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Shakespeare in Mark Twain's *1601*

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ABSTRACT

This article explores Mark Twain's representations of Shakespeare in his *1601, Conversation. As it was by the Social Fireside in the Time of the Tudors* (1876). Twain's short risqué squib relates a fictional record of Queen Elizabeth I and her guests, including Shakespeare, recounting vulgar tales. Drawing upon "double-coded" theories of parody, this article argues that in *1601* Twain blends admiration with a sarcastic attitude toward Shakespeare. At the same time, he satirizes contemporary American hypocritical practices by paying homage to liberating bawdry. Twain utilizes lighthearted mockery of Elizabethan parlance and customs to make a historical allegory criticizing American hypocrisy and censorship on the one hand and integrating his American identity with European cultural heritage on the other.

KEYWORDS: Shakespeare, Mark Twain, parody, *1601*, American identity, European heritage

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This article explores Mark Twain's representations of Shakespeare in his *1601, Conversation. As it was by the Social Fireside in the Time of the Tudors* (1876). Twain's tale relates a fictional record of the obscene closet conversation between Queen Elizabeth I and her guests, including Ben Jonson, Francis Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh, Francis Beaumont, and William Shakespeare, along with some ladies of the Queen's court. As a portrayal of their manners sitting about the fireplace recounting vulgar tales, Twain's story on the surface seems to be mocking these Elizabethan figures. Nonetheless, Margaret Rose analyzes parody as a "double-coded" device that could be used for more than mere ridicule. Also, Thomas M. Greene observes that "[e]very creative imitation mingles filial rejection with respect, just as every parody pays its own oblique homage" (46). Although Twain wrote *1601* with an ironic overtone, Twain's search for novelty in early Modern tradition permits critical distance, and its sarcastic rendition of the historical figures is not always at the expense of the parodied subjects. This article seeks to contribute to the critical conversation relating to the genre of ribaldry and Twain's relationship to Shakespeare as explored by Anthony J. Berret in his *Mark Twain and Shakespeare: A Cultural Legacy*. Drawing upon theories concerning parody, this essay argues that Twain's caricature of Elizabethan conduct and language in his *1601* functions as a "double-coded" allegory to satirize American hypocritical practices by paying homage to carefree discussions of bawdry in European writings.

I. Shakespeare in Nineteenth-Century America

The status of Shakespeare in nineteenth-century American culture is an essential context for interpreting Twain's *1601*. As early as the 1860s, Shakespeare's plays were performed throughout American theatres to "all manner of audiences" (Bean 247). According to Richard S. Lowry, Shakespeare's profile "since mid-century had hardened into a sacred icon of high culture, whose every word was the utterance of genius" (28). Shakespeare's widespread presence in newspapers and theatrical performances polarized his works between popular and elite cultures. According to Lawrence Levine, by the turn of the nineteenth century, Shakespeare had been transformed from a popular playwright into a "sacred author" whose creative integrity had to be protected (72). Revising Levine's theory of the highbrow/lowbrow split, Benjamin Reiss carefully points out that

Shakespeare's overpowering authority "made interpretation of his work such an integral part of struggles for legitimation—particularly as a new bourgeois/professional class supplanted the landed gentry who had ruled the country in the early national period" (771). He notes that the bourgeois had been "bending Shakespeare to their will" even though they endorsed Shakespeare's wisdom (771).

To this intricate social scenario, Mark Twain reacted through his diverse utilizations of Shakespeare and his works. Twain held Shakespeare in such high esteem as to consider him playing a vital role in human history. In *Life on the Mississippi*, published in *Harper's Magazine* in 1863, Twain discusses the history of the River, asserting that "When De Soto [a 16th-century Spanish explorer] stood on the banks of the Mississippi, it was still two years before Luther's death . . . ; Rabelais was not yet published; 'Don Quixote' was not yet written; Shakespeare was not yet born . . . " (5-6). Twain also mentions in this book his early study of Shakespeare: "While we lay at landings, I listened to George Ealer's flute; or to his readings from his two bibles, that is to say, Goldsmith and Shakespeare" (154). In *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), Twain's narrator relates Shakespeare as a significant figure when he comments on men's life and death.

> This was good St. Charles Borromeo, Bishop of Milan. The people idolized him; princes lavished uncounted treasures upon him. . . . [H]ow poor, and cheap, and trivial these gew-gaws seemed in presence of the solemnity, the grandeur, the awful majesty of Death! Think of Milton, Shakespeare, Washington, standing before a reverent world tricked out in the glass beads, the brass ear-rings and tin trumpery of the savages of the plains!
> (232; ch. 18)

In his autobiography, Twain indicates his interest in Shakespeare by relating an event in 1864. Joseph Thompson Goodman, editor and proprietor of the Virginia City (Nevada) *Territorial Enterprise*, hired Twain as a reporter. When Goodman took a week off in April, Twain worked as the chief editor and published information for Shakespeare's three-hundredth birthday.

> I got the Cyclopædia and examined it, and found out who Shakespeare was and what he had done, and I borrowed all that and laid it before a community that couldn't have been better prepared for instruction about Shakespeare than if they had been prepared by art. (*Mark Twain's Own Autobiography* 73; ch. 8)

In chapter 13, Twain again mentions Shakespeare when he talks about his birth in Florida, Monroe County, Missouri: ". . . I was born there in 1835. The village contained a hundred people and I increased the population by one per cent. . . . There is no record of a person doing as much—not even Shakespeare" (*Mark Twain's Own Autobiography* 112).

Twain was indebted to Shakespeare because he constantly employed Shakespearean references and quotations in his writings; he even attempted to rewrite Shakespeare to satirize contemporary American personalities, issues, and writings. On November 3, 1873, Twain saw Edwin Booth playing Hamlet. As recalled by Albert Bigelow Paine, Twain's official biographer, Twain went backstage after the performance to suggest to Booth that *Hamlet* be revised by adding a modern comic commentator to the play (495). Twain's burlesque of *Hamlet*, written in 1881, remained unpublished in his lifetime, but it may have prepared him for the pastiche in chapter 21 of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), in which he burlesqued people who wrongly adapted Shakespeare. The text of "Burlesque Hamlet," Twain's fragmentary travesty, includes the action at the beginning of Shakespeare's act 2, scene 2 and runs approximately thirty-seven pages as collected in *Mark Twain's Satires and Burlesques* (1967). This burlesque may demonstrate Twain's attitudes toward Shakespeare and relate to Twain's writing of *1601*. It adds Hamlet's foster brother, Basil Stockmar, without altering Shakespeare's existing lines. Working as a book agent, Basil visits Elsinore to sell books to Hamlet, the Queen, and the Ghost. He is given occasional asides and monologues without interacting directly with the characters. For instance, he comments on the Ghost: "I reckon I begin to see what he was chasing me around like that for . . . he wanted to subscribe" (Twain, "Burlesque Hamlet" 60). Basil's presence affects the remainder of the play by injecting humor into the tragedy, but it is difficult for Twain to develop his adaptation without changing Shakespeare's text. In October 1881, Joseph T. Goodman, Twain's former editor on the *Territorial Enterprise*, expressed interest in Twain's adaptation, and in March 1883, Goodman sent the draft of a

play, *Hamlet's Brother*, for Twain to revise and complete. The editor noted, however, "*Hamlet's Brother* was packaged and filed away among Twain's papers, where it still rests today, untouched anywhere by Twain's revising hand" (qtd. in Rogers 53). Although Shakespeare's work had been adopted by popular performance during the nineteenth century, Twain refused to manipulate Shakespeare's original text in his burlesque. As Twain wrote to his editor friend William Dean Howells on September 3, 1881, "the sacrilegious scribbler who ventured to put words into Shakspeare's [Twain's spelling] mouth would probably be hanged" (*Mark Twain-Howells Letters* 1: 369).

Ostensibly Twain's *1601* mocks Shakespearean English and blasphemes Shakespeare as a character. Nevertheless, Twain was well aware of the American earnest to play a vital role in the idolatry of Shakespeare. On April 26, 1875, Mark Twain published a letter to the editor in the *New York Times*, recounting how P. T. Barnum, the American circus owner, had attempted to purchase Shakespeare's birthplace and transport it to America. As soon as the plan was disclosed, according to Twain, the English custodians of the house made offers of re-purchase, and Barnum gave up his plan. Twain's letter concludes with Barnum's claim that "not England, but America—represented by him [Barnum]—saved the birthplace of Shakespeare from destruction" ("Barnum" 406). Through his account of the episode in this letter, Twain accentuates American contribution to the "material ownership" of Shakespeare (Teague 45); hence the significant role America plays in the bardolatry.

II. The Publication and Reception of *1601*

Because of the widespread veneration for Shakespeare in nineteenth-century American culture, Twain's representations of Shakespeare in the bawdy tale of *1601* astonished many of his readers. Delivered orally to male friends in 1876, Twain's *1601* was first published anonymously and privately printed for "Alexander Gunn" in pamphlet form in 1880 in Cleveland. It was then published in book form at West Point, New York in 1882 (Meine 14-16), in a "typographically elaborate issue of fifty copies" (Kolb 61). Twain sent a manuscript copy of *1601* to William Dean Howells, the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, along with a letter in which Twain jokingly wrote: "If you do not need this for the contributor's column, will you please return it to me, as they want it for the Christian Union" (qtd. in Fiedler 87). Howells probably sent the

manuscript to John Hay, who urged Alexander Gunn to print it secretly in an edition of six copies. *1601* was rarely found in Twain's published works, but it enjoyed underground circulation throughout much of the twentieth century. The story is now included in standard printings of Twain's writings, along with Twain's Stomach Club speech on masturbation. Twain acknowledged his authorship of *1601* in a letter dated July 20, 1880 from Dublin, New Hampshire, to Charles Orr, librarian of Case Library, Cleveland:

> The title of the piece is *1601*. The piece is a supposititious conversation which takes place in Queen Elizabeth's closet in that year, between the Queen, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Sir Walter Raleigh, the Duchess of Bilgewater and one or two others. . . . I hasten to assure you that it is *not* printed in my published writings. (qtd. in Meine 12)

Twain also acknowledges the vulgarity of the language in *1601* when he comments on this risqué writing as intentionally indecent: "If there is a decent word findable in it, it is because I overlooked it" (qtd. in Meine 12). He hoped to diversify his literary devices by employing vulgarity in the style of earlier writers such as François Rabelais, the French Renaissance writer. Twain sent it to an editor who loved reading Rabelais, as Twain believed that he could provide the editor with a Rabelaisian narrative. The editor, however, failed to acknowledge his Rabelaisian talent. Twain found it challenging to distribute it publicly and described *1601* as his "Wandering Offspring" (Fiedler 90) when his contemporary editors considered it too coarse for publication. In the notebook he wrote in 1879, Twain complains about his predicament:

> It depends on who writes a thing whether it is coarse or not. I once wrote a conversation between Elizabeth, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Sir W. Raleigh, Lord Bacon, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, and a stupid old nobleman—this latter being cup-bearer to the queen and ostensible reporter of the talk . . . . I used words such as were used at that time—1601. I sent it anonymously to a magazine, and how the editor abused it and the sender! But that man was a praiser of Rabelais, and had been saying, "O that

> we had a Rabelais!" I judged that I could furnish him one. (qtd. in Paine 581)

The fact that Twain would not want to destroy his book sales may explain why Twain submitted the manuscript of *1601* to the magazine anonymously. Twain was well aware of American literary censorship and would make any changes if he thought it threatened his book sales. For instance, he did not allow most of his satires on Christianity to be published. Twain told his publisher that, if he published his essay "The United States of Lyncherdom," "I shouldn't have even half a friend left down there [in the South], after it issued from the press" (qtd. in Edwards 245). To protect his untarnished image as a writer, he would also not allow his autobiography to be published until one hundred years after his death when the subjects had died, though he published some of the "chapters" in the *North American Review* in 1906 and 1907 in cautiously cleansed excerpts.

III. The Rabelaisian Diversity and Cultural Heritage

According to Martha Anne Turner, *1601* has survived through fifty editions in America and abroad and has become "a universally accepted aspect of American folklore" (10), and so many editions of *1601* "testify to Twain's immense capacity for laughter and to that homespun fibre of his nature which endeared him to the world" (21). However, as Franklin J. Meine elucidates, in 1876 when Twain wrote this bawdy tale, "there had been nothing like it before in American literature" (25). In his *Tramp Abroad* (1880), Twain complains about the different licenses in American art and literature:

> Art is allowed as much indecent license to-day as in earlier times—but the privileges of Literature in this respect have been sharply curtailed within the past eighty or ninety years. Fielding and Smollet could portray the beastliness of their day in the beastliest language; we have plenty of foul subjects to deal with in our day, but we are not allowed to approach them very near, even with nice and guarded forms of speech. (qtd. in Meine 25)

Twain's use of bawdiness in *1601* may be read as a subversive satire addressing more significant concerns than mere sexual appetite. Gordon Williams's

Glossary of Shakespeare's Sexual Language defines "bawdy" as "lewd, obscene, unchaste" (37). For Eric Partridge, "bawdy" means "[i]mmodest, indelicate, licentious; especially in sexual matters," but he includes entries on non-sexual bawdy involving urination, defecation, flatulence, and the buttocks (62). The bawdy richness of Elizabethan double entendres and sex punnery in *1601* exhibits Twain's approval of open discussions about sexual desire and biological functions, which nineteenth-century American polite society refused to recognize. Twain's contrasting the venerated cultural figures with their fervor for prohibited discussions about bodily needs points to his reaction against nineteenth-century social repression.

Apart from Twain's effort to diversify himself as an American Rabelais, he manifests his interest in historical reading when he envisions in *1601* a conversation between the literary men of the Elizabethan era. Twain first set foot in England in 1872, and historical England excited Twain's imagination throughout his career, shaping his reading and writing, especially in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) and *The Prince and the Pauper* (1881). Twain's notes to *The Prince and the Pauper* indicate that he scrutinized the historical background by reading books such as David Hume's *History of England*, John Timbs' *Curiosities of London*, and J. Hammond Trumbull's *Blue Laws, True and False* (279-85). *The Prince and the Pauper*, therefore, has its "origin in Twain's reading, not his experience" (Emerson 106). In 1874, Twain was impressed by William E. H. Lecky's argument that "ethical progress drove history" when he read Lecky's 1869 *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* (Bellamy 43). During the summer of 1876, Twain compiled in his notebooks samples of typical phrases of the Middle Ages to write a historical novel. All the reading and writing prove Alan Gribben's findings in *Mark Twain's Library: A Reconstruction* that dispute "the widely accepted representation of Twain as an unread man" (xvii). In *1601*, Twain endeavored to improve the truthfulness of the tale by replicating obsolete Elizabethan English and reproducing a historical moment of England through his abundant reading of Tutor history. Integrating his American identity and cultural heritage from Europe, Twain employs the playful joking in the English court as a historical allegory to criticize American society.

When the closet conversation in *1601* is interrupted by a fart, the courtiers consider breaking wind a natural process of bodily discharge: "In ye heat of ye talk it befel yt one did breake wind, yielding an exceding mightie and distresfull

stink, whereat all did laugh full sore" (Twain, *1601* 33). When the Queen inquires about the source, the participants reply with ridiculously exaggerated rhetoric, through which Twain constructs a narrative full of parodies of Tudor patrician speech. Ben Jonson and Francis Bacon philosophize the situation with idiomatic pomposity:

> Jonson. — So fell a blast hath ne'er mine ears saluted, nor yet a stench so all-pervading and immortal. 'Twas not a novice did it, good your maisty, but one of veteran experience—else hadde he failed of confidence. In sooth it was not I . . . .
> Lord Bacon. — Not from my leane entrailes hath this prodigy burst forth, so please your grace. Naught doth so befit ye grete as grete performance; and haply shall ye finde yt 'tis not from mediocrity this miracle hath issued. (34)

Twain employs a mock-epic device by adapting the elevated heroic style of the classical epic to depict a trivial subject. As a double-edged satire, mock-epic, on the one hand, ridicules hypocrites by subjecting trifling events to heroic treatment and, on the other, highlights the triviality of the events. Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712-14), for instance, concerns a man stealing a lock of hair from a society belle, but in an elevated epic style, Pope describes the trivial episode as analogous to incidents that instigated the Trojan War. In a similar token, in Twain's *1601*, Ben Jonson describes the fart as "a stench so all-pervading and immortal," and Lord Bacon "this prodigy, or this miracle." Sir Walter Raleigh admits that he is the source of the fart, though it is not his loudest wind. He talks about the fart as a competition of muscle power before he proudly breaks louder wind:

> Sr W. — Most gracious maisty, 'twas I that did it, but indeed it was so poor and frail a note, compared with such as I am wont to furnish, yt in sooth I was ashamed to call the weakling mine in so august a presence. It was nothing—less than nothing, madam—I did it but to clear my nether throat; but had I come prepared, then had I delivered something worthy. Bear with me, please your grace, till I can make amends. (47)

Along with Francis Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh, Ben Jonson, and Francis Beaumont came the "famous Shaxpur [Shakespeare]" (34). Like a mock-epic that often begins with an invocation to the Muse and employs the epic devices such as stylistic speeches and supernatural interventions, Twain's story has Shakespeare refer to "hosts of heaven," or angels in the *Holy Bible* (Isa. 14.12; Rev. 8.10-11, 9.1), as having predicted the imminent wind (Twain, *1601* 35).

Twain's invention of Shakespeare's speech in *1601* exhibits his knowledge of the physical conditions of the Globe Theater that influenced Shakespeare's bawdy and bodily references, such as the stench in his plays. When the Queen turns to Shakespeare for inquiries, he tops all the above sardonic compliments on the windy gut with his reply:

> In the great hand of God I stand and so proclaim mine innocence. Though ye sinless hosts of heaven had foretold ye coming of this most desolating breath, proclaiming it a work of uninspired man, its quaking thunders, its firmament-clogging rottenness his own achievement in due course of nature, yet had not I believed it; but had said the pit itself hath furnished forth the stink, and heaven's artillery hath shook the globe in admiration of it. (Twain, *1601* 35)

These terms ("the pit," "the stink," "artillery," and "the globe") might remind the Shakespearean audience of the Globe Theatre, built at Bankside in Southwark in 1599 by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, the theatre company for which Shakespeare worked by 1594. The theatre was destroyed in 1613 when a misfired cannon set its thatch in flames during a performance of *Henry VIII*. It was rebuilt the following year. Twain uses the term "the pit" as a pun, referring to both the anus and the pit in the theatre, the central unroofed area of the auditorium that provided the cheapest standing places for the lower classes, called *stinkards*, or *penny-stinkers*, or *groundlings*. A prevalent practice in Shakespeare's times is for dissatisfied *groundlings* to hurl food at actors. Twain adeptly has Shakespeare refer to raucous theatre-goers' conduct in the pit as a metaphor for the fart.

1601 demonstrates Twain's awareness of Shakespeare's career during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. By the end of the 1590s, Shakespeare had written *Henry IV, Parts 1* and *2*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and had received his coat of arms. According to Adolphus William Ward, John Dennis "first

mentioned in print the story of Queen Elisabeth's having commanded Shakspere to write this comedy [*The Merry Wives of Windsor*]; Rowe, in 1709, added that she wished to see Falstaff in love" (Ward 2: 137). John Dennis's preface to his *The Comical Gallant; or, The Amours of Sir John Falstaff* (1702), an adaptation of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, claims that Shakespeare wrote the play at the request of Queen Elizabeth I, who had enjoyed the role of Falstaff in the *Henry IV* plays and would like to see another play about this character. Nicholas Rowe's preface to *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear* affirms that the Queen asked to see Falstaff "in love":

> She was so well pleas'd with that admirable Character of Falstaff, in the two Parts of Henry the Fourth, that she commanded him to continue it for one Play more, and to shew him in Love. This is said to be the Occasion of his Writing *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. How well she was obey'd the Play it self is an admirable Proof. (1: viii-ix)

The Merry Wives of Windsor was printed in 1602 with the title: "A most pleasant and excellent Conceited Comedie of SYR John Falstaffe and the merrie wives of Windsor . . . As it hath bene divers times Acted by the right Honourable my Lord Chamberlaines servants. Both before her Maiestie and else-where" (Lambert 46). This title confirms the Queen's delight in attending performances of Shakespeare's play. Queen Elizabeth I was one of the most earnest patrons of the theatre at the end of the sixteenth century, and she invited the Lord Chamberlain's Men "to court for performances more than any of the other London companies" (Pogue 5). In *1601* Twain follows this part of the theatre history concerning Shakespeare and portrays a friendly interaction between the Queen and the Bard, as they amuse themselves by speaking unreservedly of bodily functions and bawdy tales.

Twain's assumption of the Elizabethans' carefree exchange about sexual topics might also stem from his studies in the cultural history of England. Although from 1581 the Master of the Revels was authorized to scrutinize plays before the performance, the Elizabethans approved discussions of sex issues. Richard Dutton repudiates that, in the early modern period, Masters of the Revels' censorship of plays paid much attention to sexual decency:

> Deliberate and consistent censorship of literature on sexual grounds seems only to have begun once sexuality itself began to assume something of its modern culturally-identifiable shape, in which pornography has a separate and identifiable status as an affront to public morality. And there is a wide consensus that this took place in England during the Commonwealth and Restoration. (51)

Also, Debora Shuger observes that in Tudor England, language regulators and press censors paid only "scant and intermittent attention" to sexual immorality (66). By employing verbal Rabelaisian humor, Twain pays homage to Shakespeare's unhampered use of bawdy. In contrast to the Victorian standards, Elizabethan morality did not regard talk about sexuality in public as taboo. Ann Jennalie Cook observes that, "from the 1570s to 1642," audiences were inevitably exposed to "sexual activities in the galleries" (286) and that the presentation of erotic themes and bawdy jokes in the performances on the stage would not have been "particularly offensive to this kind of audience" (287). Herbert A. Ellis compares writings by Shakespeare's contemporaries that embody "the often ribald humor so agreeable to the Elizabethan spirit" and argues that Shakespeare's bawdy in *Love's Labor's Lost* is generally "garbled in language which presents, through ambiguity, an outward semblance of innocence" (209-10). Eric Partridge argues against the notion that Shakespeare's sexual and non-sexual innuendo was a concession to the groundlings, because the innuendo presents Shakespeare's "vision of truth" so that it can be "shared and trusted by as many as possible" (2). The obscenities in Shakespeare's plays were also intended to strengthen a homogeneity of social experience in the theatre. Jeremy Lopez explains that "bawdy wordplay on the London stage functioned primarily to produce socially unifying delight," and that theatre is most successful when it erases distinctions between its audience members (39).

In addition to the extended joke about farting, *1601* also includes riffs on sex organs by referring to Montaigne's influence on Shakespeare. When the courtiers talk about lewd manners and customs of different cultures, Shakespeare speaks of a book written by Michel de Montaigne concerning the custom of Perigord widows wearing on the headdress a jewel resembling a man's penis "wilted and limber" (36). The Queen laughs, claiming that widows

in England also wear pricks, but "betwixt the thighs, and not wilted" until they have a chance to have more sexual intercourse (36). Shakespeare mentions another story by Montaigne about an emperor who took ten "maidenheddes" in one night, while his empress entertained twenty-two knights and was not satisfied. Countess Granby asserts that a ram is superior to the emperor because it will top a hundred ewes in one day, and "if he can have none more to shag, will masturbate until he hath enrich'd whole acres with his seed" (36). Twain rightly figures Shakespeare as quoting Montaigne's *Essays* (first published in 1580), though "some tales are told inaccurately" (Meine 61). Scholars have highlighted Montaigne's influence on Shakespeare, as in *Shakespeare's Montaigne* (2014), edited by Stephen Greenblatt and Peter Platt. Traces of influence are found in *The Tempest* (lines from Montaigne's "Of the Cannibals" in Gonzalo's speech), *King Lear* (Edmund's notion of fatherhood), *Hamlet* (some of Polonius's advice), among others, though not all the borrowings are complimentary.

Moreover, Twain may have derived part of the bawdy parlance in *1601* from Shakespeare's plays such as *Twelfth Night, Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry IV*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. The technique of innuendo beneath superficial decorousness endorses the sexual irony in Shakespeare's drama. David Landreth argues that bawdy, "the inescapable Elizabethan habit of sexual innuendo," is everywhere in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (420). Ronald Knowles emphasizes the "carnivalesque" elements of bawdy in *Romeo and Juliet* in addition to its use for structural and thematic contrast. E. A. M. Colman demonstrates the use of bawdy for indicating "dissident" personality or developing character in *The Taming of the Shrew*; as Katherina becomes tamer, her level of bawdiness decreases (41). Marion D. Perret claims that in *The Taming of the Shrew* the sexual innuendo is "morally instructive," as "the punning of the bawdy wordplay comically introduces serious values" (4-5).

Although Shakespearean figurations of sexuality reflect the "paradoxical bawdy" of the high Elizabethan culture (Cummings 523), scholars may sometimes be surprised to find *Twelfth Night* a "barely disguised sexual carnival" (La Guardia 15). With speeches filled with unconscious double entendre, Malvolio obliviously wanders into an indecent joke in act 2, scene 5, when he reads a letter which he convinces himself is in Olivia's handwriting to declare her love for him: "By my life, this is my lady's hand: these be her very

C's, her U's, and her T's . . ." (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* 2.5.87-88). It spells out "CUNT," a vulgar word referring to the vagina. This word appears three times in Twain's *1601*. For instance, the Queen mentions that at the age of fifteen she met "old Rabelais," who told her about a man with a double pair of bollocks:

> . . . whereon a controversy followed as concerning the most just way to spell the word, ye contention running high betwixt ye learned Bacon and ye ingenious Jonson, until at last ye old Lady Margery, wearying of it all, saith, "Gentles, what mattereth it how ye shall spell the word? I warrant Ye when ye use your bollocks ye shall not think of it. . . . Before I had gained my fourteenth year I had learnt that them that would explore a cunt stop'd not to consider the spelling o't." (Twain, *1601* 37)

In the fourteenth century, the word "cunt" was standard English for the "female pudendum" (Mills 59). In the fifteenth century, it was the standard way to define "vulva," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. In the sixteenth century, as Eric Partridge asserts, the word "cunt," used for vigorous vulgarism, was "the most notorious term of all" (viii). In *1601*, Twain demonstrates not only his knowledge of the archaic English language, history, and literature, but also his fondness of erotic humor, which is restricted by polite Victorian society.

The end of *1601* also exemplifies Twain's knowledge of John Lyly's influence on Shakespeare by depicting the guests' critiques of Lyly's euphuistic style:

> . . . Jonson and Shaxpur did fidget to discharge some venom of sarcasm, yet dared they not in the presence, the queene's grace being ye very flower of ye Euphuists herself. But behold, these be they yt, having a specialty, and admiring it in themselves, be jealous when a neighbor doth essaye it, nor can abide it in them long. (Twain, *1601* 39)

John Lyly, an influential dramatist and novelist in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, was renowned for his elaborately ornate prose style richly decorated with rhetorical figures, especially in his *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1578) and

Euphues and His England (1580), which reputedly influenced the court language. Euphuism, however, was subject to derision in the 1590s. Ben Jonson's preface to Shakespeare's First Folio in 1623 praises Shakespeare's greatness as outshining that of "our Lily." Despite Shakespeare's indebtedness to Lyly in *As You Like It* and the comedies composed before Queen Elizabeth I's death (Scragg 213), the Bard parodied Lyly's euphuism in others. For instance, Shakespeare wrote a "notorious parody of Lyly's style in *1 Henry IV*" (Scragg 215), when Falstaff plays the part of the king to rehearse the prince's upcoming interview with his father, announcing: "This chair shall be my state, this dagger my sceptre, and this cushion my crown" (Shakespeare, *Henry IV* 2.4.373-74).

In *1601*, Twain parodies the euphuistic style but pays tribute to the freedom and ingenuity of Queen Elizabeth's court conversation about flatulence and copulation. The humorist celebrates the mortality of the body through such sarcastic devices as "Swiftian excremental vision" and "anti-romantic Chaucerian bawdiness" (Stahl 58-59). When their conversation turns to the topic concerning prenuptial intercourse, the narrator sardonically states that Sir Walter Raleigh, once the Queen's lover, was "sinless" since others had committed similar conduct. The narrator employs rhetorical questions for his criticism: "Was not her Grace of Bilgewater roger'd by four lords before she had a husband? Was not ye little Lady Helen born on her mother's wedding-day? And, beholde, were not ye Lady Alice and ye Lady Margery there, mouthing religion, whores from ye cradle?" (Twain, *1601* 38). Also, Shakespeare's wife was four months pregnant when she married Shakespeare. Indeed, scholars have argued that Anne Hathaway, eight years older than her husband, may have forced him to marry her by getting pregnant. However, having examined birth registers from the 1500s, Germaine Greer finds that "illegitimate birth was common" and that "plenty of 'good women' ended up having bastard children" (6). Analyzing the Renaissance view of the sexes, Ann Jennalie Cook notes that, while inherent in all the data are the assumptions of woman's frail moral fiber, her temptress qualities, and her inferior status, the women "display an unusual degree of independence and ingenuity, regardless of their social class" (287).

1601 served as an allegory through which Twain celebrated Tudor sexual liberation and criticized contemporary American society. The story was written in 1876 between Twain's two masterpieces, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

(1876) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885). *1601* may have functioned as "a warm-up for his creative process" for writing *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Jong xxxv). Justin Kaplan claims that both *1601* and *Huckleberry Finn* "were implicit rejections of the taboos and codes of polite society, and [that] both were experiments in using the vernacular as a literary medium" (196). *1601* illustrates Twain's enjoyment of unrestrictive topics for discussion. Of course, the humorist was familiar with the roughness of frontier pioneers and their candid conversation. As a bachelor, Twain stayed with some of the most unrestrictive societies in American history: "the pilots of the Mississippi, the miners of the Western frontier, and the newspapermen of gold-rush San Francisco" (Jones 601). Sam Bowen, Twain's boyhood friend, slept with his lover before marrying her (Twain, *Autobiography* 1: 402). Unsurprisingly, in his letter to William Dean Howells on September 19, 1877, Twain lamented restrictions on literary writings: "Delicacy—a sad, sad false delicacy—robs literature of the best two things among its belongings. Family circle narrative and obscene stories" (*Mark Twain-Howells Letters* 1: 203).

IV. The Narrator in Twain's Parody

Twain's satire in *1601* is not directed at Shakespeare's bawdy or the rhetorical vigor of the courtiers, but at the prudish narrator's hypocritical affectedness and snobbishness. A. H. Winkler's illustration for Franklin J. Meine's edition of *1601* identifies the cup-bearer with Twain. John Daniel Stahl, however, reminds us of the "ironic distance" achieved by having a narrator who is partly the butt of the joke (62). Like many narrators of Twain's stories, the Queen's cup-bearer does not represent Twain's authorial voice but serves as a target of Twain's satire. Twain begins *1601* with a memorandum:

> The following is supposed to be an extract from the diary of the Pepys of that day, the same being Queen Elizabeth's cup-bearer. He . . . despises these literary canaille[s]; that his soul consumes with wrath, to see the queen stooping to talk with such; and that the old man feels that his nobility is defiled by contact with Shakespeare, etc. (32)

Albert Bigelow Paine explicates that the story was first written in a letter to the Rev. Joseph Twichell, pastor of the Asylum Hill Congregational Church of Hartford and Twain's intimate friend for over forty years, who had a "Rabelaisian sense of humor" (580). Twain recalls this letter in his autobiography:

> It made a fat letter. I bundled it up and mailed it to Twichell in Hartford. And in the fall, when we returned to our home . . . and resumed the Saturday ten-mile walk to Talcott Tower and back . . . we used to carry that letter along . . . used to laugh ourselves lame and sore over the cup-bearer's troubles. (*Autobiography* 2: 156)

Twain continues to recount that he contrived a gross conversation "not to be found outside of Rabelais" and chose to report it as recorded by "a dried-up old nobleman," who was "present to take down the talk—not that he wanted to do it, but because it was the Queen's desire and he had to" (2: 156).

The cup-bearer's snobbish remarks on the manners of Queen Elizabeth's guests resemble those articulated by Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) in his 1660-1669 diary, one of Twain's favorite books. Twain's enthusiasm for *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* may have enhanced his depiction of the "essential similarity of all men" (Baetzhold 80), but Twain aimed to satirize the cup-bearer's contemptuous outrage at serving such "low" persons as Shakespeare. The Queen's cup-bearer, of noble lineage, complains about the disruption of the social hierarchy during the conversation: "I being her maites cup-bearer, had no choice but to remaine and beholde rank forgot, and ye high holde converse wh ye low as uppon equal termes, a grete scandal did ye world heare thereof" (33). Styled in Pepys's manner, the arrogant narrator utters his detestation of indecent coarseness. Albert Bigelow Paine alerts us to Twain's abhorrence of this narrator: "This piece of bawdry depicts discussions between Queen Elizabeth and her court about farting and a variety of sexual indulgence, presumably narrated disapprovingly by the Queen's Cup-Bearer, who Twain in his notebook called 'a stupid old nobleman'" (581). The narrator is obliged to listen against his will since the Queen, oblivious to her conceited servant's uneasiness, is absorbed in the invigorating gross talk. The pleasure of the story for Twain came mainly from the outraged cup-bearer, as Twain states in his autobiography:

> The Queen's cup-bearer . . . loathed all those people because they were of offensively low birth, and because they hadn't a thing to recommend them except their incomparable brains. . . . I made their stateliest remarks reek with them, and all this was charming to me—delightful, delicious—but their charm was as nothing to that which was afforded me by that outraged old cup-bearer's comments upon them. (*Autobiography* 2: 156)

In Twain's tale, after Shakespeare reads a few lines from his *King Henry IV*, the Queen's cup-bearer remarks on the play as "not of ye value of an arsefull of ashes, yet they praised it bravely, one and all" (Twain, *1601* 38). When Shakespeare reads his "Venus and Adonis" (1593) to the guests' esteem, the narrator, "being sleepy and fatigued withal, did deme it but paltry stuff" (38). The pompous cup-bearer as the narrator helps maintain a restricted point of view in *1601* to create a hilarious satire on "hypocrisy, Puritanism, and censorship of the press" (Turner 10). Other sources of this fireside conversation, such as *The Decameron* (1353) by Giovanni Boccaccio, *Wit and Mirth, or Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1716) by Thomas D'Urfey, and the *Heptaméron* (1558) by Marguerite of Navarre (Baetzhold 81) may have inspired Twain with the frame narrative. Of course, the narrative form was not new to Twain. Twain adopts it in *Huckleberry Finn*, a novel he was beginning to write at about the same time. In effect, Twain used a frame narrative with comic poses of both superiority and inferiority as early as "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" (1865). Early books such as *Innocents Abroad* (1869) and *Roughing It* (1872) also have narrators whom the author partly satirizes. Through spirited conversation marked by Swiftian bawdiness but recorded by a narrator in indignation, Twain's *1601* parodies sexual hypocrisy in Victorian America. Twain's writing and postponed publication of *1601* expose the nineteenth-century American sexual ideologies that influenced the publishing industry through press censorship. Through its use of scatological terms freely referring to sexual activities, Twain's sketch values freedom from social restrictions. Albert Bigelow Paine acknowledged the contribution of Twain's tale:

> *1601* is a genuine classic, as classics of that sort go. It is better than the gross obscenities of Rabelais, and perhaps in some day to come, the taste that justified Gargantua and the Decameron will

> give this literary refugee shelter and setting among the more conventional writing of Mark Twain. (581)

V. Conclusion

Regarding parody as a "double-coded" device that could be used for more than mere ridicule, Margaret Rose sheds light on two main theories about the nature of the parodist's attitudes to the text quoted. First, the parodist may have the purpose of mocking the chosen text, when "the motivation in parodying it is contempt" (Rose 45). Second, the admiring parodist is "motivated by sympathy with the imitated text" (46). Through the double-coded language of parody that engenders plural connotations, Twain's *1601* blends admiration with a sarcastic attitude toward Shakespeare while surveying the functions of the genre of ribaldry. Using the venerated Elizabethan personages' mirth-provoking erotic humor framed by a hypocritical and snobbish narrator, Twain's tale features sexuality as a biological imperative and serves as a historical allegory to criticize nineteenth-century American social repression. Few of Twain's later works employed devices of bawdry, and, as Chris Packard proclaims, in the humorist's published writings, "some form of violence exercised in the name of social control extinguishes hints at ribald eroticism" (105). The risqué jokes in *1601*, however, demonstrate Twain's aspiration for literary liberation and his criticism of sexual hypocrisy and literary censorship. In *Rationale of the Dirty Joke: An Analysis of Sexual Humor*, Gershon Legman resorts to Freud's theory as purported in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905) and considers the social and psychological function of erotic humor in helping release anxiety associated with the socially taboo themes such as "castration, death, disease, and the Devil" (18) to provide a rationalization that helps us deal with the "unbearable abnormalities of human conduct" (22). Similarly, scholars have attributed the ribaldry in *1601* to Twain's reaction to his society's repressive influence. For Ron Powers, *1601* serves as a "hysterical underground masterpiece" which Twain and his friend the Reverend Joseph Twichell enjoyed reading aloud to each other (392). For Leslie Fiedler, such secret sharing of pornography between Twain and Twichell served in Victorian times as a practice of male bonding (87).

Most significantly, in *1601* Twain integrates his American identity with cultural heritage from Europe by paying tribute to the freedom and ingenuity of

Renaissance culture. Twain held Shakespeare in high regard and constantly employed Shakespearean allusions in his works, but he refused to manipulate Shakespeare's original text. Twain's portrayal of the Duke and the King in *Huckleberry Finn* satirizes the hypocritical exploitations of Shakespeare's authority to procure legitimation of high culture by those who slaughtered Shakespeare's texts. Twain represents Shakespeare through the double-edged ribaldry in *1601* that demonstrates the humorist's interests in Rabelaisian and historical writings. The tale exhibits Twain's knowledge of the archaic English language, literature, London theatre history, the technique of Shakespeare's sexual irony, and Montaigne's and Lyly's influences on Shakespeare. After Twain's death, Howells rightly commented on Twain's unpretentious temperament and his yearning for freedom from social repression: "He had the Southwestern, the Lincolnian, the Elizabethan breadth of parlance . . . which I suppose one ought not to call coarse without calling oneself prudish" (*My Mark Twain* 3-4).

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