

[37] See the scholia in the 1531 edition, p. 966. Erasmus also uses the word "pseudocheus" in *Ep.* 1531, line 43.

(Istae nomenculaturae *nec obesiorem* me reddunt *nec macilentiorem*, *ASD*, 1, 3: 345, line 30). Her non-classical expression may well be of vernacular provenance; perhaps, it represents the Dutch phrase "niet vet en niet mager" (neither fat nor thin).[38] Commentators agree that Margareta is based on Margarete Büsslin, Erasmus' "Xanthippe," who kept house for him during his residence in Basel and Freiburg (even to think here of his other Margaret, the learned daughter of Thomas More, would be inept and "bot," to use an Erasmian expression[39]). It is tempting therefore to surmise that a phrase of German origin underlies her reply. No such phrase, however, is found in Wander's *Sprichwörter-Lexikon*.

"Nomenculaturae," a witty corruption, puns on "culus" and, perhaps, on "culina" (kitchen), the place where Margarete is supposed to stay. Anyway, it is a nice example of *Küchenlatein* or "culinaria elegantia," as Erasmus once put it.[40]

When her master tells her to return to the kitchen, Margarete smartly replies with "an old saying": "It's easier to call up a devil than to drive him away" (Vetus dictum est: Procliuius est euocare cacodaemonem quam abigere, 345, line 38). Perhaps this, too, is taken from the vernacular; it is not attested in Walther. Wander quotes "Den Teufel ins Haus laden, ist leicht, aber schwer, von ihm loskommen" (It's easy to invite the devil into one's house, but hard to get rid of him).[41]

Evidence of Erasmus' familiarity with German is rather scant and contradictory.[42] Writing around 1498 to a German from Lübeck ("cuidam Lubecensi" — probably the father of his pupil Christian Northoff), Erasmus

[38]Harrebomée, Tweede Deel: 50 (no sources given). The translation of 1622 (329 D) reads: "Sulcke toenamen, en maken my *noch vetter noch magerder*."

[39]"Hominem stupidum . . . vulgo dicimus 'bot' pro 'Boeoto,'" he notes in an adage entitled "A Boeotian pig" (no. 906, *ASD*, 2, 2). He refers to the same word in *The Shipwreck*; see below. On his housekeeper see *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. Büsslin; and Bierlaire, 1968, 90-91. Another servant present at the feast described in the colloquy is given the name Mus (349, line 169; 351, 230; 356, 394), which has a double meaning: "mouse" and "parasite"; see *Adagia* 2468, entitled "Muris in morem."

[40]*ASD*, 1, 3: 78, line 60. Perhaps Erasmus owed the phrase to Valla and his apologias against Poggio Bracciolini (1452-53). Valla qualifies one of Poggio's barbarisms as a "culinarium vocabulum" in *Apologus* (486), a witty kitchen-dialogue between a scholar and his cook about the Latinity of Poggio's letters. See Pfeiffer, 183-87.

[41]Wander, 4: 1061. Not attested in Dutch proverb collections. The early translation (1622, 329 EF) reads: "'t Is een out [een] spreeck-woort, men can den duyvel veel lichter doen comen, als wech heeten gaen."

[42]See the excellent discussion by Chomarat, 1: 137-44, who concludes that his knowledge of German was sufficient for daily use. Halkin, 1969, 573-74, arrives at the same conclusion.

apologized for not using the German vernacular, declaring that his German was inadequate: "I have written to you to the above effect at greater length than I should; and have also done so in Latin, not because I despise your native tongue and mine but because it would not have been easy for me to write in the vernacular, nor would it have been easy for you to understand what I wrote" (Haec pluribus ad te scripsi quam debui, et quidem Latine, non fastidio linguae nostratis, sed quod neque facile id potuissem, neque tu facile intellexisses; *Ep.* 82, lines 39-41). It seems reasonable to assume that Erasmus picked up at least some German from 1521 onwards, during his many years' residence in Basel and Freiburg (Breisgau). When he pretended in 1522 not to know the language, Duke George of Saxony, who wanted him to read certain works of Luther and to write against the reformer, refused to take this claim seriously.[43] Moreover, when Leo Jud, a supporter of Zwingli, published a biased account of Erasmus' view of the Eucharist, Erasmus composed a detailed refutation within two months of its appearance (May 1526), even though Jud's tract was written in German (*Des Hochgelerten Erasmi von Roterdam, und Doctor Luthers maynung vom Nachtmal unsers Herren Jesu Christi*). And still he claimed not to know the language.[44]

As a matter of fact, he knew it well enough to review translations of his own works.[45] On the other hand, Erasmus ordered an assistant to translate a German document (*Erklärung zur Kirchenordnung*) for his own use, which proves that as late as 1533 his knowledge of German was inadequate.[46] There are just a few scattered references to German words in his letters. In Freiburg (1534), he is suffering from a disease, which to his mind is similar to gout, the illness he knew so well; the epidemic is called "Souch" and "Gesucht" by the locals, he says, which is best rendered as "the disease" (compare *Sucht* and *Gesüchte*).[47] He also refers to a German term in the 1533 edition of the *Adagia*, no. 3906, where he explains the expression "More silent than an Areopagite" (a member of the highest judicial court of Athens) by referring to the Westphalian *vemen* of his own day, or local courts of law, whose members were bound by solemn vows of secrecy; they are commonly referred to as "Certi," he says: "*Certi* vulgo dicuntur"; he was

[43] *Ep.* 1313, lines 84-85; and 1340.

[44] Erasmus' refutation, entitled *Detectio praestigiarum*, appears in *ASD*, 9, 1: 233-62; "Meam sententiam," he says, "quoniam Germanice nescio Latine dedi" (245, line 285).

[45] See Holeczek, 228-29.

[46] See Allen's note on *Ep.* 2804.

[47] *Ep.* 2906, lines 125-26: "morbum, quem vulgo Souch appellant. Eo dicuntur multi hic laborare." See also *Ep.* 2916, line 6 and 2918, line 40.

apparently familiar with the vernacular terms for these judges: *Gewissene* and *Wissende*, meaning "those who know."[48] Finally, he quotes a proverb of (presumably) German provenance in the 1508 edition of the *Adagia* (no. 161) in order to illustrate the adage "Senis mutare linguam" (to teach an old man a new language): "An old parrot does not heed the rod" (Senex psittacus negligit ferulam). He clearly identifies this non-classical proverb as a vernacular saying (introducing it with the words "quanquam vulgo iactatum"). It is not attested in Dutch proverb collections; but Wander (3, s.v. Papagai) quotes "Ein alter Papagai achtet die Ruthe nicht"; unfortunately, he gives no source. Erasmus also cites this saying (introducing it as a "vulgi prouerbium") in his tract on education, *De pueris instituendis*, which he composed during his travels in Italy (1506-09).[49] All in all, one can assume that he became increasingly familiar with German during his stay in Basel and Freiburg.

The provenance of another non-classical expression, quoted in *The Poetic Feast* (*ASD*, 1, 3: 347, line 96), is as yet obscure. Introduced as a "common saying" (vulgo iactatum prouerbium), it runs: "Qui pessime canit, primus incipiet" (The person who sings worst will begin first).

Obviously, such formulas as "vulgo dicitur" do not always signal a vernacular expression.[50] In many cases, Erasmus simply refers to ancient usage, as is clear from the very end of his introduction to the *Adagia* (chap. xiv). Besides this, he may also be referring to

(a) the common practice among users of Latin in general,
(b) common use as such, without specific reference to any language,
(c) the general use in both Latin and the vernaculars (mostly his native language).

Examples from the *Colloquies* and other works illustrate each of the above categories. (a) "A common proverb has it (credible enough, but bad Latin), 'Nouus rex, nouus lex,' 'New king, new law'" (Vulgo iactatur prouerbium, non tam vanum quam parum Latinum, 'Nouus rex, nouus lex'; *ASD*, 1, 3: 438, lines 10-11). The correct version ("noua lex") is quoted by Walther, no. 18860 c. It is clear that Erasmus does not mean here the vernacular, although the same proverb occurs in French: "De nouveau roy nouvelle loy"

[48]See the comments in the German proverb collections of Johannes Agricola (1529) and Eberhard Tappe, a native of Westphalia (1545), quoted by Grimm, s.v. Gewissen (III), 4: 6218; s.v. wissend, 14: 772; and by Suringar, no. 19.

[49]See *Adagia* 161, *ASD*, 2, 1: 274, lines 461-62; *De pueris instituendis*, *ASD*, 1, 2: 28, lines 3-4 (where the proverb is not identified); and Wesseling, 1994, 362 n. 40.

[50]See Tournoy and Tunberg, 161-65.

(A new king ordains a new law).[51] Another example of (a) is "the common saying 'So many men, so many opinions'" (vulgo dici solet, Quot homines, tot sententiae; *ASD,* 1, 3: 589, lines 120-21), although Erasmus notes in the *Adagia* (no. 207) that the same aphorism is also current in the vernacular ("Nihil vel hodie vulgo tritius est quam haec Terentiana sententia"). Yet another example is in *Lingua*, where Erasmus remarks that people who become jolly when they drink wine "are generally called tipsy, not drunk" (vulgo qui vino facti sunt hilariores bene poti dicuntur, ebrii non dicuntur, nisi lingua deliret).[52] Here "vulgo" (generally, in common use) is intended to contrast with a specific class of people, namely philosophers (mentioned in line 599).

An example of (b) occurs in *The New Mother* (*Puerpera*): "It is commonly said that one should overlook a first try" (Vulgo dicitur veniam deberi primum experienti, *ASD,* 1, 3: 469, line 569). There is no reference here to the Greek origin of the expression, which is the subject of *Adagia* 861: "Συγγνώμη πρωτοπείρῳ, id est 'Venia primum experienti.'" Another example of (b) is in the same colloquy, where Eutrapelus seeks to persuade the young mother to breastfeed her baby herself rather than hire a wet nurse: "Or do you suppose," he asks rhetorically, "that the common saying 'He drank in his wickedness with his nurse's milk' has no basis?" (An putas temere vulgo dici 'Iste maliciam cum lacte nutricis imbibit'? 467, line 529). The expression is adapted from a statement by Cicero in *Tusculanae disputationes* 3.1.2 (quoted in *Adagia* 654, entitled "Cum lacte nutricis"). This detail is of interest for any analysis of Erasmus' method of writing, but it is irrelevant to the meaning of "vulgo" in the given context. The same is true of an expression in a dialogue between a young man in love and a girl (*Proci et puellae*). Reluctant to marry, Maria raises the following objection: "Marriage is commonly called a halter" (Vulgus coniugium capistrum vocat, 286, line 318). Erasmus took the expression from Juvenal's satires (6.43): "He [a notorious womanizer] puts his silly head into the halter of marriage" (stulta maritali iam porrigit ora capistro).[53] Here, too, this detail has no relevance to the context.

Concerning (c) the following non-classical proverb is perhaps a case in point. It is found in medieval Latin and, in a slightly different form, in

[51] Quoted by Le Roux de Lincy, 547, from a sixteenth-century proverb collection, an appendix to *Mots dorés de Caton.*

[52] *ASD,* 4, 1A: 44, lines 603-04; it should be noted that the phrase "bene potus" (well warmed, tipsy) is either taken from Cicero, *Ad familiares* 7.22, or from Nonius Marcellus, 231 (quoting Lucilius, fragment 1044, ed. Werner Frenkel).

[53] That the source is Juvenal is apparent from *De contemptu mundi, ASD,* 5, 1: 50, lines 274-75 "vt caueas ferreo isti capistro ora porrigere."

various vernaculars as well. In *Pietas puerilis* (1522) Erasmus puts a "common saying" into the mouth of Erasmius: "Angelic boys turn into Satan[54] when they grow old" (Aiunt vulgo pueros angelicos in satanam verti, vbi consenuerint. 172, line 1520). Walther quotes two similar proverbs from medieval Latin sources: "Angelicus iuvenis senibus satanizat in annis" and "Saepe senex Sathane datus est puer angelicus ante" (nrs. 1042 and 27273). A Dutch version is "Jonge engeltjes zijn gemeenlijk oude duiveltjes" (Young angels usually become old devils).[55] German and French sources have "Die jungen engel werden alt teuffel" and "De jeune angelot, vieux diable."[56] In sum, the possibility that Erasmus is referring to vernacular variants cannot be ruled out. The same is true of an expression in the preface to *Annotationes in Marcum*. Checking and comparing readings and translations, he says with a sigh, involves a lot of running around among many manuscript volumes of the Bible; it is like "looking for a needle in a heap [of hay]" (At nos dum inter tot Graecos, Latinos, Hebraeos codices sursum ac deorsum discurrimus, velut aciculam, quod aiunt, in aceruo quaerentes . . .).[57] This expression is not found in this form in ancient texts.[58] A Latin version of later (medieval?) origin is "acum in meta foeni quaerere," but the phrase is also quite common in various vernaculars.[59] A Dutch version is "een naald in een voeder hooi vinden" or, as Sartorius puts it, "Ghy had wel eene naeld in eenen voeyer hoijs gheuonden" (You would even have found a needle in a pack of hay).[60]

[54]For the sense of "vertor" compare "Ex Hollando versus es in Gallum," *ASD,* 1, 3: 137, line 405. Thompson translates "angelic boys become limbs of Satan."

[55]Quoted from sources of the second half of the sixteenth century by Harrebomée, Eerste Deel: 166; Derde Deel: 172-73. The 1622 translation of the *Colloquies* reads: "Men segt gemeenlic, dat de gene die in haer kintsheyt Engelen zijn, out geworden zijnde, tot duyvelen worden" (388 A).

[56]Quoted by Wander, s.v. Engel (7) and Engelchen, 1: 820-22. The Italian variant ("Angelo nella giovanezza, diavolo nella vecchiezza") can be disregarded, since Erasmus did not understand the language, despite his stay in Italy (1506-09); see Halkin, 1969, 575-76; 1972, 39 and his note 34. He once declared that he knew as little Italian as East Indian, "vulgaris linguae vestratis tam sum ignarus quam Indicae"; see the anecdote in *Apophthegmata* 8, *LB,* 4: 363 E. He had some French but very little English; see Halkin, 1969, 575-78; Chomarat, 1: 144-47.

[57]*ASD,* 6, 5: 352, lines 35-37. I owe this reference to P.F. Hovingh. Erasmus discusses the phrase "sursum ac deorsum discurrere" in *Adagia* 285.

[58]For a close parallel (Plautus, *Menaechmi* 238) see *Adagia* 2620, entitled "Vel acum inuenisses," *ASD,* 2, 6.

[59]See Arthaber, no. 258, who unfortunately fails to give sources.

[60]Sartorius, no. 2698 (3.7.98). See *Woordenboek*, s.v. voeder, 22: 92; s.v. voer, 22: 243; and Harrebomée, Eerste Deel: 331; Derde Deel: 233.

To return to the *Colloquies*: a Dutch expression underlies a passage in *The Funeral* (*Funus*, 1526). Here a Dominican mendicant friar and a parish priest are engaged in a violent quarrel over the last will of a dying man. "I," brags the Dominican, "am a Fully-Qualified Bachelor of Sacred Theology (Sacrae Theologiae Baccalaureus Formatus), while you are an idiot." "I," the priest retorts, "could make much better bachelors than you out of beanstalks" (Ego baccalaureos multo te meliores nectam e stipulis fabarum, 540, lines 103-05, 109-10), which amounts to saying "You are absolutely worthless." It should be noted, first, that "nectam" (make by plaiting) wittily takes up "formatus" in "Baccalaureus Formatus" (a regular academic title, distinct from that of Cursor and other lower titles); the priest is taking "Formatus" in the literal sense, "fashioned, shaped." Secondly, he alludes to a popular etymology of "baccalaureus" as coming from "laurel berry."[61] Third, his gibe depends on the notion that the stalks and stubble of beans are worthless stuff. A scholium refers to a Dutch proverb or expression.[62] The anonymous commentator contrasts beanstalks, which are good for nothing, with straws of wheat, which are used for making hats and raincoats: "Ex culmis tritici nectuntur galeri, nonnunquam et pallia adversus pluviam. Faba caules habet grandes, intortos et fragiles, ad nihil minus utiles quam ad texendum. Est vulgo iactatum proverbium apud Batavos" (1531, ed., 992-93). In fact, the Dutch word for dry beanstalks, *bonenstro*, is applied to useless things or stupid people, as in the phrase "soo grof als bonen stroo" (as rough and crass as dry beanstalks).[63] The *ASD* editors merely note that, according to the scholia, a Dutch proverb is involved. The

[61] See Farge, 1985, 16-28; Weijers, 173-80; Blaise, s.v. baccalarius, 5; *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 1: s.v. baccalarius. The term is of feudal origin. It designated a young nobleman, ranking below knighthood; in many cases, as Weijers points out, he would serve as a squire. The title was usually derived from "bacca lauri" (laurel berry). Erasmus uses this and other fanciful etymologies in a humorous dialogue in *De recta pronuntiatione*, *ASD*, 1, 4: 26, lines 390-416.

[62] I have used the 1531 edition of the *Colloquia*; the scholium appears on pp. 992-93. Scholia were added to the Froben editions authorized by Erasmus from 1526 on; see Thompson's discussion, *CWE*, 39: xxvi-xxvii, and Bierlaire, 1977, 93. One would like to know the identity of the commentator. All that can be said is that he was a supporter of Erasmus who worked in close contact with the Froben firm. Perhaps he received information from Erasmus himself.

[63] Quoted by Sartorius, no. 2599 (3.6.99) as an equivalent to "Pistillo retusior est" (Erasmus, *Adagia* 2521). Harrebomée, Eerste Deel: 79; *Woordenboek*, 3, s.v. boonenstroo. The expression "Hij is zo dom als bonestro" is still in use today in Twente (Overijssel). The 1622 translation of the *Colloquies* (266 B) reads "Ick, seyde hy, soude veel beter Baccalaurien dan ghy zijt, uyt boonen-stroo konnen draeyen."

recent commentary in *CWE* refers to *Adagia* 941, entitled "Ex stipula cognoscere," but this adage has no relevance to the passage concerned.

Erasmus, with his hatred of braggarts and hypocrites, also ridicules the title Baccalaureus Formatus (and that of Cursor) in an anecdote in which he describes a monk as "theologiae baccalaureus, currens an sedens, formatus an mox formandus, incertum" (*Adagia* 1498, *LB,* 2: 582 F). He mocks the title "Magister Noster," a prerogative of doctors in theology, in two colloquies (*ASD,* 1, 3: 229, lines 83-84; 397, 289-90) and in his praise of folly (*ASD,* 4, 3: 158, lines 521-23). Yet he was quite proud of his own doctorate, which he had obtained during a very brief stay at Turin.[64] We will see in the next section how he caricatured the lengthy theological curriculum of Paris University.

Another non-classical proverb is found in *A Synod of Grammarians* (*Synodus grammaticorum*, 1529): [Many] eyes see more than one" ("Plus vident oculi quam oculus," *ASD,* 1, 3: 586, lines 20-21). It is worth noting that Erasmus quotes the same saying in a letter, written around 1489 in the monastery of Steyn and addressed to his Dutch friend Cornelius Aurelius of Gouda. In this early letter, the proverb is introduced by the formula "quod vulgo dicitur" (*Ep.* 20, lines 121-22). Erasmus presumably had a Dutch proverb in mind: "Twee ogen zien meer dan één" (Two eyes see more than one).[65] Some doubt might arise from the fact that the Latin version appears in Walther's dictionary of medieval proverbs (no. 19710 a); but Walther's entry is misleading, in that it is not based on a medieval source, but on one dated 1616![66] Since there is no indication that the Latin version predates the time of Erasmus, I assume that he took the proverb not from a medieval Latin source, but from the vernacular.

In this discussion of vernacular proverbs and expressions, a comment on the unusual word "snaphanus" in *Wealthy Beggars* (Πτωχοπλούσιοι, 1524) is appropriate. Erasmus implies that the mendicant friars of his day are a degenerate lot: they behave like "robbers boasting about the proceeds of their forays" (snaphanum ex praedationum reditu iactantem sese).[67] Why

[64]Farge, 1985, 40; Grendler.

[65]Harrebomée, Tweede Deel: 144; one may note, however, that the earliest sources given date from the seventeenth century. De Brune (1636; 295, 475 and 480) has (in iambic verse) "Twee oghen die zien meer als een" and "Vier oogen zien veel meer als twee" (Four eyes see much more than two).

[66]Walther (19710 a) has taken the Latin version from Wander (s.v. Auge, no. 200), who refers to the German dictionary of Georg Henisch (1616), 149. Henisch quotes "Vil augen sehen mehr als eins," adding "Plus vident oculi quam oculus," without giving any source. It is possible that the Latin version goes back to Erasmus.

[67]*ASD,* 1, 3: 398, lines 314-15. The 1622 translation (283 B) reads "eenen Snaphaen, die hem van de incomste sijner roveryen beroemt."

does he use the strange (Germanic) term "snaphanus" rather than such common Latin words as *latro* or *praedo*? As a loan word it seems unnecessary; and by the standards of classical Latinity, it is a barbarism. Rudolph Agricola, the founding father of humanism in the Low Countries, condemned the introduction of vernacular words into Latin. In a letter (dated 1480) to Erasmus' future teacher Alexander Hegius, he censured such Germanisms as "leccator" (from the noun *lecker*, glutton), "burgimagister" (burgomaster), and "scultetus" (bailiff).[68] True, Erasmus was by no means a purist, let alone a Ciceronian: with youthful enthusiasm he advised his Dutch friend Servatius Rogerus to develop a free and easy style, "to write spontaneously whatever came into his head and not to be ashamed of an occasional barbarism."[69] Erasmus himself happily used such uncommon words as "halbardacha" (halberd) and "mensa rupta" (from *banca rotta*, bankruptcy).[70] Further, the word "snaphanus" in the colloquy is part of a statement uttered by a monk (though, in this case, an honorable man). Even so, its use is surprising, especially in a work designed to instruct younger students how to speak proper Latin ("elegantiam Latini sermonis").[71] Besides, it would have been familiar only to readers who knew German or Dutch (*Schnapphahn*, *snaphaan*). Accordingly, a gloss was incorporated in the Froben editions at an early stage, explaining that "snaphanus," a German word, is a euphemism denoting a specific type of robber (a robber baron, apparently), who makes sudden sorties from castles and takes travellers by surprise ("Sic Germani vocant praedonum genus subito ex arcibus adorientium viatorem, mitigato vocabulo." 1531, ed., 978).

[68] He further censured "passagium" (military expedition, crusade), "guerra" (war) and "treuga" (truce) as Gallicisms; for details see Wesseling, 1988, 231-33.

[69] "Quin magis pro tui ingenii viribus (atque id quoque ex tempore malim) quicquid in buccam venerit scribe. Nec te barbarismi, si qui inciderit, pudeat; senties nos correctores, non irrisores"; *Ep.* 15 (ca. 1488), lines 40-43.

[70] Erasmus relentlessly lays into slavish imitators of Cicero's style in *Ciceronianus*, *ASD*, 1, 2. The term "halbardacha" is discussed below. He uses the phrase "mensa rupta" in a letter of 1533 (*Ep.* 2810, line 66) and in a Psalm paraphrase (*ASD*, 5, 3: 223, lines 959-60), adding such formulas as "quod aiunt" to mark its unlatin character. More common, by contrast, are the medieval terms "quietantia (vt vocant)" (receipt, *Ep.* 2126, lines 217 and 220), "represalia (quae vocant)" (reprisals, *Colloquia*, *ASD*, 1, 3: 598, line 257), and "bombarda" (cannon, *ibid.* 317, line 119; 547, line 364 ["sphaerula bombardica," a small cannonball]; *Adagia* 2001, *ASD*, 2, 7: 15, line 101; 18, line 165; *Querela pacis*, *ASD*, 4, 2: 80, line 457; 96, line 833). The question of Neo-Latin vocabulary is discussed expertly by IJsewijn and Sacré, 2: 377-422 and by Tournoy and Tunberg.

[71] "Iuuentutem illecto," says Erasmus in his defense of the *Colloquies*, "vel ad elegantiam Latini sermonis vel ad pietatem" (*ASD*, 1, 3: 741, lines 19-20).

More information about these bandits is found in other writings by Erasmus. He vividly describes the debased way of life of German Junkers ("Ionckeri") in *A Knight Without a Horse, or Faked Nobility* (1529): for a knight to relieve a common traveller of his money, he says sarcastically, seems just and right ("ius fasque esse equiti plebeium viatorem exonerare pecunia," *ASD,* 1, 3: 616, lines 160-61). In the 1528 edition of the *Adagia*, an expression on a spendthrift prompts him to expatiate on their wanton and rapacious behavior, describing them as the "pestis Germaniae nostrae" (no. 844, *ASD,* 2, 2: 364, lines 826-40). His chief target is the self-styled nobleman Heinrich von Eppendorf, a supporter of Ulrich von Hutten. Germany was not the only territory to be infested by robber barons. Erasmus inveighs on the same account against Gelderland, a province east of Holland and bordering on Germany. Sicambria, he says in a colloquy of 1527, is full of debauched and warlike braggart knights, "who don't own enough land to stand on" (Isti sibi permittunt bellum cui velint indicere, etiam si pedem vbi ponant non habent).[72] They deserve to be tortured on the rack, he remarks with an untranslatable pun ("Equites . . . equuleo dignos").[73] These knights and would-be noblemen were commonly called *Schnapphähne* in Germany. Interestingly, *Schnaphan* is also the title of a sarcastic pamphlet directed at robber barons (published around 1523); its main target was Franz von Sickingen, who (like Eppendorf) supported Ulrich von Hutten in his campaign against the Roman clergy.[74] The Hollanders frequently used *snaphaan* as a term of abuse for the rapacious Gueldrians (Gelderlanders), their arch-enemies.[75] In sum, the word must have been current in the vernacular of Erasmus' time as a specific derogatory term to denote robber barons.

[72]571, lines 170-73. For the expression "pedem vbi ponant non habent" see *Adagia* 407. Commentators suggest that the passage alludes to the sly bookseller Franz Birckmann, whom Erasmus detested. Even so, it should be pointed out that Erasmus, a Hollander by birth, censures the Gueldrians in general on more than one occasion; see the close of this section.

[73]"Equuleus" (foal) here means an instrument of torture in the shape of a horse; one might compare line 160 "Abeant in malam crucem." The pun depends on paronomasia ("eques" — "equuleus"); it seems doubtful to me that Erasmus is playing on the double sense of "equuleus," as the *ASD* commentators suggest. Thompson's translation, "Knights fit for a hobby-horse," misses the point.

[74]See Schottenloher, 52-71 (I owe this reference to Eckhard Bernstein). On Sickingen, Eppendorf, and Hutten's "Pfaffenkrieg" see Augustijn, 1996, 168-82, and *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v.

[75]See *Middelnederlandsch woordenboek*, 7, s.v. snaphaen; *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal*, 14, s.v. snaphaan (I). Erasmus' fondness for playing on words and etymologies extended to the vernacular; for examples see Chomarat, 1: 143.

It may also be that he could not resist using the colorful and suggestive word because of its literal meaning: "snatching cocks" aptly describes the behavior of mendicant friars. Snatching and grabbing is their customary trade, in his view. Calling them "cocks" is equally appropriate, since he also criticizes them for boasting, a typical feature of "cocky" behavior. In fact, ancient authors characterize vainglorious people by referring to cocks and cockfighting, and Erasmus has duly recorded this in the *Adagia*. Cocks usually boast, even after a humiliating defeat, he observes with respect to the adage "Ipse semet canit."[76]

He used the same word jokingly in a letter dated 1521 to his friend Conrad Goclenius (a Westphalian), in which he calls the messenger who was to deliver the letter a "snaphanus": "This 'brigand' should hand you an unfinished shirt, which Froben's wife sent me. In fact, he seems to have reserved it for himself" (Accipe ab hoc snaphano camisiam inperfectam, quam mihi misit vxor Frobenii. Videtur enim hic illam sibi qualificasse. *Ep.* 1209).

Another notable word in the *Colloquies* is "halbardacha," halberd (*Cyclops*, 1529; 604, line 23; 608, 172). Whereas the term "halabarda" is common enough in medieval Latin, the element "-acha" is puzzling, until one becomes aware that it simply represents the French word *hache*, axe (from the Latin word *ascia*): a halberd was indeed a combination of a spear and a battle-axe — a "bipennis," as Erasmus puts it in the same colloquy (606, line 111). It is possible that he coined the compound, which is not attested in other sources (the usual form in French is *hallebarde*).[77] He also uses it in a letter of 1530, expressing fear that religious strife in Freiburg is going to end in a war, "halabardachis et bombardis" (using halberds and cannons; *Ep.* 2263, line 6).

The Girl Who Hated Marriage (*Virgo* μισόγαμος, 1523) is about a nice and pious girl, aptly named Catarina (καθαρός meaning "pure, chaste").[78] She is determined to keep her virginity intact and yearns to enter a convent called Chrysercium (*ASD*, 1, 3: 293, line 125). As commentators have observed, the name alludes to the Dutch town Gouda (χρυσός meaning

[76] *Adagia* 1486; see also 1629 (entitled "Philippi gallus") and 3325 (entitled "Gallus in suo sterquilinio plurimum potest").

[77] Du Cange (s.v. alabarda) and Hoven (s.v. halabardacha) draw attention to Erasmus' use of the compound, but they fail to explain it.

[78] While commentators as a rule explain the names of the characters in the *Colloquies*, this does not happen in the case of Catarina. The title (*Virgo*) μισόγαμος is perhaps formed after the analogy of the ancient title Μισόγυνος (*The Woman-Hater*), a play by Atilius cited by Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 4.11.25. Cicero refers to it in commenting on misogyny and related mental diseases. The passage may have lingered in Erasmus' mind.

goud [gold]), situated between The Hague and Utrecht. The monastery of Steyn, in which Erasmus had spent some miserable years, was nearby, lying east of Gouda. An anonymous early scholium has it that the fictitious name Chrysercium refers to an actual convent situated inside Gouda: "Chrysercium fictitium nomen est; videtur innuere collegium quod est Gaudae iuxta claustrum quo naves excluduntur aut admittuntur."[79] But to which convent does this scholium refer? The word "claustrum" here indicates some kind of construction serving as a passage and check-point for ships. In Erasmus' day, there were at least six nunneries in Gouda. One of them fits the description: the convent of St. Mary, which was close to the point where the river Gouwe entered Gouda, passing through a gateway (the Potters Poorte), on the northwest side of the town. This convent belonged to the Canonesses Regular of St. Augustine, Erasmus' own order. The convent along with its inhabitants was commonly referred to as the Nonnen opder Goude ("the nuns on the river Gouwe").[80] It is tempting therefore to assume that Chrysercium means "the convent on the Gouwe" and not just "a convent at Gouda." The context supports this interpretation. To Eubulus' question "Which community [or convent, 'collegium'] did you choose?" Catarina replies: "Chrysercium." (Eubulus:) "I'm acquainted with it — near your home" (Agnosco, aedibus paternis vicinum). Thompson takes the name to mean "the Chrysercian order"; however, his suggestion that "Chrysercium" is a pun on Cistercian should be rejected.

We still need to explain the second element of the name Chrys-ercium. It undoubtedly derives from ἐρκίον (enclosure), a word used, for example, by Homer. Erasmus employs it here in the sense of "convent." One can only speculate as to the function of the fictitious name. Erasmus may have intended to preclude any direct identification with a specific convent. The name enables him to inveigh freely against monasteries in general and against the one chosen by Catarina in particular. Hiding under the cover of Catarina's friend and counsellor "Eubulus," he describes the convent's male superior as a decrepit alcoholic, while accusing the nuns themselves of Lesbian debauchery. In Catarina's imagination, Chrysercium is a golden shelter and a safe haven. Erasmus/Eubulus, by contrast, exposes monasteries as prisons and places of slavery ("seruitus"). In spite of his compelling arguments, Catarina remains steadfast — but not for long: she will deeply

[79]The scholium appears in the 1531 edition, 961. Modern commentators do not mention it.

[80]See Taal, 1957, 40-41; 1960, 38; and, esp., a map of Gouda dated 1585 by Frans Hogenberg, in Braun and Hogenberg, 2: part 4. Most of the convents and monasteries in Gouda were destroyed during the Dutch Revolt.

regret her entry into the convent in the next colloquy, which is aptly entitled *The Repentant Girl* (*Virgo poenitens*).

Erasmus was in close contact with citizens of Gouda. While a monk in the monastery of Steyn, he frequented the house of his friend and supporter Berta van Heyen, a pious and well-to-do widow. Interestingly, two of her daughters were nuns in a convent in Gouda; Erasmus' funeral oration in honor of Berta is addressed to them.[81]

In the colloquy entitled *The Shipwreck* (*Naufragium*, 1523), the skipper addresses one of his mates as "socie" (*ASD*, 1, 3: 325, line 18). Erasmus notes in parenthesis that this is the common form of address among sailors. It goes without saying that the underlying vernacular word is *maat* (in Dutch and German; and in English, *mate*), which is attested in contemporary sources.[82]

In the same colloquy, the narrator relates the silly behavior of a superstitious fellow, which prompts his listener to exclaim, "Blockhead! A Batavian, I presume?" (O crassum ingenium! Suspicor fuisse Batauum. 328, line 104). The implied characterization of Batavians or Hollanders as blockheads apparently needed an explanation for readers outside the Low Countries, since a scholium has been added, which states that Hollanders are commonly nicknamed "crassi" ("vulgari ioco" 1531, ed., 968). The reference is no doubt to their ethnic epithet *bot*, which covers the entire range of "blunt, dumb, dull-witted, stupid, gullible."[83] Stultitia alludes to it in her praise of folly, saying: "Those Hollanders of mine — and why shouldn't I call them mine, since they worship me so zealously that they have earned thereby a widely used epithet" (Hollandi mei — cur enim non meos appellem vsqueadeo studiosos mei cultores, vt inde vulgo *cognomen* emeruerint?).[84] In this context, "vulgo" (widely used) may well mean

[81] See *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. Heyen.

[82] The 1622 translation reads "'*matroos*' seyde hy (want soo noemen de schip-lieden malkanderen) . . . ," but the odd translation "matroos" (sailor) makes the parenthesis otiose and pointless. Petrus Rabus of Rotterdam (d. 1702) aptly translates "*maat*! (want met die naam noemen de bootsgezellen elkander)" (131). Another word taken by Erasmus from Dutch sailors' jargon is *buse*, which denoted a large drinking cup; *Adagia* 3116, entitled "Ex amphitheto bibisti": "[Amphitheton] Hollandi nautae vocant 'busam'." See Suringar, no. 71; *Middelnederlandsch woordenboek*, s.v. buse, 1: 1478; *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal*, s.v. buis (IV) and busen, 3: 1766.

[83] Petrus Rabus translates in fact "O *bot* verstand! Ik duchte dat hy een Hollander geweest is" (135).

[84] *Moriae encomium*, *ASD*, 4, 3: 84, lines 254-55. On the nickname see Wesseling, 1994, 352-56; and 1993, 71-75. Rudolph Agricola from Groningen (1454-94) cites the "proverb" "Crassis crassa conveniunt" (Stupid ideas befit the stupid) in *De inventione dialectica* (see the close of his prologue; I owe the reference to Marc van der Poel). Is this somehow related to the nickname of Hollanders?

specifically "in the vernacular," as in Erasmus' note "Hominem stupidum . . . vulgo dicimus 'bot' pro 'Boeoto'" (*Adagia* 906, end).

It may be useful to point out a detail of Dutch political history in the same colloquy. As the story goes on, the ship founders in a violent storm, but all those on board are rescued, finding shelter on the Dutch shore. This happy end inspires Erasmus to write words of high praise for his fellow Hollanders (a rare exception, one may say), claiming that no race is more kindly and hospitable, "despite the fact that they are surrounded by *savage peoples*" (cum tamen feris nationibus cincta sit; 332, line 260). He alludes no doubt primarily to their eastern neighbors, the Gueldrians mentioned above, with whom Holland was almost constantly at war. Supported by the king of France, their headstrong and militant duke, Charles of Egmond, also thwarted Habsburg expansion in the northern and eastern provinces of the Netherlands. Erasmus deplores his cunning and warlike politics in a comment on the adage "Ferocious through protection by others" (Alieno ferox praesidio) in the 1517 edition; it is not a coincidence that this adage reminds him of the duke.[85] He and his men are a constant threat to travellers, he remarks in 1528 ("Geldrius imminet vndique;" *Ep.* 1998, line 38). His distrust of them inspired him to coin the sarcastic phrase "Sicambrica fides" (Gueldrian honesty, or: loyalty; *Ep.* 283, line 162). His target in this letter is the sly agent and bookseller Franz Birckmann. This phrase may well be a variation of the ancient expression "Punica fides," which he discusses in the *Adagia*. The Romans used it to denounce the perfidious nature of their arch-enemies, the Carthaginians.[86] Lastly, Erasmus explicitly contrasts Hollanders with Gueldrians in *Ecclesiastes* (1535): listing national vices — for the use of preachers — he not surprisingly refers to the cunning ("astutia") of Gueldrians while calling Hollanders naïve and simple-minded (briefly, *bot*: "simplicitas"). Both nationalities are deficient in the wisdom of Christ ("euangelica prudentia"), though on opposite grounds ("astutia" versus "simplicitas").[87]

[85] *Adagia* 2725, *ASD*, 2, 6; see the commentary, and *Ep.* 549, line 23; 584, lines 35-36; 2798, lines 69-71. See also *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. Egmond (Karel van); Tracy, 1978, chap. 4; Struick; and Wesseling, 2000, 231-32.

[86] See *Adagia* 728. Perhaps he is also playing on a Dutch expression, "gelders geloof," which is quoted in later proverb collections of the sixteenth century. Sartorius, for one, connects it with the Gueldrians: he uses it in the sense of "Gueldrian perfidy"; see Sartorius, no. 796 (1.8.96); Harrebomée, Eerste Deel: 219 and, esp., Derde Deel: 188; *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal*, s.v. geld (*sic*), 4: 1246-47.

[87] *Ecclesiastes* 1, *ASD*, 5, 4: 238, lines 997-1002.

Incidentally, we are now in a position to appreciate a passage in Erasmus' correspondence which refers to the duke of Guelders and to a humanist from the same territory, Gerard Geldenhouwer of Nijmegen. In July 1530, Erasmus gives vent to his anger about the allegedly hostile conduct of Geldenhouwer, who was staying in Strassburg at that time and favored the cause of Luther. A convert, he had even publicly called upon the duke of Guelders to side with the Protestants (1526).[88] "If only he were with the duke of Guelders!" Erasmus exclaims (Vtinam esset apud ducem Gelriae!).[89] He literally wishes him to go to the devil. The duke surely knew how to deal with heretics. He competed with Charles V in imposing harsh measures against the Protestants to ingratiate himself with the pope. He had issued a severe placard in April 1529, which had resulted in a number of executions.[90] Erasmus apparently wishes the same fate on Geldenhouwer.

IV. Latin Artistry in the *Colloquies*

Remarkable Words, Puns, Persons, and Adages

The discussion of the vernacularism "snaphanus" touched upon the question of Erasmus' vocabulary. We will now examine other notable words and puns in the *Colloquies* and explore their context.

Provoking the Sorbonne: *A Synod of Grammarians*

A noteworthy non-classical term is "resumpta;" a specimen of medieval scholastic jargon, it denotes a specific type of lecture or disputation. Erasmus uses it with sarcastic intent in lampooning the theological faculty of Paris and its syndic, Natalis Beda, in *A Synod of Grammarians* (*Synodus grammaticorum*).[91] Beda played a leading role in the faculty's censure of Erasmus' paraphrases on the New Testament and the *Colloquies* (1526). In *A Synod of Grammarians*, first published in the 1529 edition of the *Colloquies*,

[88]See Augustijn, 1978, 136-37. Geldenhouwer's letter to the duke appears in Prinsen, 192-99.

[89]*Ep.* 2356, lines 3-7. He repeats the "imprecation" in *Epistola ad fratres Inferioris Germaniae* (1530), *ASD*, 9, 1: 414, line 859, "He may go to his overlord, duke Charles of Guelders" (conferat se licebit ad suum principem Carolum Gelriae ducem). On Geldenhouwer see Augustijn's introduction, *ASD*, 9, 1: 267-78; Augustijn, 1978; and *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v.

[90]*Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, s.v. Karel van Egmond, 10: 445-446. Erasmus was not opposed to the secular authorities persecuting heretics who disturbed the public order; see Augustijn, 1978, 150; 1991, 176-78.

[91]*ASD*, 1, 3: 586, line 23-587, 58. The colloquy is entitled *A Meeting of the Philological Society* in Thompson's translation; for a discussion of the title see page 112. On Natalis Beda (Noël Bédier) and his works see *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. For a detailed analysis of

Erasmus takes revenge. The colloquy is satirical throughout and caricatures the faculty meetings of the theologians in Paris. It describes a mock-synod of philologists, convened to discuss a question of a theological nature. The issue proposed to the assembly is the meaning of the strange term "anticomarita" — an indirect reference to a tract against Erasmus, entitled *Apologeticum in nouos Anticomaritas* (*Apology Against the New Opponents of the Virgin Mary*, Paris, 1526); its author was Petrus Sutor (Cousturier), a follower of Natalis Beda.[92]

The main speaker is Erasmus' Flemish assistant Hilarius Bertulphus (Bertholf). Like Erasmus, he was well acquainted with the University of Paris since he had studied there; moreover, France was his favorite country.[93] He submits for discussion the name of a bizarre vegetable, called "swimming beet," "beta natatilis" — clearly a dig at Natalis Beda. An even more outrageous pun follows, "bestia cacatilis," "shitty beast."[94] Bertulphus reports that he had found a rare reference to the vegetable in an outdated, medieval textbook — some sort of *Ovide moralisé*[95] — and describes it as twisted, insipid, and stinking, thriving as it does in mud and shit *(excusez le mot*, "honos sit auribus;" 587, line 50). There is, he goes on, just one race of people who are fond of it, to wit, the Pelini, who like to have it for dessert: "There is a race, the Pelini, who take turns inviting each other to dinner

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Erasmus' controversy with Beda and the Paris theologians, in which the *Colloquies* played an important role, see Farge, 1985, 176-96; 1999, 31-39; and Rummel, 1989, 2: 29-55; 71-72. For Beda's office of "syndic" or managing director see Farge, 1985, 41-42.

[92]See *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. Cousturier.

[93]See Bierlaire, 1968, 59-61; *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. Bertholf.

[94]*ASD*, 1, 3: 586, line 26. The sense of "cacatilis" (formed by Erasmus by analogy with "natatilis") is "defecating"; for his use of "cacare" see page 127 below. Thompson translates it as "nasty," apparently deriving it from κακός. It is tempting to assume that Erasmus is also alluding to the famous phrase which Paul (*ad Titum* 1.12) uses of the Cretans, κακὰ θηρία, or "malae bestiae," as Erasmus translates it; see *Adagia* 129 and 1778.

[95]"Ouidius per allegorias expositus," 586, lines 44-45. As IJsewijn, 1979, 348 has pointed out, the reference is to the *Ovidius moralizatus* by Pierre Bersuire (Berchorius, d. 1362), which was printed at Paris (Badius Ascensius) in 1509 and 1511. In Erasmus' view such Christianizing interpretations of the myths in Ovid were misleading and ridiculous; see *Ep.* 843, lines 595-97 and the note in *CWE*, 6: 24. Thompson apparently overlooked this note and IJsewijn's review of the *ASD* edition of the *Colloquia*. Besides correcting textual errors, IJsewijn also comments on sources and allusions to contemporary matters. Among much else, he points out (1979, 345 and 346) a reference to the Brethren of the Common Life (Erasmus censures their "peculiar Latin," *ASD*, 1, 3: 90, lines 404-05; see also 196, lines 2299-2300). On Erasmus' attitude towards the Devotio Moderna see Augustijn, 1996, 26-37; Tracy, 1996, 20-21. Students of Erasmus' works would be well advised to note IJsewijn's "Castigationes Erasmianae" and the review articles by Vredeveld.

parties, thus forming a lengthy cycle.[96] The final drinking party they call in their jargon the *resumption* — dessert or sweetmeats, as we would say." A colleague then remarks in the same sarcastic vein, "What a fine dessert!" ("Pelinorum gens est, apud quam conuiuia vicissim in longam ducuntur periodum; extremam compotationem vocant sua lingua *resumptam*, quasi nos dicamus bellaria aut tragemata." — "Quam bella bellaria!" 587, lines 56-59.)

The passage is dense with satirical allusions. The Pelini are the inhabitants of Paris or *Lutetia*, of course, for πήλινος means "made of mud," *lutum*. The Parisians are muddy people, in other words, muddled and filthy. (Erasmus calls attention to the use of "lutum" as a term of abuse in *Adagia* 3911, entitled "Luto lutulentior"). The name Pelusii in another colloquy (687, line 19) depends on the same word-play (πηλός = lutum, punning on Lutetia). Both terms are based on ancient ethnic names (Peligni, Pelusii).[97] Lady Folly uses the straight name "Parisienses"; they claim to be best in the world in theology, she says (*ASD*, 4, 3: 128, lines 63-64).

The passage under discussion is a caricature of the lengthy course of studies ("periodus"), composed of a long series of alternating sessions ("conuiuia") devoted to disputations and ceremonies which a student of theology was obliged to go through in order to acquire a doctorate from the University of Paris.[98] The term "resumpta" (used mainly within the theological faculties of Paris and Bologna) denotes the very first lecture given by a new doctor. It was so called because the professor would *resume* a question of certain preceding disputations which he had left unfinished.[99] Erasmus uses the same term in a letter, written in 1528, in which he, again, alludes disparagingly to Beda.[100] In his defense of the *Colloquies* he also ridicules another type of theological disputation, the "vesperiae," "a stupid term for a boring event" (rem insulsam insulso vocabulo; *ASD*, 1, 3: 751, line 368). This disputation would take place, at least in the early period, on

[96]Thompson fails to render "vicissim" and "periodum," translating "who have long-drawn-out parties."

[97]Erasmus refers to the French as Celtithraces (588, line 84), a mixed people of Gauls and Thracians, that is. This nickname depends, I presume, on the evil repute of the Thracians as heavy drinkers (see *Adagia*, *ASD*, 2, 1: 82, line 660 "Thracibus bibacior") and, secondly, as deceivers (see *Adagia* 928, entitled "Thracium commentum").

[98]The Paris doctorate demanded at least fourteen years of scholastic study and disputation; see Farge, 1985, 16 and 1999, 19.

[99]Weijers, 420-22. Farge, 1985, 27 refers to the same type of disputation as "resumptiva."

[100]*Ep.* 2077, lines 37-40, referred to by Thompson, *CWE*, 40: 839-40, n. 15 (where the tentative interpretation of "resumpta" as "resumé" should be discarded).

the eve of the session at which a bachelor was to receive his doctorate and which in turn was followed by the "resumpta."[101] The "vesperiae" and the "resumpta" were thus highlights of the training program for the doctorate.

Besides giving lectures, a bachelor would also participate in a number of disputations, which all the other bachelors were expected to attend.[102] In assuming different roles, bachelors "took turns," "vicissim," to use Erasmus' word. He may also be alluding to the exchange of roles between opponents and respondents. His comparison of the course of studies in theology to a series of dinner parties receives additional piquancy from the fact that it was obligatory for bachelors to provide banquets after certain disputations as a sort of additional fee. Banquets held on the occasion of the awarding of the doctorate were large affairs to which many doctors, bachelors, and other guests were invited.[103] Not surprisingly, Erasmus associates the Sorbonne (by which he means the faculty of theology) with copious wine drinking. Indeed, he jokingly derives the name Sorbonne from "bene sorbere" in *A Profane Feast* (*Conuiuium profanum*), which describes a drinking party.[104] The vintage cherished by the theologians is very heady; the Parisians call it *vin théologal* (vinum theologicum), he says in *Adagia* 2137 (entitled "Pontificalis coena").

The word "compotationem" in the passage under discussion replaces "conuiuia." In using "compotatio" Erasmus plays on the term "disputatio" and, more specifically, on the "disputatio resumpta." As we have seen, the "resumption" was the finale of the Paris curriculum, which Erasmus mockingly compares in the last clause to the final course of a dinner party,

[101]Weijers, 407-16, 418, 420; Farge, 1985, 27-28. The term "vesperiae" was commonly used in the plural.

[102]Farge, 1985, 21-24.

[103]See Farge, 1985, 30-31, who also provides an amusing report on excesses, that is, dinners censured by the authorities for being either too frugal or, more often, too sumptuous.

[104]*ASD,* 1, 3: 230, line 117; 208, line 2704. The preceding sentence is "Imo quicquid dictum est scribetur in vino" (Whatever has been said at the party will be written in wine, in other words, it should be forgotten). The subtext here is a line quoted by Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 10.441 'Ορκον δ' ἐγὼ γυναικὸς εἰς οἶνον γράφω, or "Inscribo vino si qua iurat foemina," as Erasmus translates it; see *Adagia* 356, which has the telling title "In aqua scribis." The same line underlies a sarcastic remark in another colloquy, 149, line 778 "O graue decretum, dignius quod vino inscriberetur quam aeri!" See also 655, lines 78-80 "Sed quod in conuiuio dixit . . . vino censebant inscribendum." Erasmus was fond of this expression; he also uses it in *De ciuilitate morum puerilium*, chap. 4 (end): "Quod ibi [in conuiuiis] fit diciturue vino inscribendum, ne audias: Μισῶ μνάμονα συμπόταν" (see the close of *The Praise of Folly*). For Erasmus, the name Sorbonne denotes the faculty of theology, not a particular college; see his letter to Botzheim (1523), *Ep.* 1: 10, line 36, where he refers with narrowing focus to "Gallia, Lutetia, theologi, Sorbona, collegia."

"bellaria aut tragemata" (dessert, consisting of dried fruits, sweetmeats).[105] It is on this occasion, we are told in the sequel, that such disgusting food as swimming beet ("beta natatilis") is served. Incidentally, the comparison or allegory has shifted from a series of dinner parties ("conuiuia") to a series of courses in a dinner. By using the term "bellaria" (after-course) Erasmus invites his readers to think once again of Beda, or Bedda, as he prefers to call him,[106] perhaps in order to distinguish him from his saintly namesake, Beda Venerabilis. A sneer at Beda's works and at the syndic himself is implied: Bedda, Erasmus jeers in a letter, triumphs over resumptions of his faculty and regards the rest of the world as blockheads ("Sic ornatus incedit et triumphat resumptis quasi mundus non habeat nisi fungos," *Ep.* 2077, lines 39-40). In the colloquy, the hint to the reader is strengthened by the exclamation "Quam bella bellaria!" Erasmus uses the synonym "tragemata" with similar satiric intent. He takes it up again in a concluding remark, stressing the sad and "tragic" aspect of the finale and, indeed, of the theological curriculum as a whole: "It's a tragic curriculum you describe, if the end is so unpleasant!" (Tragicam periodum mihi narras, quae tam inamoenum habeat exitum; 587, line 70).

Lady Folly notes that the French lay claim to good manners or civility ("morum ciuilitas;" *ASD,* 4, 3: 128, line 63). This stereotype underlies a passage in an early edition of the *Colloquies* about the way they respond to a dinner invitation: a Frenchman never accepts an invitation without inviting the host in return. It sheds light on the image of a lengthy round of dinner parties in the colloquy under discussion (line 57, "apud quam vicissim conuiuia in longam ducuntur periodum"): "I know the generosity and splendour of the French. You don't want to have dinner at my house for free without inviting me in return. But dinner parties usually form a full cycle in this manner. Thus a long round of parties is initiated. By such mutual invitations parties are endlessly reciprocated." (Noui Gallorum magnificentiam. Non vis gratis apud me coenare, nisi vices retuleris. At isto quidem pacto redire solent in orbem conuiuia. Sic nascitur conuiuiorum

[105]Aulus Gellius (*Noctes Atticae* 13.11.7) notes that "bellaria" is the Latin equivalent of τραγήματα.

[106]Erasmus uses this form throughout his apologias against Beda (*LB,* 9: 442-719) and in a number of letters (*Ep.* 1581, lines 1, 168, 602; 1610, line 1; 1906, lines 1, 3, 70; 2062, line 32; 2077, lines 37-40; 2275, 22; 2906, 42), while (politely?) using the form "Beda" in a letter to the Faculty of Theology (*Ep.* 1664). Bédier himself adopted the name Beda, as appears from the titles of his works; see the *Catalogue général des livres imprimés de la Bibliothèque Nationale,* s.v. Bédier. Erasmus' use of Bede the Venerable is discussed by Bejczy. It is an amusing coincidence that Ambrosius Pelargus, another Catholic critic of Erasmus, entitled his tract *Bellaria* (1539); see Rummel, 1989, 2: 55-58.

longa periodus. Hac vicissitudine fiunt sine fine reciproca conuiuia.)[107] Here, too, the rather solemn word "periodus" is used ironically: in another colloquy (413, line 57) it denotes a cycle spanning several centuries.

The colloquy *Synodus grammaticorum* is satirical from beginning to end. Even the title might be ironic; for "synodus" here does not mean a meeting in general, but rather should be taken in the specific sense of "synod." In this way, the title becomes a paradox evoking opposite spheres and cultures. The notion of humanist grammarians/philologists, convened to rule on a mock-question of a theological nature in a Synod, a traditional ecclesiastical council, was certainly a novelty. One can assume that the title is a mocking insult directed at scholastic theologians. As Erasmus himself experienced time and again, they detested grammarians encroaching on what they regarded as their own territory, biblical exegesis. They used the term "grammarian" in a derogatory way. By contrast, humanists, reacting against the scholastic approach to both Aristotelian and sacred texts, proudly claimed the name of grammarians and declared their competence to deal with texts of any kind in any discipline — even those of philosophy and theology. This was precisely the message of Poliziano's *Lamia* (1492), an introductory lecture to a course on one of Aristotle's treatises on logic.[108] Erasmus defends the same position in the introductory writings to his edition of the New Testament, the *Paraclesis* and the *Methodus*, not to mention his apologias and invectives against the traditional theologians. So, the title *A Synod of Grammarians* may well be a satirical paradox, like the phrase "theologus eloquens," which we shall meet further on. The odd and comic qualification "haereticus in grammatica" (a heretic in grammar) in the same colloquy (589, line 135) plays on the same contradiction. It also underlies a remark in Erasmus' defense of the *Colloquies*, where he opposes the "grammaticuli," the schoolboys for whom his collection was intended, to the scholastic theologians who condemned it (*ASD,* 1, 3: 751, lines 365-68).

In addition to the term "synodus" Erasmus uses in the same passage (585, lines 12-16) the related word "concilium," probably playing on the

[107] *ASD,* 1, 3: 191, lines 2155-58. The copious accumulation of phrases and sentences expressing the same idea is typical of the first, "primitive" edition of the *Colloquies*, aptly entitled *Formulae* and composed for pupils to improve their command of Latin. Erasmus makes a sneering remark about French "magnificence" in *A Profane Feast*: the French "are most fond of the splendor that costs least" (magnificentiam eam potissimum amant, quae minimo constet, *ASD,* 1, 3: 210, lines 2770-71).

[108] 16, lines 30-32 "Grammaticorum enim sunt hae partes, ut omne scriptorum genus, poetas, historicos, oratores, philosophos, medicos, iureconsultos excutiant atque enarrent." Erasmus refers to the opening section of the *Lamia* in *De copia* 2, *ASD,* 1, 6: 208, line 297.

specific sense of a religious "Council." At the beginning of the colloquy, one of the grammarians makes a big fuss about the exact number of confrères gathered. It turns out that he wishes to constitute an authoritative Synod for the solemn purpose of ruling on a serious question ("vt huius Synodi autoritate semel finiatur quaestio"). In this connection he points out to his colleagues that "the presence of seven people is required to make a council valid in law" (septenarium reddere legitimum concilium). It appears that the grammarian uses "concilium" in the sense of "Council." He also alludes to the adage "Septem conuiuium, nouem conuicium" (Seven make a feast, nine make a fray, as Mann Phillips elegantly translates). In the *Adagia* (no. 297) Erasmus explains that the number of guests invited to a dinner should be limited, for otherwise a quarrel is bound to break out. He also draws attention to the neat word-play "conuiuium/conuicium."[109] This word-pair, then, is the subtext of "concilium" in the colloquy, indicating that the reader is supposed to have the adage in mind. In *A Feast of Many Courses* (Πολυδαιτία[110]) Erasmus employs the same word-play in describing a feast attended by many people of different nationalities: "The banquet you describe is surely more like a fray than a feast, in which you are likely to have the kind of farce the Hebrews say occurred in the building of Babel: when one person asks for a cold dish, another hands him a hot one" (Nae tu mihi vere conuicium narras, non conuiuium, in quo facile possit talis exoriri lusus qualem Hebraei narrant accidisse in structura Babel, vt petenti frigidum aliquis porrigat calidum). Here, too, he alludes to the adage "Septem conuiuium, nouem conuicium."[111]

[109]"Elegans vel ob ipsam προσονομασίαν sententia." "Prosonomasia" is a common error in Erasmus for "paronomasia"; see *Ecclesiastes* 3, *ASD,* 5, 5: 134, lines 571-72 "adnominatio, Graecis προσονομασία, quum vox repetitur non prorsus eadem, sed aliqua ex parte immutata." On the ideal number of guests at a party see also *Conuiuium profanum*, *ASD,* 1, 3: 208, lines 2716-20.

[110]The nearest form in ancient Greek is πολυδαισία ("eating much"). Erasmus' title is apparently formed on the analogy of such compounds as πολυμυθία, πολυπονία, πολυτεχνία, πολυφιλία, which he uses in his letters; see Rummel, 1981, 91. Compare also πολυφαγία and πολυποσία, used at the end of *Adagia* 1168 (see this article's appendix).

[111]*ASD,* 1, 3: 562, lines 34-36. Commentators remain silent on the "Babel farce." The obvious source is *Genesis* 11.1-9, but the farce ("lusus") is Erasmus' own invention. He apparently read the story of the failed construction of the tower of Babel not as a tale about God punishing human hubris but as a funny anecdote. This light-hearted and parodic approach stands out more clearly in a longer version of the same farce in *De recta pronuntiatione*: "Aliquis e longinquo petebat obsonium, alter adferebat lateres. Rursus alius inclamabat sitiens 'Adferte potum!,' alter deferebat bitumen; priusquam ille recurreret, hic fame sitiue perierat. Rursus alius postulabat ignem, deferebatur aqua; hic petebat trullam, ille ferebat cucurbitam. Tandem fatigati taedio structuram omiserunt," *ASD,* 1, 4: 33, lines 634-

The names of the grammarians are carefully chosen: they correspond to the first seven letters of the alphabet and are listed in alphabetical order when establishing the quorum at the meeting: Albinus ("te"), Bertulphus ("me"), Canthelus, Diphylus, Eumenius, Fabullus, and Gaditanus (lines 8-10). The alphabet also determines the order in which each advances his judgment on the question proposed by Albinus. (Diphylus comes to the fore halfway through the discussion and is followed by Eumenius; 588.) The next section contains some proposed identifications.

Albinus at last opens the Council or Synod with a solemn admonition: "Attend, then, all of you; lend me your ears and minds. Many eyes see more than one" (Ergo hic estote omnes aures simul adhibentes et animos. Plus vident oculi quam oculus).[112] Given the humorous vein of the colloquy, it is worth noting that the phrase "Hic estote" recalls a passage in Augustine's deeply serious dialogues with his inner self, or Reason, who gravely commands him to heed the argument she is about to develop (*Soliloquia* 2.6.9, *CSEL* 89): "Hic esto, quantum potes, et vigilantissime attende," reiterating imperiously, "Hic esto!" The issue at stake is the immortality of the soul. Erasmus quotes the phrase twice in the *Adagia* without mentioning the source.[113] He uses yet another passage from the *Soliloquia* in a colloquy of earlier date (1522), in which he again lampoons Natalis Beda and the Parisian faculty of theology. Here, too, a serious passage on the immortality of the soul is put to use (and wittily expanded) in a dialogue full of jest and satire. In the *Soliloquia* (2.13.23) Augustine expresses disbelief about a conclusion enunciated by Reason. Bewildered, he exclaims, "What are you telling me?" Reason curtly replies, "What you hear." (Quid narras? — Id quod audis.) In the colloquy, two students have the following conversation: What news do you bring from Paris? — You're not going to believe this: at

38 (discussed by Chomarat, 1: 79-83). By contrast, Erasmus is quite serious about the story of Babel in the colloquy *Apotheosis Capnionis*, where he uses it in a prayer: "vt confundas linguas pseudapostolorum, qui coniurati substruunt impiam turrim Babel tuam gloriam obscurare conantes," *ASD*, 1, 3: 273, lines 212-13. He refers to it in the same spirit in *Lingua*, where the religious strife of his time prompts him to exclaim, "Quin desinimus extruere turrim Babel, turrim superbiae ac dissensionis?" (*ASD*, 4, 1A: 174, lines 919-20).

[112] *ASD*, 1, 3: 586, lines 20-21. The proverb "Plus vident oculi quam oculus" is discussed on page 100.

[113] *Adagia* 1684, entitled "Praesens abest": "When we tell someone to pay attention, we use phrases such as 'Please attend' and 'Watch this!'" (Quos iubemus attentos esse, iis sic loqui solemus: 'Hic estote' et 'Hoc agite.'). See also no. 4019, entitled "Hoc age!" In the volumes concerned (*ASD*, 2, 4 and 2, 8) the source of "Hic estote" is not identified. On the influence of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* in a number of Erasmus' works see Béné; and Chomarat, 1: 167-79.

Paris a beet smacks of wisdom ("Lutetiae Beta sapit"). — What are you telling me? — What you hear. — What do I hear? — What I am telling you. — It's like a prodigy! (Quid tu narras? — Hoc quod audis. — Quid ego audio? — Hoc quod narro. — Monstri simile! *ASD,* 1, 3: 131, lines 170-78).

Erasmus did not hesitate occasionally to parody sacred texts. The passages discussed also reveal his artistry in transposing and adapting tags and fragments from ancient authors to new and different contexts, a technique in which Italian humanists such as Poliziano had shown the way. Obviously, it is hard to tell whether Erasmus expected his readers to recognize each and every element of his intertextual play.

The Synod of Grammarians does not end in a fray: when each of them has had his say on the meaning of the term "anticomarita," they unanimously agree upon a final verdict, which is not the result of careful deliberation but the arbitrary outcome of drawing lots (a pagan custom, actually). Despite this, they declare the verdict to have the authority of an article of faith, of religious dogma: "Sit igitur hoc inter ea, de quibus dubitare fas non est" (589, line 132). It is further decreed that "dissenters shall be punished and labelled in capital letters: HAERETICVS IN GRAMMATICA." This bizarre label is another dig at traditional theologians, who demand that their "sacred" title "magister noster" be written in capital letters only — or so says Erasmus in his praise of folly: "Nefas aiunt esse 'Magister Noster' secus quam maiusculis scribere literis" (*ASD,* 4, 3: 158, lines 521-22).

Albinus uses the opportunity to confide to his confrères an exotic remedy for such diseases as dog mange, the chief ingredients of the medicine being "swimming beet, oak gall, and shoemakers' blacking": "Si natatilem betam, gallam e quercu et sutorium atramentum in mortario contuderis, deinde aspersis copri sex vnciis [vncias *ASD*] miscueris in malagma, praesentaneum esse remedium aduersus caninam scabiem et porcorum pruriginem." 589, lines 139-42). He owed the recipe to a Syrian doctor ("medico quodam Syro;" 589, line 137). Erasmus takes his cue here from his favorite encyclopedia, Pliny's *Natural History,* or *Historia mundi,* to cite the title of his own edition, published in 1525. He occasionally quotes Pliny even from memory.[114] Pliny (bk. 20) describes a large variety of remedies and prescriptions based on herbs and vegetables; he also discusses the healing properties of beet, "beta" (20.69-72). Interestingly, he states in the

[114]An interesting instance of this occurs in *Adagia* 3647, entitled "Execrationes serere," where the source is Pliny, 19.120; see Wesseling, 2001, 455. The colloquy *Amicitia* is entirely based on Pliny's work.

same book (20.33) that the Syrians are famous for sedulously cultivating all kinds of herbs — hence the proverb "Syria is not short of herbs," "Multa Syrorum olera." Erasmus discusses this expression in the *Adagia*, no. 756; it can be applied, he suggests, to magicians who use baleful herbs and to people well-supplied with things of little value. It is clear, then, that "medico quodam Syro" in the colloquy means "a physician from Syria" (Thompson translates "one Syrus, a doctor").

Erasmus' description of the ingredients of the bizarre concoction obviously lampoons his opponents: Natalis Beda, Guillaume Duchesne, also named De Quercu (see the next section), and Petrus Sutor. It should be noted, however, that "sutorium atramentum" alludes to an ancient proverbial phrase, used by Cicero and amply discussed by Erasmus in the *Adagia*, no. 2474. In *Epistulae ad familiares* 9.21.3 (no. 188) Cicero sarcastically remarks about a political opponent that his father, on being accused by Marcus Antonius, had been acquitted "through shoemakers' blacking" (sutorio atramento absolutus). This proverbial phrase implies that the acquittal was due to a corrupt verdict, as Shackleton Bailey notes. Erasmus was the first to propose this explanation, saying: "Sentit [Cicero], opinor, hominem absolutum fuisse iudicum corruptela non citra infamiam." So the expression "sutorium atramentum" in the colloquy is highly allusive: referring to Sutor (and to his charges against Erasmus as laid down in his *Apologia in nouos Anticomaritas*), it also implies the notion that he was a perverse, unreliable, and infamous fellow.

The colloquy ends with a passage which is just as allusive as the one about the Pelini: Albinus whispers a secret in the ear of Bertulphus, who exclaims, "What do I hear? That is no less absurd than if the Greeks had been unable to name the city they launched so many ships against, calling it Sutrium instead of Troy" (Quid ego audio? Isthuc non minus absurdum est quam si Graeci ciuitatem, cui expugnandae tot classes ducebant, suo nomine non possent nominare, pro Troia dicentes Sutrium, 590, lines 156-59). The name "Sutrium" indicates that Sutor is again the intended target. The "secret" revealed to Bertulphus is probably the author's name and the title of the book against Erasmus containing the challenged term "anticomarita," or Sutor's *Apologeticum in nouos Anticomaritas*. Bertulphus' reaction lampoons Sutor's solecism and his inability to name his opponents correctly: Sutor should have written either "Antidicomariani" or "Antimariani," as Erasmus remarks in his defense of the *Colloquies*.[115] Sutor's

[115] *ASD*, 1, 3: 748, lines 258-61: "In *Synodo grammaticorum* rideo studium cuiusdam Carthusiani suo iudicio doctissimi, qui . . . libro suo indiderit graecum titulum, sed ridicule, Anticomaritas dicens quos appellare poterat Antimarianos vel Antidicomarianos" (antimarionos vel antidicomariones *ASD, sed perperam*).

misnomer is indeed a corrupted term of Greek origin, to wit, Ἀντιδικομαριανίται, or opponents of Mary, a traditional label attached by various Church Fathers to heretics who denied the perpetual virginity of the mother of Jesus Christ.[116] Whereas Sutrium, the name of a city in ancient Italy, is an obvious allusion to Sutor, it may also refer to Paris, Sutor's (and Beda's) place.

Bertulphus' reaction perhaps also implies that Sutor's attack on Erasmus is absurd and aimed at the wrong person. True enough, Erasmus firmly believed in the virginity of Mary (at least *ante partum* and *in partu*), as is apparent from his discussion of the adage "Deo nemo potest nocere" (no. 4095, *ASD,* 2, 8).

The quasi-learned and bizarre explanations of the term "anticomarita" advanced by the grammarians lampoon Erasmus' opponents; as noted above, the first explanation, "natalis beta," targets Natalis Beda, and the last one is aimed at Petrus Sutor (see 589, lines 115-17). Another explanation, which involves a black-and-white fish, might well lampoon the Dominicans, or Black Friars (588, line 79), whom Erasmus describes as black-and-white birds, "picae," in his colloquy about Reuchlin (269, lines 91-92). Erasmus thus suggests that his critics themselves are "anticomaritae," or opponents of the Virgin.

Punning on Names

The only participant in the Synod of Grammarians identified to date is Hilarius Bertulphus. Admittedly, not all characters in the colloquies are based on historical individuals: many names defy identification and should therefore be taken as purely fictitious. But what about the grammarian named "Gaditanus," the man from Cadiz? There can be no doubt that Erasmus is referring to the great initiator of Spanish humanism, Antonio de Nebrija or Lebrixa (1441?-1522, also known as Nebrissensis). Lebrija, his birthplace, is situated north of Cadiz. Bertulphus had seen an edition of his *Grammatica* through the press (1524), as Erasmus certainly knew.[117] Nebrija had also published philological notes on the Bible, entitled *Quinquagenae.* Erasmus praises him in a letter of 1520 to Vives and in his apology against Zúñiga (Stunica); but he makes a bad-tempered remark about him in a letter of 1524, on account of his criticism of Erasmus' interpretation of a few

[116]See *CWE,* 40: 837, n. 3; and esp. *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique,* 3, s.v. Antidicomarianites.

[117]Bierlaire, 1968, 60. The edition is described in Hoven and Hoyoux, no. 27. On Nebrija see Chomarat, 1: 273-74, 347-51; *Contemporaries of Erasmus,* s.v.; Bataillon, 1: 24-42; and Rico. A bibliography of recent articles on him is given by Costas Rodríguez, 39-40.

words in the New Testament.[118] That Nebrija was given a part in the colloquy can be taken as an indication that Erasmus continued to respect him, despite the criticism — an unusual concession, given the Dutchman's notorious sensitivity to criticism. Another grammarian is called Eumenius, "the friendly one." In this character Erasmus honors, it appears, his Carthusian friend Levinus Ammonius (b. 1488 at Ghent). An outspoken critic of traditional theologians, especially those in the Paris faculty, Ammonius had given Erasmus the idea for this colloquy.[119] So much, then, for the Synod of Philologists.

Three more characters in the *Colloquies* who have defied identification are worthy of attention. All are affiliated with the University of Paris. In *A Fish Diet* (*Ichthyophagia*, 1526), Erasmus lampoons a number of theologians, including the reformer Guillaume Farel, nicknamed "Pharetrius,"[120] and Natalis Beda (bien étonnés de se trouver ensemble!). Beda or "Bliteus" is once again described as a tasteless vegetable (his nickname deriving from "blitum")[121] and a loquacious quibbler ("loquax sophista"). The last theologian mentioned is one "rabinus Druinus." Master Druinus is exposed as a religious legalist who enforces the observance of rigid rules and empty ceremonies ("rabinus")[122] and a scholastic hair-splitter who has ended up in hell: "Eas ad inferos, illic inuenies rabinum Druinum, qui Tenedia bipenni dissecabit omnes tuas quaestiunculas" (*ASD*, 1, 3: 522, lines 982-83). Who is this Druinus? He can be securely identified as Guillaume Duchesne, a notorious member of the theological faculty at Paris. Erasmus frequently names him as the chief collaborator along with Natalis Beda in the Paris proceedings against him.[123] Ended up in hell? He was dead, at any rate. He had died in September 1525, just a few months prior to the publication of the colloquy (February 1526). The name

[118]See *Ep.* 1111, lines 39-41; *ASD*, 9, 2: 70, 114, 178. The bad-tempered remark is found in *Ep.* 1431; on the philological questions involved see James E. Estes' note, *CWE*, 10: 203; and Rummel, 1989, 1: 154-55.

[119]See Thompson's introduction in *CWE*, 40: 832 (referring to *Ep.* 2016, lines 45-64), and *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. Ammonius (Levinus).

[120]"Pharetra" means "quiver," an allusion to Farel's aggressive temper. Usually Erasmus deliberately mangles his name as Phallicus; see *Ep.* 1510. On the conflict between them see Augustijn, 1996, 233-41.

[121]"Bliteos appellant stupidos. Est Βλίτον herbae genus, cui nomen etiam a stupore saporis inditum putant," says Erasmus in *Adagia* 1372, entitled "Betizare."

[122]See also 156, line 1004. For Erasmus, "rabbinical" is synonymous with "self-righteous" and "tyrannical," as opposed to the message of Christ. On the controversial question of his attitude towards the Jews and Judaism see Pabel.

[123]*Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v.; Farge, 1985, 186-96.

Druinus (δρύϊνος, from δρῦς oak) on its own is sufficient proof that Duchesne (de Quercu) is the intended target. Erasmus also jeers at him and Natalis Beda in a colloquy of earlier date: "At Paris a beet smacks of wisdom and an oak preaches" (Lutetiae Beta sapit et Quercus concionatur; 131, lines 172-73; here commentators have correctly explained the pun).

Erasmus mentions two teachers, named Faustus and Delius, in a grammar exercise ("Aestimandi formulae"): "How much does Faustus charge for teaching? — Little, but more than Delius. — How much, then? — Nineteen guilders. — I wouldn't learn to lie at so high a price." (Faustus quanti docet? Paruo, at pluris quam Delius. Quanti igitur? Vndeuiginti aureis. Non discam mentiri tanti. *ASD,* 1, 3: 213, lines 2880-82; 102, 867-69; 59, 873-74). The immediately preceding sentence is about the French. Master Faustus may also be a poet, for lying and fiction are the domain of poetry: "Mentiuntur multa cantores," πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοί, as a proverb has it (quoted by Aristotle; see *Adagia* 1198); and "poeta mentitur," says Poliziano jokingly in the *Lamia.*[124] All this indicates that Erasmus is making a humorous allusion to Fausto Andrelini, who had taught poetry at the University of Paris intermittently since 1489. He was on excellent terms with Fausto, whom he met shortly after his own arrival in Paris (1495). He celebrated his eclogues (and Robert Gaguin's history of France) the same year in a poem entitled "In Annales Gaguini et Eglogas Faustinas." Fausto in turn wrote a friendly letter for Erasmus' *Collectanea*, the earliest of his collections of adages and indeed his first publication (Paris, 1500).[125]

Who, then, is Delius? Evoking Apollo, the name could well be the pseudonym of a humanist poet. Erasmus also mentions Delius in conjunction with Fausto in a letter written in Paris (1499) and recalls the two of them again as late as 1530 (*Ep.* 95, lines 20-21; 2379, 345-47). Allen has identified him as the Dutch theologian Gillis van Delft (Aegidius Delphus, d. 1524), who taught philosophy at the University of Paris. Affiliated with the Collège de Sorbonne, he took his doctorate in theology in 1492. Besides editing philosophical works, he published pious poetry, combining scholasticism with humanist interests.[126]

Erasmus' colloquies and grammar exercises abound in veiled references to humanist friends and theological opponents. One wonders whether he expected the students for whom he composed these lively pieces to catch

[124]5, line 32 "Orator blanditur et poeta mentitur." In another colloquy, Erasmus writes: "Facis vt poeta dignum est, sed perge mentiri," *ASD,* 1, 3: 188, line 2041; 83, 211; 39, 218; see also 204, 2562.

[125]See *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. Andrelini; Erasmus, *Poems*, no. 6.

[126]See Farge's elaborate entry in *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. Delft. Strangely, the *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek* does not mention him.

each and every allusion. An intriguing instance occurs in the 1519 edition of the *Colloquiorum formulae*, where two students have the following conversation:

> What's the point of a letter without money? Just what purpose does an empty letter serve? — It can be used for wiping the arse. It's fit for wrapping mackerels. It can serve to wipe your buttocks. If you don't know its use, it's an effective means for cleaning the anus. — For my part, I know a man whose tongue I would rather exploit for such a task. — I on the other hand know someone by whose tongue it would be as risky to be wiped as by aconite leaves. — He really deserves then to eat aconite, the fusser!
> (Quorsum spectant literae sine pecunia? Ad quid tandem inanes conducunt literae? . . . — Podici tergendo vtiles. Scombris obuoluendis idoneae. Conducunt natibus tergendis. Si vsum nescis earum, ad anum expurgandum valent . . . — Equidem noui quendam cuius lingua malim ad hoc abuti. — At ego noui cuius lingua nihilo tutius sit abstergi quam aconiti foliis. — Iste igitur dignus est qui aconitum edat ardeleo! *ASD,* 1, 3: 81, line 162-82, line 169; see esp. the apparatus criticus.)

Who is the intended target in the last part of this grammar exercise? The final word "ardel*e*o" (the usual form is "ardelio" or "ardalio") indicates that Erasmus is referring to a notorious critic of his notes on the New Testament, the English theologian Edward Lee (Leus or Leeus).[127] Lee himself realized that "ardeleo" (busybody, fusser) was a pun on his name. In a letter-invective (dated February 1520) he took Erasmus to task, quoting the passage from the *Colloquies* to expose his shameless character and foul language, which he censured as "spurcus" and "podicem olens" (*Ep.* 1061, lines 365-73; see also 414-15). Erasmus suppressed the last part of the challenged passage in the next edition (March 1522); but he did not alter the first, scatological, part. Unlike Lee, he apparently found it both harmless and humorous, with its witty play on "inanis" (empty, useless) and "anus." He even added a new sentence: "Empty letters are good for cleaning that part of the body which befouls itself time and again" (Conferunt [inanes epistolae] ad eam corporis partem mundandam, quae semet identidem inquinat, 186, lines 1995-96) — a sentence which is related to the adage "Podex lotionem vincit" (The arse beats all efforts to wash it; *Adagia* 990). In his *Apologia* against Lee's invectives (March 1520) Erasmus protested that the passage in the *Colloquies* was not obscene at all, arguing that it is not indecent to refer to the buttocks. He further denied that Lee was intended (290-93). A discussion of his use of scatological expressions is in section V.[128]

[127] On Erasmus' controversy with Lee see *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v.; Rummel, 1989, 1: 95-110.

[128] For another dig at Lee in the 1519 edition of the *Colloquiorum formulae* ("He would rather leave his tail behind," "Citius caudam reliquerit," *ASD,* 1, 3: 90, apparatus criticus) see the Appendix to this article.

Words With Novel Meanings

In referring to conventional objects, Erasmus occasionally uses a common Latin word in a non-classical sense which is not attested in medieval Latin either. Two instances may strike Latinists (and not only Ciceronians) as quite peculiar. They probably result from mistakes. The words concerned are "cornix" (used for a door-knocker) and "galea" (applied to the crow's nest of a ship).

In *The New Mother* (*Puerpera*, 1526), he refers to a traditional custom of his day: the house of a new mother would have the door-handle or door-knocker ("cornix") wrapped with a white kerchief, as a sign of the new birth ("symbolum puerperii").[129] The words "*cornicem* obuinctam candido linteo" are problematic, since "cornix" (crow) is never used to denote a door-handle or door-knocker. A comment in the 1526 edition of the *Adagia* provides the solution. In no. 3520, entitled "Ad coronidem vsque" (*ASD*, 2, 8), Erasmus discusses the word κορώνη. Its literal meaning is "crow." He also notes that Homer applies it to a door-ring or door-handle ("*Corone* Graecis *cornicem* sonat . . . . Apud Homerum vsurpatur κορώνη pro anulo aut si quid aliud apponitur ostio"). His observation is based on Eustathius' commentary on Homer (73.19-22 and 29 on *Ilias* 1.170). One can infer that he uses "cornix" in the colloquy to refer either to a ring-shaped handle ("anulus") on the door of the house or to the door-knocker.[130] He did so either for lack of a proper term or, more likely, as a consequence of confusion, inadvertently projecting the secondary sense of the Greek word "corone" onto "cornix." Even Homer nods![131] The similarity of sound and sense may have facilitated the mistake.

In the colloquy, Erasmus employs the double meaning of "cornix" for a play on words, his favorite type of game. Passing by the house of the new mother, Eutrapelus ("Quick-witted") feigns surprise at seeing the door-knocker wrapped with a white cloth and pretends not to know what it means. "Isn't it a marvel," he jokes, "to see a white door-knocker?" (An non

[129]*ASD*, 1, 3: 453, lines 6-9. The custom is attested to for several towns in Holland. By wrapping the door-knocker, its harsh sound was dimmed; see Thompson's comment in *CWE*, 39: 607; and *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal*, s.v. klopper, 7: 4365-66.

[130]The adage must have escaped the attention of IJsewijn, 1979, 347, who rejected the interpretation "door-knocker" as unfounded. Interestingly, Erasmus' idiosyncratic use of "cornix" in the colloquy has made it into the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. crow, 7, where it is mentioned in connection with the meaning "door-knocker."

[131]Erasmus also "nods" in a comment on the adage "Necessitas magistra" (no. 3655, *ASD*, 2, 8), inadvertently writing Σοφία πενίαν ἔλαχεν instead of Πενία τὴν σοφίαν ἔλαχε (a lapse of memory). He quotes the proverb correctly in no. 422, entitled "Paupertas sapientiam sortita est."

prodigium est videre cornicem albam? line 10). He is alluding, of course, to the expression "a white crow," a rare phenomenon indeed, on which Erasmus duly commented in *Adagia* 3635, entitled "Coruus albus."

His novel use of "cornix" elicited a scholium. Taken, apparently, from *Adagia* 3520 (quoted above), it runs as follows: "Cornicem: circulum ferreum aut aliquid huius loco additum ostio, quo pulsetur. Graeci κορώνη vocant, vel ob figuram vel ob garrulitatem" (1531, ed., 985). ("Cornix: an iron ring attached to the door or something in the same place on the door, used as a knocker. The Greeks use the word κορώνη [crow], either because of its shape or because of the noise it makes.") In line with this explanation, the Dutch 1622 translation of the *Colloquies* has rendered "cornix" (line 6) as "ring," "den rinck der deure met wit lynen bewonden," that is, "een teken van een kinder-bedde in huys" (190 B).

Erasmus' unprecedented use of "cornix" had an interesting aftermath. His epigone Hadrianus Junius adopted it (using adage 3520) in his *Nomenclator* (1567), a polyglot vocabulary which was widely used in the Low Countries. His entry on "cornix" runs (p. 240): "'Cornix,' annulus quo pulsantur fores: κορώνη Homero . . . *de clopper*, oft *de duerhamer*[*s*]" ("cornix: a ring used as a door-knocker; Homer uses κορώνη . . . the Dutch equivalent is 'clopper' or 'duerhamer'"). An erudite philologist and the main representative of the generation of Dutch humanists who came after Erasmus, Junius also compiled a solid supplement to the *Adagia*. In the seventeenth century, the heyday of Dutch classical scholarship, G.J. Vossius (d. 1649) produced an *Etymologicum Latinum*. In his entry on "cornix" he, too, mentions the connotation "door-knocker," for which he refers to the French humanist Adrianus Turnebus and his *Adversaria* (1564; bk. 5, chap. 27). Samuel Hannot, the author of a comprehensive Dutch-Latin dictionary, renders *deurhamer* (door-knocker) as "cornix," referring (falsely) to classical authors (s.v. deurhamer).

The second instance of a common Latin word used in a new sense is found in *The Shipwreck*. Erasmus hesitatingly employs the term "galea" (helmet) to denote the highest part of the mast, apparently the crow's nest, used by the look-out man: "On the mast-head, in the 'crow's nest,' as I think they call it, stood one of the crew, looking out for land" (in summo malo stabat quidam e nautis in galea — sic enim vocant, opinor; *ASD*, 1, 3: 325, lines 12-13). "Galea" (galley, in medieval Latin) may look like a technical term of vernacular provenance in this context; but a search in national and nautical dictionaries has proved fruitless. Nor does Erasmus' use of the common medieval term "nauis galeata" (galley) in another colloquy (676, line 7) provide any help. Once again a clue is found in the *Adagia*, where Erasmus discusses the phrase "a ship or a helmet" (nauis aut galerus; no.

1900, *ASD,* 2, 4). The source of the phrase is Aristophanes. If we believe Erasmus (but in this case we should not), the masts of ancient Greek warships ("triremes," "galeae") were topped with a helmet, "galea," as a sort of identifier. Other vessels, designed for speed, would have their masts topped with a hat like that worn by the god Hermes ("petasum Mercurii signum"). More importantly, he claims that the medieval term "galea" (galley) is derived from "galerata" (topped with a helmet). His comments suggest that he readily associated ships and mast-heads with helmets. In *The Shipwreck*, which is about a passenger ship, Erasmus uses "galea" to denote the crow's nest or round-top, apparently for lack of a proper Latin term.[132]

Erasmus' novel use of "galea" also had its aftermath, revealing in a minute but characteristic way the impact of his colloquies on lexicography in the Netherlands. Cornelis Kiliaan (Kilianus), the author of a seminal Dutch-Latin dictionary (1599), cites "galea" as the Latin translation of *mars* (round-top, crow's nest). The entry runs: "meersse [= mars] van 't schip: corbis navis, *galea* navis (309)." He probably took this from Hadrianus Junius' *Nomenclator*, which gives the same information (p. 249) and refers to Erasmus as the source: "corbis, 'galea' Erasmo: Belgice *de meersse*, Gallice *cage*" ('corbis' or 'galea' [so used by Erasmus]: Dutch 'meersse,' French 'cage'). Following Kiliaan, Samuel Hannot, too, renders *mars* as "galea," referring (falsely) to Pliny (s.v. mars).

ADAGES IN THE *COLLOQUIES*

Concluding our treatment of the *Colloquies*, a few words may be said about Erasmus' use of ancient adages and his sources. The team responsible for the *ASD* edition and, above all, Thompson, through his detailed and illuminating commentaries in the *CWE*, have achieved much in this respect. Even so, a number of gaps remain to be filled. A few examples follow, taken from *Confessio militis*, a dialogue intended to expose the evil and madness of war. "It's fitting that ill-gotten gains should be lost in a worse way" (Par est vt quod male partum est peius dispereat. *ASD,* 1, 3: 156, line 988). The proverb is found in Plautus' *Poenulus*, 844: "Male partum male disperit," which Erasmus quotes in *Adagia* 682, entitled "Male parta male dilabuntur." "The law of war is the greatest wrong" (Istud ius summa est iniuria. 156, line 997). This statement, with its untranslatable play on *ius* and *iniuria*, is adapted from a famous maxim in Cicero, *De officiis* 1.33; Erasmus discusses it in *Adagia* 925, entitled "Summum ius, summa iniuria."

[132]The early translation (1622, 161 C) reads: "inde hooghste *marsse* stont een vande matrosen." For *mars* (crow's nest, round-top) see *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal*, 9, s.v. mars, 2; *Middelnederlandsch woordenboek*, 4, s.v. merse, 3.

In the colloquy, the soldier justifies himself with the saying "To be mad with the many is something" (Est aliquid insanire cum multis. 156, line 1000). The phrase, which is of Greek origin, specifically from Galen, is the subject of *Adagia* 3614, entitled "Insanire cum insanientibus" (τοῖς μαινομένοις συμμαίνεσθαι). At the end of the colloquy, the soldier reproaches the censorious questioner for having changed his conscience "from clear to cloudy" (qui mihi conscientiam e serena nubilam redderes; 158, line 1052). The expression is taken from a moral essay by Plutarch with the revealing title *How to Tell a Friend from a Flatterer* (*Moralia* 68 D): frankness of speech (παρρησία), if indulged in at the wrong moment — at a party, for example — is obnoxious; it is like "making fair weather overcast with a storm-cloud" (Εὐδίᾳ γὰρ ἐπάγει νέφος). Erasmus discusses the phrase or "proverb" in *Adagia* 3330, entitled "Serenitati nubem inducit."

Identifying the sources of the adages used by Erasmus is not a pointless exercise. On the contrary, it is a prerequisite for any analysis of his literary technique, since it helps us to appreciate basic elements of his intertextual play. His own instructions for a shrewd and prudent use of proverbs, as laid down in the introduction to the *Adagia*, invite us to examine the artistry of the master himself. His fondness for adages struck Montaigne: had he been able to meet Erasmus, he would have taken everything he said to his servant for adages and apothegms, he writes in his *Essais* (3.2 "Qui m'eut faict veoir Erasme autrefois, il eust esté malaisé que je n'eusse prins pour adages et apophthegmes tout ce qu'il eust dict à son valet"). Erasmus' copious use of adages, both as vehicles of thought and as devices for the adornment of style, might suggest that he wrote certain colloquies to show students how to apply adages in practice. At any rate, the *Adagia* collection is a valuable key enabling us to unlock the meaning of many passages in the *Colloquies*. A witty dialogue (*ASD*, 1, 3: 137, lines 410-15) may illustrate this point. A Dutchman named Balbus ("Stammerer"[133]) has just returned from France. How, his friend asks, did you learn French? — From teachers who were by no means silent ("A magistris haudquaquam mutis"). — Who? — From the ladies ("A mulierculis"). The point is that "silent teachers" (magistri muti) is a metaphor for books: young Balbus owes his fluency in French not to a

[133]Possibly, the names Balbus and Claudius in this dialogue are meant to be humorous. If Balbus means "Stammerer," the name of his friend Claudius might mean "Cripple"; Erasmus mentions a stammerer in connection with a cripple ("claudus") in *Adagia* 973, *ASD*, 2, 2: 472, line 151. For "Claudius/claudus" compare the name Barbatius which is used in another colloquy and which is clearly based on "barbatus" (363). Thompson tentatively suggests that Erasmus may have wished to allude to the Italian poet Girolamo Balbi, who lived in Paris before Erasmus' residence there (*CWE*, 39: 30, n. 70); however, Balbus is described twice as a Hollander.

grammar or a collection of colloquies, but to the *viva vox* of *les filles*.[134] The metaphor is used by Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 14.2.1, who says that he owed his legal knowledge not to the "viva vox" of a professor but to "muti magistri." Erasmus discussed the passage in the *Adagia* (no. 118). Not surprisingly, there he used the opportunity to enlarge upon the pros and cons of books versus live teachers, of reading, "lectio," versus hearing, "auscultatio."

V. Dutch Proverbs and Expressions in the Letters

Erasmus and the Vernacular: A Conclusion

As Erasmus himself recalls, the epistolary genre lends itself more than any other to a copious and playful use of proverbs (*ASD,* 2, 1: 66, lines 442-43). He employs vernacular (Dutch) expressions in only a few letters, for example, discussed on page 100, the proverb "Plus vident oculi quam oculus," which he uses in an early letter, addressed to Cornelius Aurelius of Gouda. Not surprisingly, the other letters are also addressed to those born in the Low Countries: a Fleming, a native of Maastricht, a Frisian, and a Hollander from Amsterdam. He even quotes directly in Dutch in two letters, dating from the last years of his life. In 1531 he writes to the Fleming Hilarius Bertulphus, his former assistant, who had acquired a position at the court of the Emperor. Warning against the risks of court-life, Erasmus reminds him of the proverb "Een ionck houeling, een out schoueling" (A young courtier, an old outcast).[135] He thus suggests that a career at court usually ends in disgrace and misery. Hilarius did leave the service of the Emperor and moved to Lyon, where he happily made the acquaintance of Rabelais.[136] The proverb is frequently quoted by later Dutch authors, especially in contexts evoking the blessings of Arcadian life as opposed to the

[134]There is an amusing parallel in Erasmus' letter to Daniel Stibarus, a young German, who was in Paris in 1528 and wished to learn French. Erasmus advises him to take a French girl-friend, for a Française will help as much as thirty Frenchmen to master the language. To make progress, he continues, it is best, first of all, to learn some elementary grammar, and then to read French books, with the assistance of a (female) teacher. *Ep.* 2079, lines 16-20: "Vna puella Galla ad linguae facultatem non minus conferet tibi quam triginta viri. Certissima ad profectum via est praediscere nominum et verborum inflexiones, mox ad libros bene Gallice loquentes; sed adhibito magistro, siue malis magistra."

[135]*Ep.* 2581, lines 15-16. "Schoveling" means "outcast," not "digger," as Allen has it (vol. 14 of the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal* was unavailable to him); see also Harrebomée, Eerste Deel: 337.

[136]See Bierlaire, 1968, 61; *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. Bertulphus.

ups and downs of the courtly milieu. P. C. Hooft, for one, uses it in a pastoral play (*Granida*, 477-78).

Writing in 1533 to his Antwerp banker Erasmus Schets (a native of Maastricht), Erasmus laments the sluggishness of certain Flemings. The phrase "een Vlaemschen dayng," a Flemish good-for-nothing, as Allen explains it (*Ep.* 2781, line 7), truly applies to them. "Dayng" is probably a variant (not attested elsewhere) of the Flemish *dein* (now obsolete), which means a "duffer, oaf," according to the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal.* Kiliaan, however, explains it as referring to someone who is "niggardly" (Euclio, homo avarus, sordidus).[137]

In a letter of 1530 to a Frisian friend Erasmus lashes out against the Franciscan theologian Frans Titelmans or Titelmannus, an irksome opponent active in Louvain. Punning on his name, he prefers to call him Κακelman, since "this insolent fellow lays bad eggs as bad crows do."[138] The malicious pun is evidently based on a Greek word, but a Dutch word is involved as well. In using κακός, Erasmus alludes, first, to the Greek saying "A bad crow lays a bad egg"; it is the subject of *Adagia* 825, entitled "Mali corui malum ouum" (Κακοῦ κόρακος κακὸν ὠόν). Secondly, he plays on the Dutch verb *kakelen*, which means "to cackle" and, applied to people, "to chatter or gabble." He refers to the noun *kakelaar* in his treatise on the uses of the tongue, where he alludes to the proverb "Kakelaars zijn geen vechters" ("Talkers are not fighters").[139] The association of the name Titelmans with *kakelen* (Titelmans — kakelman [cackler]) was a rather obvious invention, for *tiet* in Dutch meant "chicken" (compare the related English word *tit*, small bird).[140] In short, Titelmans is a nasty crow, a cackler, an idle chatterbox.

The pun Κακelman might also have a scatological connotation. It is not far-fetched to assume that Erasmus is also alluding to the Dutch word *kak* (shit), if not to the Latin verb *cacare*, given that elsewhere he refers to Titelmans as a festering sore, "ὕπουλον quiddam" (*Ep.* 2206, line 16). It is

[137] *Etymologicum*, s.v. deyn. Euclio is the notorious miser in Plautus' *Aulularia*. Claes mistakenly read "Eucho" (s.v. dein).

[138] "Louanii exortus Titelmannus quidam vel Κακelmannus potius, iuuenis confidens et effrenis cuiusdam petulantiae, qui nobis singulis mensibus parit mali corui malum ouum," *Ep.* 2261, lines 72-74. On Titelmans see *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. His assaults on Erasmus' edition of the New Testament are discussed by Rummel, 1989, 2: 14-22.

[139] "Quin et hodie vulgus hominum . . . aiunt . . . bellaces non esse qui sunt loquaces," *ASD*, 4, 1A: 73, lines 534-37; see the commentary.

[140] *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal*, s.v. tiet (II), 17: 20-21; *Middelnederlandsch woordenboek*, s.v. tijtkijn ("chicken"), 8: 350. The Dutch still use the expression "lopen als een tiet" (to run like a chicken, that is, to run fast).

even more telling that he altered the name of another Franciscan preacher, Medardus, to Merdardus. He even included this nickname in the title of a colloquy (*Concio siue Merdardus*; *The Sermon, or Merdardus*, 1531), which dates from the same period as the letter about Titelmans. In the colloquy Erasmus exposes Me(r)dardus' "merdosas purulentias" while vindicating his own interpretation of the Virgin Mary's *Magnificat*, which his ignorant detractor had denounced as perverse.[141] Here zeal for the true sense of the Gospel is coupled with scatological vehemence. He uses the word "merda" jestingly in connection with Paris (1500) in his roguish correspondence with Fausto Andrelini, the Italian poet mentioned above.[142] In *De copia*, his great manual on style, he states that "cacare" is an obscene word which all Christians should avoid (*ASD*, 1, 6: 48). Yet this did not stop him from using it in an example in the very same manual (134, line 703) and in a grammar exercise for the use of boys: one of the "colloquiorum formulae" (sentences for Latin conversation) is "Bassus charius cacat quam bibit."[143] This puzzling sentence presupposes a considerable familiarity on the part of the reader with Martial's epigrams — obscene poems which Erasmus himself calls "pestilentes" (*Adagia* 3535, entitled "Auris Bataua"). The sentence is borrowed from Martial (1.37), who satirizes a certain Bassus for using a golden chamber-pot, but drinking out of a cheap glass:

> Ventris onus misero, nec te pudet, excipis auro,
> Basse, bibis vitro: carius ergo cacas.

[141] *ASD*, 1, 3: 655, line 86. See Thompson's introduction, *CWE*, 40: 938-40; and *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. Medardus.

[142] *Ep.* 103, lines 10-11. Expressing embarrassment at this "questionable" word, Allen felt the need to excuse Erasmus, putting the blame instead on Fausto Andrelini, who frequently uses "merda" in his poems. It should be recalled, however, that an entire sequence of scatological sentences occurs in a grammar exercise for the use of boys, in the first part of the *Colloquies* (*ASD*, 1, 3: 186, lines 1993-96; 81, 167-69; 37, 175-77). One may further take note of the exclamation "Ego olim non semel pluris in vnam noctem sum conducta," put into the mouth of Syra (212, lines 2842-43; 101, line 829; 58, 835) and of the sentence "testium alter execetur" in the section entitled "lusus pueriles" (167, line 1359; one may compare Horace, *Satires* 1.2.44-46 "Quin etiam illud accidit, ut quidam testis caudamque salacem demeteret ferro"). Erasmus also happily referred to the obscene joke that Englishmen have tails; see the Appendix.

[143] *ASD*, 1, 3: 102, line 868, apparatus criticus; the editors failed to explain the sentence. Erasmus suppressed this sentence (and the following one about the Frisians) in the subsequent editions of the *Colloquies*. Bassus' extravagancy must have made some impression on Erasmus' mind, for he returns to it in his last major work, the manual for preachers (1535), using it there to exemplify a type of amplification: "veluti si Bassum dicas ventris onus excipere auro, vnde colligitur quanta fuerit in conuiuiis caeterisque rebus luxuries," *Ecclesiastes* 3, *ASD*, 5, 5: 60, line 176-61, line 179 (where the source reference, Martial 1.37, has to be supplied).

("Your bowels' load — and you are not ashamed — you receive in a golden vessel — unhappy urn! Bassus, you drink out of glass. So you shit at a higher price.") Erasmus continues the exercise with a sentence about the Frisians, who "build low-cost houses, using dung" (Phrysii minimo aedificant, fimo bubulo).[144] He also mentions these cottages made of dung, "domos bolitinis parietibus," in the *Adagia* (no. 1113), and reports there that the Dutch ("nostrates") call a despicable person a turd (βόλιτον). He was thinking, apparently, of the word *stront.*

Erasmus' occasional use of scatological expressions makes it plausible that the nickname Καϰelman has a similar connotation. He owed more to Martial's "pestilential" epigrams than has been recognized, and more than he was willing to admit. He employed scatological expressions of ancient and (occasionally) vernacular origin in satire and also in a few grammar exercises, probably to make them racy and attractive to his pupils. It seems only reasonable to take this neglected but colorful facet of his writing and personality into account and to appreciate it as a feature of the humanist mentality — one which is far more conspicuous, obviously, in invectives of the Italian Quattrocento, and also in works of Antonio Beccadelli, Poggio Bracciolini, and Fausto Andrelini, not to mention François Rabelais. Erasmus generally used self-restraint in his writings (no doubt for moral reasons), as appears from the fact that he was extremely selective in his use of full-fledged proverbs of Dutch provenance, carefully skirting round those which were scatological or obscene.[145] Yet his attitude was contradictory: whereas he used obscene expressions in the *Colloquies*, a work meant for boys, he admonishes them in the same collection not to laugh at obscene jokes. Instead, they should pretend that they did not hear or understand: "Ne arride, sed compone vultum quasi non intelligas" (*ASD,* 1, 3: 162, line 1211). He repeats this rule in his book on good manners (*De ciuilitate morum puerilium*, *LB,* 1: 1040 D).

His witty letter to a fellow Hollander requires a more detailed discussion at the end of this section. Another expression worthy of attention occurs in his correspondence with a wealthy friend, bishop Jacopo Sadoleto. Writing

[144]There is no evidence that Erasmus ever visited Frisia, the northernmost province in the Low Countries and the native land of his illustrious predecessor, Rudolph Agricola. Timber being quite rare, the locals used peat and dung as fuel. Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pius II, d. 1464) reports in *Europa*, chap. 35: "In pecoribus omnis eorum substantia est. Ager planus ac palustris, multo gramine foecundus, ligno caret. Bituminoso cespite et sicco stercore boum ignes fovent."

[145]The one exception which proves the rule is found at the end of *Adagia* 3977, entitled "Lucernam accendere possis," *ASD,* 2, 8, where Erasmus uses the word "frons" as a euphemism for *gat* (anus, arsehole) in his translation of a "sordid" Dutch proverb.

from Freiburg (1531), where he had settled in 1529, he informs Sadoleto that he is a man of scarce means — "but, as the saying goes, small birds don't need many feathers" (sed, vt aiunt, pusillis auiculis non multis opus est plumis. *Ep.* 2443, lines 451-53). Its provenance is as yet unknown. But it recalls a vernacular proverb which Erasmus quotes in his discussion of the adage "We build the walls we can afford" (Efficimus pro nostris opibus moenia; no. 662). "It is commonly said even today," he notes, "that small birds build small nests" (Itidem vulgo dicitur hodieque Pusillae auiculae pusillos nidulos construunt). This is the Dutch proverb "Cleen voghelkens hebben cleene nestkens."[146]

Besides epistles written by Erasmus himself, Allen's monumental edition also includes letters addressed to him. His servant-pupil Felix Rex (De Coninck), a native of Ghent, quotes a Dutch proverb in a letter of 1529, saying: "It is not for nothing that a proverb in our native language has it that 'a dog is bold on his own dunghill'" (Non temere dicitur in nostra lingua vernacula 'Eenen hont es staut vp zynen messync').[147] That he felt free to quote in Dutch in a letter to his master is indicative of the latter's attitude towards his native tongue.

From Erasmus' use of Dutch proverbs and expressions one can infer that he was fond of his native language. At any rate, he treasured its store of proverbs, which he shared with the uneducated. The simple fact that it was his mother tongue, combined with his relative ignorance (resulting from disdain) of other vernaculars, may account for his predilection. There is no reason to accept Chomarat's assumption that his feelings of contempt towards the Dutch also encompassed his native language.[148] It is true that his attitude towards his fellow countrymen was highly ambivalent and predominantly negative. He did hold them in contempt for their indifference to higher culture and the humanist movement, their lack of appreciation of his own achievements, their fondness for "compotationes" and "comessationes," their banal concerns and idle table-talk;[149] but this did not lead him to despise their language as such. His mother tongue probably had a special emotional value for him. As the language of his childhood, Dutch fragments, phrases and sayings kept coming to his mind throughout

[146]Quoted by Suringar, no. 65.

[147]*Ep.* 2130, lines 22-23. Erasmus alludes to the same proverb in *Adagia* 3325, entitled "Gallus in suo sterquilinio plurimum potest." See Suringar, no. 83. For Felix Rex see *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v.; Bierlaire, 1968, 78-81.

[148]See Chomarat's otherwise admirable chapter on Erasmus and his native tongue; 1: 107-25, esp. 108.

[149]See Wesseling, 1993.

his life, even after he had turned his back on the uncivilized Hollanders (1501) and, subsequently, on the hostile theologians in Brabant (1521).

While on the whole it is true that Erasmus disdained vernacular languages in general, it should be recalled that he favored vernacular translations of the Bible. Furthermore, he stressed the relative value and importance of the different vernaculars in his last major work, the manual for the use of preachers (*Ecclesiastes*, 1535). It is in the context of precepts on preaching in the vernacular that he admits that each national tongue has, at least potentially, its own particular charm and suggestive power. He accordingly recommends, although at the very end of the list, the reading of vernacular works by eminent literary authors. Though ignorant of Italian himself, he refers by way of example to Dante and Petrarch. Even classical scholars, he declares, should not regard any tongue as barbarous as long as it serves to draw people to the Gospel.[150]

HOLLANDERS AND HORSES

"You know the proverb Βάταυος ἱππεύς"

In May 1527 Erasmus' assistant Nicolaas Kan (Cannius), a Hollander, is on his way to England. Meanwhile, the master sends him a letter from Basel full of advice on how to behave in that highly civilized country. He had already lectured him on good manners ("morum ciuilitas") before sending him off — one is tempted to imagine that he reminded his pupil of the colloquy *A Lesson in Manners* (*Monitoria*) — however, Kan being young and Dutch, he takes no risks. So: "Always be modest and respectful: those lords behave in a jovial manner with lower-class people, but they don't always show their true feelings. Do not accept gifts except from rich and true friends; when refusing, apologize; don't be greedy: I'd rather give you ten times more myself. Adopt British manners, so uncover your head, shake hands, let others go first, smile at everybody, but don't trust anyone you don't know. Above all, don't criticize anything foreign, for the English dearly love their country, and with good reason." On his way to England, Kan should not linger too long in his homeland: what else would he expect to find in Holland but lots of drinking parties ("compotationes")?[151] Better to cross the Channel immediately. After all,

[150] "Quamuis eruditis iucundior sit Latinorum aut Graecorum lectio, tamen charitati christianae non videbitur sermo barbarus per quem proximus ad Christum allicitur," *ASD*, 5, 4: 264, 402-05; see also Chomarat's introduction, 5-7.

[151] Erasmus is quite serious: "Apud nostrates," he notes in the 1526 edition of the *Adagia*, "non creditur profectio futura felix, nisi dies aliquot dati fuerint conuiuiis et compotationibus amicorum" (no. 3496, entitled "Porta itineri longissima est"). In his letters he frequently laments the fondness of Hollanders for "compotationes" and "comessationes," regarding this vice as the main cause of their lack of culture; see Wesseling, 1993, 71-75.

> There is no need for you to fear the Straits of Dover, since you are a marine animal and almost born in the sea, if my memories of my visit to your native city of Amsterdam don't fail me. The crossing is certainly aggravating and expensive, but brief and not too notorious for shipwrecks. Anyway, whatever troubles you meet there, you will one day take pleasure in remembering them.[152] After the crossing, however, you will face another and perhaps more serious danger. You know the saying Βάταυος ἱππεύς. Even so, fear not! The horses are very clever. They know the way and don't need to be spurred on. Just give them the reins, and they won't stop trotting until they have carried you to your destination as if you were a bundle.[153]

"Nosti prouerbium Βάταυος ἱππεύς." Kan no doubt knew it, but it seems Greek to us. The saying puzzled Allen, who merely remarks that it is not found in the *Adagia*.[154] The context shows that it expresses something bizarre and incongruous, as if a Batavian on horseback were an oddity. But the Batavians had an impressive reputation as highly skilled horsemen. A Germanic tribe, they had settled in the Rhine delta in the first century B.C. As allies of the Romans, they furnished them with troops, both infantry and cavalry. Plutarch for one, as Erasmus would know, describes them as the best horsemen among the Germans (*Vita Othonis* 12.5). It follows that Erasmus meant the saying to refer to their descendants, the Hollanders.[155] This is apparent from his collection of *Parabolae*, where he uses the same paradox: "We are quite surprised if we see a person doing something well of whom one would not expect it at all, as for example a Hollander skilled in horsemanship, a frugal Englishman,[156] or an eloquent theologian"

[152]A fitting tag from Vergil, which must have reminded Kan of the eventful wanderings of Aeneas: after a narrow escape from a storm in the open sea, Aeneas encourages his companions saying, "et haec olim meminisse iuvabit" (1.203). Erasmus quotes the same tag in *Adagia* 1243, entitled "Iucundi acti labores."

[153]*Ep.* 1832, lines 46-55: "Nec conuenit vt admodum horreas fretum Caletiense, ζῶον θαλάσσιον ac propemodum in fluctibus natum, si modo satis olim contemplatus sum tuum Amstelredamum. Est sane quum molesta tum sumptuosa traiectio, sed vt breuis, ita non admodum infamis naufragiis. Et si quid illic erit molestiarum, olim meminisse iuuabit. Sed transmisso mari, aliud te periculum excipiet tibi fortasse grauius. Nosti prouerbium Βάταυος ἱππεύς. Caeterum θάρρει, equi sunt prudentissimi; norunt viam, nec egent calcaribus. Tantum illis permitte frenum, non desinent currere donec te quo conducti sunt vel sarcinae in morem peruexerint." Erasmus describes one of the dangers involved in the crossing (getting robbed by sailors) in the colloquy *Peregrinatio*, *ASD*, 1, 3: 491, lines 776-96.

[154]Bierlaire, 1968, 72-73, quotes the letter, but fails to identify the saying. Nor does Rummel, 1981, discuss it in her otherwise quite useful study on the use of Greek in Erasmus' letters; the letter to Kan, in which Greek abounds, should be added to her list (74-83).

[155]The name Batavians commonly refers to Hollanders in humanist sources; see Wesseling, 1993, 68-83, 95.

[156]Erasmus more than once portrays the English as gluttons; see the Appendix.

(Vehementius miramur, si quid recte faciunt a quibus tale nihil expectatur, veluti si quis *Hollandum* videat *peritum equitem* aut frugalem Anglum aut theologum eloquentem, *ASD,* 1, 5: 238, lines 272-76).

"Een Hollander te peerdt" (A Hollander on horseback) is the saying to which he alludes. Johannes Pontanus, in his history of Amsterdam (1611),[157] confirms that it was used to mock the Dutch; it was also applied to inexperienced people on horseback in general. He quotes Erasmus' letter in full (240-41) and explains the saying in an appendix (*Appendicula*) to his history (37-38, overlooked by Allen):

> The Batavian horsemen and all the Batavians excelled from ancient times among the tribes of Germania Inferior in horsemanship, as appears from Plutarch, Tacitus, Dio Cassius, and other authors. Taken in this sense, the saying does not fit Cannius, since Erasmus means to say that he is a Hollander, almost born in the sea, and therefore completely inexperienced in riding and horsemanship. He apparently alludes to a familiar saying which is commonly applied specifically to the Hollanders in our vernacular, namely, *a Hollander on horseback.* It has now become customary to apply it to a person who is ignorant of and completely inexperienced in horsemanship. This is why I have not rendered that saying Βάταυος ἱππεύς in the margin of Erasmus' letter as 'Batavus eques' but as 'Hollandus eques,' with a view to the Dutch saying which I quoted, *a Hollander on horseback.* I am absolutely sure that Erasmus himself had this saying in mind.[158]

He gives the same information in a treatise on the Rhine delta (1614, 189), and again in his monumental history of the province of Guelders (1639, bk. 1, p. 20). Another local historian, Johannes Smetius Sr.,[159] comments on the same saying in his history of Nijmegen (1645, 122). Active as a Protestant clergyman in that town, he sedulously collected antiquities concerning the Low Countries and corresponded with Pontanus. Following Pontanus' account closely, he first gives full credit to the horse-riding Batavians,

[157] Bk. 2, chap. 28 is devoted to "viri clari Amstelodamenses"; Cannius is one of the celebrities. For Pontanus see Haitsma Mulier, no. 387.

[158] "Batavos equites omnesque Batavos equitandi laude praecipue inter Germanos Inferiores antiquitus floruisse ex Plutarcho, Tacito, Dione et aliis patet, ita ut hoc modo sumptum adagium Cannio non quadret, quem vult Erasmus dicere Hollandum esse et in mari quasi natum animal ideoque et equestris rei atque equitandi omnino rudem, alludens scilicet ad familiare nobis et in Hollandos proprie iactari solitum vernaculo idiomate adagium *een Hollander te peerdt,* quo uti nunc mos obtinuit cum ignarum et equitandi prorsus imperitum volumus intellegi. Atque haec est causa cur ad oram epistolae Erasmianae adagium istud βάταυος ἱππεύς reddiderimus non 'Batavus eques' sed 'Hollandus eques,' adspicientes nimirum adagium Belgicum quod recitavimus, 'een Hollander te peerdt.' Quo et ipsum Erasmum respexisse omnino nobis persuasum habemus."

[159] For Smetius (Smith, 1590-1651) see Haitsma Mulier, no. 446.

quoting Plutarch (*Vita Othonis* 12.5), Tacitus (*Historiae* 4.12.3) and Dio Cassius (55.24.7). Their descendants, he says, kept to the area near the North Sea; and as Holland became increasingly subject to floods and full of lakes, they started using boats instead of horses, "wooden horses rather than hooved ones." Seasoned sailors, they lack the art of horsemanship. Hence the expression "Hollandus eques,"

> Hollandi suis Oceano vicinis se continuerunt finibus, eluvionibusque et lacubus aucti ligneis magis equis liquentes quam cornupedibus solidos campos decurrerunt,[160] ut Hollandorum vulgus navigandi peritissimum equitandi nunc artis fere sit imperitum et 'Hollandus eques' proverbiali formula nonnunquam audiat qui equitandi rudis est.

Smetius also compiled an enormous collection of proverbs, sayings, anecdotes, and inscriptions, mainly taken from the vernacular. A manuscript volume of 287 folios, it offers a wealth of information on folklore in the Low Countries.[161] It was never published and is still largely unknown, it seems, to modern scholars. Interestingly, he quotes the saying "Hollander te paert, is een martelaer op aerden" (A Hollander on horseback is a martyr on earth, fol. 151v), which means that horseriding is a torment to the Dutch. A slightly different version is "Een Hollander te peerd, is een martelaer voor God" (A Hollander on horseback is a martyr for God).[162] He also relates a witty anecdote. A horse rode his master (obviously a Hollander) to the stable. Seeing this odd scene, people scoffed at the man for his lack of skill. "I know how to ride," he replied, "provided I have someone to guide the horse." Smetius concludes with the comment "Let him use a boat instead of a horse!"

[160]Smetius' use of "aucti" (increased), in combination with "Hollandi," is strange. He follows Pontanus' account in *Historia Gelrica* 1, 20 closely: "Hollandi enim lapsu temporum et *auctis* indies Oceani atque aliis eluvionibus internis ipsorum aquis ac lacubus, Bataviae nunc solum, quod maxime est paludosum, colunt, ad classes et copias mari tum equos illos velivolos et, ut Plautus [*Rudens* 268] appellat, 'ligneos' expediendos praecipue [est] comparatum." — Inspired by Pontanus' poetic description of ships ("equos illos velivolos et ligneos"), Smetius uses a Vergilian metaphor to denote the lakes and the sea: the phrase "campos liquentes" is found in *Aeneis* 6.724. As regards "equis . . . cornupedibus" see *Aeneis* 6.591; 7.779; Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 1.280.

[161]It is the second volume of a set originally consisting of three volumes, entitled *Adversaria*. It is held in the Gemeentearchief of Nijmegen, sign. Smetius Pater 5. I wish to thank Sandra Langereis for drawing my attention to this manuscript. In the dedicatory letter to *Oppidum Batavorum*, Smetius aptly describes his collection as "proverbiorum, apophthegmatum factorumque nostratium memorandorum collectio."

[162]Quoted (from a source dated 1642) in *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal*, s.v. martelaar, 9: 272.

> Hollandum equus conscensus ad stabulum vehebat, cum spectatores sessori equitandi imperitiam exprobrarent. "Immerito," inquit, "eam mihi obiicitis. Equitare novi, modo esset qui equum regeret." "Ick kan wel rijden, wanneer ick slechs iemand hadde, die mij het peerd stierde." In navigio, non in equo agat. (fol. 152r)

Contemporaries of Erasmus testify that the Hollanders did use horses on a large scale, though mainly for drawing carts. In a description of modern Holland (1517), the local historian Cornelius Aurelius of Gouda mentions the following different means of transport: ships, rowboats, carriages, and horses ("scepen ende roeyscuten" and "wagenen ofte paerden").[163] Luigi Marliano of Milan, a physician to the future Charles V, lived at Louvain, where he composed (1508) a glowing letter full of praise of the Low Countries which was calculated to please the Louvain humanist Jérôme Busleyden. Celebrating Holland in particular for its natural resources, he feels that all its products, including men, women, horses and the wax-colored cattle, spring forth from "mother Venus herself." "Dii boni," he exclaims, "quales homines, quales foeminas, quos equos, quae cerea [cerera *ed.*] armenta, quae pecora parit!"[164] More detailed and reliable information is given by his compatriot Crisostomo Colonna (Chrysostomus Neapolitanus), a minor humanist of Caggiano near Salerno. Sixty years old, he made a six-day sightseeing tour through watery Holland, on which he reports in a letter to his patron, count Lodovico Nogarola of Verona (1514). Impressed by the determined struggle of the Dutch against recurrent floods and the ever threatening sea, he aptly describes them as amphibians, "Mortales ipsi eque propemodum in aquis ac in terris degunt, ita ut amphibia quam terrestria animalia verius dixeris." Among much else, he comments on their use of horses (mares, to be precise), which they employ mainly for drawing carriages ("equarum servicio ad currus trahendos, quorum in Olandia frequens usus est, magis utuntur"). In this connection, he also comments on their character, calling them crafty and cunning. A tourist, he blames especially the drivers for cheating and charging too much, "Hominum genus, ut plane inspexisse videor, maxime industrium et negociosum, sed versutum et callidum. Addo etiam essedarios, qui currulem vectationem exercent, subdolos et in advenas presertim lucelli cuiuspiam captandi gratia fraudulentos."[165]

[163]Aurelius, *Divisiekroniek* 1.19, fol. 14v. On the author and his work see Tilmans; see also Haitsma Mulier, no. 20.

[164]Aurelius included the letter in his *Defensorium gloriae Batavinae*, in *Batavia*, 70-76. It also appears in De Vocht's biography of Busleyden, 379-82. The early descriptions and eulogies of Holland are discussed by Wesseling, 2000.

[165]Crisostomo's letter was published for the first time by Martinus Dorpius in his *Dialogus*, fols. Fiii-Giii; the passages quoted are found on fol. Gi. For details see Wesseling, 2000, 242-44.

Returning now to Erasmus' letter to Kan, we need to explain why Erasmus has couched the saying in Greek. It is rare for him to disguise a vernacular expression in this way. In the first place, his letter is full of Greek phrases. Kan, used to copying Greek manuscripts for his master, was well versed in this language.[166] Erasmus delighted in using it, in his correspondence and in such works as the *Colloquies* and the *Praise of Folly.* In this satire he compares the insertion of Greek words with inlay-work and mosaics, "velut emblemata."[167] Not confining himself to quotations from ancient authors, he liked to make up novel phrases and compounds and to indulge in puns. Consider, for instance, the names Philetymus, Pseudocheus, Chrysercium, Pelini, Eumenius, Druinus, and Καϰelman, discussed above. Since knowledge of Greek (like Dutch) was confined to the happy few, he often employed it as a medium to achieve confidentiality and rapport. He also used it for the purpose of mockery and satire. In an hilarious account of his pilgrimage to the Abbey of Walsingham and its shrine with holy relics, he introduces a solemn dignitary bearing the title πρῶτος ὕστερος or "prior posterior," or the sub-prior (Erasmus himself makes clear that he is punning on the rhetorical term *hysteron proteron*).[168] Satirizing faked nobility ("ementita nobilitas"), he calls a pompous German ἱππεὺς ἄνιππος, a knight (*Ritter*) without a horse (*ASD,* 1, 3: 612). He expresses his hatred of mendicant friars through paradoxes clothed in Greek, calling them πτωχοπλούσιοι, beggar-magnates (*ASD,* 1, 3: 389) and πτωχοτύραννοι, beggar-tyrants, who bully the people for the sake of their own profit (*Ep.* 1875, line 32). He derides their practice of collecting eggs and cheese across rural estates as "ooptochiam ac tyrologiam" (*Adagia* 3664, *ASD,* 2, 8). He likewise calls a friar who had dared to attack him from the pulpit a "tyrologus" or "cheese-collector" (non theologum sed tyrologum,

[166]See *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. Kan; Bierlaire, 1968, 72-76; and Michelini Tocci, esp. 52-60.

[167]*ASD,* 4, 3: 76, lines 78-80. Erasmus has apparently adapted a passage in Quintilian (*Institutio oratoria* 2.4.27) to his own purpose: Quintilian refers approvingly to the practice of distinguished orators who embellish their speeches by inserting topical passages "velut emblemata."

[168]*Peregrinatio, ASD,* 1, 3: 482, line 447-483, line 467. More precisely, Erasmus uses the uncommon term ὑστερόπρωτον, which he also cites in *Adagia* 4030, entitled "Praepostere": "figuram grammaticorum, quam illi προθύστερον siue ὑστερόπρωτον appellant." The example he gives is "Cornelia Gracchos *educauit ac genuit*" ("raised and gave birth"). The name of the pilgrim-narrator in the colloquy is Ogygius. It perhaps means "the Traveller to England," for Plutarch connects the Homeric island Ogygia with Britain: he locates it in the Ocean, "a run of five days off from Britain as you sail westward" (*Moralia* 941 a). Taken in this sense, the name Ogygius aptly contrasts with the Greek name of the interested questioner, Menedemus (Μενέδημος), "Stay-at-Home," that is.

Ep. 1858, line 2). Nor does he spare Protestant reformers, showing them to be "pseudeuangelici," or false evangelicals, in his tract against Geldenhouwer (1530; *ASD,* 9, 1: 283; see also *Ep.* 1956, line 40). He calls one of them "cacangelicus" (a depraved evangelical, *Ep.* 2441 [1530/31], line 17). Nearly all these examples of invented Greek are intended to be sarcastic. In a more gently ironical vein, Erasmus teases his young assistant Kan by calling him a clumsy rider ("You know the proverb Βάταυος ἱππεύς"). Besides enhancing rapport, the phrasing in Greek veils and softens the vernacular gibe, which his fellow-Hollander was supposed to take with a smile. It is hard to tell whether Erasmus is also alluding ironically to passages in Greek authors (Plutarch and Dio Cassius) who sang the praises of Batavian horsemanship in Roman times. According to Pontanus, he was.[169]

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[169] 1639, 1, 20.

Appendix:

STEREOTYPES OF THE ENGLISH AND A GREEK CONCOCTION IN THE *PRAISE OF FOLLY*

Erasmus was fond of ethnic stereotypes. For example, he portrays the English as gluttons in various writings. He uses the paradox "a frugal Englishman" (frugalis Anglus) in his collection of *Parabolae* (see above, page 131). Like the Germans, they are well-fed, "bene pasti" (*ASD,* 1, 3: 580, line 96); the phrase is a variation of "bene potus" (tipsy), used by Cicero, *Ad familiares* 7.22 (see above, n. 52). Lady Folly taunts the British for laying claim to music, physical beauty, and sumptuous meals ("lautas mensas," *ASD,* 4, 3: 128, line 61). Hence the saying, common among the French, "as bloated as an Englishman" (tam satur est quam Anglus), which Erasmus quotes at the end of *Adagia* 1168, entitled "Syracusana mensa." To appease those readers who might take offence, he notes there that his Hollanders are blamed for hard drinking: "Verum iidem [the French] vt illis attribuunt πολυφαγίαν, ita nobis πολυποσίαν adscribunt." (See also Thompson's note, *CWE,* 40: 828, n. 25.) The English also like to show off ("ostentatores"). This characterization is part of a list of ethnic stereotypes: he labels the French as haughty ("superbi"), the Hollanders as simple-minded, *bot* ("simplices") and the Brabanters as foolish ("inepti"); the list appears in an early version of his treatise *De conscribendis epistolis* (see Vredeveld, 49). Erasmus also holds against the British their habit of keeping bears for sport (bear-dancing): the huge amounts of food needed to sustain them should instead be given to the poor, "nec pudet has Christianorum esse delicias tot egenis esurientibus" (*Adagia* 3354, entitled "Melitaeus catulus"). He also censures the common-law system for its extreme punctiliousness in form (*Adagia* 4115, entitled "Causa cadere, formula cadere"). For his otherwise quite favorable view of the English (girls prone to kissing when welcoming strangers, etc.) see *Ep.* 103 and Halkin, 1970, 93-94. The letter to Kan, discussed above, can be taken as additional evidence of his high esteem for them.

In an early edition of the *Colloquies* (1519) Erasmus referred to another stereotype, to wit, the traditional joke that the English have tails ("caudam"), but he subsequently suppressed it, apparently because it had roused the anger of his opponent, Edward Lee.[a] Does this joke perhaps

[a]See *ASD,* 1, 3: 90, apparatus criticus, and the expurgated edition, 196, line 2301; Allen's note on Lee's acrimonious letter of 1520 to Erasmus, *Ep.* 1061, line 350; *CWE,* 7: 395, n. 42; Du Cange, s.v. caudatus; and *Dictionary of Medieval Latin,* s.v. cauda (1 c) and caudare.

provide a clue to the meaning of μεγαλορροῦντας, a term used by Lady Folly in lampooning ostentatious courtiers? She feasts her eyes on them, but "sometimes even she gets fed up with watching them and quits": "Ipsa nonnunquam saginatior abeo, si quando viderim illos μεγαλορροῦντας, dum inter nymphas vnaquaeque hoc sibi videtur diis propior quo caudam longiorem trahit."[b] Assuming, with Miller, that the curious concoction is composed of μέγας & οὐρά ("tail"; akin to ὄρρος), she might mean "courtiers parading their long tails" (penises, that is); they are fittingly accompanied by young ladies ("nymphas") who take pride in showing off the long trains ("caudam longiorem") which they draw along. It should be noted that the same concocted term is found in *Lingua*, *ASD*, 4, 1A: 50, line 814, where the sense is equally unclear ("showing off" or "speaking boastfully"?): "Noui quendam pileo ἱεροπρεπεῖ μεγαλορροῦντα sed eundem plus quam scurrili loquacitate" (I know someone who flaunts [or: vaunts?] a ceremonial doctor's cap but who is still more scurrilously talkative than a city wag). Fantham and Rummel (*CWE*, 29: 284) translate "I know someone, monstrous grand with a cardinal's hat," etc., but "monstrous grand" seems a mere guess. "Pileus" is the ceremonial cap worn by a doctor of divinity: "Non omnes vere theologi qui pileum theologicum gerunt," says Erasmus in the *Adagia* (no. 606; see also no. 1027, entitled "Ad pileum vocare," and *Colloquia*, *ASD*, 1, 3: 397, line 287). In Listrius' commentary on the *Praise of Folly* (1515), the Greek compound is explained as "ostentantes sese" (making a display of themselves) and derived from μεγάλον (*sic*) and ῥῆσις ("oratio"), "quod omnia magna loquantur, nihil plebeium." In other words, courtiers are grandiloquent, according to Listrius' interpretation. The problems raised by his derivation are expertly discussed in Miller's commentary, *ASD*, 4, 3: 171.

[b] *ASD*, 4, 3: 170, lines 733-35. "Saginatior" seems to have a negative connotation: even Folly gets "fed up" seeing those foolish courtiers and therefore quits the scene ("abeo"). Miller, however, translates (109): "Sometimes I myself *feel in finest fettle* when I take leave of these cocksure courtiers strutting their stuff."

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ASD refers to Erasmus, *Opera omnia*, Amsterdam, 1969-.; *CWE*, to the translations in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, Toronto, 1974-.; *LB*, to the Clericus edition, Leiden, 1703-06.

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