

This word *mulier* seems to have been peculiarly fruitful of fanciful etymologies. Stephanus (1531) says, "Mulier . . . à mollitie dicitur, vt inquit Varro, immutata & detracta litera, quasi mollier."<sup>136</sup> Owen has made a Latin epigram on this etymology.

70. *Mulier.*  
 Dicta fuit Mulier quasi\* mollior: est tamē Eua  
 Non de carne sui sumta, sed osse, viri.<sup>136</sup>  
 \*Varro de ling. lat.

This etymology of *mollier* had been further broken into *mollis aer*, else that etymology had been independently derived.

Dr. Aldis Wright points out the following in *A World of Wonders* by Henry Stephen, translated by R. C., 1607, p. 292: "the ancient Latinists . . . had no good dexteritie in giving Etymologies of Ancient Latin words; witness the notation of *Mulier, quasi mollis aer*." A writer in *Notes and Queries* (Feb. 1857) quotes Isidore of Seville as giving this grotesque etymology.<sup>137</sup>

Shakspeare is thus turning a current Latin etymology to his purposes. To do this and his other feats of etymologizing he needed only the elementary training of grammar school. This training enabled him at need to manufacture ludicrous Latins and etymologies for his pretenders and pedants. I take it that Quinapalus<sup>138</sup> is one of these, being *quina palus*, five marsh, rather an appropriate authority for a clown to quote on fools. Of what Shakspeare could do seriously in this type of thing we have no surviving illustrations; but at least he had some smatterings such as grammar school should have given. We shall probably be safe enough in concluding that Shakspeare memorized his Withals and learned how to use Cooper, probably Baret, and other aids as he struggled with his Latins, Biblical and otherwise.

<sup>136</sup> See also Calepine, *Cornucopia*, etc. Baret, *Alvearie* (1580) says, "a Woman. *Mulier* . . . à mollicie dicta est, immutata & detracta litera quasi mollier: & propriè Mulier dicitur, quae virgo non est" etc.

<sup>137</sup> Owen, J., *Epigrammatum . . . Libri Tres* (London, 1607, personal), p. [A10]r.

<sup>138</sup> Dowden, E., *Cymbeline* (Arden ed., p. 209). <sup>139</sup> *Twelfth Night*, I, 5, 39.