

### Udall's *Floures*, Toggling, and Impersonation

For the dissemination of Latin in early modern England, arguably the most significant text was Nicholas Udall's 1533 *Floures for Latine Spekynges*. Udall's florilegium gives running excerpts from three scripts of Terence (*Andria*, *Eunuchus*, *Heauton*; the plays without a *leno*) interspersed with various English renderings as a model for speaking, understanding, and translating colloquial Latin. The *Floures* became a staple of Latin pedagogy in England, being enlarged, reprinted several times, and eventually supplemented with Terence's three other plays in 1575. The book's success reminds us that translation from the classical to the vernacular was never a silent, unidirectional process. Grammar schools inculcated facility in switching back and forth in writing and speaking. For writing, schools taught double translation from Latin to English and back, as advocated by Roger Ascham. For speaking, switching between Latin and English meant learning to toggle between Terence and Udall. Students needed such mental toggling because grammar school statutes and ordinances prohibited them from chattering in English.

The format of *Floures*, like many *vulgaria*, emphasizes the implicit nature of early modern translations as texts to be performed aloud. To today's readers, Udall's phrasebook might seem a disorienting mutilation of Terence's scripts, for Udall gives a sequence of lines in Latin and English renderings with no indication of speakers or context. But to early moderns, the format clearly recalled cue scripts. Actors in early modern England received not a copy of an entire script but only their "part" in a "roll," with cues of one to three words prefixed to their speeches (Palfrey and Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts*, 2011). Udall was not only a schoolmaster but also an impresario. Among other achievements, he staged interludes for such events as the coronation of Anne Boleyn and penned the comedy *Ralph Roister Doister*, whose title character

brought the classical braggart soldier into the English theatrical repertoire. The dedicatory preface of *Floures* figures his students as budding actors: “to the most sweet troupe of his students” (*suavissimo discipulorum suorum gregi*). In short, everyone learning to toggle between Latin and English from Udall’s florilegium surreptitiously received training from him (and Terence) in theatrical, particularly comic, impersonation.

On the theoretical level, *Floures* offers an exemplum for the convergence of Bakhtin’s ideas about heteroglossia, utterance, laughter, and Renaissance formations of vernacular literary languages vis-a-vis Latin (*Dialogic Imagination*, 1981). The very format of *Floures* validates his observation that “languages throw light on each other” and empower a speaker to “appropriate the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention.” Students learning to speak from *Floures* did not perform plays, but they did appropriate, refashion, and perform utterances from the *palliata*. Reception supplanted tradition. Perhaps not coincidentally, as in the third century BCE, Roman comedy played a leading role in the formation of a national literary consciousness (Feeney, 2016).

On a practical and fun level, familiarity with *Floures* enhances our appreciation for how schoolmasters in Shakespeare offer parodic celebrations of Udall’s achievements in toggling and impersonation. In *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, the pedant and impresario Holofernes translates and glosses with flowery excess, inviting critical reflection upon Tudor England’s burgeoning literary and theatrical culture. His opening speech, for example, mimics Udall’s copious variety of toggling translation: “The deer was, as you know, *sanguis*, in blood; ripe as the pomewater, who now hangeth like a jewel in the ear of *caelo*, the sky, the welkin, the heaven; and anon falleth like a crab on the face of *terra*, the soil, the land, the earth.” (4.2.3-7). A handout with

representative snippets of Udall's *Floures*, cue scripts, and Shakespeare will—with audience participation—demonstrate the interpenetration of translation and impersonation.

### Bibliography

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