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## Early Modern Swiss-British Relations in the Barclay-Pynson *Ship of Fools*

The publication in Basel of *Das Narrenschiff* by Sebastian Brant (1494) launched a transnational literary phenomenon sailing its way into book-stalls across Europe. The influential Latin version by Brant's pupil, Jakob Locher, also published in Basel (1497), was the basis for adaptations into French, Flemish, Dutch, and, in 1509, an ambitious English version by the priest Alexander Barclay. This edition, printed by Richard Pynson, is remarkable in many respects: the use of roman type for Locher's Latin text, almost unprecedented in an English book; the elaborate woodcut illustrations, copied from those in the Basel editions; and the reproduction at the front of the book of Locher's prefatory material, with some creative translations by Barclay. These latter have received limited attention but constitute a significant example of early modern Swiss-British relations. Through expansions, reworkings, and redistributions of voice, Barclay claims in the prefaces a role in the making of the book no less integral than Brant's or Locher's. He does not oppose these writers, nor seek to diminish the Basel editions; rather he draws attention to connections between them—textual, visual, and moral—such that the English *Ship of Fools* becomes another point on the compass of a pan-European bibliographical endeavour.

Keywords: *Narrenschiff*; fools; Barclay; Pynson; co-creativity

This article comes out of my research for a book project on co-creativity in early English literary print.<sup>1</sup> Put simply, 'co-creativity' is the activity of several agents—translators, editors, printers, and others—working and making something together, such as books. It differs from the more familiar concepts of multiple, joint, or co-authorship in the attention that it af-

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<sup>1</sup> Associated with the Subproject C05 'The Aesthetics of Co-Creativity in Early Modern English Literature' within the DFB-funded Collaborative Research Centre 1391 'Andere Ästhetik' ('Different Aesthetics').

fords to agents other than the ‘author’ (although author figures are not excluded) and the specifics of the relationships involved in determining the form and transmission of early modern printed books. In contrast to “an additive perspective that frequently underlies the idea of co-authorship,” whereby “multiple authorship is to be understood as the sum of individual authorships,” central to this conception of co-creativity is the notion of interdependence—that is, not just that book-making involves several agents, but also that the role of each agent is dependent on the others, and that responsibility for the book (in its entirety, not just its constituent parts) is shared among them all (see Bauer, Rogalski, and Zirker 125–126 [126 quoted]). The concept is instructive in relation to early English literary print, which combined (and relied on) the roles of various specialist agents and produced books that reflect in quite deliberate ways on the collaborative processes which made them. One conspicuous example of this is the international satirical bestseller *The Ship of Fools*, first published in Basel in German and Latin, then quickly finding berths in Nuremberg and Paris, in Lübeck, the Low Counties, and eventually London, where separate versions by Henry Watson and Alexander Barclay were printed by Wynkyn de Worde and Richard Pynson in 1509. As striking as the geographical range of this most well-travelled of early modern books are the ways in which writers and printers treated it as both Brant’s and Locher’s but also as a domestic work. Each new version and edition of *The Ship of Fools* extends and modifies its audience, but they also reconfigure its authorship. By the time of the Barclay-Pynson edition—my focus in the present article—the cosmopolitanism of the book was a key part to its appeal. No less important, however, and as especially evidenced by Barclay’s prefatory material, were the new agents involved and changes introduced in this English *Ship of Fools*. What follows explores how one writer and his printer harnessed the collaborative and transnational energies which they saw characterised literary production in order to market new writing in English.

### 1. The Transnational *Ship of Fools*

In all of its versions, *The Ship of Fools* is a long allegorical text about a ship with a dysfunctional crew. They speak, or (more usually) are spoken of, fool by fool, in a series of satires on contemporary follies. The allegory of a ship of fools is at least as old as Plato’s *Republic* (6.488), but the inaugurating text in the early modern tradition is the German *Das*

*Narrenschiff* by Sebastian Brant (1457/8-1521) (see Zeydel 8–15).<sup>2</sup> Published in Basel in 1494, Brant's *Narrenschiff* set the pattern for the many versions which followed (for an overview, see Pompen 7–19 and Zeydel 21–31). Each chapter treats a different folly, supported by biblical and other authorities, and is illustrated with a pictorial woodcut. It is these woodcuts to which *Das Narrenschiff* owed much of its success, and they were reused or copied in almost all of the editions which were published during the next two decades (Zeydel 19).

The same period saw at least nine translations and adaptations into Latin and the European vernaculars. The first, the Latin version, with the title *Stultifera nauis*, was produced by Brant's pupil and protégé, Jakob Locher (1471-1528), and published, also in Basel, in 1497. This is more a free adaptation than a strict translation of *Das Narrenschiff* (and of a second, expanded, edition), but it retains the allegory of the ship and separate chapters on the different fools, and it was printed with the original woodcuts. It was Locher's Latin rather than Brant's German text which was the basis for most subsequent versions. These include a French verse paraphrase (usually attributed to Pierre Rivière), two more French versions in prose, one Flemish version, another in Latin, and two English versions, all published by 1509.

*The Ship of Fools*, then, is not only a Swiss or German book, but also a French, Dutch, and an English one, published in Basel, Paris, London, and many other print centres in between. It is difficult to determine an original: while the Basel *Das Narrenschiff* is the most obvious candidate, it was Locher's *Stultifera nauis* which sailed its way into bookstalls across Europe. To make matters more complicated, while the Latin is quite different to the German, it was made with Brant's full approval, as indicated by letters between Locher and his teacher which are printed at the front of most editions.

Which all begs the question: if the early modern *Ship of Fools* is so diasporic a bibliographical entity, why talk about it as a distinct book at all? The answer is, in part: because its writers and first printers ask us to do so. Regardless of authorship, language, or place of publication, *The Ship of Fools* is immediately recognisable by its title, arrangement, and woodcut illustrations. Whether an edition of Locher's Latin or one of the French or English versions, readers, I argue, were encouraged to view the

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<sup>2</sup> See further Foucault 3–43 and Pinson on the emergence of the ship of fools motif in literature and the visual arts and the reasons for its success in capturing the imagination of Northern Europe in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

text as one more contribution to an ongoing project. There were two literary and commercial advantages to this, relating to issues of authenticity and distinctiveness. First, by signalling that their new *Ship of Fools* continues, rather than simply reproduces, the work of Brant, Locher, et al., writers and printers could sidestep the issue—especially acute in the case of English—of ‘the perceived inferiority of the target language’ (Oakley-Brown 122) and the secondary status of translation;<sup>3</sup> and second, conversely, by emphasising the affinity between the new and previous versions, writers and printers also had the opportunity to highlight the special qualities of their own.

This can be seen through comparison of the Latin *Ship of Fools* and a less well known English version, *The Shyp of folys of the worlde*, written by the poet and clergyman Alexander Barclay (c. 1484-1552) and printed in London by Richard Pynson (c. 1449-c. 1539) (see further Carlson on Barclay and Pynson).<sup>4</sup> The following sections extend the idea of *The Ship of Fools* as a book that transcends any one author, place, or language, while still each version advances a claim to national (even regional) specificity. In the Barclay-Pynson edition, this dual quality of being both foreign and domestic, Brant’s and Locher’s but also Barclay’s, is especially pronounced and I think carefully considered in the extensive prefatory material.

## 2. Continental Connections of the Barclay-Pynson *Ship of Fools*

The Barclay-Pynson *Ship of Fools* is based, like most of the non-German versions, on the Latin *Stultifera nauis*,<sup>5</sup> supplemented with readings from Rivière’s verse paraphrase (Pompen 8). Considerable effort and expense went into emphasising the connection. The edition is printed in a bilingual format: Locher’s Latin followed by Barclay’s English rendering. The Latin is printed in Roman type—one of the first and most extensive uses in early sixteenth-century England (Isaac 5, Carter 92)—while the English is

<sup>3</sup> Although this devaluation of translation in comparison to the ‘original’ work is in part a more modern attitude, still emerging in the sixteenth century: see Morini.

<sup>4</sup> Constraints of space prevent detailed discussion of the even less known Watson-de Worde edition (see above); further work will appear in my book (in preparation) on co-creativity in early English literary print.

<sup>5</sup> Specifically, either the Paris or the Lyon reprint of the Basel second edition (Pompen 18, 102–103).

printed in blackletter (see further Wakelin 474–477 on the book’s layout). Not only Locher’s text is reproduced: Pynson also printed the woodcuts. These are copies probably from a French edition, which had woodcuts copied from the originals (Pompen 292, Hodnett 41–42); but even if the woodcuts commissioned by Pynson are at two removes from those made in Basel, they are well executed, especially by English standards, as can be seen by comparison with the Watson-de Worde edition, whose cruder pictorial woodcuts are more typical of English books of the period (Hodnett nos 1129–1220, 1824–1923). Clearly, it was thought to be important—certainly by Pynson, and it seems also by Barclay (see below)—to preserve both the images and text of their continental sources. By being printed with woodcuts derived ultimately from Basel and having the Latin available for comparison—as pointed out in the book’s dedication (sig. [[Maltese Cross]1]v) and Barclay’s additions to Locher’s “Argumentum” (fol. 12)—the Barclay-Pynson *Ship of Fool* reduces the gap between itself and “the verses of my Actour” (fol. 12v). This connects to the issue of authenticity. Claims of fidelity to an authoritative source, usually with an apology for the inferiority of the translation, are a commonplace among Renaissance translators. Barclay is no exception, and in a prose prologue adapted from Locher, he says that he has translated the work “as nere to the sayd thre Langages [i.e. German, Latin, and French: see further below] as the *parcyte* of my wyt wyll suffer me” (fol. 8v). He exhorts each reader to “beholde and ouer rede this boke” and, borrowing a conceit from Brant and Locher,<sup>6</sup> says that “I doubt nat but he shal se the errorrs of hys lyfe of what condycyon that he be. in lyke wyse as he shal se in a Myrroure the fourme of his countenaunce and vysage” (fol. 8v). This English *Ship of Fools*, contends Barclay, may read differently, but it functions in the same way, as a mirror of the world’s follies.<sup>7</sup>

Yet if Barclay and Pynson hoped on the one hand to attach cultural capital to their book by means of similarity to its continental sources, on the other they saw a need to distinguish it as a new, English production. In

<sup>6</sup> The idea of *The Ship of Fools* as mirror in which readers can see their own follies appears in a verse prologue by Brant, reduced by Locher into a “Hecastastichon”, and rendered into English by Barclay (fols 10r–12r); also Brant’s Latin “Celeusma” (see below) and Locher’s prose “Argumentum”.

<sup>7</sup> The ‘Englishness’ of the Barclay-Pynson *Ship of Fools* becomes a slightly contentious issue if, as been suggested on the basis of Barclay’s Scottish surname and some sixteenth-century comments, Barclay was born in Scotland (Orme). The frame of reference for the Barclay-Pynson *Ship of Fools*, however, is distinctly English, focussed on London (see below) and Ottery St Mary, Devon, where Barclay was a chaplain at the collegiate church.

contrast to Lawrence Venuti's idea of the modern "invisible" translator (1), processes of transmission and renewal are writ large in the Barclay-Pynson *Ship of Fools*. The book's prefaces are discussed in more detail below, but returning to its overall appearance, it seems that the order and layout were meant to draw attention to Barclay's textual innovations. In the book's bilingual format, the Latin text precedes the English, suggesting an internal order of precedence. However, the copied pictorial woodcuts, together with the Latin *sententiae* which accompany them,<sup>8</sup> are not printed at the start of the Latin text but rather at the start of the English. In a printed book of this size, one of the functions of pictorial woodcuts is to divide and organise the text (Driver 1). In the Barclay-Pynson *Ship of Fools*, readers looking for a particular chapter, or simply browsing for an eye-catching woodcut, will find below and/or facing the image Barclay's English text, such that *this* is where the chapter begins. This arrangement also means that explanation of the woodcuts—which are in many cases enigmatic without the text—is given by Barclay rather than Locher. This becomes significant when Barclay's interpretation differs from that in his sources, sometimes, it seems, because he did not understand them, but at other times (as I argue elsewhere: see Atkinson) deliberately to reconfigure their meaning. This is subtle and might not always have been noticed—different readers may have prioritised different texts (see Wakelin 475–478)—but it is mentioned in one of the prefaces. In a verse prologue—again with Locher as the source, but with considerable additions by Barclay—it is said that the fools

[...] dystinctly shal apere  
 On euery lefe: in Pycures fayre and large.  
 To Barclays stody: and Pynsones cost and charge (Barclay fol. 11v)

The term "stody" here is frustratingly vague, but it attributes some aspect of the woodcuts to Barclay's intellectual labour. It can hardly have been meant as a claim that Barclay designed the woodcuts himself: the large trade in imported books (of which there were more in circulation in England at this time than books printed domestically [Ford]) makes it likely that versions of the *Ship of Fools* woodcuts would already have been known to some readers. The phrase 'To Barclay's stody' seems rather to

<sup>8</sup> These Latin *sententiae*, which appear in the margin by each pictorial woodcut, rarely relate to the image directly but rather to the contents of the chapter more generally. They are not in the Basel first edition of Locher's Latin version but were added to the second.

refer to Barclay's careful study of the woodcuts—how he has recovered the sometimes obscure significations intimated by Locher's Latin text, and in places replaced them with more colloquial ideas, more relevant to English readers. It also points to a degree of collaboration between Barclay and the printer Pynson: “[Barclay] knew enough about plans for the edition's production to write this stanza advertising on Pynson's behalf the ‘pictures fayre and large’” (Carlson 293); elsewhere, he remarks on the “charge” given him by Pynson (fol. 51r); and he uses his last, leave-taking stanza to direct those wanting to buy copies of the book to ‘Pynsonnes place’ in Fleet Street (fol. 278r). This collaborative process of domestication and renewal is further signalled in the book's glosses and envoys, as recently examined by John Colley. In addition to glosses from the Latin version, reproduced with the English text, further glosses “make the *Shyp* more accessible for a specifically English audience” and “underscore certain additions which Barclay has made to his sources” (Colley 155). Original envoys at the end of most chapters name Barclay as “Translatour,” sometimes “Actour,” “the epitome of a ‘visible’ translator” (Colley 155, 158, citing Coldiron 189–200). As in the prefaces, the glosses and envoys point to continental sources for the book and Barclay's use of existing materials, but they also make clear his original contributions, and the book's status as not just a reproduction. I will now consider some of those prefaces in more detail.

### 3. Redistribution of Voice and Agency in Barclay's Rendering of Locher's Prose Prologue

I quote above from Barclay's English rendering of a Latin prose prologue by Locher, which is reproduced, as with the chapters, on the immediately preceding pages (fols 7v–8v). This juxtaposition of Latin and English allows—indeed, encourages—close attention to Barclay's handling of his source: far from a literal translation, it conveys the more-than-reproduction that this English *Ship of Fools* was intended to be. At first, Barclay stays close to Latin, retaining the present perfect tense and first-person pronouns from Locher's commentary on his translation. The English text begins:

After that I haue longe mused by my self of the sore confounded and vn-certaine cours of mannys lyfe / and thinges therto belonging: at the last I

haue by my vigilant meditacion found and noted many degrees of errors:  
 wherby mankynd wandreth from the way of trouthe... (Barclay fol. 7v)<sup>9</sup>

Though the words are Barclay's, the subject, one assumes, is still Locher—he, in other words, remains the author. But something strange happens towards the end of the prologue. Following the Latin, the English explains that Sebastian Brant “composed in doche language”—meaning German—this work, which is “most expedient and necessary to the redar” (fol. 8v). Then, suddenly, the voice of Barclay intervenes. In the Latin, Locher, still in the first person, says that he will translate *Das Narrenschiff* to make it known to other nations that don't speak German. In the English, Barclay changes this to the third person and places Locher's translation in the past:

And after hym [i.e., Brant] one called James Locher his Disciple translated the same into Laten to the vnderstandynge of al Christen nacions where Laten is spoken. Than another (whose name to me is vnknown) translated the same into Frenche [i.e. Rivière's verse paraphrase]. I haue ouersene the fyrst Inuention in Doche, and after that the two translations in Latin and Frenche whiche agreeth in sentence: threefolde in language wherefore wylling to redresse the errors and vyces of this our Royalme of Englonde; as the foresayde composer and translatoours hath done in theyr Contrees I haue taken vpon me: howbeit vnworthy to drawe into our Englysshe tunge the sayd boke named the shyp of Folys (Barclay fol. 8v)

The voice is no longer Locher's; rather it is Alexander Barclay's. He is presented not just as a translator but as continuing and participating in the work which was begun by Brant and Locher. Robert Meyer-Lee observes a flattening in this passage of the hierarchy between ‘composer’ and ‘translatoours’:

Instead of appearing as just another agent for the dissemination of Brant's great “Inuencion”, Barclay appears as an equal member of a group of moral authorities, each of whom [...] wishes “to redres the errors and vyces” of his respective community. (Meyer-Lee 195)

Meyer-Lee interprets this passage as part of an attempt by Barclay to present his version of *The Ship of Fools* as “a kind of culmination of the prior ones, drawn from ‘thre Langages’ rather than a mere translation of a

<sup>9</sup> Compare with “CVm mecum diu multumque cogitasset lectores fauentissimi: de rerum humanarum cursu confusissimo: comperi mehercule: ex meditatione mea vigilantanti: quamplurimos errorum gradus: quibus humanum genus in precipitum labitur” (Barclay fol. [6]r).

translation” (195). I agree that Barclay is eager to point out the multiple authors of the book, not least himself; but I resist Meyer-Lee’s suggestion that this is ultimately for the promotion of Barclay’s single authorship. Barclay makes claims, here and elsewhere, to a role in the making of this English *Ship of Fools* no less integral than Brant’s or Locher’s, yet he does not oppose these writers nor seek to diminish the Basel editions; rather he, and the Barclay-Pynson edition more generally, draws attention to the connections between them—textual, visual, and all-importantly, moral (they “agreeth in sentence”)—such that this English *Ship of Fools* becomes another point on the compass of a pan-European bibliographical endeavour.

#### 4. The Allegory of the Ship in “Barclay the Translatour tho the Foles”

I use this nautical terminology advisedly. The allegory of the ship as a framework for *The Ship of Fools* is ubiquitous across its many versions; in the Barclay-Pynson edition, however, it works not only as a container for the catalogue of fools of the world: it is also used to thematise the book’s transnational and collaborative character.

Before Locher’s Latin prologue comes a poem with the heading “Barclay the Translatour tho the Foles”. This is an English rendering of the Latin verse “Celeusma,” one of Brant’s contributions to the *Stultifera nauis*.<sup>10</sup> Brant’s verse is a call to the fools to embark for “Narragonia,” an imaginary country perhaps meant to suggest Aragon and the German word *Narr* (“fool”). Barclay’s version likewise begins:

To Shyp galantes the se is at the ful.  
The wynde vs calleth our sayles ar displayed. (Barclay fol. 5v)

As in the Latin, this ship of fools has no fixed itinerary, although the voyage envisaged by Barclay includes some familiar English ports:

Where may we best aryue; at Lyn [i.e. King’s Lynn] or else at Hulle;  
To vs may no hauen in Englonde be denayd. (Barclay fol. 5v)

There are many such domesticating details in Barclay’s English text, from the substitution of Henry VIII for the Emperor Maximilian as the saviour

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<sup>10</sup> *Celeusma*, from Ancient Greek, is “[a] watchword, battle-cry; the call of the signalman who gives the time to rowers” (*celeusma n.*).

of Christendom from the Ottoman Turks (fol. 212v)<sup>11</sup> to Barclay's advice that one need not go abroad to learn "Uenus rybawdry"—it can be found in abundance "At saynt Martyns [i.e. St Martin-in-the-Fields] Westmynster or at the tour hyll [i.e. Tower Hill]" (fol. 73v) (see Hosington for further examples). Such references have led Warren Boutcher to describe the Barclay-Pynson *Ship of Fools* as "the first of the significantly humanist influenced translations to be published [in early modern England]" (51). Boutcher is referring here not only to Barclay's use of continental "humanist" sources but also his "socializ[ing]" (51) approach to translation, whereby "[t]he enthusiastic translator will call upon as many different resources as possible"—many of them domestic—"to reanimate and revisualize the sense of what he would have called his 'copy', the model whose forms he is to repeat and elaborate" (47). The objective is not a like-for-like reproduction of Locher's (or Brant's) *Ship of Fools*, but rather to refit an international bestseller to particular English circumstances, and in the process to stretch and illustrate the capacities of the English language and translator.

This notion of a socialising approach to translation further illuminates Barclay's use of the ship allegory. Returning to "Barclay the Translatour tho the Foles," Barclay, having announced the ship's departure, presents himself as the steersman who is responsible for its course:

If any man of warre / wether / or wynde apere.  
My selfe shal trye the wynde and kepe the Stere. (Barclay fol. 5v)

Barclay recognises the act of authorial appropriation that this suggestion, even if allegory, might be taken to represent. He asks his readers to:

[...] haue ye no dysdayne  
Though Barclay haue presumed audacite  
This Shyp to rule as chefe mayster and Captayne.  
Thogh some thynke them self moche worthyer than he.  
It were great marualye forsoth syth he hath be.  
A scoler longe: and that in dyuers scoles  
But he myght be Captayne of a Shyp of Foles.

But if that any one be in suche maner case.

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<sup>11</sup> This is followed by six stanzas in praise of James VI, king of Scotland, with whom Henry is urged to join forces (Barclay fols 212v–213r). This has been taken as evidence for Barclay's Scottish birth (Orme); alternatively, it may simply be the case that "James represented, in the eyes of his contemporaries, the ideal monarch," worthy of praise (Hosington 155).

That he wyl chalange the maystershyps fro me  
 yet in my Shyp can I nat want a place.  
 For in euery place my selfe I oft may se. (Barclay fol. 5v–[6]r)

Barclay humorously suggests that he should not be denied the ship's helm, for he is as well acquainted as any writer with the many follies that it contains. It is an affected gesture of modesty made also by Brant in the "Celeusma".<sup>12</sup> Yet here, I argue, it does more than simply self-ironise. Somewhat surprisingly, the allegory of the ship, in which the author too has a place, is hardly utilised in the text of *Das Narrenschiff*—indeed, it has been proposed that it might have been an afterthought which was suggested to Brant by the woodcuts (Pompen 299, Zeydel 11). It is developed by Locher in the Latin version, which includes references to the ship in more than thirty places where they do not appear in *Das Narrenschiff*, and to which Brant contributed the "Celeusma," already discussed, and an "Exhortatio," where he instructs Locher to take the helm. But neither the German nor the Latin versions compare to Barclay, who uses the allegory of the ship to describe the structure and the progress of the book. He is far from consistent in his references. As Aurelius Pompen observes:

in the majority of cases he merely mentions "this Ship" or "this barge" as a synonym for "this chapter" or "this book", without being quite sure whether his book is one ship or a collection of ships or a whole navy [this is also inconsistent in Brant and Locher]. Sometimes he bethinks himself of a special place or a special office in his ship, and the allegory becomes a little more vivid [e.g. "Barclay the Translatour tho the Foles"]. But in the most vivid passages the reader is never sure whether the fools are already on board, or whether they are anxious to get there, or whether they are compelled to embark. Some people are dismissed because they are too good, others because they are too bad or because they are too numerous. The ship of navy is ready to sail or it is in mid-ocean or it has just come back to port. (Pompen 300)

This all sounds rather bewildering, and it is; but it seems to me quite in keeping with Barclay's purpose. What better than a conflation of book and ship for a title that had voyaged across continental Europe and now also the English Channel? Reading the Barclay-Pynson edition, it is never

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<sup>12</sup> "Ipse ego cunque locum volui mihi quaerere forsan: | Inueni in quouis me fore saepe loco" ("When I wanted to find a place for myself among the fools, I found that I had often been a fool in all places") (Barclay fol. 3r, translation Pompen 268).

clear where the ship is or where it is going, but that is because its journey is without beginning or end, forever acquiring new fools—and new authors—and made no less necessary by each new version. Transnationality and sociability are made essential to the book by Barclay, for whom *The Ship of Fools* is a vessel which exceeds any one place or author. “Barclay the Translatour tho the Foles,” while making Barclay the allegorical steersman, does not expect him to complete the project which was begun by Brant and Locher; rather it imagines the work as requiring many tongues, and with the potential to be endlessly continued:

For yf I had tungen an hundreth: and wyt to fele  
 Al thinges natural and supernaturall  
 A thousand mouthes: and voyce as harde as stele.  
 And sene all the seuen Sciences lyberal  
 yet cowde I neuer touche the vyces all.  
 And syn of the worlde: ne theyr braunches comprehende:  
 Nat though I lyued vnto the worldes ende. (Barclay, fol. [6]r)

## 5. Conclusion

The Barclay-Pynson *Ship of Fools* stands out as an example of early modern relations between Switzerland—in particular, Basel—and the British Isles; I have tried to show in this article how its transnational and collaborative character was highlighted and thematised by its makers. Their motives were of course commercial, but also didactic, and, I think, highly bookish. By unmooring *The Ship of Fools* from any one author, language, or place of publication each version is made vendible not simply as a reproduction but as an extension of an ongoing project, always current, refreshingly colloquial, and playfully elaborating on the allegory of the ship. As well as fascinating in itself, the Barclay-Pynson *Ship of Fools* reminds us that the early modern book trade, even on the remote island of Britain, was self-consciously cosmopolitan from the start. The prefaces in particular will reward further study as reflections on co-creativity, and there is work to be done of the Watson-de Worde version and other ship-shaped satires of this period (see especially [Skelton] and [*Cocke Lorelles bote*]).

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