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Porci ante Margaritam: Essays in honour of Meg Twycross

Edited by

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Meg Twycross

Meg Twycross

Sarah Carpenter (and contributors)

Meg's glowing entrance at the METH meeting that celebrated this collection, her vividly sequined peacock jacket drawing and dazzling the eye, 'feeding the gaze' of assembled friends and colleagues, enacted in literal performance the role she has taken for the last thirty years in the field of medieval drama. She has been, at many levels, a beacon for medieval theatre studies. All her work has been visually spectacular, meticulous in material detail, responsive to and projected through the affective complexities of performance.

The understanding of medieval theatre has shifted dramatically over the last decades, particularly perhaps in the increased focus on and access to the material evidences of performance. Meg has always written and published vigorously and with immeasurable scholarship in this area. But her greatest influence may not have been in the published word, but in her engagement with other means of understanding performance. The prime areas of Meg's work show her as one of the key figures in opening up the new approaches that transformed the field.

Back in the 1970s at the University of Oxford she began, with the N.town *Mary Play* a long and impressive series of productions of medieval dramatic texts. They have contributed strikingly to the way in which performance itself has become a research tool in early theatre study. Meg's productions, from the beginning, drew on her detailed knowledge of iconography, costume and fabric, staging, spectacle and the physical conditions of performance. Trusting to these as keys to unlocking and developing the supposedly 'simple' texts of mystery and morality plays, her productions have over the years helped to confront and explore key issues in medieval performance. The *Mary Play* enacted the iconographic complexity of many of the mystery plays, respecting their seriously mixed tones of high seriousness and farce. Later productions with the *Joculatores Lancastrienses* investigated the relationship between drama and liturgy in productions of the *Resurrection*; the implications of male performance of female roles in the *Purification*; the effects of pageant wagon staging in the spectacularly impressive *Doomsday* pageant played with fire, music and towering Heaven through parts of the original route along the streets of York; and numerous effects and questions raised by the energetic inventiveness of sixteenth-century

interludes. The interaction of scholarly research with vibrant performance opened many academic and non-academic eyes to the expressive possibilities of medieval texts.

Production especially stresses the joint, co-operative nature both of theatre and research into it: such communal enterprise has always been important in Meg's work – as in her life. In 1979 she was instrumental in establishing *Medieval English Theatre*: the society and journal dedicated to research in early theatre, especially aspects of performance. Its annual conference meeting has brought together and maintained a cohesive and mutually supportive community of medieval theatre researchers, with a forum to share and develop the kind of work that does not always sit comfortably in traditional academic journals. Both in her own publication, and in the editorial roles METH led her into, Meg has been instrumental in raising the standard of published work in the field. She judges all contributions by the exacting standards she sets herself, and offers lengthy suggestions on every worthy article she referees. All the work which has passed by her dreaded red pen has been the better for it.

The intersection of the academic with the theatrical, of the visual and material with the verbal and conceptual, has always characterised Meg's work and often been the source of her creativity. Consequently, she has been particularly receptive to the possibilities of multi-media technology, and what it can offer to the study of medieval theatre. In the 1990s she was involved in establishing the *York Doomsday Project*, a research project into every aspect of the *York Plays* and their complex contexts. This draws on the resources of multi-media computer technology to collect, hyperlink and reproduce high-resolution manuscript, image, record and other evidences electronically. Although in its infancy, such technology has the potential to revolutionise access to and study of medieval performance across the world.

Meg's work has consistently addressed new or unfamiliar areas and approaches in the field, liaising with colleagues in other fields and other countries to expand the possibilities for medieval English theatre. She was among those most receptive to the comparative study of medieval theatre across Europe that has invigorated the English field; in particular her research with colleagues from Leuven into the pictorial and archival evidence of processional performance in the Low Countries will open up new areas of evidence to theatre researchers in Meg's characteristically vivid, visual but meticulous style.

Meg's work has always been creatively bound up with her role as a teacher. All her productions in Lancaster have been the products of a unique course in

which undergraduates learn about the medieval theatre by putting on a play. Her teaching is always innovative and imaginative: her undergraduates can take a course in medieval palaeography which is now taught through an interactive computer programme she has written, and examined in part by the requirement that they each make a medieval manuscript. In her longstanding course on the Themes and Images of the Middle Ages, students are immersed in the texts and pictures, themes and myths, and are invited to share her intimacy with and enthusiasm for the Middle Ages. Her favourite teaching area is Anglo-Saxon, however, where again she attracts a loyal and dedicated following for a subject area neither fashionable nor compulsory. Like everything she does, her teaching is endlessly painstaking, deeply challenging, and wholly original. Through her active role in the Erasmus project there are now ex-students all over Europe who vividly recall being taught by Meg.

Everyone involved with theatre knows that it is an area where warmth, spectacle, vivid engagement combine with endless stress, improvisation and unlimited personal commitment. Meg's frighteningly wide-ranging, rigorous and polymathic research has always combined with intense personal engagement of individual people in the projects of performance. The richly detailed verbal and visual textures of her work, whether on the page, the stage, or in her friends lives, have inspired and enlightened many overlapping circles of medieval theatre workers – if occasionally exasperating those in charge of deadlines, word-limits and other kinds of academic constraint. Meg knows, sees and creates too much to make 'finishing' anything an easy task.

Yet if her status and significance in the subject are plain in her writing and productions, it may be that her influence on friends and colleagues is an equally important contribution to the living field of medieval theatre studies. The rich range of topics addressed by her friends in this collection – productions medieval and modern; illustration and text; Spanish, Dutch, Flemish and English performance; mock battles and legal covenants; acting techniques and playing places; formal texts and informal games – confirms the breadth of her own interests. But a random sample of reminiscences and reflections collected from friends and colleagues testifies to the less tangible but even more vivid ways in which Meg has touched the perceptions and lives of the medieval theatre community.

* * *

'I first knew Meg as a student actor taking on a puzzling role: Mercy in the 'Parliament of Heaven'. I was already hooked on performance, but this confronted me with all kinds of new questions. How does the conceptual combine with the actual in an allegorical 'character'? How can an actor engage the audience emotionally in 'non-naturalistic' theatre? How can the immediacy of performance throw light on historical perceptions and cultures? The weight of the head-dress, the way the costume influenced gesture, all drew me into a preoccupation with medieval performance. That preoccupation, fed by Meg's endless individual engagement and inspiration, came to shape my whole academic life.'

'I first remember Meg from an undergraduate lecture. She was talking about what the Green Knight *wore*, which was a completely unexpected topic – not at all what we would have expected then from a literature lecture. My own teaching is still influenced by her techniques. I remember how she got us all to dress up in different historical costume to get to grips with pronunciation change.'

'I first met Meg at an appointments committee in 1974. Our deliberations weren't protracted: she was so obviously the best candidate and Oxford's loss was Lancaster's lasting gain. Since then I have watched with admiration how she has led medieval studies (especially drama) from predominantly historical and philological approaches (although she can teach these too) into an absorbing practice-based and literary discipline.'

'I remember exciting early conversations with Meg about the forming of *Medieval English Theatre* and the wonderful, characteristically exhaustive, questionnaire on pageant waggons that she compiled for the first METH meeting. My only contribution, I think, was the eccentric spelling of 'waggons'. I also remember a wealth of postcards from travel abroad – especially 'Antichrist's mother', which is still stuck up in the kitchen at home. There was her generous help in handing over her own modern-spelling texts when the deadline for production of the 1980 Wakefield plays was looming – a generosity that inadvertently and shamefully was never recorded in the programme. And productions, of course. The rich, endlessly-inventive, and hugely entertaining Chester 'Purification' still seems to me unmatched in pageant productions.'

'I first met Meg at the first METH meeting in 1979, when I was a postgraduate student at York. It was the first conference in my life, the first paper I ever gave, and the York gang made me drive the minibus too. I found Meg pretty terrifying, and the fact that she had two meek daughters at her bidding

handing round home-made scones completed the image of a worthy role-model. *Medieval English Theatre* and I have grown up together, shaped from that beginning. Meg is now friend, colleague and co-conspirator in a number of projects and adventures all more or less concerned with the study of medieval theatre, but as a role model I have yet to find a better.'

'We first met on our Medieval Players' maiden tour in Summer 1981, where in the shadow of Carlisle Cathedral we ate lunch at Franco's Pizzeria. Like the setting, our theatrical project was a strange mix of the medieval and modern, and Meg's immediate and intuitive grasp of what we were attempting gave us great encouragement to continue with the experiment. From the very start Meg proved a generous and loyal supporter of the Medieval Players. But she wasn't uncritical: half in jest she once remarked that it was her role to provide us with expert advice and it was ours to ignore it. Her own productions may have been informed by the most detailed research but they weren't without their moments of refreshing anachronism: my favourite was in *That Girl from Andros* when the cast burst into a Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers' number – 'Pick Yourself Up' from *Top Hat*. I hope that Meg recognised in our productions some traces of her humour and her sound advice.'

'The first time I saw Meg was on a stage, explaining how costume determined posture on the stage and in paintings. I was woefully ignorant of the theatre, let alone medieval theatre, and all of a sudden understood so much more and was so fascinated.'

'In one of my filing cabinets I keep folders and appropriate contents from every one of the METH annual meetings since 1979. Periodically, when I need to create space for other documents I look at the METH folders and wonder whether I should throw them away. To date, I have always resisted this bold action. This is because the annual METH meeting has always provided me with a 'life-line' to my medieval friends and colleagues and their work. When my work at Bretton Hall has taken me in directions other than medieval ones, the last Saturday in March (the usual day of the METH meeting) has always provided me with sufficient stimulus to drive through my medieval work for the coming year. I don't know to what extent Meg knows of this significance and her role in it. I hope she does now.'

* * *

Sarah Carpenter

The brilliant colour and inventiveness of Meg's contributions to medieval theatre studies can, inevitably, hardly be matched or captured in a work like this. But the range of interest, engagement and scholarship captured in this volume may at least be a gift from the medieval theatre community to mark the special quality of what she has given to it.

Occupation and Idleness

Richard Beadle

Occupation and Idleness is a mid-fifteenth century interlude whose genuine identity as a play has for too long been concealed under the misnomer 'dialogue'.¹ It has a great deal in common with (but also some differences from) the type of short, portable, small-cast plays, designed for indoor performance, that attracted the early printers from the 1490s onwards, and, generically-speaking, it is probably fair to describe *Occupation and Idleness* as a Tudor Interlude *avant la lettre*.² The unique surviving copy is in Winchester College MS 33, where it is to be found in the company of several standard Middle English religious texts, including extracts from the *South English Legendary*, the prose *Gospel of Nicodemus* and the *Abbey of the Holy Ghost*. It also has a companion piece in the Winchester manuscript in the shape of *Lucidus and Dubius*, which may with more justice be described as a semi-dramatic dialogue. To judge by its bibliographical complexion, the handwriting, and the scribal language, the manuscript seems likely to have been copied around the middle of the fifteenth century.³ Precisely how long it has been at Winchester is not known, but it was certainly in the library in 1634, and may have been at the college as early as c. 1529, if not earlier.⁴

We cannot say definitively that the manuscript was at Winchester at or immediately after the time that it was compiled, or that *Occupation and Idleness* – which was performed in a 'halle' (272) – was seen in the great hall of the college; but the school certainly had a strong dramatic tradition extending through the fifteenth century into the sixteenth, including records of plays given in the hall.⁵ Whether or not the play formed part of a repertoire performed in the college hall at Winchester, it is without doubt an edifying and instructive piece which would be eminently suited to a place where boys and youths were being educated. The reform of Idleness, 'a child in yowthe' (791) is effected by Doctrine, 'A maister of dyvyneté / Of the unyversyté' (297-98). As Ian Lancashire has pointed out, this motif may be connected with circumstances at Winchester, which was established together with a sister foundation

at New College, Oxford, whence annually the warden and two fellows came in visitation of the school.⁶ It is also possible that the play may originally have had an occasion, since much is made, in Doctrine's edifying discourses in the latter part of the plays, of 'al halowen', or All Saints, and 'Al Halowen day' is specifically invoked (563ff., 624). As many parish, household and corporate accounts of the time show, feasts, ceremonies and entertainments on the feast of All Souls became increasingly elaborate during the fifteenth century, and a diverting but penitentially directed interlude such as *Occupation and Idleness* would not have been out of place on such an occasion.⁷ It is also worth noting that an extended allusion to the Assumption of the Virgin, with Latin quotations from the account of the episode in the *Legenda aurea* and the liturgy of the feast, is pointedly introduced towards the end of the play (825ff.), but again there is no way of knowing for certain whether this might imply some connection with the college's dedication to the Virgin.

As against the circumstantial evidence linking *Occupation and Idleness* specifically with the college at Winchester, it might be advanced that Idleness is not presented as a schoolboy as such. Nor is Occupation, his foil, a schoolmaster; rather, he appears as a worthy yeoman farmer, albeit somewhat slow on the uptake. On the other hand, the surviving dramatic records of the college do seem to indicate that its plays were on occasion open to a wider audience of people from the neighbourhood.⁸ In such circumstances a more generalised presentation of its two principal figures, assimilating Idleness to aspects of the traditional didactic figure of Sloth, and emphasising Occupation's emblematic quality as a virtuous labourer, would have given the play wider appeal, and a circulation beyond the collegiate setting.⁹ Doctrine's appeal to the audience to

Sette youre children unto scole,
Ye that ben good men of fame; (411-12)

would be particularly relevant in such a context, and the responsibility of adults to attend to the education of children is repeatedly emphasised (506-09, 790-97). If, like a number of interludes, *Occupation and Idleness* is directly concerned with the correct upbringing of the young, it cannot however be said to possess the moral ferocity of later plays such as *Lusty Juventus* (c. 1550) and *Nice Wanton* (1547-53), written in a more charged religious and political atmosphere, which fetch their conviction of the innate corruption of the young from texts such as the 30th chapter of the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus ('De liberorum disciplina'). Doctrine seeks to reform Idleness by benign means, in the first instance, putting him to book-learning (468-69, 483-

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84), and whilst they boy pretends to be thus engaged, Doctrine responds at some length to Occupation's request to

Tell us us some of Goddis werkis,
That the comoun peple may knowe
As done thes worthi clerkis. (549-51)

Doctrine's teaching reflects the mainstream preoccupations of all elementary religious instruction in the period, which applies to all Christian of whatever age, sex or degree.¹⁰ He later resumes in this vein, having obtained Idleness's undivided attention (albeit by main force, 745ff.), and continues to embellish his discourse with conventional scriptural and liturgical allusions in Latin.¹¹ The play's more immediate concern with the education of the young is thus assimilated to the broader responsibility of all Christians to be in possession of the essentials of their belief. The macaronic mode in which Doctrine conveys this teaching is distinctive, and sometimes reminiscent of Langland's manner in passages in *Piers Plowman* where a sense of spiritual authority is called for. The wider perspective that develops in the latter part of *Occupation and Idleness* thus has more in common with the universal concerns of the earlier morality plays (as opposed to the more topical focus of many of the later interludes), and suggests that, even if the play had an immediate occasion, its audience and auspices were not necessarily intended to be limited.

As is the way of most morality plays and interludes, however, the dramatic life and conflict in *Occupation and Idleness* is generated by a morally deficient but theatrically engaging agent in the shape of Idleness, who gulls Occupation, defies Doctrine, and diverts the audience. Idleness is presented as a feckless youth, given to profligacy, drunkenness, and fleshly vices, but who nonetheless possesses an air of bouyant bonhomie, which he brings to bear directly on the audience from the moment of his entrance, and sustains with a series of mischievous asides. He stands at the head of a line of superficially plausible juvenile layabouts, ne'er-do-wells and prodigals who figure in a number of later interludes, and his close relatives may be found in *Youth* (1513-14) and *Hick Scorer* (1514), or in a later prodigal son play such as *The Disobedient Child* (c. 1560).¹²

Though Idleness is a comic character, and his behaviour belongs mostly to the realm of mischievousness, the fact that he is rooted in evil proper is quietly emphasised. Idleness is amply documented in contemporary pastoral and preaching literature as one of the many branches or 'species' of the deadly sin of Sloth, and this affiliation is mentioned at several points (80, 442, 460, 793).¹³ In its comic aspect,

Idleness's role includes several features which come to be associated with the Vice figure of the later interludes. He has something of the verbal dexterity, quibbling and back-chat characteristic of the Vice, notably the deliberate misprision of another's meaning (e.g. 464-65). Attention is drawn to his blunt dagger (751), no doubt to be identified as the absurd wooden weapon that was the Vice's essential stage property, the 'dagger of lath' alluded to by Shakespeare, Jonson and other later writers who looked back to the older interludes. Like the later Vices, Idleness treats individual members (or victims) in the audience with embarrassing familiarity (54ff., 456, 721); he is oddly dressed (62,125); he preens himself and perhaps dances (88); he impersonates a virtue ('Besynes', 109-10). However, unlike many of the Vices he does not prove incorrigible, and his conversion at the end is accompanied by a change of name and costume (812-13), otherwise a typical interlude motif. Nor is he presented as a servant or agent of the devil, though the devil's aptness to make work for idle hands is not overlooked.¹⁴ As Doctrine says:

For and thou the in temptacion fele,
Occupie the in clennes,
For the feend on no man may stele
Save in tho that he fynte in ydelnes; (390-94)

This adumbrates Idleness's eventual transformation into 'Cleanness', perhaps puzzling at first to the modern eye, but familiar to the audience as a highly-developed and polysemous moral concept, the subject of numerous *exempla* in sermons and related texts.¹⁵

The opposition of Occupation to Idleness (as a branch of Sloth) is a relatively late development.¹⁶ Idleness here is presented very much in a secular aspect, as a work-shy layabout, but lively, witty and gregarious. He is only tenuously related to the sluggish and supine image of sloth as imagined (for example) by Langland (*Piers Plowman*, B-version, Passus V), whose ultimate origin in the depressive 'spiritual dryness' of *acedia* is only vestigially present in Idleness's reluctance get up in the mornings to attend church services (77). He is conceived to a great extent in terms of an economic analysis of moral and social relationships, where honest labour, backed up by education, is the principal mitigation of man's sinful state, and the guarantor of communal welfare. Every man, says Doctrine, is bound to 'occupie hym in clennes' (371), and 'sette [his] children unto scole' (412). Unless, by these means, he comes to possess land, rents, coin and cattle, he will soon be reduced to social evils such as beggary, theft and prostitution (400-01, 416ff.). For this reason Occupation appears as

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virtuous agrarian labourer-cum-husbandman, a spiritualised conception with strong iconographic resonances, evident in the ploughman figures central to *Piers Plowman* and the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, or the spade-carrying farmer Mankind, in his uncorrupted state, in the contemporary morality play *Mankind*.¹⁷

Like Idleness, Occupation addresses the audience, but at greater length, in two substantial speeches, the first (1-48) rehearsing many of the commonplaces of contemporary vernacular verses directed at the 'abuses of the age'¹⁸ and the second (203ff.) consisting of a heartfelt expression of devotion to the crucified Christ, the Virgin, and the Eucharist. Both speeches are cast in extended stanzas, heavily ornamented with alliteration and rounded off with a 'bob-and-wheel', a variety of the high style favoured elsewhere in the northern cycles and in East Anglian plays such as the *Castle of Perseverance* and parts of the N-Town collection. Effective transitions are made from Occupation's plangent and (in the first case) somewhat apocalyptic tone to the streetwise chat of Idleness, for which the appropriately demotic tail-rhyme stanza is adopted (49ff., 233ff.). Doctrine's style, as we have observed, is different again, consisting of measured, expository quatrains and octets, with resonant Latin phrases woven into verses, though likewise interrupted by Idleness's outbreaks of tail-rhyme. This adaptation of metre to character and action is found in other plays of the time (notably the moralities *Mankind* and *Wisdom*), and it continues later in the Tudor interludes proper.¹⁹

In the text of *Occupation and Idleness* given below, the spelling of the manuscript has been retained, except that the obsolete letters thorn and yogh have been replaced by their modern equivalents, and u/v and i/j are treated as in modern English. Punctuation and capital letters have been introduced according to modern usage. Stage-directions, however, have not been added.²⁰

NOTES

¹ F.L. Utley, 'Dialogues, Debates and Catechisms', in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, ed. by A.E. Hartung vol. 3 (New Haven, 1972), pp. 743-44; N. Davis, 'Two unprinted dialogues in later Middle English and their language', *Revue des Langues Vivantes* 35 (1969), 461-72; *Non-Cycle Plays and the Winchester Dialogues*, ed. by N. Davis, Leeds Texts and Monographs: Medieval Drama Facsimiles 5 (Leeds: School of English, University of Leeds, 1979), which includes a facsimile (pp. 161-78) and a transcript (pp. 192-208) of *Occupation and Idleness*.

² T.W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1958) remains the most succinct, accurate and informative guide to the genre; see also F.P. Wilson, *The English Drama 1485-1585* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 1-46, and D.M. Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

³ There are descriptions of the manuscript in N.R. Ker & A.J. Piper, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 623-25, and Davis, *Non-Cycle Plays and the Winchester Dialogues*, pp. 135-37. *Lucidus and Dubius* immediately precedes *Occupation and Idleness* in the manuscript; see Davis, *op. cit.*, and further, B.S. Lee, 'Lucidus and Dubius: a fifteenth-century theological debate and its sources', *Medium Ævum* 45 (1976), 79-96.

⁴ Davis, *Non-Cycle Plays and the Winchester Dialogues*, p. 136, draws attention to the watermarks in the paper, which tend to support a date in the later 1440s or 1450s, and Ker & Piper, p. 625, note that a later hand appearing on a flyleaf of MS 33 is very similar, if not identical to one found in the college's Liber Albus, c. 1529.

⁵ D.W. Blewitt, 'Records of drama at Winchester and Eton', *Theatre Notebook* 38 (1984), 88-95, 135-43 (at, e.g., p. 89 for a play 'in aula' in 1410/11). A photograph of the great hall at Winchester is Plate 13 in I. Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts and Records of Britain to 1558: a chronological topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Meg Twycross has recently described the theatrical circumstances of the great hall setting in 'The theatricality of medieval English plays', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 66-83, with illustrations.

⁶ *Dramatic Texts and Records*, p. 283. Lancashire is of the view that *Occupation and Idleness* is 'undoubtedly a school play'. *Lucidus and Dubius* (based on parts of the *Elucidarium* attributed to 'Honorius of Autun') presents a pertinacious youth interrogating a learned master about a range of basic points in Christian belief, and would be equally at home in a school environment.

⁷ See R. Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: a history of the ritual year in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 371, and references there.

⁸ Blewitt, 'Records of drama at Winchester', pp. 92-93.

⁹ As will be evident from the textual notes, the text of *Occupation and Idleness* is in a relatively sound state of preservation, but nevertheless contains a few scribal errors, and is not a holograph. Together with the fact that the linguistic forms implied by the rhymes occasionally deviate from those habitual to the scribe, this suggests that there are likely to have been other copies of the play in circulation; cf. Davis, 'Two unprinted dialogues', p. 469.

¹⁰ For a brief summary of the origin and development of this curriculum see L.E. Boyle, 'The Fourth Lateran Council and manuals of popular theology', in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. by T.J. Heffernan (Knoxville, 1985), pp. 30-43.

¹¹ The Latin quotations appear elsewhere in a variety of places. For example, those in lines 578, 629, 633 and 779-80 are ultimately biblical (Matt. 3:2, Matt. 5:14, Sap. 3:2, 2Cor. 9:9, Matt. 24:42), whilst those in lines 586-88 seem to originate in Bede's homily for the first Sunday after Trinity (*Patrologia Latina*, 94. col. 482). The lyrical imagery towards the end of the play, extolling the Virgin, is based on the Song of Songs, but its immediate source is likely to have been the account of her later life in the *Legenda aurea*, and the liturgy of the feast of the Assumption; see R. Fulton, "'Quae est ista quae ascendit sicut aurora consurgens?': the Song of Songs as the *Historia* for the Office of the Assumption', *Mediaeval Studies* 60 (1998), 55-122. The allusions to the tree of life and the oil of mercy (642-51) are from legend of the Cross incorporated in the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*; see F.E. Halliday, *The Legend of the Rood* (London: Duckworth, 1955), pp. 44-46, and E.C. Quinn, *The Quest of Seth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. 9, 25-27, 35-46.

¹² *Two Tudor Interludes: The Interlude of Youth; Hick Scorner*, ed. by I. Lancashire (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980).

¹³ S. Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960).

¹⁴ Wilson, *English Drama 1485-1585*, pp. 59-66; P. Happé, "'The Vice" and the popular theatre', in *Poetry and Drama 1500-1700: essays in honour of Harold F. Brooks*, ed. by A. Coleman & A. Hammond (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 13-31.

¹⁵ See especially the poem *Cleanness* in M. Andrew & R. Waldron, *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), esp. p. 21.

¹⁶ M.W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1952), p. 96.

¹⁷ *The Macro Plays*, ed. by M. Eccles, EETS, OS 262 (1969), *Mankind*, lines 328-29,

376-77, 409-10, 541-44.

¹⁸ See for examples, *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. by R.H. Robbins (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 127-52.

¹⁹ J.E. Bernard, *The Prosody of the Tudor Interlude* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939).

²⁰ I am grateful to the Master and Fellows of Winchester College for permission to reproduce the text of *Occupation and Idleness*, and to their former librarian, Paul Yeats-Edwards, for providing me with facilities to examine the manuscript.

O C C U P A T I O N A N D I D L E N E S S

OCCUPACION: The myghty maker that made al thyng
 He medle his mercy ever in oure mende,
 Oure balis he abate and to blys us brynge,
 As he was oure founder and we come of his kende;
 For al the welthe of the world is turned to wranglynge 5
 And frendship is ful faynte now for to fynde,
 Ayen equityté and right the peple be janglynge
 And ful fewe there be that hereof have mynde.
 The cause is this:
 For now regneth tresoun 10
 There that shold be resoun;
 But ye beware in sesoun
 Ye laboure al amys.

 For we may se a grete example every day
 Of hunger and deth before oure ye; 15
 Fro the prikkyng of pestelence ascape we ne may,
 Fro wyndis and wederis that comyth fro the sky.
 Therefor lete right regne and forsake symony,
 Rewle you be resoun and laboure for youre mete,
 In trewe occupacioun selle thou and by, 20
 Deseyve no man with sotelté in colde ne in hete,
 But sewe resoun and trewthe,
 Lete ese and favour fro the fle
 And take counseyle and equityté;
 Ellis lese ye heven so fre, 25
 And me semyth that were rewthe,
 And eke grete shame.
 Now if ther be eny here
 That my name wolde aspere,
 Y telle you, sovereynes al in fere, 30
 Occupacioun, that is my name.

Y besy ful besely in colde and in hete,

Wyndis ne wederis we may nat spare;
With grete grevalise Y go my levyng to gete,
Ofte wery and wetshode Y suffre mochel care 35
To sessioun or syses if that Y fare,
Because Y have a litel gadered to-hepe.
In suche ple no skyle Y kan, thus am Y in care;
There Y stonde and studye as mad as eny shepe
For woo. 40
For Y had lever ben at plough,
To God Y make a vow,
Thresshe in a berne, ripe and mow,
And therefore Y hote Occupacion where so ever Y go
On grounde. 45
Here Y thynke to abyde
To reste me a litel tyde
In pees bothe saf and sounde.

IDELNES: A, reste you mery, Y make a vow,
Whi sey ye nat welcome now? 50
Be God, ther ben many of yow
That Y knowe wel and fyne.
This worthy man, though Y it say,
He hath know me many a day,
For he and Y spent, in fay, 55
Oure bothis thurst at wyne.

A, syr, God yeve you good morowe.
Lo, siris, this good man wyl be my borowe
And Y had nede.
Nay, good sir, laugh me nat to scorne. 60
Y trowe ye have youre knowlych for-lorne
For my symple wede.

Ye, this wede wil serve me wel and fyne.
Ofte thou hast be wette sith thou were myne,
Bothe at the ale and atte the wyne 65
In the hye strete.

Occupation and Idleness

While Y have aught Y wyl spende;
Whan Y have non God wyl sende.
Thus every company Y wyl amende
And gadere felawship to-hepe. 70

For Y have good mete and drynke;
Whan Y am ful Y wyl wynke.
Now, be my trouthe, as Y thynke,
Y am a sly clerke.
Therfor Y tel you expresse, 75
My name is called Ydelnesse.
Y kepe nat to arise to matynes ne messe
Ne to non other werke.

For to no laboure Y kaste me,
But ever to slowthe Y fast me, 80
And if ye wyl ataste me,
Ye shul fynde me queynte.
Queyntly go Y, lo,
As prety as a py, lo.
What sey ye therto 85
Who koude make me ateynte?

Beholde now this gracious face,
Hou galantly Y take my trace.
There is now non such in this place,
Sholde Y nat do thus? 90
Lo, how joly gette Y,
And non felaship let Y,
And but fewe mette Y
But they wyth me trusse
And gone.
Ey, what is that yonder gadelynge 95
That stondith yondere al stradelynge?
Y wyl wite for al his babelynge
What he is anone.

Al haile, good man, and wel yfounde. 100
OCCUPACIOUN: A welcome, yonge man, on this grounde.
YDELNESSE: Whi, sire, tel me this stounde,
Know ye nat me?
OCCUPACIOUN: Of the, sonne, what is thy name?
YDELNES: Lo, now ariseth game. 105
Y am like to take blame
But Y the better ware be.

Y muste change my name, ywis,
And telle hym Besynesse my name is;
Ye, for God, thus it is. 110
This is a prety while.
And whan Y am with hym at fese
Y wyl take myn owen ese.
To slepe ynough he shal nat chese;
Y thynke hym to begile. 115

Syr, Y wonder ye have foryete me, ywys,
And Y have served you er this,
For Besynes my name is.
Sir, know ye that name?
OCCUPACIOUN: Besynesse, ye, in good fay. 120
He hath served me many a day.
YDELNES: Now, in good fay, leve me ye may –
Y am the same.

OCCUPACIOUN: Art thou Besynesse? Y trow nay,
Me semyth be thi symple aray. 125
YDELNES: Syr, sholde Y were my best every day?
Y have ten or twelf
Of good gownes in my presse,
And furies of grete richesse.
Of this man Y take wytnesse – 130
Ye may aske hym yourself.

OCCUPACIOUN: Than what labour kan ye best now?

Occupation and Idleness

- YDELNES: Thresshe in your berne or go to plow,
Ripe, mowe, and eke sowe,
And other husbandrye; 135
Go to market, bey and selle,
And kepe an household Y kan welle;
With shepe and swyne Y kan melle.
Whereto sholde Y lye?
- OCCUPACIOUN: Wilt thou be with me al this yere, 140
And thou shalt be my partenere?
YDELNES: Ye, be my trowthe, with good chere;
But Y have no money in store.
OCCUPACIOUN: Yeve me thi trowthe in this stounde,
And have here ten pounde. 145
Look thou governe it wel on this grounde;
And thou have nede, com fech more.
- YDELNES: Yis, hardely, syr, have ye no dowte.
Now have Y nede to loke abowte,
Bothe within and withowte, 150
That no thyng be amys.
Y have here in this purse
Ten pounde of golde, it is no worse.
To the kokis wil Y me trusse
Anon, so have Y blys. 155
- Yit, good syr, tel me in same,
What shal Y clepe youre name?
OCCUPACIOUN: Sir, Y sey be Seynt Jame,
My name is Occupacioun.
YDELNES: Occupacioun, be my fay, 160
Is a good name and a worthy,
To be commendid honestly
In felde and eke in toun.
- But, syr, go ye home or over the se,
Your household and your meyné, 165

- And than in haste come hider and se;
Tary nat to longe!
OCCUPACIOUN: Farewel, than, in Goddis name.
YDELNES: Now in feithe, he were to blame
That wold do the eny wronge. 170
- Walke on – God lete the nevere the.
Thou art ful madde to truste me,
For this gold shalt thou never se,
So God me amende,
For in Bredestrete, samfayle, 175
It shall be spent in good vytayle.
Of wyne and ale Y wyl nat fayle –
Thider now am Y bent.
- For and Y wolde beset this gold here
On sheepe or lambe, thei be dere, 180
And also a badde yeere
Sone wolde hem stroye.
If Y besette it in kow or veel,
Paraventure some theef myght hem steel.
Nay, nay, therewith wyl Y nat deel, 185
Such marchauntise Y defye.
- Yf Y wolde belde eny hous then
Myght come some fire and it bren,
That makith many away to ren
And take the tounnes ende. 190
Nay, nay, Y wyl nat so, in fay,
But to the taverne wyl Y go my way,
And to the cokes, parmafay,
Thider wyl Y wende.
- But and Occupacioun come by the way, 195
Aske me, syr, Y the pray,
For we two have loved many a day
Thes yeeris foure or fyve.

Occupation and Idleness

Tyl this be spente everydel,
Fal happe, falle hel, 200
Y wyl no lenger with hym mel –
Y go hennys wel blyve.

OCCUPACIOUN: The roy reverent that on the rode was rente
He save you, my sovereynes semly in se,
That was blyndfelled and bofettid and his blood spente 205
Fro the thretnynge of thraldom to make us all fre;
And the brennynge blossom that bright is of ble
With hire feturis so fortunate voyde us of oure foon,
Excellent emperyse of high dygneté,
Conclude here conclusiones as ye wel kan, 210
Thurgh youre sonnes myght;
For treuly Y wyl every day,
Whither so ever Y take my way.
In holy chirche if that Y may
Of thi sonne have a sight. 215

Than to my labour wyl Y go,
Tylle and travayle in moche wo
My lyflode to gete.
We may nat spare wynde ne rayne,
But go to plow in crofte and playne, 220
And ofte we laboure ayen mayne
In dry and in wete.

And Y pray you telle me and ye kan,
Sey eny you Besynes my man
Syn Y was laste here? 225
For he is so longe oute
With my golde walked aboute,
Be my trouthe Y am in doute
He is in some daungere.
Y note what is best; 230
Til Y some tydyngis of hym here,
Here Y thynke to rest.

YDELNES: Aha! God spede Y am come.

Y have right wel wette my throte.

A, ware, a litel stonde a rome, 235

For Y am verry kuppe-shote.

A, my brayne gynneth to rowte

An turneth as rounde as eny balle.

Be my trouthe Y am in grete doute;

Me semyth the sky wyl on me falle – 240

Y am ille agast.

Y come from the cokis now,

And to God Y make a vow

There have Y wel broke my fast.

Y have ete and drunke of the best 245

Til me thought the dry wey slither;

And my maistris golde, so have Y rest,

It is spent all togyder

On good mete and drynk.

For be God and Oure Lady bothe, 250

Y bought therwith neyther clowte ne clothe;

For be my partenere never so wrothe,

A while wyl Y go wynde.

OCUPACIOUN: Abyde, a worde with you.

YDELNES: A, welcome, Y make a vow. 255

Y have sought you wyde ynow

Thes two dayes or thre.

OCUPACIOUN: Soughtist thou me? Y pray the where?

YDELNES: Be God, no foot there ye were.

OCUPACIOUN: Such a messanger evel he fare 260

So to seek me.

Me semyth thou comyst late fro the nale.

YDELNES: Be God, that is a trewe tale.

Ther have Y wel fare.

OCUPACIOUN: Now be God, Y stonde in doute 265

Occupation and Idleness

That thou hast spendid my money oute;
Than am Y in grete care.

YDELNES: Sir, that money is a-go,
They there had be such two.
Therefore myn herte is sore. 270

OCUPACIOUN: A, sire, foule mote the befall
That ever Y mette the in this halle.
My golde thou hast lore.

What, thou seidest Besynes thi name hight?
YDELNES: So Y dede, be this lyght, 275
And yit Y dede lye.
But now Y telle the in game,
Ydelnes is my name.

OCCUPACIOUN: Y swere be Seynt Jame,
Thou art a wyli pye. 280

Sonne, and thou wylt to me herke
Y wyl teche the some other werke.
YDELNES: What, woldist thou make me a clerke?
That wyl Y nat begynne,
For Y wyl go pley me 285
And rialy aray me.

OCCUPACIOUN: Herk, sonne, thou say me,
Wylt thou worship wyne?

YDELNES: Worship? Hou sholde Y come therto?
OCCUPACIOUN: With manere and manhod, sonne, lo, 290
And be never thyn owen fo.
To my wordis thou herk.

YDELNES: Who techith that manere, Y pray the?
OCCUPACIOUN: Treuly, sonne, as Y say the,
Doctrine, that worthi clerk. 295

YDELNES: Doctryne, what man is he?
OCUPACION: A maister of dyvyneté

Of the unyversyté,
To teche the to wex wyse.
YDELNES: A, a, wylt thou so? 300
Nay, Y wyl nat with the go;
Y have aspied the to wyse.

OCUPACION: Sonne, leve thi fantasy
And turne to grace, Y say the.
YDELNES: Y nel, Y make to God a vow. 305
Y wyl ete as good as thow.
Go sette to gras thi hors or thi kow,
Or ellis, syr, go play the.

OCCUPACIOUN: Who shal fynde the mete and drynke al day?
YDELNES: Be my fay, Jonet and Gyll. 310
OCCUPACION: What wilt thou do, kan thou me say,
Whan Jonet and Gill ys away?
YDELNES: Than be it as be may,
Therefore care Y nell.

Y shrew hym that therefore cares. 315
Some for labour wexith wode,
And they have nat an hole hode.
Y know non that better fares.

[Tunc venit Doctrina

DOCTRINA: What, siris, what pley is this
That ye make in this place? 320
Y am come to mende al mys
Bi the helpe of Goddis grace.

YDELNES: A, that man hath an angry face.
OCCUPACION: Pees, thou fool, and stonde asyde.
YDELNES: Y pray God yeve the evel grace, 325
Begynnyst thou now for to chyde.

Occupation and Idleness

OCUPACION: Sir, welcome mote ye be,
And of youre name Y you prayn.

DOCTRINE: Doctryne men clepen me;
To teche kunnyng Y am fayn.

330

OCUPACIOUN: Doctrine, syr, ye be welcome.
Y have besied me ful sadde
For to study and stire wysdom.
Now of youre company Y am ful gladde.

DOCTRINE: What is youre name, gentil brother?

335

OCCUPACION: Treuly, my name is Occupacion.

DOCTRINE: Welcome be ye above all other
With you to have communycacyoun,

For al that to good occupacion long
God is plesed and so am Y,
But occupacion that tuchith to wronge
Doth men no good, but vylany;

340

For and thou wilt the occupy
In bodely workis or almasdede,
In penaunce or prayeris wilfully,
Y, Doctrine, to the wyll take hede,

345

For Doctrine techith openly and clere
Vertuous lyf amonge us to sette.

YDELNES: Herke, siris, ye shall here,
For now two shrewis ben mette.

350

Be my trouthe Y wil me hide
Like a mows in yonder yerde,
For of hym that gapith wide
Yn feithe Y am evel aferde.
Y wyl be go.

355

DOCTRINE: Be my feith thou shalt abide,
And ere thou passe fro me this tyde

Y wil the teche a worde or two.

YDELNES: Whom? Me, syr? Y know the nat,
Ne never Y kepe, be heven kynge. 360

DOCTRINE: Sonne, Y wyl teche the somewhat
For to gete thy levyng.

OCCUPACION: Sir, in the name of heven kyng,
Yeve hym som informacion
Hou he may gete his levyng 365
In the wey of his salvacion;
That is al my desire.

DOCTRINE: Treuly, brother Occupacion,
That wil Y do without eny hire,

For every good man is bounde, 370
To occupie hym in clennes,
For and he in good occupacion be founde
The feend temptith hym moche the les.

Every man hath enmyes thre,
The devel, the world, and his owen flesh. 375
Which thei ben Y wyl telle the,
And hou than they enbateyl hem fressh.

In pride and wreth the feend temptith man,
And in envye that is so badde.
Thes thre synnes in heven began 380
Sone after Lucifer was made.

The world temptith man to slouthe and covetyse,
That Adam and Eve first up broght
Whan thei wolde be as wyse
As was Oure Lorde that hem wroght. 385

The flesh of glotonye fayled noght;
Lechery was in Sodom and Gomor and other mo,

Occupation and Idleness

For these wyte wel in oure thocht
Ful moche harme there hath be do.

For and thou the in temptacion fele, 390
Occupie the in clennes,
For the feend on no man may stele
Save in tho that he fynte in ydelnes;
In hem wil he hide.

For al the vices that ther be 395
Ydelnes is the worste, Y telle the.
YDELNES: Out! Whider may Y fle?
This angry man wyl bete me
And Y lenger abyde.

DOCTRINE: Of ydelnes comyth this – 400
Thefis and strumpettis, so have Y rest.
Ayen this defaute, ywys,
Occupacion Y holde the best.

But the most defaute nowadayes
On the peple that Y fynde, 405
Men techen hire children wanton playes,
And nat as they sholde in kynde.

Some shal beshrewe fader and moder
And be ful wantoun, as ye may se.
Such poyntis and many other 410
Makith many children never to the.

Sette youre children unto scole,
Ye that ben good men of fame;
Mayntene hem nat to pley the fole,
But lete hem lerne some good, for shame. 415

For he that hath neither londe ne rente,
Koyne ne catel hym to fynde,
Of large spense but he repente

Sone shal he begge be kynde,
That were reprefe. 420
Forwhi and his good be lore
And wylt nat laboure for no more,
But in ydelnes sett hym sore,
Than must he wexe a thefe –
Y lye nat expresse. 425
Beware, draw you to good,
And laboure for youre lyfis food,
And pray to hym that deyde on rood,
And beware of ydelnesse.

OCCUPACION: Ydelnes is nat ferre, as thynkith me, 430
And so Y tolde one ryght now.
DOCTRINE: Ydelnes, where is he?
OCCUPACIOUN: Yonder, syr, as ye may se,
And scorneth both me and yow.

DOCTRINE: Ydelnes, come nere 435
And lerne of me som curtesie.
YDELNES: Y shrew me and Y come ther
While thou art so angry.

DOCTRINE: Thou shalt come hider mawgry thyn hed
And lerne some good in thi youthe. 440
Thou wylt be like to begge thi brede
But thou drawe the fro slouthe.
Y sey, boy, aryse.

YDELNES: Y pray the, syr, go thi way;
Me lyst nat with the to play. 445
DOCTRINE: Y wyl the teche, in good fay,
Now for to wexe wyse.

Therfor, boy, Y sey stonde stille
And some vertu that thou lere.
YDELNES: Go forthe and do me non ylle. 450
Y wolde ye were in the diche both in fere.

Occupation and Idleness

DOCTRINE: Y sey, boy, scorne thou me now?

OCCUPACION: He dothe as evel as he kan.

YDELNES: He lieth, Y make God a vow

In recorde of this worthy man.

455

Syr, saw ye me mokke hym to scorne?

Nay, he lieth in his face.

DOCTRINE: Y trow, boy, thi thryft be lorne.

To goodnes thou hast no grace.

OCCUPACION: Syr, ever to sleuthe and ydelnes

460

He drawith hym morow and eve,

And Y biddde hym efte expres

Al that foly for to leve.

DOCTRINE: Sonne, to what levyng were thou borne?

YDELNES: With mylke and floure Y began, Y wene.

465

DOCTRINE: What! This boy dryveth me to scorne.

YDELNES: Nay, God forbede, lete that bene.

DOCTRINE: Have, sette honde on this book,

And to thi lore that thou lowte.

YDELNES: A, se, syr, how Y look.

470

Nerehande Y kan it thurghowte.

A, se here sitt a pye.

DOCTRINE: But thou the better to thi book lowte,

Be my fay thou shalt aby.

OCCUPACION: In good fey, ye sey wel,

475

Every man to labour in his kunnyng.

This matere Y trow wel Y fele:

Ellis can we have but hard levyng.

And ydelnes in household wende

Me semyth it moche the worse.

480

YDELNES: Ye be ever my bak frende;

Therfor have ye Goddis kurse.

- DOCTRINE: Sonne, have this book in thi hande
And lerne, in the name of God,
Ellys Y do the to understonde 485
Thou shalt be chastised with a rod
Bothe even and morowe.
- YDELNES: A, syr, he that the hider broght
Y pray God yeve hym sorowe.
DOCTRINE: Sey on, crosse Crist me spede, 490
And in thi mynde that it kepe.
- YDELNES: Be my treuthe, Y stonde in drede
Hou Y shal brynge it to-hepe.
- First lete me reste a litel while,
Myn eyen be hevvy as eny lede. 495
- OCCUPACION: Sir, this boy wyl you begyle;
In the name of God take hede,
And lerne hym som lore.
- YDELNES: A, sir, the devel be thi spede.
Thou art ayen me ever more. 500
- DOCTRINE: Sonne, lerned thou never thi beleve,
Thi Paternoster, Ave, and Crede?
- YDELNES: Nay, syr, so mote Y cheve,
Therto toke Y never hede.
Y not what it is. 505
- DOCTRINE: Now, be swete Seynt Jame,
Thi fader is the more to blame,
And thi frendis al in same
That shold have taught the er this.
- OCCUPACION: Me semyth it were an almasdede 510
To make hym leve this lewde rote.
- YDELNES: Y wyl nat do be thi rede.
Olde fole, thou begynnest to dote,
Thi berde begynnyth to hore.
Some for wery fallith doun 515
Bothe in cyté, burgh, and toun,

Occupation and Idleness

And rise paraventure no more.

DOCTRINE: Treuly, ther levyth no man in ground,

Be he never so hye of state,

But he be strongly bound

520

To occupye erly or late:

Prestis to pray and preche also

In penaunse and masse to shewe,

Dukis, erlis, baronnes, and knyghtis therto

To mayntene the lond in vertu,

525

And to fight therfore if nede be

And stonde be every trew cause ywis,

And take no mede of me ne the,

But to maynten hem there right is.

But now trewthe is dryve abakke

530

And symony is set up as a sire.

Ther mede is maister ther is no lakke

Of frendship nother in session ne shire.

But wolde God resoun regned ayé.

Than wolde ye gadre al vertues to-hepe.

535

OCCUPACIOUN: To the wordis that ye shew me

Every man is bounde to take kepe.

DOCTRINE: Lo, sonne, thou mayst se

To occupacion thou art bounde.

YDELNES: A, sir, God lete the never the.

540

Thou woldist make me weré

As is eny hounde,

And that Y hate.

For aught that thou kan telle me

Shal noon of yow felle me,

545

Nother be strengthe compel me,

Erly ne late.

OCCUPACION: Doctrine, syr, Y pray you
Tel us some of Goddis werkis,
That the comoun peple may knowe 550
As don thes worthi clerkis.

DOCTRINE: *Summe Trinitati* Y wyl begynne,
That with his myght wrought al thyng;
Novem ordines without synne
Angelorum to hym obeyng, 555

Ad Dei iudicia for to abide
Misteria complenda ful of lyght.
Yit fille many one that tide
Fro the place that mankende shal restore ful ryght.

OCCUPACION: What maner men, Y wolde wyte, 560
Shal restore that place ayen?

DOCTRINE: Hire names ben in legende wryte,
And are cleped al halowen certeyn.

OCCUPACION: Alle halowes, what be they?
Y pray you declare hem openly. 565

DOCTRINE: Angelis, patriarkis, and prophetis to sey,
Martiris and confessoris trewly,

Virgines and other of clene lyf
That deide in pure chastité,
That leved here without stryf 570
In clennes and humylité;

Viri religiosi the patriarkis called,
Atque gloriosi in hire levyng;
Thei tolde what wolde befalle
Of dyverse prophetis, and Cristis comynge. 575

John the Baptist seide in his steven
To al that *veram penitenciam* wold chesen,

Occupation and Idleness

'*Penitenciam agite* that ye nat lesen,
'*Quia aporpinquabit* the kyngdom of heven'.

The postelis were in erthe goynge 580
And Jesu Cristis lawes redde.
'*Estote fortes*', seide Jesu oure kyng
'Loke no tribulacion make you ferde'.

OCCUPACION: Y pray you telle me in this place
Hou apostlis suffred tribulacion. 585
DOCTRINE: Some *ferro perempti* hedded was,
Some *flammis exusti* brent in toun,

Flagellis verberati some forbeten,
Hii sunt triumphatores, Goddis frendis an heth.
Here good dedis shal never be foryeten, 590
For hir blissed name *in eternum manet*.
YDELNES: Heere ye, siris, al this breth?
A draght of ale Y had lever.

OCCUPACION: This were a worthy company
That the apostel loved day and nyght. 595
DOCTRINE: *Vos estis lux mundi*,
To al the world thei shal yeve lyght.

OCCUPACION: The martiris had a glorious lyf
That for Goddis love wold dey so.
DOCTRINE: A, sir, *hii sunt sancti* that never dred knyf 600
But *pro Dei amore* thei suffred wo.

O quam gloriosa hire deth is,
And hire blod shedyng dede us moche good.
The blood shedyng wolde bryng us to blys
If that we ben mylde of mood. 605

Thes blissed confessouris leved clenly
And taught aboute the worde of Crist.

Therefore thei sitte in the grete glory
Where that al joy and myrthe is most.

Virgines in hire clennes 610
Mekely in erthe here leved.
Thes be kleped al halowes, ywys,
That we before meved.

And al holi chirchis pardoun
Relevith men out of synne, 615
Of thes seyntis that is come,
That is tresore the holy chirche withynne.

At Cristis owen blode Y wyl begynne,
His postelis, his marteris, and afterwarde
His officeris that ben out of synne 620
Ledde hire lyf here ful harde;

And the clennes of the maydenes alle
Make us good weies into heven.
Al Halowen day hire day men calle,
And worship hem with myld steven. 625

OCCUPACION: A, syr, of men that levyth a day now
Shul they in that number be?

DOCTRINE: Ye, syr, and wyl ye se how?
Fulgebunt iusti, and thus sey we.

Rightwys men may nat fayle, ywis, 630
To han heven for hire travayl.
Rightfulnes so hie a vertu is
That *iusticia manet* may nat fayl.

OCCUPACION: And how do they that have do synne,
And amende hem here ere they dey? 635

DOCTRINE: Fro heven blis thei may nat wyne;
To aske mercy thei were redy.

Occupation and Idleness

OCCUPACION: What is mercy? That wold Y know;

Y pray you do me to understonde.

DOCTRINE: Mercy is the best seed sow, 640

For above al workis he shal stonde.

For as *per lignum moriebatur mors* certayn

Thurgh a tree oure deth first aroos,

And *per lignum quoque* there agayn

By a tree oure lyf was chose, 645

And broght oure blys fro deth and stryf;

For even as Adam by a tre dede falle,

To turne oure deth to everlastyng lyf

On a tre God deyde for us alle.

Ther was *oleum promissionis* shewde 650

That fro Cristis body ran.

Take hede, thou man, and be nat lewde,

For al our grace ther first began.

Goddis body therto was al to-rente

And made ful of holis that ever shal renne 655

To the blode of mercy that never shal stente

In the salvacion of synful men.

For his passion til domys day

His body shal never leve rennyng,

And of his blode of mercy every man gete may 660

If thei repente hire evel levyng.

Ther shal noon be warned that blode of blys;

Every man therof may gete.

This is the licoure of mercy that every day, ywys,

In holy chirche thou may it fette. 665

OCCUPACION: Y thanke Jesu my savyoure

With al my herte and my speche,

So fre of that worthy lycoure
As wel to pore as to ryche.

DOCTRINE: Nay, sir, ye fayle ther. 670

Ther is no disseverance but brother and brother.
God boght alle like dere
And payde as moche for one as for other.

Ther is no pore, God seith before,
But tho that be in sinne and out of vertu. 675
Thei thou have markis in store
Ther he shal be as ryche as thou.

The riches of heven is non in gold,
It is in vertu and clene lyf,
As to the before is tolde, 680
That shold be used in man and wyf.

At domys day God wote
Who shal be riche, who shal be pore,
For that day wyl be so hote
That be gold men wyl sette no store. 685

OCCUPACION: Sir, that is come to my mende,
Whi clepe ye that the grete day?

DOCTRINE: For many skile that Y fynde.
Y wil declare hem if Y may.

Than shal sitte the grettest justise opon 690
That ever sate in eny place.
Al other justisis before hym shal stonde,
And al the lordis that ever was.

So many at ones as we ther shal se
Never at ones in oo place come, 695
For all that were and ever shal be
In heven, erthe, and helle comyth to dome.

Occupation and Idleness

That day wyl be the grettest wepynge
That ever was sey in eny place before.
Many thousandis hire hondis shal wrynge 700
And curse the tyme that thei were bore.

Therfore the grete day clepe Y,
For tho that shal be dampned in that rowte
Shul wepe more water with here ye
Than is in alle the world rounde aboute. 705

Thei shal never after sese wepyng,
The water fro hire ey shal renne.
Therfor thynke on this day of rekenyng,
And ever after hate thou synne,
And in haste thi lyf amende. 710
OCCUPACION: Wyl Y never worke begynne
But Y thynke on the ende.

YDELNES: Be my trouthe, no more wil Y,
For Y have no wil to be a clerke.
Of my book Y am wery; 715
Y was nat wonte to no suche werke.

This book is nat worth a resshe;
Ten suche are nat worthe a beene.
Be my fay Y wyl hym wesshe
And make him feyre and clene. 720
Good yeve me a litel water
That Y may wesshe my book,
For they my maister chide and chater,
And theigh Ocupacion hereof smatere,
Y wyl no more hereon look. 725

OCCUPACION: What, sonne, what pley is this?

YDELNES: Be God, it is never the worse.

OCUPACION: Y wyl telle thi maister, ywis.

YDELNES: Therfore have thou Goddis curse.

OCUPACION: Doctrine, sir, take hede 730

Hou your clerk shent his book.

YDELNES: A, syr, the devel be thi spede.

Who badde the hider look?

DOCTRINE: A, lewde losell, what japes ben thes?

Thou takest the to fantasies. 735

Fast sit down, thou shalt nat chese.

YDELNES: A, sire, here be many botterflyes

Bothe white and broun.

For cokkis blood

Take me thyn hode 740

And Y wyl smyte hem doun.

DOCTRYNE: A, a, thou dost wel and fyne.

Y wyl the tame, be Seynt Austyne,

Be thou never so wyld.

Ocupacion, ley hond on hym, have do, 745

And myself wyl helpe therto.

Come forth, my feire childe.

YDELNES: Come no nere, Y charge the now,

For and thou do, Y make a vow,

Y wyl stryke the to the hert. 750

Wolde God my dagger were grounde.

DOCTRINE: Sette honde on hym anon this stounde;

Lete him nat sterte.

OCUPACION: Come forthe thou shalt, magré thy teeth.

YDELNES: Out upon the, stronge theef. 755

Wylt thou me spille?

DOCTRINE: Have here one, two and thre.

Ydelnes, now thynke on me

And holde thi tunge stille.

YDELNES: And Y lyve Y wil be awreke 760

Some of your hedis wyl Y breke,

Occupation and Idleness

For ye have made me wrothe.

DOCTRINE: How seist thou? That lete me se.

YDELNES: Nay, for God, it is he;

In recorde of al this compané, 765

Y dede beshrewe you bothe.

DOCTRINE: Fy on the, harlot, with thi glosynge.

Thou shalt have more, be heven kynge,

To teche the wexe trewe.

YDELNES: A, mercy, maister, Y cry mercy. 770

Foryeve me this and redely

Your lore wyl Y shewe.

DOCTRINE: In good feith, thou shalt have mo

But thou leve thi ydelnes,

And but thou study and labour also 775

In al the workis of clennes.

For God taught his disciplis all,

To the and to other teche wyl Y,

Vigilate ergo, grete and small,

Nescitis qua hora that ye shul dey. 780

We know non houre of oure deyinge.

Therefore in prayeris ever shul we be;

For with oure Paternoster we shold worship heven kynge

And his blissed moder with an Ave.

YDELNES: Y sey now mercy, with herte and speche, 785

For ever to you wyl Y obedient be,

And Y wyl do as ye me teche

In al the workis of honesté.

Paternoster Y wil begynne.

OCUPACION: Lo, how litel maistry it is 790

To brynge in a childe in yowthe.

Frendis, take hede to this,

And ever draw you fro slowthe.

And thus had he had no techynge
He wold have cursed his frendis al, 795
And now he may in tyme comynge
Be a good man, and so he shall.

DOCTRYNE: Art thou sory for thi mys,
The which to the Y wyl reherce?
YDELNES: Ye, syr, that Y am, ywys, 800
Therof Y cry God and you merce.

DOCTRINE: The ten comaundementis thou brake ever more,
Thi fyve wyttis thou kepte hem ille.
YDELNES: Treuly that Y repente sore.
Y wil amende with al my wylle. 805

DOCTRINE: The dedis of mercy dost thou nat fulfyllen
To poor seek presoners also.
YDELNES: Y wyl amende it with good wylle
And Y may have lyf therto.

DOCTRINE: Now thou forsakest thyn ydelnes, 810
And hereafter wilt drede shame,
Here Y caste on the a clothe of clennes,
And Clennes shal be thi name.

CLENNES: Worthi mayster, Y thanke the,
And you, Ocupacion, also, 815
Of this man that is so fre,
And to you wil Y ever drawe to.

OCCUPACION: Now am Y glad with al my hert
That ever Y mette with the in this place,
So feire thou art now convert, 820
Fro foly and fantasy turned to grace
With so mylde steven.

Occupation and Idleness

CLENNES: Mayster, Y pray you for charité
That ye wolde telle me
What powere hath Oure Lady in heven. 825

DOCTRINE: Above al the wommen that ever were
God chese Mary unto this,
In hire body hym to bere,
Et praelegit eam Deus.

Sicut lilium amonge thornes growyng 830
Sic amica mea inter filias;
So is his moder most shynyng,
Passinge al the wommen that ever was.

Witnes at hire assumpcion,
Whan the angel seide '*Que est ista*
Que descendit fro deserte adoun 835
Tanquam fumi virgula?'

Et sicut aurora consurgens,
Never sunne shynyng so bryght,
With all delites of swetnes 840
Ther they saw that glorious syght.

But at the ascension of Crist aloon,
Whan she to heven was come,
God seide to his angel anoon,
'*Hec est regina virginum,* 845

Que genuit regem in hire body so clene,
Cui famulantur angely every day;
This same body that ye here sene,
Within the blissed sides Y lay.'

God seide to hire, '*Amica veni,* 850
Veni de Libano in flessch and fell.
Veni coronaberis in heven most hy

As quene of heven and emperes of hell.'

And lady of al the world she is,
Hire power is of grete astate. 855
Whoso honoure hire with aves
Al his desese she wyl abate,

So he be clene and out of synne,
Or in wille for to amende,
In every worke that he wyl begynne 860
Oure dere Lady wyl be his frende.

And but he stonde in that degré
Y wolde nat yeve for his prayeris a pere.
CLENNES: Y thanke my Lorde in Tryneté
That ever Y mette with you here. 865

OCUPACION: Thanke we hym of myghtis moste,
Fader and Sonne in Tryneté
Abatere of the feendis boste,
Holy my hert Y yelde to the.

CLENNES: He us brynge to good ende 870
That deyde for us on Good Fryday,
And Mary his moder be oure frende
Unto thi Sonne as ye best may.

DOCTRINE: He that is registred for the ryght eyre,
That doutful domysman that sittith in trone, 875
Kepe you ever oute of all dispeyre
And graunte you his blissynge everychone.
Amen.

NOTES

- 72 wynke] Conjectural. MS 'swynke' cannot be right, as Idleness has no intention of working (78-79).
- 146 Look] Conjectural, for MS 'And'; the 'And's which begin lines 145 and 147 could have induced an error.
- 309 Who] MS 'Whi'.
- 318f. 'Then Doctrine comes'.
- 337-38 The sense seems not quite continuous, but no obvious emendation suggests itself.
- 377 than] MS 'thon'.
- 421 his] Conjectural. MS 'thi'; lines 416-25 are otherwise in the third person throughout.
- 430 ferre] Altered from 'euert' in MS.
- 478 can] MS 'ca' (damaged).
- 490 crosse] Preceded by 'god' deleted in MS.
- 536-38 The MS omits to attribute these lines to Occupation, and the character designations at lines 536 and 538 are supplied here.
- 552 'With the supreme Trinity . . . '.
- 554f. 'Nine orders . . . of angels'.
- 556 'To the judgement of God . . . '.
- 557 'Filled with (divine) mystery. . . '.
- 572 'Religious men . . . '.
- 573 'And also exalted . . . '.
- 577 ' . . . true penitence . . . '.
- 578 'Repent ye . . . '.
- 579 'Because there shall come . . . '.
- kyngdom] MS 'kyngdon'.
- 582 'Be strong . . . '.
- 586 ' . . . slain by the sword . . . '.
- 587 ' . . . consumed by fire . . . '.
- 588 'Scourged with whips . . . '.
- 589 'These are the victors . . . '.
- 591 ' . . . continues forever'.
- 596 'Ye are the light of the world'.
- 600 ' . . . these are the saints . . . '.
- 601 ' . . . for the love of God . . . '.

- 602 'O how glorious . . .'.
629 'The righteous shall be radiant . . .'.
633 ' . . . righteousness remaineth for ever . . .'.
642 ' . . . through a tree death died . . .'.
644 ' . . . through a tree likewise . . .'.
650 ' . . . the promised oil . . .'.
690 opo] Added interlineally in MS.
692 sho] Preceded in MS by 'wys' deleted
766 Y] Conjectural; MS 'He', probably an aurally induced error.
779 'Watch, therefore . . .'.
780 'For ye know not what hour . . .'.
829 'And God chose her'.
829 *praelegit*] Conjectural, for MS '*perelegit*', where the wrong abbreviation mark was used.
830 'Like a lily . . .'.
831 'So is my love amongst the daughters'.
835f. 'Who is this . . . who descends . . .'.
837 'Like pillars of smoke'.
838 'And as the dawn arising'.
845 'Here is the queen of virgins'.
846 'Who gave birth to the king . . .'.
847 'Whom angels nourished . . .'.
850 ' . . . Come, my love'.
851 'Come from Lebanon . . .'.
852 'Come and you will be crowned . . .'.

GLOSSARY

- abye 474 *pay for it*
afferde 354 *frightened*
agast 241 *alarmed*
almasdede 344 *charity*
aray 125 *clothing*
aske 196 *warn*
aspere 29 *ask*
ataste 81 *try*
ateynte, make me 86 *condemn me*
aves 856 *Ave Marias*
awreke 760 *avenged*
ayé 534 *again*
- bak 481 *false*
balis 3 *misfortunes*
beleve 501 *creed*
bent 178 *intending (to go)*
beset 179 *invest*
beshrewe 408 *curse*
ble 207 *face*
blyve 202 *content*
borowe 58 *security*
boy 443, 448 *miscreant*
bound 520 *obliged*
brennynge 207 *burning*
brent 587 *burned*
but 671 *about, regarding*
- cheve 503 *prosper*
clennes 371 *purity of life*
clepe(n) 158, 329 *call*
clowte 251 *fabric*
cokkis 739 *God's*
crofte 220 *field*
- desese 857 *trouble*
disseverance 671 *distinction*
dome 697 *judgement*
domysman 875 *judge*
doutful 875 *awesome*
drawe 442 *withdraw*
- efte 462 *again*
emperyse 209 *emperess*
enbateyl 377 *assail*
everydel 199 *entirely*
expres(se) 75, 425 *openly, clearly*
- fay 55, 120 *faith*
fell (n.) 851 *skin*
felle (v.) 545 *bring down*
fere, in 30, 451 *together*
fese, at 112 *forthwith*
fette 665 *obtain*
fille 558 *fell*
foon 208 *enemies*
foot 259 *place*
for 62 *because of*
for-lorne 61 *forgotten*
forbeten 588 *beaten to death*
forwhi 421 *wherefor*
fressh 377 *vigorously*
fynte 393 *finds*
- gadelynge 95 *fellow*
galantly 88 *elegantly*
gette 91 *strut*
glosynge 767 *twisting of words*
good 721 *'please'*
grevalise 34 *difficulty*

happe 200 <i>bad luck</i>	nel(l) 305,314 <i>will not</i>
harlot 767 <i>miscreant</i>	not(e) 230, 505 <i>do not know</i>
heded 586 <i>beheaded</i>	
hel 200 <i>good luck</i>	parmafay 193 <i>by my faith</i>
heth, an 589 <i>on high</i>	postelis 580, 620 <i>apostles</i>
hore 514 <i>go white</i>	presse 128 <i>wardrobe</i>
hote 44 <i>am called</i>	prikkyng 16 <i>affliction</i>
	py 84 <i>magpie</i>
japes 734 <i>tricks</i>	
	queynte 82 <i>clever</i>
kaste 79 <i>incline</i>	
kepe 77 <i>care</i> , 360 <i>intend to</i>	recorde 455 <i>presence</i>
kunnynge 330 <i>wisdom</i>	rede 512 <i>advice</i>
kuppe-shote 236 <i>drunk</i>	registered 874 <i>certified</i>
	relevith 615 <i>releases</i>
lesen 578 <i>lose</i>	rent 203 <i>torn apart</i>
let 93 <i>forego</i>	reprefe 420 <i>shameful</i>
leve 122 <i>believe</i>	resshe 717 <i>rush</i>
lever, had 41, 593 <i>would prefer</i>	reverent 203 <i>worthy of reverence</i>
lewde 511, 652 <i>ignorant</i>	rewthe 26 <i>a pity</i>
long 339 <i>may belong</i>	ripe 43, 135 <i>reap</i>
lore (n.) 469 <i>learning</i>	rode, rood 203, 428 <i>cross</i>
lore, lorne (v.) 273, 421, 458 <i>lost</i>	rote 511 <i>way of life</i>
losell 734 <i>knave</i>	rowte (v.) 237 <i>spin</i>
lowte 469, 474 <i>attend</i>	rowte (n.) 703 <i>company</i>
loved 197 <i>been friends</i>	roy 203 <i>king</i>
lyflode 218 <i>living</i>	
manere 290 <i>good conduct</i>	sadde 332 <i>intently</i>
mawgry, magré 439, 754 <i>despite</i>	samfayle 175 <i>without fail</i>
mayne 221 <i>force</i>	se 204 <i>seat</i>
mede 528 <i>reward</i>	sesoun, in 13 <i>promptly</i>
medle 2 <i>mingle</i>	sessioun 36 <i>law court</i>
mel(le) 138 <i>deal</i> , 201 <i>associate</i>	sewe 22 <i>follow</i>
merce 801 <i>mercy</i>	sey 223 <i>saw</i> , 699 <i>seen</i>
meyné 165 <i>company</i>	shent 731 <i>damaged</i>
	shrew (vb.) 315 <i>curse</i>
nale 262 <i>ale(house)</i>	shrewis (n.) 350 <i>ill-disposed persons</i>

Occupation and Idleness

slither 246 *slippery*
smatere 724 *should drone on*
spense 418 *expenditure*
spente 55 *satisfied*
stente 656 *cease*
sterte 753 *move*
steven 576 *discourse, 625 voice*
stire 333 *encourage*
stounde 102, 144 *place, 752 moment*
stradelynge 96 *standing awkwardly*
symony 19, 531 *trade in spiritual*
things
symple 62, 125 *plain*
syses 36 *assizes*

take 740 *give*
the (vb.) 171, 411 *thrive*
they, thei, theigh 269, 676, 724
though
tho 393 *those*
thraldom 206 *servitude*
thryft 458 *well-being*
to-hepe 37, 70 *together*
to-rente 654 *torn to pieces*
trace, take my 88 *move, ? dance*
trow(e) 61, 124 *believe*
trusse 94 *join*

voyde 208 *rid*

warned 662 *denied*
wede 62 *clothing*
wende 479 *enter*
wery 515 *exhaustion*
wex 299 *become*
while 111 *trick*
wite 97 *discover*

wode 316 *mad*
wonte 716 *accustomed*
wote 682 *knows*
wranglynge 5 *disorder*
wynke 72 *sleep*
wynne 636 *be parted*

yfounde, wel 100 *greetings*

Discipline, Dignity and Beauty: The Wakefield Mystery Plays, Bretton Hall, 1958

Philip Butterworth

When I started teaching at Bretton Hall in 1972 I arrived too late to witness the two major productions of the *Wakefield Mystery Plays* directed by Martial Rose in 1958 and John Hodgson in 1967. Colleagues from other institutions sometimes strike up conversations about these productions in a manner that suggests that their impact is understood; their apparent significance is seemingly taken for granted. This set me thinking as to what this supposed impact or significance might be if it were other than anecdotal, nostalgic or exaggerated. So, in this paper I shall attempt to determine something of the impact and significance of the first of these productions in 1958. Although the 1967 production was by no means an insignificant event,¹ the 1958 production of the *Wakefield Mystery Plays* was the first of its kind in modern times.

Bretton Hall was established as a teacher training college in 1949 with its awards validated by the University of Leeds. Since then, Bretton, like other institutions of the same kind has undergone further changes of name and function to a College of Education and latterly to a College of Higher Education. In December, 2000, Bretton Hall and the University of Leeds agreed on a full merger of the two Institutions.

Setting up of the College was largely due to the inspiration and commitment of Sir Alec Clegg, the Chief Education Officer of the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1947-74. Under his guidance the educational terms of reference were established by which the College was to develop. Many of the initial questions and problems faced by the newly-appointed staff at Bretton Hall, with its focus upon education through music, art and drama, related to and found reflection in the following lines:

If thou of fortune be bereft,
And in thy store there be but left
Two loaves, – sell one, and with the dole

Buy Hyacinths to feed thy soul.²

This verse, from the poem *Not by Bread Alone* by James Terry White was a favourite one of Clegg.³ In some ways, the sentiment and deeper insight expressed by the verse stimulated and symbolised much of his views on education. So much so, that he was later to write:

The loaves are mainly concerned with facts, and their manipulation, and with the intellect. The hyacinths are concerned with a man's loves, hates, fears, enthusiasms, and antipathies, with his courage, his confidence and his compassion, in short, with a whole range of qualities which will determine not what he knows but the sort of person he is, and the way he will act . . . Why then have we over the years pursued the loaves to the neglect of the hyacinths?⁴

In 1961, Sir Herbert Read, then the first visiting fellow of the College referred to the same concerns in his inaugural address *Art and Communication* in which he interpreted Plato by saying:

Communication only occurs, . . . when the speaker possesses an insight into the nature of the soul, and, moreover, finds a congenial soul in which he can plant his words of wisdom.⁵

The task of implementing the kind of thinking instigated by Clegg and others fell to the first Principal of the College, John Friend. Not surprisingly, he shared Clegg's vision for the development of the College and his background in mathematics made for an inspired and courageous appointment to lead the College in its specialisms of music, art and drama. Notions of creativity and community and their relationship engaged him and all those with whom he came into contact. The College motto: *Qui non ardet non incendit* (He who is not alight cannot fire others) was, by common consent, a fitting tribute to the thinking and actions of John Friend.⁶

In 1952 Friend appointed Martial Rose who was later to become Head of English and Drama and director of the 1958 production of *The Wakefield Mystery Plays*. Some three years after the production Rose became Head of Education. He left Bretton Hall in 1965 and returned in 1967 to offer a lecture in a series known as the *Foundation Lectures*.⁷ He too referred to the 1961 address given by Read in order to

The Wakefield Mystery Plays, Bretton Hall, 1958

paraphrase Sir Herbert's comments. He suggested that: 'The pursuit of this theme led him to one of his favourite topics – that of stressing the communication that must exist between the head and the hand. These two must act in collaboration and he stressed that the head must not outstrip what the hand does nor must the hand lose touch with the earth'.⁸ This paraphrasing of Read by Rose served to express and reinforce the vision articulated by Clegg. The *Foundation Lecture* given by Rose in 1967 and titled *The Wakefield Cycle of Mystery Plays: Bretton Hall Production*, extended the series of lectures begun in the 1950's and continued in the 60's. Throughout this period a number of eminent visiting speakers made complementary and persuasive contributions to an emerging institutional philosophy and identity. All the *Foundation Lectures* focused upon the nature and relationship of art and education.

From inception, a tangible sense of community was enjoyed by all who worked at Bretton. When the College opened in 1949 there were 56 students and 6 staff. By 1958, when Rose directed the Wakefield Plays, student numbers had risen to about 190 with a commensurate rise in staff numbers. According to Friend, visitors frequently commented upon the strong sense of community and were interested in how it came about :

I suggest that the ease with which the community formed was partly due to the fact that members came together with two uniting purposes, to study and practice one art in depth and the arts more generally and to share their enjoyment of such experiences with children and others by training to teach . . . When we were faced with change, participation for a whole session by the whole college, tutorial, professional, ancillary staff and students in the first production of the Wakefield Cycle of Mystery Plays gave the community that feeling of belonging and dependence one on another that took us forward with confidence to face ten years of change.⁹

As with many innovations, the exact starting point or ownership of ideas is often unclear in a chronological sense and production of the *Wakefield Mystery Plays* appears to have had a number of contributory influences in bringing about the 1958 Production. One such influence was the production of the *York Mystery Plays* in 1954. Although a number of isolated productions from the canon of English medieval drama have taken place since the late-nineteenth century,¹⁰ it is the productions of the

York Mystery Plays of 1951 and 1954, directed by E. Martin Browne, that gave national significance to a predominantly forgotten form of early English drama. Publications by Browne, letters, reviews, eye-witness accounts and production documents lodged in the *Medieval English Theatre E. Martin Browne Archive* at the University of Lancaster testify to the importance and significance of his productions.¹¹ Rose did not see the 1951 production at York but did see the one in 1954 and on more than one occasion. He was clearly influenced by the production and it served as a springboard to his own thinking about the essential spirit of the plays:

I was deeply impressed by the scope of the York undertaking; bewitched by the backdrop of the ruins of St Mary's Abbey; fascinated by the swirl of the crowd movement, and moved by the dramatic power of the story line which culminated in the Last Judgement, the presentation of which I had never seen before. But I was left with the distinct impression that although this presentation had been set against a ruined medieval abbey, performed by a cast in medieval costume, and spoken in a language that was still redolent of the Middle Ages, the overall impression was that this was far from the medieval spirit in which the original performances must have been imbued. I wondered most about the massiveness of the spectacle, the vast numbers of actors, the mammoth set, and the serried ranks of the audience. The original trade guild plays in York had few players, and took up comparatively little space. I had been deeply impressed by seeing in the streets of York, separate from the performance at St Mary's, one of the cycle plays performed in the streets of York. In 1954 it might have been "Jesus and the Doctors", and in 1957 it might have been "Pharaoh". I felt that it was this style of presentation that came closer to the medieval mode, and it was something of this which I wished very much to achieve at Bretton.¹²

This response to the *York Plays* was no doubt affected by the fact that Rose had recently presented three of the Wakefield plays (more commonly referred to as *The Towneley Plays*)¹³ in which he too attempted to identify something of the 'medieval spirit in which the original performance must have been imbued'. The stimulus for the production came from an unlikely direction when, in 1954, a West

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Riding Adviser on Environmental Education, a Mr. Ecclestone, approached Rose with a request that Bretton students might present a performance of some of the Wakefield Plays to his residential group at Woolley Hall [near Wakefield]. Ecclestone 'was concerned that the teachers on the course should relate the district, its history, its industry, its soil, to the people who lived in these parts and who were living at that time in these parts. He wanted an historical and linguistic survey and he thought that the indigenous drama might illuminate the past'.¹⁴ Rose was only too ready to agree and chose three plays from the *Towneley Plays*: *The Annunciation*; *The Second Shepherds' Play*; and *The Flight into Egypt* :

I was keen to see for the first time how that well-known Shepherd's Play fitted in with the other two. The students used the original text and there was no concession to modern English. There was no problem of the Yorkshire audience appreciating the drama of these plays spoken in the fifteenth-century vernacular. The presentation was certainly not understood word for word, but there was no problem in conveying the dramatic movement, and in securing the audience's involvement in the wide-ranging gamut of comedy and solemnity . . . I was astonished at the dramatic power in performance of both *The Annunciation* and *The Flight into Egypt*. What greater riches might there not be in store by realizing the production possibilities of some of the other plays in the cycle?¹⁵

In his foreword to Rose's published 1967 *Foundation Lecture*, Friend records that 'the Right Reverend Bishop Wilson, present Bishop of Chichester and then Bishop of Wakefield, was co-opted as a member of the Governing Body, on one of his visits, perhaps not knowing the extent of his request, he suggested that the College might agree, not only for its own development but also to further its link with the neighbourhood, to produce the *Wakefield Cycle of Mystery Plays*. This suggestion seized the imagination of the staff who agreed that such a project would prove a most worthwhile venture.'¹⁶

According to Rose, many of the staff and some of the students had also seen the 1951 and 1954 E. Martin Browne productions of the *York Mystery Plays* and had been deeply moved by the experience. After performances of *The Annunciation*; *The Second Shepherds' Play* and *The Flight into Egypt* at Woolley Hall in 1954, the same plays were presented at Bretton Hall where John Friend saw them. He and his vice

principal, Margaret Dunn (who had worked on the Woolley Hall production with Rose), became interested to know whether the *Wakefield Mystery Plays* might not be performed by the Bretton Hall students. In consequence, Rose presented a plan to the College in which student groups were allocated to different plays. The groups consisted of First Year Music students; First Year Art students; First Year Drama students; three groups of Second Year students and a group of Mature students making seven groups in all. The total number of involved students was around one hundred.¹⁷ (Fig. 1).

The presented plan was under discussion during 1955 and 1956 at a time when Rose had already begun work on his translation of the *Wakefield Mystery Plays*. At this stage a complete, line by line, translation was envisaged and not an acting version as was to emerge later. Implicit in the plan was the concern that if the production of the plays was to be successful and the other work of the College was to continue, then careful preparation would need to be established well in advance for the academic year 1957/8. The plan set out the idea of presenting the plays as their subjects coincided with the calendar of the Christian Year. This notion was well received and so the *Nativity* sequence was prepared during the Autumn Term for Christmas and the *Passion* sequence rehearsed in the Spring Term for performance before Easter. Perhaps the ease with which the terms of the plan were accepted may be seen in the following statement by Rose:

The Bretton Hall staff at that time just happened to be believing Christians. They did not make a song and dance about it, and there was no sanctimoniousness about them. The Principal, a lay-reader, was perhaps more overtly Christian than most of us. On a regular basis the whole College was brought together for religious assemblies. His enthusiasm for the *Wakefield Plays'* project certainly stemmed from both religious and educational reasons. I think the same could be said for the rest of the staff. Throughout the enterprise I was not aware of any scepticism or cynicism with regard to the merits of the project on religious or educational grounds.¹⁸

The 'educational grounds' appear to have been articulated by a unanimity of purpose. Friend, writing in 1978 considered that 'the venture could enthuse and permeate our total work for a whole session'¹⁹ and Rose similarly considered that the enterprise 'was to unite the College in one massive undertaking which would inform

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their studies for the year, with the medieval period being especially stressed . . . ' in order that the students might be able 'to perform the drama with deeper insight' and 'to help to present through costume, décor, and music, an integrated impression of the Middle Ages to the audiences . . . ' .²⁰

Rose was given considerable support from other staff who shared the direction load of the production. Margaret Dunn, the Vice-Principal (Fig. 2), Margaret Jowett and Catherine Hinson, both lecturers, and Rose formed the direction team. Rose was in overall charge of the production and it was he who co-ordinated the work of other staff that included Daphne Bird (Music); Brian Longthorn (Music) and Reg Hazell (Art). An influential contribution to the production was made by Norah Lambourne. It was she who designed the costumes for the 1951 and 1954 E. Martin Browne productions at York. Rose recruited her to the Bretton production and he regarded her work as 'pivotal' in that her 'experience and her expertise spread confidence throughout'.²¹ Rose recalls that his initial meeting with Browne and Lambourne after witnessing the *York Plays* was almost as influential on his thinking as the impact of the productions themselves.²² As with the religious and educational motives, considerable dramatic unity was thus achieved by this team. Rose attributes the coalescence of such common purpose to the fact that:

We were a small staff by present criteria, but we were close friends, and many of us had shared the friendships of residential life. I am not, I believe, deceiving myself when I recall the very close working of the Bretton staff in those early years. Music, Art, Drama, and English were not hived off into separate and competing bastions of studies. There was a generous giving on all sides, and so many of the College activities brought the various skills of the students and staff together.²³

Such generosity of spirit undoubtedly affected the quality of experience and understanding for students and staff; each learned from the other. In 1957/8 students in training as teachers took part in either two-year or one-year courses and the latter catered for mature students in music and art. However, it was the first-year students of the two-year course who took on the major performing tasks. This was made possible by completely rearranging the first-year timetable to accommodate rehearsal and production needs. Second-year students were also involved but their respective loads were affected by their final teaching practice and final examinations. As a consequence, their contributions were concentrated towards the end of the process

prior to the point of production. A similar pattern existed for the one-year students. So, it is not difficult to appreciate that the respective experiences of the year groups on separate courses was distinctly different.

The ability to re-work the first-year timetable enabled creation of an integrated programme dealing with the Middle Ages that concentrated on its history, religion, costume, drama, music and art. It was considered by Rose that this programme 'had a profound effect on all who participated, staff and students, because each was learning from the other'.²⁴ He extends the value of this process when he declares that:

The other apparent gain for the students in this interdisciplinary activity was their immediate awareness of the practical skill of those who otherwise might not have been highly rated in the field of expressive arts. We depended on the skill of property makers, costume makers, wardrobe mistresses, carpenters, electricians, the marshalling arts of the stage-managers. All this is apparent in any production, but in this year-long undertaking the dependencies were much more evident, and the precociousness of the individual actor was sharply contrasted with the continuing skill and care of the many able technicians who kept the enterprise on an even keel.²⁵

Decisions concerning the eventual scale and scope of the production were affected by the desire to devote a considerable part of the academic year of 1957/8 to its preparation. Two related conditions that established the overall dimension of the production were: the number of existing student groups and the estimated length of the final performance. This, it was decided, should be about 3 hours. Thus, it was clear from these early stages that not all 32 plays from the *Towneley* manuscript would be performed. The plays of *Isaac*, *Jacob*, *Thomas of India*, *Ascension* and the *Hanging of Judas* were never seriously contemplated. Other plays that were left out included: *Abraham*, *Pharaoh*, *First Shepherds' Play*, *Purification*, *Christ and the Doctors*, *Pilgrims* and *Lazarus*. This left 20 plays out of the 32 that were subsequently rehearsed and performed. Of the 20, one, *Offering of the Magi*, was performed as a 'mime play' (Fig. 3). Given the decision to align performances of the plays to the Christian calendar, the *Annunciation*, *Mary's Salutation of Elizabeth*, *Second Shepherds' Play*, *Offering of the Magi*, *Flight into Egypt* and *Herod the Great* were all played, albeit not in their final form, before Christmas in 1957 and the *Passion* sequence of plays was rehearsed and performed before Easter of 1958.

In respect of the shape and structure to which the remaining plays would contribute, it was clear that there should be a 'substantial' *Creation* (Fig. 4) and an 'effective' *Last Judgement*.²⁶ Since these two *Towneley* plays are incomplete, recourse was made to the same-named plays in the *York Cycle* from which parts were incorporated. Similarly, the *Nativity* and the *Passion* needed to be fully represented as did those plays that have been readily identified as those of the so-called *Wakefield Master*; the exception being the *First Shepherds' Play*. It was anticipated that the 20 chosen plays would run considerably longer than 3 hours, so some of the plays were played alternately at different performances. A case in point is the *Play of the Prophets* which was performed occasionally in the evening but mainly in the afternoon and usually to specially invited audiences. The programme that was handed to the audience listed all 20 plays to be performed but each programme contained a slip indicating those plays that would not be played at any given performance. On the Saturday of the performance week, the audience was informed:

Owing to the length of the plays we shall not be able to perform them all on any one night. The following are omitted on Saturday:
Caesar Augustus, The Annunciation, The Flight, The Scourging, The Talents.²⁷

In retrospect, Rose would have liked to have included *Thomas of India* and the *Ascension*.²⁸

Although only 20 of the 32 plays were performed, Rose's eventual text contained translations of all the plays in the *Huntington MS HMI*.²⁹ He did not set out to change, modify or rewrite the text and considered that as far as possible the original text should be left alone. Criteria that governed any changes centred around the need to reduce the length of given plays in order to allow them to be more effective in performance. Additionally, it was thought that there might be difficulty in understanding certain set passages of the text and so a more intelligible version was considered to be necessary for a modern audience. It was envisaged that this kind of audience would be different from the local Yorkshire audience that Rose attracted to his Woolley Hall production. However, some difficult or obscure words were often left in the revised text where the context supported communicated understanding. Attempts were made to remain true to the original stanzaic patterns in all their variety. The task was made more difficult by the use of complex rhyme schemes which made further use of internal rhyme. Even now, Rose considers that he employed some licence that was not entirely successful.³⁰

As key decisions were made about the length of the production, numbers of participating students and the amount of preparatory and rehearsal time, the scale and scope of the production became clearer. Although such dimension might have encouraged large-scale staging decisions, Rose's concern that the production should reflect an appropriate 'spirit' ultimately affected and defined a more condensed scale of staging.

A number of outdoor sites were considered for the venue that included ones in front of the Mansion (the principal eighteenth-century building on site), the terraced gardens (formal gardens laid out in the eighteenth century), Camellia House (an eighteenth-century conservatory), and Stable Block. The latter site was finally chosen and for a number of reasons, one of which became relevant when 'a resonant area in which amateur voices fared better than in other locations was identified'.³¹ The site was that of an early nineteenth-century quadrangle of buildings that formed the Stable Block. The central focus of this site was a 24ft high arch through which, from the early-nineteenth century, horse-drawn vehicles originally arrived and departed (Fig. 5). Only two sides of buildings surrounding the quadrangle survived, the other two were taken down for reasons of safety. A new building, a theatre, now formed a third side to the quadrangle and the fourth side remained open. Nevertheless, the site offered good opportunities for staging focus and the actors were still able to respond to a 'strong impression of playing within a quadrangle' with its acoustic advantages as well as 'a feeling of tightness of playing'.³² The area of the old quadrangle was now grassed over and offered a suitable ground-level playing area to be used in conjunction with the levels offered by the buildings:

We needed the hierarchies in vertical space of heaven, middle-earth and hell, and we needed some impression of drama in the round which I thought was so strongly inherent in the staging of the Passion sequence in particular.³³

Stable-Block arch therefore provided the focus against which was built a staging block of three different levels that enabled access to the highest level where God sat in majesty towards the top of the arch. Two brightly-painted farm wagons were positioned at ground level on either side of the staging mass and key scenes were played out on these surrogate pageant wagons (Fig. 6) (Fig. 7).

This afforded variety, an added sense of the unexpected and a nearer contact with the audience. This device was very effective in

the Second Shepherds' Play when the main stage and pageants either side were used. The Nativity took place on the pageant to the right of God's throne, and the scenes in Mak's house to the left, underlying the blessed and the cursed.³⁴ (Fig. 8).

The kind of variety referred to here is that concerned with levels and dramatic focus. Most plays were performed by small groups of actors and could be done so in tight, confined areas. For instance, it was possible to perform the *Scourging*, with its small cast, on one of the wagons. This not only enabled a tight visual and physical focus to be created but also reinforced appropriate tension. Production decisions of this kind served to promote the sought after 'spirit' of the production in which 'the small guild feeling'³⁵ might be attained. With the exception of the *Last Judgement* where most of the entire cast were used, the plays of the Bretton production found an intimacy that was not evident at York with its 'repeatedly presented swirling movements of large numbers of actors'.³⁶

The choir was placed on the roof above the colonnade of Stable Block to the right of the Arch (effectively stage right). Thus the choir was at roughly the same height as God. Some instrumentalists were also placed here although many operated unseen from under the colonnade and behind the main staging block. Characters such as Pilate, Caesar Augustus and Herod were heralded from here. Similarly, cacophonous sound that accompanied 'entrances' and 'exits' of the devils also took place from here. Rose recalls 'that the trombonists were worked quite hard'.³⁷ The audience faced the setting in a wide semi circle, with its back to the theatre (the third side of the old quadrangle). The seating was not raked.

Thus the staging configuration was determined. The simplicity associated with these staging decisions promoted flexibility in response to the varied focal requirements of the plays. Although the production was designed for the open air, contingency plans were made to transfer the production into the adjacent theatre in case of bad weather. (Fig. 9). In the event, the first two performances were played indoors and the rest were played outdoors as planned. 'W.L.W.' reviewed the production for the *Manchester Guardian* (later *The Guardian*) on the opening night and recorded:

But tonight it had to go into the college theatre and the gaudy pageants on which it should have been mounted were left reluctantly outside on the steaming grass of the quadrangle.³⁸

The result of the decision to move indoors led 'W.L.W.' to observe that 'In the weaker scenes, the more conventionally didactic passages, this inevitably made the atmosphere wrong and stagy, . . .'.³⁹ However, the reviewer in *The Times Educational Supplement* wrote:

Those who attended on the second and third evenings, when the weather was fine, were the most fortunate. They could watch the plays, from the quadrangle, performed on the two movable "pageants" (the painted carts) and on the three-tier structure representing heaven, earth and hell. They could also enjoy the gradual change of lighting as the day faded and the well-focused stage lanterns were directed on the players.⁴⁰

'W.L.W.' in the *Manchester Guardian* commenting on the larger structural concerns of the production recorded that 'The chief excitement of the long night's work, however, came in the big set pieces of the cycle, The Creation, The Crucifixion and the Judgement in which the raw gaudy colours of the medieval vision of life and death are reproduced strikingly'.⁴¹ Other reviewers, perhaps predictably, concentrated their assessment on the performances of some of the principal figures. 'Thespis' in the local newspaper, *The Barnsley Chronicle and South Yorkshire News* wrote: 'In the story of the Creation, God was a powerful figure, with a deep sonorous voice to match, and Evil, in the character of Lucifer, was a memorable performance. How well, too, did Adam and Eve portray the wonder of life and the fall into human sin'. (Fig. 10). The reviewer continued: 'We had a ranting raving Herod, who gave full value to the dramatic fury of the character. Pilate and Judas, treated rather sympathetically in modern plays, were powerfully shown as characters of scorn and evil'.⁴² Similarly, 'W.L.W.' referred to 'The maniac Herod and the wily Lucifer with a splendid ginger moustache were among the most memorable individual performances, though the standard of the acting generally was remarkably high when one remembers that there are many bit parts and that they were spread out among most of the college's 150 students'. 'Thespis' observed that 'The plays took on a marvellous new religious quality when Jesus appeared, and the young man who played this wonderful role was indeed above all others in dramatic stature. He had the aura of heavenly majesty about him, and he portrayed the emotional and physical ordeal of the Crucifixion with most impressive realism. Oberammergau cannot have seen anything better than this.' (Fig. 11). *The Times Educational Supplement* referred to the acting: 'Both in diction and in bearing the players were excellent, and within the general

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pattern of acting to which all were required to conform, there were individual demands upon each for differences of tempo and attack according to character or situation. There was so much of variety and contrast that monotony was never even threatened. The main impression that remains, however, is of discipline, dignity and beauty'. 'Thespis' regarded that 'The acting throughout was of the highest quality'. A.C. Cawley of the University of Leeds wrote to Rose to congratulate him on the production:

The staging and costumes are most impressive, and the selection of the plays gives an excellent idea of the grand design of the whole. I also liked your judicious modernising of the language of the plays: . . . This was a wonderful example of dramatic team-work, and I suppose one ought not to pick out any individuals for special mention. But just as the Wakefield Master's work stands out from the rest of the cycle, so I must say that the performance given by Herod and Lucifer was quite masterly. Congratulations on such an ambitious achievement and thank you all for providing us with a memorable experience.⁴³

Similarly, J.E. Stevens of Magdalene College, Cambridge, wrote to Rose and declared:

I rate my experience of the Towneley plays at Bretton among the experiences of the year – especially those fragments of it which I saw out of doors the following morning. The 'Prophetæ' were unforgettable. You'd never believe it from reading. I didn't! . . . Certainly, where you scored over all other productions I have seen, was in the homogeneity of the thing, and in the sense of it being a communal effort. This feeling clearly cannot be manufactured or imposed from above. It really takes a community to produce it!⁴⁴

'W.L.W.' not only commented on the quality of the acting but took in the wider scope and implications of the production:

But while the college can be proud of having made a little dramatic history in a very creditable way, the production is even more impressive as the result of a large-scale educational project. The

excellent costumes, the sets, and the intelligently selected and skilfully performed music of the period with which the production is decorated, provide impressive evidence of the quality of the research which has occupied much of this term at Bretton Hall.

Some delayed impact of the production was communicated to Rose through the offer from the Provost of the new Coventry Cathedral to perform the *Wakefield Mystery Plays* at the opening of the Cathedral in 1961. Rose was in favour of such a development but other circumstances prevented it. Shortly after the production at Bretton in 1958, Bernard Miles wrote to Rose having read the review in the *Manchester Guardian*. He contacted Rose because he thought that it might be a good idea to open his *Mermaid Theatre* with a production of the *Wakefield Mystery Plays*. Subsequently, Miles and his wife came to stay at Bretton where they heard students read through sections of the plays. They were also taken to York where they walked the original route of the plays and discussed the style of presentation of the *York Plays*. On his return to London, Miles began to encounter unforeseen difficulties. He had not reckoned with the effective intervention of the Lord Chamberlain whose office prohibited any professional public performances that involved the impersonation of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. It is remarkable to recall that the motive behind the injunction from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners at York that effectively suppressed production of 'a plaie commonlie called Corpus Christi plaie' in Wakefield in 1576 was still in force in 1959. After some lively correspondence between Miles and the Lord Chamberlain, the former gave in and opened his theatre with a production of *Lock up Your Daughters*. Some two years later censorship by the Lord Chamberlain's office was relaxed and Miles was able to mount productions of the *Wakefield Mystery Plays* in 1961 and 1963.⁴⁵ Rose's text was the one used by Miles. The timing of the production in 1961 was close to that of the opening of the new Coventry Cathedral. Miles was therefore against performance of the plays as part of the opening ceremony. Rose, reluctantly, did not accept the Provost's invitation. However, these related circumstances reflected well upon the Bretton production and the College 'as an Institution of some merit'.⁴⁶

From the foregoing responses to the production it is possible to discern some of the attributes, character and quality of it. The motivation in mounting the production is clear as are the educational, religious and theatrical aims and objectives. Clearly, some of the impact of the production relates to the fact that these plays were considered to be performed for the first time in 'modern times'. Interestingly, the notion of 'modern times' may be extended for there is no evidence of any of the plays

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in *Huntington MS HMI* having been performed before 'modern times'. Although 'a plaie commonlie called Corpus Christi plaie' performed at Wakefield in the sixteenth century was effectively censored and withdrawn by decree of the Archbishop of York in 1576, the synonymity between it and all the plays contained in *Huntington MS HMI* has not been proved.⁴⁷ Specific references to Wakefield are contained in some plays of the manuscript as are allusions to Wakefield and its environs.⁴⁸ In consequence, it may be possible to attach even greater significance to this, the first performance of so many plays in 'modern times', than was acknowledged in 1958.

Apart from the comment from 'W.L.W.', quoted earlier, concerning the resultant atmosphere as being 'wrong and stagy' on moving indoors and the 'weaker scenes' being those which were 'the more conventionally didactic passages', comments from reviewers and correspondents were positive and complimentary. Even so, the comment about the atmosphere being 'wrong and stagy' is an empathetic one to the problems associated with a performance conceived for outdoors and forced to play indoors. It is not clear, however, whether 'W.L.W.' considered the 'more conventionally didactic passages' as being intrinsically weaker or whether he thought that it was the indoor performance that made them weaker. Interestingly, perhaps the most didactic of the plays, the *Play of the Prophets* proved to be an 'unexpected success'.⁴⁹ J.E. Stevens, as recorded earlier, called the play 'unforgettable. You'd never believe it from reading. I didn't! . . .'. Margaret Jowett, one of the directing team, talking of Rose said: 'Well, it worried him for a time. He said he couldn't see how to handle it and then he said it suddenly came to him – they were preaching and so they should have been handled as preachers – and they were'.⁵⁰ Rose describes the production treatment:

The play contains no dialogue between any of the characters, but allows for a succession of prophets, Moses, David, Sibyl Sage, and Daniel, to give their vision of things to come. For this play we had made a portable pulpit. The play offered an open-air sermon-entertainment. Each of the characters in turn harangued the congregation gathered close around them in very different styles.⁵¹

A number of responses referred to the achievement of a high standard of acting. In 1958 criteria that were used to determine 'good acting' were filtered through the perceived requirements of the proscenium-arch stage. Although the central ideas of Stanislavski were known, his impact on the nature of acting was not as strong as that governed by the more recent tradition of pre-war actor training. E. Martin

Browne offered advice as to how the actor should act in religious plays:

Keep your eyes on the person you are speaking to, unless you are afraid of him.

Keep your feet still, unless you are going somewhere.

Take a sufficiently broad stance to save yourself from being knocked down by a slight push; this gives you ease and confidence of manner. It is usually best to have the 'upstage' foot (i.e. the one furthest away from the audience) forward.

Gesture must come from the body, and its weight must follow the arm in a big gesture.

Find a reason for dropping a gesture as well as for making it; and give the gesture time to make its effect on the audience before you drop it.

Kneel on the knee nearest the audience.

Turn towards the audience, not away from it.

Don't walk sideways or backwards except before a King; turn in the direction you want to go, and walk straight there.⁵²

Although Browne is essentially addressing the amateur actor, these comments nevertheless offer a good indication of what was considered important in order to achieve 'good acting'. He went on to amplify his advice by saying: 'When we recollect that nearly every one of our front-rank professional actors to-day was trained in Sir Frank Benson's Shakespearean Company, we see what Religious Drama needs'.⁵³

Since Rose has been unable to shed any light on the kind of acting style employed in the production, my guess is that deliberate decisions were not made in this regard and that the acting that was delivered was a kind of proscenium-arch realism with a concession to outdoor playing in terms of 'bigness' of action and response. This is still largely the kind of unconscious acting employed in most outdoor productions today.⁵⁴ This form of acting requires the strength of character portrayed to be the principal criterion by which 'good acting' is determined. Browne refers to this concern as 'the only approach which can lead to real acting – by appreciating the *thoughts* of the character'.⁵⁵ Some of the reviewers cited earlier refer to such a criterion.

For some of the witnesses to the production the evident educational objectives shone through the performance. 'W.L.W.' regarded the production as even 'more impressive as the result of a large-scale educational project' and that it provided

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'impressive evidence of the quality of the research'. 'Thespis' referred to the 'ample evidence of the careful research and the enthusiastic way in which the project was tackled'. The reviewer in *The Times Educational Supplement* was impressed by the intensive collaboration which he described as 'noteworthy and admirable'. One correspondent also referred to the accompanying exhibition as 'first class'.⁵⁶

In addition to the acknowledged high standard of acting and declared educational achievements, the overriding influence upon the production seems to have been that of community aspiration and endeavour. Communication of the strong sense of community purpose was felt and referred to by witnesses and correspondents. This communicated sense was clearly a unifying bonus, for that which a cast or company experience in preparation and performance is invariably not that which its audience experiences. So it is all the more remarkable that such community spirit was capable of transmitting itself in such a way as to reinforce the homogeneity of the production and its purpose. Cawley referred to the 'wonderful example of dramatic team-work'. The implication here is that the production values from everyone involved supported and matched the achievement and its communication.

Rose is the first to acknowledge that some 'mythology' might have grown up around the production.⁵⁷ In other words, more might be made of the production than is actually warranted. This may be so, particularly within the current context of increased medieval-play production in Britain and elsewhere. However, in production terms, many of the ideas, methods and approaches used in the Bretton production are now commonplace in contemporary productions. Of itself, this notion may be seen to both increase and/or lessen the original significance. Perhaps the greatest significance of the production existed within the nature of the experience. This was clearly a deep experience for many. Audience members retrospectively referred to it as 'memorable' and 'unforgettable'. The College community alluded to it somewhat differently. Rose attempted to define the experience for himself and others:

the whole project entailed most of us giving ourselves wholeheartedly over a very long period, and this for most of us was a religious act although at the time we may not have thought of it in those terms. But at the moment before the first out-of-doors performance I had an overwhelming feeling which was shared by most of those taking part, that we were about some deeply moving communal undertaking that I could only then, as I do now, define as religious.⁵⁸

Those who have attempted, with or without religious motivation, to put on such plays as these will know what Rose means.

Any theatrical production requires theoretical and/or practical decisions to be made that conspire to converge in theatrical resolution in performance. Such decisions may arise out of and from disparate sources. However, if the purpose of the production is clear then such decision making may be guided towards this end. In the case of the *Wakefield Mystery Plays*, decisions that the majority of the College community should work on the production for a whole year and that the timetable should be reworked to further the purpose of the process, clearly formed the basis upon which further more concentrated decisions were to take place. Such decisions also conditioned the infrastructure for community development. This unique process is that which most College participants seem to have valued. However, it is also clear from earlier responses that the audience too was also able to detect, receive and value this spirit.

With some 40 years hindsight, Rose considers that:

the most shaking realisation was that individually we were nothing out of the ordinary as teachers and students, but as a community we achieved something far above the level of our individual competence . . . And I knew then that that insight and that extraordinary experience would never come again.⁵⁹

The Wakefield Mystery Plays, Bretton Hall, 1958



Fig. 1. The Cast.



Fig. 2. Margaret Dunn rehearses the *Last Judgement*. The choir was placed above the colonnade (top left).

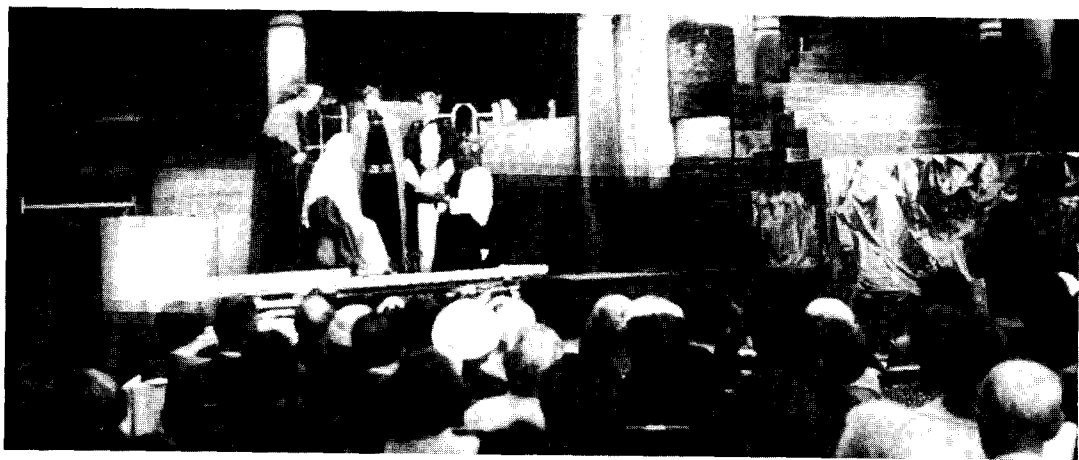


Fig. 3. Offering of the Magi.

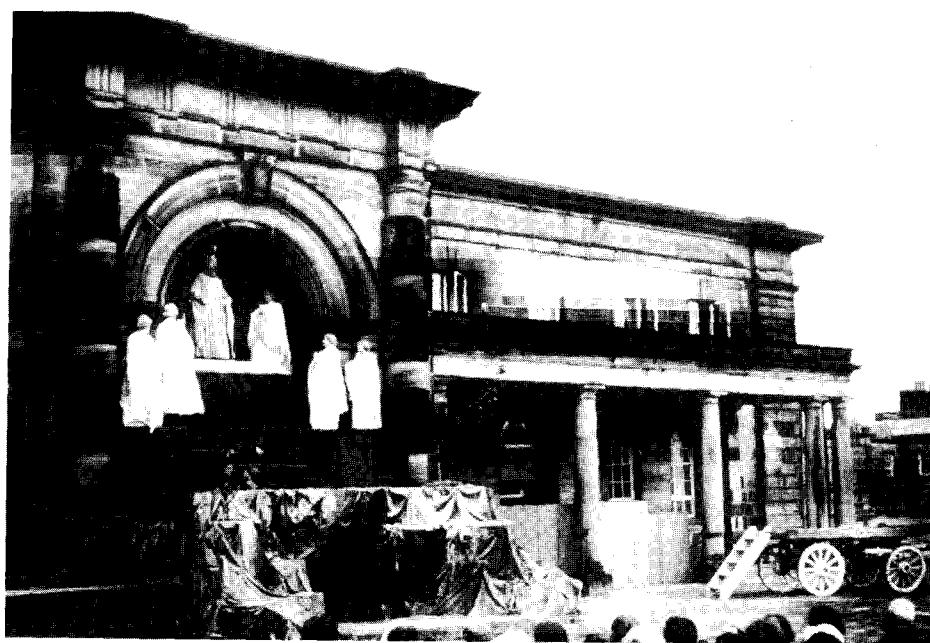


Fig. 4. Creation.

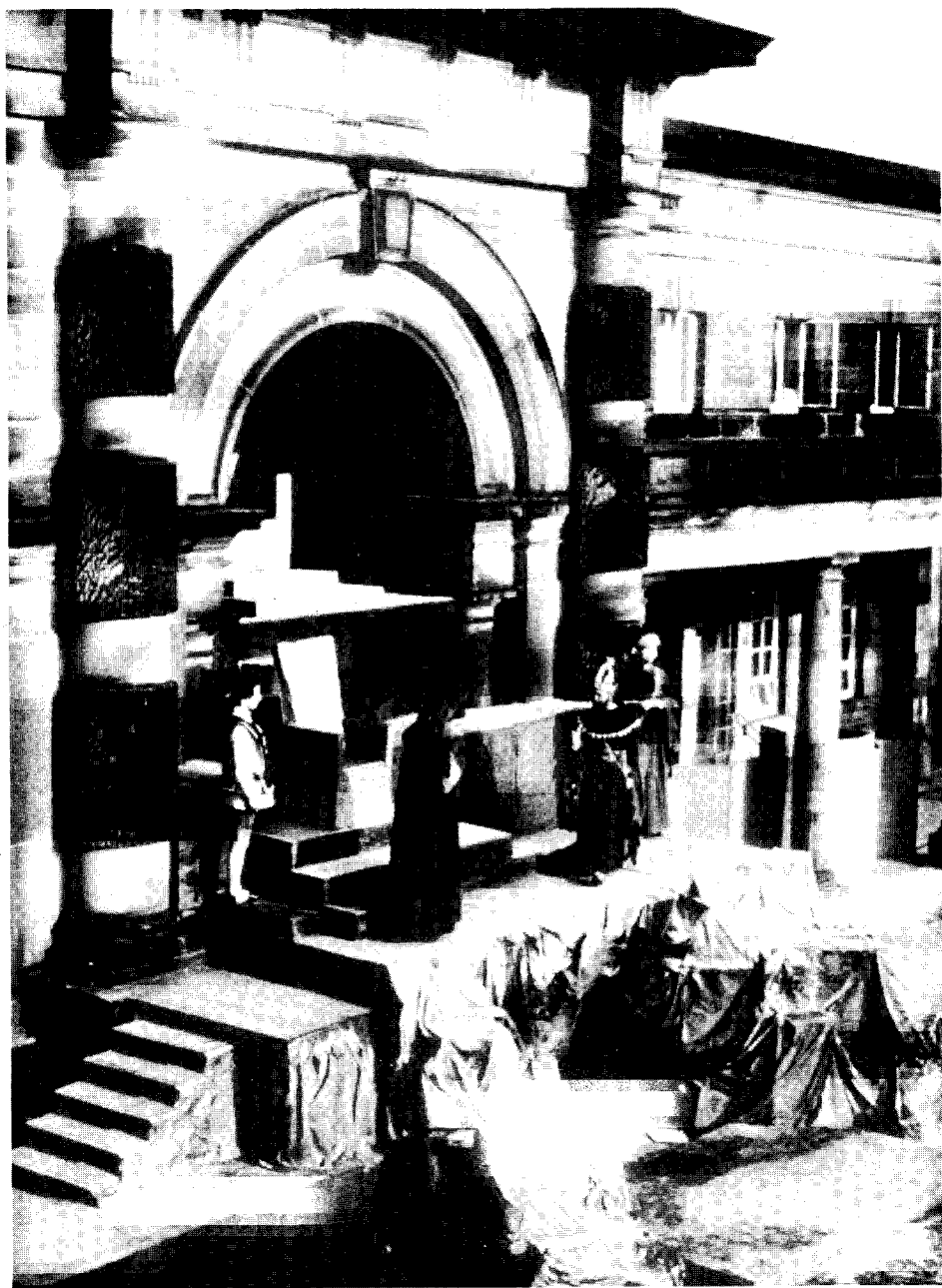


Fig. 5. *Caesar Augustus*. This photograph gives a good impression of the relationship of the arch to the set.

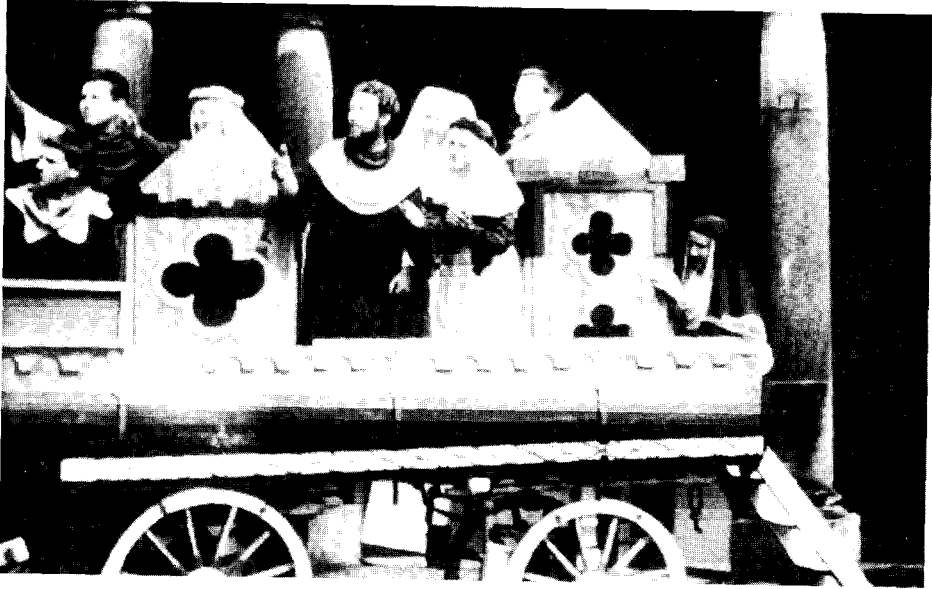


Fig. 6. (above)
Noah on wagon
(stage right).

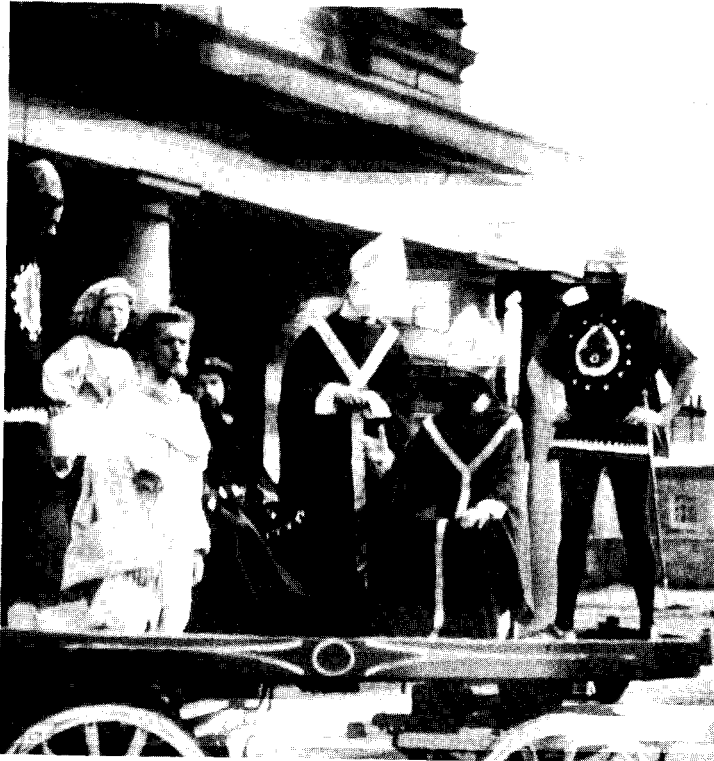


Fig. 7.
Conspiracy
on wagon
(stage left).

The Wakefield Mystery Plays, Bretton Hall, 1958



Fig. 8. *Second Shepherds' Play.*



Fig. 9. *Mopping up.*

Fig. 10. *Adam and Eve*.

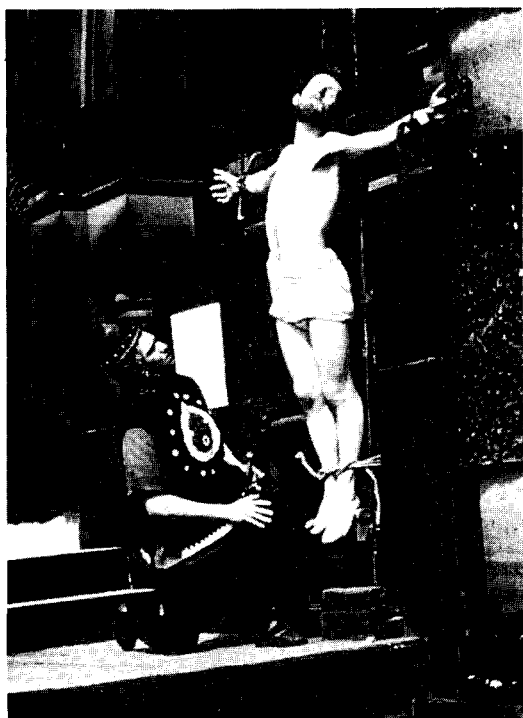


Fig. 11. *Crucifixion* in rehearsal.

NOTES

It will be evident to readers of this paper that Martial Rose has provided a considerable amount of information to its development. Additionally, he has given much reflective consideration to my questions, some of which would tax anyone required to delve into memories and details of some 40 or so years ago. I can only imagine that the sort of generosity offered by Martial may be likened to that with which the production was imbued; I wish to offer him my sincere thanks.

I should also like to thank Margaret Jowett for her time and kindness in answering my questions and Leonard Bartle of the *National Arts Education Archive* for his persistence in pursuing my requests for information.

¹ The 1967 production of the *Wakefield Mystery Plays* at Bretton Hall, directed by John Hodgson took place between 19-26 May. Thursday, 25 May of that year was Corpus Christi Day. This production consisted of all 32 plays in the *Huntington MS HMI* and used a cut-down version of Martial Rose's text. Some 200 students took part as performers with other production functions taken on by additional students. By this time student numbers in the College had risen to over 600.

² James Terry White, *For Lovers and Others: A Book of Roses* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1911), p. 16.

³ Clegg relates his interest in the verse as coming from: 'poker work on a piece of 3-ply in my aunt's sitting room wall over thirty years ago', Sir Alec Clegg, 'Loaves and Hyacinths', *The Bramley Occasional Papers*, 3 (1988), 1-8; Alec Clegg, *About our Schools* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 17.

⁴ Sir Alec Clegg, 'Loaves and Hyacinths', p. 2.

⁵ Sir Herbert Read, 'Art and Communication', *Bretton Hall Fellowship: Inaugural Address*, 17 November 1961, p. 21.

⁶ *He who is not alight cannot fire others: An appreciation of John Friend, M.A., BSc., Bretton Hall College 1949-1968*, ed. by Margaret Dunn (Bretton Hall: 1989), *passim*.

⁷ The *Foundation Lectures* were set up by John Friend and involved the following speakers: Dame Dorothy Brock (Headmistress, Mary Datchelor School); Sir Herbert Read; Bernard Shore (B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra); Professor Meredith (Dept. of Psychology, University of Leeds); Lord Fleck; Dr. Vick (Harwell Nuclear Research Station); Professor Ingham (Dept. of Physics, Keele University); George Devine (Director, Royal Court Theatre); Professor Ben Morris (University of Bristol); Professor J.W. Tibble (University College of Leicester); Professor J.P. Tuck (University of Durham); Professor W.R. Niblett; Professor Louis Arnaud Reid (University of London); Professor Quentin Bell (University of Leeds); Sir Alec

Clegg.

⁸ Martial Rose, 'The Wakefield Cycle of Mystery Plays: Bretton Hall Production', *Bretton Hall Foundation Lecture*, Spring 1967, p. 5.

⁹ John F. Friend, *Creativity and Community In the Education and Training of Teachers: Bretton Hall 1949-1968* (Bretton Hall: 1978), p. 109.

¹⁰ I am specifically thinking of the work of William Poel and Nugent Monck. For descriptions and reviews of their work see: Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play: Origins, History and Influence of the Dramatic Tradition* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 1-5, 222-25; John R. Elliott Jr, *Playing God: Medieval Mysteries on the Modern Stage* (Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 1989), pp. 42-47; John Marshall, 'Modern productions of medieval English plays', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre* ed. by Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 290-311 (pp. 290-91).

¹¹ The Archive is administered by Meg Twycross and contains many personal documents of E. Martin Browne along with items about him and his work. I should like to thank Meg and Helen Bennett for their help and consideration in enabling me to make use of the Archive.

¹² Martial Rose, *Correspondence*, (5), 17 September 1999. Where Rose's correspondence is cited in the notes, the number in brackets that precedes the date, refers to the section number in the correspondence.

¹³ Useful discussions of the relationship between 'Wakefield' and 'Towneley' designations are to be found in: A.C. Cawley, *The Wakefield Pageants in the Towneley Cycle* (Manchester: The University Press, 1958), xi-xvii; Martial Rose, *The Wakefield Mystery Plays* (London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1961), pp. 9-30; *The Towneley Plays*, ed. by Martin Stevens and A.C. Cawley 2 vols (Oxford: EETS, Oxford University Press, 1994), xv-xxii. Unfortunately, the discussion here attempts to make links that the evidence will not permit. Peter Meredith, 'The Towneley cycle', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre* ed. by Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 134-62 (pp. 134-45). This article is by far the strongest and most balanced assessment of the available evidence.

¹⁴ Rose, *Bretton Hall Foundation Lecture*, p. 6.

¹⁵ Rose, *Correspondence*, (1), 17 September 1999.

¹⁶ Rose, *Bretton Hall Foundation Lecture*, p. 3.

¹⁷ The extant lists of participating students are not organised in the way described in the text but the relationship will be clear:

Year 1 Women

Andrews, J	Atyeo, J	Baker, A
Benfield, C	Bowyer, W	Brett, F
Carr, J	Chambers, C	Chambers, S

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Clarke, N
Doran, D
Hague, M.T
Hesletine, O
Jones, S
Lincoln, A
Mephram, M
Williams, E
Wilding, M

Clarke, S
Everitt, P
Hardy, A
Hogg, B
Kingham, G
Miller, F
Nuttall, J
Winchester, L
Woolley, J
Yarrow, J

Cole, W
Gillard, D
Hayes, C
Inglis, R
Kirkham, G
Mc.Master, J
Nutting, J
Wood, C
Wilks, A

Year 1 Men

Arnold, N
Cooper, P
Edwards, P
Green, M
Holt, D
Laycock, C
Pearson, J
Thompson, K
Weavell, R

Carberry, J
Craig, D
Fulleylove, J
Green, R
Johnson, R
Mangham, I
Roocroft, S
Walcot, M
Williamson, R

Cole, E
Douglas, S
Gell, D
Hickling, D
Kirkwood, J
Palmer, D
Smith, P
Wardle, I
Wright, P

Year 2 Women

Adamson, S
Dale, P
Gosney, A
Hopkinson, R
Leybourne, O
Mc.Loughlin, M
Peaker, M
Robinson, M
Vamplew, J

Allan, S
Evans, I
Gray, M
Kinver, M
Lockwood, P
Nield, V
Roberts, J
Searle, J
Wagstaff, C

Cauldwell, B
Gordon, I
Heritage, M
Lawler, M
Mc.Hard, J
Nurse, D
Reynolds, M
Stevens, C
Winterbottom, A

Year 2 Men

Cooper, R
English, S
Jackson, A

Crimlisk, A
Hersee, D
Lomas, G

Crowther, G
Hope, W
Moore, J

Philip Butterworth

Oliver, J
Sutherland, J

Rogers, J
Traynor, O

Rubens, M
Wilson, R

Mature Students Women and Men

Berry, M
Robinson, M

Dove, S
Robinson, M

Kagwa, G

Choir and Instrumentalists

Year 1, 2 and Mature Women and Men

Sopranos

Burn, K
Collins, A
Feeney, J
Fordham, S
Griffiths, P
Horner, E
Kipling, A
Lumb, B
White, E

Contraltos

Bartlett, R
Davies, G
Lewis, C
Parrish, S
Smith, M

Tenors

Dyson, P
Featherstone, R
Howes, R
Pawson, B
Richardson, J

Basses

Haigh, J
Holt, T
Ladds, R
Loten, R
Muwonge, S
Rimmer, R
Smith, R
Walters, D

Brass

Bailey, M
Baines, B
Barton, A
Bastow, G
Bradford, D
Clarke, P
Dunn, J
Saberton, J
Tucker, R
Willett, C
Wright, R

¹⁸ Rose, *Correspondence*, (3), 17 September 1999.

¹⁹ Friend, *Creativity and Community*, p. 46.

²⁰ Rose, *Correspondence*, (2), 17 September 1999.

²¹ Rose, *Correspondence*, (4), 17 September 1999. Lambourne's two main works are:

Dressing The Play (London & New York: The Studio Publications, 1953) and *Staging the Play* (London and New York: The Studio Publications, 1956).

²² Rose, *Correspondence*, (5), 17 September 1999.

²³ Rose, *Correspondence*, (2), 17 September 1999.

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²⁴ Rose, *Correspondence*, (6), 30 September 1999.

²⁵ Rose, *Correspondence*, (6), 30 September 1999.

²⁶ Rose, *Correspondence*, (10), 30 September 1999.

²⁷ Changes in the programme were obviously well considered in respect of the shape and structure of different programmes. For instance, on Wednesday afternoon of July 2 at 2-00pm, the following were played: *Creation* (25 mins); *Annunciation* (14 mins); *Second Shepherds' Play* (25 mins); *Offering of the Magi* (mimed piece, 5 mins); interval; *Conspiracy* (22 mins); *Buffeting* (15 mins); *Crucifixion* (17 mins); *Resurrection* (18 mins); *Judgement* (20 mins). The programme on Friday evening of July 4 at 6-30pm was the one reviewed by 'W.L.W.' and consisted of the *Creation* (25 mins); *Noah* (25 mins); *Annunciation* (14 mins); *Second Shepherds' Play* (25 mins); *Offering of the Magi* (5 mins); *Herod* (20 mins); interval; *Conspiracy* (22 mins); *Scourging* (14 mins); *Crucifixion* (17 mins); *Talents* (12 mins); short interval; *Resurrection* (18 mins); *Judgement* (20 mins). Different again was the programme on Saturday evening of July 5 at 6-30pm. This was: *Creation* (25 mins); *Killing of Abel* (13 mins); *Noah* (25 mins); *Prophets* (10 mins); *Salutation of Elizabeth* (6 mins); *Second Shepherds' Play* (25 mins); *Offering of the Magi* (5 mins); interval; *John the Baptist* (9 mins); *Conspiracy* (22 mins); *Buffeting* (15 mins); *Crucifixion* (17 mins); short interval; *Deliverance* (15 mins); *Resurrection* (5 mins. This was clearly a shortened version designed for this particular programme); *Judgement* (20 mins). Thus the running time, without intervals, was: Wednesday afternoon, 161 mins; Friday evening, 217 mins; Saturday evening, 212 mins.

²⁸ Rose, *Correspondence*, (10), 30 September 1999.

²⁹ *The Towneley Cycle: a Facsimile of Huntington MS HM1*, ed. by A.C. Cawley and Martin Stevens, Leeds Texts and Monographs: Medieval Drama Facsimiles, 2 (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1976); Rose, *The Wakefield Mystery Plays* was also issued by Evans in five separate parts as softback versions.

³⁰ Rose, *Correspondence*, (8), 30 September 1999.

³¹⁻³⁷ Rose, *Correspondence*, (11), 30 September 1999.

³⁸ W.L.W., 'Wakefield Play Cycle: Fruits of research', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 July 1958, p. 9.

³⁹ W.L.W., 'Wakefield Play Cycle: Fruits of research', p. 9.

⁴⁰ Anon, 'The Wakefield Cycle', *Times Educational Supplement*, 11 July 1958, p. 1143.

⁴¹ W.L.W. 'Wakefield Play Cycle: Fruits of research', p. 9.

⁴² Thespis, 'Mystery Plays', *Barnsley Chronicle and South Yorkshire News*, 12 July 1958, p. 5.

⁴³ Letter from A.C. Cawley to Martial Rose, 5 July 1958.

⁴⁴ Letter from J.E. Stevens to Martial Rose, 10 September 1958.

⁴⁵ On 11 August 1958 Miles wrote to Rose: 'The trouble is going to be getting God the

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Father and Jesus Christ past the censor, and it seems the only solution would be to form a club for the particular purpose of this presentation. I'll tell you the situation when we meet.' The censor's responses continued to impede Miles' attempts to put on the plays and on 26 September 1960 Miles again wrote to Rose: 'the whole problem of showing God and Jesus Christ in person has raised its ugly head again, and as I must do these as a big public performance and for a long run, I must get this matter cleared up before we begin talking of versions etc. I have plans to see the Archbishop of Canterbury and others, and have good hopes we may get the whole thing settled in a very short time.' Eric Penn of the Lord Chamberlain's Office wrote to Miles on 27 September 1960 as follows:

LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S OFFICE
St. James's Palace, S.W.1.
27 September, 1960

Dear Mr. Miles,

I am not quite sure exactly what you have in contemplation for your cycle of Mystery and Morality Plays, and perhaps it will help you therefore if I give you the Lord Chamberlain's attitude towards them. It will then be up to you to judge his Lordship's probable reaction to the plans you have, and if you feel that there is any doubt then it will probably be best for you to let us know your positive intentions so that we may give you an authoritative answer.

In brief the production of Mystery and Morality Plays is governed by the fact that the Lord Chamberlain will not allow Christ or the Deity to be impersonated on the stage. A bright light or a voice off stage is allowed but not an actual impersonation. This rule applies to plays written since 1843 and which are subject to Section 12 of the Theatres' Act 1843.

As regards plays written before 1843, and for all practical purposes this means the Medieval Plays only, the Lord Chamberlain does not interfere and it is permissible for Christ to be personified on the stage. I need not go into the reasons for this differentiation because so far as you are concerned it is only the practical outcome which matters.

Where I assume difficulty may arise is the fact that you may have the intention of taking some of the old Mystery, Miracle or Morality Plays and either adapting them, or modernizing the dialogue or dress. Anything which interferes with the basic simplicity of these plays and removes them from what is almost the symbolic sphere to the actualities of a modern presentation would bring them within the sphere of the Lord Chamberlain's ban on the impersonation of Christ or the Deity. Such modern adaptations would also, of course, have to be submitted for a Licence.

I think this should be sufficient to show you what you can do with safety, and what you

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would be advised to consult us on, and if I can be of further help I shall be only too willing.

Yours sincerely.

ERIC PENN.

Bernard Miles, Esq.

C.B.E.

On the following day (28 September 1960) Miles wrote to Rose: 'I have at last received some clarification of the censorship situation-as enclosed. It seems clear that the whole thing turns around the question of adapting and modernizing, and interfering with the basic simplicity. I also enclose my reply to the Comptroller. It seems to me we will have to do a considerable job of negotiation, but in the end they may yield. In practice these things are always a matter of give and take . . . It's only that I just glimpsed the difficulty, i.e. that the Lord Chamberlain could say 'No, this is a translation of an adaptation, and therefore I refuse to let you do it'. In order to keep us from showing God and Jesus Christ in public. You get my meaning?' In a handwritten note at the foot of the page Miles adds: 'I think a great deal may turn on our sticking to the word "TRANSCRIPTION"?? please keep all this very secret.'. In the same letter Miles floats the possibility of performing the plays 'in their pristine form of speech' and asks 'would these plays still be as understandable – because of course that gets over the whole difficulty, i.e., they would hardly have been adapted or modernized at all'. On 1 October 1960 Rose replied: 'The pristine speech of the plays would be beset by difficulties of vocabulary, inversions, and the strangest grammatical inflexions that intelligibility would be completely sacrificed. Dialect speaking of the adaptation on the other hand will recreate the pristine indigenous vigour that pounds through so much of the verse. We would be hard put to justify my version as a "transcription", but if the final issue is to be decided on grounds of "basic simplicity" then we should have little to fear.'

⁴⁶ Rose, *Correspondence*, (6c), 30 September 1999. Subsequently, Rose prepared an acting text of the *Ludus Coventriae* (now referred to as the *N-Town Plays*) to be performed at Coventry. The plays went into rehearsal but were abandoned when the producer, David Langham fell ill. Rose, *Correspondence*, (3), 16 January 2001.

⁴⁷ See Meredith, 'The Towneley cycle', pp. 142-45.

⁴⁸ Stevens and Cawley, *The Towneley Plays*, I, xix-xxii; Meredith, 'The Towneley cycle', pp. 144-45.

⁴⁹ Rose, *Correspondence*, (10), 30 September 1999.

⁵⁰ Margaret Jowett, *Interview*, 16 July 1999.

⁵¹ Rose, *Correspondence*, (10) 30 September 1999.

⁵² E. Martin Browne, *The Production of Religious Plays* (London: Philip Allan & Company, 1932), p. 38.

⁵³ Browne, pp. 39-40.

⁵⁴ Two known exceptions are: a production of the Towneley play of *Pharaoh* as part of the 1980 production of the *Wakefield Mystery Plays* in Wakefield city centre, produced by Jane Oakshott. The acting style derived from the perceived rhetorical requirements of the play which led to a bold and showy demonstration of consciously acted technique. The cast of *Pharaoh* was: Peter Meredith – director/God/Pharaoh; A.E. Green – soldier; Dick Wilcox – soldier; Richard Rastall – Moses; John Tailby, Penny Newman, Dannie Green – Children of Israel.

The second example is of my own production of the York *Crucifixion*, presented in the streets of York in 1992. Here the acting style was governed by the intention for all actors to make eye contact with individuals in the audience in order to speak 'to', 'at', 'with' and 'through' the audience. Relationships with individuals in the audience were sought. The cast and crew of the *Crucifixion* was: Don Wood; Brian McCann; Mike Bellini; Kevin Rowntree; Gareth White; Peter Harrop; Joan Farnworth; Jane Francis; Elizabeth Rance; Mark Castle; Stuart Coleman; Neil Gavin; Ed Hill; Chris Hockley; William Meddis; Sarah Hamilton; Jane Francis; Carey Harvey; Justine Hoyland; Jo Oliver; Sarah Tomkins; Deborah Combes and Indira Sengupta. For a discussion of the thinking behind the production see Philip Butterworth, 'The York Crucifixion: Actor/Audience Relationship', *Medieval English Theatre*, 14 (1994 for 1992), 67-76.

⁵⁵ Browne, p. 37.

⁵⁶ Letter from D.H. Evans to Martial Rose, 9 July 1958.

⁵⁷ Rose, *Correspondence*, (6b), 30 September 1999.

⁵⁸ Rose, *Correspondence*, (3), 17 September 1999.

⁵⁹ Rose, *Correspondence*, (15), 30 September 1999.

A Catalogue of Illustrations in the Books by John Bale

Peter Happé

This catalogue is an attempt to reveal the importance John Bale attached to the visual aspect of his writings. He was not alone or original in this, and his works benefitted from the methods of other authors as well as from the practices of printers. The list is arranged to accord with the numbers in *The Short-Title Catalogue (STC)* and comprises works which he edited or translated as well as his own compositions. It will be seen that of the 33 titles listed (ignoring revisions and secondary editions) the vast majority of them have at least something to appeal to the visual imagination. The size of the books varies from the huge folio of the *Catalogus* to the tiny decimo sexto of *A Christian Exhortation*. The variety of size and scope reflects differing circumstances in his long and adventurous life and the variety of readerships to which he addressed his writings.

Born at Cove in Suffolk on 21 November 1495, Bale became an active writer in the 1520s, though he does not seem to have sought to print any of his works until the late 1530s. By this time he had amassed a quantity of manuscript material about the Carmelite order in which he was educated; he had begun his collecting of bibliographical information partly in anticipation of the disappearance of manuscripts at the dispersal of monastic libraries; and he had, for a period after his conversion, been an active playwright and performer of plays under the patronage of Thomas Cromwell. The latter's fall and execution precipitated Bale's first exile in 1540, during which he went first to Antwerp and then into Germany. In these places he doubtless found the opportunity to write for publication, for by this time there were many active Protestant printers at work locally. Indeed from Luther onwards it was an acute Protestant perception that printing was a potent weapon for conversion to the new faith and its consolidation. There was an increasing emphasis upon reading the Word, with a consequent spread of literacy. However, visual icons were also much used as complements – not least because many of the people targetted by the reformers must have been illiterate initially. From 1522 onwards there was vigorous activity in the

publication of illustrated Bibles and New Testaments. Bale continued to publish his works, with illustrations, through this first exile, during his stay in England from 1548, and during his second exile from 1553, when his work was centred in Basle. On his return to England in 1559 there was a further flurry of publication, and some of his work was printed in the years immediately after his death in 1563. There is little or no evidence of lost printed works, though his autobiographical lists show that about twenty of the plays he wrote before 1540 have not survived.

We may detect two factors affecting the illustrations: the practices of the printing trade and doctrinal significance. Each printing house was no doubt constrained by the limits of its own resources. Probably most of the illustrated capitals which form the majority of items in the list come into this category. In some volumes all such initials come from the same set; but there are times when resources were stretched beyond usual limits. This was especially the case for the *Summarium*, printed at Wesel by Dirk van der Straten in 1547, a printer active in the years 1546-65 whom Bale used quite often. Because it was decided to begin each of the hundreds of biographies which make up the *Summarium* with a decorative initial, none of the sets available was large enough. The result is an inconsistent variety from several different sets. One had been purchased by van der Straten from Jacob Köbel of Oppenheim before 1546, and another was a *Kinderalphabet*.¹ One of the most appealing is a set featuring putti, some of whom are shown playing musical instruments (Fig. 5). A singleton for P, showing a Nativity scene, is used three times. Towards the end of the volume the supply probably ran out and most capitals have no embellishment.

When the enlarged edition, the *Catalogus*, was set by J. Oporinus in Basle a decade later, this difficulty was avoided by using a large initial without decoration for each biography. Decorated capitals were chiefly confined to the first word in each of the fourteen Centuries into which the book was divided. It was apparently possible to stick to the same set for most of the book, though there was some reuse. There does not seem to be any meaningful link, however, with the contents of the writing itself. The pictures of Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Fig. 14), David and Bethsheba, Judith, three in the fiery furnace, and Balaam and his ass (Fig. 16) seem to have come from an Old Testament set. Being so, their inclusion does at least suggest a biblical dimension, but their real charm now lies for us in the ingenuity of each cut. They show remarkable delicacy in such a tiny space.

Some printers kept their sets of initials for a number of years. Stephen Mierdman, the Antwerp printer, issued some of Bale's books during the latter's first exile, but by 1548 he had moved to London, perhaps because of the now more favourable Protestant outlook, and the same capitals, and some pictorial borders, can

be found in books from both countries, as in two versions of *Votaries* (1270 and 1273.5). When Queen Mary changed the religious regime once more, Mierdman moved on to Emden.²

There is also a possibility that the practices of the printing trade itself had some influence on the availability of illustrations which were chosen more deliberately for their thematic significance. This is apparently the case for the woodcuts used for Mierdman's first edition of Bale's *Image of Both Churches* (1296.5), a work which consists of an English text of the Book of Revelation interspersed with Bale's commentary. This Antwerp printing in decimo sexto format is illustrated with 19 woodcuts (33 x 46mm), some of which are used twice. The custom of illustrating this part of scripture was well established in manuscripts before the Reformation. Albrecht Dürer probably initiated the print tradition with his set of 17 woodcuts in *Die Hiemlich offenbarung iohans: Apocalypsis cum figuris*, with a German and Latin text in 1498, and reprinted with a Latin text only in 1511.³ These influenced Lucas Cranach in his version for Martin Luther's *New Testament* (M Lotther: Wittemberg, September 1522; British Library: C.36.g.7). Many German and Dutch Bibles and New Testaments were subsequently produced with illustrations of a similar nature, and in due course printers of English versions followed suit. In some editions these were spread throughout the volume, but the special interest in the Apocalypse meant that they often became confined to this section alone.

Holbein re-created the Apocalypse material for Luther's New Testament printed by T. Wolff at Basle in 1523, using a full-page octavo format with cuts of 124 x 75mm.⁴ In turn these influenced a smaller set by Sebald Beham for H. Stayner's octavo edition, *Das Neu Testament* (Augsburg, 1535; BL: C.23.17,18). These are the closest in appearance I have been able to find to those used for the first version of *Image*, but they are manifestly not the same in spite of the stylistic similarity. Their dimensions at 44 x 60mm are still considerably larger than those in Bale's book. Possibly, a so far unknown artist cut a set specially for the Bale edition. They were certainly remarkable for the intricacy of their design, and they bear being enlarged to show off their qualities (Figs 6-8). It may well be that they do not quite match their illustrious predecessors, but the skill of the artist still needs to be recognised. When Mierdman produced a new edition of *Image* in London, which came out in two issues in 8°, one for R. Jugge (1297) and one for J. Day (1298), he used another version of the woodcuts (Figs 9-11) which is palpably similar to those in his earlier edition of 1545 (1296.5), but they have been re-drawn and are slightly larger (35 x 50mm as against 33 x 46mm). These particular blocks are all re-used from his *Het Nieuwe Testament* (Antwerp, 1545).⁵ It will be seen from the list that a considerable number

of Mierdman's first series were reused by East in 1570 (1301) but four with dimensions of 46 x 34 (approximately) are different or new.

Bale was thus able to make use of a strong illustrative tradition, mainly German and Dutch in origin, and we may suppose that he sustained an active interest in this aspect of the printing of his works. We can tell from elsewhere that his ~~had~~ good relations with printers who assisted him, he says, in the preparation of his bibliographical works.

It is apparent, however, that some woodcuts were specially created for his books, and that some of these were of outstanding quality. There can be no doubt that those in which Bale himself appears were made for his requirements. The best is probably the full-face portrait in *Three Laws* which presents him in learned costume with a flat cap and a bible in his hand. It offers a sturdy build and a determined and healthy demeanour consonant, no doubt with Bale's perception of himself as both scholarly and clerical, but also with powers of endurance. By the time of the *Catalogus*, we are shown a much frailer figure. Again there is an academic dress and flat cap, but his face is thinner and the full, long beard is apparently grey or white. By this time he was about 62 years old, and, if this really is a good likeness, it suggests that his failure to resume his duties as Bishop of Ossory on Elizabeth's accession may well have been understandable. This print was also produced in smaller size for *Acta Romanorum Pontificum*, a work derived from the *Catalogus*. Further individual copies of this reduction were inserted, by sewing or pasting, into the Bodleian copies of 1270 (which precedes it by more than ten years) and 1274.

There are two woodcuts showing Bale presenting a book to King Edward VI. Both appear in the *Summarium*, the larger on the title-page (Fig. 3), and the smaller at the end of the dedicatory poems before the Preface. The latter was also used for the enlarged edition of *Votaries* (1273.5). The title-page of the *Summarium* (1295 and 1296), by van der Straten, must have been created for his printing at Wesel near the end of Bale's first exile. The book itself may be seen as emphasising the high value Bale put on the prospects of the much awaited English Protestant king. He was always firmly committed to the monarchy, even though he had suffered at the hands of Henry VIII, and he followed the Lutheran view of the divine authority of kingship.⁶ The existence of this title-page in two states suggests the importance Bale attached to the political impact of his work. The first version was presumably set up in Wesel before King Henry's death, and Bale thought it worth while to have the printer's name changed to an English one, based at Ipswich in the county of his birth, on the accession of King Edward. He wanted this change, no doubt, to be seen as patriotic. It may well be that the respect or adulation for King Edward, which these items imply,

was influential in Bale's preferment to the see of Ossory in 1552. The fact that King Edward's health was known to be failing for some years might have been influential in the timing of the publication of this work. It is also apparent that the triumph of Protestant interest at this point (1547) may not have been a foregone conclusion, and Bale must have been much relieved.

Throughout Bale's written work he shows an interest in using people in a symbolic way. Thus King Johan, the eponymous hero of his play which remained in manuscript, was seen in terms of his martyrdom, his courageous fight against the papacy, and as an embodiment of an ideal of Christian kingship. The remaining woodcuts to be discussed here reflect this sense of how men and women can be seen in terms of what they stand for. These visual representations are mostly seen as sufferers, witnesses or fighters. It is notable that they also embody a sense that the Protestant struggle had an historical dimension, and one which is in line with Bale's constant concern to seek historical support for the fundamentals of his belief.

Most of these illustrations appear on the title-pages. This is not so very surprising, but it does at least show that he wanted to set the tone visually for what was to come. Of the warriors, Sir John Oldcastle is the strongest example (1276). The cut shows an armed soldier with a sword and helmet and the surrounding words call him 'waryoure of Iesus Christ' and draw attention to his death (Fig. 2). The cut for the title-page of *Vocation* (1307) shows a confrontation between an innocent and prayerful Christian and a violent armed Catholic. In the work itself Bale gives a vivid picture of the violence he suffered in Ireland and at the hands of pirates when making his escape. Anne Askew (848) tramples underfoot a serpent wearing a papal tiara, but she also has other symbolic resonances. She carries a palm representing her martyrdom – 'lately martyred in Smythfelde' says the title – and a Bible to draw attention to the power of her argument under torture (Fig. 1). The quotation from Proverbs 31 below, however, draws attention to the value of a woman who 'openeth her mouthe to wysdome and in her language is the laws of grace'. Appropriate womanly virtues are also touched in the words surrounding the cut for the title-page of *Godly Meditation*. The Princess Elizabeth holding a book, kneels at the feet of Christ and the words describe her blessed Christian learning, rich in Greek and Latin (Fig. 13).

Wyclif is among the witnesses in the *Summarium* (Fig. 4), which like the *Catalogus*, accompanies the biographies of authors with many indications of the historical processes Bale sought to illuminate. Two of his plays, *Temptation* and *God's Promises*, printed by van der Straten, have evangelists on the title-pages, apparently matched in design. *Vocation* contains an image of Truth, with words from the Psalms about the eternity of the truth of the Lord, and God's knowledge of the just

and the impious (Fig. 12). This cut is placed at the end of the Preface, a key place in a number of Bale's books, as in the second presentation cut in *Summarium*.

The title-page of *Three Laws* is one of the most impressive of all the woodcuts. It is no doubt related in style to the title-pages of many early bibles, especially in that the design runs from top to bottom and includes the sides. The portrayal of a series of events from the story of Adam and Eve shows great artistic skill, and the subject is thematically linked to Bale's preoccupation in the book with the succeeding phases of the divine law in history.⁷ The three images of Arion in *Catalogus* may not have been specially designed for Bale, but one of them is repeated impressively in a full page folio (Fig. 15). The story of Arion's miraculous escape from a covetous and envious crew of sailors by means of a dolphin who had been charmed by his playing is most probably a reflection of Bale's gratitude for his escape from Ireland and the pirates in 1553, events which he recounts in detail in *The Vocation*. It was after that adventure he must have put in hand the final phases of preparing his *magnum opus* for the press of Oporinus. It seems most likely that the cut has links with classical humanism.

NOTES

¹ McCusker, p. 454.

² Benzing, p.98. For illustrations of some of Mierdman's capitals and borders, see Clair, plate I.

³ See *Albrecht Dürer 1471 1971*, p. 320.

⁴ See Schmidt, pp. 123-27.

⁵ See Rosier, I, pp.264-65; II, plates 396-97; Luborsky and Ingram, p. 84, and King (1989), p. 204, and fig. 66, which is a reproduction of a Holbein page from Wolff. Other possible influences and analogues are pictured in Parshall (1999): see the illustrations for Lucas Cranach (1472-1553) p. 143, Hans Burgkmair (1473-1531) p. 151, Georg Lemberger (c.1490-after 1537) p. 156 and Gerard van Groeningen (active 1561-1575/6) p. 183.

⁶ One curious feature of the larger version is the person who peeps upon it from behind a curtain. It is remarkably like the onlookers noticed by W.M. Hummelen in contemporary Dutch pictures of acting stages; see Hummelen (1994), especially the sketches on pp. 241-42.

⁷ One may compare it, for example, with the title-page of *Den Bybel* printed by Hansken van Liesvelt in 1538. This ornamental border was printed from one block (275 x 190) and is attributed to Erhard Altdorfer: see Rosier 1.214 and fig. 478.

KEY TO ILLUSTRATIONS

First Anne Askew

Fig. 1 Woman with Biblia (STC 848. BL C.21.a.4(1))

Oldcastle

Fig. 2 Armed Solider (STC 1276. BL G.5909.(1))

Summarium

Fig. 3 Bale presents his book to Edward VI (STC 1296. CUL Syn.6.54.3)

Fig. 4 Wyclif (STC 1296. CUL Syn.6.54.3)

Fig. 5 E – Putto with trumpet (STC 1296. CUL Syn.6.54.3)

Image of Both Churches

Fig. 6 Locusts from the pit (STC 1296.5. CUL Hib.8.54.9)

Fig. 7 Angel with feet as pillars of fire (STC 1296.5. CUL Hib.8.54.9)

Fig. 8 Seven vials of plagues (STC 1296.5. CUL Hib.8.54.10)

Fig. 9 The Son of Man (STC 1298. CUL Hib.8.54.4)

Fig. 10 Dragon Bound (STC 1298. CUL Hib.8.54.4)

Fig. 11 First resurrection of 1000yrs (STC 1298. CUL Hib.8.54.4)

Vocacyon

Fig. 12 Veritas (STC 1307. CUL Hib.8.55.1)

Godly Meditation

Fig. 13 Princess (STC 17320. CUL Syn.8.54.102)

Catalogus

Fig. 14 I/J – Joseph and Potiphar's Wife (CUL Sel.2.39)

Fig. 15 Arion and the Dolphin (CUL Sel.2.39)

Fig. 16 O – Balaam and the Ass (CUL Sel.2.39)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Figures 1 and 2 are reproduced by permission of the British Library and figures 3-16 by permission of Cambridge University Library.

I should like to thank Marie Axton, Wim Hummelen, Gergely Juhasz, and Martial Rose for valuable promptings during the preparation of this article.

The first examinacy^{on}
on of Anne Askewe, latelye mar-
tyred in Smythfelde, by the Ro-
mysh popes vpholders, with
the Elucydacyon of
Johan Bale.

Edw

Cot

John

R. 3362

The verye of the lorde endureth forever.
Psalme 116.



Anne Askewe fode fast by this verye of
God to the ende.

Sanoure is discreytfull/and bewtye is a vay
ne thyng. But a woman that feareth the
lorde/is worthy to be prayfed. She ope
neth her mouthe to wysdome/and in her lan
guage is the lawe of grace. Proverb. xxxi.

Fig. 1.

A brefe Chronycle concernynge the
Examinacyon and death of the blessed
martyr of Christ syr Johan Oldeca-
stell the lorde Cobham/collected to-
gyther by Johan Bale.

¶ Syr. Johan. Oldecastel. the. worthy.



¶ suffred. death. at. London. Anno. 1418.

¶ lorde. Cobham. and. most. valyaunt.

¶ Waryoure. of. Iesus. Christ.

¶ In the latter tyme shall manye be
chosen / proued / and purysped by fyre/
yet shall the vngodly lyue wyckedly styll
and haue no vnderstandynge. Dan. 12.

Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.

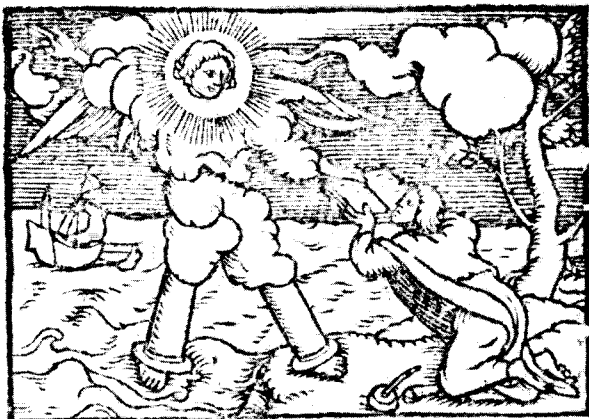


Fig. 7.



Fig. 8.



Fig. 9.



Fig. 10.



Fig. 11.

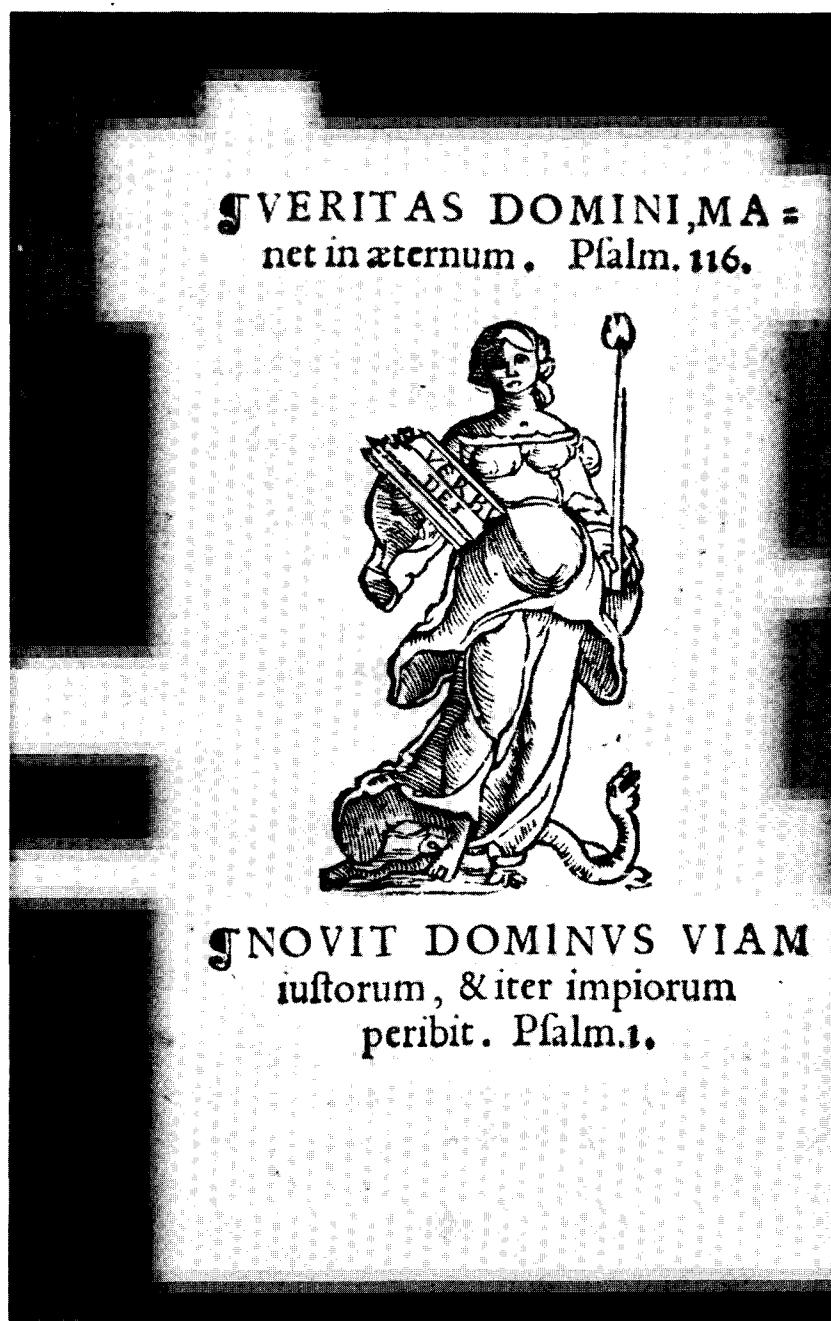


Fig. 12.

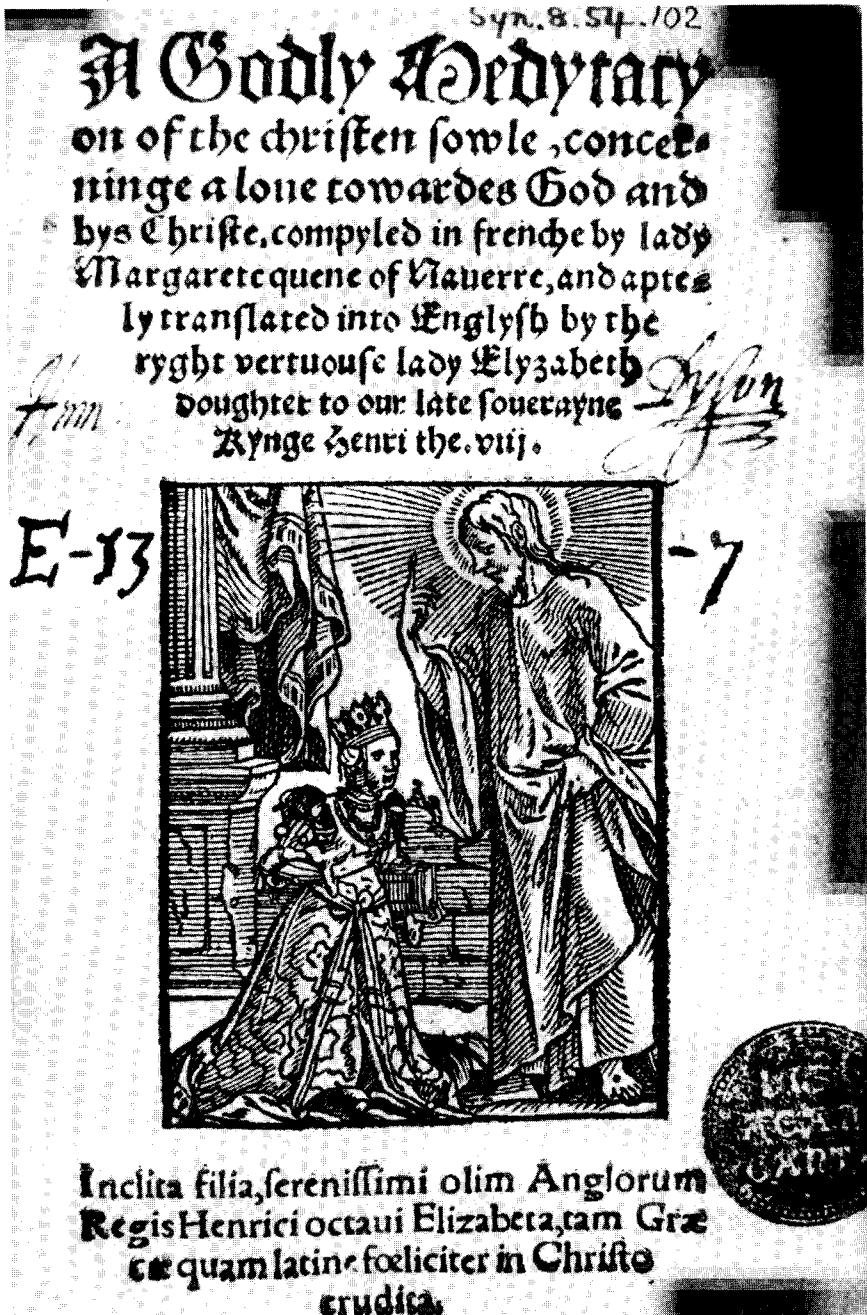


Fig. 13.



Fig. 14.

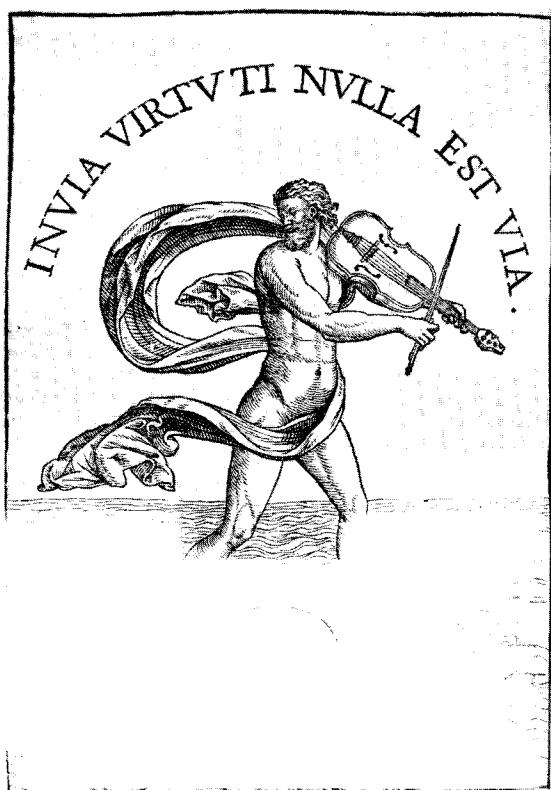


Fig. 15.



Fig. 16.

THE CATALOGUE

Editorial Procedure

Entries follow *STC* numbers (except for *Catalogus* and *Rhithmi*) and have been given short distinctive titles for the purpose of this list. Full titles and locations of texts are given in *STC*. Printers, dates and places of printing follow *STC*, but have been simplified. The place of publication is London, unless specified. Measurements are given in millimetres. The usual size for ornamented capitals is 17 x 17.

1. FIRST ANNE ASKEWE

848 **D. van der Straten, Wesel, 1546 8°**

tp Woman with palm frond, holding Biblia; dragon with papal tiara at her feet
38 x 61. The following round the edges:

(r.side) 'Anne Askewe stode fast by thys veryte of God to the ende.'

(bottom) 'Favoure is disceytfull / and bewtye is a vayne thyng. But a
woman that feareth the lorde / is worthye to be praysed. She openeth her
mouthe to wysedome / and in her language is the lawe of grace.

Proverb. xxxi.'

(l.side) 'Psalme 116. The veryte of the lorde endureth forever.' [Fig. 1]

♠ ii A - with flowers

ai O - with tendrils

fii H - with tendrils

fviii Oak tree with another climbing up it. Scroll: 'Amor vincit omnia.' Cf.
RHITHMI tp

2. LATTER ANNE ASKEWE

850 **D. van der Straten, Wesel, 1547 8°**

tp as tp 848

Aii I - with tendrils

Bii B - with tendrils

851 **848 and 850 continuous N.Hill, 1547 8°**

[Not seen.]

3. ACTS OF ENGLISH VOTARIES

1270 S.Mierdman, Antwerp, 1546 8°

BL copy: C.37.c.12. Bodleian copy: 8° A91.Med.BS

tp lower border: 2 grotesque animal heads, lion centred
[Clair, plate I, no. 9; also in the 'Matthew' Bible, 1537 (STC 2066).]

Aii G - with lute player

Avii^v I - with leaves and serifs

Kii^v H - with leaves

1271 T.Raynalde, 1548 8°

CUL copy: Syn.8.54.159

Ai^v G - with vines

Avii^v I - with leaves and stems

Kvii^v H - leaves

1273 S.Mierdman, 1551 8°

Part One only

[Not seen as an independent copy. The STC microfilm (No.1298) which is designated for 1273 is identical with 1273.5.]

1273.5 S.Mierdman for Abraham Vele, 1551 8°

[This edition in two parts contained the new Part Two, together with four sheets of Introduction, including the tp by Mierdman. This tp survives in uncorrected and corrected states (viz: 'legenades' CUL copy Syn.8.54.159 and Bodleian copy Mal.502(1), and 'legendes' CUL copy Pet.c.1.13). The colophon at Kvi dates the first part as 1546; the colophon at Kviii^v by A. Vele is dated 1551. Some copies combine 1271 (Raynalde) with the tp and Part Two of this edition (as BL copy: C.39.a.42).]

tp for two Parts Bale presents book to Edward VI (Both sideways on) 45 x 60

tp(*i^v) L - with man on horse (side on) 32 x 31

[Clair, plate I, no. 2; also in Mierdman's *Het nieuwe Testament*, Antwerp, 1545.]

tp for PART 1 lower border as 1270tp

Aii G - with lute player

Avii^v I - with leaves and stems

Kvii^v K - with leaves and curl on bar

A Catalogue of Illustrations in the Books by John Bale

PART 2

- Aii F - with four men in ?monastic robes, reading a book 25 x 24
 Avii I - with elderly man on left gesturing (disgust?), woman, bare-breasted, on right (representing Shame?) 30 x 25
 [Clair, plate I, no. 5; also in the 'Matthew' Bible, 1537 (STC 2066) and Mierdman *Het nieuwe Testament* cccxxii^v.]
 Aviii^v as tp Part 1
 Bi as Avii
 Piii T with leaves

1274 J. Tysdale, 1560 8°

CUL copy: Syn.8.56.15; Bodleian copy Douce B.55(1)

- Aii L - grotesque: bearded head, horns, breasts, wings, forked tail (?male sphinx)
 Aviii^v Lower border: animal with long body (?greyhound) 55 x 18.
 [Cf Plomer, no. 38.]

Preface

- Aii G - with leaves
 Aviii Lower border: two bearded men, head and shoulders,
 elaborate headdresses. One man blessing. Stars. Words on scroll
 'Jhc/s sa d/cl a i/r e'. [Cf. Plomer, no.81 (Ipswich, 1549).]

Part 1

- Bi I - with leaves
 Mv H - with leaves

Part 2

- tp Lower border as Aviii
 Aii F - with leaves 14 x 14
 Bi I - with leaves 20 x 20
 Biii I - with leaves and flowers 17 x 17
 Bvi N - with leaves
 Div as Bvi
 Lviii W - with foliage and ?an animal
 Tvi T - leaves
 Uvi^v Lower border as Aviii
 Uviii Lower border as Aviii

4. ANSWERS

1274a S.Mierdman, Antwerp, c.1548 8°

A2 E - with egret

5. APOLOGY

1275 S.Mierdman for J.Day ?1550 8°

Aii L - with fruit (some ?lemons) 39 x 40

Avii^v I - with horns of plenty 38 x 39

Bvii^v A - with fruit and leaves 39 x 40

Tvi T - with devil having claws and tail 18 x 18 [Numbers 30]

Uiv N - with leaves 13 x 13

Uv^v A - with urn 17 x 17

6. OLDCASTLE

1276 A.Goinus, Antwerp, 1544 8°

tp Armed soldier with sword and helmet, shield with crucifixion, 50 x 67 with the following round the edges, clockwise from the top:

Syr. Iohan. Oldcastel. the.worthy /

(r.side) lorde.Cobham.and.mooste.valyaunt./

(bottom) warryoure.of.Iesus.Christ.

(l.side) suffred.death.at.London.Anno.1418.

[Luborsky and Ingram link the armour to Ephesians 6:13-17.] [Fig. 2]

Aii I - with leaves and monstrous face

Biii A - with leaves and a squirrel

Bviii as Aii

Cvii^v T - with one flower each side

1278 A.Scoloker and W.Seres ?1548 8°

tp as 1276

Aii I - with leaves

Biii A - with leaves

Bviii I as Aii

Cvii^v T - with leaves

7. TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD

1279 D. van der Straten, Wesel, 1547 4°

tp Matthew and angel 51 x 39 [Cf. 1305 tp and Steele, p.235.]

- Ai^v A - with flowers
D1 I - with putto and ball

8. CHRISTIAN EXHORTATION

1280 widow of C.Ruremond, Antwerp, ?1543 16°

- tp border: leaves (top); angel with barrel (bottom); head with pointed ears (sides)
Ai^v G - with flowers
Av I - with flowers

1280.5 W.Hill, 1548 8°

- Aii G - with flowers - dark background
Avi I - with flowers - dark background

1281 N.Hyll, for A.Vele, 1552? 8°

- Aii G - with flowers - dark background
Avi I - with flowers - dark background

1282 N.Hyll, for R.Kele, 1552 8°

- tp ornate border top, sides and bottom: pillars and floral devices.
[Cf. McKerrow and Ferguson, no. 33.]
Aii G - with swathes of drapery and tassels
Avi I - with leaf motifs 27 x 26

1283 N.Hyll, for J.Wyghte, ?1552 8°

- tp as 1282
Aii as 1282
Avi as 1282

1286 J.Awdeley, 1575 8°

- tp Border: printers' flowers all round
Aiii printers' flowers
Aiii^v I - with floral background
Dv printers' flowers
Dviii^v peacock and plants 55 x 19 (with colophon)

9. THREE LAWS

1287 D. van der Straten, Wesel, ?1548 8° per Nicolaum Bamburgensem
(pseud.)

tp ornamental border to title, whole page:
(top) Eve offers Adam the apple; serpent on tree
(r.side) expulsion from Paradise
(bottom) Eve with children; Adam digging
(l.side) Eve emerging from Adam's side 87 x 122

Aii I - with leaves

Aii^v I - with putto and ball (As 1279 Di)

Dvi^v V - with vines as 1288 Iiv

Fiii Q - with tendrils

Gii Full face portrait of Bale 84 x 133

Gii^v B - with thistles 30 x 30

1288 T.Colwell, 1562 4°

Dii^v O - with ?onion

Gii V - with ?vines

Iiv Q - with face

Song upon Benedictus

Lii B - with strapwork. 65 x 65

10. DECLARATION OF BONNER'S ARTICLES

1289 J.Tysdale, 1561 8°

Bi A - with leaves

Dii^v H - confused design which does not match above and below bar of H

Dv I - with flowers

I - with flowers and leaves

Dvii T - with leaves

Gii^v D - with wreathed head, looking r.

Uvii^v (?single leaf) Angel with flaming sword drives out Adam and Eve 38 x 68:
borders of leaves added to top bottom and sides.

11. DIALOGUE BETWEEN TWO CHILDREN

1290 S.Mierdman, 1549 8°

tp lower border: 2 grotesque animal heads, face with flames/hair centred: cf.
1270tp

Avii^v I - with ?two birds: cf. 1297 aii

12. EPISTLE EXHORTATORY

1291 widow of C.Ruremond, Antwerp, ?1544 8° H. Stalbrydige (pseud.)

tp Border at bottom: printer's flowers

Aii I - with serifs, and leaves 19 x 18

Dv B - with leaves 14 x 14

1291.5 A Goinus, Antwerp 1544? 8°

tp border at bottom: fool and woman on either side of urn, with flowers 48 x 12

Aii I (J form) - with leaves 19 x 21

Dv B - with leaves 20 x 20

1291a A.Goinus, Antwerp, 1544? 8°

[Not seen. The STC microfilm of CUL: Syn.8.54.168² (No. 59) which is designated for 1291a is identical with 1291.5.]

1292 A. Scoloker and W. Seres, 1548? 8°

[tp no cuts]

Aii A - with leaves 21 x 23

Dviii B - with leaves 20 x 24

13. FRANTIC PAPIST

1294 S.Mierdman, ?1552 8°

tp Border all round with flowers, tendrils and leaves; two half men/animals blowing horns. Total dimensions 80 x 109: 22mm deep at top, 24 at foot, 18 at sides

Aii C - with figure with peacock's wings 39 x 39

Aviii^v B - with bear's head, drapery 39 x 39 (matched with Aii)

T - with leaves and tendrils 15 x 15

14. SUMMARIUM

1295 D. van der Straten, Wesel, 1548, but with false attribution to J. Overton, Ipswich 4° and

1296 D. van der Straten, Wesel, 1549 4°

tp Bale, kneeling r., presents book to King Edward face on. 96 x 101 {Fig. 3}

Aii M - with tendrils 37 x 37

fl.de lys 2iii border at bottom: 2 putti, with Christ's head: 'Salvator mundi ora pro nobis' 46 x 23

fl.de lys 2iv portrait of Wyclif looking l., with book: 'Figura Ioannis Wicleui doctoris Angli'. 50 x 63 [Found in STC 3021, John Purvey, *Treatise*, Antwerp, 1530, and in John Purvey, *A True Copie of a Prolog Wrytten...by John Wyckliffe* (1550); cf. King (1982) 97.] [Fig. 4]

fl.de lys 2iv^v Bale, half kneeling, looking l., presents book to King Edward, looking r. 44 x 61 (cf. 1273.5 tp.)

[Most of the biographical entries in this volume begin with an ornamented capital and it is impractical to list them all here. Several different sets are used, and many individual initials are to be found in other Bale texts. See Clair for some examples, and McCusker for some possible sources. Steele (232-3) shows how several decorated initials are spread through this and other works printed by van der Straten. The following list is therefore selective of some of the more striking pictorial decorations.]

Ai I - with putto and ball 21 x 21; also Ki, Qiv, and 1279 Di

Bii^v S - with bull rushes: also Eii, Fiii

Biv^v B - with stars: also Liii^v

Cii^v C - with putto and trumpet (level); also Div^v

Ciii B as Biv^v

Di N - putto; Iiv^v, Qiii^v

Ei^v E - with putto and trumpet (pointing upwards): Iiii^v Riv [Fig. 5]

Eiii^v H - with flowers: loop in bar of H 24 x 23; inverted Kiv^v, Siii^v

Fiii^v N - with putto and trumpet 21 x 21; also Hi^v, Kiii^v

Nii B - with thistle, cf. 1287 Gii^v

Niv W - with stars: Oi^v [see McCusker, p.243.]

Viii O - with sun's face, curly leaves; Ii iii^v

Yii^v P - with animal, blank shield 25 x 25

Aai I - with robed figure striking tailed devil; Ppii^v
[J. Köbel; see Redgrave, plate I.]

Ddiv^v I - with thistle and flower

Eeiv^v P - with Nativity scene: Xxi, Yyi^v

15. IMAGE OF BOTH CHURCHES

1296.5 S.Mierdman, Antwerp, ?1545 16°

CUL copy: Hib.8.54.9-10.

[Woodcuts 33 x 46; ornamented capitals 17 x 17; frontispieces 28 x 30]

A Catalogue of Illustrations in the Books by John Bale

Part 1

- tp St John, Angel, Eagle 20 x 28
Aii S - with flowers
Bvi^v St John seated on Eagle writing
Bvii^v O - hooded man
Cvi Son of Man, sharp-edged sword (point towards mouth)
Gviii^v Throne, 24 elders
Kii Four horsemen, man with bow
Lvi Souls killed for the Word
Mii Earthquake
Mviii^v as Mii
Nviii Multitude before seat
Ov 7 angels with trumpets, fire
Pviii Locusts from the pit [Fig. 6]
Rii^v 4 angels slay one-third of mankind
Sv^v Angel with feet as pillars of fire [Fig. 7]

Part 2

- tp as Pt 1
Aii I - leaves
Av^v Two witnesses, beast out of pit
A - Parrots?
Di Woman clothed with sun, 7-headed dragon
Fiv^v 7-headed beast from sea
Gii as Fiv^v
Kiv^v Son of Man with sickle, harvest time
Mi Destruction of earth begins
Mvii^v Seven vials of plagues [Fig. 8]
Oi as Mvii^v
Qii Woman on rose-coloured beast
Svii^v as Di
Sviii as Qii
[Ends at Revelation ch.xvii.]

1297 S.Mierdman for R.Jugge, Antwerp, ?1548 8°
CUL copy: Syn.8.55.61

and

1298 S.Mierdman for J.Daye & W.Seres c.1550 8°

CUL copy: Young 246

[Woodcuts 35 x 50; ornamented capitals 17 x 17; frontispieces 26 x 34.]

[For the close typographical links between these editions see Clair, pp.284-5. In this section references to Mierdman's *Het nieuwe Testament*, 1545, are in [square brackets].]

Part 1

Frontis. St John and Angel 26 x 34 [329]

Aii S - as 1296.5 Aii

Bvii O - as 1295.6 Bvii

Cv Son of Man, sharp-edged sword (point away from mouth) [329] [Fig. 9]

Gvii Throne, 24 elders [332]

Iviii^v Four horsemen [333^v; Rosier, fig.397]

Liv^v Souls killed for the Word [337^v]

Lviii^v Earthquake [334; Rosier, fig.396]

Mvii as Liv^v

Nvi^v Worship of Lamb [335]

Oiv as Liv^v

Pvi^v Locusts out of the pit [336^v]

Ri^v as Lviii^v

Siv Angel with feet as pillars of fire [338]

Part 2

tp as Part 1

aii I - with ?two birds

avi Giving the reed

diii^v Woman clothed with the sun [340]

fvii^v 7-headed beast [341]

gv^v as fvii^v

kviii^v Lamb on Mt Sion [342]

mv^v Son of Man with sickle [343]

niii^v Seven vials of plagues [343^v inverted]

ov as niii^v

qvi^v Great whore [345]

tiii^v as diii^v

tiv as qvi^v

Part 3

tp as Part 1

A Catalogue of Illustrations in the Books by John Bale

Bbiv	Plagues and fire [346]
Eeiv ^v	as Iviii ^v
Ggi ^v	Dragon bound [349] [Fig. 10]
Hhv ^v	First resurrection of 1000yrs [349 ^v] [Fig. 11]
Llviii	as Hhv ^v

1299 J.Wyer 1550 4°

Part 1

tp	Ornamented border with two sphinxes l. side figures rising; r. side figures falling. Procession of putti at bottom with musical instruments, and some bound figures [Cf. McKerrow and Ferguson, no.19.]
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Part 2

tp	Evangelist, eagle and ?angel
----	------------------------------

Part 3

tp	Woman on seven-headed beast
Ccvi ^v	Four horsemen as 1297 Iviii ^v
Ddvi ^v	Dragon bound as 1297 Ggi ^v

1301 T.East c.1570 8°

Part 1

Aii	S - with putto and jug
Biv ^v	O - with ?old man reclining
Cii ^v	as 1296.5 Cvi
Giii ^v	24 elders 46 x 54
Iv	White horse 46 x 33
Lii	as 1296.5 Rii ^v
Lvi	as 1296.5 Mii
Miv ^v	as 1296.5 Mii
Oi ^v	as Lii
Pv	as 1296.5 Pviii
Qviii	as 1296.5 Rii ^v , but inverted
Siii	as 1296.5 Kiv ^v

Part 2 [sigs. repeat in 1 & 2.]

tp	as 1296.5 tp
Aii	I - with jar
Av ^v	Angel shows John the city 46 x 34

Dii N - with putto and staff
 Dv^v as 1296.5 Di
 Giii^v as 1296.5 Qii
 Hii as 1296.5 Qii
 Nvi as 1296.5 Kiv^v
 Oiv as 1296.5 Mvii^v
 Rvi as 1296.5 Qii
 Uiv^v as 1296.5 Di
 Uv as 1296.5 Qii

Part 3

tp as tp Part 2
 Aaaviii^v 1296.5 Mvii^v
 Eeeii as Iv
 Fffvi Satan bound 46 x 34
 Fffvi^v as Fffvi
 Fffvii I - as Aii
 Hhhiv^v as Giii^v
 Lllviii^v as Av^v

16. MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

1303 A.Goinus, Antwerp, 1545 8° [M.Wood, Geneva (pseud.)]

tp border (eclectic) 63 x 92
 top: Instruments of the Passion, putto, eagle
 r.: putto, pillar, cow's head
 bottom: 7 people - 3 soldiers beating 4 others; animals l. and r.
 l.: goat's head, pillar, head with halo or flames
 ai^v E - with ?fool with bauble
 aiii^v border at foot: crowned head with scrolls
 [See Clair, plates I, no. 2, and II.]
 Bi O - with head and headdress/helmet, looking r. 11 x 12

17. PAGEANT OF POPES

1304 T.Marshe, 1574 4°

*aii A with shield and fruit 34 x 38
 *biv I with leaves
 *cii A with 3 putti, one with wreathed head; cauldron or net
 28 x 27

*eii	I as *biv
Ai	F with leaves
Bvii	T with leaves
Gvii ^v	H with leaves
Iviii	F as Ai
Oviii ^v	A with leaves
Yvii	I as *biv

18. GOD'S PROMISES

1305 D.van der Straten, Wesel, 1547? 4°

tp St John Evangelist writing: eagle; Virgin 38 x 50
[See Steele, p.235.]

Aii I - with tendrils
Aii^v [I damaged]

1306 J.Charlewood, 1577 4°

tp Printer's ornaments all round
[No other cuts or decoration.]

19. VOCACYON

1307 J.Lambrecht, Wesel, 1554 8°

Rome, before the castle of St Angelo (pseud.).

tp The English Christian confronted by the Irish Papist, lamb with former, wolf with latter. 68 x 50

Below: 'God hath delivered me from the snare of the hunter and from the noysome pestilence. Psal.xci'

'If I must nedes reioyce I wil reioyce of myne infirmytees, 11. Cor.xi.'

Aviii^v Female figure of Veritas holding book inscribed 'verbum dei'; serpent at her feet 35 x 60

Above: 'VERITAS DOMINI, MA/net in aeternum. Psalm 116.'

Below: 'NOVIT DOMINUS VIAM iustorum, & iter impiorum peribit.

Psalm 1.' [Fig. 12]

[Cuts used respectively by J.Lambrecht in *Een zu verlic boucxkin* (1543) and *Refreynten int vroede* (1539), Luborsky and Ingram, p.52. For a similar cut to tp by Lambrecht see Hodnett (1988) No. 10.]

Gviii^v Printer's mark of H.Singleton

20. ROMISH FOX

1309 A.Goinus, Antwerp, 1543 8° [J.Harryson pr O.Jacobson, Zurich
(pseud.).]

Biiii H - with kneeling putto, fruit and leaves

Fii^v I - with curled snakes

21. COMPENDIOUS LETTER

4021 J.Nicolson, 1536 8°

[No cuts or decoration]

22. TWO NEIGHBOURS

10383 J.Day, 1554 8° [from Roane by M.Woode]

[No cuts or decoration]

23. DE VERA OBEDIENTIA

11585 J.Day, 1553 8° [Roane, M.Wood]

[No cuts or decoration]

11586 J.Day, 1552 8° [M.Wood]

[No cuts or decoration]

11587 J.Lambrecht for H.Singleton, Wesel, 1553 8°

Bvi A - with grotesque head below, flowers and tendrils 16 x 20

Hiiii H.Singleton's mark

24. THE RESURRECTION OF THE MASS

13457 J.Lambrecht, for H. Singleton, Wesel ?1555 8°

Cvi^v H.Singleton's mark

25. DEPARTING OF MARTIN LUTHER

14717 D. van der Straten, Wesel, 1546 8°

tp Arma Ducis Saxoniae - shield 33 x 36

Aii I - with foliage (black background)

Sermon of J.Pomerane

Cvi as Aii

Dvii O - with foliage (black background)

26. TREATISE OF JOHN LAMBERT

15180 D.van der Straten, Wesel, 1548 [Preface by Bale] 8°

- tp ?Two cuts interlocked:
 above: cross with clouds: Meritum Christi spes 47 x 15
 below: Figure of Fides looking r. towards cross 22 x 54
- aii A - with leaves and tendrils
- aiv as 1295 fl.de lys 2iii (2 putti, with Christ's head: 'Salvator mundi ora pro nobis' 46 x 23)
- aiv^v A - with flowers 21 x 22

27. LABORIOUS JOURNEY OF JOHN LELAND

15445 S.Mierdman for J.Bale, 1549 8°

- tp border at foot: grotesque face with 1 animal head on each side - long tongues 45 x 13
 [See Clair, plate II for other uses of this Mierdman border.]
- Aii A - with crouching, winged grotesque 24 x 24
- Avi^v I - with burning babe, eagle and kneeling figure (?St John Evangelist)
 In some copies flames are red 24 x 24
- Bvii N - with leaves
- Evi^v M - with winged putto 27 x 27
- Gi^v M - with fruits
- Gii A as Aii
- Giiai A - with flowers and urn

28. GODLY MEDITATION

17320 D. van der Straten, Wesel, 1548 8°

- tp Princess, with book, kneels before Christ 47 x 62
 Below: 'Inclita filia, serenissimi olim Anglorum Regis Henrici octavi Elizabetha, tam Graecae quam latine foeliciter in Christo erudita.' [Fig. 13]
- Aii D - with leaves
- Bii I - with leaves
- Dii W - with stars
- Evii C - with flowers
- Fvii^v F - with bullrushes
- Fviii as tp

29. LEARNED MEDITATION

17773 J.Day, 1554 8° [from Roane by M.Woode]

[No cuts or decoration.]

30. COMPLAINT OF BAPTISTA MANTUA

22992 S.Mierdman, 1551 8°

- tp top: royal arms
sides: nude figures as columns
bottom: rondel with king, crown, sceptre, two faces (?jesters) one on each side.
- Aii a - with tendrils
Av^v O - head and face of hooded man

31. ACTA ROMANORUM PONTIFICIUM

[No STC number] J.Oporinus, Basle, 1558 8°

- *1^v Portrait of Bale as at CATALOGUS tp^v reduced to 64 x 82, with different border: 4 nudes, 1 at each corner, different decoration
- *2 Q - with flowers (as CATALOGUS G1)
- ai e - with dog on hind legs looking r.

[Another ed.] 1560 8°

-)(2 Q - with flowers 20 x 20
Ai E - with flowers 20 x 20 (same set)

[Another ed.] P.Brubachus, Frankfurt, 1567 [borrowed from Oporinus] 8°

- a2 Q - with animal head (printed sideways)
di E - with woman l.; man rides bull in sea (Phaedra and Hippolytus?)

32. CATALOGUS

[No STC number] J.Oporinus, Basle, 1557 and 1559 Fol.

Scriptorum Illustrium maioris Britanniae quam nunc Angliam et Scotiam vocant: Catalogus. Colophon: MDLIX Mense Februario.

[The general Prefatio ends on α5^v with the date MDLVII Mense Septembris. Subsequently 4 sheets were inserted, numbered α2, 3, 4 and one unnumbered. These contained a dedication to Elizabeth I and some poems, and were dated IIII Nonas Martias, anno 1559.]

- tp Fiddler (?Arion) playing on a dolphin's back, looking r. 110 x 150
tp^v portrait of Bale as old man: long, full beard, book in hand, looking to r.
border all round, with pillars and 2 nudes 108 x 145
α2 Q - with two pilgrims or worshippers, one standing, one kneeling 51 x 51

A Catalogue of Illustrations in the Books by John Bale

- a1 S with two armed warriors or giants killing themselves with swords 48 x 48
- m3^v B - with flowers 26 x 26
- D2 I - with flowers 26 x 26
- N2^v R - with 3 putti, one with dividers, one with ?map 31 x 31
- bb3^v I - with naked woman (?Potiphar's wife) tempting young man (?Joseph) who turns away 29 x 29 [Fig. 14]
- ll1^v I as bb3^v
- ss2^v R - with woman sitting on a man's chest while another man digs (?grave); galloping horse in background 29 x 29
- Dd3^v as bb3^v
- Vu1^v as bb3^v
- Aaa4^v Fiddler (?Arion) playing on dolphin's back: 'INVIA VIRTUTI NVLLA EST VIA.' 114 x 163 [Fig. 15]
- tp for Additions Fiddler (?Arion) on dolphin's back, looking l. 32 x 42
- tp^v portrait as tp^v
- α2 N - with 2 men carrying branch with fruit slung on a pole 50 x 50
- a1 O - with Balaam seated on the ass, beating it; faced by angel 50 x 50 [Fig. 16]
- A - with leaves 17 x 17 (same set as y4 C)
- b3^v B - with one man leaning on stick, another man on his back 19 x 19
- dl D - with David on steps and Bathsheba bathing below 29 x 29
- g1^v G - woman (?Judith) with sword puts severed head into a bag held by another woman; decapitated trunk in background 29 x 29
- k3 A - with 2 horses 25 x 25
- p1 V - with putto beating wolf with a stick 19 x 19
- p2^v A as k3
- s4^v M - with woman's face and animal characteristics (lion or serpent) 28 x 28
- y4 C - with flowers cf. a1 A
- z1 S - with snail and leaves
- z4 F - with 3 putti; 2 stretching animal skin and clashing sticks (?fighting) 28 x 28
- F3 E - with flowers; cf. a1 A
- G1 Q - with flowers; cf. a1 A: as ACTA *2
- G2 P - with 3 men in fiery furnace, watched by grandees 29 x 29
- H4 H - with flowers

T4^v Fiddler as Aaa4^v

Additional sheets in Dedication (see above)

α2 P - with figure seated at foot of a tree, hands clasped, open book; view of city in background 43 x 43

α3^v N - with leaves

33. RHITHMI

[No STC number]

Rhythmi vetustissimi de corrupti ecclesiae statu D. van der Straten
1546 8°

tp two trees intertwined, one living, one dying, with scroll: AMOR VINCIT OMNIA 42 x 57

Aii V - with tendrils [Traceable to J. Köbel of Oppenheim.]

Biv^v as tp, but larger 65 x 100

ABBREVIATIONS

BL British Library

CUL Cambridge University Library

Fol. Folio

l left

r right

tp title-page

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**Authentic Moors:
Two Cases of Muslim Participation
in Sixteenth-Century European Mock Battles**

Max Harris

Along a broad swathe of Spain's Mediterranean coast, stretching from Catalonia in the north to Andalucia in the south and from the Balearic Islands offshore to the mountains and central plateau inland, *fiestas* (festivals) and *danzas* (dances) of Moors and Christians make up a large part of the annual festive calendar. Scattered examples can be found in Galicia, in neighbouring Portugal, across the Pyrenees in southern France, and in parts of Italy once ruled by Spain. Although these mock battles are now annual affairs, usually attached to the local patronal saint's day festival, they were originally occasional, performed most often in the context of a royal visit or other special event of local political significance.¹

The roles of both Moors and Christians, then as now, were played by members of the local Christian community. In late medieval Spain, a dramatic framework sometimes enacted a fictional visit of real Moors as the occasion for a *juego de cañas* or other sporting battle between real Christians and mock Moors,² but, to the best of my knowledge, such battles were never staged for real Moorish visitors. Nor did authentic Moors take part in mock battles in Christian territory.

There are, however, two exceptions to this general rule. In Naples, in 1543, and Granada, in 1561, real Moors took part in mock battles on Christian soil. The former was staged on the occasion of a visit to Naples by al-Hasan, the ruler of Tunis. The latter celebrated the appointment of the latest member of the ruling Mendoza family to the office of mayor of the Alhambra. The new mayor uniquely invited the city's Morisco population to take part. The original Italian and Spanish accounts of these exceptional mock battles are little known and have never been translated into English. As one can imagine, both situations were politically highly charged.

Even mock battles staged in honour of a royal visit by a Christian ruler to one of his own cities entailed 'a delicate negotiation of power and prestige.' Explicitly

celebrating 'the royal spectator's own military prowess and accomplishments' elsewhere, it implicitly referred to the defensive battle that the city was choosing not to mount then and there. It served, in other words, to remind the visiting monarch that his entry was granted rather than forced and that it bore with it certain reciprocal obligations to the city. Steven Mullaney observes:

Rather than lay siege to gain entry, the monarch granted an entry was entertained by the comfortably displaced spectacle of a siege, a dramatic entertainment that at once represented the potential for conflict manifested by a royal visit, and sublimated that potential, recasting it as a cultural performance to be enjoyed by city and crown alike.³

Naples (1543)

As one might expect, the 'potential for conflict' is even more apparent in Geronimo de Spenis's account of the visit of al-Hasan to Naples in 1543.⁴ On the morning of Sunday, 3 June, four ships 'loaded with Moors' [*carreche de mori*] entered the bay of Naples. The ships bore the king of Tunis, his wife, a substantial escort of Moorish soldiers, 'many other Moorish women' [*multe alte donne moresche*], horses, exotic merchandise, and two captive lions, which were later released for hunting.

The women stayed on board, but that evening the king and a group of Moorish warriors were greeted outside the city gates by the Spanish viceroy (Pedro de Toledo), a company of nobles, and 'innumerable common people on foot and on horseback' [*populari sine numero ad pede et ad cavallo*]. Carefully escorted and preceded by trumpet fanfares, the king made his formal entry into the city. He was followed by a cavalcade of fifty Moorish soldiers 'armed with spears about twelve feet in length and very long muskets' [*portandono zagaglie in mano de circa 40 palmi lluna, et scoppette longhissime*]. It must have been an impressive and somewhat unnerving sight, to which the Spanish hosts responded in kind. As the Moors approached the palace where they were to lodge, they were met by a furious barrage of artillery and cannon fire that lasted a full fifteen minutes, 'making the earth shake' [*tremando la terra*].

Although the royal Moorish entry and its Neapolitan reception were not quite as daring as they first sound, since al-Hasan was an ally of Charles V, installed as puppet ruler of Tunis after the Spanish conquest of the city in 1535,⁵ they constitute a striking example of historical conflict between Moors and Christians being

'comfortably displaced,' to use Mullaney's phrase, by public pageantry.

The visit was not without tension. Two days later, the viceroy's herald toured the city's streets threatening death to anyone who mistreated a Moor. On 7 June, with both sides reassured by the other's good behaviour, the king's wife landed and was escorted to the palace by a further five hundred armed Moorish warriors [*soldati morischi che sono al numero de cinquecento in tutto*]. On 12 June, a Spanish soldier who had robbed and wounded a Moor was publicly hanged. On 31 June, the king of Tunis ordered one of his own men hanged for offending a Christian.

The most intriguing feature of the visit, from the point of view of European representations of battles between Moors and Christians, took place on Sunday, 1 July. What de Spenis calls 'a Moorish joust' [*giostra morescha*] was held in one of the main streets of the city, the *strata de la Incoronata*. His brief account does not permit a detailed reconstruction of the event, but we do know that Garcia de Toledo, the son of the Spanish viceroy, and an Italian nobleman, Ascanio Caraziolo, dressed as Moors. Other similarly costumed Christians may have taken part, but the Tunisian warriors, led by al-Hasan himself, were the star attraction.

Armed 'as if for war' [*ad modum belli*], some with spears [*zagaglie*] and others with Moorish muskets [*scoppette moresche*], the Tunisians galloped to and fro on their light cavalry horses [*jomenta*]. In modern Italian, *giumenta* means a mare, mule, or beast of burden, but in the late Middle Ages and early modern period, it also meant a small riding horse and hence, in this instance, the kind of lightweight Moorish cavalry horse for which De Spenis perhaps knew no more specialised term. So mounted, the Tunisians took the opportunity to demonstrate, in the ensuing joust, their remarkable military and equestrian skills

When the game of spears was finished, the Moors and their Christian partners took up canes, hurling them at one another. Those who lacked canes dismounted to retrieve fallen canes from the ground. [*Fenito il gioco de le zagaglie pigliorno lle canduze, menando lluno ad laltro et piu destri mori, non havendono canduze in mano, se calavano da cavallo in terra pigliando lle canduze.*] This was almost certainly a version of the popular *juego de cañas* or game of canes, a form of competitive equestrian exercise originally introduced to Spain by the Moors, which required teams of some thirty riders to charge one another at full gallop, while hurling spears made of reed, rush, or bamboo canes and defending themselves with shields.⁶ For once, as Benedetto Croce puts it, 'authentic Moors' [*mori autentici*] competed in a game of canes on European soil.⁷

There is no evidence that either game was scripted, although the costuming of at least two Christians as Moors gave the event a degree of theatricality. In the

diplomatic nature of the case, the joust could not have been staged as a conventional European *moros y cristianos* in which the Moors were finally defeated. Nor could the Moors have reversed the outcome and defeated the Christians. By dressing the Christian nobility as Moors the event was ostensibly stripped of its usual connotations of ethnic conflict and presented as a competition among Moors alone rather than as a dramatic mock battle or sporting contest between Moors and Christians. Nevertheless, to have seen Moorish warriors charging through the streets of Naples, brandishing spears, firing muskets, and displaying consummate skill at their own martial game of canes, must have been somewhat disconcerting to a European audience for whom the fear of Muslim invasion was still very real. Invasion, to use Mullanay's terms, was temporarily recast as 'cultural performance.'

Granada (1561)

In 1561, Philip II of Spain appointed eighteen-year-old Luis Hurtado de Mendoza mayor of the Alhambra, the fortified Moorish palace that dominates the city of Granada. Luis was the fourth successive member of the Mendoza family to hold the office. Both his grandfather and father, who had preceded him in office, were still alive, the former serving as president of the royal council of Castile and the latter as captain general of the kingdom of Granada and as Philip's ambassador to the Vatican. In his father's absence, Luis had served for two years as deputy captain general. He was also the fifth count of Tendilla and, on his father's death in 1580, would become the fourth marquis of Mondéjar.

The single most powerful family in the former Moorish kingdom of Granada, the Mendozas governed the Alhambra, exercised military authority in the kingdom, and enjoyed the support of the aristocracy. They were opposed by a twenty-six member chancery, first established by Ferdinand II in 1505, that governed the rest of the city of Granada, regulated civil life in the kingdom, and enjoyed the support of the immigrant Christian population. The two sides clashed over the problem of the Moriscos.

At their surrender to Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492, Granada's Moors had been promised freedom of religion. Ten years later, they had been given the choice of exile or Christian baptism. Those who stayed paid only nominal allegiance to Christianity. Known as Moriscos, they managed, for the most part, to retain their distinctive language and culture in public and observe their Muslim faith in private. In the city of Granada, some 20,000 out of a total of 50,000 to 60,000 inhabitants were Morisco.⁸

Two Cases of Muslim Participation in Sixteenth-Century European Mock Battles

In many of the mountain villages of the Alpujarra, only the priest was not.

The chancery wanted to see an end to any distinctively Morisco culture. The Mendozas defended the Moriscos against undue persecution. There was a measure of self-interest in this aristocratic protection of hard-working merchants and labourers. Fernand Braudel has remarked that the 'feudal landlords' of Granada protected the Moriscos 'much as in the United States southern plantation owners protected their slaves.' But there is a difference: the Mendoza's opponents did not want to free the Moriscos, they wanted to eradicate them.⁹

To celebrate his appointment as mayor, Luis ordered that the feast day of John the Baptist (June 24) be observed with a mock battle that would amply demonstrate the military force, both old Christian and Morisco, at his disposal.¹⁰ The setting was an artificial island in the river Genil, created by redirecting the normal flow of water. It was joined to the river banks by a bridge at each end. On the eve of the fiesta, 'four hundred horsemen, a thousand arquebusiers, and four hundred Moriscos' [*400 de a cavallo y mill arcabuzeros y quatroçientos moriscos*] assembled in the grounds of the Alhambra.

Divided into two companies, one led by Luis and the other by two of his friends, they left the palace by different gates, an hour before dawn, to descend through the city streets to the river. Luis and his men were dressed 'in Moorish style' [*a la morisca*].

A band of fifty men playing flageolets or bagpipes (*gaytas*) and other instruments preceded the soldiers. Then came the Moriscos, wearing loose trousers, white shirts, and coloured bonnets. Some were armed with slings, while others carried small lances or spears [*luego venian los moriscos con çaraguelles y camissas blancas y bonetes de colores, paños de tocar y muchas hondas, y otros con lençuelos en las manos, y muchas vanderillas repartidas entre ellos*]. They were followed by a dozen trumpeters and other musicians wearing silken Moorish gowns. The arquebusiers came next, accompanied by many fifes and drums. There were a dozen knights, riding 'with short stirrups' [*a la gineta*]; twenty more knights armed with halberds, shields, or bows; five halberdiers 'with many feathers in their hats' [*con muchas plumas en sus sombreros*]; and twelve grooms.

Behind this escort rode Luis himself. The young count wore Moorish dress: loose damask trousers, a silken gown, and a camlet cloak, all decorated with gold and silver [*vnos çaraguelles de damasco leonado bordados, y una marlota de tela de plata blanca y leonada toda cortada y lauada con madejuelas de plata, aforrada en tela de oro amarillo, y vn capellar de chamelote blanco y leonado con muchos rapacejos de oro*]. He carried a shield and a long lance from which hung a pennant emblazoned with

Islamic crescent moons [*vna lanza muy larga con veleta de los mismos colores, y vnas medias lunas*].

Behind him came twenty foot soldiers and a mounted equerry, the latter carrying a lance and standard also decorated with crescent moons. Then came three standard bearers, six trumpeters, and, marching two by two in the wake of their captain general, 'all the people, dressed in Moorish style with many elegant Moorish gowns' [*toda la gente, bestidos a la morisca con muchas marlotas muy galanas*]. Thus, as the sun rose, Luis reached the island in the river. A great crowd awaited him.

No description survives of the opposing army. Perhaps they represented Christians, although this would have meant either that Luis, at the head of what was clearly intended to represent a Moorish army, would have lost the ensuing battle (and his Morisco supporters would have been induced to enact their own defeat) or, equally unthinkable, that the Moors would have been allowed just this once to defeat the Christians. Perhaps both sides, whether Christians or Moriscos in daily life, dressed as Moors for the mock battle, just as they had when al-Hasan visited Naples in 1543. Only thus could Luis identify with the persecuted Moriscos, lead the winning side, and still avoid representing the defeat of Christians. It was enough, under the circumstances, for him to fly the crescent moon. He would not have wanted to enact the undoing of the Christian reconquest of Moorish Spain.

As day dawned, Moriscos streamed across both bridges onto the island stage, the arquebusiers formed up in battle lines, and together 'they began to fight a valiant and fierce skirmish as if it were real' [*empezaron a trabar su escaramuza tan braua y reñida como si de veras fuera*], many feigning death on either side. Artillery boomed from the walls of the Alhambra and, after a while, the cavalry joined in, four hundred strong, with the 'gallant' [*bravo*] Luis leading the charge. It was 'something never seen before in that city' [*cossa que jamas se a bisto en aquella çiudad*] and so well ordered that, even though it lasted a long time, 'it ended without any mishap' [*se acabó sin desgracia ninguna*].

Once the battle was over, Luis led the troops in a triumphal parade back to the Alhambra, leaving the Moriscos in their own quarters along the way. All the knights who had taken part sat down to lunch at tables in the courtyard of Luis's grandfather's house. The colours of their costumes and the multitude of feathers that adorned their heads so impressed the courtiers that they declared they had never seen anything like it. Food was also provided for the foot soldiers and Moriscos, although apparently not at the marquis's tables. *Convivencia*, the capacity to live together in difference, has its limits.

I am aware of no other mock battle in Christian Spain in which Moriscos took

part. Although it is possible that they were performing under duress, I am inclined to think that they offered a voluntary show of support for the new mayor of the Alhambra. Luis seems to have returned the favour, dressing as a Moor not simply for the splendour of the costume but to identify with his Morisco subjects and thereby to challenge the prejudices of the civil chancery.

Moorish dress was a heated political issue. The chancery would soon persuade Philip II to revive dormant laws forbidding Moriscos to wear traditional Moorish clothes. For Luis and his followers to have paraded in triumph through the city streets, dressed *a la morisca*, was a politically loaded gesture. In the process, he was able to portray himself as a powerful leader, both in the fictional world of the drama and, by his ability to summon a large and well-ordered military force, in the real world of Granadine politics.

Sadly, the Mendoza policy of tolerance towards the Moriscos did not prevail much longer. The Turkish siege of Malta in 1565 heightened Christian fears of an assault on the mainland. The increased frequency and scope of corsair attacks, culminating in a spectacular raid later that year on Órgiva, twenty miles inland from the Granadine coast, added to the tension, as did the discovery that some Moriscos were spying for the Turks and others were planning to seize control of Granada.

Encouraged by the chancery and without consulting the Mendozas, Philip revived a decree first issued by his father in 1526 but never seriously enforced. It required the Moriscos of Granada to learn Spanish and outlawed all use of Arabic after three years. It forbade the use of Moorish costumes, surnames, music, dances, wedding ceremonies, and public baths. It aimed, in short, at complete cultural assimilation. To enforce the decree, Philip appointed Pedro de Deza president of the chancery of Granada. In January 1567 Deza began his campaign of suppression by demolishing the beautiful Alhambra baths. Iñigo Lopez de Mendoza, marquis of Mondéjar, Luis's father and once again Philip's active captain general in Granada, was outraged.

For a while, the Moriscos hoped that negotiations and generous donations to the royal treasury would resolve the matter, as they had in the time of Charles V, but Philip was adamant. Tension mounted and, after dark on Christmas Eve 1568, 180 armed Moriscos from the Alpujarra trooped into the city dressed as Turks. Had there not been an unexpected snowfall, their numbers might have been greater. When their brethren in the city, sensing a fiasco, failed to join the uprising, the raiders cursed them for cowards and traitors. The 'Turks' killed a few guards and sacked a store before being driven off by Mondéjar's soldiers. In the morning, Mondéjar personally assured the city's Christians that there was no cause to worry. He was wrong. When the rumour that a Turkish army had invaded Granada reached the mountain villages of the

Alpujarra, the Moriscos there took up arms and massacred their old Christian priests and neighbours. The legend of the 'martyrs of the Alpujarra' was born. Mondéjar was forced to raise an army and respond.¹¹

As is often the case with ethnic conflict, the war produced accounts of terrible cruelty on both sides. The Moriscos are said to have desecrated churches, using Madonnas for target practice and holy vessels for chamber pots; tortured priests, roasting one inside a pig and filling another's mouth with gunpowder before blowing off the top of his head; and enslaved prisoners, shipping men to the galleys and women to the harems of north Africa. On the Christian side, after John of Austria replaced Mondéjar as leader of the Spanish troops, the war was fought with calculated brutality. Entire villages were razed, each house, fence, fruit tree, and vine being cut down or burned to the ground. Male captives were hanged or shot, women and children enslaved.

In the midst of all this, there was, strangely, a partial reprise of the festivities of June 1561. When John of Austria entered Granada in April 1569, he was greeted with a mock battle in which Luis led a hundred horsemen dressed in Moorish costumes against another hundred clothed in scarlet silk. All wore cuirasses and carried lances and shields [*fue el Conde de Tendilla . . . con docientos ginetes, los ciento de la compañía de Gonçalo Tello de Aguilar con ropas de raso carmesi, y los otros ciento de su compañía, vestidos a la morisca, y todos con sus coraças, adargas y lanças*'].¹²

Once again, while one side was designated by its costumes as Moorish, the other's identity is not specified. And, although Moriscos were surely absent from this mock battle, Luis did not flinch from leading the army that represented their cause. Perhaps he dressed in the same splendid costume that he had worn eight years before. Given that John of Austria was relieving the Mendozas of their command and that the family still hoped for a negotiated peace with the Moriscos, this was once again a brave public statement. The official account may say that John of Austria 'greatly enjoyed' the 'fine skirmish' [*alegraron mucho a don Juan con una vistosa escaramuza que le hizieron*] but he must also have been pointedly reminded by the 'displaced spectacle', as Mullaney puts it, of the battle he was not having to fight for command of the Christian forces in Granada.

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NOTES

Author's Note: I am grateful to John Dillon, Senior Academic Librarian in European Humanities at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, for help in making sense of De Spenis's account of the Neapolitan *giostra morescha*.

¹ Max Harris, *Aztecs, Moors, and Christians: Festivals of Reconquest in Mexico and Spain* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

² Teofilo F. Ruiz, 'Elite and Popular Culture in Late Fifteenth-Century Castilian Festivals: The Case of Jaén', in *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt and Kathryn L. Reyerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 296-318.

³ Steven Mullaney, 'Strange Things, Gross Terms, Curious Customs: The Rehearsal of Cultures in the Late Renaissance', in *Representing the English Renaissance*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 65-92, 70.

⁴ Geronimo De Spenis, 'Breve cronica dai 2 giugno 1543 a 25 maggio 1547', ed. by Bartolomeo Capasso, *Archivio storico per le provincie napoletane*, 2 (1877), 511-31, 519-25.

⁵ Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 165, 177.

⁶ *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo Americana*, 70 vols (Barcelona: Espasa-Calpe. n.d), vol. 11, pp. 299-300.

⁷ Benedetto Croce, *La Spagna nella vita italiana durante la Rinascenza*, 2nd ed. (Bari: Laterza, 1922), p. 193.

⁸ Antonio Luis Cortés Peña and Bernard Vincent, *Historia de Granada*, Vol. 3, *La época moderna: siglos XVI, XVII y XVIII* (Granada: Editorial Don Quijote, 1986), pp. 47-56.

⁹ Gabriel Rodríguez de Ardila y Esquivias, 'Historia de los condes de Tendilla,' ed. by R. Foulché-Delbosc, *Revue Hispanique* 31 (1914), 63-131; Henry Charles Lea, *The Moriscos of Spain* (1901: reprint Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1968); Julio Caro Baroja, *Los moriscos del reino de Granada* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1957), pp. 141-50; Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. by Siân Reynolds, 2 vols (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) vol. 2, pp. 785-90; Cortés Peña and Vincent, *Historia de Granada*, vol. 3, pp. 169-75, 185.

¹⁰ Rodríguez de Ardila, 'Historia de los condes de Tendilla,' 112-14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 94-110, 116-25; Lea, *The Moriscos of Spain*; Caro Baroja, *Los moriscos del reino de Granada*, pp. 173-204; Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World*,

vol. 2, pp. 1055-1073; vol. 1, pp. 211-18; Jack Beeching, *The Galleys at Lepanto* (London: Hutchinson, 1982), pp. 99-123; Henry Kamen, *Philip of Spain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 128-32.

¹² Francisco Bermudez de Pedraza, *Historia eclesiástica de Granada* (1638; repr. Granada: Editorial Don Quijote, 1988), p. 243; see also Demetrio Brisset, *Fiestas de moros y cristianos en Granada* (Granada: Diputación Provincial de Granada, 1988), pp. 125-26.

Biblical and Medieval Covenant in the York Old Testament Plays

Olga Horner

For theologians, the concept of covenant is seen as the underlying cohesive principle of the Bible as a whole, and 'the basic assumption of the biblical documents seems to be that Israel stands in a peculiar relationship to YHVH his God'.¹ This relationship is signified in the Bible by the Hebrew word *berit* ('covenant', also 'treaty', 'alliance'), usually translated in the Greek Septuagint as *diathēkē* ('disposition by will', 'testament'). St Augustine uses *testamentum* as the equivalent of *diathēkē*, but with the meaning of 'covenant', giving the titles of the Old and New Testaments the interchangeable meaning of Old and New Covenants.² In the *Vulgate*, *diathēkē* is translated indiscriminately as *fædus* ('treaty', 'compact', 'law') or *pactum* ('agreement', 'contract') and Jerome's choice of words conveys both the medieval and biblical sense of 'covenant' as a legally binding undertaking or pledge.

Because of its control over so many aspects of commercial and personal affairs, in the past and into the twenty-first century, historians of English law assign the same importance to medieval covenant and contract within the English legal system, as theologians do to covenants in the Bible.³ Old Testament covenants are made between states or their representatives, kings and their subjects, and above all between God and man, and although medieval covenants cannot be on the same global scale, they are fundamentally like those in the Bible. Biblical and medieval covenants both consist of a binding promise or obligation, usually a mutual promise between two or more parties, to do or refrain from doing certain acts, and the qualifying conditions or requirements for an agreement are essentially the same. In the Bible, a mutual promise is confirmed by oath,⁴ or by some kind of ritual such as a solemn meal or sacrifice, and the promise may be accompanied by a sign or token as a reminder to the parties of their obligation.⁵ In medieval law a promise might also be sworn, and an equally significant act demanded in order to bind a bargain: often a ceremonial handclasp formally effected in the presence of witnesses or later, a written document as material

proof of the promise.⁶

Naturally, a covenant between God and man could not arise until man had been created (Genesis 1. 27). It follows that the biblical story of the Creation to the end of the fifth day cannot have any covenant content, nor can the first two York plays: *The Creation, and the Fall of Lucifer* and *The Creation to the Fifth Day*, and the first opportunity for a covenant should be after God creates Adam and Eve. *Berit* ('covenant') is not in fact found in the Bible until God speaks to Noah after the flood recedes (Genesis 9:9), but theologians are prepared to admit a less restrictive identification of a covenant. In any situation where God's words and His actions towards man can be interpreted as 'a kind of contract between God and the people, through which the people earned God's friendship and protection by their keeping of the law', the concept of covenant is said to exist without the word being used.⁷

The gift of Paradise to Adam appears to meet the requirements of this definition, especially as a biblical covenant can be a unilateral, rather than a mutual, promise. It might be a permanent, unconditional, and unalterable divine gift of God which does not bind man in any way, or its antithesis: a covenant demanding obedience without any prior obligation or promise by God, but with calamitous results for the disobedient – as in the case of Adam. When God puts Adam into the Garden of Eden *ut operaretur et custodiret illum* ('to dress and keep it') (Genesis 2. 15), He gives Adam dominion over all living things (Genesis 1. 28), albeit with an imposed condition. The actions and words of God qualify as a unilateral covenant despite the absence of *berit* from the text.

This is where biblical and medieval covenants diverge. In theory, English medieval law does not recognise a unilateral promise as a legally binding transaction, and there is no exchange of conversation between God and Adam capable of converting the gift of Paradise into a mutual promise. Adam has no choice in the matter when God places him in the Garden of Eden, and his agreement to the prohibition of the fruit of the tree is neither demanded nor given. But in English law as far back as Anglo-Saxon times, a grant or gift of land 'included within itself both the idea of conveyance [transfer] and the idea of contract', and always required a counter-gift or counter-performance by the grantee to form a binding covenant.⁸

Transforming the first and all-encompassing land deal in the Bible into a medieval covenant seems to have been the aim of the playwright(s) of the York plays: *The Creation of Adam and Eve* and *Adam and Eve in Eden*, by adding the necessary reciprocal actions and promises to the account in Genesis 1. 26-29 and 2. 15-17: 21-22. To achieve this, liberties are taken with the biblical source of the plays, including the telescoping of the two Genesis versions of the Creation of Adam and Eve,

1

inventing dialogue, and adapting the events in Genesis to allow Eve's participation in the gift of Paradise. There also appears to be a particular doctrinal agenda with the insistence on the love and worship of God in return for the 'lordship' of Paradise. This changes the dynamics of the relationship between God, and Adam and Eve, into one of an interactive, personal, and promissory nature – a mutual promise – which does not exist in the original Genesis story.

In *The Creation of Adam and Eve*, when Adam acknowledges that he and Eve were made by God's will, he asks what they should do and where they should live. God explains to them both:

Deus For þis skyl made I 3ow þis day,
My name to worschip ay-whare;
Louys me, forþi, and louys me ay
For my making, I axke no mare. 65-68

In return for love and worship, Adam is presented with the Garden of Eden:

Deus Lordschipe in erthe þan graunt I þe.
All thyng to serue þe bat I haue wrought. 71-72

Adam agrees wholeheartedly for both himself and Eve to do the required services of love and worship for the gift:

Adam A, lorde, sene we sall do no thyng
 But louffe þe for þi gret gudnesse,
We sall ay bay to þi bidding
 And fulfyll it, both more and less. 77-80

The biblical unilateral promise in Genesis 2. 15-25 has been re-written as a medieval mutual agreement for a legally binding grant of land, using the common device of a legal fiction (the medieval equivalent of virtual reality?). The principle of *quid pro quo* in a medieval covenant (a counter-gift or counter-performance required in exchange for land) could be satisfied or evaded by providing a nominal counter-gift or service. In English land law it might be a valueless trifle such as a peppercorn rent. In the York plays, it is the counter-performance of love, not of any monetary worth but asked for by God in return for Paradise. Both these unequal forms of *quid pro quo* would count as 'consideration' to convert a unilateral pledge or undertaking into a

legally acceptable mutual promise.⁹ Eve follows Adam's promise by saying: 'His syng sene he has on vs sett/Beforne all othir thyng certayne,' (81-82). With 'syng' meaning 'token; proof; earnest; evidence; pledge', is she referring to the act which often accompanied a medieval covenant, to remind the parties of their obligations?

In Genesis 2. 22, Eve is only created after Adam is put in charge of the Garden. In *The Creation of Adam and Eve*, she is made immediately after Adam (as in Genesis 1. 27), so that she is present at the dealings between God and Adam and enters into Paradise with him. Adam speaks for her, and through him she confirms her agreement: 'Hym for to loue we sall nocht lett/And worschip hym with myght and mayne' (83-84) in accordance with the medieval law relating to contracts made by married women. Influenced by the canonist's view that woman was created for man and bound to obey him (originating in Genesis), husband and wife were viewed as *animae duae in carne una* ('two minds in one body') for certain activities within the scope of English common law, and the legal existence of a woman was suspended during marriage or at least incorporated into that of her husband.¹⁰ With some exceptions, a married woman could not enter into a contract and her husband was held responsible for her contractual actions and answered for them in court.

The Fullers' play of *Adam and Eve in Eden* is both a continuation and partial repetition of the preceding play, although with a different legal slant. The text recapitulates the services required for the gift of Paradise and the willing acceptance of them by Adam and Eve, but in a re-ordering of the Genesis events, God prohibits the fruit of the tree of knowledge to both Adam and Eve. In English law, civil liability was enforced against husband and wife jointly if the wife committed a wrong in respect of real property, trespass to the person, and perhaps trespass to goods,¹¹ (such as taking the forbidden fruit). This makes their joint ejection from Paradise legally acceptable and harmonises the Old Testament with the medieval law governing the status of a married woman.

Adam and Eve in Eden also presents a more involved and surprising set of circumstances from the previous play with regard to the gift of Paradise. In this play Eve is acknowledged as an equal partner in the lordship of the land, and the rights and duties flowing from the joint lordship:

Deus Adam and Eve, this is the place
 That I haue graunte you of my grace
 To haue your wonnyng in,

1-3

God tells husband and wife:

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Deus All your wyll here shall ye haue.
Lykyng for to eate or sayff
Fyshe, fewle or fee;

11-13

and that: 'All other creatours also theretyll/Your suggettes shall they bee'. (15-16) He then makes the gift: 'Lordeship in erthe here graunte I the' (18), in almost the identical words of line 71 of the previous play. Eve is specifically required to agree to the terms of service: 'Looke that ye bothe saue and sett/Erbes and treys; for nothyng lett,' (24-25), and to 'Love my name with good entent' (50). She also gives her own undertaking directly to God not to eat the forbidden fruit: 'Thys frute full styll shall hyng,/Lorde, that thowe hays forbyd'. (78-79). God confirms both their agreements to the prohibition: 'Looke that ye doe as ye haue sayd,' (80), and explains, apparently only to Adam, why the fruit is banned:

Deus Luke nother thowe nor Eve thy wyf
Lay ye no handes theretyll.
For-why it is knowyng
Bothe of good and yll.

84-87

The terms of the dramatic covenant have been clearly set out: land and power in exchange for love, obedience, and caring for the land – a tenurial service comparable to 'looking after the lord's wood'.¹² The promise has been ratified by man and wife, and in civil law, the future punishment of Adam for the wrongful act initially committed by his wife will be justified.

Paradise is granted to both husband and wife in a manner entirely consistent with the provisions of the common law: 'If an estate is conveyed to the husband and wife they take as tenants by entreties – both own the whole'.¹³ Unlike the previous play, Adam and Eve jointly and severally agree to abide by the condition of the grant, and are equally at fault for breaking the promise. Tenancy by entirety was known at least by the mid-fourteenth century, although commoner in the fifteenth. Whether or not this suggests a later date of composition for *Adam and Eve in Eden* and/or a different playwright for *The Creation of Adam and Eve*, the evidence of the texts suggests that both plays have changed the implied or assumed unilateral biblical covenant into an explicit medieval transfer of land for which service must be done. The two following plays: *The Fall of Man* and *The Expulsion from Eden*, show the consequences of failing in that service – ejection from the land.

The original Anglo-Saxon rules for acquiring land – gift and counter-gift or

counter-performance – did not alter after the Norman Conquest, but the circumstances of the transaction changed drastically. Instead of independent Anglo-Saxon kings, princes, and overlords of separate territories, a conquering king had taken possession of the whole country as its sole landowner. Consequently, under Norman rule and thereafter, all transfers of land were controlled by the Crown, and all land was held by tenure, mediately or immediately of the king,¹⁴ – a microcosm of the circumstances surrounding the creation of Paradise and its occupation by Adam and Eve.

All tenures implied service of some sort, because the English feudal structure was founded on a personal relationship between lord and vassal, and tenants who held immediately of the Crown performed services of a personal nature for the king.¹⁵ Between a mesne lord and his tenant there were more mundane reciprocal duties. In both cases, protection by the lord entailed service by the tenant, and benefits were granted by the lord only as long as the service was faithfully performed. But where the tenant failed to observe the obligations of his tenure, or was unfaithful to his lord, he committed a fundamental breach of faith and 'he could be disciplined, even to the extent of losing his status and thus his land'.¹⁶ Does this not sound like the reworked story of Adam in the York plays?

Think of Adam as a tenant-in-chief; a lord in possession of and holding land directly of his paramount lord, God. Adam is the sole lord in *The Creation of Adam and Eve*, whereas lordship is shared in *Adam and Eve in Eden*, but the conditions of lordship are the same. In the play, God devolves to Adam the rights, privileges, and control of a feudal lord: 'Lordship in erthe here graunte I the' (18), and in return He requires husband and wife to 'Love my name with good entent,/And harken to my commaundement' (50-51). When Adam and Eve are disobedient and unfaithful in their promised services they lose the land, as they would have done in England from the Norman Conquest onwards. Instead of being lords over their 'sujettes', they lost their status, were turned out of Paradise, and became villeins tied to the land by labour: 'In erthe þan shalle ye swete and swynke,/And trauayle for youre food.' (*The Fall of Man* 161-62).

In the patriarchal societies of post-Conquest England and the post-Creation world of the two York plays, when a lord gave the land to a tenant and his heirs – which God was doing when He told Adam and Eve to go forth and multiply – a lord's superior rights over the land could always be revived if a tenant did not have heirs or if he was outlawed or convicted of felony. The lands of a tenant committing treason were forfeited to the king, a felon's lands escheated to his lord.¹⁷ Whether under English law Adam would be a traitor by challenging God's authority and power by eating of the tree of knowledge, or a felon for illegally taking the fruit, is immaterial. Adam held

immediately of his paramount lord, so in either case Paradise would be forfeited to God.

In both plays there are echoes of the ceremony of homage and the sworn oath of fealty, by which a tenant became his lord's man. Homage, called the most honourable and humble service of reverence a free tenant could make to his lord ('*le plus honourable service, et plus humble service de reuerence, un franktenant puit faire a son Seignieur*') was also a legal bond,¹⁸ the relationship between lord and tenant being a contractual one:

quo quis tenetur & astringitur ad warrantizandum, defendendum, & adquietandum tenetem suum in seysina sua versus omnes, per certum servitum in donatione nominatum & expressum, & etiam vice versa quo tenens reobligatur & astringitur ad fidem domino suo servandum et servitium debitum faciendum.

['by which one is bound and constrained to warrant, defend, and acquit his tenant in his seisin [possession of the land] against all persons for a service certain, described, and expressed in the gift, and also, conversely, whereby the tenant is bound and constrained in return to keep faith to his lord and perform the service due.']¹⁹

Bracton's definition of the medieval law governing lord and tenant fairly describes God's intention to support Adam's possession of Paradise only as far as Adam and Eve remain faithful in their care of the land, their love, and the honouring of their promises not to eat the forbidden fruit.

The ceremony of homage was known and its form was much the same all over Europe.²⁰ In England the words and actions to confirm the bond were laid down by statute.²¹ The tenant would be ungirt with his head uncovered, kneeling before his lord, *tenens manus suas utrasque ponere inter manus utrasque domini sui* ('holding out his hands and putting them together between the hands of the lord') – an essential symbolic act of subjection. The tenant would then say: *Devenio homo vester, de tenemento quod de vobis teneo* ('I become your man in respect of the tenement I hold of you'), promising to his lord *fidem vobis portabo de vita & membris & terreno honore* ('I will bear faith to you of life and limb and earthly honour').²²

According to Littleton, writing soon after the mid-fifteenth century, a woman could not do homage because a single woman cannot say to her lord that she will be his woman; she can only say that to a man when she marries, and when married, can say it only to her husband.²³ However, exceptions can always be found to rules of

law, and in one case of a man and wife doing homage together in 1341, the husband speaks for both in a ceremony resonant of *Adam and Eve in Eden*. John Leuknor and Elizabeth his wife did homage to their lord, W. Thorp, for land which he himself held of a superior lord. Putting their hands jointly between the hands of their lord, the husband swore the oath:

Nous vous ferromus homage & foy vous porterons, pur les tenements que nous teignomus de A., vostre conusor, que a vous ad graunt nostre services en B. et C. & auters villes &c encounter tous gents, salue la foy que nous deuons a nostre seignior le Roy & a ses heires & a nostre auters Seigniors.

[‘We do homage to you, and bear faith to you for the lands which we hold of A your cognisour (overlord) who has granted to you our services in B and C and other vills & etc., against all people, saving the faith we owe to the King and his heirs and to our other lords.’]²⁴

And both kissed him, and then they did fealty, the husband saying the words and both kissed the book.²⁵

The act of homage and the words used in the oath of fealty: to bear faith to the lord *de vita & membris, corpore & catallis & terreno honore* (‘in life and limb, in body, goods, and earthly honour’,²⁶ have nothing to do with the Genesis description of Adam’s introduction to Paradise. They do reflect the dialogue in the play texts when Adam is given lordship on earth in return for love and obedience, and the actions of the homage ceremony could invest the presentation of Paradise to Adam and Eve in the play with a recognisable solemn ritual. Unfortunately there is no support in English iconography for showing the dramatic Adam and Eve in a comparable act of reverence to that of homage.²⁷ Artists chose biblical subjects and events for doctrinal illustrations or prefigurations, with the Creation of Eve a more popular subject than the Creation of Adam, probably because the representation of her being drawn from the side of Adam is associated with the idea of the Church issuing from the wounded side of Christ on the Cross. On purely aesthetic grounds, Eve’s Creation is more visually exciting than the image of Adam being formed from the dust of the earth, unless of course the artist has the genius of Michelangelo, whose early sixteenth-century version of *God Creating Adam* epitomises the Divine energy of the act of Creation. His *Creation of Eve*, also in the Sistine Chapel, is equally individual,

showing her in true homage posture, kneeling with her hands together gazing up to God. Since the homage ceremony was much the same throughout Europe, Michelangelo may well have had the pictorial representation of homage in mind. It is also the position of prayer, used on the Continent before it was adopted in England, and known as a Frankish custom, and believed to 'have been derived from a Teutonic feudal ceremony since it was known as a judicial form of homage long before it was adopted as a devotional attitude'.²⁸

Looking for literary comparisons, it is clear that the style and content of the Creation plays in the other extant mystery cycles have little in common with the York plays. Lines 81-128 of the Chester *Creation and Fall* are generally scripturally faithful to Genesis 1. 26-31 and 2. 7-9, 15-25, including Adam's marital comments, and with no apparent authorial bias. In the N-Town *Creation* there is a very brief scene (lines 97-143) consisting of a monologue by God summarising Genesis 1. 26-31, 2. 1-3. One line from 2. 23: *Hoc nunc os ex ossibus meis, et caro de carne mea* (This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh') is inserted into the text out of the biblical order, spoken by God not Adam, and changed in the play to 'fflesche of thi fflesche, and bon of thi bone'. Some novel horticultural details are added to the text: 'pepyr, pyan, and swete lycorys, . . . appel and pere and gentyl rys', and God repeats the warning about the fruit of the tree twice more. God takes Adam to Paradise, and Adam and Eve offer their thanks to God (who is not present) at the beginning of the next play: *The Fall of Man*. In context, the Creation passages in N-Town and in Chester seem to be dramatically less important than the preceding fall of Lucifer and the succeeding Temptation and Fall of man scenes (presumably also dealt with in the missing twelve pages of Towneley). The Towneley *Creation* (lines 162-249) is more selective of the biblical material than the Chester play, with an emphasis on the pleasures of Paradise (177-79). Again, there is no exchange of dialogue between God and Adam and Eve; He forbids the tree of life to them both, with death as the punishment for disobedience (203) and then leads them into Paradise, and a Cherub is introduced into the cast who repeats the warning about the tree of life (225).

But unlike the other two cycles, Towneley's Creation episode does have some resemblances to the York plays: Adam and Eve are given joint dominion on earth: 'Ye both to gouerne that here is' (189), and only the Towneley play requires love in return for Paradise, although it is the Cherub (not God) who instructs Adam to 'luf my lord in all thi thocht' (213). God tells Adam: 'This I make thi wonnyng playce . . . and I seasse the therin' (180, 182). 'Seisin', the possession of land and the basis of the entire system of medieval land law, was acquired by a tenant when he did homage to the lord (see the description of the legal bond of homage, above). If the Towneley playwright

was thinking in terms of a legally valid gift of land, he would know that the parties had to make a physical entry on to the land (as they do in the play, according to the script), with appropriate words expressing the extent of the interest in the land and the services to be rendered (such as are spoken by God and the Cherub in lines 189 and 203).²⁹

The mid-twelfth century religious drama *Le Mystère d'Adam*,³⁰ actually pre-empted some of the plot and thematic innovations of *The Creation of Adam and Eve* and *Adam and Eve in Eden* with its references to homage and lordship, although in a different format – the dramatic action and dialogues of *Le Mystère d'Adam* are interwoven with the lessons and responses of the season of Septuagesima. Apart from the instructions for married life in lines 23-24 and 33-38, that part of the *Le Mystère d'Adam* text which reproduces Genesis 2. 15-22 is remarkably similar to the content of the two York plays. In the Anglo-Norman drama, Eve is created before the gift of Paradise is made; God speaks to both Adam and Eve and tells them *De tote terre avez la seignorie . . . seiet vers mei leal* ('You have lordship over all the earth . . . be loyal to me') (61, 68); God requires Adam to *Tun seignor aime e si od lui le tien* ('Love your lord and hold to him') (70); and Adam acknowledges *En tei servir metrai ma volente./Tu es mi sires, jo sui ta creature* ('I have set my intention on serving you. You are my lord, I am your created thing') (76-77). God then entrusts the land to Adam, outlining the tenurial service required from him and the reciprocal benefits: whoever lives in Paradise will have the friendship of God in return for maintaining and guarding it: . . . *serra mis amis./Jol tei comand por maindre e por garder* (84-85). Following the stage direction *Tunc mittet eos in paradisum* ('Then He leads them into Paradise'), God tells Adam and Eve to go inside: *Dedenz vus met* (86) – to take seisin of the garden.

Seignorie in line 61 above (seignory in English law) had a specific feudal meaning, it comprised the services and other profits due to a tenant from the land held of his superior lord. Adam has the services of *D'oisels, de bestes e d'altre manantie* ('birds, beasts and all created things') (62) from the land created by God. Treating God's gift of Paradise to Adam as an exchange of land in return for love and service is hardly a surprising theme for *Le Mystère d'Adam*. The social condition of feudal tenure, with its inherent contractual system of lordship, homage, and reciprocal service, was already known to the Normans and thoroughly exploited by them in England after the Conquest.

Perhaps the author of the *Cursor Mundi*, a contemporary literary source for some of the York plays, also thought of the granting of Paradise to Adam in terms of a feudal gift of land. The phrase: 'He gaf it him, als in heritage', describes the

admission of an acknowledged heir to the tenancy of land. The mutually agreed condition of tenure: 'to hald it wel vnbroken/be forbot þat was be-tuix þam spoken' ('... the commandment that was agreed between them') was not to use the tree of life to acquire more knowledge.³¹ And when Adam and Eve are put out of Paradise for breaking the agreement, the reason is expressed in the legal language of civil law: 'Ye trespassid at the tre of lyfe';³² damage or use of property which has been explicitly excluded by the lord from the tenancy (trespass) being a good and sufficient reason for forfeiting the land.

The language and conditions attached to covenants of land do not feature at all in the texts of the remaining Old Testament plays of the York Cycle, even when they are a vital part of the biblical stories. The first mention of covenant in the Bible, after the flood recedes, is when God tells Noah: *Ecce ego statuam pactum meum vobiscum, et cum semine vestro post vos* ('Behold I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you,'). Subsequently God repeatedly refers to the rainbow as the symbol of His covenant to Noah and his descendants,³³ and it is reasonable to assume that the word 'covenant' would be essential to the text of *The Flood*. It is not there. In the play, Noah quotes the beginning of God's promise in Genesis 9. 13 never to drown the earth again, telling his sons he well remembers when God said:

Noe *'Arcum meum ponam in nudibus'*
 He sette his bowe clerly to kenne
 As a tokenyng bytwene hym and vs, . . .
 With wattir wolde he neuere wast yt þen.

283-85, 288

The words of the biblical verse following *nudibus* are: *et erit signum fæderis inter me et inter terram* ('and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth'), but the sentence is not fully translated in line 285 of *The Flood*. The word *fæderis* ('covenant') is conspicuously disregarded, although reference to the sign or token accompanying a biblical promise (as in line 81 of *The Creation of Adam and Eve*, 'His syng sene he has on vs sett') is retained. Noah says: 'þus has God most of myght/Sette his senge full clere' (289-90), and his son confirms that God:

II Filius Has sette his syne þus in certayne
 Than may we wytte þis worldis empire
 Shall euermore laste . . .

296-98

Although the text accurately describes the sign as a reminder to God that He will never again flood the earth, it is not quite the same as saying that the rainbow is the sign of God's everlasting covenant with mankind from Noah to Doomsday. This is odd if the audiences of the mystery cycle were meant to recognise the rainbow as a linking symbol of God's promise when it later appears in the Mercers' pageant of *The Last Judgment* ('A cloud & ij peces of Rainbow of tymber').³⁴ As a potent traditional icon of the Last Judgment, the rainbow was also ever present for York citizens in the Great East Window of York Minster, so it is disconcerting to find that the play of *The Flood* carefully disassociates the rainbow from its function as the sign of the validation of God's promise to mankind. In contrast to the plays, the *Cursor Mundi* does make the connection between covenant, rainbow, and the Last Judgment. Explaining that there will be no more flood when the rainbow is seen, the poet writes:

A couenand neu ic hight to þe
þou sal fra now mi rainbow see . . . 1975-76

but . . .

If man misdos on oþer wise
O þam sal i ta my iustice,
Als sal be at þe dai of ire,
Wen I sal com and deme mit fire. 1979-82

The York play of *Abraham and Isaac* like *The Flood*, also ignores the covenant content of the original account, possibly because it focuses almost exclusively on the single episode of the sacrifice of Isaac. The rest of Abraham's lengthy and action-packed life is dealt with cursorily, condensed into 64 lines of a selective and garbled summary of Genesis 15.5 to 17.19. In this preamble to the main dramatic action, the theatrical Abraham rephrases God's various biblical promises: to make of Abram a great nation, to give all the land of Canaan that Abram could see, to ensure that Abram will have an heir and that his seed will be like the stars, to confirm to Sarah the birth of Isaac, and to establish a future covenant with Isaac. All these pledges, specifically called 'covenants' in the Bible, become ordinary statements or commands in the play: 'He saide my seede shulde be multiplyed/Lyke to the gravell of þe see' (15-16), 'And [He] bad I shulde be circumcicyd/To fulfille þe lawe' (19-20), and 'Oure God nedes tythynges tyll vs talde . . . Tille haue a sone we shulde be balde' (43, 45).

In view of the number and diversity of the covenantal promises made by God to Abraham, and their cruciality to Old Testament history, it seems deliberately perverse to dispense entirely with the word 'covenant' in *Abraham and Isaac*.³⁵ Even a strict adherence to a dramatic plan selecting 'only those Old Testament episodes which to the medieval mind typified and prefigured' the leading facts of salvation,³⁶ would not necessarily prohibit using 'covenant' in the scripts of *The Flood* and *Abraham and Isaac*, especially since they have biblical authority. Was there a deliberate exclusion policy in place against the use of the word in these plays, or, assuming that the *Adam and Eve* plays were written by other hands, did their playwright(s) uniquely have a particular purpose to do with loyalty, covenants, and possession of land?

To be effective, the dramatic manipulation of a biblical story to reflect the knowledge and concerns of the spectators requires them to recognise and understand what the playwright is doing, and inevitably raises questions. Can the composition or revision dates of a particular play be matched with contemporary events or conditions, taking into account the considerable period of time during which the mystery cycle was performed? Is it possible to say how long feudal tenure and the incidents of service persisted, since none of the customs, practices, or laws discussed here can be allocated a certain and finite span of time within the course of English history, or in the common and canon legal systems? Were they applicable or even generally known for a span of three centuries or so to the inhabitants of the powerful and largely independent city of York? Were any of the citizens ever feudal tenants of a lord doing homage for tenure? And what was the attitude of the ecclesiastical authorities to a popularised version of the Adam and Eve story?

The answers may have to be speculative, or at best deductive, but not where the involvement of the Church in the secular matter of the plays was concerned. Apart from jurisdiction over all crimes and offences committed by clerics of any rank, ecclesiastical courts in every diocese claimed authority over a wide range of social activities that now belong to, or need the legal confirmation of, a secular government. They would include marriage and its termination, legitimacy, all types of sexual conduct, wills (except for land), burial of the dead, and tithes, (used for relief of the poor among other things). The Church also took an active role in employment and financial affairs on moral grounds, bringing pressure to bear on commercial enterprises to set just prices and regulate excess profits. Usury was discouraged and attempts made to improve labour conditions.³⁷ And, in relation to the content of the reconstructed biblical stories in the York plays, the Church was conspicuously active in the province of covenant.

The ecclesiastical courts expected to enforce all promises made by oath or

'pledge of faith' because any man pledging his faith was pawning his Christianity. Jurisdiction was claimed over all causes of broken oath or broken faith (*fidei laesio*) in any promise, covenant, or action of debt,³⁸ although the rights of the Church were frequently disputed by the common law judges. In 1164, the *Constitutions of Clarendon* declared that the king's justices, not the bishops, should decide what matters were for the king's courts and which not, and expressly forbade the ecclesiastical courts to entertain pleas of debt where there had been no lesion of faith. Two centuries later territorial incursions were an ongoing cause of friction. In 1373 the commons in Parliament petitioned the king, complaining that: *les Courtz Cristiens encrochent a eaux plusours pointz & articles prejudiciels al Corone & Courtz de Roi . . . Plee de Dette, ov un addition q'est appelle Fide-lesion . . . dont eaux n'ont power de trier ne terminer* ('the courts Christian are encroching to themselves many issues and matters prejudicial to the Crown and the king's courts . . . [including] the Plea of Debt without an added element which is called breach of faith, . . . of which they do not have the power to try and determine').³⁹ Another two centuries on, cases about debts owed by one person to another were still being heard by church courts. In a somewhat dubious breach of faith case in 1454, (*in causa lesionis fidei*), a witness was produced by the plaintiff to support his claim for 2 shillings owed by the defendant. The witness was asked whether the defendant had pledged her faith (*presterit fidem*) to pay the debt, and he answered that he thought so because, *videbat manus ipsorum junctas* ('he saw their hands joined')⁴⁰ – the ceremonial handclasp signifying faith-pledge which binds a bargain, used from Roman times onward. The persistent intervention of the Church in covenants which were claimed to be based on pledges of faith made it necessary once again for all the judges in the Exchequer Chamber to formally restate the rule that *lesio fidei* could not be made the means to give the church courts general jurisdiction over contracts.⁴¹

Medieval covenants in general played as large a part in the economic and business life of ordinary citizens (especially in a centre of commerce such as York) as the modern law of contract does in the twenty-first century. The significance of the grant of land and the reciprocal services demanded from Adam and Eve would be understood perfectly by the original audiences. Their familiarity with courts staffed by ecclesiastical lawyers administering the canon law of the Church in matters which would now be exclusively the concern of common law, also meant that there was nothing necessarily strange in the mixture of religion and medieval law in the plays. York citizens at the time would in fact see a certain significance in the phrase: 'The fooles that faith is fallen fra' (*The Expulsion*, 18) not apparent to modern audiences. After Adam and Eve have been expelled from Paradise, the Angel warns the audience:

'Take tente to me nowe, or ye ga' (19). This is surely a reminder to the spectators not to break their promises or covenants, or they would be guilty of the same breach of faith which deprived Adam and Eve of Paradise.

The disjunction between official policy directives and what actually happens in real life (as evidenced by the history of covenant), probably applies equally to the duration of the concept and practice of homage and lordship. 'Legal rules, which run counter to the prevalent ideas of the age, must be rigidly applied before they bring about a reform of those prevalent ideas,' implying that old customs continue to be observed in spite of legislation to the contrary. The disorder of the fifteenth century, caused by the maintenance of liveried retainers by great lords in order to enforce their own interests, was a distorted survival of 'the political ideas which underlay the old conception of homage which still lived on', despite the statutes passed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to contain the evils of maintenance. No precise date can be set for when the observance of homage finally lapsed, and the oath of fealty 'might [still] be exacted at the present day' from a free tenant.⁴² Manorial courts are recording cases throughout the fifteenth century where lawful inheritance was disputed or needed to be proved by *qui . . . tenuit per fidelitatem et servicium*, (who held by fealty and service') and the agreement reached or judgment given usually ends with *Et fecit fidelitatem* ('And he/she did fealty').⁴³ For less humble tenants, the identification of the lawful heir of a man who held land directly of the Crown was a matter for the king's escheator. In 1453, an enquiry after the death of William Fitz Hugh, knight, listed the various messuages, land etc., held in parts of Yorkshire of the king in socage, 'to wit, by service of rendering a rose yearly to the king, for all services' (the negligible *quid pro quo* for a grant of land). Verifying that Henry was the son and heir male of William, the king's escheator (*in loco Regis*) took the fealty of the said Henry and caused him to have seisin of all his father's estates and property.⁴⁴ Later, in 1485, the escheator for the county of York was ordered to take the fealty of Ralph Nevyll knight earl of Westmorland [heir of the late earl] and cause him to have full seisin of all the lands held of the king in chief, and for 40s the king 'respited his homage until Christmas next.'⁴⁵ Clearly it would be in the king's interests for the protection of the realm to preserve the duties of homage and fealty to the Crown. Instead of an archaic system belonging to an undeveloped social structure, the fact remains that the 'notion of tenure, though it no longer affects the ownership of land, has been the foundation of the law of real property for nine centuries',⁴⁶ and even into the twenty-first century vestigial reminders of the monarch as paramount lord survive. The estate of a citizen who dies intestate and without traceable heirs still passes to the Crown, and some offices of state held by tenure of serjeanty or by grant of the king remain hereditary.

For example the present Earl Marshal of England, the duke of Norfolk, is a descendant of Thomas Mowbray, the first duke of Norfolk, awarded the office of earl Marshal in 1386, to him and his heirs lawful in perpetuity.

Which brings us back to the status of the members of the original York audiences and their knowledge or ignorance of homage and lordship. York was an ancient borough; its citizens held their property by burgage tenure, with the right to transfer it by payment with none of the incidents of service attached to feudal tenure. The burgesses had a fair amount of autonomy in judicial, monetary, and mercantile affairs with their rights authorised by successive charters, either guaranteeing or expanding their powers and privileges. King John's charter of 1199 confirms even earlier charters to the citizens of *omnes libertates, et leges, et consuetudines suas; et nominatam Gildam suam mercarium* ('all their liberties, laws and customs, and namely their gild of merchants'). Judicial rights and powers for the mayor and bailiffs to have cognisance of all pleas of trespass, covenants, and contracts within the city or suburbs were confirmed in Henry III's charter of 1256. Citizens were allowed to answer 'of any land or tenement within the liberty of the city, or of any trespass' in their own guildhall instead of before the justices of assize, and after Richard II's charter of 1396 appointed two sheriffs and separated York from the county of York, the city became a county by itself, with all the independent legal, political, and administrative powers provided thereby.⁴⁷

On the other hand, York citizens could hardly be ignorant of the meaning of feudal tenure. The city was surrounded by large estates, and many citizens must have had relatives who were feudal tenants, or might have migrated themselves from those estates to live in York. Country landowners were also landlords of property within the city, while the burgesses themselves were landlords of tenant farmers. By charter, the city had been granted the wapentake of Ainsty (an agricultural area outside the city) to farm (rent out). It was sublet to a bailiff, 'who used his subjects so vilely that they talked of selling their tenements and leaving the county,'⁴⁸ but the burgesses would have to deal with the conditions of tenure and the complaints and dissatisfaction of the tenants. There were also enough marriages between the daughters of wealthy but socially aspiring city merchants, and members of the landed gentry to spread information about the system of tenurial land holdings.⁴⁹

Moreover, all the apparent freedom and power of a borough and its inhabitants tends to obscure the fact that every citizen who held land by burgage tenure was a tenant in chief of the king. With no mesne lord between the king and the York burgesses, one could say that in legal terms York was the equivalent of Paradise, and every burgess was Adam, holding his land directly of his paramount lord, the king, (or

in Adam's case, God). As to Adam's crime, whether felony or treason (and attempted usurpation of God's powers was surely treason), the outcome was the same as for a York citizen. The lands of a felon which elsewhere escheated to a feudal lord, escheated to the king in the case of a tenant in chief; the lands of a traitor always had been forfeited to the king, and would go on being so until 1870.⁵⁰

If the Adam and Eve plays existed in their present form in the years immediately after 1405, the disastrous consequences of Adam's disobedience would have a very personal effect on York citizens. When Archbishop Scrope and his confederates: the earl Marshal, Lord Bardolf, and Sir William Plumptre, supported by many North Yorkshire knights and prelates, led a York-based conspiracy against Henry IV, it was a treasonable act by all those who took part. Retribution was swift and ruthless. The ringleaders lost their heads, and everyone connected with the uprising, however tangentially, forfeited their lands and possessions to the king. On 31 May 1405, the mayor of York as escheator was ordered 'to take into the king's hands all goods of Richard, archbishop of York, and all others who have risen in insurrection'. The day before Archbishop Scrope was executed, an order was made to several of the Northern sheriffs, including those of York and the city of York, to proclaim that 'no-one under forfeiture of all he can forfeit' should forcibly enter forfeited lands or those belonging to the king's 'faithful lieges or deprive them of their goods'.⁵¹ Those who had been executed were beyond being affected by the forfeiture of their possessions or by this order, but any rebel left alive lost his land, dwelling and all his private property. Barred from attempting to recover them, he became destitute and an outcast.

In a short period during August 1405, the Patent Rolls list the vast estates, important offices, and lands throughout England belonging to all ranks of society, which were forfeited to the king by the rebels, and describe how the various offices and estates were parcelled out to the king's supporters as rewards. They included grants for life to Sir Henry Lescrope 'of all manors and lordships of Thriske and Hovyngham, co. York with all lands, rents, franchises, services and other things pertaining to them late of Thomas late earl Marshal and forfeited to the king on account of his rebellion'. The disgraced earl Marshal, later restored to favour, was the ancestor of the present holder of the office, the duke of Norfolk and in another reversal of fortune, lands acquired by Sir Henry Lescrope were in turn forfeited by him in 1417 to Henry V and then granted to the grandfather of the Henry Fitzhugh mentioned above, who succeeded to them in 1453.

Other grants of interest to York citizens went to the king's sergeant of the armoury of 'all lands late of William de Bowes within the city of York in the king's hands by the forfeiture of Ranulph del See', and to one of the king's esquires, who

received 'all the lands and rents which John de Kenley had in Copergate within the city of York . . . forfeited to the king because the said John and his sons rode in insurrection against the king's majesty with the archbishop of York and the earl Marshal . . .'.⁵² Earlier than that, in June, conditional grants were made to Thomas Emley citizen and tailor of York, of a messuage in Botham . . . late of Robert Wheldale, and to two of the king's servants of the office of porter of the hospital of St Leonard of York (held by John Astleby) of all profits and commodities pertaining to the offices, 'if [they] should pertain to the king on account of the rebellion of the latter'.⁵³ These actions by the king, and the threat of dispossession and penury were guaranteed to frighten the York burgesses into submission and lead to a reappraisal by them of where their loyalty and proper allegiance lay.

Once the main rebels had been punished and the York citizens brought face to face with the stark reality of the king's power over his land and his subjects, the king could afford to be magnanimous. On August 24th, he ordered 'Pardon to all the king's lieges, clerks and laymen, of the city, suburbs and precincts of York or residing or staying in the same between 1 May last and 1 August for all treasons, insurrections, rebellions, contempts, trespasses and felonies committed by them between those dates, and grant to them all their lands, reversions and goods forfeited on that account and at present in the king's hands . . .'.⁵⁴ The effects of the rebellion would not be forgotten quickly, and the punishment for breaking the bond of homage and faith owed to the supreme lord of all York long remembered by the citizens, especially if they were reminded annually by the contemporary dramatic parable of the story of Adam and Eve and their loss of Paradise.

NOTES

All line references to plays in the mystery cycles are to the following editions: *The York Plays*, ed. by Richard Beadle (London: Edward Arnold, 1982), *The Chester Plays* re-ed. by Dr. Herman Deimling (*EETS ES LXII*, 1892; repr. 1926, 1959, 1968), *Ludus Coventriae* [N-Town], ed. by James Orchard Halliwell (London: The Shakespeare Society, 1841), *The Towneley Plays*, re-ed. by George England, notes and introduction by Alfred W. Pollard (*EETS ES LXXI*, 1897 reprinted 1907, 1925).

¹ Jakob Jocz, *The Covenant* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1968), p. 9.

² St Augustine discusses how to understand the scriptures of the two covenants, the old and the new (*duorum testamentorum, uetris et noui*) in the story of Abraham, and St Paul's interpretation of the mothers of Abraham's two sons (Galatians 4. 22-24): *haec enim sunt duo testamento* ('here in fact are the two covenants'). St Augustine *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos*, ed. by J.E.C. Welldon, 2 vols (London: SPCK, 1924), II, Book 15, chap. 2. Welldon (p. 131, n. 2, 2) believes that 'covenant', not 'testament' is the proper meaning of *diathēkē*.

³ "Contract" in the Year Book period [the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries] denoted a sale or loan which transferred property or guaranteed a debt. It was a *real* rather than a *consensual* contract. "Covenant" was a legally binding agreement, often within the jurisdiction of canon law. Eventually covenant fell entirely within the common law system and its obligations were transferred to become the present-day legally binding agreements of modern contract law. The word substituted for the older concept of "covenant" was then "undertaking" or *assumptio*. J.H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 2nd edn (London: Butterworths, 1979), pp. 263-64. In modern English law, a covenant can be unilateral, established by the promise of one party, without the agreement of the benefitting party.

⁴ See Genesis 21. 23-31 for the story of Abimelech and Abraham.

⁵ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 16 vols (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), V, pp. 1012-22.

⁶ Sir Frederick Pollock and Frederic William Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Cambridge: University Press, 1898), II, pp. 188-89, 192.

⁷ Dennis J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), p. 2.

⁸ *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, ed. by Dorothy Whitelock (Cambridge: University Press, 1930), pp. xix, xx.

⁹ Pollock and Maitland, II, pp. 212-14.

¹⁰ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, Facsimile of the first edition of 1765-1769, 4 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), I, p. 432.

¹¹ Sir William Searle Holdsworth, *A History of English Law*, 17 vols (London: Methuen, Sweet and Maxwell, 1922-66), III (1923), pp. 531-32.

¹² Pollock and Maitland, I, p. 238.

¹³ Holdsworth, III, p. 526.

¹⁴ Sir Edward Coke, *The First Part of the Institutes of England* (London, J. More, 1639), p. 1.

¹⁵ Tenants in chief of the king who owed grand serjeanty to him might carry his banner or lance, or lead his army, or be his marshal, or fill other high offices of the kingdom. By the end of the fifteenth century they had all become honourable services, some of which are hereditary and still exist. (Pollock and Maitland I, p. 283).

¹⁶ A.W.B. Simpson, *A History of the Land Law*, 2nd edn (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 2.

¹⁷ Pollock and Maitland, I, p. 351.

¹⁸ Sir Edward Coke, *The Third Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England* (London: D. Pakeman and W. Lee, 1628; repr. New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1979), p. 13. Coke died 1634.

¹⁹ *Henrici de Bracton de Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae*, ed. by Sir Travers Twiss, 6 vols (London: Longman, 1878-83) I, (1878), p. 614. Bracton died 1268.

²⁰ Pollock and Maitland I, p. 297.

²¹ *Modus faciendi Homagium & Fidelitatem* (Temp. incert.) inserted into all printed copies of 17 Edward II. See *The Statutes of the Realm* (London: Dawsons, 1810; repr. 1963), I, p. 227.

²² *Henrici de Bracton*, I, p. 632.

²³ Sir Thomas Littleton, *Les Tenures de M. Littleton* (Thomas Wright, London, 1604), section 87. Littleton died 1481.

²⁴ Littleton, sec. 91 (in rather peculiar French).

²⁵ The ceremony is described in Littleton, sec. 85.

²⁶ *Henrici de Bracton*, I, p. 632.

²⁷ A window in Malvern Priory shows Abraham kneeling with hands raised to God, who is leaning out of Heaven with His hands extended. (M.D. Anderson, *The Imagery of British Churches* (London: John Murray, 1955), p. 81.) Such an image does reproduce the posture of homage.

²⁸ Dom Louis Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices in the Middle Ages* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1927), pp. 26-28.

²⁹ The complicated subject of seisin is dealt with in Pollock and Maitland, II, pp. 29-

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80, 83-90 (livery of seisin), 103-06, *passim*.

³⁰ *Le Mystère d'Adam*, ed. by Paul Studer (Manchester: University Press, 1928).

³¹ *Cursor Mundi*, ed. by Richard Morris, EETS OS 57 (1874), reprinted 1961, lines 609, 611-12.

³² *Cursor Mundi*, line 941 (Trinity and Fairfax mss only).

³³ Apart from promissory covenants where the word is not actually used, the following are quotations from the story of Noah: *Ponamque fœdus meum tecum* ('But I will set in place my covenant with you'), *Ecce ego statuam pactum meum vobiscum* ('Behold I establish my covenant with you'), *Statuam pactum meum vobiscum* ('I establish my pact with you'), *Hoc erit signum fœderis* ('This is the token of the covenant') [referring to the rainbow] (Genesis 6.18: 9. 9, 11, 12, and see 9. 15, 16, 17 which also refer to the rainbow as the everlasting covenant).

³⁴ Inventory dated 1433 in *Records of Early English Drama: York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), I, p. 55.

³⁵ God's dealings with Abraham (name changed from Abram by God in Genesis 17. 5) also include promissory covenants which do not use the words *foedus* or *pactum*; among the explicit confirmatory covenants are: *pepigit Dominus fœdus cum Abram* ('the Lord made a covenant with Abram'), *Ponamque foedus meum inter me et te* ('And I will make my covenant between me and you'), *constituam pactum meum illi in foedus sempiternum* ('I will establish my pact with him for an everlasting covenant') (Genesis 15. 18: 17. 2, 19, and also see 17. 4, 7, 9, 21, 27).

For an analysis of the preamble and its relation to *A Middle English Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament*, see Richard Beadle, 'The Origins of Abraham's Preamble in the York Play of *Abraham and Isaac*, in *The Yearbook of English Studies* vol. 11 (1981), 178-87.

³⁶ *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays*, ed. by A.C. Cawley (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1956; reprinted with revisions 1974, last reprinted 1976), p. ix.

³⁷ James A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law* (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 70-76.

³⁸ Pollock and Maitland, II, pp. 197-205.

³⁹ *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, 6 vols (1783) II, pp. 319:22.

⁴⁰ Eileen A. Gooder, *Latin for Local History*, 2nd edn (London: Longman, 1978), pp. 90-91.

⁴¹ *Year Book 21-39 Henry VI* (London: 1679, repr. Abingdon, England: Professional Books, 1981), De Termino Pasche, pl. 11.

⁴² Quotations in this paragraph are from Holdsworth, III, pp. 54-56 (written at the beginning of the twentieth century). Theoretically, the different types of tenure and all their incidents lasted until 1660, (Holdsworth, III, p. 73).

⁴³ *Select Cases in Manorial Courts 1250-1550*, ed. by L.R. Poos and Lloyd Bonfield, vol. 114 (London: Selden Society, 1998) Cases 163 (1405), 202 (1408), 166 (1438) *passim*.

⁴⁴ *Calendar of the Fine Rolls Henry VI 1452-146*, vol. xix (London: HMSO, 1939) pp. 23-25, 42.

⁴⁵ *Calendar of the Fine Rolls Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III, 1471-1485*, vol. xxi (London: HMSO, 1961), p. 306.

⁴⁶ Baker, p. 194.

⁴⁷ Francis Drake, *Eboracum, the History and Antiquities of the City of York*, 2 vols (York: T. Wilson and R. Spence, 1788), I, pp. 268, 270, 272.

⁴⁸ Pollock and Maitland, I, p. 652.

⁴⁹ For examples of marriages between merchant and gentry families see Pamela M. King, 'Corpus Christi Plays and the "Bolton Hours" 1: Tastes in Lay Piety and Patronage in Fifteenth-Century York', in *Medieval English Theatre* 18 (1996), 51, 53.

⁵⁰ 33, 34 Victoria c. 23.

⁵¹ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Henry IV 1405-1408*, 4 vols (London: HMSO, 1907), III, p. 66.

⁵² *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, III, p. 38.

⁵³ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, III, pp. 19, 20.

⁵⁴ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, III, p. 40.

Queen Elizabeth and Essex: A Dutch Rhetoricians' Play

Wim Hüskén¹

Introduction

The oldest history of 's-Gravenpolder, a village located on the island of Zuid-Beveland in the province of Zeeland, dates back to 1315 when Count William III of Holland (1287-1337) ordered that the salt marshes bordering the 'Voistrappe' area in the south-eastern part of the island be enclosed. Hence the name "'s-Gravenpolder', the Count's reclaimed land. Two years later, in 1317, the first harvest was gathered in. Since detailed information as to when people started living in the polder is not available it is uncertain whether the new land was, in its early years, merely used for agricultural reasons or for habitation as well.²

Some time during the sixteenth century a Rhetoricians' Chamber, named *De Fiolieren* or Stock-Gillyflowers, was founded in the village, by then the central habitat of the polder which had been renamed Middel- or Koornpolder. The precise date of the Chamber's foundation is unknown but, according to an archival record, it was re-established in 1596 after having been inactive for many years. From then on its members continued to work as a Rhetoricians' Chamber until 1818. Some time during the 1920s, the town archivist D.A. Poldermans retrieved a large collection of documents belonging to *De Fiolieren* from under a fool's costume in an old milk container previously used as a ballot box. Apart from a few account books and attendance records it contained a relatively large number of plays as well. On an earlier occasion I gave a synopsis of the contents of this remarkable collection.³ Part of this treasure-trove is a play on the execution of Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex, who was beheaded on 25 February 1601, after being found guilty of high treason.

Why would members of a Rhetoricians' Chamber in a little village such as 's-Gravenpolder be interested in this topic? What sources did the author of the play use? And is his account of Essex's affairs and his trial accurate? Before

addressing these questions I shall summarize the play and outline some of the most fascinating events in the earl's short yet turbulent life.

The Play

Two manuscripts of the play survive. The first one – hereinafter 'MS a' – is signed by a certain Michael Michaelis, working under the motto 'Traght naart Beste', Attempt for the Best; this manuscript is dated '1629 April 11'. Whether Michaelis was the author of the play or the scribe who copied the text from an older script is unknown. The second manuscript, 'MS b', also in the archives of the *Fiolieren*, is dated 9 June 1694. This version is signed by a certain 'Adriaen Eeuwoutsen raes'. A reason why neither of the two manuscripts may represent the original text can be found near the end of the play where one of the characters reminds the audience of the long time the Chamber had been inactive. In or shortly after 1601, the year in which Essex was beheaded, this remark would have made sense, but in 1629, more than thirty years after the Chamber's restoration, it would hardly have been meaningful.⁴ So both Raes and Michaelis may be scribes. As for the date of the conjectured original, there are indications that it must have been written after 1603. I shall return to this matter below.

The play opens with a dialogue between two allegorical characters, representatives of evil called Schyn van Recht (Semblance of Justice) and Jaloers Bedryf (Jealous Affair), the former a man, the latter a woman. Their main task in the play consists of seducing other personages by whispering jealous thoughts into their ears, an activity typical for the type of stage-character they represent in Dutch Rhetoricians' drama, the so-called *sinnekens*.⁵ Occasionally they notify the audience about what happens off-stage. In their opening scene they inform one another about the journey Essex has recently made to Ireland in order to suppress the Irish revolt led by Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone:

Hy was deur bevel na Ierlandt gesonden ras.

Jaloers Bedryf

Dats waer, om dat Herry Bagnal schier gesconden was,

Tjaer vyftienhondert tnegentigh en acht.

Schyn van Recht

Teron sloegh vyftien hondert Engelsen met cracht.

Daer waren onder veel capiteyns en officieren.

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Jaloers Bedryf

De reste berghde haer in Arnach en de quartier
En op de sterckte Fagh om behouden tleven. [MS b, fol. 2v]

[He had quickly been ordered to Ireland. *Jealous Affair*: That's true, because Henry Bagenal was unexpectedly killed in the year 1598. *Semblance of Justice*: Tyrone forcefully beat 1500 English, many of them captains and officers. *Jealous Affair*: The rest went into hiding in Armagh and its quarters and at the stronghold of Fagh to save their lives.]

The sympathy of the sinnekens obviously resides with Essex. They describe him as a brave man experienced in matters of warfare (*een man in oorloge ervaren en cloeck*). It was he, they say, who, through his forbearance, brought the war to an end (*met syn gratie doorloge tenden brochte*). Back home, however, he was arrested and at this very moment he is imprisoned in the house of the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. Schyn van Recht observes that Essex looks like bursting with sorrow and anger (*Essex schynt te bersten van rou en spyt*). The sinnekens betray their true character when Jaloers Bedryf remarks that he will make Essex go mad (*Ick, Jaloers Bedryf, sal hem doen dol rasen*) while Schyn van Recht says that they intend to conceal their deeds by giving them a polished outlook (*een bepeerelt schyn*).

In the next scene Essex, *een costelyck man* (a wealthy man) bemoans his state. He realizes that a sham of justice and jealousy have caused him to be in this predicament, thus alluding to the names of the sinnekens as the driving forces behind his opponents' plotting. He has always been loyal to his Queen and he remembers well his success in Cadiz which was his crowning achievement and reflected favourably on her. The sinnekens encourage him to stay put, but Essex feels weak and ill. Meanwhile Elysabeth (Queen Elizabeth) wonders why so many people turn out to be traitors once they carry a sword. Essex in particular has let her down. She asks Baron Bochorst (Thomas Sackville Lord Buckhurst) to find out why Essex decided to turn against his Queen. When she leaves, a number of heads appear from behind the curtain shouting, *Godt bewaer de coninginne*, God save the Queen. In a scene-apart the two sinnekens rejoice in their success: they will see to it that Essex's trial will be a real case of sham justice. In it Menich Advocaet (Many a Lawyer), who represents the law, accuses Essex of having led the army to the southern parts of Ireland rather than to the north. Moreover, he

alleges he has wasted 30,000 guilders, spoken face to face with the earl of Tyrone and, against the Queen's express command, knighted many English soldiers. Since his premature homecoming he has achieved very little or nothing. Menich Advocaet therefore accuses him of 'lese magestates' (*lèse majesté*). Essex tries to justify his behaviour, but the sinnekens, who listen in on this cross-examination, are not convinced. Baron Bochorst is won over, however, and allows the earl to return home, though not to visit the Queen.

Lord Cobham (Henry Brooke Lord Cobham) is not satisfied with the outcome of Essex's trial. In a short monologue he discloses his intention to bring his opponent down, no matter how. Coincidentally Walter Raeleygh (Sir Walter Raleigh) crosses his path, his mood in high spirits. Now our time has come, we shall plant our ideas into the Queen's mind, he boasts (*Nu sullen wy in de coninginne ons verstant saeyen*). Like Darius and Julius Caesar, the earl has finally fallen into disgrace. The sinnekens decide to increase their evil doings by insinuating further jealous thoughts into the ears of Cobham, Cecyl (Sir Robert Cecil) and others:

Cobham, Cecyl en ander syn teghen hem.

Die moeten wy ter dege in d'oor blasen.

[MS a, fol. 7r]

Introducing themselves by their 'surnames', 'Recht' (Justice) and 'Bedryf' (Affair), rather than by their full names, the sinnekens offer their services to Essex, who has reentered the stage in a desperate mood. The earl mistakes them for Recht Bedryf (Honest Affair). They confirm his suspicion regarding his foes; some would indeed want to see him hanged. In addition to that, they tell him that his servant Daniel has secretly sold copies of his letters to his enemies, pretending that they are originals, for the incredible sum of 20,000 guilders.

Southamton (Henry Wriothesley earl of Southampton), is the next person to pay the earl a visit. He reveals that he knows very well what goes on in the minds of Essex's antagonists using terms directly related to the names of the sinnekens:

Uut Jalousie ist dat sy uwen staat benyden.

Duer Schyn van Reght sy de conincken playsant rieden

Om u te stellen vanden hooghen graat besyden.

...

Sy maken haar wys, dat wit swert is.

[MS a, fol. 8r]

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[Out of Jealousy they envy your state, through Semblance of Justice they happily advised the Queen to depose you from your high position . . . They make her believe that white is black.]

The only person who might be able to change the situation is the Queen herself; Southamton therefore advises his friend to try and get access to her.

Regretting what has happened to Essex, Elysabeth delivers a melancholic speech about the reversals of fortune suffered by famous people from antiquity such as Alexander the Great and Hannibal. The sinnekens tell her that Essex is not worth her affection because he is a traitor who would gladly be prepared to serve as an assistant to the Spanish king. When they learn that the Queen wants to hear Essex's side of the story they quickly return to his house to warn him not to accept her invitation because he may risk being arrested. There Essex's secretary proposes to his master that he should storm the court, occupy its gates and main entrances, and present his case to the Queen. Essex himself is thinking of something violent (*iet heftichs*) such as an assault on the City of London. However, no decision is taken as yet.

When Essex does not appear at court, Elysabeth sends for him. Once again the sinnekens advise the earl not to lend his ears to the Queen's demands. Sommich Raetsheer (Many a Councilor) is granted access to Essex but only to be kept prisoner while Essex and his followers march on London. The sinnekens give an 'eyewitness account' of what happens in town during which two shots are fired (*hier schietmen tweemael*). Schyn van Recht reports that Essex was shot through his hat, that one of his servants was killed and that his stepfather, Christopher Blount, was mortally wounded. When Essex eventually has to surrender the sinnekens cry victory.

In the next scene Robbert Cecyl (Robert Cecil), Cobham and Raeleygh reflect on the reasons why Essex attempted this coup. According to Cecyl his revenge evolved out of a jealous affair, reinforced by a semblance of justice. Once more the names of the sinnekens are used to explain the impulses behind the motives of an individual:

Maar uut Jaloers Bedryf syn dees wraken gebloyt,
Daar Schyn van Reght hem in gesterckt heeft.

[MS a, fol. 16r]

The three men end their conversation by making their way to Westminster where Essex will be tried, while at court Elysabeth and Baron Bochorst confer about how to judge him. The Queen tells Bochorst that she has asked Essex's peers to act as his justices. However, nobody will be allowed to defend Essex on penalty of undergoing the same punishment as Captain Lee who was hanged because he dared to speak in the earl's favour.

At the beginning of the trial Essex requests permission to have some of the judges removed from the bench for being prejudiced. Sommich Raetsheer refuses because an equal number of the earl's own friends appear to be present as well. After reminding the court of the Irish disaster, Sommich Raetsheer refers to Essex's roaming through London during that fatal day of the assault on the City, shouting that England had been sold to the Spanish Infanta. Essex retorts that he never intended to do the Queen any harm but that he has three enemies: Robbert Cecyl, Lord Cobham, and Raeleygh. These men in particular would not hesitate to deliver England up to the Spaniards, as Cnollis (Sir Francis Knollys) will be able to confirm. Following the statement delivered by this witness, Sommich Raetsheer pronounces the case to be sufficiently clarified and the peers retreat to judge the case. Shortly after that Baron Bochorst reads out the sentence: Essex and Southamton will both be beheaded on a day and a time to be set by the Queen. In a monologue following the trial, Elysabeth indicates that it is impossible for her to pardon Essex even if he were to request this, but the earl does not seem to have any plans in that direction. The sinnekens, appearing on stage by the end of the Queen's monologue, differ in opinion about what should be done with the two convicted men. Schyn van Recht favours lifelong imprisonment, whereas Jaloers Bedryf prefers to see them beheaded. Asked by his companion where he was during the trial, Jaloers Bedryf informs him that he was in the hearts of the peers. Had it not been for him they would never have sentenced Essex to death. Schyn van Recht for his part sat on the tongues of the lawyers and judges:

[*Schyn van Recht*]

Waar was Jaloers Bedryf met syn perten
Doemen pleyte?

Jaloers Bedryf

Waer?

Schyn van Recht

Ja.

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Jaloers Bedryf

Ick sat binnen inde heeren herten.
Ten ware duer my, sy haddent gelaten.
Waer saet ghy?

Schyn van Recht

Ick sat op de tonghe vande advocaten
En reghters; die voedick al met liste. [MS a, fol. 20r-v]

The next scene is set in the Tower where Essex bewails his ill fortune, and Elysabeth gives voice to her own regrets. The following morning Mr Carew (Sir George Carew) is sent to the Tower to announce that the Queen has decided to change Essex's death penalty to life imprisonment. On hearing him pronounce these words the sinnekens panic. They will do everything they can to prevent this. Subsequently, Sir Edewaert Darie (Edward Darcy)⁶ appears on stage saying that the Queen has ordered Essex's immediate execution. Once more the sinnekens supply the audience with an eyewitness account of the event but this time it is also shown on stage. They notice that the scaffold has been made out of the timber used to support the canons in one of Essex's biggest victories, the battle of Cadiz. Essex prepares to die by saying a last prayer. Another messenger, Jhon Killegruw (John Killigrew), arrives from the court with letters from the Queen, and her ring as an extra token of credibility, to save the earl's life, but he is too late; Essex has just been beheaded. Elated to see their work end in this way the sinnekens sing a merry song. Edewaert Darie and Jhon Killegruw meet each other centre-stage where Darie reports Essex's last minutes in graphic detail to Killegruw. Their tasks completed, the sinnekens decide to retire, particularly as the whole world now hates them. Finally Darie and Killegruw describe Essex's death to the Queen who bursts into tears on hearing the news and leaves the two men behind. In concluding speeches they address the audience reminding all present that pride frequently leads to a downfall when Lady Fortune turns her wheel.

Robert Devereux, earl of Essex (1565-1601)

Robert Devereux was born on 10 November 1565, the third child and first son of Walter Devereux (1539-76), first earl of Essex, and Lady Lettice Knollys († 1634).⁷ Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's second wife, was an aunt of Lady Lettice's

mother, Katherine Carey (1529-69). Hence, Robert's mother was a second cousin to Queen Elizabeth.⁸ Two years after Walter Devereux's death, Lady Lettice remarried, on 21 September 1578, Robert Dudley, the earl of Leicester (1532-88), and he in turn introduced the young earl to court in September 1585. Dudley's first military undertaking followed in December 1585, when as Master of the Horse he joined Leicester to the United Provinces. In reward for his valiant part in the capture of Zutphen, Essex was made knight banneret. By 23 November 1586, he was back home.

Essex became a regular visitor to the Queen, accompanying her on her long rides, talking and playing cards with her until early in the morning. His star rose rapidly, but he also made enemies, Walter Raleigh (c. 1552-1618) and Robert Cecil (1563-1612) in particular. On 18 June 1587 Essex was made Master of the Queen's Horse. When, in the following month, he had a serious argument with the Queen about his sister Dorothy, who had fallen from grace, Essex jumped on his horse and rode to Sandwich with the intention of crossing to the United Provinces to help the Dutch army resist the Spanish siege of Sluys, claiming that 'A beautiful death is better than a disquiet life'.⁹ Moments before he could board the ship he was, by Elizabeth's command, stopped by Robert Carey.¹⁰

In the Spring of 1590 Essex secretly married Frances Walsingham (1567-1632), the widow of Philip Sidney, who had died on 17 October 1586 after receiving a mortal blow in the battle of Zutphen a few weeks earlier. In order to help the Protestant French king, Henry IV (1533-1610), in his struggle against anti-Protestant resistance in Rouen, Essex was sent to Normandy at the head of an army of about 4,000 soldiers. Helped by a number of more experienced warriors than himself, Essex anchored on 3 August 1591 in the port of Dieppe. The enterprise ended in a disaster, as most of Essex's subsequent military exploits would. A further disappointment awaited him back home when he learned that not he but one of his rivals, Lord Buckhurst (1536-1608), had been elected Chancellor of Oxford University.

Fortune smiled again upon Essex after Raleigh had seduced and secretly married one of Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour, Elizabeth Throckmorton. A few months after she had given birth to a son, in March 1592, she and Raleigh were imprisoned in the Tower. Following their release the two were banned from court – Raleigh for about five years, Bess, 'who would prove a domineering wife'¹¹ for the rest of her lifetime. On 25 February 1593, Essex was honoured with a seat on the Privy Council. Further members were, among others, Thomas Sackville Lord Buckhurst, the Lord High Butler of England, William Cobham, the Lord

Warden of the Cinque Ports and Lord Chamberlain, his maternal grandfather Francis Knollys (c. 1514-96) the Treasurer of the Household, and Robert Cecil. The next few years were relatively quiet until, seeing that the Spanish king was, after the disastrous 1588 enterprise, once again preparing for an invincible Armada to invade England, Elizabeth decided, in March 1596, that an English fleet should sail to Spain to prevent Philip II from carrying out his plan. Essex and Charles Howard, Lord Effingham, were appointed its commanders with Raleigh as Rear Admiral. The expedition for Cadiz set out in early June with one of the squadrons consisting of twenty-four ships led by the Dutch Admiral Jan van Duvenvoorde (1547-1610). The expedition was relatively successful, and upon his return to England Essex was welcomed as a hero. The Spaniards, however, refused to give up their attempts to attack England and in the next year another fleet was ready to sail. Eager for a reprise of his former success, Essex offered to strike once more, but this time the journey would end in disaster on a grand scale. An attempt to capture the island of San Miguel in the Azores failed, a Spanish fleet worth £3,500,000 in silver was missed by only three hours, while enemy ships were heading for the English coast. The new Armada was subsequently shipwrecked off the coast of Finisterre in October 1597, however, and by the end of the same year Essex reached the highest position in his career when he was appointed to the post of earl Marshal.

Meanwhile the Irish Lords were stepping up their rebellion against the English. Hugh O'Neill (c. 1550-1616), earl of Tyrone, had become the uncontested leader of the resistance¹² with Ulster as the centre of war. On 14 August 1598, Henry Bagenal, Marshal of the Army, failed to recapture the Yellow Fort at Blackwater, losing his life in the attempt, and what remained of the English army had to retreat to the town of Armagh. On receiving the news of the Irish disaster, Essex persuaded the Queen that a firm hand was needed and that he himself was the only suitable candidate for restoring law and order. Assigned the task of punishing Tyrone, Essex reached Dublin on 15 April 1599 with one of the largest armies ever sent overseas during Elizabeth's reign.¹³ On his arrival he appointed one of his long-standing devotees, Henry Wriothesley (1573-1624), earl of Southampton, as General of the Horse. By doing so he defied the Queen's command which had explicitly forbidden him to use his authority to that end. During the next few months very little progress was made. Disease and massive desertion caused the English army to shrink to about 4,000 men. In early September Essex even attempted to make peace with Tyrone, much to Elizabeth's dissatisfaction, and by the end of the month the earl returned to England without

having achieved anything.

Back in London Essex wished to speak to the Queen at once. He barged into her bedroom without having washed his face or changed his attire and he spoke to her for a few minutes. Later the same day, refreshed and somewhat more presentable, they had a second conversation but it was obvious that Elizabeth was not satisfied with the outcome of Essex's journey. Members of the Privy Council advised her to have him arrested and later in the evening Essex was put under house arrest at York House on the Strand, the residency of Thomas Egerton (c. 1540-1617), Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. Essex fell ill almost instantaneously and, by the end of the year, was near dying. It took him almost half a year to recover. By the Spring of 1600 he was allowed to return home but his house arrest was not terminated and appeals to the Queen proved to be of no avail. On one occasion Essex even sneered, 'shortly they will play me upon the stage'.¹⁴ In the end it was decided that the earl's conduct in Ireland should be assessed at law. From 5 June, the better part of the summer was spent on lengthy interrogations but on 26 August it was the Queen herself who made an end to the trial by deciding to release Essex from imprisonment. He was, however, still not permitted to return to court.

By the beginning of 1601 Essex, for whatever reason, had become more and more convinced there was a plot to remove Queen Elizabeth from the throne, which would mean a victory for his life-long opponents, Cecil, Raleigh, Cobham, and Buckhurst in particular. On 3 February he assembled an elite gathering of supporters at his house on the Strand to consider possible solutions, by which time there were rumours that Essex himself would be assassinated. On Sunday 8 February, the earl and his followers waged an assault on the City, the Tower, and the court. Within hours it was clear that the inhabitants of London did not support this rebellion and that Essex and his men were outnumbered by those who claimed to defend the Queen's honour. Back home at Essex House, the former residence of the earl of Leicester,¹⁵ the earl was besieged by troops of the Lord Admiral, Charles Howard, and about ten o'clock in the evening Essex and his men surrendered. The earl was brought to Lambeth Palace and from there, at the crack of dawn of the following day, to the Tower. On 19 February he and some of his fellow-conspirators – among them the earl of Southampton and Essex's step-father Christopher Blount (c. 1556-1601) – were tried. Six days later, on 25 February, Essex was beheaded. Southampton was sentenced to death too, but the Queen decided to commute his sentence to life imprisonment. Two years later, after James I had ascended the throne, he was released from prison.

Accuracy of the Play

The author of the play from 's-Gravenpolder supplies his audience with many details of the events leading up to Essex's eventual death, some closer to the official version than others.

In their first dialogue the sinnekens refer to the earl's Irish adventure. According to them, fifteen-hundred English were killed in 1598 in the battle of the Yellow Fort at Blackwater between Henry Bagenal – who lost his life at the event – and Hugh O'Neill, the earl of Tyrone. Those who managed to save their lives allegedly retreated to Armagh and the neighbouring stronghold of Fagh (*de sterckte Fagh*). Henry's half-brother Samuel prevented the Irish of gaining an even bigger victory. Present day estimates of how many men actually lost their lives vary between 830 and 2000.¹⁶ Hence with his estimate of 1500 men killed the author of the play was not very far off the mark. His observation that it was Samuel Bagenal who prevented the English from having to stomach an even bigger disaster than suffered on 14 August is also very much to the point. A stronghold called *Fagh* seems, however, to be unknown. The amount of money wasted by Essex on this Irish campaign is estimated by the author of the play at 30,000 guilders. Although the total funds spent on this journey were many times larger than that, Essex's private income must have come close to the amount mentioned. His Irish army, excluding those civil servants not actively involved in the war, cost the English state £277,782.15s; the earl himself was paid £10 per day.¹⁷ In various documents, among them Camden's *History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth*, the costs of Essex's Irish adventure is set at £30,000.¹⁸

On the morning of the assault on the City of London, the playwright has Sommich Raetsheer knock at Essex's door to order him to report to court. Did the author of the play know the names of the four deputies of the Privy Council – Thomas Egerton, the earl of Worcester, John Popham, and Essex's uncle William Knollys – who came to summon the earl in the early morning of 8 February 1601? The name Sommich Raetsheer does hint at a plural concept but it will have been for practical reasons that the author decided to introduce an allegorical character representing the four delegates in one person.

Essex and Southampton are regarded as the two highest noblemen involved in the rebellion. The list of offenders was, however, much longer: six, including Essex, eventually lost their lives, Charles Danvers and Christopher Blount being the most prominent amongst them. It is noteworthy in this respect that the author

of the play has the Queen inquire with Baron Bochorst whether 'Capiteyn Lee' (Captain Lea), one of Essex's men in Ireland, has already been executed. According to the author of the play the reason for his conviction was, . . . *omdat hy voor Essex te spreken hadde begonnen. / Dies hy tegen my en het ryck hem hadde vertast* . . . (. . . because he had embarked upon speaking in Essex's favour. Thus he affronted me and the State . . .). In fact Captain Lea's crime was much more serious than just speaking in the earl's favour; Robert Cecil described it in a letter to George Carew as follows:

Captain Thomas Lee, one of the earl of Essex's Irish Captains, has been seized in the palace, and being examined confesseth that he had an intention to have taken the Queen at supper time when she was at supper, and there to have locked the doors, pinning her up till he had forced her to sign a warrant for the earl's delivery out of the Tower. This vile purpose he had already broken to Sir Henry Neville and Sir Robert Cross who discovered it.¹⁹

Essex had many friends at court but perhaps even more enemies who, according to the playwright, included Lord Cobham, Walter Raeleygh, and Robbert Cecyl in particular. On the morning of the attack on London, Southamton and the earl's 'Secretaris' (Secretary) confront Sommich Raetsheer with the rumours they have heard regarding the plans of Essex's adversaries. A striking aspect of the play is the fact that the author does not mention this secretary, Henry Cuffe, by name even though he would play an essential role on the day of the rebellion, 'a Mephistopheles to Essex's Faust'.²⁰

Southamton

Hoe na soudt ghy garen verraden hem
En quansys hier comt om tstick vermooyen!
Wy kennen wel Cobhams flicke flooyen
En Walter Raleych met syn mede plichters.

Den Secretaris

Men hoort te rabraken sulcke onvrede stichters
Die hare magesteyt met alle quade aast
En Robbert Cecil die in haar alle schade blaast.
Ick hope sy sullen noch hals en beenen breken! [MS a, fol. 14r.]

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[*Southampton*: How much would you like to betray him, coming here pretending to garnish things! We know well Cobham's cajoling, Walter Raleigh's and his conspirators. *The Secretary*: One ought to break such mischief-makers who feed her majesty with all kind of evil and Robert Cecil who blows all those delusions into her ears. I hope they will break their necks and legs anon!]

Eye-witness accounts of the events testify that Cobham and Raleigh in particular were seen as the main schemers, Cecil mainly stayed in the background. William Masham, an occasional servant at Essex House, stated in his declaration before Lord Buckhurst that, early that morning, he had run into Pettingale,

. . . a servant of Lady Essex, who told me that Cobham and Raleigh would have murdered my Lord that night . . . [M]y Lord himself came forth, and . . . he told the people that he acted for the good of the Queen, city, and crown, which certain atheists, meaning Raleigh, had betrayed to the Infanta of Spain.²¹

Masham himself was arrested on the day and fined £100 before being released on 14 June. A similar statement incriminating Cobham and Raleigh was made by a certain Fra[nci]s Smith.²² The earl had indeed reasons to suspect an attempt on his life. On the very day of the assault on the city of London one of Essex's secretaries, William Temple, wrote a letter to goldsmith Edward Westword, telling how

. . . my Lord of Essex was informed that there were lying here in the city Jesuits who had conspired his Lordship's death; and yesterday night late, his Lordship received intelligence from the court, that if he stirred out of Essex House he should be murdered.²³

The trial in which Robert Devereux was found guilty of high treason took place on 19 February, 1601. In all likelihood, the author of the play from 's-Gravenpolder consulted one of the accounts of the proceedings of the day. The scene in which Essex and Southampton, one of the accomplices in the assault, are

interrogated by Baron Bochorst, Menich Advocaet, Robbert Cecyl, Lord Cobham, and Walter Raeleygh, closely follows the report published by Camden. In some cases, however, the author of the play has certain characters make statements which were in fact made by others. Southamton, for example, remarks:

En Robbert, den secretaris, voordert met Spayngen
Den sorghelycken pays, daar hy by achte,
Dat den tytel vande Infante, van maghte,
Tot de croone van Engelants oprecht
Soo goet haar achte, heeft hy geseght,
Als iemant anders by comparatie. [MS a, fol. 18r]

[And Robert [Cecil], the secretary, is favouring the precarious peace with Spain, and he holds the opinion that the title of Infanta, by nature, honestly makes her qualified to anyone else for that matter to wear the crown of England.]

The wording of this statement almost literally echoes Camden's account, except that according to Camden it was not Southamton who uttered these words but Essex: 'Essex added, that he understood that Secretary *Cecyl* had said to one of the Councill, that the Title of the *Infanta* of *Spain* to the Crown of *England* was as good as any other of the Cempetitours whosoever.'²⁴ The continuation of this part of the interrogation in the play and in Camden parallel one another step by step: Robert Cecil, hearing these allegations, falls to his knees begging Essex and Southamton to name the man who made this allegation, upon which Southamton (in the play it is Essex who does this) names Essex's father-in-law, Sir William Knollys. Brought in as a special witness, Knollys confirms that it was a certain R. Doleman, pseudonym of Robert Parsons (1546-1610), who, in 1594, had published, *A conference about the next succession to the crowne of Inland*, in which the Spanish Infanta was mentioned as a suitable successor to the English Queen. Cecil replied, 'Is it not a strange impudence in that Doleman to give as equal right in the succession of the Crown to the Infanta of Spain as any other?'²⁵ In the play, Cnollis indicates clearly that Cecyl thought Doleman's ideas to be a disgrace for the Crown and the English nation (. . . *twelck den secretaris sprack schande te wesen / Voor de croone en staat van Engelant*), thus making it possible to relieve him of any further suspicion.

After Elizabeth had signed the order for the earl's execution, she twice

changed her mind and reversed orders. On 24 February, 'she sent her Command by Sir *Ed. Cary* that he should not be executed . . . shortly after [that] she sent a fresh Command by *Darcy*, that he should be put to Death'.²⁶ The author of the play has the Queen change her mind even a third time by sending a certain Jhon Killegruw to the Tower to stop the earl's execution. Killegruw informs the audience that Elysabeth gave him her ring to add credibility to his directives and as a token of her sincerity: 'Haren rynck gaf sy my tot teeken hier inne'. Although there is no evidence of a third envoy being sent on Elizabeth's behalf, this story may have been added to the play in order to make reference to a popular anecdote, spread by rumour shortly after Essex's death. Lytton Strachey, noting that his readers should regard this story as 'a sentimental novelette' rather than an historical account, summarizes it as follows:

Afterwards a romantic story was told, which made the final catastrophe the consequence of a dramatic mishap. The tale is well known: how, in happier days, the Queen gave the earl a ring, with the promise that, whenever he sent it back to her, it would always bring forgiveness; how Essex, leaning from a window in the Tower, entrusted the ring to a boy, bidding him take it to Lady Scrope, and beg her to present it to her Majesty; how the boy, in mistake, gave the ring to Lady Scrope's sister, Lady Nottingham, the wife of the earl's enemy; how Lady Nottingham kept it, and said nothing, until, on her deathbed two years later, she confessed all to the Queen, who, with the exclamation 'God may forgive you, Madam, but I never can!' brought down the curtain on the tragedy.²⁷

The reference to the ring by this Jhon Killegruw shows an inversion of details such as occur elsewhere in the play, because it was, according to the story, not the Queen who gave the ring to one of her servants but Essex who sent it to Elizabeth. However, if the reference in the play to the ring relates to this particular anecdote, then it gives us a *terminus post quem* for the play's composition. Lady Nottingham died in 1603, and the story of the ring would clearly have been unknown before her death, so the play cannot have been written until at least two years after Essex's revolt.

Essex and the Low Countries

The overriding question remains why the inhabitants of a small village in the Low Countries, 's-Gravenpolder, should display such a particular interest in the fate of an English nobleman. In 1586, Robert Devereux created a deep impression on the Dutch when he accompanied his stepfather, the earl of Leicester, on his sojourn in the Low Countries. It was, according to Paul Hammer in his recent monograph on Essex's political career, during this year that the earl's military and political paths were shaped.²⁸ Barely twenty years of age, this short stay was, however, not the sole reason for Essex's subsequent popularity, even though he attracted a lot of attention in the crowds as a highly skilled participant of various jousting events.

A much more important factor in the Dutch appreciation of Essex's political position would have been his influential view that direct English involvement in the Low Countries was beneficial to the Dutch and the English nations alike. In December 1594, the earl wrote to Prince Maurice of Nassau, 'there is nothing more connected with the welfare of England than the prosperity of the United Provinces'.²⁹ Eventually he would become the most important spokesman for Dutch affairs across the Channel.³⁰ Moreover, since Essex was seen as the 'leader of the Puritans' in England – in March 1602 he was posthumously identified as such in a document sent by the English priest Thomas Bluet to the Cardinals of Borghese and Aragon – this made him even more qualified to being the ideal ally for the Dutch.³¹ Indeed, the earl became known as 'the leading advocate of the overseas Protestant cause in English politics',³² and because he was also not anti-Catholic, acceptable to Dutch Calvinists and moderate Italian Roman-Catholics alike.³³ In some respects Essex's position replicated that of William of Orange (1533-84), the assassinated leader of the Dutch revolt. Essex had started promoting himself as a religiously inspired politician by the end of 1591, after the campaign in France where he had tried to help Henri IV fight anti-Protestant resistance.

News about the earl's revolt and his subsequent death must have spread around the country like wildfire. To the tune of 'Welladay', people would sing *A Lamentable Ditty composed upon the Death of Robert Lord Devereux, late earl of Essex, who was beheaded in the Tower of London, on Ashwenesday in the morning, 1600*. In the Low Countries information about what had happened in London was available almost instantaneously. On 10 February 1601, Robert Cecil wrote a letter to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland as well as to the English officers in

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the Low Countries about Essex's assault on the city of London.³⁴

Dutch public interest in the earl's affairs had increased during the last years of the century, witnessed by a number of publications relating to his various enterprises. In 1599, an English pamphlet on his voyage to Ireland, including a description of the nature of the Irish people and how they started their rebellion, was immediately translated into Dutch as *Warachtighe Tijdinghe ende corte beschrijvinghe van Yrlant . . . Met een verhael wat de Yrische voor een volc is, hoe sy . . . haer in rebellicheyt stellen . . . waer door hare Majesteyt bedwongen is geweest den Grave van Essex met een groote armade derwaerts te senden. Tot Londen by Christoffel Barker . . . ende nu by Cornelis Claessz tot Amsterdam, 1599*.³⁵ An *Apology*, written in 1598 and published in 1603, in which Essex defended himself against those who accused him of being 'the hindere of the peace and quiet of his country', was also translated into Dutch. In the latter case there is even a direct link with the province of Zeeland in that the Dutch version of this document was translated and published by a printer in Middelburg, Caspar Coolhaes: *Apologie oft verantwoordinge vanden Grave van Essex, teghen de ghene die hem jaloerselick ende ten onrechten schelden als beletter des vredes ende ruste zijnes vaderlands*.³⁶ The story of Essex's execution was made public in yet another Dutch text, available shortly after the tragic events had taken place in a pamphlet entitled *De executie van Robert, grave van Essex, inde Tower oft casteel*, 1601.³⁷

It will not be easy to find documents describing the history of Essex's life and death containing similarities that are striking enough to identify them as direct sources for the Dutch play. In England many accounts circulated of the events of February 1601, both in writing and in oral form, and, no doubt, the same will have been the case on the continent of Europe. The only safe conjecture is that the author of the play had access to a detailed account of Essex's trial and his subsequent execution and death. After years the story of Essex and his relationship with the Queen held its appeal to authors, and historians, playwrights and composers of operas retold the story of his revolt. In their own way the two manuscripts from 's-Gravenpolder also attest to the story's abiding place in the popular imagination.

NOTES

¹ Dr Paul Hammer of the University of Adelaide, Australia, kindly read an earlier version of this essay. He made a number of very helpful suggestions for improvement, for which I am very grateful.

² Information regarding 's-Gravenpolder's oldest history has kindly been supplied by the staff of Heinkenszand's City Archives in which the records of 's-Gravenpolder are now kept. Very little is known about Voirtrappe. Onomastic data suggest that it was once a settlement but it must have ceased to function as such long before the middle of the sixteenth century.

³ Cf. Wim Hüsken, 'Between Evil and Temptation: 'Sinnekens' in Rhetoricians' Drama from 's-Gravenpolder', *Dutch Crossing* 20 (1996), 128-47.

⁴ Should the similarities, noted below, between the play and William Camden's *Annales rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum, regnante Elizabetha*, a book printed in Leyden in 1625, be more than accidental then our conjectures regarding year of origin of the play and Michaelis's authorship would have to be revised.

⁵ There are certain points of resemblance between 'Sinnekens' and the Vice in English morality plays. See Peter Happé and Wim Hüsken, 'Sinnekens and the Vice: Prolegomena', *Comparative Drama* 29 (1995), 248-69.

⁶ Edward Darcy was one of the 'Groomes of her Majesty's Privy Chamber' who held letters patent from the Queen for a private monopoly to import playing cards from overseas or have them manufactured in England. See *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, ed. by J.R. Dasent, new series 31 (London: Stationery Office, 1907), pp. 55-56.

⁷ Most information regarding Robert Devereux, earl of Essex, has been derived from G.B. Harrison, *The Life and Death of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex* (London: Cassell & Co., 1937); Robert Lacey, *Robert Earl of Essex: An Elizabethan Icarus* (Trowbridge: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972); Alison Weir, *Elizabeth the Queen* (London: Jonathon Cape, 1998); and Paul E. J. Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585-1597* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁸ Harrison, *Life and Death of Robert Devereux*, p. 1, calls Lady Lettice a cousin of Ann Boleyn, while Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, p. 33, thinks that Robert's mother was a cousin of Elizabeth. Table 2, 'The Boleyn and Howard Connection', in Weir, *Elizabeth the Queen*, p. 513, shows that both are wrong. Katherine Carey, Lady Lettice's mother, was Elizabeth's cousin and a niece of Ann Boleyn. Only Lacey, *Robert Earl of Essex*, p. 15, is therefore correct in calling Robert's mother, Lady Lettice, a second cousin to the Queen.

⁹ Quoted by Weir, *Elizabeth the Queen*, p. 387.

¹⁰ See Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, p. 62.

¹¹ Weir, *Elizabeth the Queen*, p. 413.

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¹² See for the early years of the Irish wars Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion: The Outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland* (Woodbridge: Boydell, for the Royal Historical Society, 1993).

¹³ Weir, *Elizabeth the Queen*, p. 439.

¹⁴ Harrison, *Life and Death of Robert Devereux*, p. 261.

¹⁵ See Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, p. 131.

¹⁶ Steven G. Ellis, *Ireland in the Age of the Tudors, 1447-1603: English Expansion and the End of Gaelic Rule*, (London & New York: Longman, 1998), p. 345, claims that 830 were killed, 400 wounded and 300 defected to the enemy. Harrison, *Life and Death of Robert Devereux*, p. 204, and Lacey, *Robert Earl of Essex*, p. 216, believe 2000 were lost. The same figure is given by Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I: War and Politics, 1588-1603* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 410, and by G.A. Hayes-McCoy in *A New History of Ireland*, ed. by T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), III: *Early Modern Ireland, 1534-1691*, p. 124.

¹⁷ See John McGurk, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: The 1590 Crisis* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 200-03 and Table 16.

¹⁸ William Camden, *The History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth, Late Queen of England* (London: Benjamin Fisher, 1675), pp. 613-14. Camden wrote his *Annales* between 1608 and 1617; a complete edition of the Latin text was printed for the first time in Leyden as *Annales rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum, regnante Elizabetha* (Lugdunum Batavorum, Ex officina Elzeviriana, 1625). Camden had invited the French historian Pierre Dupuy (1582-1651) to act as trustee for his manuscript, fearing that it would eventually disappear if it were not printed soon. The London edition of the Latin original of the complete work dates back to 1627; the first English translation was published in 1630. See William Camden, *The Historie of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princesse Elizabeth, late Queen of England: Selected Chapters*, ed. by Wallace T. MacCaffrey (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970) XXIV, and Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Queen Elizabeth's First Historian: William Camden and the Beginnings of English 'Civil History'* (London: Cape, 1971).

¹⁹ Cf. *Letters from Sir Robert Cecil to Sir George Carew*, ed. by John Maclean (London: Camden Society LXXXVIII, 1864), pp. 72-73. Quoted from G.B. Harrison, *The Elizabethan Journals, Being a Record of Those Things Most Talked of During the Years 1591-1603* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1928, reprinted 1938 and 1955), pt. III, p. 151.

²⁰ Lacey, *Robert Earl of Essex*, p. 109.

²¹ See *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1598-1601*, London, 1869, p. 547.

²² *Ibid*, p. 549.

²³ Ibid, p. 545. The *Calendar State Papers* identifies the earl's secretary as *Edward Temple* but the examination, on 1 July 1601, of a certain *W[illia]m Temple* regarding allegations accusing Jesuits priests planning to murder Essex makes it clear that his first name was William. See *Calendar of State Papers, 1601-1603*, London, 1870, p. 61.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 617.

²⁵ Harrison, *Life and Death of Robert Devereux*, p. 309.

²⁶ Camden, *History of The most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth*, p. 622.

²⁷ Lytton Strachey, *Elizabeth and Essex: A Tragic History*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928), p. 259.

²⁸ See Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, p. 38

²⁹ Ibid, p. 128.

³⁰ In private correspondence with the author (5 March 2000), Paul Hammer writes: 'In 1598, Essex was instrumental in preventing Elizabeth from emulating Henri IV and making a separate peace with Spain, which would have left the Dutch vulnerable and alone (as explained in his *Apology*). This cost him a great deal of his political credit with Elizabeth and left him very exposed when he went to Ireland in 1599.'

³¹ See *Calendar of State Papers, 1601-1603*, London, 1870, p. 170.

³² See Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, p. 107.

³³ Ibid, p. 178.

³⁴ See *Calendar of State Papers, 1598-1601*, London, 1869, p. 547.

³⁵ See W.P.C. Knuttel, *Catalogus van de pamfletten-verzameling berustende in de Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1486-1853*, ('s-Gravenhage: Algemeene landsdrukkerij, 1889-1919, reprinted Utrecht: HES Publishers, 1978) 9 vols., vol. I, n° 1091. The English pamphlet has so far not been identified.

³⁶ Ibid, n° 1213.

³⁷ See H.C. Rogge, *Beschrijvende catalogus der pamfletten-verzameling van de boekerij der Remonstrantsche kerk te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 1862-1865) II,2,1. Place of publication and name of publisher are unknown. Unfortunately I have not been able to consult this booklet.

The Rehabilitation of Margery Kempe

Stanley Hussey

In 1934 occurred one of those accidental discoveries which both enrich and complicate medieval studies. A fifteenth-century manuscript, in the possession of a northern catholic family, the Butler-Bowdens, came to light. It was identified by Hope Emily Allen as *The Book of Margery Kempe* (the manuscript is untitled) and a note on the binding leaf, in a fifteenth-century hand, reads *Liber Montis Gracie*, 'This boke is of Mountegrace', that is of the Carthusian monastery of Mount Grace in North Yorkshire. Hitherto Margery Kempe had been known only through Wynkyn de Worde's pamphlet (c. 1501) entitled 'A shorte treatyse of contemplacyon taught by oure Lorde Ihesu Cryste, or taken out of the boke of Margerie Kempe of Lynn'. That was a considerable and, as soon appeared, a deliberate and curious abridgement ('taken out') of the original. As Sue-Ellen Holbrook says:

In sum, the extractor has searched for passages that commend the patient, invisible toleration of scorn and the private, inaudible, mental practice of good will in meditation rather than the public or physical acts or sensory signs of communion with God and has left behind all that is radical, enthusiastic, feminist, particular, potentially heretical and historical.¹

Misrepresentation was compounded when in 1521 Henry Pepwell reprinted these extracts in an anthology of mystical pieces and described their author as a 'deuoute ancre', as if she had been another Julian of Norwich.

Colonel Butler-Bowden produced his own translation of the *Book* in 1936, and the Early English Text Society edition by S.B. Meech and H.E. Allen was published in 1940.² In 1950 the unique manuscript was acquired by the British Library where it is now MS Additional 61823. In this essay I quote from the recent edition by Barry Windeatt, which follows his very readable Penguin translation of 1985.³ Reference is

to line (Windeatt numbers throughout), but for the longer quotations I also give chapter number so that they can be followed in Meech and Allen.

I

At its first appearance, and indeed in several discussions since, the *Book* was celebrated as 'the first autobiography in English'. Yet three criteria by which we might try to define autobiography are not present, or at least not fully demonstrated, in this work. This account is not the whole of her life, nor is it always chronological in its approach. It tells little of the times in which she lived or the lands she visited. She has practically nothing to say about Compostela, for instance, simply four lines covering her stay of fourteen days, and very little about Rome. Her book seems overwhelmingly concerned with her own preoccupations and the people she met (and the one reflects the other). And, more important, it may well not have been all her own work. The second and longer of the two Prologues (although it appears first in the manuscript) opens:

Here begynnyth a schort tretys and a comfortabyll for synful
wrecchys, wherin thei may have gret solas and comfort to hem and
undyrstondyn the hy and unspecabyll mercy of ower sovereyn
Savyowr Cryst Jhesu, whos name be worschepd and magnyfyed
wythowten ende, that now in ower days to us unworthy deyneth to
exercysen hys nobeley and hys goodnesse. Alle the werkys of ower
Saviowr ben for ower exampyl and instruccyon, and what grace
that he werkylth in any creatur is ower profyth, yf lak of charyte be
not ower hynderawnce.

And therfor, be the leve of ower merciful Lord Cryst Jhesu,
to the magnyfyng of hys holy name, Jhesu, this lytyl tretys schal
tretyn sumdeel in parcel of hys wonderful werkys, how mercyfully,
how benyngly, and how charytefully he meved and stered a synful
caytyf unto hys love, wech synful caytyf many yerys was in wyl
and in purpose, thorw steryng of the Holy Gost, to folwyn oure
Savyowr.

Not an autobiography, you notice, but 'a schort tretys and a comfortabyll', i.e. comforting, 'for synful wrecchys', almost a moral work. But we can't take it like that,

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for its heroine is too much of an individual for most readers to make the considerable leap of faith to believe that much of what she experienced might directly help them.

Although her father John Brunham, a substantial citizen of King's Lynn, is mentioned later on (there is nothing about her mother), Margery's story begins, not with her birth, or even with her childhood, but with her marriage to John Kempe, probably in 1393, when she would have been about twenty. And not really with her marriage, but with her first pregnancy, a difficult pregnancy, and the near-fatal sickness she suffered as a result. It was in this sickness that she had her first vision of Christ Jesus, who came to her

in lyknesse of a man, most semly, most bewtyvows, and most amyable that evyr mygth be seen wyth mannys eye, clad in a mantyl of purpyl sylke, syttyng upon hir beddys syde, lokyng upon hir wyth so blyssyd a chere that sche was strengthyd in alle hir spyritys, seyde to hir thes wordys:

'Dowtyr, why hast thou forsakyn me, and I forsoke nevyr the?' And anon, as he had seyde thes wordys, sche saw veryly how the eyr openyd as brygth as ony levyn, and he stey up into the eyr, not rygth hastyli and qwykly, but fayr and esly, that sche mygth wel beholdyn hym in the eyr tyl it was closyd ageyn. (227-36, ch. 1)

After this she makes a miraculous recovery. It is a curious parallel – but one not really worth pursuing since the two women's characters and the results of their visions are so different – with the case of Julian of Norwich who in 1373 (the probable year of Margery's birth) received her revelations when she, and her friends and family as well, thought she was about to die. St Bridget of Sweden, too, dates her visions from shortly after the death of her husband in 1344.

Margery had fourteen children, but only one is mentioned, the renegade son who, through her prayers, eventually reforms and who finally comes back to Lynn with his German wife. When he dies, about a month after, she accompanies her daughter-in-law to Ipswich with the intention of returning home after seeing her safely embarked back to Germany, but ends up sailing with her and making her final pilgrimage abroad to Danzig and back home via Aachen (probably between April 1433 and mid 1434); this is related in the much shorter second book. It was not an easy journey – she was now sixty – and on her return to Lynn she was reprimanded for going by her confessor who was only mollified by the intervention of our Lord. We hear nothing about the other children (except for Christ's passing reference, 7142), not

even whether they all reached adulthood. The early chapters of Book I make some attempt at order and method: 'as schal be seyde aftyr' (323), 'as schal be wretyn aftyr' (366). In chapter 15 Christ tells Margery that she will go on pilgrimage to Rome, Jerusalem and Santiago two years before she actually goes (1411 for 1413). Almost one-third of Book I, in fact, takes place before she sets off on her pilgrimages abroad at the age of forty. Some of these early English pilgrimages were made with her husband, the long-suffering John Kempe. By chapter 25, however, similarity of subject-matter occasionally takes precedence over chronology:

Ferthermore her folwyth a rygth notabyll matere of the creaturys
felyng, and it is wretyn her for convenyens, in-as-mech as it is in
felyng leche to the materys that ben wretyn befor,
notwythstondyng it befel long aftyr the materys wech folwyn.

(1878-81, ch. 25)

After she returns from her pilgrimages, both at home and abroad, chronology flies out at the window: 'for thow the mater be wretyn befor this, nevyrthesse it fel aftyr this.' (5544-5, ch. 67). But, even earlier, comes the disarming close to chapter 16: 'Rede fyrst the xxi chapetre, and than this chapetre aftyr that.' (1206-7), and a number of casual introductions – 'One day long before this time', 'another day', 'another time', 'soon after' – are of only limited help.

II

Whose, though, is this *Book*? Is it true autobiography, only biography, or, as we might say today, 'ghosted'? It is usually held that Margery was illiterate, although there is one reference to her reading ('whethyr thu redist or herist redyng', 7342). She was certainly *read to*, by a number of people. She can quote scripture and argue about its true meaning, once getting the better of clerics over a particularly dangerous text, *Crescite et multiplicamini* (4011)⁴ and in chapter 53 countering the common Pauline and antifeminist objection

As-swythe a gret clerke browt forth a boke and leyde Seynt Powyl
for hys party ageyns hir, that no woman schulde prechyn. Sche,
answeryng therto, seyde:

'I preche not, ser; I come in no pulpytt. I use but

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comownycacyon and good wordys, and that will I do whil I
leve. (4210-14)

She tells the Steward of Leicester that she has no Latin (ch. 47) but in chapter 6 of Book II quotes the Psalter in Latin. This latter reference, however, may be an addition by her priest-scribe whose contribution we must now investigate.

Here we are dependent upon the two prologues to the *Book*, both dated 1436 although the shorter of the two (which comes second) in fact precedes the longer version which is an expansion of it. Despite the advice she is given, and even an offer to write the account for her, Margery waits twenty years after the events before deciding to commit them to writing:

For it was xx yer and mor fro tym this creatur had forsake the
world and besyly clef onto ower Lord or this boke was wretyn,
notwythstondyng this creatur had greet counsel for to don wryten
hir tribulacyons and hir felingys, and a Whyte Frer proferyd hir to
wryten frely, yf sche wold. And sche was warnyd in hyr spyrit that
sche schuld not wryte so sone. (158-63, Short Prologue)

This long interval would in itself account for some of the disturbed chronology previously mentioned. The attempt to reduce disorder to some kind of order must be the responsibility of the amanuensis. The *Book of Margery Kempe*, then, is in some sense not 'my story' but 'her story', the story of 'this creature', as Margery regularly calls herself. The two prologues (whose significance has been best studied in a closely-reasoned article by Sue-Ellen Holbrook), together with the end of the final chapter of Book I and the beginning of the first of Book II, provide us with at least some pieces of the jigsaw.⁵ Margery's first choice of amanuensis was an Englishman who came back from 'Dewchlond' and stayed with her 'tyl he had wretyn as mech as sche wold tellyn hym for the tym that thei wer togydder' (93-96). Since this man had a wife and a child and also 'good knowlach of this creatur and of hir desyr' (92), it has been suggested that he was the errant but now reformed son – 'and sythen he deyed' (96), as did her son. But since the son fell ill on the day after coming home and died a month later, this would hardly give enough time to write very much of the *Book*, and, in any case, one would suppose his English to be better than is stated at the end of Book I: 'And thow that he wrot not clerly ne opynly to owr maner of spekyng, he in hys maner of wrytyng and spellyng mad trewe sentens' (7418-20). Her second choice was a priest who was responsible for deferring the project for a further four years,

partly through his inability to read what had been written but probably also through fear of becoming too closely involved with someone so suspect. So he sent her on to another man who, despite his greater familiarity with the dialect of the original version, and despite having been paid in advance by Margery, was in his turn soon defeated:

And this good man wrot abowt a leef, and yet it was lytyl to the
purpose, for he coud not wel fare therwyth, the boke was so evel
sett and so unreasonably wretyn. (120-22, Long Prologue)

But the priest has a conscience, so he persuades Margery to get the book back, and, second time round, despite the devil's attempt to wreck his eyesight, things go much better, as he tells us in the Prologue. He completed Book I in 1436 and added Book II in 1438.

Hirsh argued that this unnamed priest (perhaps to be identified with her confessor, Robert Spryngolde) deliberately sets Margery's reminiscences in a more general, and sometimes a more literary context, that he and not she is responsible for *The Book of Margery Kempe*.⁶ In general terms this must be true, and on one occasion when God, following Margery's prayers, restores the wits of a woman who suffered from severe post-natal illness (as Margery herself had), the priest gives an eye-witness account:

It was, as hem thowt that knewyn it, a ryth gret myrakyl, for he
that wrot this boke had nevyr befor that tyme sey man ne woman,
as hym thowt, so fer owt of himself as this woman was, ne so evyl
to rewlyn ne governyn, and sithyn he sey hir sad and sobyr anow –
worschip and preysyng be to owr Lord wythowtyn ende for hys hy
mercy and hys goodnes, that evyr helpith at nede.

(6001-06, ch. 75)

Margery, unlike Catherine of Siena, did not give rise to a cult 'to press her claims and to maintain her memory'.⁷ There is no *famiglia*, as with St Bridget, and no ready named confessor to write the contemporary account which eventually forms the basis for canonisation. She makes do, as best she can, with telling it all to a single priest, not even like it was, but like it *had been*, twenty years before. Unlike Julian, she seems not to have much reflected, during the long interval, on the deeper spiritual meaning of the events. I agree with Holbrook, however, that this is in a very real

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sense, Margery's own book, that the scribe is more mediator than interventionist, that she decided to write it at what she believed was the proper time and that she keeps control of it:

The preste, trustyng in hire prayers, began to redyn this booke, and it was mych mor esy, as hym thowt, than it was beforntym. And so he red it ovyr befor this creatur every word, sche sumtym helpyng where ony difficulte was.

Thys boke is not wretyn in ordyr, every thyng aftyr other as it wer don, but lych as the mater cam to the creatur in mend whan it schuld be wretyn, for it was so long er it was wretyn that sche had forgetyn the tyme and the ordyr whan thyngys befellyn. And therfor sche dede no thing wryten but that sche knew rygth wel for very trewth.

(130-39, Long Prologue)

Not surprisingly, some criticism has recently gone further. Lynn Staley comments that the *Book* is a 'disturbing and difficult reading experience' (agreed), but argues that it was designed as such: 'Kempe does not directly address the reader but addresses the reader through the scribe' (again true, at least in part). But for Staley, beyond this, there is 'Margery' and there is 'Kempe':

. . . although Kempe uses autobiographical apparatus to shape an account of Margery as a representative type, she uses those details as a screen for an analysis of communal values and practices.

It is Kempe who fashions Margery's biography since

the world Margery flees is the world in which Kempe lives, where success is valued as highly as failure is scorned.⁸

So the *Book* is really a fiction, exploring the subject of secular and spiritual authority in relation to a single individual. I remain unconvinced: to me Margery the manipulator is an unbelievable figure and the structure of her *Book* (in so far as it has one) is simply too episodic, as Staley admits elsewhere.⁹ Surely criticism has moved on from the schizophrenic Chaucer and Langland, yet here is thoroughly modern Margery (sorry, 'Kempe') being, we are led to believe, even more sensitive and cunning than her medieval predecessors.

III

The *Book*, then, was first perceived as autobiography, although, as we have seen, the term needs considerable qualification in Margery's case. But as other fourteenth- and fifteenth-century mystical writers were gradually edited or modernised (sometimes both), it was legitimate to ask what kind of a mystic (if mystic at all) Margery was in comparison. For R.W. Chambers, in his Introduction to the Butler-Bowden modernization, she is 'a difficult and morbid religious enthusiast'.¹⁰ She was too emotional for Dom. David Knowles when compared with the austerity of the *Cloud* author, or even Hilton.¹¹ In his opinion she is undoubtedly sincere, charitable, and when she can be checked accurate, but exhibits 'a strong exhibitionist streak in her nature, and an absence of depth in the alleged spiritual communications' (the 'alleged' is interesting). Riehle sees 'pathologically neurotic traits',¹² Colledge and Walsh a 'morbid self-engrossment'.¹³ 'Everyone agrees that she was "neurotic"', says Sheila Delany;¹⁴ everyone does not, in fact, even if Delany puts 'neurotic' in quotation marks. Nor is she 'paranoid', 'hysterical', or other terms from popular modern psychology you can think of. Margery inevitably comes off worse in comparisons, explicit or implicit, with Julian – if only she had stayed *put* – whereas she cannot even begin to compete with the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. And she would have done far better to have taken heed of the warnings by Hilton and the *Cloud* author against literal interpretation of mystical metaphors. Even those critics more sympathetic to Margery remain guarded in their assessment:

Although she was shrewd, her mind was neither profound nor disciplined, and she lacked not sincerity but discrimination. She was as flamboyant in her religious practices as she had been formerly in her dress.¹⁵

Marion Glasscoe finds that 'the narrative has an air of self-absorption and self-justification'.¹⁶

IV

For many of Margery's critics (medieval as well as modern) her mystical experiences are simply too physical. The English contemplative tradition shows little evidence of the trances, levitations, stigmata, eucharistic ecstasy, visions and

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supernatural signs of its continental counterpart. It is, in a word, far less obviously charismatic. Rolle, with his *caldor*, *dulcor* and *canor*, is the best it can offer and he is sometimes regarded as superficial. Margery, too, experiences heat in her breast, melody (almost every day for twenty-five years – 2870), sweet smells, motes in the air, and a sound like a redbreast singing in her ear (2969), but as Atkinson remarks, they do not seem central to her experience.¹⁷ Her colloquies with Christ are far more important.

The gift of penitential tears was of course traditional. For her it is authenticated, all over again, by Christ himself (ch. 14), Julian of Norwich (ch. 18), the Virgin Mary (ch. 29) and Saint Jerome (ch. 41). Hilton, whom she did not meet but whose 'book' she had heard read, whilst not dissenting, identifies tears and other 'such great bodily fervours' as characteristic of souls comparatively inexperienced in contemplation – as he would put it, not yet 'reformed in feeling'.¹⁸ Her public outbursts of 'plentyvows teers and many boystows sobbyngys' (394) begin after a three-year period of bodily penance. The crying ('screaming') happens for the first time at Calvary:

And sche had so gret compassyon and so gret peyn to se owyr
Lordys peyn that sche myt not kepe hirself fro kryng and roryng,
thow sche schuld a be ded therfor. And this was the fyrst cry that
evyr sche cryed in any contemplacyon. And this maner of crying
enduryd many yerys aftyr this tyme, for owt that any man myt do,
and therfor sufferyd sche mych despyte and mech reprefe.

(2215-20, ch. 28)

Thereafter 'weeping, crying and roaring' ('sob', evidently more extreme than 'weep', sometimes replaces 'cry') become something of a litany in Book I; the cries are absent from Book II. Many people found them acutely embarrassing, and in Lynn a famous visiting preacher, probably the Franciscan, William Melton, would not allow her at his sermons despite the representations of other clerics. Some people believed she could have stopped had she wished. She asks God (who refuses) to let her cry in private and not in public, but she is convinced that she needs tears and is desolate when God withdraws them for a time:

And, thei so wer that owr Lord wythdrow fro hir sumtyme the
habundawnce of teerys, yet he wythdrowe not fro hir holy mendys
ne desyrys of yerys togedyr, for evyr hir mynde and hir desyr was

to owr Lord. But hir thowt it was no savowr ne swetnesse but
whan sche myth wepyn, for than sche thowt that sche cowde
preyin. (6724-29, ch. 62)

The more she tries to restrain her tears, the more loudly she cries.

The 'ravishing' of her spirit starts as early as chapter 5 and in the following chapter she begins to participate in the life of the Holy Family. She takes part in the preparations for Christ's birth, becomes the Virgin's handmaiden, and is present at the birth itself. Later on she goes with Our Lady to the Mount of Olives and she sees Christ betrayed by Judas and subsequently buffeted by the Jews and the soldiers (chapters 79-80). After the Crucifixion she comforts Mary with a hot drink ('a good cawdel', 6560). All this we can accept as part of affective piety, if somewhat extreme. Meditation on the Passion was a standard part of the early stages of contemplation. Chapter 66 tells us that she was granted knowledge of Christ's manhood before her pilgrimages abroad and of the Godhead afterwards. Her favourite word for all the intimate conversations with Christ is 'dalliance'. In Middle English this signified informal, usually enjoyable, discussion. Often, as the citations under sense 1 in the *Middle English Dictionary* suggest, it was associated with coquetry and courtship: Gawain and Bertilak's wife have 'dere dalyaunce of her deme wordez' (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 1012). Margery has a ring upon which is engraved, by Christ's command, *Jhesus est amor meus* (2542). The best of the *Middle English Dictionary's* (not very many) examples of sense 2 ('serious, edifying or spiritual conversation') of both noun and related verb are from Margery Kempe's *Book*. Did anyone object to her use of 'dalliance'? We do not know.

It is with the direct physical manifestations of the mystical marriage that, for us at least, things become more difficult. For several medieval writers (especially continental women mystics) Christ is like a lover. For Margery he *is* a lover:

For it is convenyent the wyf to be homly wyth hir husbond. Be he
nevyr so gret a lorde and sche so powr a woman whan he weddyth
hir, yet thei must ly togedir and rest togedir in joy and pes. Ryght
so mot it be twyx the and me, for I take non hed what thu hast be,
but what thu woldist be. And oftyntymes have I telde the that I
have clene foryove the alle thy synnes. Therfore most I nedys be
homly wyth the and lyn in thi bed wyth the. Dowtyr, thou
desyrest gretly to se me, and thu mayst boldly, whan thou art in thi
bed, take me to the as for thi weddyd husbond, as thy derworthy

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derlyng, and as for thy swete sone, for I wyl be lovyd as a sone schuld be lovyd wyth the modyr, and wil that thu love me, dowtyr, as a good wife owyth to love hir husbonde. And therfor thu mayst boldly take me in the armys of thi sowle and kyssen my mowth, myn hed and my fete as swetly as thow wylt. And as oftyntymes as thu thynkyst on me, or woldyst don any good dede to me, thu schalt have the same mede in hevyn as yyf thu dedist it to myn owyn precyows body which is in hevyn. For I aske no mor of the but thin hert for to lovyn me that lovyth the, for my lofe is evyr redy to the. (2944-61, ch. 36)

I doubt whether Margery saw the mixed metaphor here ('as your wedded husband . . . as your sweet son'); she is too literal-minded for that. Although, at the end of chapter 14, God had pointed out to her the metaphorical meanings of daughter, mother, sister, wife and spouse, this piece of instruction seems to have passed Margery by. And yet, her marriage to the Godhead is carefully stated to be 'in hir sowle' (2848) and here 'in the armys of thi sowle, for myn owyn precyows body . . . is in hevyn.' There is no way of telling whether these phrases are Margery's own words or the priest-amanuensis's gloss on them. Marriage, not to mention John Kempe's insistence on his conjugal rights and those fourteen pregnancies, was something Margery knew all about. Holy virgins, and the white clothing signifying chastity, she had heard about as well. Initially Christ has to assure her that he loves wives too:

Than seyde the creatur 'Lord Jhesu, this maner of levying longyth to thy holy maydens.'

'Ya, dowtyr, trow thow rygth wel that I lofe wyfes also, and specyal tho wyfys which woldyn levyn chast, yyf thei mygtyn have her wyl, and don her besynes to plesyn me as thou dost, for, thow the state of maydenhode be mor parfyte and mor holy than the state of wedewhode, and the state of wedewhode mor parfyte than the state of wedlake, yet, dowtyr, I lofe the as wel as any mayden in the world. (1566-74, ch. 21)

The insertion of widowhood (of which there is no question here) into the traditional trilogy of virgins, widows and wives, does sound more like the priest's language than Margery's own. In the early years of her marriage she had, like the

Wife of Bath or the Wife in *The Shipman's Tale*, seen clothes as a mark of fashion and social advancement. It would have taken some resolution to turn herself into the mystic's usual function as the transparent and empty vessel of God's love (as the self-abnegatory 'this creature' might lead us to expect) and publicly, at least, she never quite made it. Her manner was naturally direct, insubordinate, sometimes abrasive, and she never did things by halves. Nancy Partner puts it well: 'she did not understand any of the subtle negotiations which were necessary to turn personal experience into an authorized source of respect, dignity, harmony with institutions'.¹⁹

With Margery, Jesus Christ is usually protective, reassuring and accommodating. It has been objected, principally by Stargardt, that he is sometimes reduced to the status of a crude miracle-worker – a stone weighing three pounds and a six-pound spar fall upon her from the church vault, but she is unharmed (chapter 9); thunder and lightning appear on demand (chapters 44, 47); St Margaret's Church at Lynn is, at her prayer, saved from fire by a miraculous fall of snow (chapter 67) – but not always. At the start of her penitential career, Margery (traditionally, perhaps) wears a hair shirt. Christ tells her to take it off. Later she gives up eating meat, but is eventually ordered to start eating it again. She believes she has given up her fashionable dress for the more modest garb of a pilgrim – but no, she is commanded to wear fine linen. And the things she is asked to do are sometimes unpleasant and unwelcome. In Rome her confessor orders her to look after a poor, sick, verminous old woman (chapter 34). Back home again, she suffers dysentery and various other bodily pains (chapter 56). In chapter 59 God withdraws from her (as happens to other mystics) 'alle good thowtys and alle good mendys of holy spechys and dalyawns, and the hy contemplacyon which sche had ben usyd to befortyme' (4850-52) and allows the devil to tempt her with hallucinations which, in her case, take the form of sexual advances by clerics. Finally John Kempe falls downstairs and is seriously injured. As ever, people were very ready to blame it all on her:

And than the pepil seyde, yf he deyde, hys wyfe was worthy to ben hangyn for hys deth, for-as-mech as sche myght a kept hym and dede not. They dwellyd not togedyr, ne thei lay not togedyr, for (as is wretyn befor) thei bothyn wyth on assent and wyth fre wil of her eithyr haddyn mad avow to levyn chast. And therfor, to enchewyn alle perellys, thei dwellyd and sojowryd in divers placys, wher no suspicyon schulde ben had of her incontynens.

(6022-28, ch. 76)

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God tells her to look after her husband. Margery objects, on the grounds that it would prevent her from serving Christ in prayer and contemplation, but she finally sees both the poetic justice and the devotion in tending this old, childish and now incontinent man:

And therfor was hir labowr meche the mor in waschyng and wryngyng, and hir costage in fyryng, and lettyd hir ful meche fro hir contemplacyon, that many tymys sche schuld an yrkyd hir labowr, saf sche bethowt hir how sche in hir yong age had ful many delectabyl thowtys, fleschly lustys, and inordinat lovys to hys persone. And therfor sche was glad to be ponischyd wyth the same persone and toke it mech the mor esily, and servyd hym and helpyd hym, as hir thowt, as sche wolde a don Crist hymself.

(6072-80, ch. 76)

God can sometimes be a hard taskmaster, but he keeps his promises and support always materialises when she most needs it.

V

Twice we are told of the books that Margery heard read:

. . . so excellently that sche herd nevr boke, neythyr Hyltons boke, ne Bridis boke, ne *Stimulus Amoris*, ne *Incendium Amoris*, ne non other that evyr sche herd redyn, that spak so hyly of lofe of God but that sche felt as hyly in werkyng in hir sowle, yf sche coud or ellys myght a schewyd as sche felt. (1256-61, ch. 17)

He red to hir many a good boke of hy contemplacyon and other bokys, as the Bybyl wyth doctowrys therupon, Seynt Brydys boke, Hyltons boke, Boneventur, *Stimulus Amoris*, *Incendium Amoris*, and swech other. (4818-21, ch. 58)

'Hilton's book' was probably *The Scale of Perfection*, but just possibly *Mixed Life*, meant for a 'worldly lord' with contemplative inclinations but secular responsibilities. The *Stimulus Amoris*, often mistakenly attributed to St Bonaventura and which

includes a series of meditations on the Passion, exists in a Middle English version, *The Prick of Love*, possibly adapted by Walter Hilton. Just what Margery made of Rolle's *Incendium Amoris* is unclear since it is in Latin.

St Bridget of Sweden (whose book is authenticated by Christ in chapter 20) was probably something of a role model for Margery. Bridget was married at thirteen, had eight children, went on pilgrimage to Santiago (as Margery did) with her husband, but after his death became a visionary and pilgrim and founded a new order of nuns. Margery visited Syon, the English house of the Bridgettine order, in 1434 when she returned from Prussia (Book II, chapter 10). Bridget was an aristocrat (Margery was bourgeois) and became a force in politics at Rome, where she died. The canonization of Bridget was being discussed while Margery was in Rome and was eventually confirmed in 1415. And yet Bridget's *Liber Celestis* (which also exists in a Middle English version) is in many ways unlike Margery's own book. It is a series of disconnected visions with no linking material such as Margery's pilgrimages. In her revelations Bridget is visited by several saints and is commanded by Christ and his mother to pass on advice to various bishops, friars, the city of Rome and the papal court, especially on the cessation of warfare between England and France. She witnesses the Nativity and the Crucifixion but as a spectator rather than a participant. There is quite frequent use of allegory (again unlike Margery's *Book*). Bridget is usually referred to as 'þe spouse' or, by the Virgin, as 'þe doghter' (e.g. in Book 2, chapter 6: 'Wordes of maiden Mari to þe doghtir and of Criste to þe spouse'). What very little there is about the mystical marriage is traditional and orthodox:

pou buse be redi to he weddinge of mi godehede, in þe whilke is no
fleshli luste, but þare is alpirswettteste gasteli delite. (I, ch. 20)

a gude saule, þat is Godes wife, brynges furth gude werkes þat are
plesynge to Gode. (IV, ch. 67)

When Melton preaches in King's Lynn, 'he prechyd meche ageyn the seyde creatur, not expressyng hir name, but so he expletyd hys conseytys that men undirstod wel that he ment hir' (5107-09). Hearing this, the priest who wrote down her book began also to lose faith in her. His belief is restored when he reads the life of Mary of Oignies. Mary was a married woman who persuaded her husband to live chaste (as Margery eventually persuaded John Kempe) and became one of Christ's chosen brides. She too wept copiously and on at least one occasion was not allowed in church because of it. Her *Life* was written in Latin by her confessor, Jacques de Vitry,

although a Middle English version of it also survives. Jacques de Vitry calls such women *mulieres sanctae*, and such quasi-religious groups as the beguines in the Low Countries and the Rhineland and the tertiaries in Italy are another manifestation of the greater lay participation in the religion of the late Middle Ages. Beguines took no formal religious vows and did not completely sever secular ties; they were sometimes wives and mothers.²⁰ They were organised 'in what might loosely be called religious collectives', predominantly active but with a definite interest in contemplation.²¹ Their only 'rules' were those which evolved to meet the needs of individual communities. Margery, of course, was the supreme individual, not a member of a group, and it must be doubtful whether she had any knowledge of beguines, but she would surely have been sympathetic towards their aims.

England (as so often) was late in joining the mystical common market. One result is, as I said, that it escaped several of the more embarrassing pathological practices of some continental women mystics. What is very evident in England is the growth of lay piety. One manifestation of this is the kind of life practised by a few wealthy and pious widows, women like Lady Margaret Beaufort (Countess of Richmond and Derby and the mother of the future Henry VII), her grandmother, Margaret, Duchess of Clarence, and Cicely, Duchess of York. Margaret Beaufort commissioned Wynkyn de Worde's 1494 print of *The Scale of Perfection and Mixed Life*, the first book to which de Worde put his name. Now these were aristocrats, but there is some evidence of the conviction that more ordinary people should be allowed to participate in the gospel story, in their own language (as the Lollards argued). Margery's 'eye-witness' account of the Crucifixion is reminiscent of the York Crucifixion play. The stress on action, as well as suffering, with bit-players (the soldiers at York but Margery includes the Jews) taking centre-stage for a moment, is natural in drama, less so in contemplative literature. Her earlier service as handmaid to the Virgin is following in the footsteps of her saviour, as related by the gentle Nicholas Love, Prior of Mount Grace Charterhouse (which owned the manuscript of her *Book* in the Middle Ages) who tells us that his book is written 'for common people and simple souls' and who honestly admits that he has allowed his imagination to play over both the scriptural account and his source, the pseudo-Bonaventure *Meditationes*:

. . . & how oure lord Jesus mekely help hem boþe [Mary and Joseph] at hir nede & also in leying þe borde, makyng be beddes & sech opere choores gladly & lowly ministryng, & so fulfylling in dede þat he seiþ of him self in þe gospel, þat Mannus sone came

not to be seruet bot to serue.

(ch. 13)

The *Meditations* itself encourages the reader's participation in the gospel story:

You, too, who lingered so long, kneel and adore your Lord God, and then His mother, and reverently greet the saintly old Joseph. Kiss the beautiful little feet of the infant Jesus who lies in the manger and beg His mother to offer to let you hold Him a while. Pick Him up and hold Him in your arms. Gaze on His face with devotion and reverently kiss Him and delight in Him. Then return Him to the mother and watch her attentively as she cares for Him assiduously and wisely, nursing Him and rendering all services, and remain to help her if you can. (ch. 7)

Similarly Margery's revelations are 'wretyn for to schewyn the homlynes and the goodlynes of owyr mercyful Lord Crist Jhesu, and for no commendacyon of the creatur' (1747-49). Here was she, a mere citizen of Lynn, able to share in these miraculous happenings.

VI

As the New Historicists regularly remind us, we write (and rewrite) history in our own image. So it was, I suppose, inevitable that attempts would be made to portray a feminist Margery Kempe. The clerics made the rules and the clerics were men (as the Wife of Bath knew). Atkinson remarks that women having no responsibilities such as teaching or parish work

may have participated enthusiastically in the 'New Piety' in part because it was possible for them to do so. Mystical experience requires no office or ordination; women's experience is as valid as men's.²²

The oppression of women in a capitalist society is one of the arguments of Delany and Aers.²³ But it cannot really be made to stick in Margery's case: she is far too much of an individual to be hijacked by the sisterhood. Nor is she completely confident about her own 'feelings' despite frequent confirmation by God, and she regularly seeks

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clerical approval for her way of life. At the very end of Book I, she is still uncertain about the nature of some of her 'stirrings':

Sumtyme sche was in gret hevynes for hir felyngys, whan sche knew not how thei schulde ben undirstondyn many days togedyr, for drede that sche had of deceytys and illusyons, that hir thowt sche wolde that hir hed had be smet fro the body, tyl God of hys goodnesse declaryd hem to hir mende. For sumtyme that sche undirstod bodily, it was to ben undirstondyn gostly.

(7404-09, ch. 89)

Her pilgrimages (in England, anyway) sometimes seem less visits to holy places than a personal search for validation and reassurance.

More insidious – and to my mind more wrong-headed – is the belief in some modern criticism that if a work can be shown (or even claimed to be) complex, paradoxical, and above all subversive, it is *ipso facto*, that much more rewarding. This approach is frequent in two recent books, those of Lochrie and the collection of essays edited by McEntire.²⁴ Lochrie's is a careful reading, but for me it is spoiled by what is seen as Margery's ordered and deliberate strategies of subversion which are often explained by using the work of twentieth-century French feminist writers. Let me demonstrate by two quotations from the section on Laughter, in a chapter entitled 'Fissuring the Text'

In a culture which attempts to place the flesh (and woman) in parentheses, Kempe uses laughter to disperse the parentheses and contaminate the boundaries which preserve the power of the medieval Church and society.

(p. 137)

Kempe's treatise offers a theology and hermeneutic of mirth which periodically erupts in her narrative, but which often runs like a silent subtext within it.

(p. 144)

I don't think that these are unrepresentative quotations. One might object that Kempe's forte was weeping rather than laughter, but perhaps the one leads to the other. I can find very little that is illuminating in the collection of essays. Kempe is 'richly problematic' according to Szell,²⁵ whereas she herself might, I imagine, have regarded what she said and did as quite straightforward. Holloway is talking about Bridget, but

it might as well have been Margery

Care was always taken by Bride and her circle that her writings be authorized and orthodox. However that never prevented them from being powerful, subversive and feminist.²⁶

If in doubt, there can be the 'thinly disguised metaphor'. The following two instances are identified by Ruth Shklar:

The wryly comic episode [in the second Prologue] of the priest wearing spectacles that, of course, only make his vision worse serves as a thinly disguised metaphor for the real restrictions that prevent him from writing.

When part of the church vault falls on Margery's head and back but she is unharmed

The strikingly real physical contact between Kempe's body and the materials of the church highlights her strained relations within the church as both hierarchy and community.²⁷

We see, all too readily, what we want to see.

VII

So how far has Margery Kempe really been rehabilitated? Epithets like 'hysterical', 'neurotic', even 'self-absorbed' are clearly inadequate to describe her and I have suggested that terms from feminist or literary theory are very little better. Her claims for the quality and the extent of her contemplative experiences are nevertheless considerable:

Sche teld hym how sumtyme the Fadyr of hevyn dalyd to hir sowle as pleylny and as verlyly as o frend spekyth to another be bodyly spech. Sumtyme the Secunde Persone in Trinyte, sumtyme alle thre Personys in Trinyte and o substawns in Godhede, dalyid to hir sowle and informyd hir in hir feyth and in hys lofe how sche schuld lofe hym, worshepyn hym, and dredyn hym . . . Sumtyme

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owyr lady spak to hir mend. Sumtyme Seynt Petyr, sumtyme Seynt Powyl, sumtym Seynt Kateryn, er what seynt in hevyn sche had devocyon to, aperyd to hir sowle and tawt hir how sche schuld lovyn owyr Lord and how sche schuld plesyn hym. Her dalyawns was so swet, so holy, and so devowt, that this creatur myt not oftyntymes beryn it, but fel down and wrestyd wyth hir body, and mad wondyrful cher and contenawns, wyth boystows sobbygys and gret plente of terys, sumtyme seyng 'Jhesu, mercy', sumtyme 'I dey.'

(1251-56, 1262-70, ch. 17)

Her amanuensis says (chapter 87) there were many more such experiences, some of them more subtle and more extreme than those written. Christ promises her a singular love in heaven (chapter 22). To Rolle 'singular' was the very highest form of love. In the longer Prologue we are told that 'Sche knew and undyrstod many secret and prevy thyngys which schuld beffallen aftyward be inspiracyon of the Holy Gost' (56-57) and in chapter 59 God tells her she would learn of the fate of the saved and the damned. For the author of *The Cloud* (who, perhaps significantly, is never mentioned) and for Hilton too, the advanced stages of contemplation are a lengthy and intricate business. The pure soul is shown the final fate of the reprobate (and of the saved too) only in the penultimate chapter of Book II of *The Scale*.

Like most of the mystics, Margery says that she is unable to explain her revelations in detail to those who cannot envisage them:

... sche cowde nevyr rehersyn but fewe of hem; it wer so holy and so hy that sche was abaschyd to tellyn hem to any creatur, and also it weryn so hy abovyn hir bodily wittys that sche myth nevyr expressyn hem wyth hir bodily tunge liche as sche felt hem. Sche undirstod hem bettyr in hir sowle than sche cowde uttyr hem.

(6791-96, ch. 83)

There are similar remarks in chapters 78 and 87. This is, I think, more than an excuse, although it makes it difficult for us to gauge how genuine her experiences were. The language may be exaggerated and she is apt to confuse the metaphorical with the literal, but in many cases she should be given the benefit of the doubt.

I reach this conclusion partly because she seems to have impressed and been accepted by more people than she alienated or merely embarrassed. Apart from her inveterate enemies like the Mayor of Leicester or William Melton, she wins the

approval of Repyndon of Lincoln (although he temporises a little), Arundel of Canterbury, the Pope's legate, Julian of Norwich, the abbess of Denny and a number of clerics: the Carmelite Alan of Lynn, Richard of Caister, the bishop of Worcester, the Abbot of Leicester, Robert Spryngolde, Thomas Hevingham, and others unnamed (some in England and some abroad). A priest who has heard of her but never seen her travels from England to Rome especially to meet her. The Franciscans in Jerusalem have heard of her (2390). If she is the Margery Kempe who on 13 April 1438 was admitted to the Guild of the Trinity of Lynn – and there is no reason to suppose otherwise – her pilgrimages done, she perhaps gained acceptance in her own town. Some opposition comes from those who see people simply in categories, as at Beverley: 'Damsel, forsake this lyfe that thu hast, and go spynne and card as other women don' (4330-1). When John Kempe falls ill and she has to look after him, the same kind of people simply regard it as her come-uppance.

The taunts of 'Lollard' are only to be expected at this time (and in those white clothes), especially in some of the places she visited. When she returns from Spain she makes her way from Bristol, a Lollard centre, to York, via Leicester, the Lollard 'capital'. Oldcastle was captured and executed in December 1417, the same year. It is the secular authorities who apprehend Margery and hand her over to the bishops for trial; she is not specifically attacked by the Church. She is caught up in the general anxiety over domestic rebellion; were not Lollards even now encouraging women to take a more active role in the community? Since she (a) went on pilgrimages, (b) appears to have believed in images, and (c) was orthodox on the mass, such a charge could hardly be made to stick. In any case, 'loller' was sometimes simply a term of abuse. Langland's Will was

... yclothed as a lollare,
And lytel ylet be, leueth me for sothe,
Amonges lollares of Londone and lewede ermytes,
For y made of tho men as resoun me tauhte.

(C-Text, V, 2-5)

She was perhaps one of the first – although certainly not the last – to discover that the English abroad can be particularly beastly: 'And sche fond alle pepyl good onto hir and gentyl, saf only hir owyn cuntremen' (2443). Even the Saracens 'mad mych of hir' (2442). On one occasion her English companions

... cuttyd hir gown so schort that it come but lytil benethyn hir

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kne, and dedyn hir don on a whyte canwas in maner of a sekkyn gelle [rough sackcloth], for sche schuld ben holdyn a fool and the pepyl schuld not makyn of hir ne han hir in reputacyon. Thei madyn hir to syttyn at the tabelys ende benethyn alle other, that sche durst ful evyl spekyn a word. (2005-10, ch. 26)

All the difficulties and opposition she experiences she regards as suffering to be offered up to God. And God, in his turn, uses them to comfort her and assure her of her eventual entry into heaven without the torments of purgatory.

We are left with an unpredictable, difficult, sometimes too literal-minded personality whose *Book* whilst not chaotic is certainly episodic and inconsistent. Lynn Staley sums this up nicely:

... good confessors succeed bad confessors; John Kempe seems at times to threaten Margery's vocation and at others to support it; bishops are at once accessible and intractable; and Margery seems profound in one incident, banal in the next.²⁸

Margery Kempe is a one-off; there is no programme for contemplatives here, no idea that her manner of life might be followed by another devout woman. Sometimes I am sure that we sympathise with the Archbishop of York (who on the whole finds her innocent of the charges against her): 'What, woman, art thou come ayen? I wolde fayn be delyveryd of the' (4397). Margery Kempe, however, will not go away. But nowadays we are more willing to accept the contradictions in her personality: the desire for confirmation of her way of life from someone in authority, but also the directness of approach which allows her to rebuke the Archbishop of Canterbury for the language used by his retainers (chapter 16), the Archbishop of York for calling her a heretic (chapter 52) and the Bishop of Worcester whom she challenged with the extravagances of his household (chapter 45). And perhaps we can now begin to locate her rather more profitably in the changing fifteenth-century spiritual climate. In the present-day trial of Margery Kempe, over what the longer Prologue calls 'hyr felyngys and revelacyons and the forme of her levyng' (86), I think the jury is still out.²⁹

NOTES

¹ S.-E. Holbrook, 'Margery Kempe and Wynkyn de Worde', *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, IV, ed. by M. Glasscoe (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987), 27-46, 35.

² W. Butler-Bowden, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (London: Cape, 1936); S.B. Meech and H.E. Allen, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Early English Text Society, 212 (1940).

³ Barry Windeatt, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Harlow: Pearson, 2000); *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).

⁴ Windeatt, *The Book*, 2000, see note on this line.

⁵ S.-E. Holbrook, "'About Her": Margery Kempe's Book of Feeling and Working', in *The Idea of Medieval Literature, New Essays on Chaucer and Medieval Culture in Honor of Donald R. Howard*, ed. by J.M. Dean and C.K. Zacher (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), pp. 265-84.

⁶ J. Hirsh, 'Author and Scribe in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Medium Aevum*, 44 (1975), 145-50.

⁷ C.W. Atkinson, *Margery Kempe: Mystic and Pilgrim* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 18.

⁸ L. Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), pp. 4, 35, 39, 49.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹⁰ Butler-Bowden, *The Book*, p. xxii.

¹¹ D. Knowles, *The English Mystical Tradition* (London: Burns and Oates, 1961), p. 143.

¹² W. Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics* (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 11.

¹³ E. Colledge and J. Walsh, *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978), p. 38.

¹⁴ S. Delany, 'Sexual Economics, Chaucer's Wife of Bath and *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Writing Women* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), pp. 76-92, reprinted in R. Evans and L. Johnson, *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature* (London: Routledge, 1994).

¹⁵ J. Bray, 'Concepts of Fourteenth Century Sainthood', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 66 (1984), 40-77.

¹⁶ M. Glasscoe, *English Medieval Mystics: Games of Faith* (London: Longman, 1993), p. 273.

¹⁷ Atkinson, *Margery Kempe*, p. 46.

¹⁸ W. Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. by J.P.H. Clark and R. Dorward (New York

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and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1991), II, ch. 29.

¹⁹ N.F. Partner, 'Reading the *Book of Margery Kempe*', *Exemplaria*, 3 (1991), 29-66, 66.

²⁰ See S. Dickman, 'Margery Kempe and the Continental Tradition of the Pious Woman', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, IV, ed. by M. Glasscoe (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1984), 150-68; U. Stargardt, 'The Beguines of Belgium, the Dominican Nuns of Germany and Margery Kempe', in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. by T.J. Heffernan (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), pp. 277-313; S. Murk-Jansen, *Brides in the Desert: The Spirituality of the Beguines* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998).

²¹ Evans and Johnson, *Feminist Readings*, p. 3.

²² Atkinson, *Margery Kempe*, p. 162.

²³ Delany, 'Sexual Economics'; D. Aers, 'The Making of Margery Kempe: individual and community', in *Community, Gender and Individual Identity: English Writing 1360-1430* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 73-116.

²⁴ K. Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); S.J. McEntire, *Margery Kempe: A Book of Essays* (New York and London: Garland, 1992).

²⁵ T.K. Szell, 'From Woe to Weal and Weal to Woe: Notes on the Structure of *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in McEntire, *Margery Kempe*, pp. 73-91, 90.

²⁶ J.B. Holloway, 'Bride, Margery, Julian and Alice: Bridget of Sweden's Textual Community in Medieval England', in McEntire, *Margery Kempe*, pp. 203-21, 205.

²⁷ R. Shklar, 'Cobham's Daughter: *The Book of Margery Kempe* and the Power of Heterodox Thinking', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 56 (1995), 277-304, both quotations from 287.

²⁸ Staley, *Dissenting Fictions*, p. 176.

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'It pleased the Lord to discover his displeasure': the 1652 performance of *Mucedorus* in Witney

Alexandra F. Johnston

Introduction.

The performance of *Mucedorus* in Witney during the Interregnum was noticed by E.K. Chambers long ago.¹ Although he provided the reference to John Rowe's pamphlet with its cumbersome title '*Tragi-Comoedia. Being a Brief Relation of the strange, and Wonderful hand of God discovered at Witney, in the Comedy Acted there February the third, where there were some Slaine, many Hurt, with severall other Remarkable Passages. Together with what was Preached in three Sermons on that occasion from Rom. I.18. Both which May serve as some Check to the Growing Atheisme of the Present Age*',² few drama scholars have picked it up.³ Chambers remarks the performance with a dismissive sentence, 'After the suppression of the theatres in 1642, *Mucedorus* was acted by strolling players in various parts of Oxfordshire', a phraseology that is picked up in the introductions of modern editions of the play.⁴ Some years ago, as I was gathering material for the Oxfordshire collection in the Records of Early English Drama series, I read the pamphlet and was struck both by what it can tell us about local dramatic activity and by its coherence and fairness as a piece of polemic writing. Rowe may have considered plays ungodly but he does not condemn the players and, in his careful journalistic approach to the event, he has tried to be as factual as possible. This concern for fact has provided us with an unexpected and detailed account of a parish performance that persisted into the Commonwealth period. I have provided below an edition of that section of the pamphlet which Rowe entitled 'A breife narrative of the play acted at *Whitny* the third of February 1652. Together with its sad and Tragical End.'

John Rowe has found his way into the *Dictionary of National Biography*. He was born in Crediton, Devon on 1626. Admitted as battler to New Hall Inn,

Oxford in 1642, he was displaced by the arrival of the Royal Mint with the Court in 1643 and continued his education at the Puritan stronghold, Emmanuel College, Cambridge, from which he graduated with his BA in 1646. Two years later Oxford recognised his degree and on 12 December, 1648, he received his MA from his original university. The next year he was made a fellow of Corpus Christi by the parliamentary visitors. He was a patristic scholar, well read in philosophy and jurisprudence as well as the schoolmen, and was remarkable for keeping a diary in Greek all his life. His first preferment was a lectureship in Witney while he retained his fellowship in Corpus. After his time in Oxfordshire he returned briefly to Devon where he was lecturer in Tiverton. In 1654 he became preacher in Westminster Abbey and pastor of an independent congregation that met in the Abbey. His high standing in the eyes of the Commonwealth government is reflected in his appointment in 1660 as one of the approvers of ministers. At the Restoration he lost all his offices, although he remained pastor of his independent congregation taking it first to Bartholomew Close and afterwards to Holborn. He died in 1677.⁵

He was, then, still in his twenties when the events of February 3, 1652 took place – a young and zealous fellow of Corpus Christi, 'tall and dignified with a pleasing manner',⁶ dividing his time between Oxford and the small market town of Witney thirteen miles away. Internal evidence from the 'Narrative' makes it clear that he was not present at the performance of the play. In the discussion of the 'blasphemous' passages, he writes, after he has cited a speech by Bremo,

At the end of which verses it followeth, *He strikes*: and probable enough it is that he used some action at that time; but the words were so gastly, and had such a face of impiety in them that he durst not say *Gods*, but (as one that excused him would have us believe) he sai'd *Gobs*.

This is the description of someone who has been told about a performance but not seen it himself. Rowe was probably among the 'many Godly People, Townesmen and Schollars of *Oxford*' who 'kept a Solemne Day of *Fast* at Carfax'. It is possible that he and the other godly citizens returned to town before or just after the disaster that happened at some time between nine-thirty and ten o'clock that night. Whether he witnessed the immediate aftermath of the disaster or not, he undertook to report both the performance and its sequel responsibly. The events are clear enough from his account even if the interpretation of those events is

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wildly coloured by his ideological stance. He carefully framed his narrative with lines from the play itself which are quoted with scholarly accuracy arguing he had the text beside him as he wrote. He interviewed the players, the surgeon and those who attended the performance and related what they told him with a clarity that gives us a unique 'window' on performance practice in the countryside in the seventeenth century.

The town of Witney had a history of dramatic performance and festival. Its parish church, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, is one of the few in the country that celebrated Easter with a puppet play version of the resurrection. Lambarde's late sixteenth century *Dictionarium* has the following entry,

In the Dayes of ceremonial Religion they used at *Wytney* to set foorth yearly in the maner of a Shew, or Enterlude, the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour *Chryste*, partly of Purpose to draw thither some Concourse of People that might spend their Money in the Towne, but cheiflie to allure by pleasant Spectacle the comon Sort to the Liking of Popishe Maumetrie; for the which Purpose, and the more lyvely thearby to exhibite to the Eye the hole Action of the Resurrection, the Preistes garnished out certein smalle Puppets, representinge the Parsons of *Christe*, the Watchmen, *Marie*, and others, amongst the which one bare the Parte of a wakinge Watchman, who (espiinge *Christ* to arise) made a continual Noyce, like to the Sound that is caused by the Metinge of two Styckes, and was therof comonly called *Jack Snacker of Wytney*.⁷

Witney also held summer festivals in support of the parish. We have only traces of evidence for the event in the fragmentary churchwardens' accounts where receipts for 'whitsontide sportes' are recorded for 1610, 1620 and 1628.⁸ More details about the possible nature of the summer event comes from another Interregnum document, *The King Found at Southwell*.⁹ It was printed in London in 1646 for a Mr F. Loyd, a student of Christ Church and Captain of the Christ Church garrison, and presented to the Duke of York. The garrison left Oxford and had arranged to be met in Witney by morris dancers – a troop that included Maid Marian and two fools one of whom tumbled for the visitors – country fiddlers, a taborer, a pair of bagpipes, a harper and a group of singers. The pamphlet is, in effect, a description of the day's revelries in which the student soldiers danced,

joined with the entertainers in various capers and got very drunk. That such an array of entertainers could be summoned to be present in a town like Witney in 1646 argues the continuing tradition of folk customs in this very conservative corner of Oxfordshire. In choosing to come to Witney with their production of *Mucedorus*, then, the men of Stanton Harcourt could be reasonably assured of a receptive audience.

John Rowe's Narrative

A BRIEF
NARRATIVE OF
The Play Acted at *Whitny* the
third of February 1652. Together
with its sad and Tragical End.

It may not seem so proper, nor be so pleasing to every Reader, to set down all the Circumstances about this *Play*, forasmuch that somewhat might be said touching the rise and originall of it, the nature of the *Play* it self, and the book from whence it was taken, the motives, grounds, and ends of the Actors, concerning all which I might speak more then here shall be inserted, having taken some paines to satisfie my selfe in those particulars. But I thought it meet to insist on those things, which did most discover the hand of God in so eminent and remarkable a Providence, and lightly touch on other things, so far as they might give light to | that which is the name. This *Play* was an old *Play*, and had been Acted by some of *Santon-Harcourt* [Stanton-Harcourt] men many years since. The Title of it is, *A most pleasant Comedy of Mucedorus the Kings Sonne of Valentia, and Amadine the Kings Daughter of Aragon: with the merry conceits of Mouse, &c.* The Actors of the *Play* were Countrey men; most of them, and for any thing I can heare, all of *Stanton-Harcourt* Parish. The punctuall time of their first Learning the *Play*, cannot be certainly set downe: but this we have been told, they had been learning it ever since *Michaelmas*, and had been Acting privately every week. This we are informed upon more certain grounds, that they began to Act it in a more publike manner about *Christmas*, and Acted it three or foure times in their own Parish, they Acted it likewise in severall neibowring Parishes, as *Moore, Stanlake, South-Leigh, Cumner*. The last place they came at was *Witny*, where it pleased the Lord to discover his displeasure, against such wicked and ungodly *Playes* by an

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eminent hand. Some few days before the *Play* was to be Acted, one of *Stanton* came to the *Baylife* of *Witny* telling him *that there were some Countrey men that had learn'd to make a Play, and desired his Leave to shew it*, his aime being (as the *Baylife* conceiv'd) that they might have the Liberty of the *Towne-Hall*. Leave also was desired of the other *Baylife*, but they being denied by both *Baylifs*, they pitched on the *White Hart*, a chiefe *Inne* of the *Towne* to Act their *Play* there. The day when it was Acted, was the third of *Fe- | bruary*, the same day when many Godly People, Townesmen and Schollars of *Oxford*, kept a Solemne Day of *Fast* at *Carfax* [The area in front of the parish church of St Martin in Oxford at the junction of High Street and Cornmarket]. About seaven a Clock at Night they caused a Drum to beat, and a Trumpet to be sounded to gather the People together. The people flocked in great multitudes, Men, Women, and Children, to the number (as is guess'd) of three Hundred, some say foure hundred, and the Chamber where the *Play* was Acted being full, others in the Yard pressed sorely to get in. The people which were in the Roome were exceeding Joviall, and merry before the *Play* began, Young men and Maides dancing together, and so merry and frolick were many of the Spectators, that the Players could hardly get Liberty that they themselves might Act, but at last a little Liberty being obtained, the *Play* it self began. In the beginning of it Enters a Person that took the name of *Comedie*, and speaks as follows.

*Why so thus doe I hope to please;
Musick revives, and Mirth is tolerable,
Comedie play thy part, and please:
Make merry them that come to joy with thee.*

With two or three verses more.

Vpon this enters *Envy*, another person, & speaks as followes.

*Nay stay Minion stay there lyes a block;
What all on mirth? I'le interrupt your tale,
And mix your Musick with a Tragick end.*

Vpon which *Comedie* replies. *Envy* makes answer [sic] againe in severall verses, and among the rest these. |

*Harken thou shalt heare noyse
Shall fill the ayre with shrilling sound,
And thunder Musicke to the Gods above.*

Three verses after it followes,

*In this brave Musick Envy takes delight
Where I may see them wallow in their bloud,*

*To spurne at Armes & Leggs quite shivered off,
And heare the cryes of many thousand slaine.*
After this *Comedie* speaks, Envy replies
– *Treble death shall crosse thee with dispight
And make thee mourn where most thou joyest,
Turning thy mirth into a deadly dole;
Whirling thy pleasurs with a peale of death,
And drench thy methods in a Sea of bloud.*

Which passages if the Reader carry along with him, he will see how farre they were made good by the Divine hand, both on the Actors and the Spectators. The matter of the *Play* is scurrilous, impious, blasphemous in severall passages. One passage of it hath such a bitter Taunt against all *Godly persons* under the nature of *Puritans*, and at *Religion* it selfe, under the phrase of *observing Fasting days*, that it may not be omitted, it was almost in the beginning of the *Play*, and they were some of the Clownes words when he first began to Act, *Well Ile see my Father hang'd before Ile serve his Horse any more, well Ile carry home my bottle of Hay and for once make my Fathers Horse turne Puritan, and observe Fasting dayes, for he gets not a bitt.* How remarkable was this that some of them that were called *Puritans* in the dayes of old, had spent that | very day in *Oxford* in Fasting and Prayer; and that the Lord by so eminent an hand should testifie against such, who were not scoffers at *Godly persons*, but at *Religion* it selfe. Another passage was of so horrid an aspect, as that the Actor who was to speak it durst not vent it without a change. The verses as they are Printed are these.

*Ah Bremono, Bremono, what a foyle hadst thou,
that yet at no time was afraid
To dare the greatest Gods to fight with thee*

At the end of which verses it followeth, *He strikes*: and probable enough it is, that he used some action at that time; but the words were so gastly, and had such a face of impiety in them, that he durst not say *Gods*, but (as one that excused him would have us believe) he sai'd *Gobs*. And indeed so insolent were these, and other expressions in the *Play*, that some of the Spectators thought they were not fit to be used, and when they heard them, wished themselves out of the roome. We might instance in some other passages, but there hath been enough already. The modest, and ingenuous reader would blush to read some passages. Thus had they continued their sport for an hour, and halfe, as some of the Spectators say, but as is more probable, about two houres, for they were

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ordinarily three houres in acting it (as the Players say) and there were aboute two parts in three of the play were passed over in this Action. At which time it pleased God to put a stop to their mirth, and by an immediate hand of his owne, in causing the chamber to sink, and fall | under them, to put an end to this ungodly Play before it was thought, or intended by them.

The Actors who were now in action were *Bremo a wild man*, (courting, and solliciting his Lady, and among other things, begging a *Kisse* in this verse.

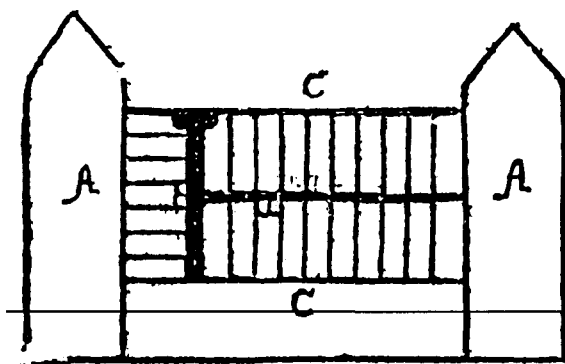
*Come kisse me (Sweet) for all my
favours past)*

And *Amadine* the Kings daughter (as named in the Play) but in truth a young man attired in a womans Habit. The words which were then speaking were these, the words of *Bremo* to his Lady

*Thou shalt be fed with Quailles, and Partridges,
With Black-birds, Larkes, Thrushes,
and Nightingales.*

Various reports there have been concerning the words spoken at that time, as that it should be sayed, *the Devill was now come to act his part*: some People might say so, observing the *wild mans* carriage, and some other passages that went before, where there was mention made of the Divell in a Bares dublet, the *wild man* then acting the Bares part: and indeed we have it upon good information that there were such words spoken; only they were the *spectators* words and not the *Actors*: but this we are assured of, the words then spoken by the *Actor* were those above mentioned, as *he himselfe* acknowledged, and we find them printed so in the Book.

The *Place* wherein the *Play* was acted, was not a *Stage* erected on purpose, but a *Chamber* belong | ing to the *Inne*, a larg [sic] Chamber, and which sometime had been a Malting roome, having a part of it covered with earth to that purpose. It had two Beames to support it, of which one So: the shorter was a great, *sound* & substantiall one; & lay between the two side walls; the other had one end shooting into the middle of the shorter beame, and the other end of it fastned in the wall, of which you may see a description.



The 2 end Walls. A. The 2 Beames B. The sid-Walls C. The short Beame, which broke neare the middle, was betwixt 13 and 14 Inches square, one end lying even, or a little within the Wall upon a shoulder of Stone, the other end almost a foot in the Wall, the short Beame breaking, the other fell with it. |

The fall was not very quick, but somewhat slow, & gentle, in so much that some that were present thought it was part of the play, (but it proved the saddest part) & expected when they should be taken up againe, yet was it not so slowe as that they were able to recover themselves, for the actors then in the action fell down, and a great number of people with them into the under roome, which was a *Shuffle-board-roome*, and the *table* it selfe broken in peeces by the fall of the Timber. The Chamber did not fall down quite, but lay somewhat pendulous, and hanging, broad at the top, and narrow at the bottome, that end of the long beame, which lay in the short falling down, the other end not falling, & the ends of the short Beame where it brake hanging down, the bottome where the people lay was of a very narrow compasse, the people falling as it were into a Pit: & such were the apprehentions of some of the Spectators, seeing the chamber sink in that manner as if the *earth was opening, and swallowing them up*. After the Crack of the beame which was exceeding great, and the fall of the Chamber (in the manner as is before described) all was quiet, and still and a kind of silence for a pretty space of time, the people being astonied, and bereft of their senses. One that was present was so much affrighted (as was said) that she thought her selfe verily to be in Hell, which we do the rather insert because whoevershall [sic] put the circumstances together may well say it was a little resemblance of that black, and dismall place, there being so many taken in the midst of their sinfull practises, and thrust into a pit together where they were left in darknesse, the *Lights* being

put out by the fall, where the dust that was raised made a kind of Mist, and Smoake, where there were the most lamentable skreekes, and out-cries that may be imagined; where they were shut up as in a prison, and could not get themselves out, (the doore of the under roome being blocked up, and their leg's [sic] being so pinioned, & wedged together by faggots, and other things, that fell down together with them from the upper roome, that they could not stirre to help themselves.) Another (as is said) supposing his limbs to be all plucked asunder cried out, *that they should cut off his head*: this is certaine, the fright was exceeding great, and many were dead for a time that afterward came to themselves. When the people were come to themselves, there was a fearfull, and most lamentable cry, some crying one thing, some another, some crying *aid for the Lords sake*, others crying *Lord have mercy on us*, *Christ have mercy on us*, others cried oh my Husband! a second, oh my Wife! a third, Oh my child! and another said No body loves *me* so well as to see where my child is. Others cried out for Ladders, and Hatchets to make their passage out, for the chamber falling, the doore of the under roome was so Blocked up that they could not get out there, so that they were fain to break the barres of the window, and most of the people got out that way though it were a good space of time before | they could get forth. The other Players that were not in action were in the Attiring-roome which was joyning to the chamber that fell, and they helped to save some of the people which were neer that part. Those of the people that fell not down, but were preserved by that meanes got out at the window of the upper roome. There were five slaine outright, wherof three were Boys, two of which being about seaven, or eight yeares old or thereabout; the other neer twelve: the other two were Girles, the elder of which being fourteen, or fiveteen, and the younger twelve or thirteen yeares old. A woman also had her legg sorely broken that the surgeons were forced to cut it off, and she dyed within three or foure dayes after it was cut off. Many were hurt, and sorely bruised, to the number of about threescore, that we have certaine information of, besides those that conceale their griefes, and some of the Contry of which there were diverse present, it being a market day when this Play was acted.

The Surgeon that dressed the wounded people, told me that the next day after this was done he was counting with himselfe how many he had dressed, and as neere as he could reckon he had dressed aboute fortie five, and twelve after that as he had supposed, and two or three after he had cut off the womans legg. Which therefore I thought good to insert that the reader may know upon what grounds he may take this relation.

Some others were dressed by others in the town | the just number of which

I have not learn't. But it is generally conceived that there were divers did receive hurt which would not suffer it to be known. Among those that were hurt there were about a dozen broken armes, and leggs, and some two or three dislocations, as we were likewise informed by the Surgeon. Some of the people came out with bloody faces, neither could it be otherwise they having trod one upon another in a most sad, and lamentable manner. Certain it is there was much hurt done that way; the children that were killed, being stifled as was supposed. The man in womans apparrell lay panting for breath and had it not been for *Bremo* his fellow Actor, he had been stifled; but *Bremo* having recovered himselfe a little, bare up the others head with his arme, whereby he got some breath, and so was preserved; but both the one, and the other were hurt; *Bremo* being so sorely bruised, as that he was fain to keep his bed for two dayes after, and the Lady had her beauty mar'd, her face being swoln by the hurt taken in the fall. Some had their mouths so stuf'd with dust that they could hardly speak, the people that came from the house made a pittifull moane, some going in the streets, and complaining, here is a Play, a sad Play indeed, others crying out to them that met them, (as they are wont that have received some deadly wound) oh I am kil'd! Some cryed out that their Armes were broken, others that their Leggs were broken, some cursed the Players that ever they came to *Witny*, and the players them | selves wished that they had never came thither. They that had received no hurt were exceedingly affrighted, insomuch that one of them that were present, as I am credibly informed, did say, that he would not, for as much as *Witny* was worth, be in the like affright again, though he were sure he should have no hurt. Others said that they would never goe to a play more, and that it was a judgment. Others have been so prophane, as we hear, to make a laughing-stock of it, and some so desperate, as to say, they would go againe, if it were to morrow next: and too many apt to say it was but chance, a misfortune, the beame was weak, there were so many load of people there, and the like. But how sleight so ever the matter was made afterwards, sure enough it is, it was sad enough then. It was one of the saddest, and blackest nights that ever came on *Witny*. Sad it was to see Parents carry home their Children dead in their armes, sad it was to see so many bruised, hurt, and maimed, and some, as it were, halfe dead that were not able to help themselves, but were fain to be carryed away by their friends, some on their backs, some on chaires, sad it was to hear the piteous cryes of those that were not there bemoaning their distressed friends. This was the sad end of this ungodly play. And what was spoken in jest in the beginning of it, by the just hand of God, was made good in earnest. The Comedy being turned into a Tragedy, it had a sad

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Catastrophe, ending with the deaths of some, and hurts of many, And as it was said before |

*And make thee mourn where most thou
joy'st*

So by the just hand of God came it to passe. For in the midst of their mirth, and jollity did this fall out, in the midst of these amorous passages between *Bremo*, and his Lady was this stroke given; yea immediately before they expected the greatest pleasure, and contentment. For the Actors said the best of the play was still behind, and a little after the hearts, and fancyes of the Spectators were to be filled with love-complements between *Mucedorus*, and his *Amadine*. So true was that

Turning thy mirth into a deadly Dole

The Lord from heaven, having given a check to such wanton sports, teaching men what they must look for, and that he will not bear with such grosse open profanenesse in such an age of light as this is. That he will so farre take notice of Atheisme, and the profanenesse of men in this world, as shall keep the world in order, though he hath reserved the great, and full recompence for another day, and place.

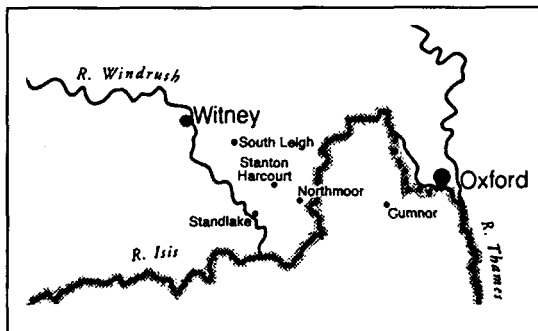
Commentary

It is clear from the description of the actors that these were not, as Chambers suggested, 'strolling players' but players who had a local base in the parish of Stanton Harcourt, a village about four miles south east of Witney. Rowe's interviews have filled in for us a picture of parish dramatic activity that is startlingly like the parish dramatic activity of over a century before where groups of entertainers from parishes in the Thames Valley would visit neighbouring parishes in order to raise money for the upkeep of their church.¹⁰ The ancient tradition where the priest was responsible for the upkeep and appointments of all parts of the church east of the rood screen while the parish was responsible for the upkeep of the rest of the building and the property continued to place a heavy financial burden on the laity. The parishioners of Stanton Harcourt are simply continuing an ancient and honourable custom. The major difference between the playmaking recorded here and the historic situation seems to be the nature of the entertainment. The earlier evidence indicates that parish folk plays, Biblical plays or morris dancers were shared with neighbouring parishes. Here we have a more

ambitious project – the production of an 'old play', *Mucedorus*, first registered in the Stationers' Register in 1590 with its first text dating from 1605.¹¹ It is a slight play but one that was sufficiently popular to be revived by the King's Men in 1610 to be played 'before the King's majesty at Whitehall on Shrove-Sunday next'.¹² Exactly how a copy of the play came to be in the hands of the parishioners of Stanton Harcourt remains a subject of speculation. Plays were purchased by country gentlemen when they went up to London. For example, Sir Thomas Temple of Stowe in Buckinghamshire visited London in 1600-01. His steward, Raphe Handes, recorded the following expenses for that trip,

Item your standing at Paules Sermon	iiij d
...	
Item your place at Paules Sermon againe	iiij d
Item paid in part for your standing at the Tylt	xij d
Item for the Conquest of west India	xx d
Item deliuered ys at the plaie at Paules	xv d ¹³

The Conquest of the West Indies by John Day, William Haughton, and Wentworth Smith (now lost) was registered by the Admiral's Men that year.¹⁴ It seems likely that someone from the parish purchased *Mucedorus* in the first decade of the century. When the idea was broached to perform a play it must have seemed attractive to the players since the title page carries the assurance 'ten persons may easily play it'.¹⁵



Work on the play, Rowe tells us, began in early October with weekly rehearsals. By Christmas the show was ready to go up and was performed first in Stanton Harcourt itself and then in the neighbouring parishes of Standlake and North

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Moor (each less than two miles away), South Leigh slightly over two miles to the north west and then Cumnor over three miles to the south east. By the end of January, they felt ready for the larger venue of Witney just beyond South Leigh.

By the time the players arrived in Witney to ask permission of the Bailiffs to perform in the town, at least seven performances had taken place within less than six weeks in a very small district. The prospective audience must have been aware of production. This may explain the astonishing number of people Rowe records as attending the performance – between three and four hundred. The fact that it was a market day may also have contributed to the large audience of men, women and children who crowded together at seven o'clock on a dark February evening summoned by drums and trumpets to begin the evening with dancing. The weight of the crowd and the vigour of the dance may well have contributed to the disaster. The shorter beam spanning the width of the room was not fastened into the walls but rested 'upon a shoulder of stone'. Once it broke in the middle, there was no residual strength from a beam securely fastened in to the side walls, removing all vestige of horizontal support from the floor and allowing the fatal tipping that shot so many of the people into the lower room. It could be said that the disaster was caused not by the hand of God but by the size and robustness of the audience.

Rowe's description of the terrified confusion that followed the disaster is a compelling one. He has captured the panic of the moment as well as the long term pain of those who lost their children and other relatives. The picture of the actor playing Bremono protecting the boy playing Amadine is particularly striking. But one of the most interesting passages is the one where he records the attitude of those involved in the disaster to the idea of attending another play. Some said they would never go to a play again while others said 'they would go again, if it were tomorrow next.' Clearly the only thing unusual about this performance was the unstable condition of the playing space. Ten years after the closing of the professional theatres in London, playmaking in the countryside seems to have been a sufficiently common occurrence that the victims of the Witney disaster could speak with confidence about future opportunities to see plays. The Puritan divines, such as Rowe, may have preached against the playmaking as an ungodly and blasphemous activity but it is clear that it continued. Like so much of the 'received tradition' about the history of the English theatre, this piece of Puritan polemic must be re-thought in light of the contextual evidence provided by the extensive research of the REED project. Rowe's pamphlet is as much evidence of a vigorous continuing practice of playmaking as it is of Puritan disapproval of the theatre. A man of stern convictions but also one of compassion and attention to detail, John Rowe has provided us with

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an account of a living tradition that did not die when the professional houses were closed but continued its long established customary life deep in the English countryside.

The 1652 Performance of Mucedorus in Witney

NOTES

¹ E.K.Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, IV (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 36.

² It was printed in Oxford by L. Lichfield, for Henry Cripps, Anno Dom. 1653. The Bodleian shelfmark for their copy of the pamphlet is Gough Oxf 45(5). It can be found on WING Film 509 item R2067.

³ An American scholar, Thornton S. Graves, working at the same time as Chambers, published the text of the Narrative with no commentary in his 'Notes on Puritanism and the Stage' in *Studies in Philology* 18 (1921), pp. 141-69. The only modern edition I could trace was a facsimile edition in the Garland *The English Stage: Attack and Defense 1577-1730* series edited by Arthur Freeman, *Tragi-Comoedia*, (New York, 1973) with a brief preface.

⁴ See, for example, *Drama of the English Renaissance I: The Tudor Period*, ed. by R.A. Fraser and Norman Rabkin (New York, 1976), p. 463.

⁵ *The Dictionary of National Biography*, The Compact Edition (Oxford, 1975), p. 1818.

⁶ *DNB* p. 1818.

⁷ Cited in Pamela Sheingorn, *The Easter Sepulchre in England*, Early Drama, Art and Music Reference Series, 5 (Kalamazoo, 1987), pp. 294-95.

⁸ Oxfordshire Record Office; Ms DD Par Witney c.9, ff.34, 43, and 49v.

⁹ Its full title is *The King Found at Southwell, and the Oxford Gigg playd, and Sung at Witney Wakes: With the Masque shewed before divers Courtiers, and Cavaliers, that went thither from Oxford, and severall Ketches and Songs at the said Wakes*. The pamphlet is BL E.336,14.

¹⁰ See Alexandra F. Johnston, 'Summer Festivals in the Thames Valley Counties', in *Custom, Culture and Community in the later Middle Ages*, ed. by T. Petitt and L. Søndergaard (Odense, 1994), pp. 37-56 and Alexandra F. Johnston and Sally-Beth MacLean, 'Reformation and resistance in the Thames/Severn parishes: the dramatic witness' in *The Parish in English Life 1400-1600*, ed. by Katherine L. French, Gary Gibbs and Beat Kümin (Manchester, 1997), 178-200.

¹¹ Alfred Harbage and Samuel Schoenbaum, *Annals of English Drama 975-1700* (Philadelphia, 1940), pp. 54-55.

¹² Fraser and Rabkin, p. 463.

¹³ Huntington Library, San Marino California; STTF Box 5.

¹⁴ *Annals*, pp. 78-79.

¹⁵ Fraser and Rabkin, p. 464.

'He pleyeth Herodes upon a scaffold hye'?

Pamela M. King

English medieval drama is a phenomenon of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, late for the Middle Ages even by English standards. No-one knows where it came from, although theories abound, from the now largely discredited view of E.K. Chambers and others that it slowly evolved from the sung Latin drama of the medieval church,¹ to the more current 'big bang' theory which sees it as a product of a particular set of socio-economic circumstances.² Although the work of *Records of Early English Drama* has done much in recent years to demonstrate that religious drama of some kind or another was played all over late medieval England, the surviving texts of the great cycles still mean that for scholars of the plays as literary texts it remains a predominantly northern phenomenon. That the earliest references to the medieval stage's most celebrated stock bombastic characters, Herod and Pilate, should occur in *The Canterbury Tales* is, accordingly, as troublesome as it is well known. Both references are associated with the Miller and his *Tale*. The Miller is first heard crying 'in Pilates voys' (line 3124) when he disrupts the orderly proceedings of the newly opened tale-telling competition, and it is Absolon, the failed lover in the Miller's fabliau parody of the Knight's courtly romance who, it is improbably claimed, 'pleyeth Herodes upon a scaffold hye' (line 3384).³ These references, comprehensible to any modern reader familiar with the fifteenth-century cycles from York, Wakefield, Chester and Coventry, clearly also held meaning for Chaucer and his London-based, late fourteenth-century audience. In what follows, I will offer some circumstantial evidence and some speculation about Absolon and his theatrical prowess. *The Miller's Tale* is a rich and self-sufficient, not to say over-read, narrative, but an understanding of its possible theatrical context may enrich the modern reader's appreciation of its range of imaginative resonances.

Absolon is a comic fantasy poised between the outlandish and the effeminate.

Crul was his heer, and as the gold it shoon,

Pamela King

And strouted as a fanne large and brode;
Ful streight and evene lay his joly shode.
His rode was reed, his eyen greye as goos.
With Poules window corven on his shoos,
In hoses rede he went fetisly.
Yclad he was ful smal and proprely
Al in a kirtel of a light waget;
Ful faire and thikke been his pointes set.
And thereupon he hadde a gay surplis
A whit as is the blosme upon the ris.
A mirie child he was, so God me save.
Wel koude he laten blood and clippe and shave,
And maken a chartre of lond or acquitaunce.
In twenty manere koude he tripe and daunce
After the scole of Oxenforde tho,
And with his legges casten to and fro,
And pleyen songes on a smal rubibile;
Therto he song som time a loud quible;
And as wel koude he pleye on a giterne.
In al th toun nas brewhous ne taverne
That he ne visited with his solas,
Ther any gailard tappestre was.
But sooth to seyn, he was somdeel squaymous
Of farting, and of speche daungerous. (Lines 3314-38)

His hair is outlandish by any standards. Generally it is considered to link him with Absolom in 2 Samuel who was hanged by his luxuriant hair from an oak tree. This can seem a delightful critical dead-end, if it were not that Adam of Usk in his partisan Lancastrian *Chronicle* compared the deposed Richard II with Absolon also.⁴ Chaucer is probably taking a satirical side-swipe at the petty disobediences of the minor clergy in matters such as the tonsure, using a comparison with Absolon in matters concerning pride in appearance which was voguish, even if the specific political reference is too late for the Tale. In general, however, the application of the tools of practical criticism to the portrait of Absolon, with his array of small town accomplishments, while yielding such rich results which permit the reader to conceive a vivid individual identity for a pathetic burlesque character, conveniently evade the question of what a 'normal' parish clerk for Chaucer might be like.

'The name of the office is hardly distinctive: it is almost misleading', wrote Toulmin Smith in 1857.⁵ Both before and after the Reformation the privilege of appointing parish clerks was a matter of dispute between priest and parish, but by whichever means they were appointed they had freehold of their office and could not be turned out without just cause. The parish clerks of London in particular were incorporated by a charter of Henry III and authorised to make by-laws and ordinances for their own regulation.⁶ The office appears to have changed little between the earliest records, which considerably predate Chaucer, and the nineteenth century except insofar as the activity surrounding the divine office which they supported was changed by the Reformation. The parish clerk, before and after the Reformation, has always been connected with the carrying out of the supportive duties and rituals concerned with the services of the church. His duties are distinct from those of the churchwarden, being concerned with the management of the conduct of church ritual and ceremony rather than the administration of church security, finance and fabric. Before the Reformation parish clerks were often, but not always in holy orders, so, while Absolon might have been tonsured, he need not have been. They seem to have been chosen from among those who, had they better social origins, would have sought a clerical career, and held an office 'half-way between that of a curate or assistant minister and that of a church menial'. Dr Johnson remarked in 1781 that 'a parish clerk should be a man who is able to make a will or write a letter for anybody in the parish'.⁷ They assisted the priest in the administration of divine office, such as censuring, taking up the collection, leading the responses and singing.

Parish clerks, seen as the poor parish's substitute for a deacon or sub-deacon, were chosen from amongst promising scholars in local schools and were in their turn expected to engage in teaching the children of the parish, duties laid down in 1230 in the Decretals of Gregory IX.⁸ In particular, they supported themselves from the office of *aquaebajalus*, that is of carrying the holy water around the parish for the priest's use, from which they received a customary allowance and also their popular alternative name, 'holy-water clerks'. Their other income seems to have come chiefly from customary gratuities from the wealthier members of the congregation every Sunday, as well as bread at Christmas, eggs at Easter and sheaves at harvest time.⁹ Most of the duties feature either directly or obliquely in Chaucer's portrait of an enthusiastic and accomplished holder of the office, and an understanding of the means by which parish clerks received their remuneration goes some way towards explaining Absolon's sycophancy with the more impressionable members of the congregation, his evident need to supplement his income from other sources, and his conviction that gifts of food and money will help to win Alison's heart (lines 3375-82).

The relationship of the late medieval office of parish clerk to general clerical rules of celibacy, critical to an understanding of Absolon's moral status, if such things matter in this Tale, seem to have been anomalous. By the 1420s in London the office had emerged as a new lay profession, whereas the records from Chaucer's period suggest they were in transition from the previous position of being in minor orders. Norman James, who is currently editing the Bede Roll of the London Parish Clerks' Company, first compiled in 1449, writes,

In fourteenth-century London the evidence is fragmentary, but we have examples of married parish clerks, although in at least one case there is a glimpse of a stalled ecclesiastical career in the will of a married parish clerk leaving books appropriate to priestly studies. We do not have enough source material to suggest exactly when the majority of the London parish clerks was first composed of laymen, content to remain in this office with no aspirations to join the higher ranks of the clergy. By the time of the Bede Roll this was a fait accompli.¹⁰

The position under canon law was set out in 1429 by the Official Principal of the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Lyndewoode, in his *Provinciale*. According to Lyndewoode, the parish clerk married once may enjoy all the privileges of a cleric in minor orders. Should he marry more than once, however, he will be considered a layman except that, as long as he continues to wear clerical habit and the tonsure, he retains benefit of clergy under the law.¹¹ Married or celibate, the holy water clerk, like the friar, might in the course of his duties, visit townswomen in their homes while their husbands were away, something which attracted a certain reputation for sexual seduction to the office. At least one contemporary lyric appears to suggest a rather racey reputation for the office:

Ladd I the dance a Midsomer Day:
I made smale trippe as, soth for to say.
Jack oure haly-water clerk, com by the way,
And loked me upon – he thought that it was gay.
Thought I on no gile . . .

The victim of this clerical lothario continues to think on no guile after a night of passion,

Till my gurdle aros, my wombe wax out.¹²

The humour of Absolon's chaste ardour would presumably be enriched for contemporary readers if they were accustomed to a stereotypically sexually predatory image of the holy water clerk. Such stereotypical expectations would also go some way towards explaining Gervase the smith's laconic reception of the clerk who turns up playing the thwarted lover in his smithy in the middle of the night (lines 3766-71). Chaucer, however, never once refers to the parish clerk's customary duties as *aquaebajulus* in the Tale. Absolon certainly does enjoy intimate encounters with local wives of the parish:

This Absolon that jolif was and gay,
Gooth with a censer on the haliday,
Sensynge the wyves of the parisshe faste;
And many a lovely look on hem he caste . . . (3339-43)

Chaucer, however focuses not on aspersion with holy water but on the other clerical duty of censuring. In a tale in which so much depends on water, or the lack of it, this may seem a lost opportunity. Chaucer was evidently confident that such were the stereotypical expectations of the holy water clerk that they could be realised in their frustration; his strategic choice of incense over holy water is then free to contribute to the construction of the obsessively hygiene-conscious Absolon whom Paul Strohm has memorably called, 'the most orally fastidious character in literature'.¹³

Anyone fitted to fulfill the office of parish clerk was bound to be an asset in the production of religious plays. It was after all the clerk who had charge of all aspects of the ceremonial trappings that accompanied the round of church feasts and fasts, as well as the conduct of the cotidian rituals of the parish. He was a modest scholar, with sufficient literacy to run a parish school, he could lead choral singing, read sacred text coherently, process and genuflect in an exemplary way, and care for and dispose correctly all the church vestments and plate. A parish clerk was, therefore, vocationally practised in what we might call stage-management and public self-presentation. Unsurprisingly, therefore, we find parish clerks featuring in English parish drama records, deployed in a number of ways in ensuring that the show went on. As far as the great cycles are concerned, in York we find that Robert Hewyk, a parish clerk from Leeds, was, along with Thomas Fitt, tapiter, and Henry Clayton, weaver, both of York, appointed pageant-master by the mercers in 1454.¹⁴ In Coventry the city waits were also clerks at Holy Trinity, so references in the sixteenth century

records there to payments for singing clerks who participated in the plays probably refer to them.¹⁵ Ingram assumes that the city waits served as singing clerks at Holy Trinity, but it seems at least possible in view of the elaborate rules governing the office of clerk enshrined in the 1462 constitution of Holy Trinity parish, that the combination of duties might be expressed the other way round.¹⁶

In the southern counties, beyond the scope of the great urban play cycles, there is more evidence of parish activity which matches Absolon's *curriculum vitae*, although the involvement of the clerk is not explicitly mentioned. From Salisbury's records, Audrey Douglas has demonstrated conclusively that dancing was an integral part of pre-Reformation parish activity as part of liturgical ceremony and as a means of raising money for the church or cathedral fabric. The money is receipted in churchwardens accounts. It is particularly, but not exclusively, at Whit that processional ceremonies seem to have included dance.¹⁷ Regrettably most parish entertainment from Chaucer's time in which parish clerks might have participated goes unremarked, and it is only after the Reformation that we learn of the persistence of ancient customs, by which time the church and its scions are firmly set against the traditional festive activities of their parishioners. This is not always the case, however, and Barbara Palmer in her search for records of early dramatic activity in West Yorkshire, discovered one parish clerk, John Birkbie of All Saints, Moor Monkton, who appears to have been a throw back to a livelier age, for he

... vesthe veine vndecent apparell namelie great britcheis cut and drawn oute with sarcenet and taffitie, and great Ruffes laid on with laceis of gold and silk and of late toke vpon him to minister or saie devine Service in the Churche of Rippon vpon a holie daie in the assemblie of the people in his Cote without gowne or Cloke with a long sword by his side And he is also vehementlie Suspected to be a notable ffornicator, and he haiethe divers times in the night time bene taken abroad in the towne of Rippon by the wakerman and other officers with Lewde women, and he vseth to Daunce verie offencivelie at alehowsesand mariages in the presence of Common people to the verie evell example of others and the greate Slaunder of the ministerie ...¹⁸

One cannot help but imagine that, in the ecclesiastical climate of 1567, this behaviour was the equivalent of the conscript appearing on parade with his underpants on his head contrivedly seeking dishonourable discharge.

Alexandra Johnston's work on plays in the Thames Valley has also generated another possible context for Absolon's playing activities. One of the problems, or elisions, of reading the Miller's Tale has too often been that one mention of Absolon's playing Herod leads to an association with the mystery cycles, northern and far too late, though probably cheek by jowl on the same undergraduate course on Middle English literature. Chaucer's audience in the late fourteenth century must have found the idea of a New Testament play, performed on a scaffold in the vicinity of Oxford at least comprehensible enough for it to trigger humour. Johnston finds that, 'what is clear is that small scale Biblical drama was far more common than the ambitious processional plays of the midland and northern cities', and a particularly common form of parish drama was the Easter play, possibly para-liturgical in form, and a useful element in bringing in modest amounts of revenue to the parish.¹⁹ The records are still all too late for Chaucer, but the scale, the parish as the organisational structure, and the mode of performance in a number of places along the Thames Valley as well as more widely across southern England, or so it seems as the Records of Early English Drama project develops, suggest a playing tradition more appropriate for our reading of Absolon's dramatic activities than the great cycles of York or Coventry. The records of all such events survive in the churchwardens' accounts, because it was the churchwarden who was responsible for raising funds. This does not, however, make the churchwardens the initiators of the entertainment itself; the money collected swelled the fabric funds, but the likeliest 'facilitators', because of the nature of their regular parish duties, were the parish clerks.

Chaucer may have been a detached cosmopolitan bystander at the performance of a parish biblical play on one of his visits to the environs of Oxford. We know that he had other reasons for visiting Oxford which also made their mark on *The Miller's Tale*. One of his associates was the philosopher Ralph Strode of the Merton school of astronomers, and Chaucer's young son Lewis, for whom he wrote the *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, lived, and probably went to school, in Oxford. One of the same circle of astronomers at Merton was Nicholas Lynn, whose fashionable theories on the measuring of shadows Chaucer makes enthusiastic use of elsewhere. Derek Pearsall has suggested that Nicholas in *The Miller's Tale* was named after him.²⁰

Oxford may have inspired the provincialism of the *Miller's Tale*, and the character and astrological interests of Nicholas, but I want to suggest that Chaucer did not have to leave London for the theatrical inspiration of the Tale, nor for the character of Absolon, although their transposition into Oxfordshire depended too on parish playing traditions in that vicinity. For evidence of parish clerks engaged in Bible plays in Chaucer's lifetime one need go no further than Clerkenwell. Not far from the City,

Clerkenwell was the semi-rural site of the annual Bartholomew Fair, close both to Smithfield and to the surviving medieval church of St Bartholomew the Great. The name Clerkenwell derives from the fact that throughout the late fourteenth century, the independent confraternity of parish clerks of London performed their plays there. The origins of the London confraternity are obscure, although it is traditionally said to have been granted a charter by Henry III in 1233. On 22 January 1441/2, Henry VI granted a charter confirming the foundation of the body, though no trace of the earlier thirteenth century document has ever been discovered, and the confraternity made no return to the court of Chancery as was required of all guilds in 1389. The 1442 charter refers, however, to forty years' or more previous activity by the brotherhood.²¹

A celebrated performance by the brotherhood was that staged before Richard II in 1391, for which payment of £10 is recorded in the *Issue Rolls*:

11 July. To the clerks of the parish churches and to divers other clerks of the city of London. In money paid to them in discharge of £10 which the Lord the King commanded to be paid to them of his gift on account of the play of the 'Passion of Our Lord and the Creation of the World' by them performed at Skynnerwell after the feast of St Bartholomew last past. By writ of Privy Seal amongst the mandates of this term. – £10.²²

The London antiquarian, Stow, provides an account of a production in 1390:

The third [well] is called Clarkes well, or Clarken well, and is curbed about square with hard stone, not farre from the west ende of Clarken well Church, but close without the wall that incloseth it: the sayd Church tooke the name of the Well, and the Well tooke name of the Parish Clarkes in London, who in old time were accustomed there yearly to assemble and to play some large hystorie of holy Scripture. And for example of later time, to wit in the yeare 1390, the 14. of Richard the second, I read the Parish Clarkes of London, on the 18 of July, playd Enterludes at Skinners well neare vnto Clarkes well which play continued three dayes together, the King, Queene, and Nobles being present.²³

Stow follows this immediately with an account of a further production attended by royalty in 1409, and lasting eight days. Adams believes that the plays were

presented regularly from 1384 onwards, possibly deriving from some original connection with St Bartholomew's Fair instituted by Rahere to pay for his new buildings at Smithfield. The plays are traceable to the early sixteenth century.²⁴

There is no definitive dating for *The Canterbury Tales*, let alone *The Miller's Tale*, although 1387 is usually cited as *terminus a quo*. The clerk's plays took place in July 1390, the middle of a hot summer during which plague raged in London,²⁵ and during which Geoffrey Chaucer had the misfortune to be stuck in the capital in his position as Clerk of the King's Works. The post was, as Crow and Olsen put it in the *Life Records*, 'no sinecure', and involved arrangements for the

procurement, transportation, and care of a great store of many kinds of building materials, tools, implements, containers, machines etc., needed for construction and repair. If any of the materials were carried away he had to see they were brought back. Also he had to supervise the sale of branches and bark from the trees purveyed for the king's works . . .²⁶

From his appointment he was engaged in work to complete a wharf at the Tower of London, work inherited from his predecessor and completed by June 1390. His other big job that summer was superintending work at St George's Chapel, Windsor, but he was not commissioned to do that until July 12. During the same period he was engaged in superintending the erection and dismantling of scaffolds for two jousts in Smithfield, one in May and one in October. A mandate was issued on 1 July to meet the costs he incurred in May.²⁷

This was an anxious time for Chaucer, dealing with eminent men like Henry Yevele, as well as other workmen, holding responsibility for quantities of capital plant, meeting contract deadlines, and carrying large pay-packets around London and its suburbs. The records are confused, but it seems that during the same summer he was personally mugged and robbed at least twice.²⁸ Derek Pearsall observes that Chaucer's involvement in the tournaments may have led him to revise the description of the lists in *The Knight's Tale*. The composition of that tale is known to predate the *Tales* as a whole, as it is mentioned in the *Legend of Good Women*.²⁹ It is at least conceivable that *The Miller's Tale* the complex companion piece to *The Knight's Tale* was inspired by Chaucer's experiences that same summer. He had become perforce during that hot summer intimately knowledgeable about carpenters, their materials, tools and work, as can be observed from the indenture by which dead stock was transferred to Chaucer by Elham, his predecessor as Clerk of Works in November 1389

. . . videlicet: Infra palacium Westmonasterii: viii paria aundyerns quorum pedes ii franguntur et devastantur i par scipparum i patella i rake i ladel et i soudour pro officio plumbarii i ymago eris ii ymagine lapidee non depicte vii ymagine facte ad similitudinem regum xv clavi vocati cleryngnaill pro officio vitriarii ii molendina manualia quorum deficiu[n]t ii paria wynches i lathe pro officio carpentarii i parva campana vocata Wyron i grossum fern[um] cum toto apparatu i crowe ferri i instrumentum vocatum ramme cuius stipes (frangitur et devastatur) i grossus anulus in superiori parte et les stayinghokes franguntur et devastantur i trabs ferri stannati cum statera lignea diversa pondera plumbi continencia Ccxli libras ii grossa fanes nuper facta pro magna aula ii spyndles ferri pro eisdem i olla plumbea pro glutine v casus ferrei pro fenestris vitreis certe parcelle unius carre facte pro Rege Edwardo videlicet ii paria rotarum ferro ligaturum iiii pecie pre celura camere viii pecie ordinate pro costeriis dicte camere iiii pecie pro costeris aule i somere cum axella ii staybarres ferri stannati xii pecie meremii pro carra predicta i countre coopertum de novo cum viridi panno pro domo compoti i stopp i botell pro inclaustro i pixis pro pulvere i piciosia ii scale i cable xii hirdles pro scaffoldes i par de lystis duplicatis continentibus in circuitu xxxi perticatas i quartronus viii libre stanni pro soudura xxi panelli vitrei in casibus ferreis firmati pro fenestris camere regis CCxv petre de Stapulton continentes xliii doliata i par ptentegarnettarum pro quodam ostio i par grossarum potentegarnettarum cum iiii boltis ferreis ii colers ferri numper facta pro quodam ponte vertibili iii vertivelli ferrei pro ostiis iiii hopes ferri pro rotis carri ix [a]nuli ferrei pro barruris predictarum lystarum i vetus trabs pro ponder' i vetus ferramentum ii tabule pro officio vitriarii quarum una est parva ii slynges pro le crane ii tribula ferrata quarum i debilis ii crowdeweyns xii petre de Reygate pro ii fenestris.

[that is to say: within the palace of Westminster: 8 pairs of andirons of which the feet of 2 are broken and destroyed, 1 pair of dry measures, 1 small pan, 1 rake, 1 ladle, and 1 solder (soldering iron?) for the office of plumber, 1 statue (*eris*?), 2 statues of unpainted stone, 7 statues made in the likeness of the king, 15 keys called 'cleryngnaills' for the office of the glazier, two mills,

'He pleyeth Herodes upon a scaffold hye'?

the handles of which are missing, 2 pairs of winches, 1 lathe for the office of carpenter, 1 poor bell called 'Wyron', 1 gross windlasses with all apparatus, 1 iron crow-bar, 1 instrument called a ram of which the posts are broken and destroyed, 1 gross of rings of which the fixing hooks at the upper ends are broken and destroyed, 1 steel-yard of tinned iron with a balance of diverse woods containing weights of lead, 241 pound weights, 2 gross banners newly made for the great hall, 2 spindles of iron for them, 1 lead pot for glue, 5 cases of iron for the window glass, certain parcels relating to a carriage made for King Edward, that is to say 2 pairs of wheels with iron braces, 4 pieces for the canopy of the chamber, 8 pieces ordained for the hangings of the same chamber, 4 pieces for the hangings of the hall, 1 beam with an axel, 2 staybars of tinned iron, 12 pieces of timber for the aforesaid carriage, 1 new counting-cloth with greenwood timbers for the counting house, 1 stoup, 1 butt for nails (?), 1 vessel for powder, 1 pick-axe, 2 scales, 1 cable, 12 hurdles for scaffolds, 1 pair of double lists containing 31 perches (banks of seating?) in its circuit, 1 quarter-weight, 8 pounds of tin for solder, 21 panes of fortified glass in cases of iron for the windows in the king's chamber, 215 Stapleton stones contained in 43 tuns, 1 pair of cross-garnet hinges for a certain door, 1 pair of large cross-garnet hinges with 4 bolts of iron, 2 collars of iron newly made for a certain drawbridge, 3 hinges of iron for doors, 4 hoops of iron for the wheels of a carriage, 9 rings of iron for the barriers of the aforesaid lists, 1 old shaft for a heavy old piece of ironwork, 2 tables for the office of glazier of which one is poor, 2 slings for the crane, 2 shovels of iron, one of them weak, 2 handcarts, 12 Reigate stones for 2 windows.]

This is just the inventory of items at Westminster, which include the scaffolds and barriers for the lists; he took into his keeping further miscellaneous items at the Tower (including one bucket and one frying pan) and more still at Sheen, Eltham, Kennington, Childern Langley and Byfleet, all equally assorted.³⁰ Whether Chaucer assiduously checked them off one by one, and to what extent he had hands-on experience of the use of such items in the following months, is anyone's guess. He would have been familiar with projects such as the out-of-town work that John the

carpenter is described as being involved in, would know how long it could take to fetch a load of timber, and possibly encountered local residents as dense as the monk who is unable to tell Absolon quite where the carpenter might be. In short, there can be no doubt that he was involved in the world of the building trades and their tackle, and that in the course of his duties he was commuting to and fro between Smithfield, Westminster and the Tower, so could not have avoided knowing about, if not watching, the elaborate amateur theatricals of the parish clerks at Clerkenwell.³¹

Theatricality in the *Miller's Tale* goes well beyond what inspiration Chaucer may have derived from plays at Clerkenwell in his construction of Absolon's character as recent criticism has acknowledged. John Gamin and Linda Lomperis have both noticed how the Tale is preoccupied with dressing-up and with role-playing although Absolon is the only one labeled as an actor.³² Alison is dressed as the petit bourgeois wife, Absolon plays at being the stereotypical courtly lover, and Nicholas pretends to be a foreteller of the future, which leads to his persuading John and Alison, albeit for different reasons, to play at Noah and his wife. There, by a couple of simple moves, we are back with Bible plays.

What I want to do now is to push the acting analogy a little further and suggest that amateur performance of Bible plays provides more than just a footnote in this Tale; it supplies a set of metaphorical resonances based on the idea of pretending to be what you are not, which supply the mainspring of the Tale's satirical thrust. Modern readers persist in seeing Absolon as effete, even effeminate. There is the hair for a start. His eyes, too, provide us with a detail of indeterminate significance. Grey eyes are associated with the ideal courtly lady; his are a debased burlesque version, grey as a goose (line 3315). But there is no innuendo about Absolon's sexual orientation to match that directed at that other flaxen-haired falsetto, Chaucer's Pardoner; on the contrary Absolon is rather keen on women, if fastidious and precise about his appearance. To be able to sing falsetto is a skill, not an affliction, and there is nothing to suggest that Absolon spoke like the Pardoner.

The balance of probability is that no women participated in the London Clerks' plays, as the organising body there was exclusively male, so some of the participants would have developed the skills necessary to take on female roles. There has been some debate in recent years about whether women took part in medieval theatricals, which there is not the space to rehearse here.³³ For present purposes I want to suggest that some of the humour of the *Miller's Tale* depends on Chaucer's having seen biblical plays with all male casts. In particular, the joke on Absolon, the multi-talented parish clerk and seasoned performer, is not simply that he is rather effete and, therefore, woefully miscast as Herod, but that he is modeled on either an individual or

a stereotypical cross-dresser, a parish-clerk actor accustomed because of his appearance, as well as certain physical and vocal skills, to being cast in some female role, even as the Virgin Mary. To understand the portrait of Absolon in this way explains how he can at once suggest characteristics which the modern reader perceives as effeminate, but can also be a show-off, would-be courtly lover, and womaniser.

The theatrical analogy can be pushed further. There is a proto-mystery play in *The Miller's Tale*, but it is not a play containing a Virgin Mary or a Herod, it is a Noah Play. The London parish clerks performed 'The Passion of Our Lord and the Creation of the World', one assumes not in that order, which may have contained a Noah's ark. Alexandra Johnston has pointed out that although parish Bible plays were often Easter plays, the Brome and Northampton plays of Abraham and Isaac fall into the category of parish dramas. Old Testament episodes were not, it seems, exclusive to the large civic cycles.

The famous burlesque action of a Noah play involved the ante-diluvial marital strife of ancient Noah and his wife. It is frequently remarked that John the carpenter and Alison belong to the stock *fabliau mal-mariée* tradition, often connected, as in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*, with the story of Joseph and Mary. In *The Miller's Tale* another biblical partnership is invoked, however, as John and Alison end the story playing Noah and his wife in their kneading tubs. The 'play' is a construct of Nicholas's imagination, and, if Nicholas the intelligent outsider who gets the girl is Chaucer's surrogate here, it is the author's imagination which puts this provincial Noah and Mrs Noah into kneading tubs in a village duck-pond. Epic theatre is always difficult to produce convincingly on parish scale.

If Alison, then, is Mrs Noah in our proto-drama, she needs to be shrewish. This she qualifies for well. Her voice is 'as loude and yerne/As any swalwe sittinge on a berne' (3257-58). The contemporary rules of female speech emphasise the desirability of silence and the need for demure speech, which call to mind Chaucer's paragons Griselda and Virginia.³⁴ The only exception to the rule is the bold speech of female virgin martyrs, and indeed when Alison has her first encounter with Nicholas, fearing rape, she does speak entirely in expletives; the trouble is that she is no virgin, and we remain unconvinced that she means it. Her 'Out! Harrow!' would, nonetheless, not be inappropriate on the medieval stage. She also, however, needs to be a man.

The famously anthologised portrait of Alison at the beginning of the *Tale* generally provokes commentary along the lines that Alison is a picture of female vitality which is, nonetheless, at odds with the courtly archetype of the sexually attractive woman. Generally commentary focuses on the fields of imagery, farmyard and mercantile, as the explanation for this and demonstrates how the portrait therefore

differs from that of Emily in *The Knight's Tale*. Alison's appearance merits another look, however. She is very tall and, in modern parlance, 'straight-up-and-down'. To be as tall as a mast, upright as a bolt and slender as a weasel, is to be more like a youth than a voluptuous girl. Then there is the loud voice, the elaborate figure-concealing dress – again the arbiters of conduct proscribe superfluity of clothing³⁵ – in particular the broad collar and the apron, and the plucked eyebrows. Absolon may not be the only female impersonator in this Tale.

There is, of course, a robust strain of contemporary criticism that finds interest in the complexities surrounding gender in *The Miller's Tale*, all based on the observation that no-one inhabits his or her gender identity in a simple way. Laskaya has remarked that *The Miller's Tale* seems to see men who worship women according to the courtly love tradition as effeminate, that all the men in the Tale seek to control their world through their own versions of masculinity: John is the working man who creates with his hands, Nicholas the intellectual who creates with his mind, Absolon is the courtly lover whose goal is to love women.³⁶ All are vulnerable because their culturally constructed masculine roles depend upon assumptions about other men and about women, which turn out to be unreliable. Lomperis finds that there is no evidence that Alison is caged by John, whose main attitude to her seems loving and protective, that ostensibly the Tale pits Nicholas's aggressive masculinity against Absolon's passive effeminacy, yet it is Absolon who wields the phallic coulter at the end. Alison is not so much a passive sex-object either, but seems to be Nicholas's willing partner. Her conclusion is that all the characters are highly theatrical. She remarks that cross-dressing characterised the medieval theatre, that people gain attention in the Tale by their acting abilities, dressing up, role-playing and keeping up appearances. She relates this to fashions at the court of Richard II where heterosexuality may not have been the only acceptable sexual practice.³⁷ Elaine Tuttle Hansen's focus is the denouement, where the emphasis on Alison's 'queynt' shifts to one on her 'hole', from the specifically female organ to 'the undifferentiated anus', concluding that

this shift is set up and is writ large by the subsequent substitution of Nicholas's body for Alisoun's, a maneuver that returns agency to the male but in doing so also exposes the humiliating and frightening lack of difference between male and female bodies . . .³⁸

She observes that Absolon's first anxiety when he reels back from his kiss is that he has kissed a man's mouth rather than a woman's. She goes on to explore further the

sequence of confusions arising from what she calls 'cross-undressing' as anticipatory of Freudian narrative.³⁹

I find the same features in the Tale's characterisations, but would wish to tie them to a more specific and literal source. Yes, there is a 'humorous substitution of the male body for the female', not just in the articulation of body parts at the Tale's denouement, but throughout. Absolon's capacity for manly action is fatally underestimated because he chooses on occasion to play the woman, and Alison in many respects *is* a man.

Chaucer's experiences as Clerk of Works in the long hot summer of 1390, working on the scaffolds at Smithfield, may well have inspired more than the description of the lists in *The Knight's Tale*. In the same summer he spent a lot of time in intimate contact with artisans in the building trade, particularly carpenters, and had every opportunity to observe the all-male amateur theatricals put on nearby by the Company of Parish Clerks. His court audience would have shared much of this experience, as they attended both the tournament and the plays, and we know from Froissart's account of the rickety nature of the scaffolds from which the tournament was viewed, that a story which ended with a carpenter falling from a great height and breaking his arm is unlikely to have missed its mark.⁴⁰ *The Miller's Tale* is an acknowledged palimpsest of *The Knight's Tale*, so it seems entirely appropriate to suggest that they were polished into the form in which they survive in *The Canterbury Tales* together. That being the case, it is unsurprising that both Tales draw elements of their imaginative worlds, and contemporary references for their original target audiences, from the experiences Chaucer had and the events he witnessed in London during that summer.

NOTES

¹ E.K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903), 2, pp. 69-70.

² See, for example, R.B. Dobson, 'Craft Guilds and City: The Historical Origins of the York Plays Reassessed', in *The Stage as Mirror*, ed. by Alan E. Knight (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 91-106.

³ All references to *The Canterbury Tales* are taken from Larry D. Benson (gen. ed.), *The Riverside Chaucer* (Boston, 1987).

⁴ Nigel Saul, 'Richard II: Author of his Own Downfall', *History Today* (September 1999), 36-41, p. 37 points out that Lancastrian chroniclers used comparisons with Absalom, Solomon and Chosroes of Persia to imply that Richard was brought down by the turning of Fortune's wheel.

⁵ J. Toulmin Smith, *The Parish, its Power and Obligations at Law* (London, 1857), p. 197.

⁶ John Steer, *Parish Law* (London, 1830), p. 99.

⁷ Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *English Local Government from the Revolution to the Municipal Corporations Act: the Parish and the County* (London, 1906), pp. 32-34, especially 32 n.2.

⁸ P.H. Ditchfield, *The Parish Clerk* (London, 1907), p. 17, Reginald H. Adams, *The Parish Clerks of London* (London and Chichester, 1971), pp. 4-5.

⁹ Steer, pp. 96-102; Adams, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰ I am very grateful to Dr Norman James of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts for his illuminating correspondence on the subject. An edition of the Bede Roll of the Parish Clerk's Company, Guildhall Library, London, MS 4889, with an explanatory introduction, is being prepared by Norman and Valerie James for publication by the London Record Society.

¹¹ Ditchfield, p. 18.

¹² Gonville and Caius College Cambridge, MS 383, 41, quoted from *Medieval English Lyrics: a Critical Anthology*, ed. by R.T. Davies (London: Faber, 1963), p. 205.

¹³ Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), p. 135.

¹⁴ Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, *York*, 2 vols, Records of Early English Drama (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), I, p. 87.

¹⁵ R.W. Ingram, *Coventry*, Records of Early English Drama, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), pp. 491, 183, 475-76, 478-80

¹⁶ Ditchfield, pp. 36-38.

¹⁷ Audrey Douglas, "'Owre Thanssynge Day": Parish Dance and Procession in

Salisbury', *English Parish Drama*, ed. by Alexandra Johnston and Wim Hüsken (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 41-63.

¹⁸ Barbara D. Palmer, "'Anye disguised person": Parish Entertainment in West Yorkshire', *English Parish Drama*, pp. 81-93, 89.

¹⁹ Alexandra F. Johnston, "'What revels are in hand": Dramatic Activities Sponsored by the Parishes of the Thames Valley', *English Parish Drama*, pp. 95-104, 98-99.

²⁰ Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 217.

²¹ Adams, pp. 13-14.

²² Ditchfield, p. 131

²³ John Stow, *A Survey of London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), p. 15.

²⁴ Adams, p. 7.

²⁵ *The Westminster Chronicle 1381-1394*, ed. and trans. by L.C. Hector and B. Harvey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 438-39.

²⁶ Martin M. Crow and Claire C. Olsen, *Chaucer Life Records* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 473.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 470-72.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 477-89.

²⁹ Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, p. 212.

³⁰ Crow and Olsen, *Life Records*, pp. 406-08.

³¹ In 1419, one of the confraternity of Parish Clerks of London rose to be Town Clerk and wrote the *Liber Albis* (Adams, 14). His name was John Carpenter, a fact which must remain simply a coincidence, as Nicholas Rogers reports, 'I am afraid that there is no John Carpenter among the few parish clerks from fourteenth century London who are known by name' (private correspondence).

³² John M. Gamin, *Chaucerian Theatricality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Linda Lomperis, 'Bodies that Matter in the Court of Late Medieval England and in Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*', *Romanic Review*, 86 (1995), 243-64.

³³ See Peter Meredith, "'Item for a grone – iijd" – records and performance', *Records of Early English Drama: Proceedings of the First Colloquium*, ed. JoAnna Dukta (Toronto, 1979), p. 55, n.42, who points out that what evidence there is all points to women's roles having been taken by men. Meg Twycross, "'Transvestism'" in the Mystery Plays', *Medieval English Theatre* 5:2 (1983), 123-180, adheres to the same argument, supported by practical experiment. On the other side, Jeremy Goldberg, 'Craft Guilds, the Corpus Christi Play and Civic Government', *The Government of Medieval York: Essays in Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter*, ed. by Sarah Rees-Jones (York, 1997), pp. 141-65, 146-47, has recently suggested that the scant evidence of women's participation in civic ceremonial is connected with the fact that the survival of records is directly related to

the growth of civic control over mystery plays, but that it is reasonable to speculate that women may have performed in the civic cycle plays before their participation came to be proscribed by the controlling civic authorities.

³⁴ Margaret Hallisey, *Clean Maids, True Wives, Steadfast Widows: Chaucer's Women and Medieval Codes of Conduct*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1993), pp. 59-74.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-34.

³⁶ Anne Laykaska, *Chaucer's Approach to Gender in The Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995).

³⁷ Lomperis, 'Bodies that Matter'.

³⁸ Elaine Tuttle Hansen, *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1992), p. 228.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 231-36.

⁴⁰ Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, p. 213.

Brussels, Joanna of Castile, and the Art of Theatrical Illustration (1496)

Gordon Kipling

On the ninth of December 1496, the city of Brussels welcomed its new Archduchess, Joanna of Castile, who had come to Flanders to marry the Archduke Philip. The political moment was a particularly portentous one; this dynastic marriage between a daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain and a son of the Emperor Maximilian I and Mary of Burgundy was soon to bring Spain into Hapsburg control. Their son, the Emperor Charles V, would extend the Hapsburg dominion over most of Europe and across the seas into the New World. At the time, of course, no one could have guessed that Joanna would bring quite such an impressive political dowry to her marriage with the Archduke Philip. For them, the Archduke's marriage held out the more immediate promise of enlisting the Spanish as their allies against the French.¹ That was more than reason enough to stage one of the largest and most complex civic triumphs that Flanders had yet seen.

According to the fashion of Flemish entries, the show, which took place at night, was lit by torches mounted atop booth-shaped pageant stages. As was their custom, the Chambers of Rhetoric devised and performed the pageants, and the scale of the show, as measured by the number and variety of pageant stages, was designed to rival the famous civic triumphs of the Burgundian past. The Chambers of Bruges had staged a twenty-seven pageant show for Philip the Good in 1440, and the Ghent Rhetoricians' famous triumph of 1458 consisted of about twenty such pageants. The twenty-nine pageants staged by the Brussels guilds on this occasion bested those celebrated shows and staked the city's claim of pre-eminence among its rivals. They also tested the ingenuity of the guilds, for each of the brilliantly-lit booth stages would have to present a scene drawn from biblical history or classical myth appropriate to Joanna's marriage to the Archduke Philip the Fair and her inauguration as Archduchess of Austria.

As a memorial of this important occasion, an extraordinary manuscript

containing some 62 illustrations of the event was prepared, almost certainly for presentation to the Archduchess.² For historians of the medieval theatre, these illustrations are extremely precious, for they constitute the earliest attempt we have to produce something like pictorial records of an actual theatrical performance.³ They purport to be, as no earlier illustrations can, illustrations of what actually happened in a particular theatrical performance at a verifiable time and place. Potentially, at least, they have the power to embody our ideas of the medieval theatre with solid substance, to give them a local habitation and a name. They are unusual in yet another sense. There are no other detailed records of the event to document this important occasion. Neither civic records nor guild records exist, and there remain few and very undetailed narrative reports.⁴ The armies of Louis XIV have been very hard on such documents as once may have existed, and we are left with this visual report alone.⁵

For these reasons, Meg Twycross and I are planning an edition of the manuscript with commentary. What I propose to do here is very much a preliminary report limited to one main point. I'd like to examine the manuscript's claim to documentary authority. To what extent can such a manuscript as this, in the absence of more traditional records, constitute a reliable record of dramatic and cultural performance? In what senses can the artist claim to be producing something like an accurate visual record of the dramatic spectacle? Consider, to begin with, the practical difficulties of producing such a record. How does the artist manage to compose some 58 illustrations *ad vivum*? Is such a feat of artistic prowess even possible? Does he run from place to place madly making sketches as he goes? Were there dress rehearsals that he might have attended? Did the actors pose for him before or after the event?

Let us begin with the construction of the manuscript. There were originally at least 66 folios containing 62 illustrations, but in its present form, it contains only 63 folios and 60 illustrations because two of the original illustrations have been excised and have disappeared.⁶ The illustrations conventionally appear on the recto folios opposite brief explanatory texts on the preceding verso folios. These texts rarely do more than identify the subject of the opposing illustration: 'This scene represents how Solomon, the wisest of kings, married the daughter of the King of Egypt. Thus with great joy Lord Philip took to wife the admirable Joanna of Castille in Brabant'. Four of the original illustrations lie outside the major programme of theatrical illustrations; they consist of a frontispiece showing Archangel Michael slaying a dragon (1v), a tailpiece illustration of the Brussels Town Hall (this latter illustration, alas, is one of the missing-in-action casualties of the manuscript), and two folios of heraldic coats-of-arms relating to the married couple (60r, 61r). The 58 remaining illustrations (including in this count one missing illustration) are equally divided between 29

illustrations of the Archduchess' procession (on the rectos of fols 3-31) and 29 of the booth stages which the Archduchess encountered in the streets that December evening (on the rectos of fols 32-59).

The frontispiece and tailpiece illustrations, which bracket the entire collection of images, provide an essential interpretative context. Both emphasize civic rather than archducal power. By beginning with an image of St. Michael, the manuscript makes clear that what follows must be understood as a reflection of Brussels' civic authority. St Michael, as well as being the patron of the town's cathedral, also served as the city's patron saint and in this role appeared on the civic seal. He was to Brussels what the Agnus Dei symbol was to Rouen – an expression of both religious and civic identity. By 1455, when Martin van Rode's gilded, bronze statue of St Michael was hoisted to the top of the massive, central tower of the Brussels Town Hall, it had become the most visible and dominant symbol of Brussels' civic authority.⁷ The artist then reinforced this civic point of view by concluding the decorative programme of the manuscript with an illustration of the Brussels Town Hall over which the emblem of St Michael presides. In so doing, he pointedly encapsulates his book of images within two potent icons of civic power and authority. Since he has enclosed even the manuscript's emblems of archducal power – two folios of heraldic achievements relative to Philip and Joanna – between these civic symbols, the artist seems to be making a point about the relationship of civic to princely authority. As we shall see, he makes this point consistently throughout the manuscript, and in surprising ways.

At first glance, the original division of the processional and theatrical images into two groups of 29 illustrations each strikes one as curious. This number seems too remarkable to be mere coincidence. If we look at the nature of the illustrations, however, I think we can see that the artist has made a conscious decision to make up the number of processional illustrations to match the number of stage illustrations. In other words, what has happened here I think is that the Archduchess probably *did* encounter precisely 29 booth stages in the streets of Brussels that evening (we will examine this point in detail below). The artist has allocated one folio to the illustration of each of these structures, and then decided to provide a matching number of processional illustrations in order to suggest that the procession and stages were equally important and thus equally deserving of preservation in the visual record he was creating. Indeed, as we shall see, he seems to have regarded both parts of his visual record as equally theatrical.

The processional half of his task, of course, was in some ways not as easy to record as was the half depicting the booth stages. First of all, the procession doesn't divide itself up into convenient pre-packaged pictorial units as easily as the stages do.

For the artist, each stage, however simple or complex, constituted a pictorial unit, but what exactly constitutes a pictorial unit of the procession? Secondly, once you begin to think in folio-sized pictorial units, you find you have to make choices about the procession that you don't have to make about the stage illustrations. If you've got quite a large procession, and that procession included (as this one evidently did) more than 29 people or even 29 groups of people, whom do you include and whom do you exclude from your pictorial record? What is it that you are recording, after all?

We can see the dimensions of his problem when we compare one illustration (Figure 1), in which the artist devotes an entire folio essentially to a single individual, with a second illustration (Figure 2), in which he means to illustrate an entire group. What we notice first of all are the extraordinary differences between these two illustrations. In the first, an individual described on the facing text page as a *histrion* dominates both a landscape and a small group of five children. In the second, by contrast, the most important person in the entire procession, the Archduchess Joanna herself, rides sidesaddle on a horse in the centre of the picture, but she is almost entirely lost inside a group of torch-carrying military guildsmen. The group clearly dominates the individual – remarkably so, when one considers that the Archduchess herself is being submerged in the group – whereas the individual clearly dominates in the preceding illustration.

If we view these illustrations as part of a coherent representational strategy, however, we can see that they really are not so different after all. In deciding what to represent, the artist clearly means to record the city's contributions to the day's spectacle, not the court's contributions. Consider, for instance, how much of the procession is 'missing' from these illustrations. What one would normally expect to find, I think, are illustrations of the Archduchess' retinue. Where are the heralds? Where are the henchmen? Where are the noble ladies accompanying the Archduchess? Where are the great noblemen of the realm? Where are the great officers of the Archduchess' household? Conventional illustrations of royal processions seek to document the participation of the great ones of the realm in this important event. What makes these Brussels processional illustrations different from almost all other essays in this genre – and especially valuable to historians of the theatre – is that the artist has chosen to ignore the great ones of the realm and document instead as fully as possible the civic groups which marched in the procession. These are arranged in hierarchal order: first, six groups representing the town's religious establishment: Scholars, Carmelites, Franciscans, Preachers, Canons, and the Chapter of the Cathedral of Sainte Gedeule (rectos of fols 3-8). Then follow the various constituents of the Town's municipal organization: the 'Centenarii' (council representatives), the

Representatives of the Town's *Métiers* (Craft Guilds), the Patricians, the 'Clients', the Peacekeepers, the Justices, the Secretaries, the Councillors, the Receivers, the Échevins, and, lastly, the Burgomaster and his advisors (rectos of fols 9-10, 17-26). Finally, the procession concludes with illustrations of the Town's five military guilds or *Serments en armes*, beginning with the most junior and ending with the oldest and most prestigious, the *Grand-Serment des Arbalétriers* (rectos of fols 27-31).⁸ Together, these illustrations anatomize Brussels' civic establishment, grouped into its three divisions: religious, municipal, and military. Each of these divisions is further organized hierarchally, leaving the most powerful and important representative to conclude each division: the Cathedral Chapter, the Burgomaster, the *Grand-Serment*.

The artist's representational strategy appears most clearly, perhaps, when he finally does manage to include a painting of the Archduchess herself. What we expect, of course, is a conventional illustration in which the royal personage (Figure 3) appears as the centre of attention, riding triumphantly and serenely beneath a canopy of estate. But what we get is the astonishing illustration which actually seeks to displace her from the centre of attention (Figure 2). True, we see her riding sidesaddle on a palfrey right where we might expect her to, in the position of most honour, at the end of the procession. But instead of singling her out for special attention, the artist has chosen to depict her surrounded by – indeed nearly obscured by – a group of torch-bearing military guildsmen. He easily could have made her especially prominent merely by emphasizing the distinctions inherent in her equestrian appearance as opposed to the citizens of lesser rank who are walking rather than riding in the procession. In fact, however, the artist is more interested in the guildsmen's special distinction than he is in hers. As the text points out on the facing page, this picture represents the *Grand-Serment des Arbalétriers*, the military guild of most antiquity and greatest respect in Brussels. The illustration is, in short, a tiny essay in the same genre as Rembrandt's *Nachtwacht*. Because of their distinguished status among the guilds, the crossbowmen claimed the right to escort the Archduchess. Moreover, the *Arbalétriers* had their own annual procession and traditionally organized processions such as this one.⁹ Perhaps, indeed, they appear in the position of most honour at the end of the procession because they were responsible for organizing this procession as well. Perhaps, in short, the procession was their show. The Princess thus appears in the picture primarily to document their honourable status as reflected in their right to escort members of royalty. She serves the illustration as a kind of emblematic appendage to the crossbowmen's company, who embody and represent the city in the same way, perhaps, as the small image of the Town Hall of Brussels in the background also does.

To judge from these processional pictures, the artist is understandably more interested in depicting groups rather than individuals. The manuscript was, after all, probably meant as a gift to the Archduchess, a kind of memory book into which the Archduchess could look and recall the city's achievements that day. The clerics, the military guildsmen, the civic officers are documented, but he does not attempt portraits. No individual member of any of the guilds or religious orders depicted here is likely to be able to put finger to page and say, 'There I am, third from the left in the back row'. He documents the corporate bodies that constitute the city of Brussels, not the particular individuals who upon this date occupied these offices. He takes so little interest in the individuals who form these groups, in fact, that he deliberately leaves many groups 'unfinished', presenting them as only portions of a larger group lost behind the margins of the picture. He thus not only represents the *Grand-Serment des Arbalétriers* as marching into the picture area, but he also cuts off several members of the group at the margin, thus suggesting that many other individual members of the group must remain unrepresented, lost beyond the picture frame. There would be little point, after all, in presenting the Archduchess with careful portrait likenesses of (to her) obscure individuals. Rather, it was important to impress upon her what the city of Brussels corporately achieved in her honour that day.

But this approach necessarily presented the painter with some important problems. If you count all these groups, you end up with 23. He documents each of these civic groups in a single folio. For a number of reasons, he can't really allow more than one folio for each organization. For one thing, in deciding to illustrate, say, the order of friars minors on two folios instead of one, he would necessarily find himself moving in the direction of portraiture. By crowding individuals together on a single folio, you emphasize a group identity. By spreading the group over two or more folios, you inevitably emphasize the individuals in the group. For another thing, if you begin to give some groups more prominence than others by awarding them extra folios, so to speak, you're no longer documenting the civic body of Brussels, you're inevitably favouring one group over another and questions of the relative importance of the various groups to the civic body suddenly claim one's attention. By limiting each group to a single folio, one avoids such problems and recognizes each group's contribution to the show equally.

This still leaves the artist with a representational problem: he has only 23 groups, but 29 folio illustrations to fill. He chose to solve his problem in a way that wonderfully serves our purposes as theatre historians. He chose not only to document the civic groups that marched in the procession, but also the performers that accompanied the procession and whose duty was primarily to entertain the crowd of

bystanders. He inserts six folios of performers' illustrations into his manuscript so that it interrupts the sequence of civic officers (rectos of fols 11-16). We've already seen the *histrion*, who seems to have been something of a clown who distinguished himself by a kind of entertaining lunacy, according to the brief facing-page description,¹⁰ but he also records a fool (Figure 4), who brandishes his bauble and sits upon a stool instead of a saddle to ride his horse in the procession. (Incidentally, he is not smoking a pipe in the year 1496; a seventeenth-century doodler has added that detail). Because they focus upon individuals rather than groups, these paintings tend to be more individuated. Perhaps, in other words, the actors who played the *histrion* and the fool *might* recognize themselves from these depictions. Whether or not they are intended as true portraits, they certainly are, at the very least, *representations* of specific individuals. They are meant to recall specific individuals to the Archduchess' memory as she turns the pages of this book in much the same way that the other pictures are intended to recall specific groups.

He also includes a sled-load of masked musicians, a group of club-swinging wildmen, a group of wildwomen escorting an exotic lady blackamoor, and another group of musicians dressed as fools. All of these performers played their part in the civic procession that day, and the artist has selected the most memorable of them to be documented in his pictorial record. More importantly, had the artist conceived of his role in the usual way, we would have perhaps some additional depictions of the worthies of the Habsburg court in solemn procession, but we would have had none of these visual records of theatrical entertainers plying their craft in the streets of a late medieval city. In short these 58 illustrations add up to something less than a Foucaultian representation of power, whether Archducal or civic. What interests the artist in many of these pictures is what interests modern theatre historians: the actors that made the event not only pompous but entertaining. He is interested in six individuals and groups of performers precisely because they are performers, not because they are representative of civic or archducal institutions. Moreover, he expects his ultimate audience, the Archduchess, to share his interest in these pictures as well.

For most viewers, however, the theatrical structures filled with actors will claim the lion's share of attention. Traditionally, just as the procession was organized by the *Serments en armes*, so the civic triumph pageants were organized by the *Métiers*. 'It was the duty of every important guild in the city to help with the street-shows', according to Geroge Kernodle, 'and from the Rederykers, whose special concern was with drama and poetry, more was expected than from the rest'.¹¹ Without further documentary information, we cannot be sure which of Brussels' many guilds paid for, designed, and staged these pageants. That the Brussels' St Luke's Guild (the

Painters' Guild) probably took a leading role in the production is suggested by the final pageant in the series (fol. 59r).¹² At the conclusion of her civic triumph, the Archduchess thus saw a staged representation of St Luke painting a portrait of the Virgin (Figure 5). The pageant is not very clearly related to Joanna or to the occasion, except in the general sense that, as a royal consort, she was expected to play a Virgin-like role. The explanatory text opposite this image is not of much help; it merely suggests that the scene is relevant because Joanna's parents had sent painted images of her from Spain to Brabant.¹³ The presence of this scene thus makes best sense as a kind of trademark affixed to the show. The St Luke's Guild virtually stages its own trade emblem and places it in the position of most honour at the conclusion of the show.

But even if the St Luke's Guild may have been responsible in a general way for organizing these spectacles, other *Métiers* played their part as well. The subject matter of the 29 stages and their arrangement certainly suggests miscellaneous composition rather than the unfolding of a centrally-organized thematic structure. In some sequences of stages, to be sure, particular Guilds might cooperate in constructing a series of closely connected scenes. Thus the middle third of the show is dominated by a series of nine separate booth stages, each devoted to one of the Nine Female Worthies (Figure 6). The entire sequence is carefully coordinated in style. Each stage opens to reveal a carefully posed triad: the central Worthy is flanked by two attendants, one of whom holds a pennant, the other a military helmet (rectos of fols 42-51). As Joanna progresses from stage to stage, the Nine greet her in the fashion of a chivalric *ordo prophetarum*.¹⁴ These nine stages, in turn, are perhaps connected to another, which immediately precedes them. It shows Joanna's mother, Queen Isabella of Castile, accepting the surrender of Granada's last Moorish king (Figure 7). If these were the only pageants in the series, we might be tempted to see them as proof of a highly-organized civic triumph, one which – extremely unusually – seeks to depict Joanna's entry into Brussels in terms of the Advent of the Valiant Woman.

The trouble is, other pageants in the series find very different meanings for the Archduchess's advent. A few others, it is true, attempt further essays on the theme of the Valiant Woman: early on in the show, Joanna thus contemplates a pageant of Judith killing Holofernes (fol. 33r), then three pageants later she finds herself imaged in the Woman of Thebez who slew Abimelech (fol. 36r). Later, she sees a coordinated pair of pageants depicting the story of how two valiant women led the Israelites to defeat the Caananites: one depicting Deborah and Barak (fol. 54r) and one of Jael and Sisera (fol. 55r). Elsewhere, however, other stages encourage her to see herself as a type of royal mediatrix, as Hester is to Ahasuerus (fol. 40r; Figure 14), as the

Daughter of the Pharaoh is to Solomon (fol. 37r), and as Michal who sought to make peace between Abner and David (fol. 38r). Or she is a type of the Desired One, as in the Judgment of Paris (Figure 8; fol. 57r) or the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca (Figure 9; fol. 39r). In some, she is a type of the Queen of Heaven, who receives her crown from heaven (Figure 9; fol. 39r; Figure 15; fol. 56r). One pageant distinguishes itself as a prophetic, allegorical vision of the 'Domus Delicie et Jocunditatis' that will result from the marriage of Philip and Joanna (fol. 58r). And it is certainly possible that other *Métiers* than the St Luke's Guild sought to place their trademark on the show. Do we regard the first pageant in the series, which stages the invention of music by Tubal-Cain, to be representation of the political harmony that the Archduchess' advent will bring about? Or have the Blacksmith's Guild carefully chosen the topic of their contribution so as to advertise the dignity of their Craft (Figure 10; fol. 32r)?

Given the varied subject matter of these pageants, it would be unwise to attempt to find too intricate an organization for this show.¹⁵ Rather, the pageants as the artist records them seem to value variety as much as coherence in subject matter. All of them, to be sure, are appropriate to the occasion, and most of them derive obviously enough from the iconography common to the receptions of queens in fifteenth-century triumphs.¹⁶ But within these limits, the diversity of subject matter suggests that the various craft guilds were operating relatively independently of one another. Some obviously co-operated extensively with one another, but others seem to have pursued independent – and even idiosyncratic – choices. To some extent, there must have been competition. The guild (or guilds) that produced the massive and impressive two-tiered and four-booth stage devoted to the story of Isaac and Rebecca (Figure 9) were obviously trying to impress more than those guilds who were content with less ambitious *tableaux*. For our purposes, however, what is most important is that the artist seems to have recorded this diversity – and consequent rivalry – with some care. He thus lavishes much more attention in recording complicated scenes, like the Judgment of Paris (Figure 8) with its revolving stage machinery, than he does in recording simpler stages.

The stages erected in the streets of Brussels were all of a type familiar to the practices of the Chambers of Rhetoric and the Painters' Guilds in the Low Countries from the mid-fifteenth through the early seventeenth centuries.¹⁷ The majority of them – as in the sixteenth-century example illustrated in Figure 11 – consist of a single, curtained booth set atop a raised platform.¹⁸ As the Archduchess appears before the stage, the curtain is first drawn back to reveal the tableau inside, and then it is immediately closed at the conclusion of the brief performance. Because this mode of performance seemed so peculiar to him, the English herald, Thomas Whiting, took

pains to explain how such booth stages operated in a similar performance he witnessed at Bruges in 1468:

There was a stage made of timbar work, under this forme as ensuythe. The staige devidid in thre pageauntes Richely coveride w' tappettes, and before subtilly corteynyd with oute those cortayne. A man gevnynge Attendance att soche tyme as any lady passid by and drew the cortayne of the last pageaunte of the iij pageauntes Afore rehersed and than secretly closed it agayne and shewde as lytil sight as myght be sheuid and so sodenly from pageaunt to pageaunt. The first pageant cast the curtayne subtilly, that the people hadde therof a sufficient sight; the pageauntes were soo obscure that y fere me to wryte or speke of them because all was countenance and noo wordes. In my understandyng the ffurst pageaunt [was Medea] thorough wom Jason wane the fflees of golde, the ij^{de} was quene Astor, that was Last wyfe vnto Assuerus the king. And the iij^{de} pageaunte was Vestie that was furst wife vnto the Kynge Assureus.¹⁹

The performance, such as it is, takes place entirely within the confines of the curtained booth and is managed by 'A man gevnynge Attendance'. Not improbably the *histrion* depicted by the artist fulfilled this function for the Archduchess Juana in 1496. The staff he carries seems to suggest that he may have played an expository role of some sort in the procession.

In depicting such a performance, the artist chooses to illustrate the tableau 'straight on', from a notional position directly in front of the stage, and he fills in the entire picture width with the tableau so that one never sees the sides of the booth, either from the inside or the outside. Because the artist adopts this 'straight-on' pictorial convention, however, we can't be entirely sure whether we're seeing entire stages or merely portions of stages. The manuscript includes a few examples of double- and triple-booth stages. But we cannot be sure that he means each separate illustration to represent a separate stage structure. In the majority of his illustrations, he presents us with a straight-on view of but a single booth. In these cases, does he mean to focus the viewer's attention on an entire stage structure, so as to replicate, in some measure, the experience of progressing from stage to stage through the city? Or is he instead focusing upon the contents of individual booths, thus isolating for detailed inspection each scene in the performance, regardless of whether the scene

represents only a single booth in a multiple-booth stage structure or whether the stage structure in fact contained only a single such scene?

Consider again, for instance, the enormous, multiple-booth stage we have examined previously (Figure 9). Even though he cuts off the painting at the ends of the structure without attempting to show the sides, we can tell with some certainty that he means to illustrate an entire stage structure, not just an individual booth. In this case alone, he includes the torches and mirrors set atop the booth which – together with the torches carried by the marchers – are meant to provide illumination for this night-time show.²⁰ He's apparently chosen to illustrate an entire scene in this instance because of its unusual, four-booth structure. The upper stage, which illustrates the Coronation of the Virgin, is thus set atop three booths at the bottom, which illustrate the story of the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca as an analogue to the marriage of the Archduke Philip and the Archduchess Joanna. Similarly, he chooses to illustrate the story of Hester and Ahasuerus (here offered as an analogue to Joanna's role as *virgo mediatrix* on behalf of her people) as a two-booth stage structure (Figure 14). Here, too, he has probably chosen to illustrate an entire stage structure combining two booth-scenes, though we cannot be entirely certain because he has omitted the mirrors and torches which would clearly have defined the top of the stage.

But how do we decide whether this booth, which illustrates an episode in the story of Tobias and Sara (fol. 34r; Figure 12), represents an entire stage structure or whether it was grouped with the booth represented by the very next illustration (fol. 35r; Figure 13) into the same stage structure. The second scene, after all, represents the concluding episode to the story begun in the former episode. Is this two-episode story being told on two separate stage structures or in a single two-booth stage structure? Why did the artist group two Hester and Ahasuerus episodes on a common stage structure (Figure 14) while apparently creating different structures for the story of Tobias and Sara? Did he do so because he was recording the disposition of pageant structures as they actually existed in the streets of Brussels, or merely because he was adjusting the number of scenes he had to record in order to fit the number of folios available to him?

In one case only does the artist depart from his habitual 'straight-on' viewpoint (fol. 56r; Figure 15). He did so, apparently, because he wanted to illustrate the unusually important interaction between the actors and the Archduchess which occurred at this stage structure. Exceptionally, therefore, the artist chose to view the stage and actors from an acute side angle in order to record both the actors on stage and the performance in front of the booth. Here, the three ladies – we don't know who they are because the explanatory verso page has been cut from the manuscript – are

lowering a crown, apparently by means of some sort of pulley device, from somewhere above the booth stage. It is meant, I suspect, to drop gently upon the head of the Archduchess; such crowning scenes conventionally appear in civic triumphs of queens and princesses.²¹ In any case, the performance, which cannot be entirely static, spills outward from the confines of the booth and – if I'm right about the identity of the head that is the target of this descending crown – explicitly enlists the Archduchess as an actor in the performance. In order to accommodate this unusual feature of the pageant stage, the artist has had to break the convention he has established, adopt an oblique (rather than 'straight-on') view, and allow us for once to see one side of a stage structure. We can thus be confident that the structure ends at the far side of the booth. But once again, he cuts off the top, so that we cannot see the superstructure of the scaffold (if any), and more worryingly, he omits the near side of the booth. To what, if anything, is the near side of this booth attached? To another booth, illustrated in the previous painting? Or has he given us a reasonably complete view of the stage structure?

In the absence of other documentary records which might tell us the number and disposition of pageant structures, we are left with the formal, representational clues that the artist uses to define his subjects. Such evidence as we have, I believe, leads to the conclusion that the artist means to record individual stage structures. If the structure he happens to be illustrating consists of merely a single booth, he will illustrate it as such. If it combines two, three, or four booths in a single, more complex structure, his painting will reflect the complexity of its construction. He makes the structure clear with a conventional sign: notice the curtains that open to disclose each scene. Each structure – whether single, double, or triple – is framed by a single pair of curtains, one on each side of the structure. When the expositor (the *histrion*, perhaps?) reveals the tableaux, he must manage the curtains carefully. For the Hester and Ahasuerus double-booth structure (Figure 14), he probably opens the left-hand curtain first, to reveal the first booth (and first episode in the story); then he opens the right-hand curtain to reveal the concluding episode. Curtain management at the three-booth stage illustrated in Figure 9 is more complicated. These three stages tell the story of the marriage of Rebecca and Isaac from Genesis 24, but the sequence of booths are arranged in an order that only makes sense when the opening of curtains is taken into account. The story's first episode thus takes place in the central booth: Abraham sends his servant, 'Elyazar', into Mesopotamia to find a wife for his son, Isaac. As a consequence, the expositor would have to open both right and left curtains far enough to reveal the central stage, but not so far as to reveal the booths to either side. Then the curtain to the viewers left is opened still further to reveal the second

episode in the story: Rebecca modestly covers her face with her cloak upon first meeting Isaac. Finally, the curtain to the viewer's right is then opened to reveal the last booth and the final chapter in the story: Rebecca and Isaac marry in fulfilment of God's covenant with Abraham. The artist clearly seems to be recording a feature of the staging of the pageants rather than merely adopting a pictorial convention. He defines the sides of the booth stages by the presence of the curtains because the stages themselves are probably structured in this way.

There are no celebrities in our artist's theatrical illustrations any more than there are individuals in most of the processional pictures. Faces, bodies, are merely conventional. In this way, he concentrates on what the actors *represent* more than on who the actors are. But he takes great interest in the theatrical paraphernalia – the scenery, costumes, or even lack of costumes (Figure 8) as the case may be. Whether because he has had some means of recording costumes and stage setting in detail, or because he is merely recreating them as best as he can after the fact, he is extremely interested in what we might call the material culture of the theatre.

Consider the way that the god Mercury appears in the human world in a furred gown, as an expression of his status, while offering the fateful golden apple to the sleeping Paris. As a mere mortal, Paris, even though a prince of Troy, is dressed in a simple costume, merely a doublet and hose. Above all, our artist has a fine eye – or memory – for the unusual, for the departure from the conventional. After painting so many groups huddled together in boxes or gathered about thrones, he delights here in recording the Font of Helicon set atop Mount Parnassus (recognizable by its two peaks, each topped by an olive tree), and he records as well the turning stage which the three goddesses use to emerge from one door, to display their tempting charms to Paris, before disappearing again into the opposite door.

Our artist is, in short, interested in the technical details of the late medieval theatre. If, then, one wants to know what theatrical costuming looks like at the turn of the sixteenth century, or if one wants to see what the technical capabilities of the stage are at the same time – and by that I mean relatively normal stagecraft such as might be accommodated within the confines of a humble curtained booth stage, not the dazzling effects characteristic of a Leonard da Vinci or a Burgundian court *entremet* – one could do worse than to consult this knowledgeable record of an artist clearly sympathetic to, and interested in, the late medieval theatre.



Fig. 1. 'Histrio', a street performer (fol. 12r).



Fig. 2. The Archduchess Joanna escorted by the *Grand-Serment des Arbalétriers* (fol. 31r).



Fig. 3. Lucas de Heere,
Francis of Anjou entering
Ghent, August 1582'. Berlin,
Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78
D 6, fol. 25r.



Fig. 4. Fool on horseback
(fol. 14r).



Fig. 5. St Luke Painting the Virgin (fol. 59r).



Fig. 6. Semiramis, one of the Nine Female Worthies (fol. 47r).



Fig. 7. Granada's last Moorish king surrendering to Queen Isabella of Castile (fol. 42r).

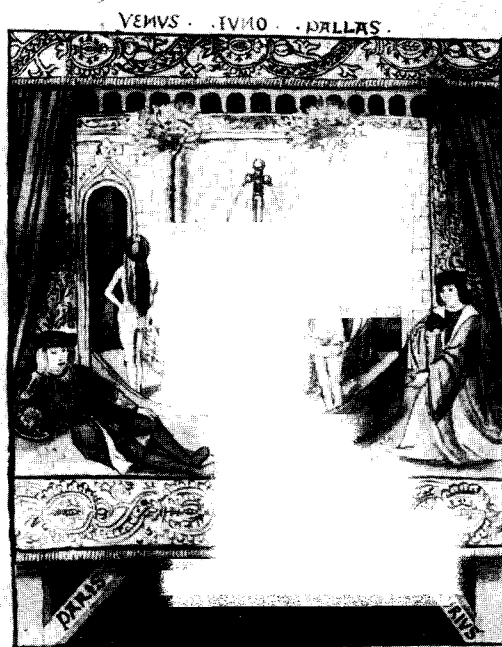


Fig. 8. The Judgment of Paris performed on a revolving stage (fol. 57r).

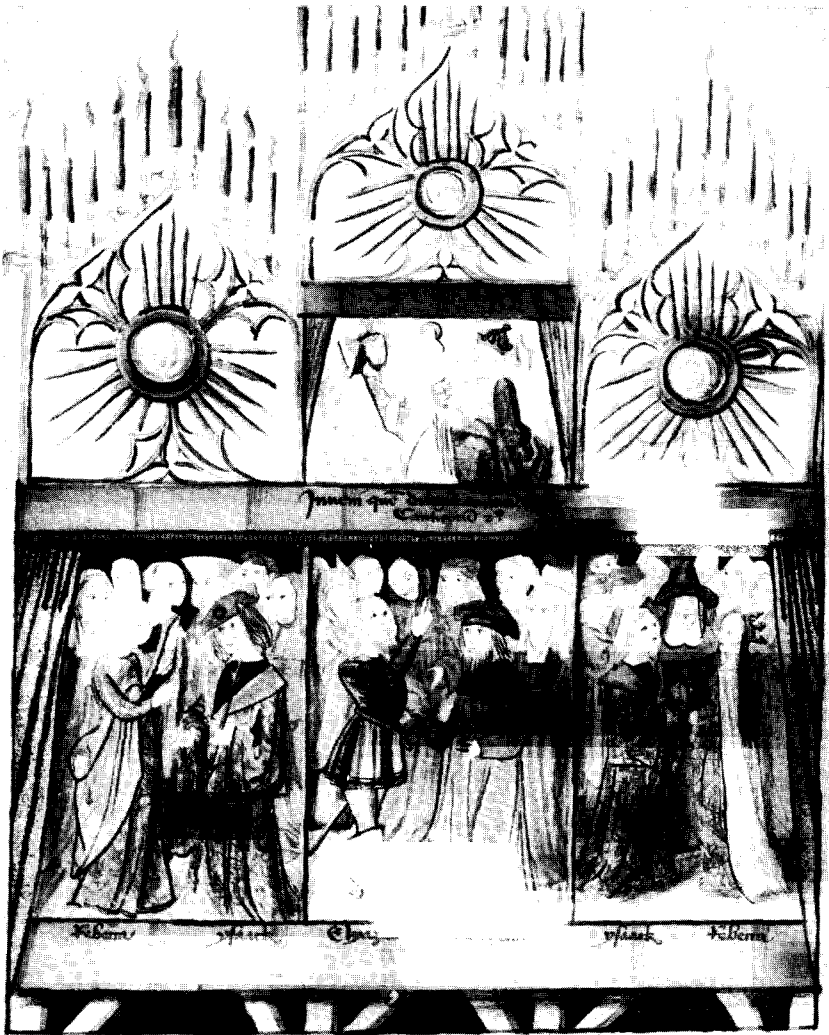


Fig. 9. Multiple booth stage with torches and mirrors; the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca and the Coronation of the Virgin (fol. 39r).



Fig. 10. The invention of music by Tubal-Cain (fol. 32r).

Fig. 11. Lucas de Heere, Pageant stage design for the entry of Francis of Anjou into Ghent, August 1582. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78 D 6, fol. 11r.

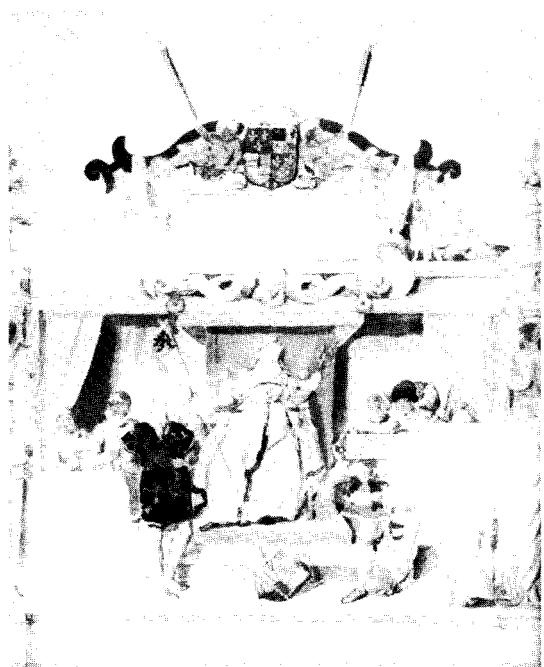




Fig. 12. The Story of Tobias and Sara, part 1 (fol. 34r).



Fig. 13. The Story of Tobias and Sara, part 2 (fol. 35r).



Fig. 14. Double-booth stage structure; the story of Hester and Ahasuerus (fol. 40r).



Fig. 15. Tres Virgines' booth stage depicted from oblique angle to show pulley mechanism (fol. 56r).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

¹ For the political objects of the marriage between Philip and Joanna, see Victor-L. Tapié, *The Rise and Fall of the Habsburg Monarchy*, trans. by Stephen Hardman (London: Pall Mall Press, 1971), pp. 45-46; J.H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), pp. 132-33.

² Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78 D 5. The manuscript has been described in Paul Wescher, *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der Miniaturen – Handschriften und Einzelblätter – des Kupferstichkabinetts der Staatlichen Museen Berlin* (Leipzig: J.J. Weber, 1931), pp. 179-81; and in Helmut Boese, *Die Lateinischen Handschriften der Sammlung Hamilton zu Berlin* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966), pp. 168-69. Max Herrmann made the manuscript familiar to theatre historians by discussing the manuscript, quoting a number of its descriptive passages, and reproducing 17 of the illustrations in his *Forschungen zur Deutschen Theatergeschichte des Mittelalters und der Renaissance* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1914).

³ Jean Fouquet's miniature of *The Martyrdom of St Apollonia* in the *Hours of Etienne Chevalier* is often thought to be such a performance record of a particular medieval play. For reasons why this cannot be so, see Gordon Kipling, 'Theatre as Subject and Object in Fouquet's *Martyrdom of St Apollonia*,' *Medieval English Theatre*, 19 (1997), 26-80 and 'Fouquet, St Apollonia, and the Motives of the Miniaturist's Art: A Reply to Graham Runnalls,' *Medieval English Theatre*, 19 (1997), 101-20.

⁴ Jean Molinet mentions this entry in only the most general terms and is only interested in the notable ladies who were there to meet her. *Chroniques de Jean Molinet*, ed. by Georges Doutrepoint and Omer Jodogne, vol. 2 (Brussels: Palais des académies, 1935), pp. 429-30. Don Lorenzo de Padilla provides the most circumstantial narrative account of this occasion, but he says almost nothing of the entry itself. Rather he merely enumerates the Flemish noblemen who came to Brussels to 'besar las manos á la Archiduquesa' and describes in some detail the 'justas y torneos' which were staged on the same occasion. *Crónica de Felipe I.º Llamado El Hermoso*, in *Collección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España*, ed. by D. Miguel Salvá and D. Pedro Sainz de Baranda, vol. 8 (Madrid:

Academia de la Historia, 1846), pp. 42-43. A lone civic record of the event provides little more than the date of Joanna's entry into Brussels: M.L. Galesloot, 'Notes extraites des anciens comptes de la ville de Bruxelles', *Compte rendu des séances de la Commission royale d'Histoire*, ser. 3, vol. 9 (Brussels: Palais de Académies, 1867), p. 493.

⁵ The Brussels archives were destroyed during the French bombardment of the city in October 1695. See Hermann, p. 366, and Alexandre Henne and Alphonse Wauters, *Histoire de la Ville de Bruxelles*, 3 vols (Brussels: Editions 'Culture et civilisation', 1968), II, pp. 124-30.

⁶ Of the two 'missing' illustrations, the first has clearly been excised, probably by a souvenir hunter. It should have become between fols 55v and 56r as currently foliated. The stub of the missing folio is clearly visible in the binding. The recto page of the missing folio, according to the text on fol. 55v, would have shown a booth stage containing three actors representing the Emperor Henry III giving his daughter Sophie to Godfrey 'the bearded', Duke of Brabant, in 1101: 'Hoc scemate Representatur Quam vti imperator henricus semper augustus Godefrido barbato brabantie duci filiam Sophiam nuptui dedit. Sic hispanie rex dominus Fernandus Philippo mellifluo austrie burgundie brabantie &c. duci Johannam filiam suam in vxorem misit.' The verso page of the missing folio would have contained appropriate text to explain the puzzling 'Tres Virgines' pageant depicted on fol. 56r (Figure 15).

The second 'missing' illustration may also have been a casualty of vandalism, but it originally appeared on the last folio at the end of the manuscript. The text on fols 63r-v thus refer to a now lost illustration of the Town Hall as 'Hoc scemate quod sequetur Representatur Egregia ac incomparabilis domus consilium sine respublice opidi Bruxellensis'. Since the manuscript in its current condition does not have a title page (it merely begins with the blank recto with the St Michael frontispiece on its verso), the lost Town Hall illustration may have formed a cognate pair with a lost title folio. If so, the outer bifolium of the manuscript, containing title and illustration, may simply have become separated from its parent manuscript and lost.

⁷ For St Michael on the civic seal, see Henne and Wauters, pp. 33-35; for van Rode's statue, see Marc Vokaer, *La Grand-Place de Bruxelles* (Bruxelles-Liège: Editions Desoer, 1966), p. 71 and plate 31.

⁸ For the *Métiers* and the *Serments en armes*, see Henne and Wauters, I, pp. 54-56, 194.

⁹ For the activities of the *Grand-Serment des Arbalétriers* in organizing spectacular processions in Brussels, see James Laver, *Isabella's Triumph* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), p. 4; and Luc Duerloo and Werner Thomas, *Albert & Isabelle 1598-1621*, exhibition catalogue (Brussels: Brepols, 1998), pp. 205-06.

¹⁰ Hoc scemate Representatur histrio quidam qui partim lunatico cerebro correptus populo frequetem risum extorquere suevit hic (quod nec dii dedignantur) suo modulo affectum pium kyrieleyson kyriel. Alta voce ingeminans Illustrissime domine (cui alludere prata virencia queque) prodidit' (fol. llv).

¹¹ *From Art to Theatre: Form and Convention in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), pp. 116-17.

¹² As Kernodle points out, in many cities the Chambers of Rhetoric 'were closely associated with the Guild of St. Luke, the painters' organization, and were quite interested in relating painting, poetry, and drama' (p. 117).

¹³ Hoc scemate Representatur Quam Vti congratulantibus angelis sanctus ucas ymaginem beatissime marie depinxit Sic parentibus fatis Rerum conditor Johannam hispanie amplectandam ymaginem brabantie aduexit (fol. 58v).

¹⁴ For the civic triumph's use of the *ordo prophetarum*, see Gordon Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy, and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 61-63.

¹⁵ Wim Blockmans has made a very interesting recent attempt to describe a numerological organization to the illustrations (and perhaps as well to the procession and pageants which are represented in the illustrations): 'la procession de la ville s'ouvre par six groupes de religieux, douze corps institutionnels et quatre gildes de la ville, vingt-sept tableaux vivants. Toutefois, certains éléments nous apparaissent ici comme très significatifs, sans qu'ils soient mentionnés comme tels dans les textes: le rôle des armoiries, la présence de six 'esbattements'. Constatons d'ores et déjà que les nombres quatre, six, douze, vingt-sept (9x3), et soixante (12x5), tous chargés de significations religieuses, forment la trame de la procession. Lors de la joyeuse entrée à Bruges en 1515, il y avait également vingt-sept tableaux vivants. Mais il y a plus: toute la série de dessins est soigneusement ordonnée, ce qui conduit à la conclusion que la procession l'était également.' 'Le Dialogue imaginaire entre princes et sujets: Les Joyeuses Entrées en brabant en 1494 et en 1496,' in *A La Cour de Bourgogne: Le Duc, son entourage, son train*, ed. by Jean-Marie Cauchies (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1998), p. 162. Unhappily, however, these calculations do not take into account the removal of several illustrations from the manuscript. There would thus be 29, not 27, *tableaux vivants*. And to make thirty 'processional' illustrations, he is forced to press the St Michael frontispiece into service as if it were an illustration of a member of the procession.

¹⁶ For iconographical topics appropriate to the civic triumphs of women in the fifteenth century, see Kipling, pp. 77-85, 188-201, 209-21, 289-356.

¹⁷ Kernodle, pp. 111-29.

¹⁸ Lucas De Heere, Pageant stage design for the entry of Francis of Anjou into Ghent,

Brussels, Joanna of Castile, and the Art of Theatrical Illustration (1496)

August 1582. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78 D 6, fol. 11r

¹⁹ British Library, Cotton MS Nero C. IX, fol. 174r-v.

²⁰ Thomas Whiting, *Chester Herald*, emphasizes that illumination for such a night-time procession was provided by torches carried by performers and audience members alike: 'And so, my ladye procedinge thorowe the towne unto hir loginge, the people made fiers in great numbar of waxe torchis, and torchis out of every howse, pynacles subtile devisid in the towne, and in the castell, w' fiers brenninge in the stret, great numbar; and also every howsholder standing in the strete, w' over ther dores, every of them, a torche in his hande breninge.' British Library, Cotton MS Nero C. IX, fol. 174r.

²¹ For crowning scenes in civic triumphs, see Kipling, pp. 292-318.

But What *Does* the Fleming Say?: The Two Flemish Proverbs and their Contexts in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

Guido Latré

The Cook and the Manciple, two traditional rivals clearly at loggerheads in the *Canterbury Tales*, each quotes a Flemish proverb. The positions of the sayings are conspicuously complementary. The Cook shows his knowledge of Flemish popular wisdom in the Prologue to his tale, whilst the Manciple uses a Flemish proverb to conclude the argument of his story. Both proverbs were dealt with in 1934 by the Flemish scholars Jan Grauls and J.F. Vanderheijden in the *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*.¹ This contribution reconsiders the linguistic contents of each of them, and tries to interpret them in the larger literary context of their respective prologues or tales, and of the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole. Rather than attributing a fixed or specific meaning to them, as Grauls and Vanderheijden do, I shall argue that the Flemish sayings trigger a whole series of contradictions and reversals of meaning that mirror the complexity of Chaucer's comedy.

'Sooth pley, quaad pley, as the Flemyng seith'

The second popular saying Grauls and Vanderheijden discuss is chronologically the first in Chaucer's narrative. It occurs in the Prologue to the Cook's Tale, and is spoken by the Cook, Roger of Ware:

But 'sooth pley, quaad pley,' as the Flemyng seith.

(l. 4357)²

It is usually translated in the manner suggested by the footnote in the *Riverside Chaucer*: 'A true jest is a bad jest', i.e. when what is said jokingly also hits home, the jest may be too bitter and therefore not really funny or successful. In his joking

manner the Host, Herry Bailly, may have said true things indeed, Roger suggests, but can we really appreciate his jokes?

If this is the meaning we attribute to the saying, we can read it as the Cook's reaction to the words of the Host two lines earlier on: 'A man may seye ful sooth in game and play' (l. 4355). When one reads this line without paying too much attention to it, it appears to form part of a straightforward continuation of the Host's reconciliatory message to 'gentil Roger' that his (Herry Bailly's) words need not be interpreted as an insult. At the beginning of this Prologue, the Host may have incited Roger of Ware's indignation by speaking disparagingly about the taste and hygiene of the Cook's products and insisting that his tale be better quality:

Now tell on, Roger, looke that it [your tale] be good,
For many a pastee hastow laten blood,
And many a Jakke of Doveere hastow soold
That hath been twies hoot and twies coold.
Of many a pilgrym hastow Cristes curs,
For of thy percely yet they fare the wors,
That they han eten with thy stubbel goos,
For in thy shoppe is many a flye loos.
Now telle on, gentil Roger by thy name.
But yet I pray thee, be nat wroth for game;
A man may seye ful sooth in game and play.

(ll. 4345-55)

When one looks at the context leading up to this last line, one would expect the Host to say that a man may in fact be joking or telling a fiction when he appears to be speaking in earnest. That would genuinely take the sting out of the hurtful remarks about Roger's professional qualities. What the reader or careful listener gets instead, and what no doubt did not escape the Cook's attention either, is a further rubbing of salt into the wound: 'my playful words may well be hiding a hard truth about your lousy meals and pastry'. What one expected to be an apology, or an attempt to make harmless what may have done harm, is in fact a further attack, and, on the reading of 'sooth play, quaad play' as 'a true jest is a bad jest', the Cook's quotation of the Flemish proverb is an appropriate response indeed.

But instead of heeding his own advice and avoiding jokes that may cause pain, the Cook then promptly announces a comic tale that will have a 'hostileer' as the butt of the joke. Playfully and/or ironically he echoes Herry's 'be nat wroth':

'And therefore, Herry Bailly, by thy feith,
Be thou nat wrooth, er we departen heer,
Though that my tale be of an hostileer.
But nathelees I wol nat telle it yit;
But er we parte, ywis, thou shalt be quit.'
And therwithal he lough and made cheere,
And seyde his tale, as ye shul after heere.

(ll. 4358-64)

The Cook's laughter and merry-making are very much part of his nature (he has just had a laughing-fit after hearing the conclusion of the Reeve's Tale; cf. ll. 4325-29), but more importantly, they are part of the roadside drama in which the Reeve, who is also a carpenter, has already told his tale by way of revenge against the Miller, whose earlier tale ridiculed a carpenter. Similarly the Cook will now tell a tale that will make him quits with the Host or 'hostileer'.

Thus our first Flemish proverb forms part of a subtle game of reversals of meanings and intentions. Jokes have 'quaad' effects, even when an argument at first seems to lead to the conclusion that the jest need not or should not be understood in a negative manner; the giver of reproachful advice proceeds smoothly to action directly contradicting his own advice. Even at the outset of the Cook's Prologue we find that comforting arguments seem to lead to 'sharp conclusions', although they pretend they do not:

'Ha! ha!' quod he [the Cook], 'For Cristes passion,
This millere had a sharp conclusion
Upon his argument of herbergage!'

(ll. 4327-29)

Where you think you give others safe lodging, you may suddenly lose your own security in your home and feel as attacked, exposed and unprotected as the miller does in the Reeve's Tale, when he finds both his wife and his daughter 'used' by a Cambridge student. Scholastically solid arguments contain uncomfortable conclusions, in the same way as seemingly secure lodgings may harbour discomfoting lodgers.

There is subtle humour in this reference to 'argument' and 'conclusion', and it works on more than one level. The Reeve's miller had already referred to the ability of the Cambridge students 'by argumentes [to] make a place/ A myle brood of twenty

foot of space' (ll. 4123-4124). Moreover, the reference to the schools of philosophy and their syllogisms ('arguments') is comically incongruous with the speaker, an ordinary cook – as incongruous, in fact, as his wrapping of another popular saying in a biblical context, giving his words the authority of no less a person than Solomon:

Wel seyde Salomon in his langage,
'Ne bryng nat every man into thyn hous.'

(ll. 4330-31)³

Words and the arguments that combine them may turn tiny rooms into spacious lodgings, ordinary cooks into sophisticated scholars and exegetes, and ordinary speech into philosophical reflections.

We now begin to see on a slightly larger scale the textual game of which the Flemish proverb 'sooth play, quaad play' forms part. 'Herbergage' will announce itself as a dominant motif in the unfinished Cook's Tale. In a literal sense, as, for instance, in the Miller's or Reeve's Tale, 'herbergage' is, of course, a safe lodging, which turns out to be insecure. In a metaphoric sense, and as used before the Cook's Tale begins, it refers to words leading to a conclusion or containing a meaning. In the Cook's Prologue, it is *language* that no longer offers a safe haven or 'herbergage'. What seems to lead to the reassuring conclusion that no harm was meant – 'be nat wroth for game' – ultimately prepares the way for the reassertion that what has just been said may have been at least as acerbic as one's worst fears may have led one to believe – 'A man may seye ful sooth in game and play'. And although the Cook says of his tale 'I wol nat telle it yet', this 'argument' takes a sharp turn in the opposite direction when a couple of lines later he starts telling his tale about 'hostileers' and 'herbergage' after all, clearly with the intention of hurting the feelings of the Host. Language, like lodgings, can be made unsafe by trickery and usurpation – as the Flemyng seith.

In this context, the Cook's repeated and extravagant laughter is far from innocent. So laughter, too, is turned into its opposite here. It may be meant to harm even if the speaker emphatically asserts it is not. The words of the Miller (as narrator), the Reeve, the Host and the Cook may all have been successful by hitting as hard or indeed much harder than they pretend they do. For some, the joke that makes us laugh and at the same time hits home may, therefore, not be an unsuccessful but a successful one. For such people, we might guess, the interpretation of the phrase 'quaad play', in isolation, would be positive rather than negative. That aspect of the meaning of 'quaad' as 'harmful', 'vicious', would for them equate with 'successful'. It should be emphasised that this sense of 'quaad' (Modern Dutch 'kwaad') – 'vicious'

'evil', etc. – is prominent in both Middle and Modern Dutch. In short, jests can be harmful and the Cook enjoys seeing this potential exploited by others and exploits it himself.

Curiously enough, this may have been exactly what Chaucer, though not necessarily his entire audience, would have understood 'quaad pley' to mean in the context of 'sooth pley, quaad pley'. That is, rather than, or perhaps in addition to, 'bad, unsuccessful joke', Chaucer might have intended 'vicious joke'. There are simple linguistic grounds for this supposition. The Riverside Chaucer's reading of 'quaad pley' as 'bad jest' is based, as the explanatory note to line 4357 makes clear, on the above-mentioned article published by Grauls and Vanderheijden in 1934. These authors refer to what they believe to be the oldest text of a Flemish proverb approaching Chaucer's version, viz. 'Waer spot, quaet spot'. They found this saying in the Deventer edition of the *Proverbia Communia*, a collection of more than 800 Flemish proverbs and their Latin translations printed by Richard Paffraet (1480). They further argue for the probable existence of another Middle Dutch form of this proverb as 'Waar spel, kwaad spel'.⁴

'Kwaad spel' or (in an older spelling) 'quaad spel', would have been the logical basis for Chaucer's phrase 'quaad pley' (or in some variant Chaucer manuscripts 'quaad spel')⁵ with Chaucer leaving the first Flemish word untranslated, and, according to most manuscripts, translating the second, 'spel', by 'pley'. The problem Grauls and Vanderheijden had was that nowhere did they find the combination 'quaad spel'. Nevertheless, the phrase 'quaad spel' (also with the spelling 'quaet', or in Modern Dutch 'kwaad') does occur in Proverb 668 in the Delft edition of the *Proverbia Communia* by Christian Snellaert (ca. 1495): 'tes quaet spel daer deene lacht ende dander screyt' ('it is a bad or vicious joke where one person laughs and the the other cries'). The edition also gives a Latin translation ('Est ludus dum flet malus otto platoque ridet'), and a Low German equivalent ('It is quait spijl dat der eyn schreit vnd der ander lacht').⁶ We are much nearer here to Chaucer's 'quaad spel'. Moreover, it is easy to infer that it is particularly a *truth* spoken in jest that makes the speaker laugh and the listener cry. We are therefore also somewhat nearer to a proverb much more familiar in Flemish than 'waer spot, quaet spot', viz. 'In speele ende spotte seytmē dicke waer' (Delft edition of the *Proverbia Communia*, no. 432). This saying corresponds to some extent with the equally familiar modern English 'Many a true word is spoken in jest', but through the use of the word 'spotte' (sneering), it puts more emphasis on the hurt that is caused or the harmful ('quaet') effect.

One can occasionally still hear a corresponding expression among the older generations in some corners of West-Flanders: 'zot spel, kwae [i.e. quaad] spel',⁷

meaning 'what is said in jest, or what appear to be crazy fantasies, may be meant to harm'. If we can assume a Middle Dutch ancestor, it must have been 'sot spel, quaet spel'. This expression comes tantalizingly close to the Cook's 'sooth play, quaad play', in the form of each of the first words of the two-word phrases, 'sot' and 'quaet', in the meaning of 'spel', and in the syntax of the whole saying. The only problem is that the meaning of the adjective 'zot' ('crazy', 'foolish'), which would have been spelt 'sot' in Middle Dutch, does not remotely resemble that of the Middle English adjective 'sooth' (true). But who says (apart from Grauls and Vanderheijden, and all the Chaucer editions that follow them) that 'quaad' should be the only word in the Flemish proverb that Chaucer would have associated with its Flemish meaning?⁸ In 'sooth play, quaad play', the word 'sooth' might also be Chaucer's untranslated rendering, in a parallel position to the other similarly untranslated adjective in the proverb, of the Middle Dutch 'sot'. This Middle Dutch adjective would then be used in the meaning Verwijs and Verdam's Middle Dutch dictionary refer to under 'sot II. Van zaken: Dwaas, dom' (of objects, not persons: foolish, stupid). Among the examples given by Verwijs and Verdam one finds a phrase still very common especially in southern Low Countries dialects: 'sotte klap', for which they give the French and Latin equivalents 'folle parole' and 'stultiloquium' respectively.⁹

The combination of 'sot' with 'spel' as defined in the same dictionary (columns 1671-85) fits perfectly within this alternative interpretation of the proverb as quoted by Chaucer. 'Spel' in its fifth meaning according to Verwijs and Verdam, column 1677, refers to 'Gekheid, jok, jokkerij, scherts' (jest, lies, lying, sneers). Examples abound, and in West-Flanders, the phrase 'zot spel' (without its corollary 'quaad/ kwae spel') referring to a crazy game, joke or situation is still used very frequently by all generations.

We can now conclude our reading of the first Flemish proverb in the *Canterbury Tales* by applying two alternative interpretations to its immediate context. The Host concludes his insults addressed to the Cook with a 'but':

'But yet I pray thee, be nat wroth for game;
A man may seye ful sooth in game and play.'
(ll. 4354-55)

To which the Cook immediately answers:

'Thou seist ful sooth,' quod Roger, 'by my fey!
But 'sooth play, quaad play,' as the Flemyng seith.' (ll. 4356-57)

The Two Flemish Proverbs and their Contexts in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

In three successive lines, we find the words 'sooth'; in the third, it forms part of the Flemish proverb. The impetus of the text leads us to believe that the third 'sooth' means what it did in the previous lines. This implies that we read 'sooth pley' as an entirely Middle English phrase with the word 'sooth' meaning 'true'. The proverb then means: 'a joke that hits the truth is a bad joke'. However, the syntactic parallelism in line 4357, and the survival of an almost identical Flemish proverb 'zot spel, kwa[ad] spel', leads one to read 'sooth' as the Flemish 'zot'/'sot', in which case the proverb means: 'crazy fantasies spoken in jest may be meant to be vicious'.

Paradoxically, a completely Middle English reading of 'sooth pley' (true jest) yields the very opposite meaning of a half Middle Dutch, half Middle English reading (crazy fantasies). This first Flemish proverb either amounts to saying that to make a joke of what is too obviously true is to make a bad, unsuccessful joke, or that foolish fantasies may successfully mask vicious attacks. In the end, both readings are acceptable, and both may have been intended at the same time so that they can interact with each other. The contradictory interpretations only add to the verbal game based on constant reversals of meanings that Chaucer would have relished generally in the *Canterbury Tales*, and in particular in the context of the Cook's Prologue, which seems to reverse meanings and intentions all the time.

The possibility of reconciling the two contradictory readings of the proverb, 'true jest' and 'crazy fantasies', in a single, constantly shifting interpretation, does not mean that craziness and truth are happily reconciled once and for all in the Cook's Prologue and Tale, or in *The Canterbury Tales* as a whole. In the Cook's Tale itself, the narrator observes that in a man of low moral calibre, 'revel' and truth remain angry with each other all the time:

Revel and trouthe, as in lowe degree,
They been ful wrothe al day, as men may see.
(ll. 4397-98)

'Sot spel' will remain 'quaad pley', unless one finds a way of redeeming the corruption in language in the same way as one might redeem a wicked servant like Perkyn Revelour in the Cook's Tale. This might prove as difficult a task as conveying moral truths via a fabliau, as the Cook's Tale, larded as it is with moral admonitions, rather ineffectually tries to do. If your manner is the mocking fantasy of a fabliau and its revellers, it is hard to make eternal truths your substance.

'Litel janglyng causeth muchel reste'

Later on in *The Canterbury Tales*, both the Host and the Cook repeat the tricks they played just before the latter embarked upon his narrative. In the Prologue to the Monk's Tale, the Host speaks mockingly about the Monk's wasteful celibacy and unspiritual appearance, then seems to apologise ('But be nat wrooth, my lord, though that I pleye'), but immediately adds: 'Ful ofte in game a sooth I have herd seye!' (ll. 1964-65). In other words, he plays again a by now familiar game of mock-apologies. Here, as in the Prologue to the Cook's Tale, his jests preserve a certain degree of innocence. In the meantime, however, he has already shown real anger towards the Pardoner, the ultimate corrupter of meaning, thus reminding us that the constant turns one takes in the labyrinth of reversible meanings, although often fascinating, can also be frightening.

The 'jape of malice in the derk', which, as the Cook says in his Prologue (l. 4338), has been played upon the miller in the Reeve's Tale, is a phrase that can be appropriately applied metaphorically to the use of language, and very much describes the mechanism the Cook himself exploits. His verbal aggression almost becomes physical later on, in the Prologue to the Manciple's Tale 'by cause drynke hath dominacioun/ Upon this man' (Prologue to MancT, ll. 57-58). In this Prologue, the Host again addresses the Cook, this time as if the latter has not yet told a tale, and because Roger of Ware is drunk, the Manciple volunteers to do the story-telling in his stead. The emphasis in the Manciple's Prologue is again on tales and speech, and on the organ of speech, the mouth. The Manciple points at the Cook's evil breath and the potential destructiveness of his language and attitude in a series of terms that are used highly ambiguously:

And, wel I woot, thy breeth ful soure stynketh:
That sheweth wel thou art nat wel disposed.
Of me, certeyn, thou shalt nat been yglosed.
See how he ganeth, lo, this dronken wight,
As though he wolde swolwe us anonright.
Hooold cloos thy mouth, man, by thy fader kyn!
The devel of helle sette his foot therin!
Thy cursed breeth infecte wole us alle.
Fy, stynkyng swyn! Fy, foule moote thee falle!
A, taketh heede, sires, of this lusty man.

(ll. 32-41)

'Nat wel disposed' means, in this context, 'indisposed, unwell' because drunk, as *The Riverside Chaucer* edition explains, but the lines that follow in this quotation also imply an evil disposition in a more spiritual sense. The Cook is a dangerous man, his mouth is hell-mouth and his yawning is threatening. On the literal level, he infects others when he exhales, and seems to devour them when he inhales. On a more figurative level, it is his language that is infectious or drags you into evil beyond redemption. The Manciple's words 'Of me, certeyn, thou shalt nat been yglosed' therefore acquire the double meaning of (1) 'I shall not flatter ('glose') you at all' and (2) 'Do not expect me to comment ('glose') in the margin of *your* text!'

The Cook, says the Manciple, has reached a stage of drunkenness that puts his behaviour on a par with that of monkeys ('I trowe that ye dronken han wyn ape! – l. 44). Apes are known for their mimetic behaviour, and the way the Cook is now swaying on his horse reminds the Manciple of a preposterous imitation of 'justen atte fan' (l. 42 – an exercise designed to improve jousting skills by striking a board and avoiding a bag). The Cook could not do the real thing, neither in horse-riding or jousting, nor in speaking, nor in telling tales. The Manciple's insults ultimately lead the Cook to a state of speechless wrath – precisely the kind of rage which the 'be nat wroth' of his own Prologue told us to avoid. In the Cook's Prologue, anger came out fuming in a controlled manner via sneering remarks; in the Prologue to the Manciple's Tale, the Cook is dumbfounded with rage:

And with this speche the Cook wax wrooth and wraw,
And on the Manciple he gan nodde faste
For lakke of speche, and doun the hors hym caste,
Where as he lay, til that men hym up took.
This was a fair chyvachee of a cook!

(ll. 46-50)

In a subtle blend of the images of horsemanship and control of speech, the Cook has lost the reins over his speech and is made speech-less. The Host fears that he might recover sufficiently so that he 'lewedly wolde telle his tale' (l. 59). He invites the Manciple to take over the Cook's role as narrator, but also fears that the game of verbal, and perhaps physical, revenge will go on: he will 'brynge thee to the lure' (l. 72 – recall you as a hawk is recalled, with a lure, i.e. with false seeming or mock-attractions), he suggests to the Manciple, and 'pynchen at thy rekenynges' (find fault with your accounts). In a by now familiar pattern, it is the Manciple's turn to guarantee to his audience and to the Cook that all was meant in jest and nothing in

earnest: 'That that I spak, I seyde it in my bourde' (in jest – l. 81). Ultimately, it is a 'gourde' or flask of ripe wine offered by the Manciple that settles the quarrel. The Cook's mouth is stopped with yet more wine, and the Host mockingly praises sweet Bacchus for being the ultimate peacemaker on the pilgrimage to Canterbury when words have soured the atmosphere.

Subsequently, the Manciple tells his story. It is a tale of a crow that belongs to Bacchus' rational counterpart, viz. Ph(o)ebus Apollo. Its mimetic abilities lead to a revelation of the truth. That truth happens to be a sad one, viz. the unfaithfulness of Phebus' wife. Unfortunately, the uncovering of the secret truth leads to the killing of Phebus' wife and to the crow's downfall. 'Phebus' Apollo, the pagan god of poetry, cannot sort out through reason and culture what his unruly rival Bacchus was happy to quench in alcohol and leave in peace. Phebus, it appears, has made the terrible mistake of giving the crow the Promethean gift of human language:

Now hadde this Phebus in his hous a crowe
Which in a cage he fostred many a day,
And taughte it speken, as men teche a jay.
Whit was this crowe as is a snow-whit swan,
And countrefete the speche of every man
He koude, whan he sholde telle a tale.

(ll. 130-35)

Unsurprisingly, one of the main emphases of the text is on speech, on the mimetic and deceptive use of language ('countrefete'), which can, if necessary, make a crow look like a swan.

The crow does not put language to good moral use. It is speechless when it could and perhaps should speak in protest against the act of unfaithfulness. Its speech would perhaps slightly annoy but not deeply harm Phebus' wife and her lover during their act of fornication. It cries out fatally, however, when Phebus comes home after the scene of adultery:

The white crowe, that heeng ay in the cage,
Biheeld hire werk [their adultery], and seyde never a word.
And whan that hoom was come Phebus, the lord,
This crowe sang 'Cokkow! Cokkow! Cokkow!'

(ll. 240-43)

The Two Flemish Proverbs and their Contexts in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

After a possibly guilty silence follows decidedly guilty speech. Language is, apparently, the rude and cold forest we prefer to the comfort of the golden cage and comfort of speechlessness. There is no way in which speech can ever be contained, as the tale has warned us already through its subtle metaphoric implications, equating the crow's cage to the mechanisms that control language:

Taak any bryd, and put it in a cage,
And do al thyn entente and thy corage
To fostre it tendrely with mete and drynke
Of alle deyntees that thou kanst bithynke,
And keep it al so clenly as thou may,
Although his cage of gold be never so gay,
Yet hath this brid, by twenty thousand foold,
Levere in a forest that is rude and coold
Goon ete wormes and swich wrecchednesse.
For evere this brid wol doon his bisynesse
To escape out of his cage, yif he may.

(ll. 163-73)

Speech demands a 'libertee' (l. 174) to which we are all enslaved. Worms and wretchedness – 'quaad' things of alle kinds – is what it feeds on. As V.J. Scattergood has demonstrated in an excellent discussion of this tale and its prologue, the Manciple himself expresses things in such a manner that he constantly denies what is being said.¹⁰ In this tale, the theme of language gradually takes over from the theme of unfaithful women. In her Oxford Guide to *The Canterbury Tales*, Helen Cooper demonstrates how in connection with this theme, the manner and substance of speech contradict each other all the time, and how the 'word' that 'moot cosyn be to the werkynge' (l. 210) fails to do so, and how if it did, 'it would be impossible to enjoin silence at all'.¹¹

The disparity between the manner of speech and its substance or purpose, leads us back again to our Flemish proverbs. In its context in the Cook's Prologue and Tale, 'sooth play, quaad play', pointed at the dangers of a speech that reveals a hard truth through mockery, either because the manner of speaking might be bad or unsuccessful (a bad joke), or because the substance might be vicious, or both. In what might be considered an epilogue to the Manciple's Tale, Phebus yields the floor to his mother, who, making use of a second Flemish proverb, warns against the 'muchel harm' (l. 337) done by speaking itself:

The Flemyng seith, and lerne it if thee leste,
That litel janglyng causeth muchel reste.

(ll. 349-50)

The crow has mocked the god of poetry through speaking the truth, and silence, in this case, would have been advisable. Grauls and Vanderheijden point out that there is a 'slight difference' between the Flemish source of the proverb ('Luttel onderwinds maakt groote rust')¹² and Chaucer's translation:

. . . 'janglyng' being usually understood as a purely verbal meddling with somebody else's affairs, 'onderwind' apparently conveying in most cases the idea of a more active interference, as the different Latin translations of the proverb seem to suggest. It should however be borne in mind that in more than one example, quoted in the *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek* [Verwijs and Verdam], 'onderwinden' can simply be taken as an equivalent expression of 'to jangle'.¹³

Although the form of the crow's revelatory speech to Phebus seems, on the surface at least, to be honest and straightforward (no 'sot pley' here!), there is wrapped in it the kind of viciousness that the Flemish word 'onderwinden' suggests. The words of the crow to cuckolded Phebus, unlike those of the Host to the Cook in the Prologue to the Cook's Tale, or those of the Manciple to the Cook in the Prologue to the Manciple's own tale, *seem* to speak the truth in earnest rather than in mockery, but ultimately even in the form, there is hidden malice and mockery, as one can infer from Helen Cooper's comment:

The crow's account of the adultery has the same summary pointedness as the brisk narrative that recounts it in the first place:

Anon they wroghten al hire lust volage. (239)

'On thy bed thy wyf I saugh hym swyve.' (255)

There is still a touch of French euphemism in the first of these lines [in fact a quotation of the Manciple's words]; the second [spoken by the crow] is as brutal as it could be. The Manciple's

Tale equates such brutality with realism, to claim it to be a faithful representation of reality.¹⁴

In fact, the crow invites Phebus to reduce truth to a brutal 'reality', for which too absolute a claim is made. A seemingly straightforward communication of the truth may be the biggest mockery of them all. The formal simplicity of the crow's communication is a rhetorical stratagem.

On the surface, the two Flemish proverbs seem to point in opposite directions. The Cook's warns against making a truth of mockery, the other against making a mockery of truth through gossip. But was not the critical comment made by the Host on the Cook's recipes and kitchen hygiene a basic 'realistic' truth as well? And could not the same be said about the comments made by the Manciple on the Cook's drunkenness and foul mouth? And would it not have been better also for the Host, as for the Manciple, to keep his mouth shut about the Cook's shortcomings? Ultimately, there does not need to be a fundamental difference between the contexts in which both proverbs are placed. They are interchangeable and reversible, like so many of the words we utter.

The proverbs are similar also in other ways. Both appear as radical drops in style because each is placed by the speaker in the context of Solomon's wisdom (Salomon in his langage' – l. 4330 in the Prologue to the Cook's Tale; 'Reed Salomon, so wys and honourable' – l. 344 in the Manciple's Tale). Especially in a context in which we are reminded of biblical wisdom, both popular sayings come across as truths too trivial to reveal anything fundamental about speech or rhetoric, or the manner in which we should speak, or the value of silence. The Manciple says and repeats that he is 'a man noght textueel' (l. 235 and l. 315), but subtly exploits the mechanisms of a language that always says too little and too much. The Cook, with his exploitation of sudden reversals of meaning, appeared to be not much different in this. It is time for the Parson to take over and speak the word that is no longer based on 'fables and swich wrecchedness' (ParsTPro, l. 34), but on God's truth.

Erik Hertog (like J.F. Vanderheijden, an eminent Flemish Chaucerian) wrote the following conclusion to his study of *Chaucer's Fabliaux as Analogues*:

No tale (or 'solution') is allowed to dominate the scene for long, and even the cleverest of verbal manipulators can be brought down. Perhaps the most telling and striking sign of this ceaseless ambivalence, is the recurrent harping on the theme of 'earnest in game'. In whatever context it occurs, it is clearly never meant

anymore as an irreducible opposition, but as an 'and... and' relation, in which one term is often even indistinguishable from the other, or has *become* the other.¹⁵

Erik Hertog's words seem like a direct comment on the way Chaucer juggles with his Flemish proverbs, their meanings and their contexts.

Should it come as a surprise, then, that the worst of verbal manipulators in the *Canterbury Tales*, the Pardoner, should tell his tale about *Flemish* revellers, who by swearing and blaspheming join the crowd of those who tell ungodly (and therefore, unparsonlike) tales? The Flemings themselves may be archetypal 'manipulators and subverters of established meaning'.¹⁶ They are described as 'yonge folk that haunteden folye' (PardT, l. 464), and are, in the Flemish sense of the word, well and truly 'sot'. It will take more than the Squire's abortive 'crusade' against 'Flaundes, Artoys, and Pycardie' (GP, l. 86) to teach those Flemings a lesson (in a comic reversal, the lack of success of the military campaigns against Flemish towns in 1383 should also teach the Squire a lesson). Should one wonder at the Flemish-sounding name of the 'clerk' or 'textual' scholar the Wife of Bath marries for the sake of his lovely legs? Jankin or Janekin, he is called. His name is a Flemish diminutive for the very common Flemish name 'Jan', (i.e. 'John'), and he manipulates texts for the destruction of women's reputation. The Wife of Bath has a hard task to get rid of his 'quaad pley'. She may be a match to him, though, as she believes she is to the Flemish cloth-makers of 'Ypres and of Gaunt' (l. 448). She certainly is a match to the Flemings in the creation of illusions: are there 'truly' important weavers and cloth-traders in the town (Bath) of this 'verray jangleresse' (WBTPro, l. 638)? 'Much jangling' rather than 'litel janglyng' will be this Wife's motto. Sir Thopas, who is from the Flemish town of 'Poperyng' (Thop, l. 720; modern spelling Poperinge) and has bought 'hosen broun' in 'Brugges' (Thop, l. 733), is a very innocent manipulator by comparison, trying hard as he does to make us believe he is a genuine Flemish knight rather than a fake, provincial *nouveau riche*. On the whole, his 'sot pley' has no malice in it but is exceedingly boring.

Only some, it would seem, preserve the integrity of the merchant in the Shipman's Tale and manage to remain interesting, when they travel to 'Brugges' or other Flemish towns to acquire Flemish merchandise or bonds. The Shipman's merchant shows himself in debt openly when he is, and his deeds are in accordance with his words.¹⁷ Of the Merchant of the General Prologue, by contrast, 'Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette' (GP, l. 280). This tradesman masks his real financial situation by showing off with 'a Flaundryssh bever hat' (GP, l. 272), one of the most

expensive commodities he could possibly get to adorn his head and create an illusion of wealth. In the case of the Merchant in the General Prologue, Flanders is again associated, as usual, with signs or messages that do not cover what they mean – if anything.

Meaninglessness may indeed be the ultimate threat. It is significant that in spite of the appearances, the crow is not reduced to silence, as is the Cook before the Manciple's Tale, but to raw noise. When its white 'swan-like' feathers have been pulled out and replaced by a coat as black as grim 'reality', it will continue to make noise – not the sweet sounds it used to make, but ghastly cries:

Ne nevere sweete noyse shul ye make,
But evere crie agayn tempest and rayn.

(ll. 300-01)

This reference is a cruel and no doubt, on Chaucer's part, deliberate corruption of its source. The closest analogue is the *Integumenta Ovidii*, which describes the raven as a sacred animal capable of foretelling tempests, as Phoebus does.¹⁸ What used to be a divine feature of human language, becomes in Chaucer trivial jangling against the elements. The image of the mouth being hell-mouth (used earlier in the Prologue to the Manciple's Tale, and applied to the Cook) has by no means been dispelled: 'A wikked tonge is worse than a feend' (l. 320), says Phebus' mother. There is a great deal of noise around us in the

litel toun
Which that ycleped is Bobbe-up-and-down

(ll. 1-2)

where the Manciple quarrels with the Cook and then tells his tale explaining how the crow's harmonious song has been turned into harsh notes. Language itself wickedly bobs up and down.

Flemings, of all people, make most noise. The conclusion of the Nun's Priest's Tale makes this clear when it describes the cries of despair among Chauntecleer's 'woful hennes' when their hero is carried away by the fox. Trojan wives may have produced noble and woeful sounds when their town fell; the wives of senators may have made lamentable but still noble noise when Nero burnt their city, but one wonders whether one would designate the cries of Flemish prostitutes that became victims of 'Jakke Straw and his meynee'¹⁹ (NPT, l. 3394) as equally noble.

Flemings come, as usual, as a rhetorical anticlimax where we expect a rhetorical climax. They seem to make noble language take a turn in the opposite direction.

NOTES

¹ Jan Grauls and Jan Frans Vanderheijden, 'Two Flemish Proverbs in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 13:2 (1934), 745-49.

² All references to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* are based on Larry D. Benson (gen. ed.), *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

³ See explanatory note, Fragment I, l. 4331 in *The Riverside Chaucer*: 'Ecclus. 11.29 "Bring not every man into thine house; for many are the plots of the deceitful man",' with further references for the attribution of Ecclesiasticus to Salomon.

⁴ Grauls and Vanderheijden, 749: 'The fact that in several Middle Dutch locutions both "spel" and "spot" are used synonymously in the sense of "jest", may lend some plausible basis to the assumption of the probable existence of another Middle Dutch form of this proverb "Waar spel, kwaad spel", which in some way might account for the variant reading (Sooth play, quaat spel) of two of the manuscripts.' Whilst Grauls and Vanderheijden do not make reference to the connotations of sneering and viciousness that 'spotte' inevitably has, it is not possible that they could have meant the word to be equated with 'jest' in any neutral way, but only negatively as, say, a jest at someone's expense.

⁵ See Grauls and Vanderheijden, 749, n. 3; and *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 853, explanatory note on l. 4357 of Fragment I.

⁶ *Proverbia Communia: A Fifteenth Century Collection of Dutch Proverbs together with the Low German Version*, ed. by Richard Jente, Folklore Series 4 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1947). Given this date of publication it was less easy for Grauls and Vanderheijden to get hold of the Delft edition than it was for me. This might explain why they did not find the combination 'quaad/ quaat spel' in the *Proverbia Communia*. P.J. Harrebomée mentions the combination 'kwaad [i.e. quaad] spel' also in 'Dat zal kwaad spel maken' and 'Dat zou kwaad spel in het gasthuis gemaakt hebben', but 'kwaad spel maken' here means 'to cause problems, to create havoc', which makes the expression more remote from its Chaucerian use. See P.J. Harrebomée, *Spreekwoordenboek der Nederlandscher Taal, of verzameling van Nederlandscher spreekwoorden en spreekwoordelijke uitdrukkingen van vroegeren en lateren tijd*. Part 2 (Utrecht: Kemink en Zoon, 1861), p. 286. It is more useful to note that on the basis of various sources, Harrebomée does confirm the existence of the expression 'Het is kwaad spel, daar de een lacht en de ander schreit' (cf. Harrebomée, p. 286).

⁷ The author of this article heard the expression used repeatedly by rural Flemish speakers born before World War I in the areas just to the east and south of Bruges or 'Brugges', the Flemish town Chaucer refers to more often than any other in *The Canterbury Tales* (see esp. the Shipman's Tale).

⁸ Explanatory note to I, 4357 in *The Riverside Chaucer* suggests that the 'use of the Flemish adjective *quaad* (bad) may suggest that Chaucer knew the proverb in Flemish form (although *quade* appears in ProPrT VII.438)'. Canon Camille Looten suggests a lot more words which in his view Chaucer borrowed directly from Middle Dutch: 'il est certain que de loin en loin, il cueille un épi dans le champ étranger où il s'attarde et qu'il en garnit son propre idiome'. See Camille Looten, *Chaucer, ses modèles, ses sources, sa religion, Mémoires et travaux publiés par des professeurs des facultés catholiques de Lille*, 38 (Lille: Economat des facultés catholiques, 1931), p. 214. It is not certain, however, that Chaucer even visited Flanders. Moreover, Looten's list of words borrowed by Chaucer personally is unreliable. Words like 'wanhope' (for despair) and 'ey' (for egg) were in common use in coastal and other areas on both sides of the North Sea. On the whole, Looten's chapter on 'Chaucer et la Flandre' (pp. 190-214) should be treated with care.

⁹ E. Verwijs and J. Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch woordenboek*, Part 7 ('s Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1912) column 1598: 'sot, bnw'.

¹⁰ V.J. Scattergood, 'The Manciple's Manner of Speaking', *Essays in Criticism* 24 (1974), 124-146.

¹¹ Helen Cooper, *The Canterbury Tales*, Oxford Guides to Chaucer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 394.

¹² Grauls and Vanderheijden, 746.

¹³ Grauls and Vanderheijden, 747-748.

¹⁴ Cooper, p. 394.

¹⁵ Erik Hertog, *Chaucer's Fabliaux as Analogues*, Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, Series 1, Studia 19 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1991), p. 238.

¹⁶ Hertog, p. 233.

¹⁷ On the honesty of the merchant in the Shipman's Tale and the straightforwardness of his speech, see V.J. Scattergood, 'The Originality of the Shipman's Tale', *Chaucer Review* 11 (1976-77), 210-31.

¹⁸ Cf. *The Riverside Chaucer* edition, p. 954, explanatory note on l. 301.

¹⁹ In connection with the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, *The Anonimale Chronicle* says: 'Mesme le iour de Corpore Christi en le matyne, les ditz comunes de Kent abaterount une measone destwes [a brothel] pres le pount de Loundres qe fuist en mayns del frows [women] de Flaundes et avoient a ferme [were renting] la dite measone del meare de Loundres'. See *The Anonimale Chronicle 1333 to 1381*. From a Ms. written at St. Mary's Abbey, York, ed. by V.H. Galbraith (Manchester: Manchester University Press; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970, repr. from 1927 with minor corrections), p. 140. It is noteworthy that the Flemish word 'frow' (with a Flemish plural in -s) is used here in a French text as a marker of the Flemishness of London prostitutes. I am grateful to Dr Paul Arblaster for drawing my

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attention to this reference. For her help in doing the research on references to Flemings and Flanders in general, I should like to thank Delphine Piraprez.

**Old Theatre for New:
The Cambridge Medieval Players (1974-1977), The
Medieval Players (1980-1992)**

Dick McCaw

Twenty years ago in 1980 Carl Heap and I spent much of a hot summer arguing about theatre. Medieval theatre, to be precise. The reasons for this conversation go back to Summer 1974 when we were both students at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. I used to work nights in the college bar and he was one of my regulars, arriving promptly at 10.30 for the last half hour. One night after work he asked me whether I would join him in a theatre company called the Cambridge Medieval Players (CMP). Although I had little experience of theatre, and none of medieval theatre, the idea as he described it, appealed and I said yes. Thus began a four-week training session that was military in its rigour. Apart from physical exercises for building strength and developing suppleness, he would take us out to a cricket pitch for vocal warm-ups. We would stand at opposite ends of the field and speak our lines to each other, sometimes whispering them whilst still remaining audible. This training stood us in good stead when we were performing outdoors and without any acoustic assistance at all: it also built up our physical stamina which resulted in our high-octane performances.

During the summer vacation of 1974 we performed *Johan Johan The Husband*, and *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament* on Latham Lawn, Trinity Hall. Our audience consisted of tourists and Cambridge academics who hadn't gone on holiday. In 1975 we added *Mankynde* and the Towneley *Mactatio Abel* to the repertoire and New College Oxford to the tour schedule. We added *The Pardoner's Tale* to the repertoire in 1977 and toured to Alençon, venues in East Anglia, New College Oxford and ended our five-week tour at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe where we all nearly froze to death in an arctic Scottish summer. By this time all the performers had learned a variety of skills for which the subsequent Medieval Players were to become celebrated: acrobatics, singing, juggling and stilt-walking. Our street parades showed off our circus skills and garish costumes to great effect: no-one could forget Carl striding

down Princes Street blowing his cow horn, preceded by the lewdly capering devil, Titivillus.

After September 1977 we went our separate ways. Carl began a professional career after a one-year course at Webber Douglas College, his brother Mark went back to Oxford University, Roy Weskin went into professional theatre, where he worked with Carl in Purves' Puppets, Andy Watts became a professional musician, and, in 1978, I joined a scratch theatre company called The Actor's Touring Company (ATC). I returned to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe with ATC's adaptation of Byron's *Don Juan* and, having won one of the coveted 'Fringe First Awards', started my professional career.

Don Juan was a show whose minimal set could be stowed in the back of a Renault 5 – an example of theatre at its most portable. The stage was laid bare for the six actors who between them took on some forty or so roles. I loved the show for the invention of its staging and for the whippy sophistication of Byron's poetry, but it lacked something. The actors didn't have the stage reality of the CMP performers – all they could do was act. Byron's poem had a fantastic geographical sweep but it lacked the cosmic dimension of the medieval dramas. Byron's rudeness was sharp and witty but lacked the earthy vulgarity of a play like *Mankynde*. During ATC's third production – this time an adaptation by Richard Curtis of *Don Quixote* – I began to dream of a company which would perform those medieval plays we had experimented with in the 1970s.

I tracked Carl down and we began to discuss the idea that was later to become The Medieval Players. He brought his knowledge of medieval theatre and his actor training, and I brought the experience of having started a professional theatre company. The result of our sometimes heated discussions was a two-page manifesto whose propositions we remained faithful to until we parted company in 1990. After it had been produced I don't remember us ever arguing about fundamentals again. I now realise just how unique our partnership was: rarely does one achieve such a harmony of purpose, and from that, such a complete trust in one another's actions.

Ten years on from the break-up of the Medieval Players we have all gone our separate ways again. I am a part-time PhD student, working on a thesis called *Bakhtin's Other Theatre* which examines the theories of the Russian writer Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) and their application to twentieth-century Eastern European theatre.¹ The inspiration for my approach goes back to the principles Carl and I put into practice, in particular to the Medieval Players' landmark tour of Autumn 1982. This, our fourth national tour, saw the beginnings of our first ensemble; it marked the moment at which Carl and I stopped feeding the company members with theory, and

began following and shaping their creative development as they interpreted our vision. During the Autumn tour we started working on an adaptation of Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* and copies of Thomas Urquhart's wonderfully unfaithful translation circulated around the van.² Urquhart was accompanied by another book, which Carl recommended to Rabelais-remedials like myself who were having difficulties getting to grips with the novel. This book was called *Rabelais and His World* by Mikhail Bakhtin.³ Carl had set me off on my theatrical journey in 1974 and unwittingly on my academic journey in 1982.

The thesis has become, in some respects, a 200-page elaboration of our two-page manifesto. It is a rediscovery of those fundamentals of theatre which I now find echoed in the writings of Appia, Brecht, Copeau, and, above all, Meyerhold. The thesis grew directly out of the talks I had to give throughout Britain and Australia to try and persuade sixth-formers and university students to come and watch our plays. At first their function was simply to sell our performances, emphasising the spectacle and skills and downplaying the religion and middle English of our productions; after a while they became a means of testing and exploring our manifesto and for applying the latest translations of Bakhtin's writings which appeared throughout the eighties. The thesis also originated in a book I was asked to write in 1987 when Carl and I were planning our farewell tour. I wrote eighty pages before The Medieval Players' hugely successful 'farewell tour' became the prelude to our most intense period of activity, and after September 1987 I never had time to return to the book. Its title was to have been *Old Theatre for New*.

Of course The Medieval Players were not the first to confront the challenges of producing medieval plays in such a way that they appealed to modern theatre audiences. William Poel's 1900 production of *Everyman* was the first 20th century performance of a medieval play, although he is probably better remembered as a re-inventor of Shakespeare's plays, staging them as close to what was then known of, or believed to be, the Elizabethan original as possible. When he was asked whether he wasn't being a little 'archaeological' in his approach, he replied that, on the contrary, he was in the vanguard of the New Theatre by doing away with the proscenium arch and footlights which separate actors from their audience.⁴ The distinction he implied between the 'archaeological' and the contemporary introduces the fundamental dilemma faced by anyone wanting to present early theatre to a modern paying audience. Putting it another way, if the two are in tension should one's first debt be to the audience or to the original material? How can one be faithful to a theatre that no diarist described in detail, for which we have no instruction manuals on either acting or stage conventions, and that had scant stage directions in the play texts? Non-specialists like

Carl and me had to look to the academics like Meg Twycross for an informed view based on painstaking and eclectic research of what a play might originally have looked like, and what acting styles might have prevailed. In deciding to draw on and interpret that body of evidence, The Medieval Players' approach might seem in danger of falling into the archaeological camp. Indeed when we met with Dario Fo who was performing his celebrated *Mistero Buffo* at the Riverside Studios in 1985 the one thing he warned us against was 'archaeology'. But not surprisingly Carl and I are with Poel in thinking that our approach was modern rather than archaeological, ironically precisely *because* we drew on recent academic research into medieval theatre.

The Medieval Players took inspiration from and worked creatively with academic models of a theatre that was completely alien to contemporary ideas of illusionist theatre. Their projection had more in common with the theatre of Bertholt Brecht and Tadeusz Kantor than current West End fodder. While we were working, Ronald Harwood introduced his own history of (European) theatre for the BBC called *All the World's a Stage*, which remains instructive in reminding us of the official theatre world's received wisdom on medieval theatre at the time.⁵ This was, in our view, a tendentious history whose culminating point was the West End theatre of the early 1980s and which presented medieval theatre as apparently lacking any intelligence, beauty or sophistication, as coarse and stupid plays for coarse and stupid people, who had to wait 150 years for Shakespeare, whose plays were performed according to the best traditions of television naturalism. The excerpt from *Mankynde* appears to have been contrived to enact these prejudices and stands as a piece of historical/theatrical snobbery in which actors and audiences were both presented as microcephalic idiots laughing at jokes which no modern viewer could grasp, often before the gags had been delivered. For Harwood the past truly was a foreign land and medieval theatre an entirely alien phenomenon.

Bill Bryden's production of Tony Harrison's *The Mysteries* was another, much more interesting example of an 'official' theatre taking on what it championed as a 'popular' theatre. Their (very self-conscious) process of popularisation was explicitly un-'archeological'.

I hope you understand our purpose to throw out all scholarship and bring the plays back to a popular audience. [. . .] The Mystery Plays are essentially popular art, designed for mass audiences in open spaces. [. . .] by rooting the plays in a gritty working-class environment he [Bill Bryden] has reclaimed them for our times for what they are: an essential part of our dramatic heritage.⁶

If Harwood's version of medieval was predicated on a particular theatrical tradition (which calls itself Theatre), Hall reinstates it but as 'our dramatic heritage'. In the programme there is much made of the grittiness and working-class origins of this theatre: wholemeal theatre wi' nowt of the goodness taken out. Musical Director, John Tams describes Tony Harrison's verse transliteration in exactly these terms:

Language is powerful verse and strong rhythm; not thinly-sliced
language with the crusts taken off . . . but stone ground and
crunchy so that it tastes good in your mouth and you want
everyone to have a slice.⁷

I am not saying their production was a travesty of medieval theatre; Bryden, Harrison, Tams and Bill Dudley (the designer) were clearly inspired by the York and Towneley Plays and worked on them with both admiration and affection for the original. I could not help but enjoy their production: the staging had brilliant moments, and the cast played with an emotional commitment rare in British theatre. But out with the scholarly bathwater went much of the very baby they were so keen to present to us *tel quel*. Their rendering of *Abraham and Isaac* was terrifically moving up until the Angel's appearance – an excellent piece of rough-hewn Ibsen played with great realism. But what to make of the Angel? There is no context for Angels in the Yorkshire of *Kes* – especially angels who play such a decisive role in the story.

Religion was the problem in this production. *The Creation* was played as a comic tour de force by an actor who seemed to have confused his role of God with that of Herod. For him (or Bryden) authority was synonymous with shouting and bullying. It was funny but it failed to make sense of the theological structure of the play as a whole. This was the case too with Bill Dudley's *Hell's Mouth*. It was spectacular but had only the vaguest meaning:

Hellmouth below was a corporation dust cart's jaws and Hell itself,
a combination of sewage and garbage – more real for a largely
agnostic audience than a gargoyles mouth and demons.⁸

I don't agree that their production decisions did create images which were 'more real for a largely agnostic audience': medieval theatre was accessible and intelligible precisely because its dramaturgical register was visual. This theatre was a 'living book' for the illiterate because the concepts were presented in vivid iconic form. The staging of *The Creation* can and should set out the medieval theological cosmology, situating

mankind in relation to God and the Devil. God was an inaccessible figure set high above the stage, masked, speaking from a throne set within a golden mandorla. From Hell's Mouth leaped the Devil, close-up and terrifying – the costume a horrible confusion of animal, bird and fish, all natural order reversed. In between was mankind, on middle-earth, aspiring to the heavenly and tempted by the devil. These images which we were able to draw on because of the research of Meg Twycross and others, read, I believe, more clearly than fudged generality.

Harrison accepts that while the York Cycle was a popular drama its *function* was religious:

One of the things religion does is help people cope with mortality.
What else have we? There are very few public ceremonies for that.⁹

Harrison's religion helps us 'cope' with our own mortality perhaps, but the 'religion' of the York cycle deals centrally not with the mortality of the individual body but with the resurrection of Christ's body, Corpus Christi. It is about salvation and the *immortality* of the soul. Only if we grasp this can we understand the meaning of its representations of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. What *The Mysteries* courted was popular drama, the 'public ceremony' without the religious content, the *ecclesiam* without the *sanctum*.

... these plays are not really about what your religion is. They're about the faith of the common people, and their days of celebration. They make sense today, at a time when the church is virtually nowhere, because they help us to remember our faith and our struggle for that faith, whether it is in our family, our home town, our union.¹⁰

Bernard Levin found that they achieved their aim completely:

It is this welding of actor, audience, play and story into one whole that gives the performance its unique quality – and I wish there were another word for performance, for it diminishes the thing that has been created, which transcends any idea of a theatre as a place which we visit to see a play, and of a play as that which we visit a theatre to see.¹¹

Having recently seen *The Mysteries* again, I still feel that they work as a *spectacle*, but at bottom the project is an exercise in nostalgia, and nostalgia not for the Middle Ages but for a William Morrisite pre-industrial nirvana, a world of gritty working-class honesty, of Northern folk who call spades spades. In the 1980s the production was also seen as an act of solidarity in the face of the Thatcher government's defeat of the Miner's Strike, based on a very questionable equation of Craft Guild (an employer's organisation) with a Trades Union (a worker's organisation). It was a wonderful party that affirmed our need for fellowship and celebration but without having found within the plays a convincing reason for doing so.

Even if they sidestepped the religious burden of the plays, the National Theatre team did get the collective moment right: a sense of 'communitas' was also one of the central objectives of The Medieval Players. To explain our type of theatre Carl would quote a passage from Tyrone Guthrie's autobiography, describing the author's reaction to *Ane Satire of The Thrie Estates*:

Gradually as I toiled through the formidable text, it began to dawn that here was an opportunity to put into practice some of the theories which, through the years, I had been longing to test. Scene after scene seemed absolutely unplayable on a proscenium stage, almost meaningless in terms of 'dramatic illusion'; but seemed at the same time to offer fascinating possibilities.¹²

The first thing to note in this quotation is the phrase 'toiled through the formidable text'. It has to be said that medieval plays do not have the literary allure of Shakespeare; they only come to life when performed. This is why many colleagues thought that we were mad wanting to create popular theatre from what looked like such unpromising material. But, like Guthrie, we realised that this drama allowed us to take inspiration from the theatrical experiments of our contemporaries. Carl listed his inspirations as the theatre of Tadeusz Kantor and Peter Schumann of Bread and Puppet Theatre, both of whom created drama that is 'unplayable on a proscenium stage'. It was a 'revelation' for Guthrie when he found the Assembly Hall in Edinburgh to stage the play at the 1948 Edinburgh Festival.

... it threw a new light for me on the whole meaning of theatrical performance. One of the most pleasing effects of the performance was the physical relation of the audience to the stage. [. . .] Seated

around three sides they focused upon the actors in the brightly lit acting area, but the background was of the dimly lit rows of people similarly focused on the actor. All the time, but unemphatically and by inference, each member of the audience was being ceaselessly reminded that he was not lost in an illusion, was not at the court of King Humanitie in 16thC Scotland, but was, in fact, a member of a large audience, taking part, 'assisting' as the French very properly express it, in a performance, a participant in a ritual.¹³

Anyone who saw The Medieval Players perform can understand why this description of Guthrie's production was used by Carl to support our work. Guthrie vividly describes the complex actor/audience relationship that develops once one jettisons the footlights and proscenium arch of illusionist theatre: the audience is transformed from a passive 'fly on the wall' into an active participant in the total event. This active relationship means far more than embarrassing moments of audience participation; it demands a different kind of acting, and a different kind of responding. Ever fond of bad jokes Carl would announce that 'The Medieval Players do it with the lights on', but it took us years to perfect a style of playing directly to an audience that didn't drop into condescending *Jackanory* story-telling, or assume the hectoring tones of agit-prop.

It was the same achievement of this live actor/audience that led William Poel to consider himself a modernist rather than an 'archaeologist'. On Sundays when West End theatres were closed he would lay down a platform stage over the stalls and play directly to his audience. Poel's challenge to proscenium arch, illusionist theatre, was being repeated throughout Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. Swiss designer Adolphe Appia found the separation of audience and performer spiritually impoverishing and, in 1911, he designed the lighting and architecture of Great Hall at Hellerau (near Dresden) to bring together both halves of the total event.¹⁴ The Bauhaus architect Walter Gropius designed his 'Total Theatre' for political theatre-maker Erwin Piscator in 1927, with exactly the same idea in mind.¹⁵ Indeed the very name Bauhaus was taken from the sheds that the Cathedral masons would be housed in during construction. The more I study theatre the more I feel confident about placing the work of The Medieval Players within a tradition of twentieth-century experimentation: I want, therefore, to conclude this article by examining the relationship between the Russian theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold (1865-1940) and medieval theatre as we came to understand it.

A constant in all productions by The Medieval Players was the booth-and-

trestle staging which allowed us to perform in almost any space: village hall, gymnasium, shopping precinct or football pitch. The priorities of the Arts Council of England's national lottery scheme demonstrate how authorities seem much happier funding theatre buildings than paying for artists to make work in them. It is clearly much sounder to invest in the solid durability of bricks and mortar than in the ephemeral life of artistic performances. Theatre, however, is not about buildings but the live exchange between actor and audience. The booth-and-trestle stage demonstrates that you don't need theatre buildings in order to make theatre; by jettisoning the weighty paraphernalia of theatres you return to the fundamentals of theatre. The proscenium arch is not simply a feature of stage architecture; by the physical distance it places between actor and audience it determines the kind of theatre that can be performed on that stage. The frame disengages and highlights the represented world of the play. Not only stage space but also stage time becomes remote. Events cease to have immediacy and become representations of time past, they move from the present to the preterite tense. Meyerhold notes how the isolation created by the proscenium arch affected the interaction between audience and spectator:

The spectator experienced passively that which was presented on the stage. There arose that magic barrier which even today, in the form of footlights, divides the theatre into two opposed camps, the performers and the onlookers; no artery exists to unite these two separate bodies and preserve the unbroken circulation of creative energy. The orchestra kept the spectator close to the action; when it was replaced by footlights the spectator became isolated.¹⁶

Meyerhold's was just one voice amongst many challenging the limitations of the naturalistic stage and he looked to the equally ancient tradition of the booth-and-trestle.

At the present time, when the cinematograph is in the ascendant, the absence of the fairground booth is only apparent. The fairground booth is eternal. Its heroes do not die; they simply change their aspects and assume new forms. The heroes of the ancient *Atellanae*, the foolish *Maccus* and the simple *Pappus*, were resurrected almost twenty centuries later in the figures of *Arlecchino* and *Pantalone*, the principal characters of the *Commedia dell'Arte*.¹⁷

Meyerhold's first reference is to the depictions on Etruscan pottery of the stock characters of Atellan farce, Pappus and Maccus, capering on the phlyax stage. His historical sweep from the popular farces of first century Campania to the *Commedia dell'Arte* of sixteenth-century Northern Italy anticipates Bakhtin's millenary tradition of the carnivalesque, especially because it focuses on the specific *genre* of theatre played on these portable stages. It is a theatre of stock characters, of masks, performed by the strolling player who could turn his hand to a whole range of skills. When referring to this player Meyerhold uses the French term 'Cabotin', a word quite often used pejoratively to refer to performers in the boulevard touring theatres of the nineteenth century.

The cabotin is a strolling player; the cabotin is a kinsman to the mime, the histrion, and the juggler; the cabotin can work miracles with his technical mastery; the cabotin keeps alive the tradition of the true art of acting. [. . .] In order to rescue the Russian theatre from its desire to become the servant of literature, we must spare nothing to restore to the stage the cult of cabotinage in its broadest sense.¹⁸

Along with other revolutionaries of the theatre (notably Craig) Meyerhold makes an opposition between 'the true art of acting' and theatre which risks becoming 'the servant of literature'. Without ever having read a word of Meyerhold in the 1970s and 80s Carl Heap was pursuing exactly the same exercise of reinvention, of reanimation of theatre. I'm sure he would agree with the following words:

Overjoyed at the simplicity, the refined grace, the extreme artistry of the old yet eternally new tricks of the histrions, mimi atellanae, scurrae, jaculatores and ministrelli the actor of the future should~ or if he wishes to remain an actor must co-ordinate his emotional responses with his technique, measuring both against the traditional precepts of the old theatre.¹⁹

I began this article by saying that Carl and I spent one summer 'talking about theatre. Medieval theatre, to be precise'. I think we have now got far enough to turn this statement around. To be precise, by talking about 'medieval' theatre, we were talking about Theatre in its simplest and purest state; not some archaeological revival, some hand-me-down from literature, some pictorial make-believe, but an artistic genre

with a unique appeal and immediacy. Meyerhold defines the specific appeal of theatre in terms of the actor's physical presence on stage, as opposed to the beauty of the spoken word. Indeed he is always presented in opposition to Stanislavski precisely because he insisted on the actor 'co-ordinating his emotional responses with his technique': he demanded a theatre of 'emotional excitability' and not the 'psychological' approach of emotional memory. To achieve this type of physical performance he re-invented the ancient tradition of popular acting.

If you think that traditions survive without attention you are wrong – they need watering just like a bulb under cultivation. It is ridiculous to expect a tradition to flourish by itself; culture doesn't function like that. Anybody who is familiar with the history of Italian theatre knows what a bitter struggle Gozzi had with Goldoni when they quarrelled over the need to revive the ancient tradition of the mask in Italian comedy. In his battles with Goldoni Gozzi placed his faith in the masses, in popular taste, and in the needs of the contemporary Italian audience; furthermore, he assembled a troupe of actors ready to fight with him to preserve the lusty traditions of the theatre.²⁰

This describes the path The Medieval Players trod. Each generation has to fight its own battle with non-theatrical theatre, with stagings of literary texts which are neither theatre nor literature. What makes a tradition alive is precisely the recurrent and militant act of reinvention.

A tradition is not a content, but a generic or stylistic structure that you have to rediscover through trial and error. We have pictures of Atellan farces and pictures and descriptions of Commedia dell'Arte and its masks, but how does one make the leap from still (possibly idealised or decorated) pictures to live theatre? Just how does the performer create an immediate effect whilst wearing stylised mask? Because the answers to these questions lie in form and style, ultimately they have to be resolved through practice. One has to work with the old texts, and work with the masks, sustained by the belief that they contain within them (like some genetic code) a characteristic notion of theatre. I think it was because the National Theatre changed anything which didn't conform to (their notion of) contemporary theatre practice that their theatrical results were limited.

As I mentioned earlier in this article, it took Carl and me two years of dogged experiment before we really started to create an ensemble (Autumn 1982). One quality

that Carl sought was naïveté, which also happens to be central to Meyerhold's conception of stylised acting:

The basic quality of kabuki players' acting is the same as Chaplin's: their naïveté. Naïve in everything they do: in tragedy and in comedy. That's why the stylised form of their productions seems natural. Without the naïveté in acting, the stylised devices of a director seem stiff and strange.²¹

It is true that stylised acting would seem 'stiff and strange', or better, affected, unless one had that ease, simplicity or, as Dario Fo puts it, *souplesse* in one's way of playing. But one must remember that theatre *is* unnatural and is a style of communication which becomes more immediate, more surprising, more effective, as a genre when the stylisation is acknowledged. The National Theatre realised that you needed to have 'high octane' language for the York plays, hence Harrison's driving alliterative verse; what they did not realise is that you need the same pent-energy in the gesture and movement – *that* is the element that makes the play watchable. On the booth-and-trestle stage neither words nor movement can descend into flaccid, formless naturalism which simply doesn't register as theatre.

Training! Training! Training! But if it's the kind of training which exercises only the body and not the mind then No, thank you! I have no use for the actors who know how to move but cannot think.²²

In the 1920s Meyerhold was one of the first directors to create an actor's training which is now taken as a commonplace of experimental theatre, promulgated by Jerzy Grotowski in the late 1950s²³ and brought to wider attention by Peter Brook and Eugenio Barba in the 1960s and 1970s.²⁴ We inherited this ethos and made it very much our own. The grace of movement, the energy of delivery, the physical availability of actors was entirely due to Carl's insistence on regular training for our ensemble of actors. Like Meyerhold we looked to the earlier tradition of the multifaceted performer who could juggle, sing, walk stilts and was an acrobat.

As a teacher I began by employing many means of expression which had been rejected by theatre; one of them was acrobatic training, which I revived in the system known as 'biomechanics'.

That is why I was to enjoy following the course of Chaplin's career: in discovering the means he employed to develop his monumental art, I find that he, too, realised the necessity for acrobatic training in the actor's education.²⁵

How right that these 'means of expression . . . had been rejected by theatre'. Throughout our career we came up against what Bakhtin would call 'official theatre' for which most of the drama schools train actors, which the greater part of theatres are built for, and which most theatre organisations promote and produce. Our success was as a marginal group, hugely popular in smaller communities, both rural or inner city, but never quite accepted by the arbiters of official theatre. Which is how it should be. We took our inspiration from a tradition which always seems to have run parallel with a more official, less dangerous, less immediate kind of theatre. Ours is the poor theatre of minimal technical requirements, of direct audience address, which appeals to their imagination through suggestive gesture, a theatre of skill and spectacle. This is the theatre which I left ATC London to create with Carl, a creation which was supported and informed by Meg Twycross's work. Now I am discovering in retrospect the rich tradition of theatre to which we belong and to which I hope The Medieval Players made some contribution.

[Editor's note. The archives of The Medieval Players' entire touring career passed into the custody of York *Doomsday* Project (Lancaster), of which Meg Twycross is a director, after the company disbanded, where they await the attentions of a suitable PhD candidate.]

NOTES

¹ The thesis is being written under the supervision of Professor David Wiles, Royal Holloway College, University of London. The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own.

² *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. by Thomas Urquhart (The Navarre Society: London, 1931).

³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Midland Books: London, 1984).

⁴ William Poel, *The Elizabethan Revival* (Heinemann: London, 1954).

⁵ BBC 1, 1984.

⁶ Peter Hall, *The Mysteries*, programme notes, National Theatre, 1985.

⁷ Johns Tams, *ibid.*

⁸ Bill Dudley, *ibid.*

⁹ Tony Harrison, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Bill Bryden, *ibid.*

¹¹ Bernard Levin, 'When Mystery was an Open Book', *The Times*, 19 April 1985, 18.

¹² Tyrone Guthrie, *A Life in the Theatre* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1960)

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Richard C. Beacham, *Adolphe Appia: Artist and Visionary of the Modern Theatre* (Chur, Switzerland; Philadelphia: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994).

¹⁵ Reginald Isaacs, *Gropius, Biography* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1984), pp. 131-32.

¹⁶ *Meyerhold on Theatre*, ed. and trans. by Edward Braun (London: Methuen, 1991), p. 59.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-23.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 258

²¹ A. Gladkov, *Meyerhold Speaks, Meyerhold Rehearses* (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1997), p. 113.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

²³ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1991).

²⁴ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe* (London: Routledge, 1995).

²⁵ Braun, *Meyerhold on Theatre*, pp. 312-13.

Significant Gestures: Two Medieval Illustrations of Classical Theatre

John McKinnell

In this paper I shall look at two medieval illustrations of supposed performances of classical drama, both of which are to be found in manuscripts now in the Vatican Library. The first is on fol. 1v of Cod.Vat.Urb.Lat. 355, a commentary on the tragedies of Seneca by the English Dominican Nicholas Trevet (ca. 1258 – ca. 1330) which one of his editors dates to about 1315.¹ Trevet's prologue to the commentary on *Hercules Furens*, which begins the work, contains an interesting if curious description of the classical theatre, and the full-page frontispiece miniature depicts how *Hercules Furens* is supposed to have looked in performance in a semi-circular theatrical space (see Plate 1).

The manuscript appears to originate from Urbino or its territory. It is usually dated to the mid- or later 14th century,² but the first side of its main text (fol. 5r, see Plate 2) has, in the middle of its bottom margin, a shield with diagonal blue and gold stripes (the arms of Urbino), with the initials .F. .C. on either side of it, presumably standing for *F. Comes*. This shows that the manuscript was made, or at least illustrated, for a Count of Urbino whose name began with F. Only two counts of Urbino fulfill this condition, both named Federico,³ and the more probable of the two in terms of date is Count Federico I da Montefeltro (ruled 1300-22);⁴ the other is Federico II (ruled 1444-82, but with the title of Duke from 1474),⁵ but in this case the decoration must have been added in the fifteenth century, and there is no evidence, so far as I know, that it is any later than the rest of the manuscript. If the identification of Federico I as the first owner of the manuscript is correct, it must have been illustrated before his violent death at the hands of the citizens of Urbino in 1322; this would make it one of the earliest surviving copies of this work by Trevet.

Trevet's commentary was hugely popular and influential, especially in Italy, and some of the many manuscripts of it are beautifully illustrated with painted initials depicting scenes from Seneca's tragedies;⁶ however, I have not yet found any other

manuscript which contains anything like the Urbino miniature, or any other contemporary illustration which could be said to depict a classical performance rather than a dramatic narrative or an astronomical diagram.⁷ If it proves to be indeed the case that this is the only early version of this illustration, it will seem probable that anything which the illustrator has added to Trevet's prologue did not make up any part of Trevet's intention; there would thus be no reason to link it to any country other than Italy.

Trevet includes a brief description of the physical space of the classical theatre, as follows:

Et nota quod tragedie et comedie solebant in theatro hoc modo recitari: theatrum erat area semicircularis, in cuius medio erat parva domuncula, que scena dicebatur, in qua erat pulpitum super quod poeta carmina pronunciabat; extra vero erant mimi, qui carminum prononciationem gestu corporis effigiabant per adaptionem ad quemlibet ex cuius persona loquebatur. Unde cum hoc primum carmen legebatur mimus effigiebat Iunonem conquerentem et invitantem Furias infernales ad infestandum Herculem.⁸

[And notice that tragedies and comedies used to be recited in the theatre in this way: the theatre was a semi-circular area, in the middle of which there was a little house called the *scena*, in which there was a pulpit on which the poet pronounced the songs; outside, indeed, were the actors, who figured forth the pronounciation of the songs with bodily gesture, adapting them to whichever person was speaking. Thus while this first song was being read, an actor would depict Juno complaining and summoning the hellish Furies to attack Hercules.]

The frontispiece follows this fairly closely, but its semi-circular area includes only the *poeta*, the *mimi* and the Chorus, while the audience, labelled *populus expectans* 'the watching people', look on from the two roughly triangular spaces outside the semicircle; the upper group of audience appears to be sitting on some grass, and a small flecked area behind the lower group may be intended to carry the same meaning.

The semi-circular area is divided into two roughly equal halves, with all the *mimi* (and the stars and the Furies, see below) crowded into the top half, while the bottom half is occupied only by the Chorus. Bisecting the clearly-marked boundary between the two, right in the middle of the semi-circular area, is a small crenellated

structure in which the *poeta* (a crowned figure) stands reading from a large book on a lectern.

The upper half of the semicircular area includes all the play's characters except the Chorus, and illustrates various different moments in the text; it must be read from left to right. At the left is the tall crowned figure of Juno, pointing with her left hand to the stars (depicted in a small defined area above and to the right of her), which are full of the evidence of Jove's infidelities to her (cf. *Hercules Furens* 1-29);⁹ with her right hand, she indicates the Furies below her, calling on them to attack Hercules (cf. *Hercules Furens* 100-22).¹⁰ The subject-matter for both these gestures is clearly derived from the last sentence of Trevet's description of the theatre, quoted above.

To the right of Juno are the figures of Amphitryon and Megera, the stepfather and the wife of Hercules. Amphitryon has his left hand raised in lamenting prayer to Jove to bring the trials of Hercules to an end (cf. *Hercules Furens* 205-48)¹¹ and points downwards with his right hand, in a gesture which echoes that of Juno, indicating the present exile of Hercules in the underworld. Megera joins with her right hand in Amphitryon's prayer (cf. her vow of sacrifice to Jove and Ceres, *Hercules Furens* 299-302),¹² while her left hand is raised in front of her in a gesture which probably expresses her loyalty to Hercules, to whom her first speech is addressed in his absence (cf. Plate 3).¹³

To the right of Megera is the tyrant Lycus, crowned and carrying in his right hand the sceptre which should rightly be that of Hercules (as described by Megera when he first appears (*Hercules Furens* 329-31).¹⁴ His left hand is raised as if to ward off the attack of Hercules, who stands to his right brandishing a mace (Lycus is killed offstage by the returning Hercules between the hero's first exit at line 640 and his return, announcing the tyrant's death, in *Hercules Furens* 895-99).¹⁵

To the right of Lycus is Hercules, the only figure who cannot be identified with a particular moment of the play; since he is the protagonist, we seem to be offered a generalised view of his appearance, though some details may be derived from Juno's first description of him. She states that *armatus venit / leone et hydra* 'he has come armed with lion and hydra' (*Hercules Furens* 45-46),¹⁶ because he wears the skin of the Nemean lion and has dipped his arrows in the Hydra's venom. Most illustrators depict the lion's skin as a cloak draped over his shoulders, sometimes with the lion's head forming the hood (see e.g. the opening illuminated initial in another Trevet manuscript, Cod.Vat.Lat. 1647, fol.1r, Plate 4), but this artist has interpreted it rather oddly, as a full 'catsuit' of armour which covers his whole body except his face and hands, and even incorporates the lion's ears, hind claws and tail. At his belt Hercules carries a small bundle of very short arrows, tipped with a small splash of green which

probably represents the Hydra's poison. In his right hand he wields a metal mace, which is spiked at both ends, and in his left he holds a very large bow. After his deranged slaughter of his wife and sons, Hercules himself describes his weapons as arrows, bow and club, as he vows to destroy them (*Hercules Furens* 1231-37);¹⁷ but the obviously metal mace seems an odd version of the *stipes* 'tree-trunk' referred to here.¹⁸

To the right of Hercules we see Amphitruon again (now with a grey beard and hair, and wearing a dull, russet-coloured robe which the artist may have intended to represent sackcloth), holding up both hands in lamentation; facing him is Theseus, who is grasping his right wrist. This represents the moment when Theseus takes Amphitruon's hand to dissuade him from killing himself near the end of the play (*Hercules Furens* 1308-21).¹⁹

The lower half of the semicircular area is occupied only by the Chorus, who are explained by Trevet in the course of his exposition of their first speech (*Hercules Furens* 125-204):²⁰

Quia, ut prius dictum est, ad poetam tragicum pertinet describere luctuosos casus magnorum virorum, solent autem de talibus multi esse rumores in populo et diversa ferri iudicia, ideo Seneca in suis tragediis, ad representandum tales rumores et tali iudicia populi, interpolatim introducit chorum de talibus canentem.

['Because, as has been said before, it is the business of a tragic poet to describe the lamentable falls of great men, and yet it is usual for there to be many rumours among the people about such things and various verdicts expressed about them; therefore Seneca in his tragedies introduces a chorus singing about such things, in order to represent such rumours and popular judgements.']²¹

The only figures depicted in the miniature who are not characters in the play are the audience and the Furies (depicted as naked women sitting among flames, with green serpents perched on their heads and labelled *furie infernales*). The audience are referred to by Trevet when he is discussing the last of the 'causes' of the tragedy:

Causa finalis est delectatio populi audientis . . .

['The final cause is the entertainment of the listening audience']²²

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and this is probably the source of the label *populus expectans* in the miniature. The Furies are explained in Trevet's commentary on the last paragraph of Juno's opening speech, explaining *Hercules Furens* 100-03:

Incipite, famulae Ditis, ardentem citae
concutite pinum et agmen horrendum anguibus
Megaera ducat atque luctifica manu
vastam rogo flagrante corripiat trabem.
['Begin, handmaids of Dis, make haste to brandish the burning
pine; let Megaera lead on her band bristling with serpents and with
baleful hand snatch a huge faggot from the blazing pyre.']*²³

Trevet adds to this:

Ysidorus vero Ethymologiarum libro VIII capitulo ultimo dicit sic: 'aiunt et tres Furias feminas crinitas serpentibus, propter tres affectus, qui in animis hominum multas perturbationes gignunt, et interdum cogunt ita delinquere, ut nec fame nec periculi sui respectum habere permittant. Ira, que vindictam cupit; cupiditas, que desiderat opes; libido, que appetit voluptates.' Quamvis autem quolibet istarum sit causa discordie, precipue tamen ira; et ideo, quia secundum distinctionem Fulgentii omnes Furie ad iram videntur reduci, secundum diversos gradus ita, quod maximus gradus ire videtur attribui Megere, potest dici quod hic vocat discordem deam Megeram; unde et in sequentibus eam specialiter evocat.

[Indeed, Isidore in his *Etymologiae* Book VIII says this in the last chapter: "They also say that the Furies are three women with serpents for hair, on account of three dispositions which bring forth many disturbances in the souls of men, forcing them for the time being so to go astray that they do not allow them to pay any attention either to hunger or to their own danger: anger, which wants revenge; greed, which desires wealth; lust, which seeks indulgence." But although any of these can be the cause of discord, it is especially so with anger. Following the explanation of Fulgentius, all the Furies can be seen to come down to anger, arrived at by different steps; and so, because the largest step, of

anger, is seen to be attributed to Megeira, it can be said that here she (i.e. Juno) calls on Megeira as goddess of discord; hence she also invokes her particularly in what follows.']

It may be that Isidore and Trevet have both mistaken gorgons for furies, but at least this explains why the Furies are shown sitting in flames and have serpents on their heads (though the artist has given them normal hair as well).

However, there are still a number of features of the miniature which cannot be derived from either Seneca's text or Trevet's commentary. The fact that the *scena* (by which Trevet may have meant something like a covered stage) is here occupied only by the *poeta*, with the actors outside it (rather than merely outside his pulpit) is a misunderstanding of Trevet by the artist. This can be seen from Trevet's source, Isidore's *Etymologiae*, which makes it quite clear that the *scena* included the area occupied by the *mimi* as well as that of the *poeta*;²⁴ this mistake may also have led to the depiction of a lectern rather than a pulpit. But the audience sitting on the grass outside the semicircular area of the *theatrum* cannot come from Trevet's description, and neither can the literal presence of the Furies, the fact that they have hair as well as serpents on their heads, or their nakedness (though the last might derive from depictions of the damned in hell). The artist is not particularly sophisticated, and his iconography of Hercules is quite unrelated to that of the refined tradition of the illuminated initials which depict the hero, so a source in graphic art also seems rather unlikely.

I would like to suggest the possibility (which admittedly cannot be proved) that the artist had seen or been told about the ruins of an actual Roman theatre, of which a number survive in Italy even today.²⁵ Before excavation, many of these would have had grassy banks in the obvious audience seating area round the outside of the semicircular *plataea*; at Gubbio, for example, the upper part of the seating terraces remains higher than the modern ground level, and must have been easily visible in the middle ages; the terracing here is grass-covered even today (Plate 5, and compare Plate 1 with the site-plan of the theatre at Gubbio, Plate 6). Some theatres, notably that at Ostia antica, but see also the pillar bases at Gubbio, still have standing pillars near the stage area, which could have suggested the *domuncula* which Trevet calls the *scena* (Plate 7). It might also be possible to explain the presence of the naked furies as a representation of free-standing or relief statues. At Ostia there is a row of three grotesque carved masks in marble at the tops of three stone pillars at the back of the stage on the stage right side (Plate 8). At least one of them has a beard, but their long, heavily stylised hair and horrific open mouths might suggest that they were furies,

especially if they had unbearded parallels elsewhere. The one element of an actual classical theatre which is conspicuously absent from the miniature is the raised stage; but as that was normally made of wood and can be reconstructed today only from the brick pillars used to support it, it would not have been evident to a medieval observer.

There can be no certainty about where the artist or his informant might have seen the ruins of a Roman theatre, but if he was based somewhere in the territory of Urbino, it might well have been the one at Gubbio, some sixty kilometres from Urbino. Gubbio was an independent *comune* until it voluntarily submitted to the Montefeltri, Counts of Urbino, in 1384, but there must always have been many contacts between the two towns, and Gubbio might easily have provided the artist with an informant. If the illustration was actually copied by the Urbino artist from another manuscript, it would probably be impossible to identify the place which inspired that lost source.

My conclusion – a slightly melancholy one from the point of view of a northern European scholar – is that this miniature has great interest for the rediscovery of classical tragedy in fourteenth-century Italy, but probably cannot be taken as representative of a scholarly view from northern Europe except in so far as it reflects the rather theoretical text of Trevet's commentary. It is certainly not safe to take it as a guide to any sort of performance north of the Alps, though it might help us to visualise such classically-influenced texts as Albertino Mussato's *Ecerinis*, which was probably influenced by Trevet and was read aloud (and perhaps mimed?) annually at Padua from 1318.²⁶

My second medieval representation of a classical theatre illustrates a comedy – or to be more exact, an incident during the performance of a comedy. It is to be found in an illustrated manuscript of the plays of Terence, Cod.Vat.Lat. 3305, fol. 8v (Plate 9), which dates from the late 11th or early 12th century and probably comes from northern France. There is a rich tradition of illustrated manuscripts of Terence, and where we can attribute a place of origin to them they usually seem to come from northern Europe.²⁷ Several of them have a full-page illustration at this point, usually of a house-shaped cupboard with shelves on which are displayed the masks needed to portray the various character-types in the plays (Plate 10); this is the earliest one I have seen so far which replaces this 'cupboard' with a dramatic scene.²⁸

The text in Cod.Vat.Lat. 3305 begins with an explanatory preface about the circumstances of Terence's life and the basic plots of his comedies; this explains how Terence was captured and enslaved following the fall of Carthage, forced to walk in Scipio's triumphal procession with his hands tied behind his back, but later freed by Scipio's generosity. Seeing the Roman love of the theatre, he composed a version of

the *Andria*, but it was condemned by jealous rivals even after he had revised its metre. The preface continues:

Illud etiam animadvertendum has fabulas non ab ipso esse recitatas in scena, sed a Calliopio, clarissimo viro satisque eruditissimo, cui ipse precipue adherebat cuique ope sustentabatur et auctoritate audiebatur. Modulator autem harum fabularum fuit Flaccus. Quocienscumque cum recitabantur erat modulator, et alii qui gestu corporis eos affectus agebant.²⁹

[It must also be noted that these stories were not recited on the stage by Terence himself, but by Calliopius, a famous and quite learned man, to whom he was particularly attached, by whose wealth he was supported and by whose authority he obtained a hearing. However, the director of music for these fictions was Flaccus. He was the musical director whenever they were recited, and there were others who acted them with bodily gesture of their emotion.]

The miniature shows a house-shaped structure (possibly derived from the more usual cupboard but clearly implying a building), within which there are three rows of figures, all clearly labelled.

The top row is dominated by the central figure of Calliopius, who is seated on a throne reading from a large book on a lectern to his right; the right-hand page of the book is blank, while the text on the left-hand page reads *poeta cum primum animus*, 'when the poet first (directed) his mind (to write)', the opening words of the Prologue of the *Andria*. His arms are crossed: his right hand (traditionally used for the 'lead' gesture) keeps his place in the book, while his left points to the figure to the left of him, also seated, who is labelled *TERENCIVS*. To the right and facing him are two figures, labelled *LVSCIVS LIVINIVS / ADVERSARII*. One of them, who is sitting with his right leg crossed over his left, is pointing scornfully with his right index finger towards Calliopius; the other has his right arm round the shoulders of the first, presumably in support of his objection to Terence's play.

Below these figures, but evidently intended to be read as part of the same scene, there are seven men, seen only from the waist up, who are labelled *ROMANI*. Several of them are making significant gestures, which (working from left to right) can be summarised as follows:

No. 1 points with his right index finger to his own head, and with his left

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index finger to the *Adversarii*; he is probably expressing his opinion that they are mad.

No. 3 looks up, probably towards the *Adversarii*; with his right hand he is making what looks like a rejection gesture, while his left points down towards the actors below him. His probable meaning is 'go away, I want to concentrate on the play'.

No. 4 looks up, probably towards *Calliopus*, and points upward with his right index finger across his body; he is probably listening to *Calliopus*.

No. 5 looks up and left towards *Calliopus* and *Terence*; he has his right hand on his hip (possibly a gesture of mockery)³⁰ while his left index finger points across his body towards *Terence* – unlike the others, he may be sympathising with the *Adversarii*.

No. 6 looks left towards *Terence* and gestures only with his left hand, palm upwards and possibly with the thumb meeting the index finger – a gesture which *Dodwell* identifies as approval.³¹

Below this straight line of Roman audience there is a wavy line with an orange-coloured 'filler' area below it. This is a fairly common device indicating a boundary between one scene or level of narrative and another, and it shows that the *Romani* are part of the same scene as *Calliopus* and distinct from the bottom row of figures, which is divided into two by a vertical line.

The bottom left scene shows *Simo* (the father) on the left and the shock-haired figure of the slave *Davus* on the right. This probably represents the last scene of Act II (*Andria* 432-58), which is often illustrated in other *Terence* manuscripts (e.g. Vat.Lat. 3868) but does not receive a separate picture in this one. *Simo* points with his right hand across his body towards *Davus*, while his left hand can be seen drooping under his cloak. *Davus* points with his right hand towards *Simo*, and his left hand is on his hip. In this scene *Simo* is accusing *Davus* of trickery (the probable meaning of his accusing finger) but is perplexed because *Davus* is not reacting as he expected; *Davus* is pretending to be attentive and informative about the intentions of his young master *Pamphilus*, but is actually tricking the old man and mocking him (the probable meaning of the hand on his hip).

The right-hand scene in the bottom row shows *Pamphilus* (the young lover) on the left and *Glycerium* (his mistress) on the right. *Pamphilus* is holding up in his right hand something that looks like a sheet of parchment, and grasping *Glycerium* by the upper arm with his left; she is facing him with her hands on her hips. As *Glycerium* only speaks offstage, it is difficult to place this scene in the play, but it might represent Act IV scene 2 (*Andria* 684-708), which ends with *Pamphilus* going

in to comfort Glycerium, who has just borne his child. Again, Cod.Vat.Lat. 3305 gives no other picture of this scene; at the point in the text where it would appear on fol. 20v, there is a marginal note:

Egrediens Misis a Glicerio ut quaereret Pamphilum et ad se iuberet uenire, hoc secum cepit dicere.

['Mysis, going out from Glycerium to look for Pamphilus and urge him to come to her, began to say this to herself.']

However, if this identification is right, the artist of Cod.Vat.Lat. 3305 has not used the traditional version of the scene, which is found in manuscripts such as Vat. Lat. 3868 and Oxford Bodleian Auct. F.12.13. They do not depict Glycerium at all, but show Mysis coming out of the house to summon Pamphilus, whom she finds in the company of Charinus (his friend) and Davus. It remains possible that this scene represents an imaginary moment after the end of the play, when Pamphilus will show Glycerium the vital evidence which allows him to marry her, or perhaps their fathers' written permission.

The first obvious feature of the 'stage' miniature in Cod.Vat.Lat. 3305 is that it is placed in a building, with no indication of any circular or semi-circular acting area. Calliopius is seen reading, like the *poeta* in the Seneca miniature, but he has no pulpit or 'little house', and it is not clear from either the miniature or the preface whether he was thought of as reciting any more of the play than the Prologue (which he is reading in the picture). The lively and varied tradition of dramatic scholia in the illustrated Terence manuscripts suggests quite strongly that there was a continuing tradition of performance, probably for educational purposes, and this would be better served by allowing each actor to speak his own part than by having a single reader read the whole play aloud. The rectangular building may therefore represent the actuality of medieval performance.

The actors depicted in the Terence manuscripts are obviously using a traditional code of gesture. Over and over again, we see pictures in which their lead emotions are indicated with the right hand and any subsidiary one with the left (even when this results in an awkward crossing of arms); and the meaning of each common gesture can similarly be seen from the fact that it is repeated many times in different illustrations. Many of these gestures probably derive from ancient Roman theatre, but they clearly continued to have currency, and to change over time. The earliest manuscripts, such as Cod.Vat.Lat. 3868 (c. 820-30, from Corvey, Westphalen) and Florence, Codex Ambrosianus H. 75 Inf. (10th century, probably from Fleury or Orleans), depict all

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characters in reasonable approximations to ancient Roman dress, while the costumes in Cod.Vat.Lat. 3305 and Oxford, Bodleian Auct. F.12.13 (12th century, from St. Albans or Canterbury) show the cloaks, tunics and figure-hugging female dresses with drooping sleeves that were fashionable in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Cod.Vat.Lat. 3305 also shows two other important changes, as we can see by comparing its illustration of *Andria* 581 with that in the earlier Cod. Vat. 3868 and the more conservative Oxford manuscript (Plates 12-14). In this scene, Davus enters, urging his master's father Simo to hurry on the arrangements for his master's marriage, which he feels confident the latter will refuse, only to be dismayed by the news that Simo and Chremes (the girl's father) have just agreed on the marriage; Chremes then exits (*Andria* 595) to tell the bride to get ready.

In the Oxford illustration, which is similar to those in earlier manuscripts, Davus, Simo and Chremes are all masked, and all lead gestures are done with the right hand. Davus stretches his right arm across the front of his body in order to greet Simo and urge him on; Simo's right hand fingers the beard of his mask in a gesture of meditation (probably reflecting his uncertainty about whether Davus can be trusted or not – see *Andria* 582ff.); Chremes faces Simo and extends his right hand in a gesture commonly used to show that a character is listening to another (Simo has just overcome his doubts about the marriage).

In Cod.Vat.Lat. 3305, none of the characters is masked. Davus makes the same gesture, but with the left, 'upstage' arm; Simo's gesture of meditation is replaced with one of instruction to Chremes, again with the left hand; Chremes is turning away from the others and exiting into his house, indicating with his left hand that he is going to make preparations for the wedding (which presumably explains the servant with a large fish at the right of the picture). All three characters are using left-arm gestures, which enable them to avoid turning away from us or partially hiding their own faces or bodies.

When we turn back to the 'stage' illustration at the beginning of the manuscript, we again find that no one is masked, but the tradition of gesture is more mixed. Some characters, of course, can naturally use the right arm as the 'upstage' arm, and these would look the same according to either convention; but Calliopius, the 5th Roman and Simo all gesture across their bodies with the right arm (the 'old' tradition). The 6th Roman, by contrast, gestures only with his left arm, because that is more natural to his pose and the space available; it is as if the first trace of a new acting tradition has already invaded this first illustration in the manuscript, to be followed by many more.

This is a vital change, because it also implies a change of performance setting.

In ancient Roman theatres, the audience might be on three sides of the actor, and his gestures would inevitably hide his body or face-mask for at least part of the audience. There was therefore no advantage in varying the hand with which the lead gesture was made, and it helped audience recognition always to use the right (since most actors and audience-members would be right-handed). But when performance was at one end of a medieval hall, most of the audience (and all the most important members of the audience) would be roughly on the same side of the actor, as in a modern proscenium arch theatre; a gesture with the 'downstage' hand could therefore obscure the actor's performance, especially if he was no longer wearing a mask and was therefore able to use facial expression as well as body gesture. This suggests that the illustrations are not merely copies of an extinct tradition, but reflections of changing conditions in continuing performance.

I would like to finish by returning to the fourteenth-century Urbino miniature with which I began. It clearly sets out to portray the conventions of classical performance as accurately as possible, yet the 'new' conventions of which Cod.Vat.Lat. 3305 gives early intimations have now invaded even this self-conscious attempt to be 'historical'. None of the actors is masked, and at least three of them are 'leading' with the left-hand gesture. Juno points first (with her left index finger) to the evidence of Jove's adulteries in the stars, and only afterwards (with her right) to the Furies. The dominant gesture of the first Amphytrion figure is lament (with his raised left palm) for the labours of his stepson Hercules, and it is only later that we hear that Hercules is now in the underworld (the meaning of his downward-pointing right index finger). Lycus holds his sceptre in his right hand and gestures only with his left. It is difficult to tell which of Theseus' gestures is dominant: he restrains the second Amphytrion figure from suicide with his left hand and seems to admonish him (to stoicism?) with his right, but the latter, though perfectly natural, does not actually reflect anything he says in the play. The three Furies may be intended to represent statues rather than living actors, but the right-hand one is also making her predominant gesture of lament with her left hand. This artist shows no knowledge either that masks were worn in the Roman theatre or that lead gestures were made with the right hand.

One of the many contributions Meg Twycross has made to the advancement of early drama has been the exact attention which she has devoted to graphic art and what it can teach us. This study of two miniatures was inspired by her example. It has suggested that while the reconstruction of classical tragedy in the fourteenth century was largely a matter of reconstructive antiquarian study, Terence's comedies probably enjoyed a continuing tradition of performance, one whose conventions gradually

adapted from those suitable for the semi-circular *theatrum* to those which suited a rectangular hall. The change may have taken place in northern Europe at some time around 1100, and Cod.Vat.Lat. 3305 probably provides some of the earliest evidence for it. Inconspicuous as it may seem, it was fundamental to the development of later theatre, and its results remain part of the conventions of theatre even today.³²

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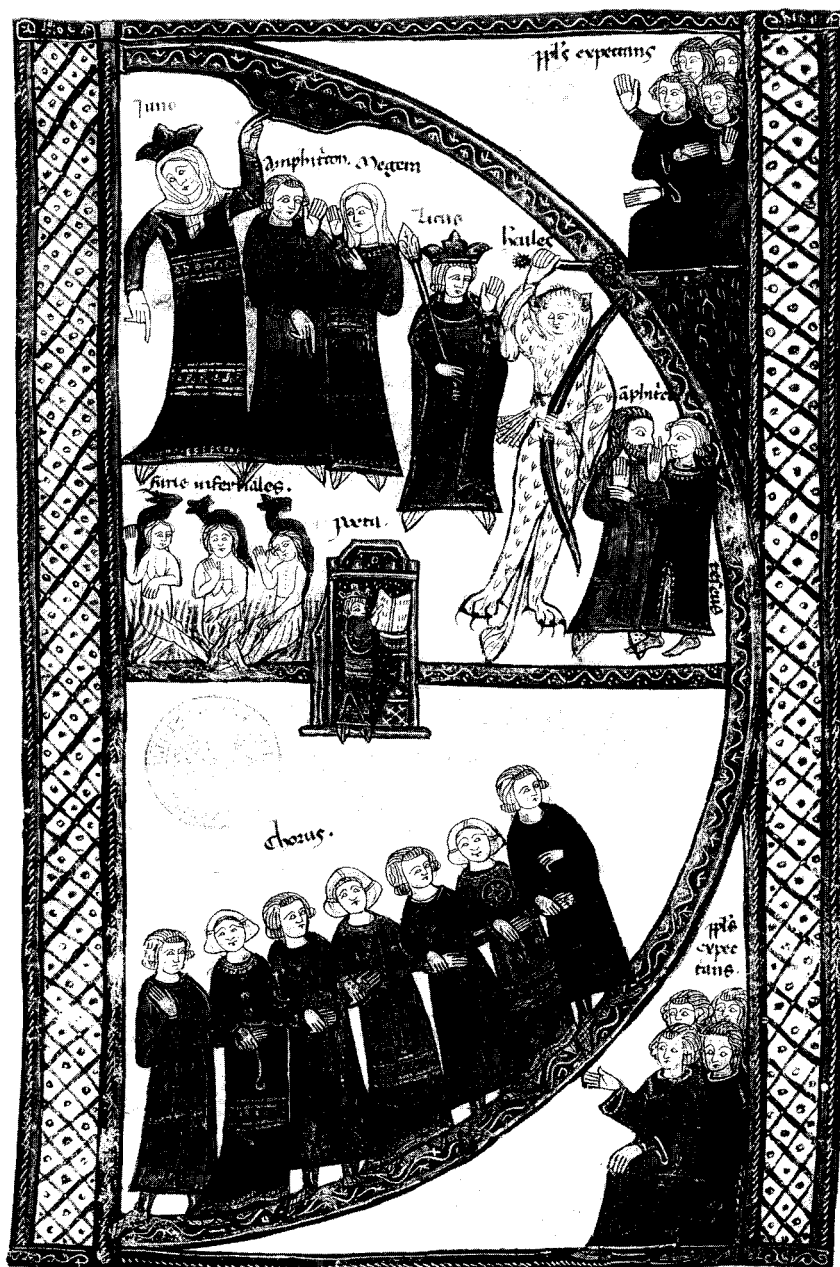


Plate 1. Cod. Vat. Urb. Lat. 355, fol. lv; Trevet's commentary on Seneca: frontispiece miniature of an imaginary performance of *Hercules Furens*.

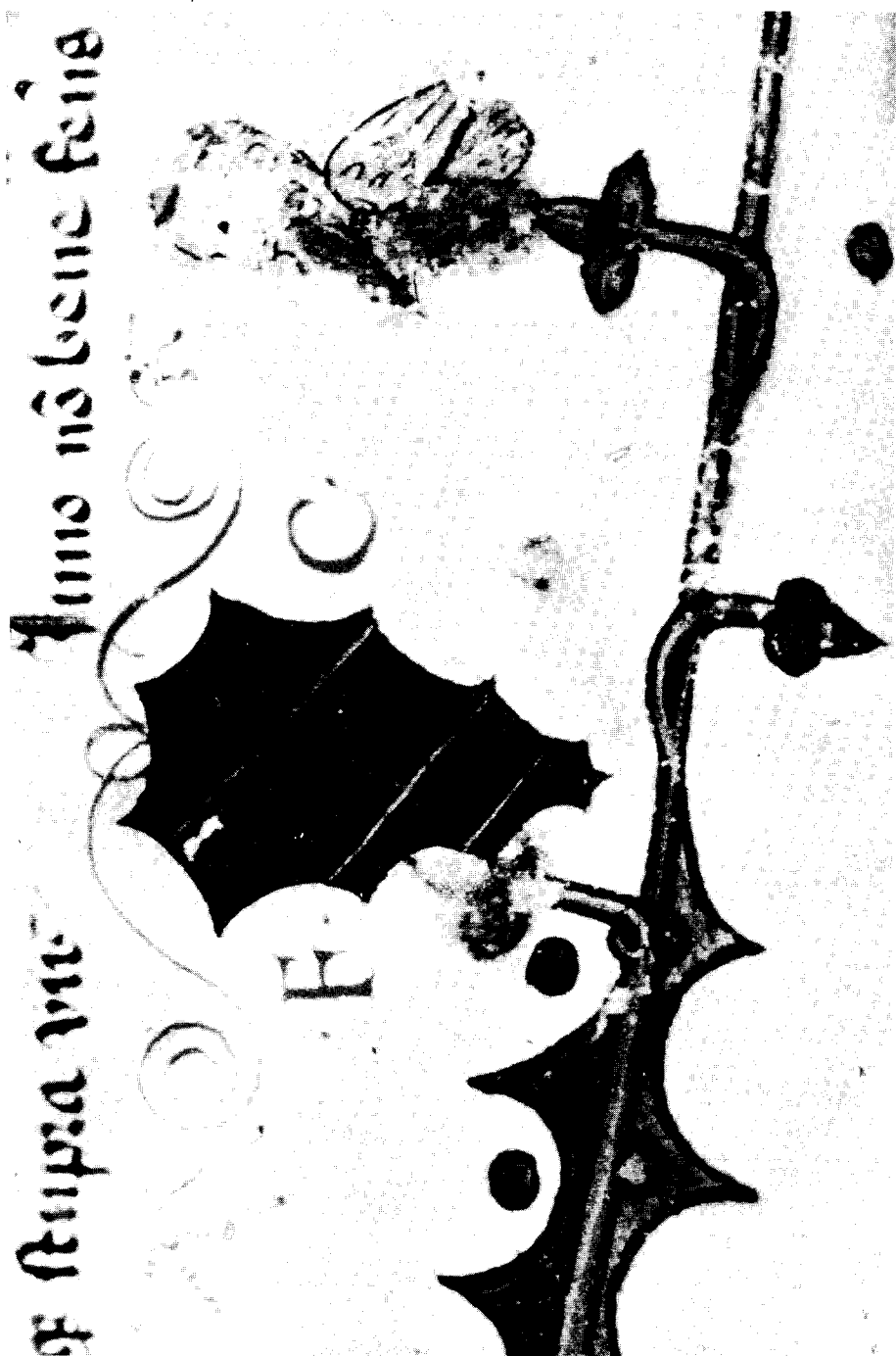


Plate 2. Cod. Vat. Urb. Lat. 355, fol. 5r; the arms of Urbino with the initials of Federico I, Count of Urbino 1300-1322.



Plate 3. Paris, BN Lat. 3898, fol. 293: Gratian's *Decretals*: marriage scene.



Plate 4. Cod. Vat. Lat. 1647, fol. 1r: Trevet's commentary on Seneca: opening initial for *Hercules Furens*.



Plate 5. The Roman theatre, Gubbio, Umbria. Photo: John McKinnell.

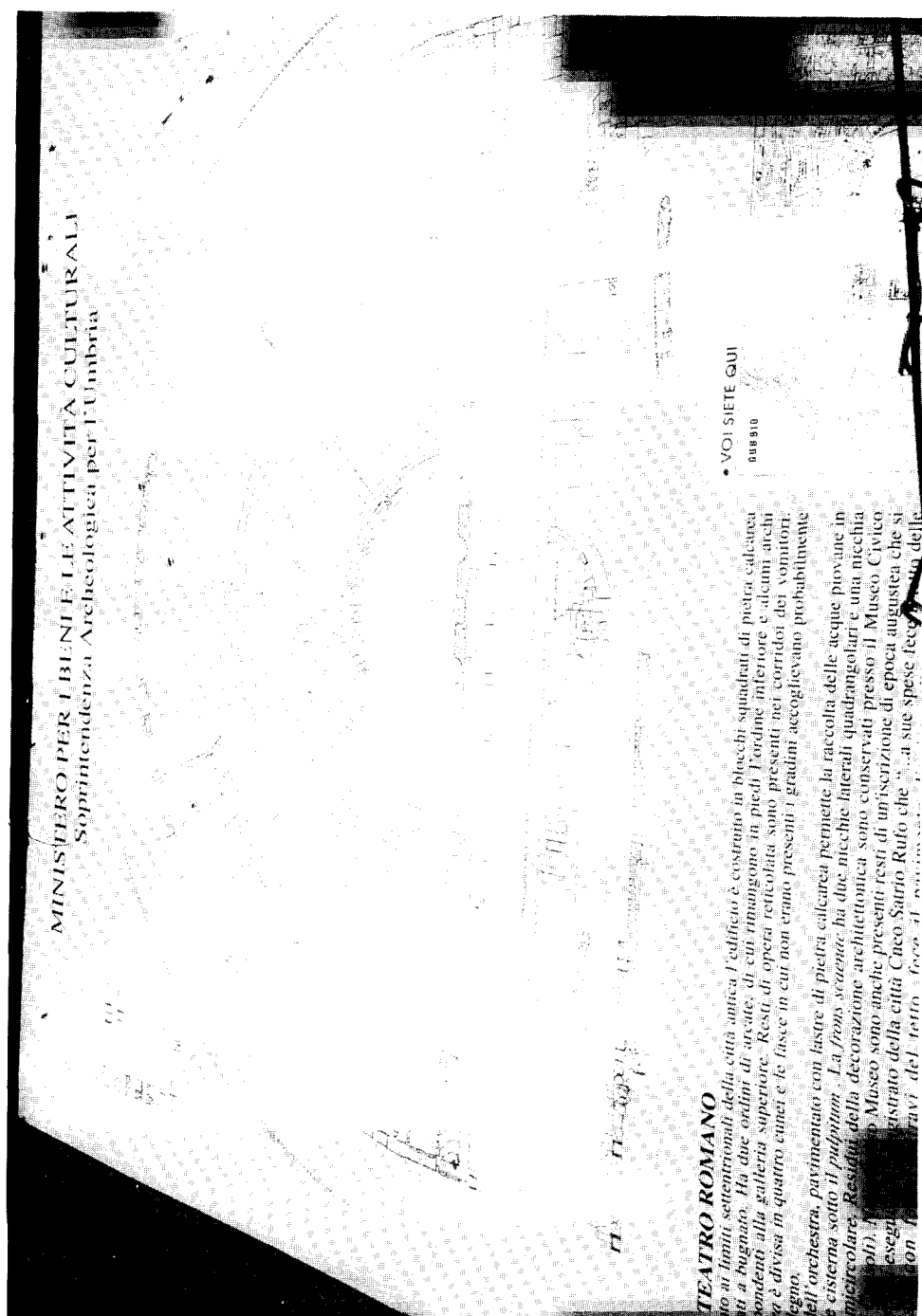


Plate 6. The Roman theatre, Gubbio, Umbria — site plan. Photo: John McKinnell.



Plate 7. The Roman theatre, Gubbio, Umbria — stage view with column bases. Photo: John McKinnell.

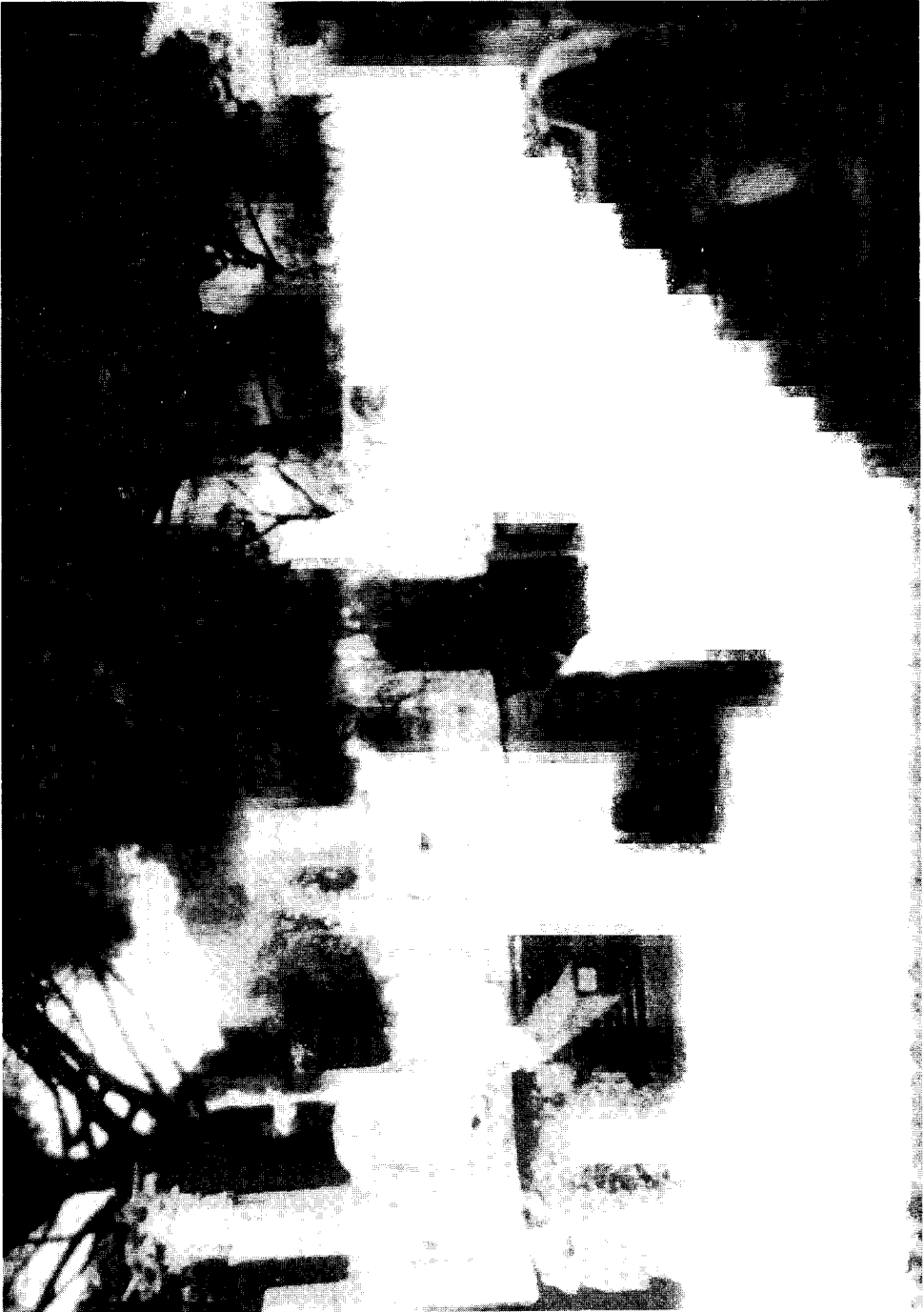


Plate 8. The Roman theatre, Ostia antica, Lazio: carvings of actors' masks. Photo: John McKinnell.



Plate 9. Cod. Vat. Lat. 3305, fol. 8v; the comedies of Terence: frontispiece miniature of a performance of the *Andria*.



Plate 10. Cod.Vat.Lat. 3868, fol. 3r: the comedies of Terence: frontispiece miniature of actors' masks.



Plate 11. Vienna, Österreiches Nationalbibliothek Cod. 2739, fol. 20v: prayer book, illustration of those who rejoice in evil (see lower left figure).

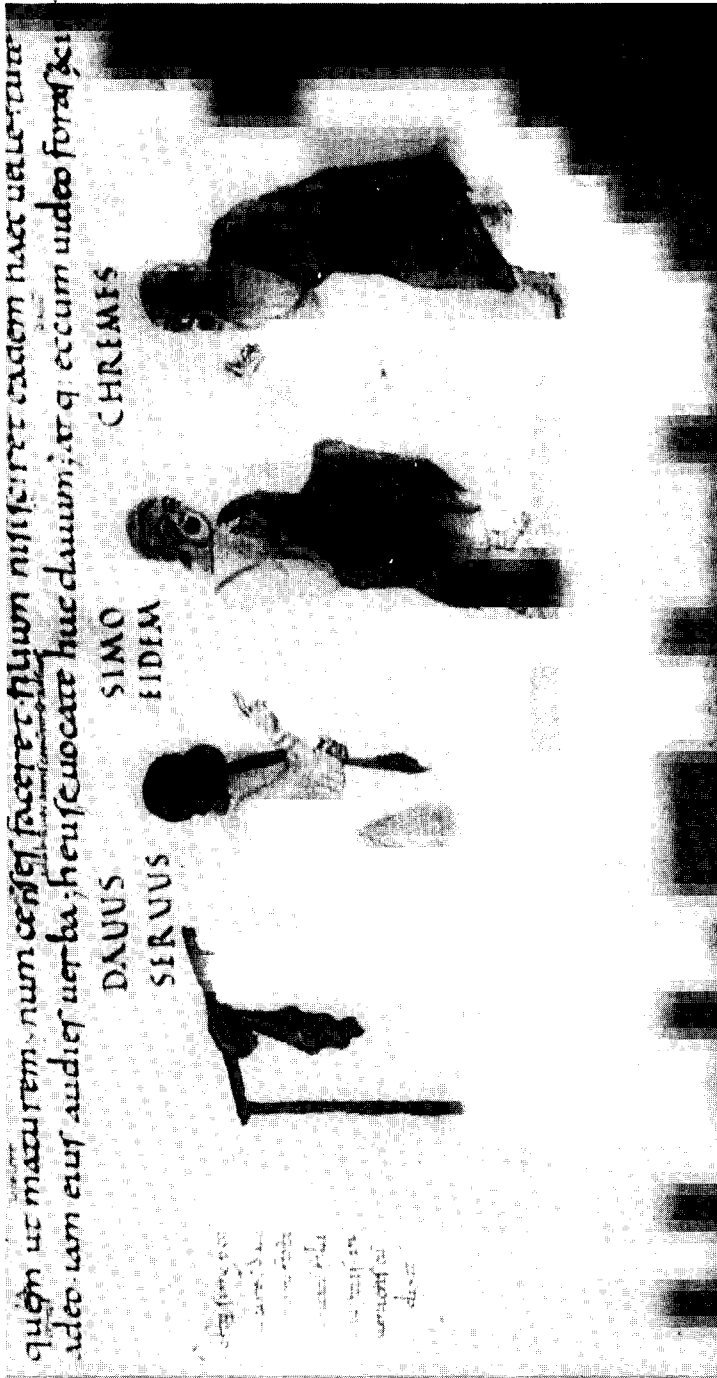
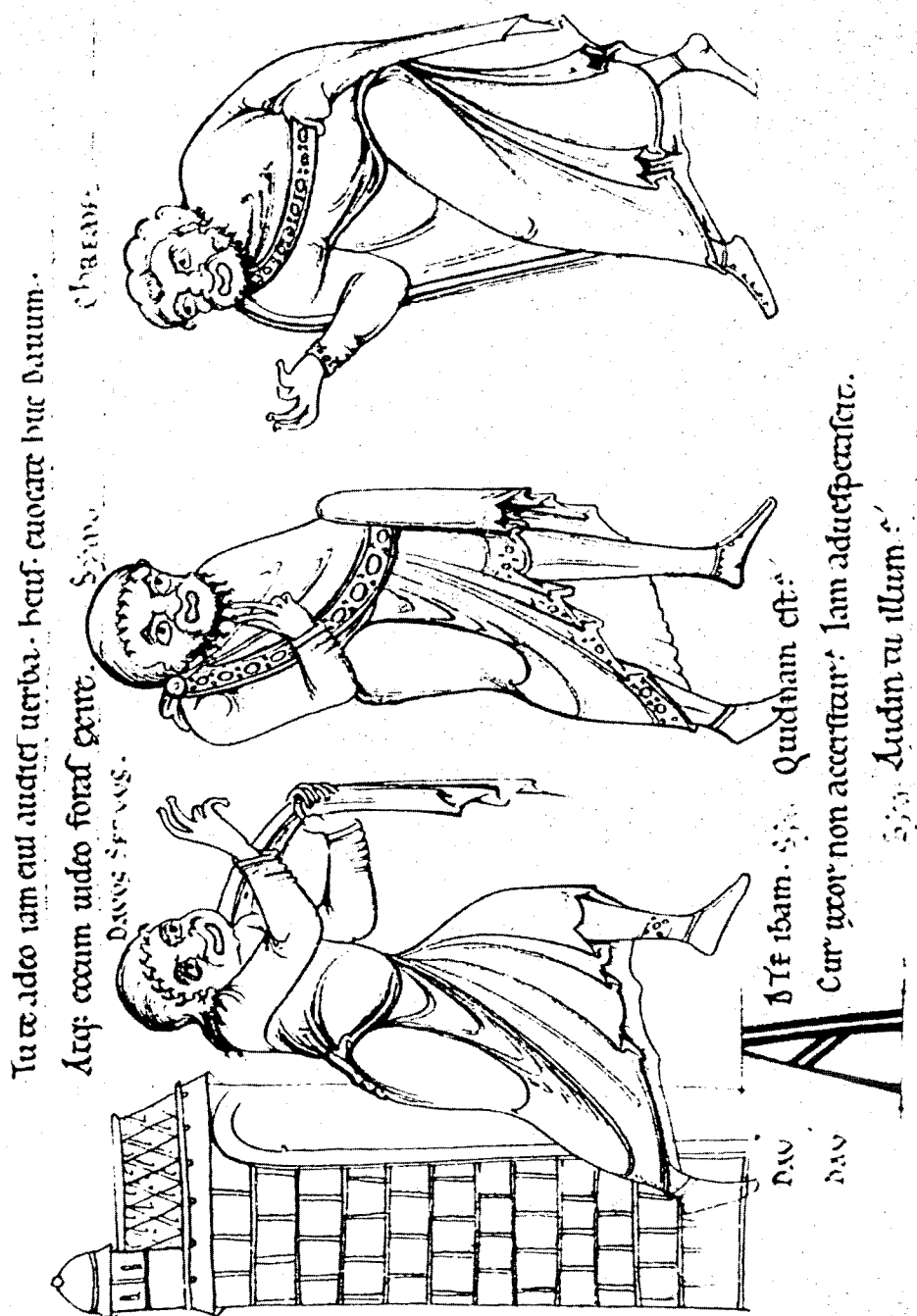


Plate 13. Cod. Vat. Lat. 3868, detail of fol. 12r: illustration of *Andria* 581.



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NOTES

¹ *Il Commento di Nicola Trevet al Tieste di Seneca*, ed. by Franceschini, VIII-IX.

² See e.g. Kipling, 34-35.

³ For a brief historical account of the Montefeltri as counts of Urbino, see Michaud, vol. 29, pp. 62-65.

⁴ For a record of his death, see Villani (1322) and Michaud, vol. 29, p. 63.

⁵ Sestan, p. 516.

⁶ Illustrated manuscripts of Trevet's work, with or without Seneca's text, include Cod.Vat.Lat. 1650 (1st half, 14th century); Cod.Vat.Urb.Lat. 356 (c. 1400); Cod.Vat.Lat. 1645 (15th century); and Milan, Trivult. 809 (14th century; I have not seen this manuscript, but the description of it in Santoro, 214-15 gives details of miniatures in the initials opening each tragedy, but not of any frontispiece illustration). Cod.Vat.Lat. 1647 (1391-92) is an illustrated copy of the tragedies without Trevet's commentary. Cod.Vat.Lat. 7611 (14th-15th century) and Cod.Vat.Lat. 13,003 (14th century, from the Ara Cæli monastery in Rome), both manuscripts of Trevet's commentary, leave spaces for miniatures which were never added. Breslau, Cod. Rehdigeranus 118, a late-14th-century manuscript of the tragedies with notes derived from Trevet's commentary, which was destroyed during the Second World War, also had initials with miniatures at the beginning of each tragedy, but apparently no frontispiece illustration (Ziegler, pp. 83-84).

Besides the staging frontispiece, Cod.Vat.Urb.Lat. 355 includes some illustrations of constellations, which also appear in Cod.Vat.Lat. 1650 and London, Society of Antiquaries 63 (see below) and probably were part of Trevet's original work; the first six are also in Padua, Bibl. Univ. 896 (first half, 14th century).

⁷ I have also consulted the following manuscripts without miniatures: Padua, Patavinus Bibl. Univ. 896 (but see previous note); Oxford, Bodleian Ms. 292 (14th century); Bologna, Bibl. Univ. 1632 (15th century); Modena, Bibl. Estensis *Alpha*.R.8,10 (Lat. 712), (15th century, from Florence); Venice, Marcianus XII,41 (=3908) (15th century, with a colophon added in 1478).

London, Society of Antiquaries MS 63 (first half, 14th century) is now defective at the beginning and end, but can never have included a frontispiece stage illustration: an early (16th century?) reader has added some notes on a flyleaf added at the end (fol. 228r) and a tiny pen and ink diagram which consists of two adjacent semicircular lines labelled *teatrum* and inside them a small house-shape (labelled *scena*) with an arrow-like object within it that might be a lectern. This diagram must have been made from Trevet's opening description of the theatre at a time when the beginning of the manuscript was still complete, and it would have been unnecessary if there had also been a staging illustration. I

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am grateful to Dr. Bernard Nurse, Librarian of the Society of Antiquaries, for his help over their manuscript.

There are two further manuscripts which I have not seen: Paris, BN Lat. 8033 and 8038 (both 15th century), and a further one, apparently not illustrated, was destroyed during the war (Breslau, Cod. Rehdigeranus 122, 14th century, see Ziegler, p. 89).

⁸ *L. Annaei Senecae Hercules Furens et Nicolai Treveti Expositio*, ed. Ussani, p. 5.

⁹ Miller, pp. 4-7.

¹⁰ Miller, pp. 12-13.

¹¹ Miller, pp. 18-23.

¹² Miller, pp. 26-27.

¹³ Miller, pp. 24-27. For the same gesture, made by the bridesmaid in a miniature of a marriage in a fourteenth-century manuscript of Gratian's *Decretals* (Paris, BN lat. 3898, fol. 293), see Schmitt, Plate XXIV and my Plate 3.

¹⁴ Miller, pp. 28-29.

¹⁵ Miller, pp. 78-79.

¹⁶ Miller, pp. 6-7.

¹⁷ Miller, pp. 108-09.

¹⁸ Amphitriton has earlier welcomed Hercules back from the underworld with a reference to his 'famous hand with huge club' (*alto nobilem trunco manum, Hercules Furens* 625, Miller, 56-57), and Lycus has referred to the club rather disparagingly as *clava* 'a knotted stick' (*Hercules Furens* 466, Miller, pp. 44-45); but it is hard to see how any of these could have produced the thoroughly medieval weapon depicted in the miniature.

¹⁹ Miller, pp. 116-17.

²⁰ Miller, pp. 12-19.

²¹ Ussani, pp. 29-30.

²² Ussani, p. 4.

²³ Miller, pp. 12-13.

²⁴ 'Scena autem erat locus infra theatrum in modum domus instructa cum pulpito, qui pulpitus orchestra vocabatur, ubi cantabant comici, tragici, atque saltabant histriones et mimi' – 'But the *scena* was a place inside the theatre, built like a house and with a pulpit which was called the *orchestra*, where comic and tragic poets recited, and actors and mimes performed.' (Isidore, *Etymologiae*, Book XVIII, ch. 43).

²⁵ Those I have seen are at Brescia (Lombardia), Gubbio, (Umbria), Nora (Sardinia), Ostia antica (Lazio, near Rome), Spoleto (Umbria) and Ventimiglia (Liguria, on the Mediterranean near the French border); all share the same basic design, which is quite well represented by the miniature except for its omission of the raised stage.

²⁶ Lunari, pp. 44-45.

²⁷ See e.g. Vatican, Cod.Vat.Lat. 3868 (c. 820-30, from Corvey, Westphalen); Florence, Codex Ambrosianus H. 75 Inf. (10th century, probably from Fleury or Orleans, France); Paris, BN Lat. 12,322 (10th or 11th century, from Fulda, Germany); Vatican, Cod. Vat. Lat. 3305 (late 11th or early 12th century, probably from Northern France); Oxford, Bodleian Auct. F. 12. 13 (12th century, from St. Albans or Canterbury, England); Tours, Lat. 924 (12th century, from Tours, France); Paris, Arsenal 25 (early 15th century, from Paris). Further, see Rostagni, pp. 272-310; Jones and Morey, *passim*.

²⁸ A later example can be seen in MS Paris, Arsenal 25, and is helpfully reproduced by Kipling (Plate 5); this also features Calliopius, but Terence himself is no longer in the theatre, but can be seen in his house (bottom left) giving the script to Calliopius. More importantly, however, the *theatrum* has now become completely circular, Calliopius reads from within a canopied pulpit which is labelled *scena*, and the actors (labelled *joculatores*) perform in front of him, and are masked; these extra details are probably derived from Trevet or similar sources of 'historical' information.

²⁹ Text transcribed from Cod.Vat.Lat. 3305, fol. 1v.

³⁰ See e.g. Schmitt, Fig. 17, where the same gesture is used by one of a pair of figures who illustrate the text *Maledicti qui gaudent in rebus pessimis* 'Cursed are those who rejoice in the worst things', from a prayer-book, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2739, fol. 20v, from about 1200; see my Plate 11.

³¹ Dodwell, Plates XXI a-b.

³² Much of the work underlying this paper was done while I was visiting research professor at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza' (March-May, 1991); I would like to express my gratitude to the university, and especially to Professor Teresa Paroli, who generously invited me to Rome. I am also grateful to Professor Romana Zacchi and Dr Laura Bedodi, who arranged for me to consult manuscripts in Bologna and Padua, and to Professor Maria Elena Ruggerini, who has given me much help and support throughout the research for this paper.

A Road Less Travelled? Touring Performers in Medieval and Renaissance Lancashire

Sally-Beth MacLean

The history of entertainment before 1642 in the north west has been somewhat dominated by the drama of one location, the city of Chester, where a famous Whitsun Cycle of biblical plays can be traced through the sixteenth century until its suppression by religious reformers in the 1570s.¹ Admittedly, Chester was the most important town in the region at the time, the administrative centre for a county palatine, a port and market centre, bustling with varied crafts and trades, and, after 1540, cathedral city for the new diocese of Chester.² Beyond this cultural centre lay the northern counties of Lancashire, Westmorland and Cumberland, a region that seldom draws comment in accounts of medieval and renaissance drama.³ However, the dramatic records of all three counties have been published by the Records of Early English Drama series, and the 1991 edition for Lancashire by David George now provides a springboard for any study of early entertainment in that county, including this essay.⁴

One of the primary forms of early public theatre in the English provinces was the varied shows brought by a vivid array of touring performers – minstrels, players, bearwards, musicians, jesters, jugglers, acrobats, and puppeteers. Some of these entrepreneurial acts seem to have been local amateurs but many others had patrons, with obligations, as members of royal, noble or gentry households, to perform such services as their lord or lady requested. The latter class of performer travelled the length and breadth of the country to augment household income, but there were also some surprisingly ambitious trips undertaken by bands of civic waits such as those from Bristol in the south west, which show up as far away as Carlisle.⁵ Tracking this touring talent has become possible in recent years, with the further interest of comparing the relative popularity of performance routes and debating the underlying reasons for a road taken three or four centuries ago.

The intrinsic stimulation of newly available dramatic records for theatre

historians seems to be drawing a response beyond the discipline from others working on various aspects of urban and local culture in the period. Cultural history can also intersect usefully with recent developments in regional geography, where one modern writer defines 'region' as follows: 'it is a taxonomic and practical device used for characterizing and identifying, for different purposes and at different points in time, the common cultural, economic and social characteristics of varying communities, in both their local and broader spatial contexts and with some appropriate regard to the association, particularly in essentially pre-industrial times, with their natural environment. It is, in short, about the local and wider associations between people and places and people and people, partly recoverable from written descriptions, and in some cases from maps'.⁶

Using both available written records and period maps, my purpose now is to explore cultural associations between people and places in the Lancashire region before 1642, using touring performers as my lens. The earliest notices of locally sponsored entertainers come from outside the county, but nonetheless furnish evidence that the tradition of household retainers providing entertainment both in the patron's home and beyond at convenient times of the year was established in Lancashire by the mid-fifteenth century. A minstrel patronized by Sir John le Botiler was paid at York in 1448/9, within a year or so of payments to the minstrels attached to two Harington households, one resident at Hornby Castle in northern Lancashire and the other at Gleaston Castle in Furness, also in the county.⁷ The Botilers, lords of the manor of Warrington, resided at Bewsey, near Warrington and the only bridge across the middle and lower course of the Mersey in south-west Lancashire.⁸ How would the minstrels from these gentry households have made their way across to York and what was their cultural context in their home region?

In the mid-fifteenth century, Lancashire was still a remote and relatively underpopulated county. Much of its landscape was still wild, with hills and moorland to the north and along the eastern borders with Yorkshire, a lowlying undrained peatmoss plain in the south west where Liverpool is situated, and rivers running down from the Pennines carving up the landscape.⁹ Studies of the geographical distribution of wealth in England suggest that from the fourteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries Lancashire was the poorest or second poorest county in the country.¹⁰ Villages were thinly scattered and the incorporated boroughs few. At the end of the fifteenth century there were only four boroughs of any significance – Lancaster, Preston, Wigan and Liverpool – but even they

were modest in size and not to be compared with major provincial centres like Coventry, York, Exeter or Bristol (Liverpool's population has been estimated at about 700 as late as 1565).¹¹ More significant than the boroughs were the landed gentry: 'one of the most consistent features of the history of this region was the dominating influence of the class of landholders, under the lead of the Derby family . . .' (after 1485).¹²

Perhaps it is not surprising, under these circumstances, that Lancashire lacks the rich sources of historical record that allow us to trace the development of cultural life in major towns such as York, Shrewsbury and Exeter. There are very few civic accounts surviving for its larger boroughs, even in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, and no relevant accounts have been found for key market towns like Blackburn, Clitheroe, Ormskirk and Warrington.¹³ Family accounts of local nobility and gentry have unpredictable rates of survival in any county and Lancashire is not distinctive in lacking such archives for the medieval period. As a result we have no corroborative evidence of the minstrels attached to the Botiler and Harington households beyond their appearance at York in the mid-fifteenth century. The only late medieval records from the county which confirm local touring are the accounts of two prominent abbeys, Lytham in the Fylde district and Whalley in the Ribble Valley. The priors' accounts of the Benedictine priory of Lytham run from 1342 to 1534, seemingly a rich source but, because of their summary style, only useful to confirm that 'histriones' and 'ministralli' regularly made their way across the marshes, lured by the promise of performance payments, as well as room and board.¹⁴ Disappointingly, Cistercian Whalley's bursars' accounts are little different – individual payments to minstrels and sometimes bearwards are noted annually from 1485 through 1536, but without further identification by patrons' names (with a single exception).¹⁵

Despite the meagreness of the written record, we can catch a few glimpses of entertainment available to some privileged Lancastrians in the fifteenth century and how it became accessible to them. Minstrels were attached to private households by this time and although records are lacking in the north west generally in this period, the civic accounts of York prove that they travelled, perhaps in company with their patrons, as far as the Vale of York.¹⁶ Other performers, whether local or patronized, toured to welcoming monastic households in the Preston area on a regular basis and it would be surprising if they had not also visited other locations in the region along their main route. Where this and other main routes lay is another question that can only be tentatively answered from period map sources.

The mid-fourteenth century Gough map is the principal cartographic source of information for the road network across England in the period. It shows only one main road through Lancashire, entering the county in the south at Warrington from Newcastle under Lyme in Staffordshire and proceeding north, probably through Wigan, Preston, Garstang and Lancaster, to Kendal in Westmorland.¹⁷ Three hundred years later, when John Ogilby published his detailed 'strip' road maps in *Britannia* (1675), essentially the same road is recognizable as the main – indeed the only – north-south route through Lancashire.¹⁸ The only other road indicated on the Gough map divided at some point beyond Shrewsbury into two branches, one of which ran into North Wales, and the other to Liverpool on the Mersey. There are no cross-country routes indicated in this region of the north west, and just a glance at modern renderings of the medieval road network from the Gough and other period sources suggests that other parts of the kingdom were more inter-connected.¹⁹ No further evidence for north-western routes is provided by the four thirteenth-century maps drawn by Matthew Paris; his focus was on an itinerary from Dover to Newcastle, an eastern route through easier terrain that seems to have been favoured by many travellers, including entertainers, if surviving dramatic records are any indication.²⁰

Despite the lack of medieval cartographic evidence, there were some roads in the region that allowed communication with the north east, including York. The north-south route through Lancashire was established by the Romans, whose major roads are generally agreed to have remained in use, furnishing at least forty per cent of the medieval English road network.²¹ It seems likely, given the apparent traffic of touring entertainers in the Preston area as well as the existence of chartered market towns at Clitheroe, Preston and Kirkham, that there was a road through the fertile Ribble Valley to Preston and beyond into the agricultural Fylde district where Lytham Priory was located. In fact, evidence from an earlier period confirms this supposition. Much of this route was laid by the Romans to connect their station at Ilkley beyond Skipton in Wharfedale (Yorkshire) with an important fort at Ribchester in the Ribble Valley, through the Aire-Ribble gap, one of the lowest of the Pennine passes. This road continued west to Preston, Kirkham and the Fylde coast at Blackpool.²² The network of local roads traceable later in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries may well have derived from such old Roman roads, carved out of a sometimes difficult landscape by gifted engineers. Thus, another cross-country road that may have been used by the minstrels from Bewsey would have run to Manchester and then followed the Roman course over Blackstone Edge through Leeds and Tadcaster to York. This

is much the same route as the second cross-country road, originating at Chester and running through Warrington and Frodsham to Manchester and beyond to York, drawn by Ogilby in 1675.²³ A renaissance road followed some of the same course from Manchester through Rochdale over Blackstone Edge but diverged from there through Halifax, Bradford, Otley and Wetherby into York.²⁴

Ogilby has one other northern route that may well have been in existence in the medieval period. This was a branch of the road east to York that originated at Lancaster, following the Lune Valley past Hornby Castle and then over Burn Moor to Clapham, Settle, Long Preston and Gargrave in the North Riding before joining the other road to York in Airedale at Skipton. If such a route existed in the fifteenth century, this would have been the most direct for minstrels from Hornby.

With only one medieval cartographic source and no further information for the north west in published renaissance road lists, tracing performers' routes on a Lancashire map must necessarily be speculative (see map).²⁵ Even along the main road north, there is more than one witness to the difficulty of the terrain and the vulnerability of the route during wet weather. An act of parliament passed in 1670 pays notice to what must have been an enduring problem: 'in the Counties of Chester and Lancaster there are many and sundry great and deep Rivers, which run cross and through the common and publick Highways and Roads within the said Counties, which many Times cannot be passed over without Hazard and Loss of the Lives and Goods of the inhabitants and Travellers within the said Counties for want of covenient, good and sufficient Bridges in the said Highways and Roads'.²⁶ Not many years later Celia Fiennes gave an eyewitness account of some of the hazards of touring the county: 'Preston is reckon'd but 12 miles from Wiggon but they exceed in length by farre those that I thought long the day before from Leverpoole; its true to avoid the many mers and marshy places it was a great compass I tooke and passed down and up very steep hills . . . I was about 4 houres going this twelve mile and could have gone 20 in the tyme in most countrys'.²⁷

Lancashire seems to have remained a county that presented the long distance traveller with some challenges that may have made it a less attractive destination. Certainly touring entertainers based in the south and Midlands might have found other directions more appetizing, especially given the dearth of well-populated towns and the relative poverty of Lancashire's economy.

Although the medieval dramatic records are few, a more representative, if still incomplete, selection survives from the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. From these we can deduce more about the place of touring entertainment in the cultural life of the county. By this time some economic and

social changes were occurring but in many ways Lancashire remained a relative backwater with a small population, few incorporated boroughs, and much the same travel conditions, although it is possible that the roads deteriorated somewhat as they did elsewhere in the kingdom with the increase in heavier traffic and the loss of monastic upkeep.²⁸ Chester remained the only major city in the region although woollen manufacture was beginning to transform the south-eastern section of Lancashire, bringing Manchester in particular into increasing contact with London and the port of Southampton and creating stronger bonds with other cloth communities in neighbouring Yorkshire. The new textile industry and coal-mining in the Wigan and Prescott area of the south west heralded prosperity to come in the next century, but for the most part Lancashire could still be characterized as a pastoral county, with more land being brought into use for cattle raising and sheep grazing although there were still large tracts of forest, undrained mosses and empty moor.

The influence of local gentry in Lancashire has attracted much interest in recent years because of the role they played in resisting religious reform in the later sixteenth century.²⁹ Conservative and relatively isolated from the centres of administrative control, the county became infamous for its tolerance of recusancy, an attitude fostered by the gentry who held key positions as justices of the peace. Local landholders continued to be dominant in the region, characterized as follows: '... the first loyalty of many was to the Earl of Derby, or to some lesser local landholder, rather than to a distant monarch. Substantial gentry were thin on the ground, and only a narrow elite among them looked beyond the county for marriage partners, education or political preferment'.³⁰

The Stanley earls of Derby were pre-eminent in the region, the only higher nobility resident in the county. They held the powerful office of county lieutenant for almost a hundred years after its creation in 1551. Another minor peer, Lord Monteagle, was descended from a cadet branch of the Derbys and resided at Hornby Castle in the north. Below the peers in the county hierarchy were the gentry who took subordinate administrative posts such as deputy lieutenant, sheriff and justice of the peace. Phillips and Smith point out that even in this class, Lancashire had relatively few baronets and knights – by the start of the Civil War there were only seven baronets and six knights.³¹ The numbers of gentry were further augmented by those holding the lower ranks of esquire and gentlemen. It is evident that intermarriage, conservatism and distance from the capital would have made this county society insular and introspective. As Haigh notes: 'The ruling group in the county therefore formed a compact and inter-

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related coterie; the deputy lieutenants of Tudor Lancashire came from a circle of no more than ten families and they were all related'.³²

Is corroboration of this insularity to be found in the dramatic records? In this later period, as before, our primary evidence comes from household accounts rather than civic records. Although both Liverpool and Manchester have a few relevant records, there is little sign that their officials encouraged performance, either locally produced or touring, apart from the hiring of town waits. Liverpool's four notices of touring entertainers come from two years: 1574-75 and 1582-83, and three of these are for Lancashire-based troupes, the earl of Derby's and the Lord Monteagle's players.³³ Unlike some parishes in the south west, Liverpool became puritan, which may have been a factor in the apparent lack of interest in entertainment reflected in the Town Books, but it was also not as well-located as Manchester for attracting performers. But Manchester may not have had enduring appeal, for it was 'the largest, most prosperous, most economically developed and most puritan town in Lancashire'.³⁴ The Constables' Accounts, which only begin in 1613, have yielded very few entries, mostly for conveying unnamed visiting entertainers out of this puritan town.³⁵

We must therefore look to the accounts of the nobility and gentry in our search for touring performers and here we will not be disappointed. It is unfortunate that only one household book, with entries for 1587-90, survives for the leading noble family, the Stanleys, but it provides a distinctly different level of sophistication than the more numerous household accounts of the gentry families. No accounts have yet come to light from those holding the title of baron or baronet, but the rank of knighthood is represented by a brief household account for Sir Thomas Butler of Bewsey (1579-81); a rental book for Sir Richard Shireburn of Stonyhurst (1569-76); and household accounts for the Shuttleworths of Smithills and Gawthorpe (1583-1621). The lower gentry rank of esquire also has examples in the accounts of the executors of Robert Nowell of Read Hall (1568-80); household accounts both for Gilbert and Francis Sherrington of Wardley Hall (1581-1603) and for Thomas Walmesley of Dunkenhall (1612-54). There are also documents of related interest from the homes of Nicholas Assheton of Downham and Alexander Hoghton of the Lea.³⁶

Of immediate interest is the clustering of these households in the area of Preston and the Ribble Valley (see map). Stonyhurst, Gawthorpe, Read Hall, Dunkenhall, Downham and the Lea were all located in this part of Lancashire, on or near the old Roman road from Yorkshire to Preston. The Shuttleworth family had moved from Smithills near Bolton over the moor to Gawthorpe by

1606 so the entries are divided between those two different residences. Apart from the two Stanley residences in the south west, the only other clustering is in the Manchester area where Wardley Hall was situated and where Sir Thomas Butler appears to have made his only payment, on the move in 1579, to 'minstrels' patronized by Sir Edmund Trafford of Trafford Hall just west of the town.³⁷ The Manchester area is not on record as a favoured route for its households either, in fact. The Sherrington accounts have only a few entertainment payments at very modest levels over a twenty-three-year period and not one is to a patronized troupe. The highest reward was made to Robert Hewet, the chief wait of York, in 1583, the only other performers with an identification being the local players from Clitheroe who received 2s during the Christmas season in 1583/4.³⁸

Intriguingly, the route for which we have the most surviving evidence of travelling entertainment is therefore the one that we have been able to document but not trace on period maps. The Ribble Valley remains one of Lancashire's best kept secrets, not far from the main road north at Preston, but probably not considered a major cross-country route since the time of the Romans. Tucked away in beautiful landscape far from the surveillance of ecclesiastical authorities, it was chosen as a place of residence by some of the more prominent county gentry, many of whom became recusants or, like the Shireburns, 'church-Catholics' in the later sixteenth century. These were men who could afford to build imposing homes like Stonyhurst or Gawthorpe, thanks to the profits of high offices held under the earls of Derby. Sir Richard Shireburn, high steward and master forester of Bowland, was the fourth earl of Derby's household steward while Sir Richard Shuttleworth held a lucrative office as palatine judge in Cheshire.³⁹ Establishing a higher standard of living included private entertainment, largely provided by visitors. There is no evidence that the Shuttleworths employed their own household players although a troupe patronized by Shireburn's son Richard, a JP and sheriff of Lancashire in the early seventeenth century, showed up at Dunkenhalgh in 1628-29, the only record of their existence. Seventeenth-century accounts for this second Sir Richard are sadly lacking, but this isolated entry in the Walmesley accounts does indicate that the handsome hall still to be seen at Stonyhurst was used by performers. Both the Walmesleys and the Shuttleworths did employ pipers as part of their households.

How far did the visiting troupes travel to play in these residences and what would have been the attraction for their efforts? The best clues come from the accounts for the recusant Walmesleys of Dunkenhalgh and for the protestant Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe. Dunkenhalgh has been largely rebuilt over the

centuries but Gawthorpe remains an impressive Jacobean mansion, on the outskirts of Padiham not far from Clitheroe.⁴⁰ Some differences between the two should be noted at the outset, while acknowledging that the relevant records for Dunkenhalgh run from 1613-42, those for the Shuttleworths at Gawthorpe from 1608-21.⁴¹ Within a similar time period, however, a greater number of patronized troupes seems to have visited the conservative household of Dunkenhalgh and a wider variety of performers from other named locations – players, musicians, fiddlers and waits.⁴² Of the sixteen patrons whose troupes made the journey between 1613 and 1636 (some several times), seven were probably Lancashire-based, four were the constantly touring royal companies (king's, queen's, Prince Charles' and the Lady Elizabeth's), and two had their seats in Yorkshire and held powerful offices in the north (Shrewsbury and Eure). Two other patrons had troupes that mostly operated in the north, perhaps because it was increasingly unusual to find performers sponsored by those holding the rank of baron in the early seventeenth century.⁴³ As members of the extended Stanley family, both could also count on the earl of Derby's indulgent influence. In fact, the north-western counties may have been altogether more welcoming for the players of Edward Sutton, Lord Dudley, whose seat was in Staffordshire.⁴⁴ The only other patron known was Derby's son-in-law, the earl of Huntingdon, whose piper appeared once in 1629/30.⁴⁵

The Lancashire patrons included the ubiquitous earl of Derby, Lord Strange (in the 1630s), Lord Monteaule, Sir Cuthbert Halsall (mayor of Liverpool in 1616-17), a Mr Warren (presumably John Warren of Woodplumpton in the Fylde just beyond Preston (and Poynton, Cheshire), the second Sir Richard Shireburn, and possibly a Sir Edward Warren of uncertain origin.⁴⁶ Their visits could occur at any time of the year, but there is a consistent pattern of local players appearing during the Christmas or Shrovetide season and being handsomely rewarded.⁴⁷ Such players mostly came from towns and villages in or near the Ribble Valley: Downham, Ribchester, Clitheroe, Whalley and Burnley. Were these players in the same category as those noted in Nicholas Assheton's journal entry for festivities at Downham Hall on Twelfth Day, 1617/18: 'At night some companie from Reead came a Mumming; was kindly taken: but they were but Mummers . . . ?'⁴⁸ There are no further clues but what is apparent is that such patronage of performers strengthened the bonds of local community even as it must have impressed the visitors with the prestige of the patron and the opulence of his surroundings. Other locals came at intervals through the year – the players of Burnley and the waits of Preston and Lancaster. There is an impressive list of

musicians, often termed waits, from further away in the West Riding of Yorkshire: Wigglesworth in Ribblesdale; Bradford, Halifax, Leeds, and Wakefield along the route through the Pennines; and Pateley Bridge, Knaresborough and Ripon, north-east of Ilkley, all within a fifty mile radius. The only musicians to come from larger towns at a greater distance were the Durham waits who made the trip in 1619 and one troupe from the south, the Nottingham waits, who visited in 1631. The Walmesley household clearly relished plays and music, both 'professional' and amateur, but most of their performers originated in either Lancashire or neighbouring Yorkshire.⁴⁹

The same homegrown talent appeared at Gawthorpe, although the Shuttleworths recorded fewer visiting patronized troupes (7) and seem to have favoured musicians rather than local players at Christmastime. The three Lancashire-based patrons are already familiar – Derby, Monteagle and Mr Warren (probably of Woodplumpton) – as are the two Stanley relatives from Staffordshire, Dudley and Stafford. Only one royal troupe (Queen Anne's) made a tour stop in 1617/18 and it is possible that 'Mr Ratcliffe's' fiddlers of 1618 were patronized by Savile Radcliffe, JP of Lancashire in the period and the only West Riding patron, with his seat at Todmorden Hall near Halifax. The visiting local musicians are more limited in their variety also: neighbouring Padiham produced a piper and the town piper from Clitheroe came once as did the waits of Manchester.⁵⁰ Payments to musicians from the West Riding are fewer, but some of the same troupes included Gawthorpe in their circuit: Halifax, Wakefield and Leeds, as well as fiddlers from Heptonstall, on the moor beyond Burnley. Waits from as far away as Carlisle made their way to Gawthorpe, but the Durham waits had the longest journey. Their dated payment on 11 March 1617/18 when combined with other notices at Dunkenhalgh sometime after 14 February in the same year and at Carlisle between 21 December 1617 and 25 March 1618 gives us a rare indication of the extent of their itinerary.⁵¹ It is to be hoped that when the research survey of Yorkshire is complete we will also be able to piece together more detailed annual itineraries for some of the more active Yorkshire musicians from the Pennine area.

The pattern of Gawthorpe payments can also be compared with those of the same family's other household at Smithills, located closer to the Pennine route through Manchester and the main road running through Wigan. Surviving records for Smithills cover more years than those for Gawthorpe, but the diversity and number of the payments is noticeably less.⁵² The seven patrons of the visiting troupes differ as well. The musicians of three local patrons, Sir Edmund Trafford

and his son Edmund of Trafford Hall and John Atherton of Atherton Hall (a few miles south-west of Bolton) played at Smithills between 1586 and 1587, when Atherton and the Traffords were JPs with Shuttleworth.⁵³ Lord Monteagle's son-in-law, Lord Morley, also sponsored a troupe of players who came in 1586.⁵⁴ Perhaps because of Shuttleworth's high office in Cheshire or because this residence was so close to the Cheshire border, Smithills attracted the players of Sir Peter Legh of Lyme Hall just south of Manchester as well as his musicians and those of another Cheshire patron, William Tatton of Wythenshawe Hall, similarly located. It is striking that these visits cluster in the same 1580s period; the only patronized troupe to visit in the 1590s was the earl of Essex's men, a national troupe that seldom appeared in the north during the decade.⁵⁵

The local performers who included Smithills on their tour were also limited, although there are more correspondences. The four Lancashire-based troupes were all described as players, their visits falling within the Christmas period or a week later in one case. The players of Downham in particular were encouraged by the Shuttleworths in the 1590s, coming to Smithills three times. Otherwise undocumented players from Preston, Blackburn and Garstang, all on or near the main road north, also paid visits. The other Lancashire performer was a minstrel from Leigh near Bolton. The five West Riding musicians and players all came from locations along or near the Pennine route to York – Rochdale, Elland, Halifax, and Pontefract – or, in James Hewet, the wait's case, from York itself in 1591. Neighbourly affiliations with Cheshire are represented by payments to players from Nantwich (another Christmas visit), the Chester waits, and a vaguely titled troupe, 'playeres which came furthe of cheshire'.⁵⁶

It would seem, therefore, that Smithills may have been on a less popular route than Gawthorpe – and possibly that the older Shuttleworth had less time or inclination for entertainment at home outside the Christmas season, given his administrative responsibilities. The performance space at Smithills should not have been a deterrent and may indeed have been more accommodating to performers than has sometimes been thought. Despite its charm now, the well-known medieval hall would then have been considered a smaller, outmoded space with a central open fireplace. It seems unlikely that a host of Shuttleworth's status would have preferred this hall to the more modern and congenial withdrawing room, which was distinguished by some of the earliest linenfold panelling in Lancashire, as well as by its more generous dimensions and fashionable bay window.⁵⁷ Gawthorpe Hall is a grander space, however, and Shuttleworth's nephew Richard responded to his inheritance with hospitality on a scale to match

the house.

A few miscellaneous records from other households bolster the case for a thriving local culture in the Ribble Valley area. Sir Thomas Hesketh's minstrel, may have come from Hesketh's residence at Martholme, manor house of Great Harwood, to neighbouring Read Hall, in 1569, the only performance payment noted in the brief accounts surviving for the Nowell family. The same Hesketh may have inherited two players in 1581 from Alexander Hoghton of the Lea, a residence near his other home at Rufford Hall; if players under Hesketh's patronage were referred to in an ambiguous, unpunctuated MS entry for 1587, they were the only gentry troupe noted in the Derby Household Book. The other possible inheritor of the two players, Fulke Gyllom and William Shakshafte, was Alexander's brother Sir Thomas, residing at Hoghton Tower, also in the Preston area.⁵⁸ Neither the Heskeths of Rufford nor the Hoghtons of Hoghton Tower have left behind records to further illuminate the fate of the two players whose identities have drawn increasing attention from scholars willing to speculate about the possibility of Shakespeare spending some of his formative years in Lancashire.⁵⁹

The most active touring troupes based in Lancashire were undoubtedly those with the earl of Derby as their patron. The fourth earl of Derby's players, musicians and bearwards toured widely beyond the county and across the country, guaranteed a welcome because of their patron's prestige as one of the most important peers of the realm. The only notices within the county are two mentioned previously at Liverpool, but most of the detailed accounts for the Ribble Valley area postdate Henry Stanley's death. It is, however, intriguing that neither the players of the fourth earl or the equally active troupe of his heir, Lord Strange, appeared at Smithills or Wardley, which have some household accounts for their period (1572-94). Certainly they must have performed at the three Derby residences in Lancashire – Knowsley, Lathom and New Park – especially because the family was present for much of the year.⁶⁰ Henry, Lord Derby, preferred to keep an independent court in the north west rather than play the courtier to the queen like so many of his other noble contemporaries. The four years covered by his Household Book reveal a quality of entertainment on a consistently higher level than the haphazard mix of amateur and 'professional' music and drama enjoyed by members of his retinue in the Ribble Valley area. Although this was the period of his active service on privy council when the family was absent for considerable stretches of time in London, between 1587 and 1590 Derby, his family, friends and guest officials, saw performances at home by some of the best

troupes in the country.⁶¹ Hesketh's men, if they played at Knowsley, was the only one based in Lancashire. Derby's homes near the main road north attracted four visits by the queen's men (sometimes for more than one performance), one by Essex's, and one by Leicester's (two performances). In addition, the players who performed at Christmas 1588/9 and in February 1589/90, and possibly at Christmas 1587/8, must have been one of the Stanley troupes.⁶² There are no references made to the performances by amateur local entertainers which characterize the accounts of the Walmesleys and Shuttleworths.

There is little other extant evidence of what we can assume was a noble household with a sophisticated appetite for theatre. William, the sixth earl, was especially inspired by a love of drama. Chambers quotes letters of 1599 relating that his enthusiasm was such that he was 'busy penning comedies for the common players'.⁶³ A letter also survives from Derby himself to show that he was willing to use his influence to secure performance opportunities for the earl of Hertford's men at Chester (a city somewhat inhospitable to players by this time), before their return to Lathom for the Christmas season.⁶⁴

Did his fervour extend to the establishment of a playhouse at Prescott, part of a manor leased by the Stanleys neighbouring the Derby seat at Knowsley?⁶⁵ If this building was indeed a purpose-built playhouse for theatre, then it is one of the first on record in the provinces, the others being the Wine Street playhouse in Bristol (dated c. 1604), a later private playhouse in Redcliffe Hill, also in Bristol, known from the 1638 will of Sarah Barker, and a short-lived playhouse at York in 1609.⁶⁶ The small town of Prescott is not to be compared with the major cities of York and Bristol in this period as a mecca for touring companies or as a cultural capital for its region. There are no known performances at this playhouse and it seems to have had a very brief existence if such it was. Its builder, Richard Harrington, died in February 1602/3, so it must have been built between 1592, when the manor survey book (which fails to mention it) was drawn up, and 1602. By 1609 it had been converted into a house for habitation.⁶⁷ Was it an experiment for a theatre-loving earl or was it some other sort of entertainment place? It must probably remain an enigma. We are on more secure ground with the touring activities of the sixth earl's players, who made regular visits to the proud new residences of his loyal retainers in the Ribble Valley area for the years on record there from 1609 on. But like his father's troupe, this Derby's men did not confine their travels to the north west. They appear across the country, as far south as Barnstaple in Devon and Norwich in East Anglia. Their patron had national prominence and his players worked in a more sophisticated context as a result.

Only Monteagle's troupe had a range of travel beyond the north west that could be compared, but their touring seems to have concluded by 1616 while Derby's continued at least as late as 1635-36.⁶⁸

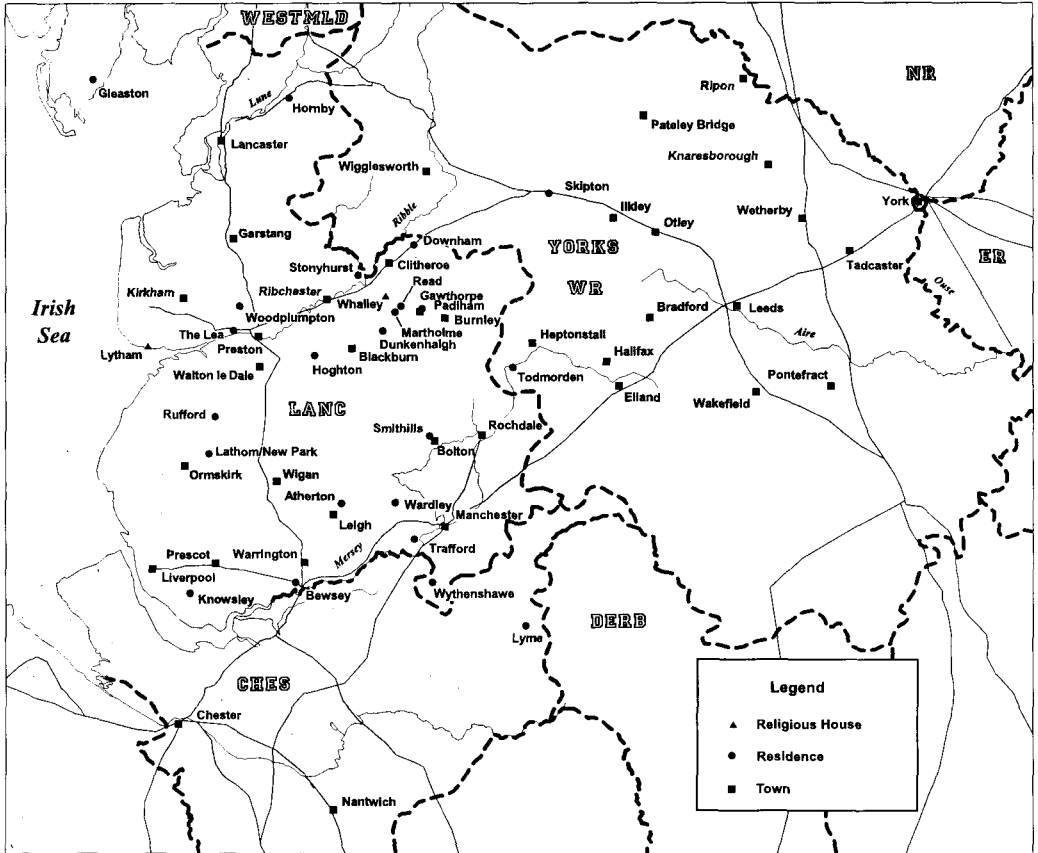
Given the assembled evidence, our conclusion must be that these troupes of the resident nobility were unusual in their wider frame of reference. The survey of surviving records of touring performance corroborates the image of Lancashire as essentially introspective and self-contained. The troupes of the gentry, like most of the amateur performers, circulated within the county, with only a few venturing beyond their home region into the West Riding or further north into Cumberland. It is striking that so far there have been only three notices found of Lancashire-based performers other than the Derby and Monteagle troupes further south (the Wigan and Lancaster waits at Nottingham and Preston waits at Coventry).⁶⁹

Piecing together what clues we have, it seems that culture in Lancashire's few small urban centres was poorly developed, apart from an interest in hiring town waits. The county was famous in the period for its pipers, however, and the wealth of local musicians on tour in the region bears witness to a lively, if modest, musical life in the smaller towns and villages. William Harrison, a local preacher, spoke out vehemently on the subject in 1614: 'Moreouer I cannot but lament, and with grieffe of heart complaine, that still in this part of the countrey, the course of religion is exceedingly hindered, the fruites of our labours greatly frustrated, the Lords Sabboth impiously profained, by publike pyping, by open and lasciuious dancing on that day . . . That pyping should put downe preaching: that dancing should draw the people from their dutie: That for one person which we haue in the Church, to heare diuine seruice, sermons and catechisme, euery pyper (there being many in one parish) should at the same instant, haue many hundreds on the greenes'.⁷⁰

There appear to have been amateur players too, from villages like Downham and Whalley, perhaps mummers, confident of a welcome at the homes of neighbouring gentry. Unlike the more ambitious bands of Yorkshire musicians, the Lancashire local performers seem to have been content to play within a limited sphere – although we do not yet have access to research results from Yorkshire, the absence of Ribble Valley performers from the substantial accounts of Kendal and Carlisle to the north is notable.⁷¹ Intriguingly, the most active region for cultural exchange, both between neighbouring gentry households and across the different levels of local society has proved to be the Ribble Valley, off the best-known roads in the north but perhaps, as a shelter for recusants, more

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inclined to nurture traditional forms of entertainment than puritan Manchester and likeminded smaller settlements in the south east, despite their location near a principal cross-country route through the Pennines. The old Roman road through the Ribble Valley may not have competed with better populated routes in other parts of the kingdom as a lure for national troupes, but it served the entertainment needs of its local residents better than may have been previously suspected.⁷²



Cartography: C.A. Robinson

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Map indicating locations of the places mentioned in the text.

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NOTES

¹ See further David Mills, *Recycling the Cycle: The City of Chester and Its Whitsun Plays*, Studies in Early English Drama 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) and *Chester*, ed. Lawrence M. Clopper, Records of Early English Drama (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979) for the dramatic records.

² See, for example, T.W. Freeman, H.B. Rodger, and R.H. Kinvig, *Lancashire, Cheshire and the Isle of Man* (London: Nelson, 1966), p. 45 and C.B. Phillips, and J.H. Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540* (London: Longman, 1994), pp. 37-38.

³ References to English counties in this essay define them according to their historic boundaries. Thus, the changes brought by legislation in the 1970s and '80s to Lancashire, especially the Liverpool, Greater Manchester and Furness areas, are irrelevant to my purpose.

⁴ *Lancashire*, ed. David George, REED (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991). The records for Cumberland and Westmorland were edited by Audrey Douglas in *Cumberland/Westmorland/Gloucestershire*, ed. Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield, REED (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

⁵ See *Cumberland/Westmorland/Gloucestershire*, pp. 78, 81.

⁶ R.A. Butlin, 'Regions in England and Wales c. 1600-1914', *An Historical Geography of England and Wales*, ed. R.A. Dodgshon and R.A. Butlin, 2nd ed. (London: Academic Press, 1990), p. 225. Butlin (224) also cites the essential features of the 'new' regional geography which developed in the 1980s as defined by A. Gilbert, remarking on the trend 'away from visible attributes of an area to its invisible ones, the relations that link individuals and institutions within the region; and toward the interpretation of the region as a process which, once established, is continually reproduced and gradually transformed through practices' (in 'The New Regional Geography in English and French Speaking Countries', *Progress in Human Geography* 12.2 (1988), p. 212).

⁷ It is possible, although the entry is somewhat opaque, that a minstrel patronized by Sir Richard Tunstall of Thurland Castle near Hornby in the north also made his way across to York in 1447. For all entries from the period 1447 to 1449, see *York*, ed. A.F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, REED, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), I, pp. 69-76. The richly detailed accounts for this short period are unusual for York, which must have been a mecca for touring performers, judging by this all-too-brief glimpse. Sadly, most of the York civic accounts for the next hundred years are lost or summary.

⁸ The bridge was built around the end of the thirteenth century along the main route into Lancashire. See Roy Millward, *Lancashire: An Illustrated Essay on the History of the Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955), pp. 70-71.

⁹ Among several detailed accounts of Lancashire's contrasting and somewhat

inhospitable geography are the following: Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975), pp. 87-92; F. Walker, *Historical Geography of Southwest Lancashire before the Industrial Revolution*, Remains Historical and Literary connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester, Chetham Society n.s. 103 (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1939; rpt. 1968); and Freeman, Rodgers, and Kinvig, *Lancashire, Cheshire and the Isle of Man*, especially pp. 42-51.

¹⁰ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance Lancashire*, p. 20 and note 4, provides further references.

¹¹ *Historical Geography of Southwest Lancashire*, p. 45.

¹² *Historical Geography of Southwest Lancashire*, p. 62. For the rise of the Derby earls in the later fifteenth century, see Barry Coward, *The Stanley Lords Stanley and Earls of Derby 1385-1672* (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1983), p. 112.

¹³ For further detail, see *Lancashire*, pp. xiii-xv, liii-lxxix. David George found no relevant borough accounts for Lancaster, Preston and Wigan, and for Liverpool, the primary source recording the actions of the mayor and burgess assembly is three Town Books running from 1550-1671. Although not an incorporated borough in the period, Manchester was the largest town in Lancashire, with between 1500 and 2000 inhabitants in the mid-sixteenth century (John K. Walton, *Lancashire: A Social History 1558-1939* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1986), p. 12). The Constables' Accounts, which only begin in 1613, have yielded very few entries, mostly for conveying visiting entertainers out of this puritan town.

¹⁴ See *Lancashire*, pp. 114-27.

¹⁵ See *Lancashire*, pp. 128-44. The single exception is 1531 when the Princess Mary's troupe is singled out (142). The only break in the annual run of these accounts is 1506-08.

¹⁶ Thomas Harington, for example, was a JP for the West Riding of Yorkshire in 1448, one of the two years when his minstrels were recorded at York (see *York*, p. 72, and Elza C. Tiner's 'Patrons and Travelling Companies in York', *REED Newsletter* 17:1 (1992), 16). The Yorkshire West Riding collection being edited for the REED series by Barbara D. Palmer and John M. Wasson may provide further evidence of touring medieval entertainers in one adjacent county, but the records of Chester, Cumberland and Westmorland are meagre before the sixteenth century and have so far furnished no records of medieval performers on tour.

An isolated account roll for Thomas, Lord Stanley, in 1459-60, provides further evidence that another Lancashire household retained the services of entertainers, in this case a piper and trumpeter (see *Lancashire*, p. 179).

¹⁷ This is the same road north outlined in Grafton's 1570 *Abridgement of the Chronicles of Englande* entitled 'The high wayes from any notable towne in Englande to the Citie of London. And lykewise from one notable towne to an other . . .' (STC: 12151). A facsimile of the Gough map has been published with an introduction by E.J.S. Parsons, *The Map of Great*

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Britain circa A.D. 1360 Known as the Gough Map (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1958). See also Frank M. Stenton's seminal article on the medieval road network, 'The Road System of Medieval England', *Economic History Review* 7 (1936), 1-21.

¹⁸ For readily accessible versions of these strip maps, see the facsimile publication, *Ogilby's Road Maps of England and Wales from Ogilby's 'Britannia', 1675* (Reading: Osprey Publications Ltd., 1971), plates 37, 38, 88, 89.

¹⁹ See, for example, Brian Hindle's reconstructions, derived from the Gough and Matthew Paris maps, as well as his research into royal itineraries, 'Roads and Tracks', in *The English Medieval Landscape*, ed. by Leonard Cantor (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1982), pp. 193-217. P.T.H. Unwin contrasts the 'clustering of routes radiating out from the main towns such as York and Lincoln' with certain parts of the country such as Wales, Devon, Cornwall and the north west which were 'poorly served' ('Towns and Trade 1066-1500', *An Historical Geography of England and Wales*, p. 145).

²⁰ For details of Matthew Paris' maps, see Hindle, 'Roads and Tracks', pp. 196-97.

²¹ See Hindle, 'Roads and Tracks', pp. 193, 196.

²² For all Roman roads in the north west see Ivan D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, 3rd ed. (London: John Baker, 1973), pp. 358-99.

²³ Ogilby's road (plate 89) passes through Eccles and Manchester to Rochdale and then over Blackstone Edge to Halifax, Elland, Leeds, Tadcaster and York.

²⁴ See the list at the end of Grafton's 1570 *Abridgement of the Chronicles of Englande*.

²⁵ Renaissance road maps are surprisingly few and there are none for the north west. Instead we must rely on road lists printed at the end of chronicles like Grafton's.

²⁶ As quoted by William Harrison, 'The Development of the Turnpike System in Lancashire and Cheshire', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society* 4 (1886), 82-83. For more on the Lancashire rivers, roads and bridges, see Walker, *Historical Geography of Southwest Lancashire*, pp. 10-11, 72-75 and Appendix A.

²⁷ *The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Fiennes 1685-c. 1712*, ed. Christopher Morris (London & Sydney: Macdonald and Co., 1982), p. 163.

²⁸ See, for example, Walton, *Lancashire*, pp. 7-29 and Phillips and Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540*, pp. 5-65.

²⁹ For a detailed study of Catholic resistance in the region, see especially Haigh's influential work, *Reformation and Resistance*.

³⁰ Walton, *Lancashire*, p. 7.

³¹ *Lancashire and Cheshire*, p. 13.

³² *Reformation and Resistance*, p. 89.

³³ See *Lancashire*, pp. 41, 46. Deference to the Lancashire patrons is clear in the rewards paid: Lord Derby's players (10s) and bearward (6s 8d); Lord Monteagle's (10s 4d). One of the

most active national troupes patronized by the earl of Oxford, by contrast, receives a mere 3s 4d.

³⁴ R.C. Richardson, *Puritanism in North-west England: A Regional Study of the diocese of Chester to 1642* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972), pp. 11 and following.

³⁵ See *Lancashire*, pp. 67-69. None of these players has a patron named. Manchester was a seigneurial borough in the period so it lacks corporate records. The extant Court Leet and Manor Rental Books have no entries relevant to touring entertainment nor do the Collegiate Church Accounts.

³⁶ All references to these sources come from *Lancashire*, pp. lxxxi-xciii, 145-212 and will henceforth be given in the text by date.

³⁷ David George notes that the Traffords are known to have patronized a minstrel as early as 1539 when he was indicted for assaulting someone (*Lancashire*, p. 351).

³⁸ For more biographical details on Hewet's career, see Eileen White, 'Hewet, the wait of York', *REEDN* 12.2 (1987), 17-22. He also visited Smithills in 1591. Hewet presumably would have followed the traditional route to the Manchester area via Rochdale through the Pennines.

³⁹ See Barry Coward, *The Stanley Lords Stanley and Earls of Derby*, p. 90.

⁴⁰ According to Nikolaus Pevsner, the present building at Dunkenhalth is mostly early nineteenth century (*Lancashire: The Rural North* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1969), p. 102).

⁴¹ Household accounts are missing for 1603-04, 1606-08 and 1613-16 in this period (*Lancashire*, p. lxxxviii).

⁴² Seventeen different groups of local entertainers visited Dunkenhalth compared with Gawthorpe's nine, in addition to performances by the troupes of sixteen patrons at Dunkenhalth contrasting with Gawthorpe's seven patronized troupes.

⁴³ For a recent study of the changes in licensing of players in the later Elizabethan period, see Peter Roberts, 'Elizabethan Players and Minstrels and the Legislation of 1572 against Retainers and Vagabonds', *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson*, ed. by Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 29-55, especially 54-55.

⁴⁴ For Edward, 5th Lord Dudley (Derby's cousin) and Edward, 13th Baron Stafford (another cousin), see the *Complete Peerage*.

⁴⁵ The Walmesleys also welcomed independent acting troupes. Richard Bradshaw and his company visited seven times between 1624/5 and 1635. William Perry, a member of the Red Bull company for some of this period, came with his provincial troupe five times between 1625 and 1630/1. For further details on this troupe see Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 392n., 418-19, 441, 447-48 and on Bradshaw and Perry see Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage: Dramatic*

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Companies and Players, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1941), pp. 387-88, 529-31.

⁴⁶ Sir Edward Warren, John Warren's father, who was prominent in both Cheshire and Lancashire in the late sixteenth century, had died in 1609 and is not to be confused with this later patron.

⁴⁷ The rewards range from 10s to 20s between 1624 and 1638.

⁴⁸ The Asshetons of Downham Hall were a junior branch of this prominent Lancashire family: this is the only evidence for entertainment at his home, although glimpses afforded from his now lost journal suggest that Nicholas Assheton enjoyed a variety of social activities abroad (see *Lancashire*, pp. 145-47).

⁴⁹ Thomas Walmesley had an appetite for pipers – there are numerous annual payments to otherwise unspecified musicians of this type.

⁵⁰ Clitheroe is known to have had a piper from other town records in the period: see *Lancashire*, p. 14.

⁵¹ For the Carlisle payment, see *Cumberland/Westmorland/Gloucestershire*, p. 87.

⁵² On the family's history during these years see further, *Lancashire*, p. xxxv. David George also discusses the Shuttleworth family and its records in more detail in his study of the hall at Gawthorpe as a performance space, 'Jacobean Actors and the Great Hall at Gawthorpe, Lancashire', *Theatre Notebook* 37 (1983), 109-21.

⁵³ At Christmas 1584 Atherton's bearward ventured as far as York (see *York*, vol. 1, p. 409) where he was well rewarded. Atherton had several manors in Yorkshire. For a partial list of JPs in 1586, including Atherton, Shuttleworth and one Trafford, see *Proceedings of the Lancashire Justices of the Peace at the Sheriff's Table during the Assizes Week 1578-1694*, ed. by B.W. Quintrell, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire 121 (Bristol: Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1981), p. 68.

⁵⁴ Edward Parker, Lord Morley, had Elizabeth, daughter of Lord Monteagle, as his first wife. She died in 1585 (*Complete Peerage*).

⁵⁵ Essex's players have been found at Chester in 1591 (*Chester*, p. 166) and at York in 1596 (*York*, vol. 1, p. 471).

⁵⁶ See *Lancashire*, p. 169. The players are paid a relatively meagre 12d, so it is unlikely that they were a patronized troupe.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Maurice Howard, *The Early Tudor Country House: Architecture and Politics 1490-1550* (London: George Philip, 1987), p. 112, and *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Lancashire*, ed. by William Farrer and J. Brownbill, vol. 5 (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1911), p. 18.

⁵⁸ For a transcript and brief discussion of the will, see *Lancashire*, pp. 156-58, and endnote, p. 350. The only known performer on record from Hoghton Tower is the Baron de Hoghton's bearward who visited York with his three bears in 1611/12 (see *York*, vol. 1, p. 539).

⁵⁹ See, for example, the most recent biographies by Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford, Oxford UP, 1998) and Anthony Holden, *William Shakespeare* (London: Little, Brown and Co., 1999).

⁶⁰ All three Derby homes have been torn down or substantially altered since the sixteenth century. Little of the family's current principal residence at Knowsley predates the early eighteenth century (*The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Lancaster*, ed. by William Farrer and J. Brownbill, vol. 3 (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1907), p. 166). Lathom House was destroyed during the Civil War and New Park, the lodge in its grounds, seems to have been pulled down during the eighteenth century (*VCH: Lancaster*, vol. 3, pp. 251, 254n).

⁶¹ See *Lancashire*, p. lxxxix.

⁶² Further details of interpretation are provided in my essay, 'A Family Tradition: Dramatic Patronage by the Earls of Derby', forthcoming in an essay collection edited by Richard Dutton et al (for Manchester University Press).

⁶³ A letter of 30 June 1599 from George Fanner to H. Galdelli and G. Tusinga as quoted by E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), p. 127.

⁶⁴ See *Lancashire*, p. 183.

⁶⁵ See Coward, *The Stanley Lords Stanley and Earls of Derby*, p. 7.

⁶⁶ See *Bristol*, pp. xxxvii-xl, 160-64, 242-43, and *York*, vol. 1, pp. 530-31.

⁶⁷ For details of all Prescott documents, see *Lancashire*, pp. 77-85 and endnotes pp. xlv-xlv, 331-33.

⁶⁸ Monteagle's players last appeared at Coventry in 1615-16 (*Coventry*, ed. R.W. Ingram, REED (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 397 and at Dunkenhalth in the same year (*Lancashire*, p. 186). Derby's troupe is last on record at Kendal in 1635-36 (*Cumberland/Westmorland/Gloucestershire*, p. 212). Outside the north west they were last seen at Leominster in Herefordshire in 1619-20 (*Herefordshire/Worcestershire*, ed. David N. Klausner, REED (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 149).

⁶⁹ The Wigan and Lancaster entries have been noted by Walter L. Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society from Elizabeth to Charles I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 294-95, and will be published in John Coldewey's edition of the Nottinghamshire dramatic records in the REED series. They can be found in the Nottingham Chamberlains' Accounts, Nottinghamshire Record Office: CA 1626, fol. 10 (Lancaster, 1586-87) and CA 1627, p. 15 (Wigan, 1587-88). It is possible that research in eastern Midland counties such as Lincolnshire, for example, may turn up a few more entries, but so far published surveys in the south east and East Anglia have yielded none.

⁷⁰ *Lancashire*, pp. 27-28.

⁷¹ Although medieval accounts are lost for both locations, there are chamberlains'

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accounts surviving for Carlisle from 1602-42 and for Kendal 1582-41.

⁷² This essay draws on research in connection with a longer analytical study of regional theatre before 1642. My collaboration with Alexandra F. Johnston in this venture has been generously funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and I gratefully acknowledge their support.



'Comyth in Robyn Hode': Paying and Playing the Outlaw at Crocombe

John Marshall

At the end of the last century, *Medieval English Theatre* published a Cumulative Index for Volumes 1-20.¹ In addition to its usefulness as a resource, it is splendid testimony to the vision of the first two editors; Meg Twycross and Peter Meredith. Their decision to concentrate on medieval *English* theatre in such a way that Continental material and the early Renaissance would not be excluded, and to interpret 'plays' as 'any kind of dramatic activity', has been applauded by more than eighty contributors world-wide.² The editors' prediction that the journal's staple would comprise 'mysteries and moralities' turns out, not surprisingly, to be accurate, and their expectation that the 'material will mostly be from the late medieval and early Renaissance periods' fully realised. Furthermore, their belief that England would be illuminated by reference to the Continent was shared by contributors from the very beginning.³

With all this success, it is surprising that one area of medieval English theatre, through no fault of the editors, has received so little attention. For reasons that may be to do with the vagueness of some of the evidence, or the tendency to place the subject in the field of local history rather than drama, only a single article on the plays or games of Robin Hood has been published by *METH*. Moreover, John Wasson's account of the St George and Robin Hood plays in Devon is alone in being devoted to what might loosely be described as folk or traditional drama.⁴ This is in spite of 'Folk Drama' being the topic for the annual *METH* meeting in 1996. It is true that Meg, with her encyclopaedic interests, mentions Maid Marian twice but this, like the reference to Friar Tuck by W.R. Streitberger, is in the context of the royal household, not the village green.⁵

This under representation of the subject of Robin Hood in early performance is not peculiar to *METH*. It is rather a symptom of the wider neglect observed recently by two Robin Hood scholars. Jeffrey L. Singman, in the introduction to his study of the legend, acknowledges the value of David Wiles' book, *The Early Plays of Robin*

Hood (D.S. Brewer, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1981), while recognising that in terms of reference it has been overtaken by the work of the Records of Early English Drama (REED) project. He maintains that Robin Hood scholars have been slow to absorb the new data, and that the 'subject remains in desperate need of a full-length study'.⁶ Similarly, in a paper delivered at The First International Conference of Robin Hood Studies, held at the University of Rochester in 1997, Stephen Knight appealed for scholars to examine the increasing detail of the Robin Hood games being revealed by the publication of drama records in order to improve our knowledge of these 'unusual events'.⁷ The full-length study must probably wait for the completion of the REED volumes for counties where Robin Hood games are known, or are likely, to have occurred. In the interim, REED editors themselves – John Wasson (Devon), James Stokes (Yeovil), Sally-Beth MacLean (Kingston-upon-Thames) and Alexandra Johnston (Thames Valley) – are doing much to provide the necessary elucidation of the records at a local level.⁸

This article attempts to do something of the same for the Robin Hood of the Somerset parish of Croscombe. It explores the role the revels may have played there in financing extensions to the church building, seeks to identify those named as Robin Hood players, and tries to locate the playing or game place. More speculatively, it questions the persistent, although not entirely unchallenged, view that Robin Hood's appearance in these games implies a level of conscious subversion on the part of the participants, or at least of carnivalesque inversion. This critical perspective, dominant in the late twentieth century, sees Robin as an embodiment of disorder and misrule, and the games as giving formal expression to repressed political tendencies.⁹ In contrast, I suggest that it is possible to reposition the role of Robin Hood, in late medieval England, as a champion of the ideals of communalism and local identity that underpinned the emergence of autonomous parish assemblies.

There are many reasons for choosing the Croscombe records, even though antiquarian knowledge of them goes back more than a century.¹⁰ They are the earliest lengthy sequence of surviving churchwardens' accounts to record the gathering of money in Robin Hood's name. In the fifty-year period between 1476 and 1526, collections are made on 18 occasions. Earlier references than this to Robin Hood plays or games are more isolated; Exeter in 1427, possibly Caister in Norfolk in 1469 or 1470, and Thame in 1474.¹¹ The parish of Croscombe engaged in a comprehensive round of annual collections that sub-divided almost the entire community into groups defined by age, occupation, and, on at least one occasion, marital status. It is thus possible to see the Robin Hood revels in the wider context of parish finance and administration. Croscombe was also part of an intriguing cluster of Somerset towns

and villages that hosted Robin Hood games; Glastonbury, Tintinhull, Wells, Westonzoiland and Yeovil.¹²

Croscombe is a relatively small village on the southern edge of the Mendip Hills (grid reference ST590444), lying in the valley of the Doultling Water (River Sheppey), midway between Wells and Shepton Mallet (Plate 1). In the period of the accounts, the parish occupied an area of 1,433 acres that has since been enlarged by a third.¹³ The population in the mid sixteenth century was probably about 300; an increase of more than a half over the likely population at the time of the 1377 poll-tax returns.¹⁴ The lordship of Croscombe was held by the Palton family from 1330 to 1449. They were responsible for rebuilding the nave of the parish church and for the establishment of the Palton Chantry Chapel in the east end of the south aisle. On the death of Sir William Palton, the estate eventually descended by marriage to the Fortescues of Filleigh in Devon, following temporary possession by Richard Pomeroy, a cleric from Wells who had married into the family. The wealth of the village was founded on the cloth trade, with a high proportion of inhabitants occupied in weaving and fulling. The village was granted a charter in 1343, confirmed in 1438, to hold a weekly market on Tuesdays and a yearly fair on the eve of the Annunciation and the two following days.¹⁵ The church, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, is mainly of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, although the tower may be slightly earlier and the south doorway is thought to be late thirteenth century (Plate 2). It is particularly noted for the survival of extensive Jacobean church furnishings.¹⁶

The Croscombe churchwardens' accounts run from 1475/6 to 1560/1 and record outlay on the fabric and furnishings of the church, and the means by which this was funded. The income came, in part, from a few rents, some gifts and bequests of money, rings, gowns, woad, vestments, sheep and cows, but mainly from the annual collections and church-ales organised by the parish. The accounts were generally audited on the first or second Saturday after Epiphany and consequently cross two calendar years.¹⁷ This means that when a contribution from the sport or revel of Robin Hood is registered, it refers to an event held in the first year of the account. The wardens' record of these gatherings is disappointingly concise:

1476-7: Comes Thomas Blower and John Hille and presents in xls. of Roben Hod's recones

1481-2: Comes John Halse and Roger Morris for Roben Hod's revel, presents in . . . xls. ivd.

1482-3: Comys Robin Hode and presents in . . . xxxiijs. ivd.

1483-4: Ric. Willes was Roben Hode, and presents in for yere past . . . xxiijs.

- 1484-5:** Comys Robyn Hode and presents in . . . xxiijs. viijd.
1486-7: Comys Robyn Hode, Wyllyam Wyndylsor, and presents in for the yere
paste iijl. vjs. viijd. ob.
1488-9: Comys Robyn Hode and presents in . . . iijl. vjs. viijd.
1490-1: Comys Robyn Hode and presentith . . . ls.
1494-5: Robyn Hode presents in . . . xlvjs. viijd.
1500-1: Comyth in Robyn Hode and Lytyll John and presentyth in . . . xvs.
1502-3: Comyth Robart Hode and presentyth in . . . xls.
1505-6: Presented in of the sport of Robart Hode and hys company . . . liijs. iiijd.
the wych resteth in the hands of W. Carter.
in the hands of W. Dunpayn to by ches . . . vjs. viijd.
1506-7: Presented in for the sporte of Robart Hode . . . xliijs. iiijd.
1507-8: The wardens present for the sport of Robart Hode . . . ix. viijd.
In the hands of Donpayn to by chese . . . vjs. viijd.
1509-10: The comyng in of Robyn Hode (John Honythorne) . . . iijl.
1510-11: Comyng in of Robyn Hode . . . iijl. vjs. viijd.
To J. Donpayne for by chesse . . . vjs. viijd.
1511-12: Itm. the Croke box . . . iijl. ix. jd.
" " Robyn Hode (J. Honythorn and J. Stevyn) . . . xxxvs. xd.
1526-7: Gifts. Robyn Hode . . . iiijl. iiijd.¹⁸

The descriptive evidence from these accounts, even when put together, provides only the barest outline of activity. Robin Hood and his company, that includes, but may not exceed, Little John, preside over occasional revels or sports that contribute a 'recones' to church funds. It is probably safe to assume that the references are, in the main, to a church-ale with a Robin Hood flavour. Contemporary accounts indicate that church-ales could include feasting, drinking, dancing, minstrelsy, archery and other competitive sports such as wrestling, and plays.¹⁹ Of these, feasting is the only item from the menu possibly to feature in the Croscombe accounts. On three occasions in the sixteenth century (1505/6, 1507/8, 1510/11) the churchwardens appear to reserve a sum in connection with Robin Hood for the buying of cheese. The connection, though, may be one of proximity in the records only, and the cheese meant for some other occasion, as it clearly was in 1508/9 when a similar payment occurs in a year without Robin Hood games.²⁰

The lack of documentary detail in the accounts is regrettable but explicable and does not necessarily reflect the level of activity. The expenses incurred by the Robin Hood revels, including items of costume, were probably accounted for independently

by the presenters, with only the profit to the church recorded by the churchwardens. Even so, such little information raises the question of what level of mimetic action is necessary to identify a church-ale or revel with Robin Hood. In some places, such as Kingston upon Thames, the connection was immediate and obvious with dramatic impersonation by costumed characters in dance or scripted drama.²¹ It would be a mistake, though, to assume from these references that all Robin Hood games followed their example. There is a danger in conflating widely dispersed evidence (of time and place) in order to create a prototype game where the sum of the parts exceeds any one whole. The church-ale ingredients listed above, combining feasting and fraternity with competition and conviviality, are already suggestive of Greenwood hospitality and Robin Hood's fellowship. All that need be added to make the suggestion explicit is the disguise of two parishioners as Robin Hood and Little John to oversee the festivities and collect the livery fee.

Whatever form the revels took, their impulse was clearly financial and their profit substantial. This was certainly the case at Croscombe where Robin Hood returns outstripped all other kinds of gathering. The parish was particularly well organised in raising money from all sections of the community. This it did through a mixture of individual and communal collections that fit into three broad categories. First there were the annual collections from parishioners for Easter ('paskall and fonte taper') and St Michael's Light. Second, the annual gatherings by sub-parochial groups or guilds differentiated by the occupation or status of their members. Third, the occasional gatherings open to the entire local and, very likely, neighbouring populations. Table 1 shows the frequency and level of contributions from the second and third categories during the period 1475 to 1538.

The churchwardens' accounts give no more information about the means that produced the guild returns than they do about the form of the Robin Hood revels. From evidence elsewhere in Somerset, it seems that the Croscombe Hogglingers were a group of men who, sometime during the twelve days of Christmas, conducted door to door gatherings of money, or food for church-ales, in return for possibly sung entertainment.²² It is not clear from the records whether the practice of hogging survived the period of the accounts. The last detailed record of a collection was in 1532/3, but this may reflect Hobhouse's decision to abbreviate the accounts for later years to 'usual entries' rather than the demise of hogging. It is possible that a vestige of the practice continued until the 1970s with the Old Year's Eve celebration on 5 January when a group of handbell ringers and singers toured the parish streets collecting for charity.²³

Table 1
Croscombe Parish Income From Communal Activity
1475-1538

Year	King's Revel	Robin Hood	St George	Hogglers	Young Men	Maidens	Weavers	Fullers
1475/6	✓			2s 10d	2s 2d		23d	23d
1476/7		40s		3s 10d	3s 9d	9d	22d	2s 2d
1477/8	20s			3s 8d	7s	9s 7d	18½d	2s 2d
1478/9	13s 1d			3s 1d	2s 9d	3s	21d	2s
1479/80						3s	20d	2s 2d
1480/1						4s 8d	2s	2s 1d
1481/2		40s 4d		3s 4d	9s 3d*	0 'yet'	0	3s 4d
1482/3		33s 4d		0	3s 8d	0	0	3s 7d
1483/4		23s		4s 4d	1s 5d (?)	9s 6d	0	3s 4d
1484/5		23s 8d		4s 1½d	0	16s 3½d	0	2s 11d
1485/6				6s 2d	8s 2d*	17s 4d	7d	2s 8d
1486/7		£3 6s 8½d		4s 10d		17s 4d		3s
1487/8				5s	3s 4d	22s	0	3s 6d
1488/9		£3 7s 8d		5s	3s 4d	20s 4d	0	4s
1489/90				6s 2½d	4s 6d	23s 4d	0	3s 6d
1490/1		50s		5s 3½d	4s 2d	25s	0	2s 9d
1491/2				4s 9d	3s 8d	16s 2d		4s 2½d
1492/3				4s 4½d	5s 2d	18s 3d		2s 5d
1493/4				6s 1d	5s			3s
1494/5		46s 8d		4s 5d	✓	35s 4d		2s 8d
1495/6				4s 7½d	6s 8d	25s 4d		2s 11d
1496/7				4s 9d		27s 4d		3s 2½d
1497/8				6s 5d	3s 5d	13s 1d		3s 7½d
1498/9				6s	3s 1d	22s 5d		2s 11½d

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Year	King's Revel	Robin Hood	St George	Hogglers	Young Men	Maidens	Weavers	Fullers
1499/00				6s 1d	5s 1d	20s 4d		3s
1500/1		15s		4s 6d	4s 4d			4s
1501/2				4s 6d	5s 4d	21s		3s 4d
1502/3		40s		4s 9d	41d	16s		3s
1503/4				5s	5s	18d†		3s 4d
1504/5	23s 10½d			6s 2d	5s	13s		2s 11d
1505/6		53s 4d		3s 9d	4s 8d	17s 5d		2s 10d
1506/7		43s 4d		4s 7½d	2s	9s 2d		3s 6d
1507/8		9s 8d		4s 5d	4s	13s 1½d		3s 10d
1508/9				5s	3s 8d	15s 6d		3s 4d
1509/10		£3		4s	3s 4d	16s		3s 4d
1510/11		£3 6s 8d		4s 2½d	4s 5d	16s 10d		3s
1511/12		35s 10d		4s 8d	5s 10d	20s		2s 11d
1512/13				4s 7d	4s 5d	18s 6d		2s 2½d
1513/14				✓	✓	✓		✓
1514/15								
1515/16				✓	✓	✓		✓
1516/17			12s	✓	✓	✓		✓
1517/18			16s 8d	✓	✓	✓		✓
1518/19				✓	✓	✓		✓
1519/20				✓	✓	✓		✓
1520/1			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
1521/2				?	?	?		?
1522/3				✓	?	?		?
1523/4			13s 8d	✓	✓	✓		✓
1524/5				?	?	?		?
1525/6				✓	?	?		?
1526/7		£4 0s 4d						

Year	King's Revel	Robin Hood	St George	Hogglers	Young Men	Maidens	Weavers	Fullers
1527/8			33s 4d					
1528/9			57s 4d	✓	?	?		?
1529/30			26s 8d	✓	?	?		?
1530/1			13s	✓	?	?		?
1531/2			26s 8d	✓	?	?		?
1532/3			18s 4d	4s	2s 8d	17s 4d		21d
1533/4			✓	✓	?	✓		?
1534/5			?	?	?	?		?
1535/6			?	?	?	?		?
1536/7			?	?	?	?		?
1537/8			?	?	?	?		?
1538/9			26s 8d			4s		

KEY

- * Income from this and preceding year.
- † This small sum was returned to the Maidens as stock for the coming year. It suggests that they may not have collected in 1503.
- (?) Possibly an error; sums under two shillings are usually expressed in pence.
- ✓ Contribution noted but sum not recorded.
- 0 Nil return recorded.
- ? Contribution probably made but not transcribed by Hobhouse who gives only 'usual entries'.

NOTES

1. After 1538/9 the only entries relevant to the table above occur in 1547/8 when the wardens received 22s 6d from 'the maydes ayl' and 17s 2d from 'The Ale att Wytontyde'. The latter may refer to the St George ale or its successor.
2. A single contribution of 6s was received in 1483/4 from the 'wyfes dansyng'.
3. In addition to the income from communal activity, there were annual collections for Easter ('paskall and fonte taper'), St Michael's Light (most years until 1503/4 and again in 1523/4) and twice for St Nicholas' Light (1475/6 and 1477/8).
4. In the table, the Roman numerals of the accounts have been converted into Arabic.

The Maidens' collections may be from the festival of Hocktide. In a number of Croscombe accounts, the entry for the Maidens follows that for the paschal taper, suggesting a possible Easter connection.²⁴ The Young Men's involvement in these games is a possibility, as happened elsewhere, except that they usually make their contribution not with the Maidens but after the Weavers and Fullers. This might suggest a different activity on a separate occasion, but the accounts are not sufficiently consistent to draw conclusions about what was done from the order of presentation alone. The Weavers and Fullers, or Tuckers as they are referred to in the accounts, may have raised their contributions from a levy or through some social gathering.

Each year, the guilds were provided with a 'stock' by the churchwardens, usually 12d, with which to purchase votive lights. The amount the guilds raised above this sum, called the 'increase', was presented to the churchwardens as their contribution to church funds. Unlike these guild wardens, the Robin Hood presenters are never given a stock. This was presumably because they did not represent a specific membership with an obligation to provide candles each year. Moreover, as an irregular event, it would not always be known, from year to year, when the next revel would occur.

What emerges from analysing the accounts as a whole is that the annual guild contributions, for all the variation in amounts, were sufficient, along with rents, gifts and bequests, to maintain the lights and the predictable day to day expenses of the church. The occasional events of the King's Revel and the sport of Robin Hood, on the other hand, are either brought out to rescue the parish from potential debt or scheduled to finance extensions to church property.

From the table, a pattern to the Robin Hood sports emerges, with two intense periods of activity evident; one of four years beginning in 1481, and one of six years in a seven-year period between 1505/6 and 1511/12. At the end-of-year audit, the churchwardens calculated the balance of church funds after the payment of expenses. What was left is described as 'the remains in stock'. In 1481/2 the stock was at its lowest level since the records began: £1 15s compared with £15 1s 10½d three years earlier. Without the Robin Hood revel that year, the stock would have been in deficit. In 1503/4 the stock drops to £2 14s 10d from the previous year high of £16 17s 5d. It remains comparatively low (averaging just over £3) until picking up again to £13 in 1511/12. Neither instance is a case of mismanagement or unforeseen crisis. Both can be explained by an active programme of church building undertaken by the churchwardens on behalf of the parishioners.

In 1481/2 the sudden depletion in stock is accounted for by the payment of a 'bille for makyng of the Cherch house'. The wardens for the year, Roger Morris and

William Branch, settled the costs of a carpenter and a fellowship of masons amounting to £13 2s 6½d (the account miscalculates the sum as £13 2s 11½d). By 1485/6 the stock used to pay for this building, intended to enhance the social life of the parishioners, had been restored, in no small measure, by Robin Hood (Plate 3).²⁵ Unlike this remedial role, the clutch of Robin Hood revels beginning in 1505/6 exhibits a degree of financial foresight. In the accounts for 1507/8 appears the first reference to John Carter, 'Jorge maker', a free mason of Exeter who receives £4 'off the parech of Croscombe'. In 1509/10 he is paid 30s for 'the settingg oppe of the Jorge' and in 1512/13 the large sum of £27 11s 8d to settle the 'holle sume of all the coste' of the George. These payments, over a five year period, refer to the construction of the Chapel of St George at the north-east end of the church (Plate 4). It is possible that the sums paid to John Carter also include, but do not refer to, the contemporary building of the two-storey vestry and treasury at the south-west corner of the church (Plate 5). This is first mentioned in the accounts for 1510/11 and became the secure destination of the funds raised by the guilds. By 1511/12, the final year of this burst of Robin Hood revels, the church stock had not only coped with major extensions to the fabric of the church but had climbed back to a healthy surplus of £13.

At Croscombe, Robin was a victim of his own success. The generosity he inspired amongst the parishioners contributed to his downfall, or rather to his usurpation. The establishment of the Chapel of St George seems, predictably, to have promoted a new hero to headline the church-ale. Never as financially successful as Robin Hood, George makes up in consistency what he lacks in profusion. Robin makes a spectacular return in 1526/7 with the largest collection in the history of the Croscombe accounts. The churchwardens, or more likely Hobhouse, give little indication of why Robin was resurrected after a gap of fifteen years. The published accounts stop listing the stock figure in 1520/1. At £7 13s 4d, it gives little cause for alarm. Around the time of the revel, the only unusual expenses recorded are for the distraint of rent by the Lord of the Manor for all the parish in 1526/7 and for the 'mending of the horne of the cherch' in 1527/8. The reintroduction of Robin Hood may have been to cover these expenses or to replenish the stock reduced by not holding the St George Ale in the previous two years.

It would represent a crude negation of the social dimension of Robin Hood games to assume that they were only held to satisfy the financial needs of a parish. Nevertheless, at Croscombe and elsewhere this was a powerful motive and probably best explains why the revels were only occasional.²⁶ It certainly calls into question modern notions of Robin Hood as the Green Man or as an incarnation of spring.²⁷ For such ritual associations to be culturally meaningful, Robin would surely need to

appear annually.

The level of mutuality between Robin Hood and parish enterprise, revealed by the accounts, is supported by the identity of the presenters. That those named were the impersonators of Robin Hood, rather than just administrative wardens, can reasonably be assumed from the formulation in 1483/4 that 'Ric. Willes was Roben Hode'. From the Croscombe churchwardens' accounts, wills and other related documents it is possible to draw up a brief biography for each presenter.²⁸ The years of presentation are in square brackets.

Thomas Blower [1476/7]

- may have been churchwarden in 1475/6, only 'Thomas' transcribed.
- makes gift to the church of a gown, gold ring and kerchief in 1478/9.

John Hille [1476/7]

- churchwarden in 1476/7, 1477/8 and 1478/9.
- gatherer of paschal money on Easter Day 1477 and 1478.
- makes gift to the church of a ring and a towel in 1489/90.
- Jone Hill (probably sister) warden of the Maidens in 1480/1 and 1483/4.

John Halse [1481/2]

- churchwarden in 1484/5.
- witness to Joan Mayow's will in 1496.
- died 1500/1 leaving money to Our Lady, the Rood, the bells and his grave.
- 'Halses' (probably sister) warden of the Maidens in 1483/4.

Roger Morris [1481/2]

- churchwarden in 1481/2.
- Fullers' warden in 1477/8, 1478/9, 1479/80 and 1480/1 (possibly for the years 1475/6 and 1476/7 when only 'Roger' recorded).
- witness to Joan Mayow's will in 1496.
- supervisor of Richard Maudeley's will in 1508.
- overseer of William Carter's will in 1513.
- one of three patrons of the parish incumbent, William Morris LL.D (1498-1519), possibly his brother.
- will made on 9 Jan 1519, proved at Lambeth on 17 Feb 1519; occupation given as 'clothier'; buried in chancel of Croscombe church.
- John Mors (probably son) churchwarden in 1527/8.

Ric. Willes [1483/4]

- churchwarden (Richard att Wyll) in 1493/4.
- Young Men's warden in 1483/4 (possibly in 1482/3).
- Hogglers' warden between 1486/7 and 1492/3 (possibly for most years following until 1507/8 if Vowles, Vells, Volls, Wells, Woll etc. are the same person. If they are, he may also have been the Richard Vowllys who was churchwarden in 1487/8).
- Johan Wylls (possibly wife) makes a gift to the church of a silver and gilt ring in 1508/9.
- relative (?) John att Wyll churchwarden in 1551/2.

Wyllyam Wyndylsor [1486/7]

- churchwarden in 1482/3.
- gives/leaves vjs viijd to the church in 1503/4.
- 'Wyndelsor's servant' gives iiijd to the church in 1486/7.
- Margery Wynsor (possibly wife) makes a gift to the church of beads, rings and money in 1502/3.
- Edward Windore (brother?) Young Men's warden in 1488/9, 1491/2, 1492/3 and 1493/4, and churchwarden in 1504/5 and 1505/6.

William Carter [1505/6]

- churchwarden in 1513/14; died in office and replaced by his father John Carter, clothier, who was previously churchwarden in 1486/7.
- will made 15 Apr 1513 and proved 3 Nov 1513.
- Jone Carter (sister) warden of the Maidens in 1494/5.
- John Carter (brother) warden of the Young Men in 1495/6.
- Carters were also churchwardens in 1533/4 (John), 1544/5 (John) and 1550/1 (Joseph).

John Honythorne [1509/10 and 1511/12]

- churchwarden in 1521/2.
- J. Honythorne (father?) churchwarden in 1489/90 whose death may be recorded by the gift of two rings and viijd in 1502/3.

John Stevyn (aka Sadeler) [1511/12]

- churchwarden in 1537/8, 1542/3 and 1544/5.

The striking thing about this list is that all presenters, with the possible exception of Blower, were, had been, or would become churchwardens. At Croscombe, the churchwardens were, according to the account for 1476/7, elected by 'al the parresch'. Such democracy ought to ensure that they were respected by the community as responsible and capable individuals. The Robin Hood presenters may also have been chosen by parishioners or appointed by the churchwardens. The element of trust in handling money that a link between the presenters of Robin Hood and churchwardens implies is borne out by the evidence of other parishes.²⁹ In addition, all named Robin Hood presenters, except the first and last, either held office as wardens of other guilds or had relatives, male and female, who had done so. For these families, at least, commitment to the community went beyond mere obligation.

As far as it is possible to tell, the wardens of church and Robin Hood were neither the wealthiest nor the poorest parishioners. For the most part they were the craftsmen of middling status. Croscombe's two longest serving churchwardens, William Branch and Edward Bolle, were both fullers.³⁰ This profile of non-gentry wardenship is by no means uncommon.³¹ They were not, though, without ambition. Roger Morris, for example, seems to rise from the status of fuller in the years before he presented as Robin Hood to a clothier in his later years.³² William Carter, too, came from a family of clothiers. None of the men named were sufficiently wealthy to make endowments or large bequests to the church. Roger Morris, at the time of his death in 1519, was perhaps the most prosperous. In his will he leaves;

12d to the cathedral church of Wells
20d to the high altar of Croscombe for tithes and oblations
forgotten
20s to the chantry of Croscombe to pray for his soul and the souls
of his two wives
12d to the curate of Croscombe
a blue gown to his son, John
20d to his eldest daughter, Joanna
a dozen silver spoons, a maser, a flock-bed with tester and other
household goods to his youngest daughter, also Joanna
3 quarters of woad and a cloth with the residue of his estate to his
wife, Agnes³³

At Yeovil the Robin Hoods were drawn from among the 'relatively older rather than younger men of the parish.'³⁴ Chagford in Devon went to the opposite extreme

and entrusted the games to the 'yongemen off the parysche'.³⁵ Croscombe seems to have favoured something between the two. Assuming that Roger Morris became a warden of the Fullers only after serving an apprenticeship at 21, and that he held office in 1475, the latest year of his birth would be 1453. This would make him 65 or 66 at his death in 1519 and mean that he was 27 or 28 in 1481 when he became churchwarden and presented as Robin Hood. Richard Willes (sometimes referred to as 'att Wyll') represented the Young Men in the same year he was Robin Hood. It is not certain whether membership of this guild terminated at the coming of age. If it did, Willes was possibly 21 when he played Robin Hood, and 31 when he became churchwarden.

Although these crude calculations cannot be applied to the others named, a comparable age range of early to mid twenties can be guessed at for John Hille, John Halse, William Windsor and William Carter from the years their siblings were wardens of the Young Men and Maidens. It is tempting, from these ages, to draw conclusions about physical strength and prowess being criteria for the selection of Robin Hood. This, in turn, might suggest that the revels stressed the athletic and combative aspects of the character familiar from the early plays and ballads.

The uncertainty that surrounds the form of the revels extends to their location. The accounts give no indication of where they took place. On the basis of the large amounts raised by the relatively small population, it seems probable that the majority of Croscombe parishioners, and a substantial number of those from neighbouring villages, attended.³⁶ Perhaps the most likely setting for such a gathering is the field to the north-west of the church known as Fair Place (see the field to the left of the church spire in Plate 1). As the name may reflect, this was the site of the annual fair, at least during the Victorian period.³⁷ There is no way of telling if the field derived its name from the medieval fair granted a charter in 1343, or from its open and pleasing appearance. Nevertheless, the use of the site as a fair ground in the nineteenth century, and the absence of a suitable alternative elsewhere in the village, makes it by far the most likely venue. It is also only a few yards from the church and church house where the food and drink for the ales were probably prepared.

In spite of the lack of detail, it seems clear that the growth of the Robin Hood myth and its broadening appeal during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was, in large part, due to its dissemination through parish games. The relationship was not one-sided. Parishes increased their revenue by associating church-ales with a popular hero. This mutual alliance, and the social and economic interests it served, are revealing in understanding the distribution and orientation of the Robin Hood games.

The evidence for Robin Hood games in England down to 1550 is limited to an

area south of the Wash. Except for isolated instances, it predominates in the Thames Valley and the South West.³⁸ Particularly in respect of the West Country, the late medieval Robin Hood games coincide with an especially active period of church building.³⁹ Responsibility for the nave and tower rested with the parish and funds to pay for them had to be raised over and above the regular income of rents and gifts. In such circumstances, the Robin Hood game, or its equivalent, was a necessary source of extra finance. The games also tend to be found grouped in areas of the greatest growth in wealth during the period. By 1515, for example, Somerset had become the second wealthiest county in England (after Middlesex and excluding London), having moved from a position of 23rd in 1334.⁴⁰ Devon, Cornwall and Surrey also experienced outstanding levels of growth during the period that they held, or came to establish, Robin Hood games. In true Robin Hood fashion, it seems that in these places there was wealth to be redistributed.

More generally, Robin Hood games occur in the southern half of England where parish funds were generated largely by church-ales rather than by relying on the alternatives of patronage by the gentry, bequests or the levying of a church rate.⁴¹ In these circumstances a structure for charitable giving in a convivial atmosphere already existed on which to graft Robin Hood. The obvious similarity between the celebratory character of church-ales and the ballad descriptions of Greenwood hospitality was clearly visible then as now. Equally, it may be significant that the games flourish at a time when the middling or yeoman class, that represent the socially defining culture of Robin Hood, emerge as the source of parish government officers. It is possible that the inspiration for associating church-ales with Robin Hood rested with those who most closely identified with him.

These connections between form and content may be no more than coincidences. What is indisputable, though, is that the institutional principles upon which parish assemblies were founded bear striking resemblance to those underlying the Greenwood. The parish in late medieval England, like the Barnsdale or Sherwood of the ballads, sought to practise the ideals of independence and self-government. It has been described as a territorial unit that 'provided a framework for the solution of problems which affected all members of local society, but transcended their individual powers.'⁴² It was sustained by a system of shared values that emphasised the horizontal ties that bound its members, rather than the vertical line of hierarchy that divided them. In this political respect, the Greenwood mirrored the parish paradigm. In addition, Robin's legendary means of acquiring wealth for redistribution may only have been adopted by the parish at the symbolic level of game, but the charitable ends were practically the same. Robin is for the parishioner, then, not necessarily a conduit

for repressed political feelings but a hero of communalism and autonomy, where the individual derives strength from the mutual support of fellowship. The relationship between myth and parish was similarly reciprocal; it is why it lasted so long. In the games or revels, Robin Hood acquired a presence in performance that sustained and energised the myth. And the parish elected a heroic representative who successfully embodied the values of fraternity and charity. In the event, at Croscombe and elsewhere, these explanations count for nothing without the sheer fun to be had from dressing up in Lincoln green and brandishing a bow and arrows with a few friends.



Plate 1. Crocombe from the South with Fair Place field to the left of the church spire.

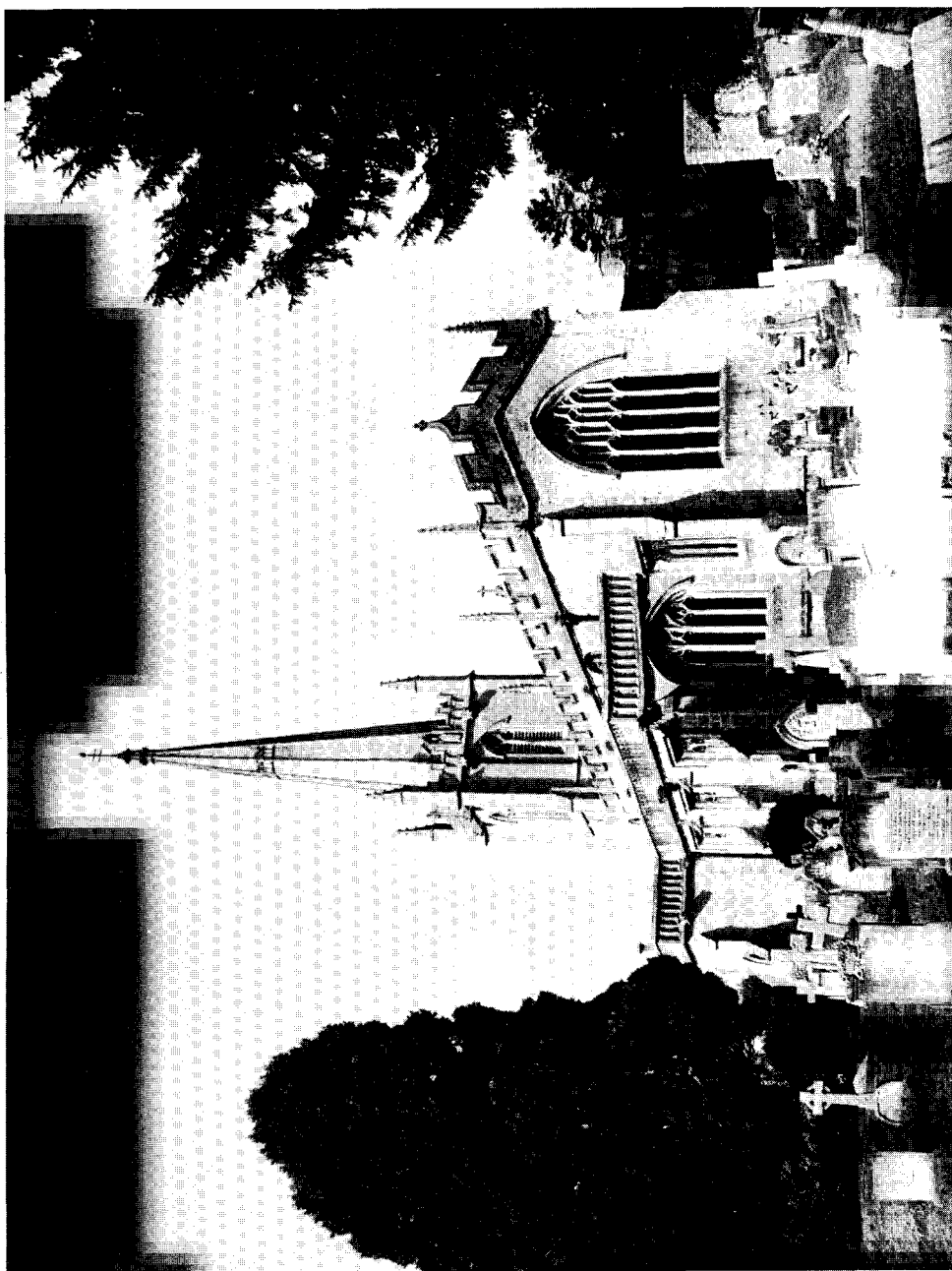


Plate 2. St Mary the Virgin, Crocombe.



Plate 3. The Church House.

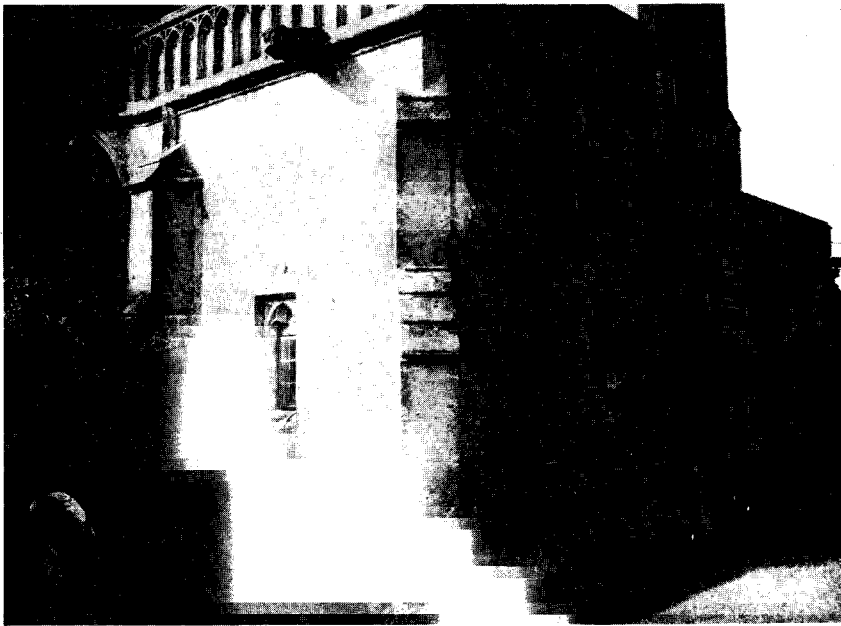


Plate 4. The Chapel of St George.

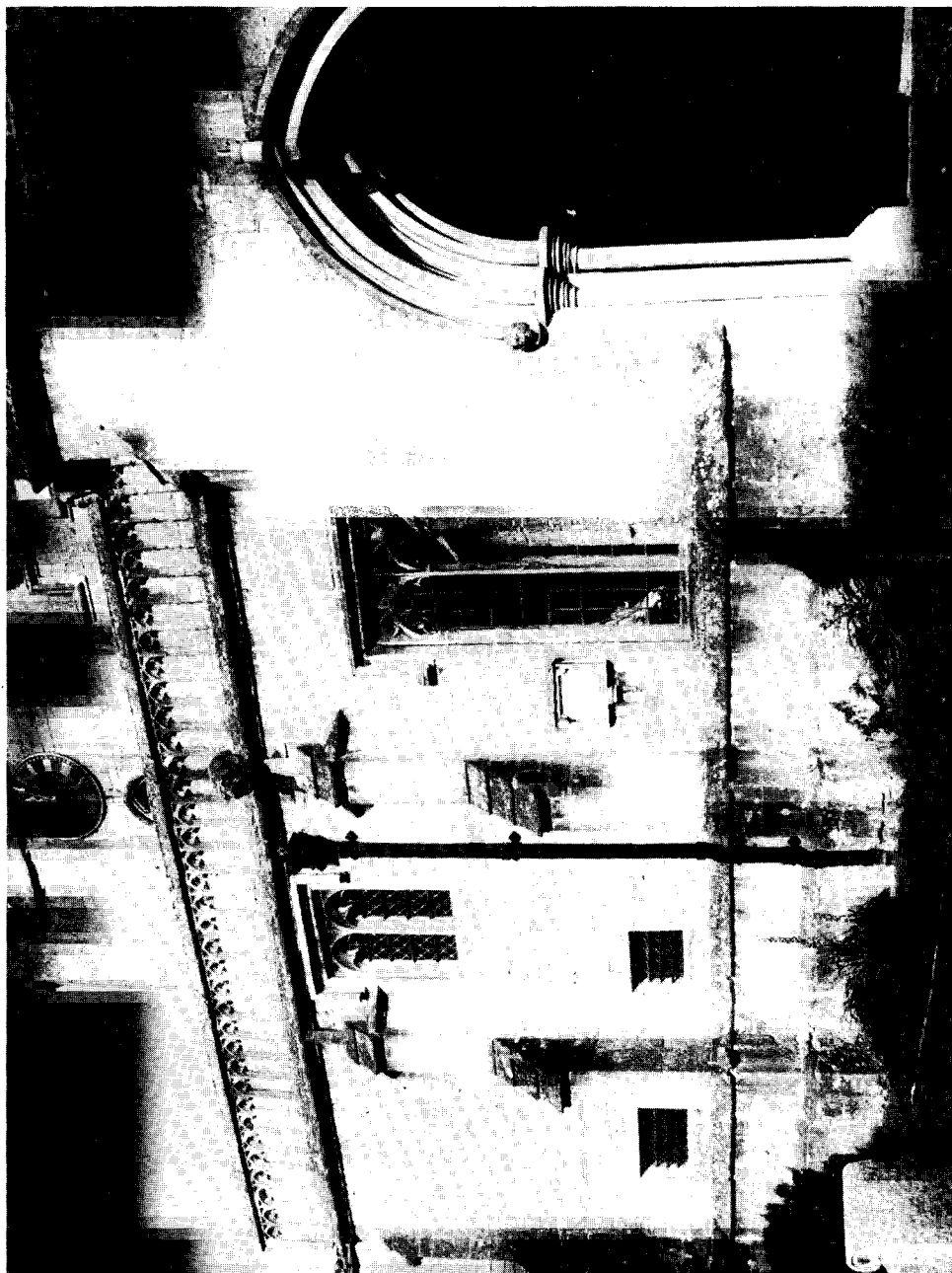


Plate 5. The Treasury and Vestry.

NOTES

¹ *METH* 20 (1999 for 1998), 127-38.

² Meg Twycross and Peter Meredith, 'Editorial', *METH* 1:1 (1979), 1-2.

³ Alan H. Nelson, 'Easter Week Pageants in Valladolid and Medina del Campo', *METH* 1:2 (1979), 62-70.

⁴ John Wasson, 'The *St George* and *Robin Hood* Plays in Devon', *METH* 2:2 (1980), 66-69.

⁵ Meg Twycross, 'Two Maid Marians and a Jewess', *METH* 9:1 (1987), 6-7; W.R. Streitberger, 'Court Performances by the King's Players, 1510-1521', *METH* 14 (1994 for 1992), 95-101.

⁶ Jeffrey L. Singman, *Robin Hood: The Shaping of the Legend* (Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1998), p. 4.

⁷ Stephen Knight, 'Which Way to the Forest? Directions in Robin Hood Studies', in *Robin Hood in Popular Culture: Violence, Transgression, and Justice*, ed. by Thomas Hahn (D. S. Brewer, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2000), pp. 111-28.

⁸ John Wasson (see note 4); James D. Stokes, 'Robin Hood and the Churchwardens in Yeovil', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 3 (1986), 1-25; Sally-Beth MacLean, 'King Games and Robin Hood: Play and Profit at Kingston-upon-Thames', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 29 (1986-87), 85-94; Alexandra F. Johnston, 'Summer Festivals in the Thames Valley Counties', in *Custom, Culture and Community in the later Middle Ages*, ed. by Thomas Pettitt and Leif Søndergaard (Odense University Press, Odense, 1994), pp. 37-57 and, more broadly, 'The Robin Hood of the Records', in *Playing Robin Hood: The Legend as Performance in Five Centuries*, ed. by Lois Potter (University of Delaware Press, Newark, NJ, 1998), pp. 27-44.

⁹ For a representative sample of these views see David Wiles, *The Early Plays of Robin Hood* (D.S. Brewer, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1981), pp. 51-58; Peter Stallybrass, '"Drunk with the Cup of Liberty": Robin Hood, the Carnavalesque and the Rhetoric of Violence in Early Modern England', *Semiotica* 54 (1985), 113-45; Christine Richardson, 'The Figure of Robin Hood within the Carnival Tradition', *REED Newsletter* 22:2 (1997), 18-25; Claire Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods, and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997), pp. 24-49; Peter H. Greenfield, 'The Carnavalesque in the Robin Hood Games and King Ales of Southern England', in *Carnival and the Carnavalesque: The Fool, the Reformer, the Wildman, and Others in Early Modern Theatre*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler and Wim Hüsken (Rodopi, Amsterdam, 1999), pp. 19-28.

¹⁰ The accounts were first published in *Church-Wardens' Accounts of Croscombe*,

Pilton, Yatton, Tintinhull, Morebath, and St Michael's Bath Ranging from A.D. 1349 to 1560, ed. by Edmund Hobhouse, *Somerset Record Society* 4 (1890). The original accounts are now lost.

¹¹ Exeter; *Records of Early English Drama: Devon*, ed. by John M. Wasson (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1986), p. 89: Caister; John Marshall, '"goon in-to Bernysdale": The Trail of the Paston Robin Hood Play', *Leeds Studies in English* 29 (1998), 185-217: Thame; W. Patterson Ellis, 'The Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of St Mary, Thame', *Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archaeological Journal* 19 (1913), 20-24.

¹² For the records of these places see *Records of Early English Drama: Somerset*, ed. by James Stokes, 2 vols (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1996).

¹³ Hobhouse, p. 3. For the history and topography of Croscombe see John Collinson, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset*, 3 vols (R. Cruttwell, Bath, 1791) III, pp. 469-70; John East, *The Village* (J. Chilcott, Bristol, second edition, 1834); William Phelps, *The History and Antiquities of Somersetshire*, 3 vols in 2 (J.B. Nichols, London, 1836, 1839) I, pp. 228-36; Keith Armstrong, *The Story of Croscombe: A Somerset Village* (privately printed for the author by St Andrew's Press, Wells, n.d.).

¹⁴ Population calculations are notoriously difficult for such small parishes at this time. The figures are based on the 220 Croscombe communicants recorded by the Chantry Survey of 1548; *The Survey and Rental of the Chantries, Colleges and Free Chapels, Guilds, Fraternities, Lamps, Lights and Obits in the County of Somerset as Returned in the 2nd Year of King Edward VI: AD 1548*, ed. by Emanuel Green, *Somerset Record Society* 2 (1888), p. 137. Chantry certificates were frequently returned with crudely rounded numbers but this is perhaps less likely in areas of comparatively low population. To calculate the total population from the number of communicants I have used the Wrigley and Schofield formula. This estimates that in the mid sixteenth century 24.9% of the population was below the age of communion. Population totals are derived from multiplying the number of communicants by 100/(100-24.9). For Croscombe this gives a total of 293 in 1548. On such small numbers this can only be regarded as a very approximate figure. The calculation of a population of 178 in 1377 is produced by dividing 293 by the trimean of the ratios between the parish poll-tax returns and the chantries survey (1.645). See E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (Edward Arnold, London, 1981), pp. 563-67.

¹⁵ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls: Henry VI Vol. III: AD 1436-1441* (HMSO, London, 1907), p. 163.

¹⁶ Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: North Somerset and Bristol* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1958), pp. 177-79.

¹⁷ Hobhouse's dating of the accounts is slightly misleading and appears to be

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consistently out by a year. I have followed the realignment proposed by Stokes, *Somerset* II, p. 532.

¹⁸ Records taken from Hobhouse, *Church-Wardens' Accounts*, pp. 1-48. See also Stokes *Somerset* I, pp. 86-90.

¹⁹ The most informative, and the most critical, near contemporary account of games and ales is Philip Stubbs, *The Anatomy of Abuses*, with an introductory note by Peter Davison (Johnson Reprint, New York, 1972).

²⁰ On this point see Stokes, *Somerset* II, p. 897 n. 89.

²¹ For the Kingston upon Thames accounts see Singman, pp. 181-83, Sally-Beth MacLean, 'King Games and Robin Hood', and John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing 1458-1750* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1999), pp. 156-67.

²² On hogging in Somerset see James Stokes, 'The Hoglers: Evidences of an Entertainment Tradition in Eleven Somerset Parishes', *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries* 32 (1986-1990), 807-17 and Stokes, *Somerset* II, pp. 641-708.

²³ Armstrong, pp. 122-23.

²⁴ On the festival see Sally-Beth MacLean, 'Hocktide: A Reassessment of a Popular Pre-Reformation Festival', in *Festive Drama* ed. by Meg Twycross (D.S. Brewer, Cambridge, 1996), pp. 233-41.

²⁵ As will be seen from the photograph, the church house has undergone some, mainly Victorian, alterations since the end of the fifteenth century. On the function of church houses see Patrick Cowley, *The Church Houses: Their Religious and Social Significance* (SPCK, London, 1970).

²⁶ At Glastonbury in 1500 a Robin Hood revel was held by the parish of St John to contribute towards new seats and the restoration of the St George image, and at Tintinhull in 1512 'robyne hoodes All' paid towards the acquisition of new pews. See Katherine French, 'Parochial fund-raising in late medieval Somerset', in *The Parish in English Life 1400-1600*, ed. by Katherine French, Gary G. Gibbs, and Beat A. Kümin (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1997), pp. 115-32 (128).

²⁷ For these associations see Wiles, pp. 19, 56; John Matthews, *Robin Hood: Green Lord of the Wildwood* (Gothic Image, Glastonbury, 1993); Lorraine Kochanske Stock, 'Lords of the Wildwood: The Wild Man, the Green Man, and Robin Hood' in Hahn, *Robin Hood*, pp. 239-49.

²⁸ The wills are to be found in *Somerset Medieval Wills 1383-1500 and 1501-1530*, ed. by F.W. Weaver, *Somerset Record Society* 16 and 19 (1901 and 1903). The patronage of Croscombe incumbents in *Somerset Incumbents*, ed. by Frederic William Weaver (privately printed, Bristol, 1889), pp. 76-77.

²⁹ See particularly the evidence from Yeovil in Stokes, 'Robin Hood'.

³⁰ William Branch served for 25 years between 1479/80 and 1507/8 and Edward Bolle, continuously, from 1507/8 to 1532/3.

³¹ On the professional status of churchwardens see Beat Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish c.1400-1560* (Scolar Press, Aldershot, 1996), pp. 37-39.

³² According to Heather Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: An Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989), p. 41, fullers were the most likely of textile artisans to become entrepreneurs. She is speaking specifically of Winchester and Colchester but Morris' elevation suggests that this might also be the case in some rural areas. It is not possible to tell from the 1481/2 account whether Roger Morris represented Robin Hood or Little John. His listing after John Halse may suggest the latter. Whichever part he played, the question of the age and status of the presenters is germane to both roles.

³³ *Somerset Medieval Wills 1501-1530*, p. 205.

³⁴ Stokes, 'Robin Hood', 4.

³⁵ Singman, p. 173.

³⁶ There were 220 Croscombe communicants in 1548. If a similar number attended the Robin Hood revel in 1526, they contributed the equivalent of almost 4½d per head. This might suggest that the participants were drawn from a wider constituency than the village.

³⁷ Armstrong, p. 123. The field is described as 'Fair Place' and designated 'pasture' in the Croscombe Tithe Map c.1840; SRO D/D/RT Croscombe A (Award List) and M (Map).

³⁸ See Singman, pp. 71-76, for a useful series of chronological maps.

³⁹ Colin Platt, *The Parish Churches of Medieval England* (Secker and Warburg, London, 1981), p. 97.

⁴⁰ R.S. Schofield, 'The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1334-1649', in *Essays in Quantitative Economic History*, ed. by Roderick Floud (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1974), pp. 79-106 (97).

⁴¹ According to Judith M. Bennett, 'Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England' *Past and Present* 134 (1992), 19-41 (34 n.40) there is no firm evidence for church-ales further north than Derbyshire.

⁴² Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, p. 260.

Carved and Spoken Words: the Angelic Salutation, The Mary Play and South Walsham Church, Norfolk

Peter Meredith

As things stand at the moment, it is not possible to 'place' the N.town plays with any greater precision than 'East Anglia, most probably Norfolk'.¹ The work of *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English*² has placed the scribe in the south of the county in the Thetford area, more precisely somewhere near East Harling.³ Despite the fact that *LALME* aims not to place a text but the scribe who wrote it, it is inevitable that the placing of the scribe will rub off on the text he has written. There is a general feeling, therefore, that the N.town plays are probably from somewhere in the East Harling/Thetford area. As far as records are concerned, there is no clear evidence from there that would specifically point to the kinds of play represented by the N.town manuscript, but, as with many other small country places, the records are by no means extensive. The now-missing East Harling church-wardens' accounts refer to 'an Interlude at the Cherch gate' in 1452 and to the 'Games' from Lopham and Garboldisham in 1457, and from Kenninghall in 1463 and 1467.⁴ Judging from the use of the word in records from small villages elsewhere in Norfolk, 'games' are as likely (if not more likely) to be sports and general entertainments, or even processions, as any kind of formal drama. The 'Interlude' could, I suppose, refer to the *Mary Play*, the *Purification* or the *Assumption* but probably not to anything on a larger scale.⁵ Thetford is at first sight a much more promising place. It was already an ancient town by the fifteenth century. There was a castle (demolished in 1173); there had been an Anglo-Saxon cathedral, and, by the fifteenth century, there were twenty parish churches, and dominating the town was a large and wealthy Cluniac Priory. Fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century evidence for entertainment survives, but unfortunately only from the Priory. There are relevant records from 1496 until 1540, though again there is nothing that looks obviously like any of the N.town plays. But what would the N.town plays look like in a series of priory accounts?

There are *jucelararis*, 'Menstrelles' and 'pleyerers', *Mimis* and *lusoribus*, commanding fees of between xij^d (1499/1500) and ix^s (1496/7); there are more 'games', a 'gild', a 'procession' and, most promisingly at first sight, a 'ludus' – but worth only xij^d, and probably never at Thetford anyway.⁶ As at East Harling, local places appear, but there are others, especially (but not only) the waits, from quite a distance.

But even if the scribe of the N.town manuscript was originally from that area, scribes move about, especially when there is a commercial or social reason for doing so, as *LALME* readily admits; and, besides, they are not the only kind of evidence. The EDAM series of volumes on the surviving and recorded art of individual cities and counties partly stems from the idea that local connections may exist between the media of art and drama, and that possibilities of this kind are worth investigating.⁷ The idea of the 'discourse community' seems to me to be useful here. I am not using it simply to refer to a language community but to a community created by shared attitudes (whether in opposition, agreement or indifference) and by shared experience, by familiarity with a local landscape (the built environment as well as the natural and agricultural) and with local social conditions. 'Discourse' is the right word because it implies communication and reception; that what is spoken, written, carved or painted will be presented and understood in a particular local way.⁸ A 'discourse community' is, however, a difficult thing to establish, especially from the distant viewpoint of the twenty-first century. How do you define its borders? Or what is part of the 'discourse'? What one person saw at the time, may be what another was blind to; what was of obvious importance to one, was insignificant to another. And how do we interpret the evidence? Is the plague inscription in Acle church in Norfolk⁹ an expression of the deeply-felt grief of a community, or is it a sign of the ingenuity and Latinity of the parish priest, or just the opportunity for some moralising? Would the 'community' even have been aware of it, placed as it is on the north wall of the chancel? What we can know is that it existed in Acle in the fifteenth century and that in that same century Acle was in what one scholar believes to have been a region of endemic disease and at times a 'crisis-mortality zone'.¹⁰ Despite the difficulties, it is one such possible discourse community that I want to start piecing together here. It involves the N.town *Mary Play*, the village of South Walsham, and the nearby small town of Acle.

South Walsham (TG 365131)¹¹ might appear at present a little non-descript. It has no obvious centre; it lies along what is now a minor road from Norwich to Great Yarmouth, and suffers a bit from it. Almost five kilometres to

The Mary Play and South Walsham Church

the south-east is Acle (TG 401102) which suffers more, being drawn and quartered by roads, though the main Norwich-to-Yarmouth road now by-passes the centre. If you went to Norfolk in search of great churches or of Arthur Ransome or simply of peace and quiet, you would probably not stop at either. Also, both lie just outside the tourist orbit of the Broads, even though South Walsham possesses a broad of its own. About two kilometres to the north of Walsham is Ranworth, which in site and broad and church fittings and tourist provision easily outdoes both Acle and South Walsham. Not that either of them is lacking in interest. Acle has a large church, St Edmund's, a very elaborate fifteenth-century font, a 'tall and exceptionally good' screen (as Pevsner says), the already-mentioned and remarkable Latin plague inscription painted on the north wall of the chancel, and a fifteenth-century porch with donors carved in the left-hand spandrel of the arch.¹² Walsham has a pretty painted screen (not Pevsner this time) with an inscription, a fifteenth-century porch with an Annunciation in the spandrels of the arch and a Coronation of the Virgin in a niche above, and a series of fifteenth-century bench-ends with carved poppyheads. Walsham is also unusual though not unique in possessing two churches in one churchyard, St Mary and the larger St Lawrence. The latter was, however, burnt out in 1927, and only an extended chancel now survives. The nave is a herb garden and the tower a pile of rubble.¹³

In the fifteenth century, South Walsham and Acle were in the same arch-deaconry (Norwich), the same deanery (Blofield) and the same hundred (Walsham), but the parishes were not adjacent. Acle was the local market town.¹⁴ Both places had religious institutions associated with them: Acle, the Augustinian Priory of Weybridge, and South Walsham, the Benedictine Abbey of St Benet of Hulme. All the evidence suggests that St Benet's maintained a regular community of a little over twenty monks throughout its existence, but Weybridge Priory apparently never had more than four canons, and latterly only two.¹⁵ Weybridge Priory appears to have been just outside Acle, near the bridge over the river Bure on the road to Yarmouth, but as an Augustinian house, and a very small one, it was closely associated with the town. It possessed a guild of St Anne.¹⁶ St Benet's was about three kilometres to the north-east of Walsham, across the river Bure. It owned property in Walsham and held a manor court there, but as a flourishing Benedictine abbey it was largely self-contained, besides which its outside associations were to the north and east rather than to the west and south. Sir John Fastolf, who was a benefactor of the abbey, and his wife, Millicent Scrope, were buried there in the south aisle of the chancel, which he had built as a chapel,

probably intending it as the centre-piece of the college which it was his intention to found.¹⁷ There was possibly a ferry across the river at St Benet's, however, linking it with its possessions in Walsham, as there certainly was at a later date. South Walsham lies about fourteen kilometres east of Norwich; between is Mousehold heath, which in the fifteenth century was one of the largest areas of heathland in Norfolk and had a somewhat unsavoury reputation.

Acle, of course, was also the home of Robert Reynes. His so-called commonplace book contains the heterogeneous contents of a human life; fortunately a life which touched on literature and drama as well as on business and family affairs, so that not only did he ensure the survival of two excerpts from plays of which we should otherwise know nothing, but he also allows us a view of the activities and beliefs of one member of a fifteenth-century audience – or, if that is jumping too much to conclusions, at the very least to glimpse an individual with some known dramatic connections.¹⁸ Various attempts have been made to characterise Reynes. Cameron Louis in the introduction to his edition gives the fullest account. He sees Reynes as grammar- or business-school trained,¹⁹ a practiced scribe if not a fluent Latinist, acting perhaps as reeve for the lord of the manor, the Abbot of Tintern, as well as a church-warden. It is worth saying also that Reynes's legal documents are full of references to Norwich, and his book includes two routes to Tintern Abbey, via Oxford or via London (with the address of the Abbot of Tintern's inn in London, as well), perhaps implying that it would be wrong to see him as Acle-bound. Louis is less concerned with Reynes's devotional side. This is dealt with to some extent by Eamon Duffy, who uses Reynes as his sample lower-end-of-the-social-scale Christian.²⁰ For Duffy, he is 'as near as one is likely to get to the typical representative of the class of men who became churchwardens in the parishes of late fifteenth-century England', and 'he was clearly far less sophisticated and far less well educated than either Idley or the compilers of [Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38]' (p. 71). His demonstration of this consists largely in listing the contents of Reynes's book. But it is important to remember that it is not a commonplace book in the later understanding of the term²¹ or a book of instruction for others; it is a personal memorandum book – a repository of what he didn't want forgotten, either because it was interesting or important, or because it might or would come in useful in the future. It is easy to be critical of Reynes for not getting his Latin quite right²² or for jotting down charms instead of prayers,²³ but he was as far as we know doing it for his own benefit or as an *aide-mémoire* for his community. Though revealing, it is not perhaps remarkable that ordinary members of a small-town

community in rural Norfolk should have access to such varied resources; officials of religious guilds might well have possessed literature appropriate to their chosen dedicatees, such as a full-scale life of St Anne; manorial men of affairs must have had the means of knowing assizes of bread and ale, the processes involved in swearing allegiance, or legal formularies for such matters as the transferring of land. What is remarkable is that it is one man's range, and that he had either intellectual curiosity enough to want to keep this material himself or social responsibility enough to want to keep it for his community, *and* the skill and diligence to make a record of it. But it isn't because of the simple existence of his book that he doesn't fit my idea of a typical church-warden. How many church-wardens possessed a Cisio-Janus (120),²⁴ or were interested in listing all the archbishoprics of the world (119)? How many made notes about the reredos of the altar of their local shrine (116c), or listed the nine orders of angels (115) or what Louis calls 'Major Events in the History of the World' (94)? And interestingly enough his book reflects, both in a general and in a detailed way, theological and devotional matters that also interested the writer and the scribe of the N.town plays (in particular the *Mary Play*): the lineage of Mary and Anne (46-48), puns on *Ave* (99), Our Lady's Psalter (90), the names of the knights who watched the sepulchre (78). The N.town plays are not, like many French plays, monuments of theological learning; they are repositories of history and legend, fun, knowledge of affairs, serious devotion. One might argue that there's not much fun in Reynes's book; that may be the nature of memorandum books. There is certainly a bit of everything else.

South Walsham can claim no-one to match Reynes, but it can offer something which parallels the kind of devotional world which appears in his book. St Mary's church contains a very full, possibly complete, set of fifteenth-century bench-ends (fig. 1), though they are not in the same decorative class as, for example, those at Wiggenhall St Mary, Salle or Fressingfield, over the border in Suffolk.²⁵ There are two beautifully carved arm-rest figures surviving of the four which once existed (though both are rather damaged), but the main interest of the bench-ends lies in their subject matter not in the beauty of their carving. A number of the poppyheads carry the text of the *Ave Maria* carved on shields. It is divided up as follows: (1) *Ave / Maria* (2) *gratia / plena* (3) *dominus / tecum* (4) *benedic'ta tu* (5) *in mulieribus* (fig. 2a) (6) *et benedictus* (fig. 2b) (7) *Amen* (below which, contained within the shield, is a *Maria* monogram). Of these, five are undamaged: *dominus tecum*, *in mulieribus*, *et benedictus*, *benedicta tu* and *Amen*. *Ave Maria* is just discernible, and *gratia plena* somewhat worn. Because

both *et benedictus* and *Amen* exist there can be little doubt that *fructus ventris tui Iesus* was also once present.²⁶ The phrase is unlikely to have appeared on one shield. It has twenty-two letters in four words as opposed to the longest phrase contained on a single shield, twelve in two words. Even with abbreviation this is too long, and it is likely that the phrase was divided into *fructus ventris* and *tui Iesus*. As it happens, there are two further shields, whose letters have been cut away, which could contain the missing phrases. Some letter shapes are just discernible, and it seems to me that, to say the least, they are not inconsistent with the missing words.²⁷

It is not possible to know for sure what the original layout of the *Ave* was. The phrases now appear in order (with one exception) down the central nave aisle of the church going from east to west and then back again, west to east, but with varying gaps between them (fig. 3). *Ave Maria* is on the easternmost pew on the south side of the nave aisle [C1], and is immediately followed by *gratia plena* on the next pew to the west [C2]. There is then a gap of one pew between each of the next two phrases, *dominus tecum* [C4] and *benedicta tu* [C6]. The next phrase, *in mulieribus*, is nine pews further on: that is six to the back of the church on the south side and three pews forward again from the back on the north side of the nave aisle [D10]. It is followed by *et benedictus* two pews further on towards the east [D8]. One of the defaced shields, ?*fructus ventris*, then follows two pews on again [D6], and *Amen* four pews on [D2], across the aisle from *gratia plena*. These phrases, therefore, are in the order of the *Ave*. If it is part of the group, the exception to the order is the defaced shield on the south side of the north aisle, two pews from the west end [E11]. If it contains the words ?*tui Iesus*, as I think it does, it is clearly out of order. It is odd that one defaced shield appears to be in the right place and the other not. If the nineteenth-century restorers were aware of the existence of the *Ave*, as they must have been, it is strange that they didn't see the significance for the missing phrase of the second defaced shield. Structurally these bench-ends are interchangeable, so there would be no difficulty in bringing the one facing north into a position facing south, even though it would mean turning it 180°. And in fact, by moving this defaced shield from its present position in the north aisle to one in the central nave aisle [D4], opposite *dominus tecum*, it would be brought back into its 'correct' place in the *Ave* (fig. 4).

Assuming the earlier existence of the missing phrases, then, the *Ave* takes up nine bench-ends. Is it possible that these originally flanked the pews of a chapel of Our Lady or of the Annunciation? The church guide draws attention to the existence of a Lady Chapel in the south aisle; but a position in the south aisle

would not accommodate the bench-ends which must face south (see below) since the south ends of the relevant benches are attached to the wall. Given that the church is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, it is entirely appropriate that they should occupy the central position, as to some extent they still do, in the nave of the church.

At present there are in all sixty-eight fifteenth-century bench-ends, of which only twenty-one have letter-carving on the poppyheads, so seemingly the difficulties of arranging them in their original order are great. Fortunately, however, one group can be fixed. The bench-ends with arm-rests can face only one way. There are two south-facing ends and two north-facing ones. This suggests that they stood at either end of two pews. Unlike all the others, they have signs of what appear to be grooves cut into them for backs, which would have the effect of joining them in pairs. One of the north-facing ends has the shield with *gratia plena* on it [C2], one of the south-facing ones, *Amen-Maria* [D2]. They at present face each other across the central nave aisle, and this could well have been their original position. At the south end of the *gratia-plena* pew is a shield with an R [B2]; at the north end of the *Amen* pew is a poppyhead with no further decoration [E2]. The arm-rests have carvings on them but as previously mentioned one has been slightly and one seriously damaged, one has been entirely cut away, and one almost so. The one that survives almost intact is that at the north end of the north pew [E2], otherwise decorated with a simple poppyhead. Its subject is a woman kneeling at a prayer-stool with her beads in her hand, while what appears to be another female figure, also kneeling, leans over her right shoulder almost enveloping her (fig. 5a and b). The carving on the arm-rest at the south end of the pew (the bench-end with the *Amen* shield [D2]) has been completely cut away. Opposite it, at the north end of the south pew (the *gratia-plena* bench-end [C2]), the figure on the arm-rest has been cut away but a prayer stool survives and on it the hands of the figure (fig. 5c). Sufficient of the knees and feet also survives to show that it was a male figure. The damaged but nearly complete carving, at the south end of the south pew (R bench-end [B2]), is of a man kneeling alone apparently at a prayer stool (fig. 5d). Two conclusions can be drawn from this. Given the common division of men from women during medieval church services, it seems more than a possibility that the southern pew was for men and the northern for women; indeed, that the northern side of the church was the women's side and the southern the men's.²⁸ More importantly, the presence of this fixed point for the bench-ends with arm-rests, two of which contain *Ave-Maria* shields, establishes the position of the *Ave Maria* as a whole in

the nave (fig. 4). This positioning perhaps suggests parish devotion rather than a separate guild, since it is clearly central to the arrangement of the whole church. What is not so clear is why the words of the *Ave* are organised in this particular way. It is possible that they were intended to link the male and female members of the congregation across the aisle, or, perhaps less likely, that they were an attempt to link just the central part of the church together in a circuit of belief. Or that the power of devotion was seen as emanating out from the centre like ripples in a stone-disturbed pool, ultimately including those seated in the aisles. Whatever the reason behind it, this layout of pews indicates the prominence being given to a verbal sign of Mary.²⁹

There are bench-ends elsewhere which contain text or are wholly made up of it, but they are not common.³⁰ The only others I know which contain the text of a prayer are again *Ave-Maria* ones, from Trent in Dorset and almost certainly of the early sixteenth century.³¹ In this case it is an abbreviated form of the prayer, with the words arbitrarily dismembered, and it is contained in four bench-ends (but duplicated, so that there are two sets): (1) *AVE MARIA G-*; (2) *RATIA PLE-* (fig. 6); (3) *NA doMI-*; (4) *NUS TECVM AMEN*. Perhaps associated with the *Ave Maria* (and also duplicated) is a bench-end design of monograms of *Iesus* and *Maria*, one above the other. The first *Ave-Maria* set is laid out consecutively on the south side of the nave aisle. It is followed by the second set which goes (out of order) to the west end of the church and comes back down the north side of the aisle but is interrupted by a patterned bench-end and a monogram one. The second set looks like a later close copy. The significance of the sixteenth-century set is unknown but its form makes it an interesting contrast with the treatment of the *Ave* at South Walsham. The nave of the church at Trent was extended in the nineteenth century, but even given its smaller dimensions there are not enough *Ave-Maria* bench-ends to make anything other than a small isolated group. The pews on the south side are divided into two blocks by the entrance passage from the south porch doorway. In the eastern block there are at present five pews. If this had been so in the early sixteenth century, it is possible that the *Ave Maria* together with the *Iesus/Maria* monogram bench-ends created a separate 'guild' space. The casualness with which the text is treated, however, perhaps tells against this. Whatever the earlier use of these bench-ends, it clearly represents a charming but less sophisticated treatment than that at South Walsham.

Verbal signs are, of course, not uncommon in medieval art, nor is simple text. The latter is, in the later Middle Ages in England, taking on a far more central role in decoration. It had for a long time been used in art for labelling (in

explanatory scrolls, for example), for key elements of dialogue (like the angelic salutation and Mary's reply), and in diagrams, but its decorative function had been minimal except in display lettering.³² Even there it is the letters rather than the text which are central. But in the fifteenth century, text takes on a new importance as a decorative motif, and there is far more of it. Something like the Sherborne Missal³³ already represents an enormous increase in the volume of ancillary text; the margins are never silent. Much of this ancillary text in the missal is labelling or information panels, but by no means all. Characters are constantly addressing God in prayer or each other in conversation. Down the left hand border of p. 30, for example, a scroll winds with the words of the angel to Joseph (Matthew 1. 20-21), assuring him of the purity of Mary's pregnancy: *Joseph fili dauid nolite timere accipere Mariam coniugem tuam Quod in ea natum est de spiritu sancto est*. It ends in the initial H of the opening of the Mass for Christmas Eve, where the angel leans over Joseph, lying in bed, with the words: *Pariet autem filium et vocabis no[m]en eius Iesum* (Backhouse, p. 10). At the foot of page 581, God and Moses converse over the burning bush, and next to them John the Baptist speaks of and to his lamb (Backhouse, p. 62). The border itself speaks to Christ on behalf of the Centurion (John 4. 48-49) on page 347: *Domine descende priusquam moriatur filius meus* (Backhouse, p. 38). This is also the case with many memorial brasses, where text curls from the mouths of those commemorated. In sculpture, something different appears in a work like the roof of the Divinity School at Oxford. There, in the form of rebuses, prayers, mottoes, initials, monograms, and simple statements, text almost dominates the decorative pattern. The middle section of the third (central) bay is, for example, threaded through with words: 'ladi help', 'Jhc mercy', 'Jhc [b]e mi [s]ped', parts of which the north and south sections repeat, also adding further text: 'Da gloriam deo tuo', 'Edwardus rex Quartus'.³⁴ Tiles from the Malvern tiler also speak: in prayer, with the *Ave* for example, or at greater moral length, taking up a whole tile, in warning of the duplicity of executors.³⁵ The line of letters in Gazeley church, Suffolk, probably serving to commemorate donors and benefactors, is carved in such a way as to create a spectacular decorative frieze along the back of the pew.³⁶ In a century when text becomes a burning issue,³⁷ it also becomes at times a dominant decorative motif.

Words carved in wood or stone stand in a curious relationship with everyday use. They are no longer thoughts in the head or transient breaths of air as even the most beautifully spoken words are, but have a material form, a fixed three-dimensional shape and permanence, potentially inert but also potentially

inflammatory. Most carved words or letters are proprietorial, informational or commemorative. The carved initials at Walsham are probably one or more of these. But what of the *Maria* monogram? Is it inert? Has it the lifelessness of over-repeated prayer, or the vigour of the *Cloud of Unknowing's* single word cries?³⁸ It looks more like celebration. The questions raise themselves even more clearly in the case of the carved *Ave*. As has been already suggested, it is unusual to find a text carved sectionally on a series of poppyheads. Is it commemoration or celebration or just fulfilling the practical purpose of marking out the pews of members of a guild; or is it intended to be read? It is unlikely that we shall ever know how the words were perceived, or even whether they were after the first year or so, but it would certainly be wrong to close off the possibilities. It is even possible that the verbal sign becomes visual as it begins and ends at the east end of the nave and consequently circles back on itself, creating something of the effect of a string of beads. Some may have used it in this way. For others the carved words may simple have been a sign of status, for themselves or for the church; for others still, a work of craftsmanship; for some invisible, for others abomination.

In this century, too, the material form of the written word is given complicated theatrical life. With his careful writing of *Memento homo quod cinis es et in cinerem reverteris* Mankind gives objective reality to his commitment to a particular mode of behaviour.³⁹ But the material text, the folded paper, transforms the appearance of the commitment into a protective charm – the badge he wears on his breast. *Memento homo*, as formal commitment and as talisman, has physical form; the piece of paper with its ink is an object in its own right carrying both elements. Mankind's text is a highly emotionally charged one, potentially carrying his hope of salvation. Of a very different kind, Pilate's simulated writing of his public statement, his 'tabyl', in N.town *Passion II* brings text into theatrical prominence again.⁴⁰ Mankind's writing, though it has material form, is private. It is not public utterance like Pilate's or like the Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards forced on Parliament by being nailed to the doors of Westminster Hall,⁴¹ but it is folded and put away. Or rather within the world of the play it is private; for the audience it has been made public. And in that way it is more like the public statement of Pilate or the Lollards. Are the kinds of statement that the bench-ends make like any of these?

The Divinity School with its 'text' bosses, Mankind with his paper, the brasses with their appeals, the Missal with its scrolls, the bench-ends with their prayer, the Lollards with their Twelve Conclusions, even Reynes with his book,

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are all elements in an explosion of text. In this way they are part of a very much larger 'discourse community'. But what of the smaller one that centres on the *Mary Play*? Do Reynes's book, the bench-ends and the *Mary Play* fit into any kind of common discourse? In a general sense they obviously do, but to make a case for a more limited accessibility there needs to be detailed similarity. There are a number of details which bring Reynes's book and the N.town *Mary Play* together, most strikingly those related to the genealogy of Mary. That both should be interested in Mary's parents and relations is a point of similarity but not an uncommon one. The extended holy family is a common subject of fifteenth-century painting.⁴² But elements of the N.town genealogies and Reynes's are surprisingly alike: forms of the less common 'Nasaphat' occur as the name of Anne's mother in both (Reynes: (46) l. 3 'Nasabath'; (47) 'Nazaphat'; (48) l. 4 'Nasaphat'; *Mary Play*, p. 87); both have forms of the tag:

Est tuus Anna pater Izakar, Nazaphat tua mater (Reynes)

Est Ysakar Anne pater; Melophat sic quoque mater vel Nasaphat
(N.town);

both use the name 'Asmaria' for Joachim's mother (Reynes: (48), l. 2; *Mary Play*, p. 87); for the relations of Elizabeth, both, with minor spelling variations, have: 'Eliud, Eminen, filia, Beatus Geruasius Episcopus ' (Reynes: (46) margin to l. 19, (48), l. 12; *Mary Play*, p. 87). The last of these is the most interesting in that not only do both have exactly the same names but also they repeat the error 'Geruasius' for 'Servatius'.⁴³ These are small details but coming together with the broader similarities they seem to me to make the beginnings of a case.

There is one other most tantalising piece of evidence from South Walsham church, this time a visual rather than a verbal sign. On the south porch is a representation of the Annunciation. It fills the spandrels of the arch on either side of the doorway (fig. 7a). On the right, as you face the entrance from the outside, is Gabriel, his right leg bent and his knee braced against the arch, his left leg stretched out straight, the long toe of his sabatoun curled up to fit the acute angle in which he stands. He is in feathered armour and his wings echo the shape of the spandrel. Over his left shoulder he carries a sceptre now largely broken away. His hair sticks out in a typically fifteenth-century angelic way and behind his head is a large halo. In front of the right wing, flung out towards Mary, is the scroll of his greeting. On the left-hand side of the arch Mary kneels at a small *prie-dieu* from which what remains of the scroll, presumably of her response, rises. Framing her

head is a sun-burst halo. Behind her, filling the left-hand side of the spandrel, is a huge lily stem rising from a pot. Her hands were probably originally raised in prayer or response to Gabriel's message, but they are now broken off. The rest of the space is filled by a great sun-burst, which extends to Mary's head and shoulder, emanating from two small figures rising out of tiered rings of cloud in the top right corner (fig. 7b). The presence of two figures, rather than one, turns what is a fairly run-of-the-mill presentation of the scene into something very much more unusual.

A number of questions arise from this, but the most important for my purposes is: if the two tiny figures are persons of the Trinity, as I assume they are, where is the third? Annunciations abound with the figure of God the Father in heaven and a ray of light descending from him to Mary. Often these elements are accompanied by a dove or a figure of a small child descending the ray, or both. The presence of God the Father or of the dove does not lead to the expectation of another figure, but the presence of two nearly identical figures, clearly in or from heaven, does. Do the broken hands of the Virgin conceal the fact that there was once a dove there? Was it destroyed in some iconoclastic attack, or is it simply that it was the most vulnerable part? Or if there was never a third 'person' visible was that because the child was already in Mary's womb? If so, how was that indicated? Or is the scroll not Mary's reply but the continuation and reality of the angelic greeting, the Word? I don't know of another Annunciation quite like this one, and so can adduce no parallels that might explain it.⁴⁴

With the third person present, I would be reminded instantly of the *Mary Play* Annunciation. Gabriel has delivered his message but the persons of the Trinity are the fulfilment of that message, or, perhaps better, are that message. Hence their position between the 'bemys'. One behind the other, they embody the fact that the incarnation is the work of the whole Trinity:

Here þe Holy Gost discendit with thre bemys to Our Lady,
the Sone of þe Godhed nest with thre bemys to þe Holy Gost,
the Fadyr godly with thre bemys to þe Sone, and so entre all
thre to here bosom . . . (*Mary Play*, l. 1355sd)

The tiny figures at South Walsham do not descend with three 'bemys' one after the other, to each other, and finally to Mary, and for some that will make them too unlike to be worth considering further. But given the space available to the carver, a reasonable attempt is made to suggest the Trinity in the identity of the figures,

and its creative power in the traditional shafts of the sun-burst. If only there were a third figure. I can only say that at the moment I have nothing further to offer. I have stared at the original carving and at my own photographs and can think of no obvious solution to the missing person. The only obviously missing parts are Mary's hands. There is damage to her face, to the prie-dieu, and possibly to the scroll, but no obvious place where another figure could have been. So I am left with the lame conclusion that here is an unusual iconography of the Annunciation. What would a member of my discourse community have seen? Or in other words, are both play and carving sufficiently unusual and yet sufficiently related to be part of the same way of seeing?

A similar question might be asked about the bench-ends. Allowing for the fact that the *Ave* is one of the commonest forms of devotion, does the unusualness of the bench-ends and the unusualness of an English play centred on the *Ave* offer any grounds for seeing them as products of the same discourse community? The obvious problem is of knowing how uncommon these two manifestations of interest in the *Ave* were. So much has been lost that it is impossible to be sure. Nevertheless it is worth bearing in mind that the play is text-oriented;⁴⁵ most clearly, but not only, in the conclusion spoken by Contemplacio as he works through the *Ave Maria*, temporal layer by layer:

How þe *Aue* was mad, here is lernyd vs:
Pe aungel seyð: *Ave gracia plena dominus tecum*
Benedicta tu in mulieribus;
Elyzabeth seyð: *et benedictus*
Fructus uentris tui; thus þe Chirch addyd *Maria* and *Jhesus* her.
(*Mary Play*, ll. 1562-66)

Clearly it cannot be said that the bench-ends are teaching the structure of the *Ave*, as Contemplacio is, but they are showing the same concern with its text and putting that text at the centre of devotion. Taken with the arm-rest figures, they also appear to be emphasising the seriousness of prayer; something which the play certainly does address, though it is not its central theme:

Ther is not [*nothing*] may profyte but prayour to 3our presens
With prayorys prostrat byfore þi person I wepe;
[Joachim to God] (ll. 161-62)
God is plesyd with þin helmes [*alms*] and hath herd þi prayere

[Angel to Joachim] (l. 176)

God hath herd þi preyour and þi wepynge.

[Angel to Anne] (l. 220)

For with prayzer [come] grace and mercy

[Bishop to Mary] (l. 473)

For be prayour grett knowlech men recure;

[Minister to bishop] (l. 699)

Thy prayour is herd to hyȝ hevyn halle

[Angel to bishop] (l. 713)

The overall impression in the action of the play is of God's readiness to respond to prayer; and in what is said of prayer the overwhelming impression is of its crucial importance: prayer is the prompter of mercy (the emended line 473); prayer produces knowledge in a dilemma (l. 699); God responds only to prayer (l. 166). Prayer is also the saying of the psalms, and Mary lists the varied benefits that come from that (ll. 1010-25). So that though what the play is trying to do above all is to give the *Ave* emotional depth by reinstating an understanding of the human and divine context of the words (something which does not obviously concern the designers of the bench-ends), it has also as a running theme through the first part, the importance and power of prayer generally. This theme culminates at the very centre of the action of the play, the moment of the Annunciation, when it is to prayer that God responds when he first (in terms of human time) contemplates the saving of mankind (ll. 1115-18). Unlike the textual bench-ends or the textually-oriented play, this concern with prayer is not unusual, but it does provide a context of similarity for bench-end texts and for play. The *Ave* of the bench-ends is enclosed by praying figures, as, it might be said, the *Ave* of the play is.

Where does this leave the relationship between play and place? I was first attracted to *Acle* by the clear similarities that exist, both generally and in detail, between the *N.town* plays and Reynes's book, which despite its reaching out to the world beyond *Acle* remains very much a part of that place. General concerns and detail are most apparent in the sections dealing with the early life of Mary. I was next struck by the unusualness of the *Ave-Maria* bench-ends at South Walsham St Mary's, and by their concern with the significance of the text of the prayer to the exclusion of almost all other decoration. Again there seemed to be here a connection in approach and spirit between play and place. Finally, (admittedly to a mind ready to be convinced) the specific oddness of the

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Annunciation in the spandrels of the porch arch at St Mary's, the presence of two heavenly figures approaching Mary at the moment of the angel's greeting, seemed to spring out of the way of thinking that produced the *Mary Play* staging of that moment of the Annunciation. And, (it has to be said, to my delighted surprise) Acle was just down the road. None of these similarities is precise, but (perhaps more naturally) all seem to fit together and to expand on and grow out of each other in a way that might be expected in a community.

This, of course, leaves out the ultimate question; where were they performed? *LALME* quite properly restricts its statements about manuscripts to the provenance of scribes. I, in turn, can only say that there seems to me to be a cluster of evidence for a particular way of seeing and thinking about the *Ave Maria* and the Annunciation in this area. It doesn't yet place the play(s). I have not found a 'playing-place', let alone an author. My 'fit technique' is not in any way comparable to that of *LALME*. But it does seem to me that there is value in investigating (very carefully) apparent discourse communities whose thinking and seeing echo that of a play.

To give the last (fanciful) word to Robert Reynes. On the Thursday before Lady Day, 1465, the new Abbot of Tintern made his first official visit to his manor of Acle. The N.town manuscript was certainly written down some time, probably not long, after 1468, and the Mary Play must have existed before then. Reynes records only the court held to affirm allegiances and tenancies(100), but what a perfect setting that visit would have been for a performance of the *Mary Play*.

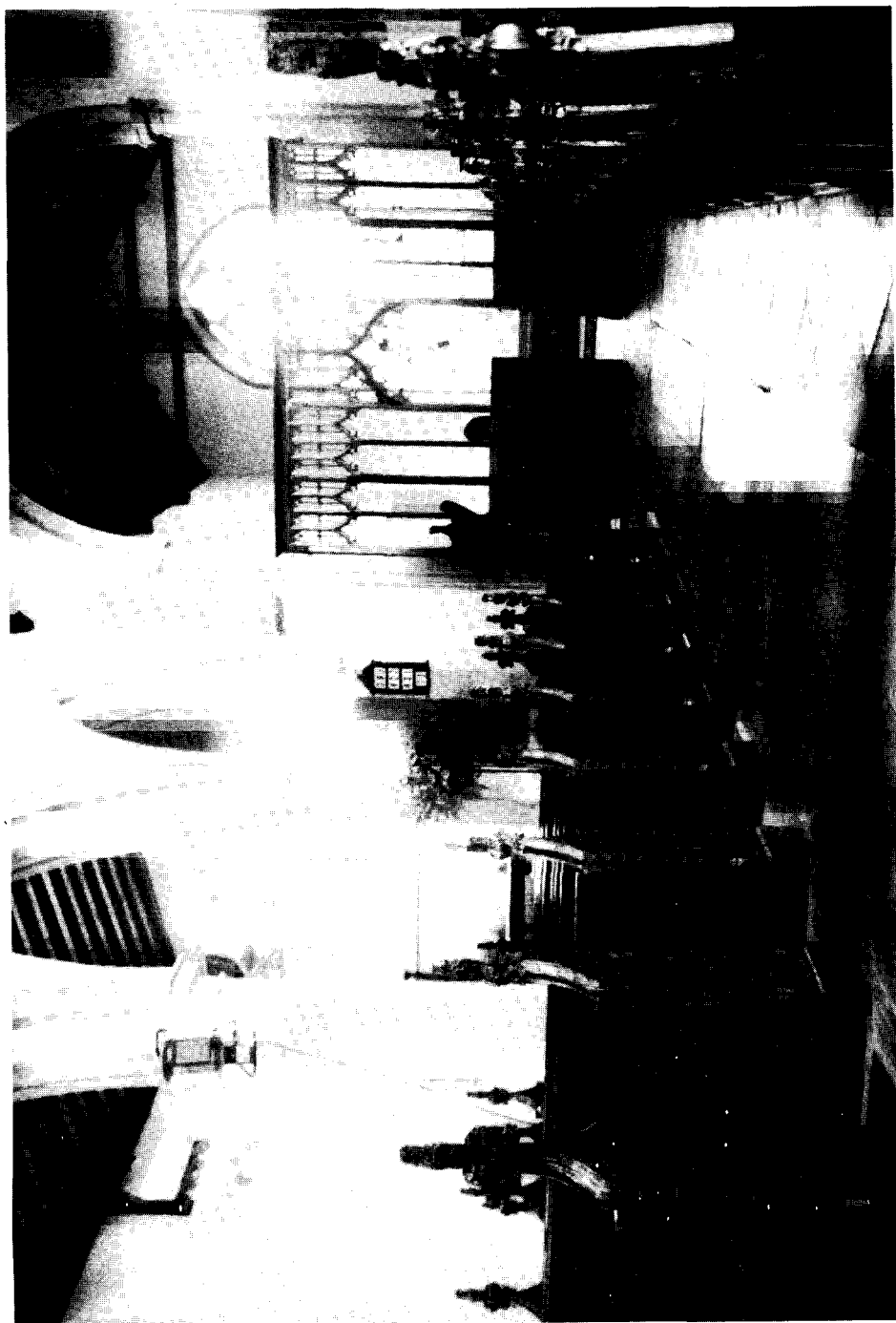
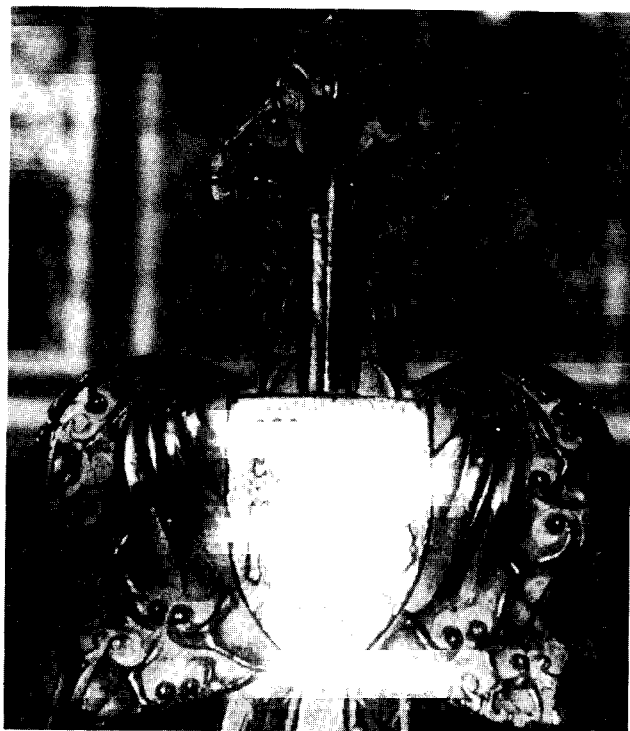
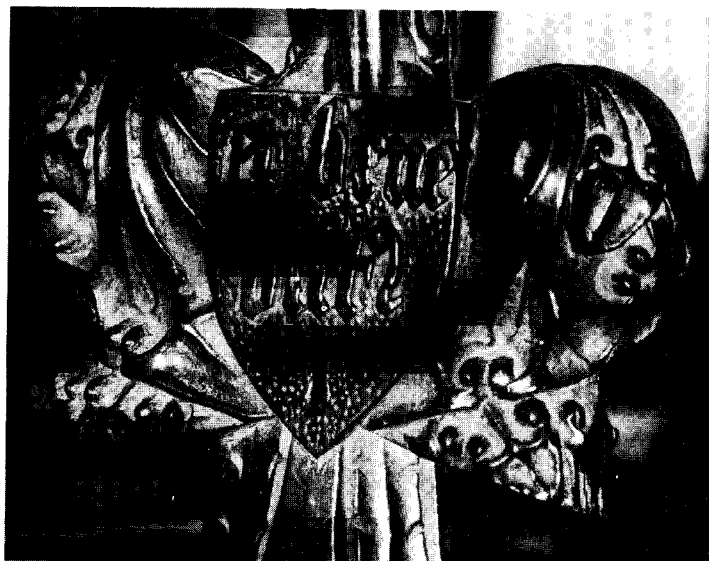


Fig. 1. St Mary's Church, South Walsham, Norfolk — the nave, looking east.



(a)
'in mulieribus'
[D10]



(b)
'et benedictus'
[D8]

Fig. 2. Poppy-heads from St Mary's, South Walsham.

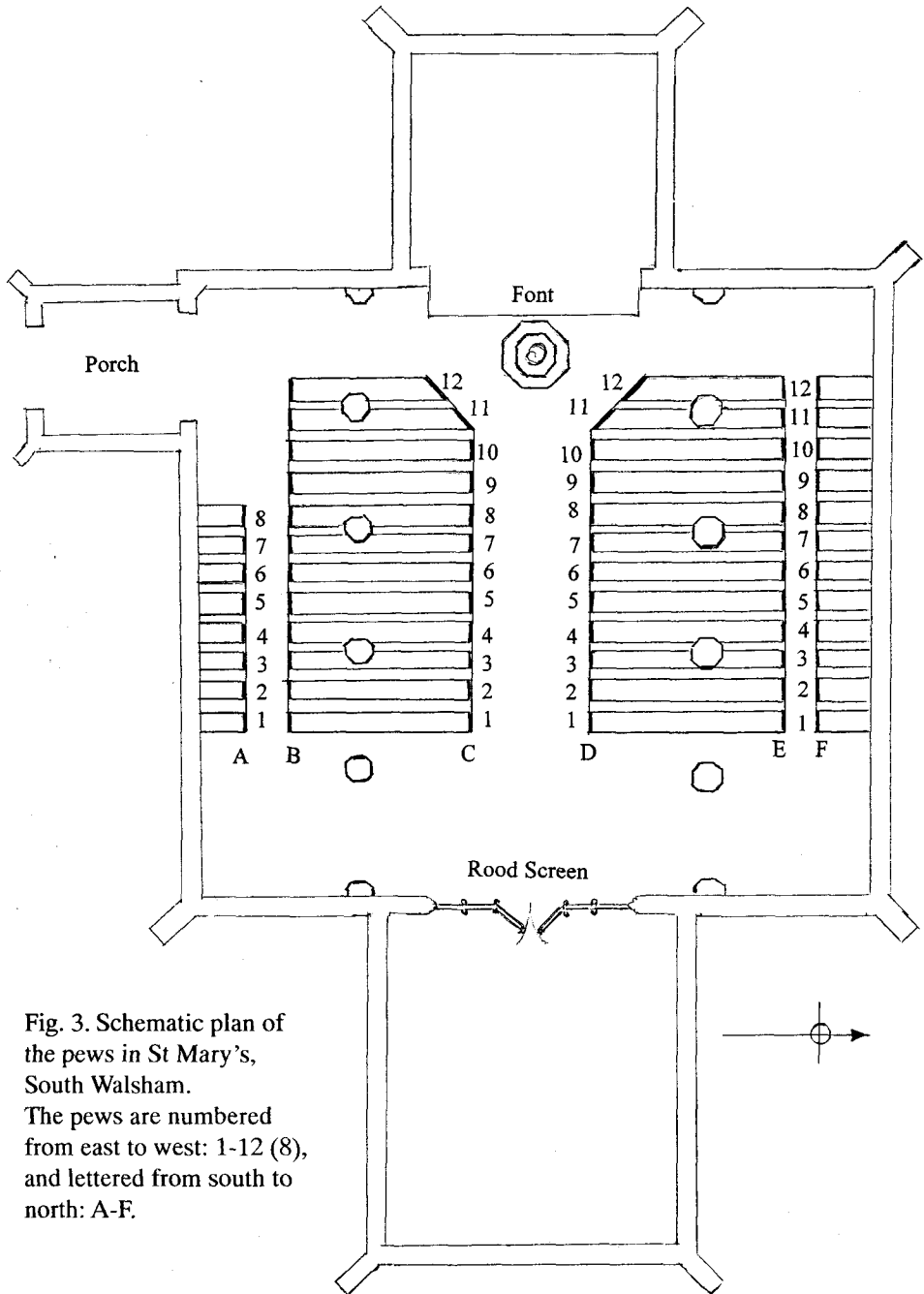


Fig. 3. Schematic plan of the pews in St Mary's, South Walsham. The pews are numbered from east to west: 1-12 (8), and lettered from south to north: A-F.

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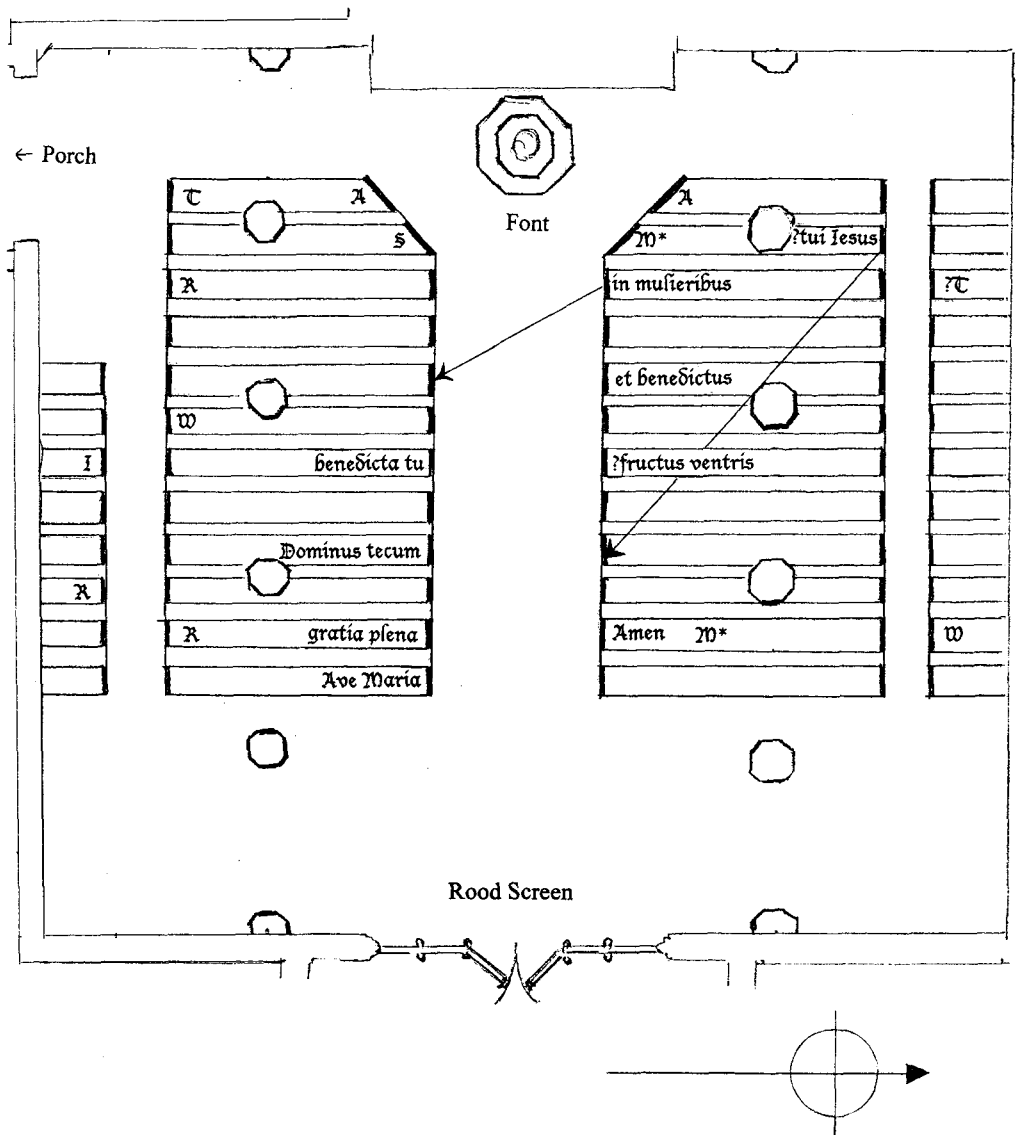


Fig. 4. Suggested original positions of the *Ave-Maria* bench-ends. Two changes are involved: moving bench-end D10 to C8 [*in mulieribus*] and E11 to D4 [*?tui Iesus*]. The asterisked Gothic M in the plan indicates the positions of the two *Maria* monograms.



(a) front view.



(b) back view.

Interrupted prayer [E2].

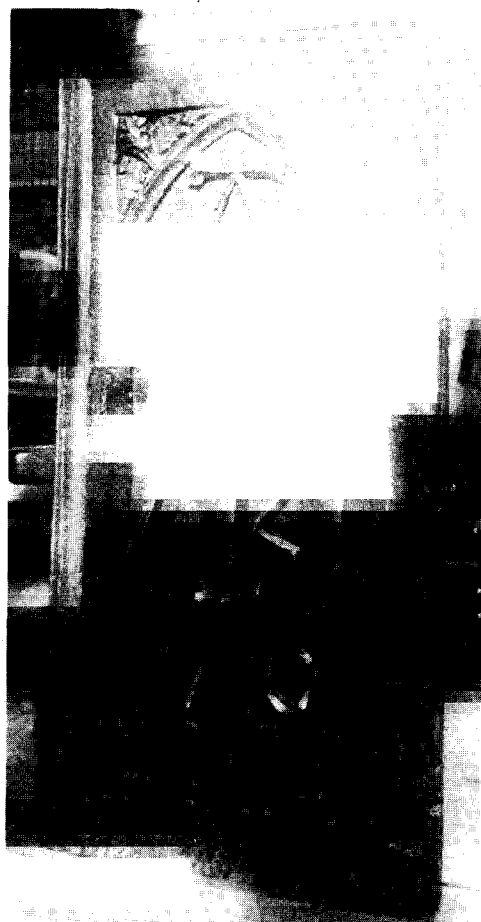


(c) surviving parts of praying figure [C2].

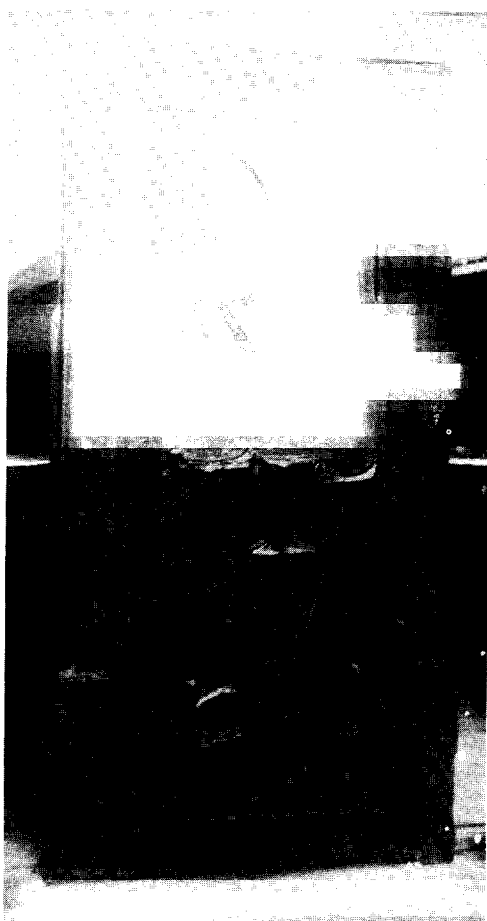


(d) man praying alone [A2].

Fig. 5. Arm-rest figures at St Mary's, South Walsham.



(a) AVE MARIA G



(b) RATIA PLE

Fig. 6. Two *Ave-Maria* bench-ends from St Andrew's Church, Trent, Dorset.



Fig. 7. The south porch,
St Mary's, South Walsham.

(a) Entrance showing the
position of the Annunciation.

(Photo: E. M. Trendell).



(b) Mary and the two figures of the Trinity.

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NOTES

I should like to thank Canon Phillip MacFadyen for permission to print the photographs of the bench-ends and porch at South Walsham and the Rev A.J.H. Edwards for permission to print those of the bench-ends at Trent. I should also like to thank Mr Martial Rose for finding a photographer and Mr Michael Trendell for his assistance with the photography at South Walsham.

¹ The most recent edition of the complete N.town plays is Stephen Spector, *The N-town Play*, 2 vols, Early English Text Society SS 11 and 12 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). As his title suggests, Spector is not concerned to separate out the individual plays which make up this disparate manuscript. Separate editions of *The Mary Play* appear in, *The Mary Play from the N.town Manuscript*, ed. by Peter Meredith, Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997) and *Medieval Drama: an anthology*, ed. by Greg Walker (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 167-95; and of *The Passion Play* in *The Passion Play from the N.town Manuscript*, ed. by Peter Meredith (London: Longman, 1990). Arguments for their separateness are set out in Peter Meredith, 'Manuscript, Scribe and Performance: further looks at the N.town manuscript', in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. by Felicity Riddy, York Manuscripts Conference: Proceedings Series 2 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 109-28, and for and against in Alan J. Fletcher, 'The N-Town plays', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 167-78. *The Assumption of Mary* was separately edited by W.W. Greg many years ago: *The Assumption of the Virgin: a miracle play from the N-town cycle* (London: Oxford University Press, 1915). *The Purification*, the other 'separate' play, has not been individually edited.

On provenance, Spector comments:

The fact that the principal constituents of the cycle were copied out by East Anglian scribes, evidently writing at various times, argues strongly for compilation and transcription in East Anglia. And the appearance of East Anglian dialect words, several times in rhyme, confirms the notion of composition and performance in that region. (pp. xv-xvi)

² Referred to hereafter as *LALME*; ed. by Angus McIntosh, M.L. Samuels and Michael Benskin, 4 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986).

³ There are some uncertainties associated with this placing. The manuscript was analysed by Professor M.L. Samuels for *LALME* and appears as mapped source LP4280, London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian D viii (*LALME* 3, pp. 339-40). This locates the main scribe of the manuscript to the south-west of Norwich (Grid ref. 595 289, between East Harling

and, to the north-west, East Wretham). *LALME* covered fols.1-20 of the manuscript by 'analysis' and 'scanned' to 106. I am assuming that by 'scan' is meant a less intensive search. (For comments on the analysis of literary manuscripts, see 1, section 5, pp. 51-52.) *The Mary Play* occurs between fols 37v and 73v, so no part of the play was included in the analysis, only in the 'scan'. *The Passion Play*, starting on fol. 136, was not investigated at all. Not surprisingly, considering the lack of certainty about that aspect of the manuscript, there seems to have been no attention paid to the different periods of transcription in the N.town plays. Had there been, it is possible in view of what is said in the Introduction (1, p. 39) that a different kind of analysis would have been used; though it has to be admitted that the kind of difference evidenced in the N.town manuscript is not quite what is usually meant in *LALME* by 'linguistically diverse'. If any attempt is made to place the scribe of this particular play, analysis of strictly *Mary Play* text will be needed, though it has to be said that it may not materially alter the placing. Fletcher reports briefly on such findings in 'The N-Town plays', p. 185, fn. 5.

⁴ *Records of Plays and Players in Norfolk and Suffolk, 1330-1642*, ed. by David Galloway and John Wasson, Collections Volume XI, The Malone Society 1980/1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), s.v. East Harling. Kenninghall (TM 040860) is about 4 kilometres due east of East Harling (TL 995865), Garboldisham (TM 005815) about 5 kilometres slightly east of south, and the two Lophams (TM 036825 and 040817) around 6 and 7 kilometres south-east. They lie in an arc on slightly higher ground than East Harling. All four villages are now similarly small, but there is no sign that they were ever significantly larger. Each has a large church, that at South Lopham having a particularly impressive Norman tower. As with so many other rural towns and villages, there may well be a connection between games, etc. and raising funds for the church. For Norfolk churches, see H. Munro Cautley, *Norfolk Churches* (Ipswich: Norman Adlard, 1949) and Nikolaus Pevsner and Bill Wilson, *Norfolk 1: Norwich and North-East*, *The Buildings of England*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1997) and *Norfolk 2: North-West and South*, *The Buildings of England*, 2nd ed (London: Penguin Books, 1999).

⁵ 'At the Cherch gate' presumably means an outdoor performance. The *Assumption* with its boisterous action and partly outdoor setting, would make an excellent outdoor play; less so the *Purification*. The scenes of elaborate liturgical staging combined with the intimate tone of the *Mary Play* seem to me elements which mark it out as an indoor play. But for the moment it remains an open question.

For discussion of the word 'interlude', see Nicholas Davis, 'The meaning of the word "Interlude"', and 'Allusions to Medieval Drama in Britain (4): Interludes', *Medieval English Theatre* 6:1 (1984) 5-15 and 61-91.

⁶ *Norfolk and Suffolk*, s.v. Thetford. Thetford (TL 875831) lies on the southern edge of Norfolk, on the border with Suffolk. Places from which entertainers come that appear in both

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the East Harling and the Thetford records are marked with asterisks and grid references are not repeated: Bardwell (TL 945735) [1505/6, game], Croxton (TL 874866) [1506/7, 1524/25, gild], Finchingfield, Essex [1524/25, *ludus*], Gislingham (TM 075715) [1505/6, game], Ixworth, Suffolk (TL 931702) [1508/9, play], Kenninghall* [1511/12, play], Lopham* [1504/5, game], Mildenhall, Suffolk (TL 710746) [1505/6, play], Shelfanger (TM 108837) [1508/9, play], Snarehill (there is now no village but a number of place-names just east of Thetford indicate the area meant) [1510/11, procession], Spalding, Lincolnshire [1533/34, *locatores*], Walsham (probably but not certainly North Walsham, TG 285302) [1505/6, game], Wangford, Suffolk (TM 465791) [1524/25, minstrels], Wymondham (TM 115015) [1533/34, *locatores*]; Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk [waits], Colchester, Essex [waits], Hull, East Yorkshire [waits], King's Lynn [waits], Norwich [waits]. Interestingly, only the waits and the Croxton gild appear more than once. I have divided off those referred to as 'waits', but '*locatores*' and 'minstrels' could as easily be 'waits'. Except for those from Bury, waits come from greater distances. This is perhaps another reason for identifying the *locatores* and minstrels as waits, since Wangford and Spalding are both more distant locations. Finchingfield [*ludus*] is distant, but Galloway and Wasson suggest that this is a record of a monetary contribution to a play performed elsewhere rather than a visit by one. See also Richard Beadle, 'Plays and Playing at Thetford and Nearby, 1498-1540', *Theatre Notebook* 32 (1978), 4-11, and Fletcher, 'The N-Town plays', pp. 166-67.

⁷ The original intention seems to have had more to do with using local art as source material for modern stagings of medieval plays (see Clifford Davidson's remarks in the Introduction to the York volume, p. iii).

So far *Chester* (ed. by Sally-Beth Maclean, 1982), *Coventry/Stratford-upon-Avon/Warwick and lesser sites in Warwickshire* (ed. by Clifford Davidson and Jennifer Alexander, 1985), *The West Riding of Yorkshire* (ed. by Barbara Palmer, 1990), and *York* (ed. by Clifford Davidson and David E. O'Connor, 1978) have been published. Norfolk will appear soon (ed. Ann Eljenhom Nichols). All are Medieval Institute Publications from Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, in the Early Drama, Art, and Music Reference Series. I am grateful to Professor Nichols for generously sharing her Marian findings in Norfolk with me.

⁸ I have borrowed the term from R.N. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215-c. 1515* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 9: 'Christendom might then be portrayed as a series of "discourse communities" (in the terminology of the rhetorical theorists), sharing perceptions, aspirations, and vocabulary, and operating independently at a variety of levels . . . '.

⁹ G.G. Coulton, 'A medieval inscription in Acle church', *Norfolk Archaeology* 20 (1921), 141-49.

¹⁰ Robert S. Gottfried, *Epidemic Disease in Fifteenth Century England: the medical response and the demographic consequences* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), pp.

2 and 135.

¹¹ Place names in Norfolk and Suffolk are followed by a grid reference since many are small and not always easy to locate. Using the grid, however, also launched me into using 'kilometre' which does not come naturally.

¹² For Acle, see Pevsner/Wilson, *Norfolk 1*, pp. 357-58. Colin Richmond identifies the donors as 'Robert Bataly and Joan his wife'; see 'Religion', in *Fifteenth-century attitudes*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 184. According to Richmond, Robert died in 1494 'leaving 20 marks for the building of the porch; Joan was his executor'.

¹³ For South Walsham, see Pevsner/Wilson, *Norfolk 1*, pp. 668-69. There is a short but informative church guide by Nicholas Groves (1995) and a note on *Shared Churchyards* (also by Groves, 1994) available in the church.

¹⁴ *A Historical Atlas of Norfolk*, ed. by Peter Wade-Martins, 2nd edn (Norwich: Norfolk Museums Service, 1994), pp. 88-93 and end-maps.

¹⁵ David Knowles and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (London: Longmans, 1953), pp. 75 and 159.

¹⁶ Francis Blomefield, and Charles Parkin, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, 5 vols (Fersfield, Norwich, Lynn, 1739-75). Acle is in volume 5, pp. 1457-60.

¹⁷ G.S. Amos, *A History and Description of South Walsham, Norfolk*, rev. ed. (South Walsham: South Walsham Parish Council, 2000), pp. 25-28. Colin Richmond, *The Paston Family in the fifteenth century: Fastolf's will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 68-70.

¹⁸ *The Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acle: an edition of Tanner MS 407*, ed. by Cameron Louis, Garland Medieval Texts 1 (New York & London: Garland, 1980).

¹⁹ It is worth noting here that by 1350 a school administered by the Bishop of Norwich existed in Blofield. It lies about 7 kilometres east of Acle and 5 south-east of South Walsham and was the centre of the Deanery in which both lay (Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 144, n. 5).

²⁰ Reynes is discussed in Louis's introduction pp. 24-39, and in Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 71-75. A number of the entries from Reynes's book appear in *Medieval Popular Religion 1000-1500*, ed. by John Shinnars, Readings in Medieval Civilisations and Culture: 2 (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1997), pp. 335-76. Duffy's description of Reynes as a 'rural artisan' seems also to underplay his literacy, the range of his literary, social and legal interests and his curiosity. For what it's worth, his brother James calls himself 'gentylman' in his will (*Commonplace Book*, p. 518).

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²¹ See Louis's discussion in *Commonplace Book*, pp. 99-103.

²² *Commonplace Book*, pp. 34-35.

²³ *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 73.

²⁴ The numbers refer to Louis's division of the contents of the manuscript.

²⁵ For discussion and photographs of these bench-ends see, under their place names, Cautley, *Norfolk Churches*, and his *Suffolk Churches and their Treasures* (Ipswich: Norman Adlard, 1937), and also J. Charles Cox, *Bench Ends in English Churches* (London: Oxford University Press, 1916).

²⁶ There is a slight complication in that beneath the words '*et benedictus*' there is at the foot of the shield a capital 'I' (fig. 1b). This could be an abbreviation for the missing '*Iesus*', placing it before rather than after '*fructus ventris tui*', though this would be an odd position for it. The 'I' is very shallowly cut and may have been an error later shaved away.

²⁷ The original content of the defaced shields is made slightly less certain by the existence of other carved poppyhead shields. Their decoration consists of a number of initial letters: A (twice), I, R (three times), S, T (possibly twice), and W (twice), and a *Maria* monogram. The initials are most likely to have proprietary or commemorative significance and represent donors, churchwardens or other local benefactors. The apparently random row of letters on the pew back at Gazeley, Suffolk, seems to be commemoration of that sort (Cautley, *Suffolk Churches*, p. 150). As there is no sign of any mutilation of 'initial' shields and as the little that is still visible on the defaced shields looks most like the missing elements of the *Ave*, however, *fructus ventris tui Iesus* must remain their most likely content.

²⁸ See Cox, *Bench Ends*, pp. 17-19 and *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 171.

²⁹ There are two further questions that occur to me: was there a matching bench-end with inscribed shield placed opposite the *Ave-Maria* one on the other side of the nave aisle, and was the *Ave-Maria* bench-end always immediately in front of the *gratia-plena* one, rather than one pew away like the other phrases? As regards the first question, apart from an initial the only bench-end that would naturally fill the gap is the *Maria* monogram. But as there is already a monogram on the *Amen* shield, that seems inappropriate. Besides which, if there were no matching decorated shield opposite, it would give greater prominence to the opening of the *Ave Maria*, which is perhaps the intention.

³⁰ The best-known is probably the Simon Werman one in Broomfield church, Somerset, which may record the name of the carver. There is a good collection of photographs of bench-ends published in Peter Poyntz Wright, *The Rural Benchends of Somerset* (Amersham: Avebury, 1983), but it relates only to one county and Cox, *Bench Ends* remains an essential source. For some discussion of 'text' bench-ends, see Wright, *Rural Benchends*, pp. 152-59.

Wright also has photographs of three bench-ends with beads on them (see pp. 77-80), two at Kingston St Mary, which parallel South Walsham's concern with prayer.

³¹ There is a useful guide to Trent church, Margaret Webster, *St Andrew's Church, Trent* (Trent, 2000), which contains drawings of a number of the bench-ends. There are photographs of all the *Ave-Maria* ones and a brief discussion in Cox, *Bench Ends*, pp. 91-93.

³² For some discussion of text in art, see Roger Ellis, 'The Word in Religious Art of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance', in *Word, Picture, and Spectacle*, ed. by Clifford Davidson, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series 5 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1984), pp. 21-38.

³³ The Sherborne Missal, once in the possession of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle, is now British Library Additional MS 74236. It is dated between 1396 and 1407. For full descriptions see Kathleen Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts, 1390-1490*, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles 6, 2 vols (London: Harvey Millar, 1996), II, pp. 45-60, and Janet Backhouse, *The Sherborne Missal* (London: The British Library, 1999). References in the text are to illustrations in Backhouse.

³⁴ H. Edith Legge, *The Divinity School, Oxford: a guide for visitors* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1923). The central bay is described on pp. 7-9 and a list of the texts used appears in Appendix 1. There are individual photographs of most of the 'text' bosses, and Plate 21 shows the middle section of the central bay.

³⁵ See Elizabeth S. Eames, *Medieval Tiles: a handbook* (London: The British Museum, 1968), especially pp. 22-24 (the Malvern tiling and its inscribed tiles); Jane A. Wight, *Medieval Floor Tiles: their design and distribution in Britain* (London: John Baker, 1975), especially pp. 136-47 (Malvern and inscribed tiles), and Elizabeth Eames, *Medieval Craftsmen: English Tilers* (London: The British Museum, 1996), see especially pp. 60-63. Malvern was not the only tiling to make inscribed tiles, nor, of course, do pavements with inscriptions first appear in the fifteenth century. The great pavement at Westminster Abbey, for example, with its elaborate inlaid latten inscription, dates from 1268; see Paul Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets: kingship and the representation of power, 1200-1400* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 95-97, and Richard Foster, *Patterns of Thought: the hidden meaning of the great pavement of Westminster Abbey* (London: Cape, 1991).

³⁶ Cautley, *Suffolk Churches*, pp. 147 and 150.

³⁷ Three Lollards were burnt in Norwich in 1428; see Norman P. Tanner, *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428-31*, Camden Fourth Series 20 (London: The Royal Historical Society, 1977), p. 8. It is perhaps worth mentioning, though at the cost of a long footnote, that Acle was not unacquainted with Lollardy. In one case, that of Margery Baxter (1 April 1429), the defendant's penance required her on two occasions to walk barefoot around Acle market place, as well as on four Sundays around the parish church of her then home town of Martham (about 10 kilometres to the north-east); see Tanner, *Heresy Trials*, pp. 41-51 (for the court's decision see p. 43), and Shinnars, *Medieval Popular Religion*, pp. 491-96. Tanner does not

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comment on the reason for this double penance, but it seems likely that it was because she was born in Acle.

The 'heretical' conversations took place in Joan Clifland, the deponent's, home in Norwich where Margery Baxter was sitting and sewing by the fire. Amongst other things, the accused apparently called 'Walsingham' 'Falsingham': '. . . quod prefata Margeria docuit et informavit eandem iuratum quod ipsa nunquam iret peregre ad Mariam de Falsyngham nec ad aliquem sanctum vel alium locum' ['. . . that the said Margery instructed and told the witness that she should never go on pilgrimage to Mary of Falsingham or to any saint whatever or other place'] (Tanner, p. 47).

³⁸ *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. by Phyllis Hodgson, Early English Text Society OS 218 (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), pp. 73-75.

³⁹ *Mankind: an acting edition*, ed. by Peter Meredith (Leeds: Alumnus, 1997), pp. 25, 35 and 58.

⁴⁰ Meredith, *The Passion Play from the N.town Manuscript*, p. 126, l.874sd

⁴¹ For the 'Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards' see *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, ed. by Anne Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 24-29 and 150-55. For further discussion see Fiona Somerset, 'Answering the Twelve Conclusions: Dymmok's halfhearted gestures towards publication', in *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. by Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997), pp. 52-76

⁴² Up the road from South Walsham is the rood screen in Ranworth church with its painted reredos for the altar of Our Lady depicting Mary and her half-sisters with their offspring (illustration in Richard Tilbrook and C.V. Roberts, *Norfolk's Churches Great and Small* (Norwich: Jarrold Publishing, 1997), pp. 76-77).

⁴³ See Louis's discussion of the names in *Commonplace Book*, pp. 406-16, especially 411-12.

⁴⁴ Gertrud Schiller has no comparable Annunciation scene; see *Iconography of Christian Art*, trans. by Janet Seligman, 2 vols (London: Lund Humphries, 1971), pp. 33-35 and figs 64-129.

An alabaster of the 'Annunciation' in the Victoria and Albert Museum (A58-1925) has, however, two figures of God the Father and the Holy Spirit seated in heaven, identical except for their poses and the attributes held in their left hands (God the Father, an orb; the Holy Spirit, a book). In the centre the Christ-child descends in a mandorla towards Mary. The scene is surrounded by the four daughters of God bearing scrolls with texts from Psalms (Vulgate) 84 and 118. Mary is at the bottom right in an Annunciation pose, but there is no Gabriel. See Francis Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters* (Oxford: Phaidon/Christies, 1984), p. 175.

⁴⁵ For some discussion of another kind of text-centredness see Peter Meredith, 'The direct

Peter Meredith

and indirect use of the Bible in medieval English drama', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 77:3 (1995), 61-77, especially 69-73. There is also the acrostic of *MARIA* (*Mary Play*, ll. 545-50) which celebrates the name in a way similar to, but more expansively than, the bench-end monogram.

Chester's Covenant Theology

David Mills

'Correcting' the Text

That the plaies Comonly Called the whitson plaies At Midsomer
next Comynge shalbe sett furth and plaied in such orderly maner
and sorte as the same haue ben Accostomed with such correction
and amendment as shalbe thought Convenient by the said Maior.¹

The resolution of Chester's Common Council in 1575 makes it clear that the text performed in what proved to be the final performance of the civic plays would be 'amended'. In fact, the play-text had evidently been 'amended' on several occasions during the sixteenth century. The Puritan minister Christopher Goodman, writing from Chester to the Archbishop of York in 1572, comments that the plays contain theologically unacceptable material despite previous attempts at correction:

For albeit divers have gone about the correction of the same at
sundry times & mended divers things, yet hath it not been done by
such as are by authority allowed, nor the same their corrections
view-ed & approved according to order, nor yet so played for the
most part as they have been corrected.²

And evidence of such reworking is found also in the Post-Reformation Banns, both explicitly, in lines such as:

how Criste from deathe arose the thirde daye –
not altered in menye poyntes from the olde fashion³

and also in comparison to the Pre-Reformation Banns, whose play of the Assumption

of the Virgin Mary is absent from the later listing. Chester's text seems to have been frequently rescruinised at local level, possibly in response to changing doctrine and to vocal Puritan opposition from the city's pulpits.

It is not possible now to trace the layers of 'correction' in the extant cyclic manuscripts, all copies of a common exemplar which bore the marks of earlier alterations.⁴ The plays as we have them seem still in some respects to contain material which would substantiate the claim of the Proclamation of c.1531-32 to be 'for the Augmentacion & incres [of the holy & Catholick] faith of o[ur S]auyour iesu Crist'.⁵

Matters such as the Petrine succession (Play 18, Appendix 1D, 72-95), the role of the Virgin Mary (Play 24, 613-16), and the doctrine of Purgatory (Play 24, 69-72, 97-100, etc) can still be discerned in the text, and one can only assume that these were matters addressed at some stage in the 'correction' of the performance text.⁶ Certainly, in writing in defence of the Mayor of 1575, Sir John Savage, to the privy Council, his successor, the Puritan Henry Hardware, addresses his supporting document confidently 'To all true christen people'.⁷ But within the extant manuscripts it is possible to detect a recurrent strain of covenant theology which could only have gained ground during the sixteenth century.

Salvation History and Covenant Theology

Chester's plays differ from those of York, and indeed from the other large play-collections of Towneley and N-Town, which can usefully be considered a species of 'Salvation History'.⁸ 'Salvation History' became established through the influence of a German Protestant theologian, J.C. von Hofmann, in the nineteenth century and can be summed up as follows:

God has made a progressive revelation of Himself and His will in Scripture. The interpreter therefore must expect a organic growth in the deposit of Biblical faith.⁹

That revelation is reflected in episodes which seem to appear in any cyclic text or play-list – The Creation and Fall of Man, Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham and Isaac, Moses and the Law, and the birth, ministry and Passion of Christ. The resulting drama centres upon issues of understanding and obedience and the related concerns of spiritual and worldly power and authority. York and Towneley in particular develop

these themes in the direction of social satire and comment.

But history as written by the Jews is one of covenants between God and Man. A covenant is an agreement which is made between two parties and confirmed by a sign or significant happening. 'Covenant' in general usage refers to a legally binding contract, but in Jewish scriptures that contract also constitutes a way of representing the relationship between God and Man, a contract made by God with a named individual which places God's limitless, and potentially arbitrary, power on a rational and human basis.

God imposed rational and constitutional limitations on his unlimited caprice, offered himself as a ready constitutional partner to each believer, prescribed moral duties not directfully and violently but with each Christian's reasonable and willing consent.¹⁰

For some Rabbinical teachers, the covenant began in Eden, where God granted Adam power over all created things in return for obedience to Him.¹¹ Adam broke that covenant, but God continued to covenant with His creation, making new covenants with Noah, Abraham and Moses, among others – the patriarchs whose dealings with God are dramatised in salvation history. But salvation history ignores the covenant-aspect of the narrative.

Thus, in reward for Noah's obedience, God agreed that He would never again destroy the Earth by water, and as a sign of that agreement he created the rainbow. He renewed the covenant with Abraham in recognition of Abraham's obedience in presenting a part of his spoils to Melchizedek, priest and king of Salem;¹² his gift was fertility and land, and the sign was circumcision.¹³ And He renewed His covenant with Moses, who had obeyed Him, providing protection in return for obedience to the Law; the sign there was the observance of the Sabbath with its ritual offerings.¹⁴ These covenants represent the Old Law of works, written variously – in the air (Noah); on the flesh (Abraham); on stone (Moses). But the Old Testament envisages a New Covenant of grace, written in the heart of Man which, in the New Testament, is sealed by the blood of Christ.

After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jeremiah 31 v. 33).¹⁵

It is this covenant within the heart that provides the New Testament and Christian extension of the Jewish covenant.

During the sixteenth century in England interest in covenant theology revived. It appealed to those of Puritan persuasion as a way of redefining the relationship of Man and God, since, at its most extreme, it removed the perceived obstacles of bishops and Church and brought the individual into a direct and personal contract with his Maker and Redeemer. It therefore became, by the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries a dominant organising principle for Puritan thought; but during the period when Chester's plays were being 'corrected' and performed covenant theology remained merely one theological theme among several. Only from seventeenth-century theologians, such as William Ames, did it develop into a doctrine of pervasive force, structuring not only relationships between Man and God but also the contract between subject and monarch.¹⁶

Yet even in embryo the doctrine has a potential political dimension, epitomising the transition from the feudal monarchy of the Middle Ages to the constitutional monarchy of the later sixteenth century. It belongs with a greater delegation of power, which contrasts with the hierarchical structures that spring from the descent of power as commissioned by Christ to St Peter and thereafter recommissioned to each of St. Peter's successors in the papacy. The power to loose and to bind remained central to the theocratic view of authority in the Middle Ages; it placed the monarch's power as divinely committed through the Church, but left that power unassailable from below. The covenant, in contrast, set obligations upon both monarch and subject on analogy to the contracts of obligation which God had confirmed with Man.

Christopher Goodman, a learned theologian, would have appreciated the allusion to the covenant. Covenant theology permeates the thinking of his close friend and constant correspondent John Knox, emerging in response to Mary's accession and Knox's exile.¹⁷ In his *Admonition or Warning* of 1554,¹⁸ Knox asserts:

This is the league betwixt God and us, that he alone sall be oure God, and we salbe his pepill: He sall communicat with us of his graces and gudness: We sall serve him in bodie and spreit: He salbe oure saifgaard frome death and dampnacioun; We sall seik him and sall flie from all strange Godis.

The sense of God's people as chosen, the elect, carried with it the obligation to remain apart from the idolaters. A more moderate tradition in England had been worked out,

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typified in the words of John Hooper on the Ten Commandments:

The contract whereof binds God to aid and succour, keep and preserve, warrant and defend man from all ill, both of body and soul, and at the last to give him eternal bliss and everlasting felicity. Man is bound of the other part to obey, serve, and keep God's commandments, to love him, honour him, and fear him above all things . . . So that it was fully agreed upon, that God should be their God, and they his servants, with certain conditions, containing the office of them both.¹⁹

This view of the commandments as contract rather than imperative contrasts with the traditional teaching of obedience in cycles of salvation history.

Covenant Theology in Chester's Plays

Chester's cycle has been revised by one or more scholars of considerable learning who has underlined the covenant potential of the plays, incorporating material and details not found in other extant cycles. As Philip Zarrilli has pointed out in a revealing interpretation of Play 3, 'The Flood':

Of the Wakefield, Chester and N-town *Noah* plays, only the Chester version includes the 'covenant' motif as an integral part of the dramatic action.²⁰

At its conclusion God makes his peace with Man by sending the rainbow as a sign that the world will never again be destroyed by water (3/309-24). But Chester moderates that obvious closure through what is effectively a coda, a long address by God to Noah. Noah has proved his obedience to God both by building the Ark and also, significantly and dramatically, by sacrificing to God on his disembarkation (267-68) in recognitions of his elect state (305-07). God therefore gives Noah a dietary concession, and warning:

of cleane beastes nowe, lesse and more,
I give you leave to eate –
save blood and fleshe bothe in feare

of [wronge] dead carryen that is here. (287-90)

Then He confirms a 'forwarde' (301) both with Noah 'for thy sake' and hence with all his descendants, that He will never again destroy the Earth with water. God finally produces the rainbow,

by verey tokeninge that you may see
that such vengeance shall cease (311-12)

and explains it. Here God makes a formal agreement with one individual on behalf of all, and expressly as a reward for Noah's obedience. The dietary concession, which to the Chester audience must have seemed a quaint touch of ethnicity, is the ongoing sign of that agreement, technically appropriate.

The rainbow is explained in some detail:

The stringe is torned towardes you
and towardes me is bente the bowe (321-22)

It is a war-bow, turned away from Man towards God, and thus, as Zarrilli points out, acknowledges the nature of the covenant made:

The obligation is not upon man, but upon God for the sustaining
of the new creation.²¹

The covenant is unconditional. Here the sign is written in air, by the rainbow, and marked by the ritual act of meat-eating, with its stress upon the nature of the beasts that might be eaten.

Play 4, the Barber-Surgeons' play of Abraham continues this covenant theme. Other plays on the corresponding episode could be called 'The Sacrifice of Isaac' and present it either for its typological import or as an exemplum of obedience. Typology is implicit in the York play, where Isaac is aged thirty, the age of Christ, and therefore willingly chooses to submit to sacrifice. The exemplum is represented by the Brome Play, generally agreed to be the forerunner of the corresponding section of Chester's play.²² It is not clear whether the play was taken verbatim from the cycle or has been adapted for production as a self-contained play. Brome presents the sacrifice as a test of Abraham's obedience set up by God and the Doctor finally uses it to urge patience upon bereaved and mourning mothers.

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Our cycle play, however, prefaces the sacrifice of Isaac by a series of episodes, unique among our extant plays, which show the establishment and reaffirmation of God's covenant with Abraham, another agreement with an individual for his faith which has implications for his descendants. Abraham, like Noah, offers to God. Having overcome four kings to rescue Lot:

the teathe I will give him of this
as skylle is that I doe (4/35-36)

the recipient being Melchizedek, priest and king of Salem. This obedience pleases God, who promises to be Abraham's 'helpe and thy succour' (146), and this emboldens Abraham to ask for an heir and the covenant is made:

and here a forwarde I make with thee (171)

promising fertility and lands. As its sign, Abraham will be circumcised, and all male children on the eighth day (178). Like Noah, Abraham acknowledges their elect state:

for therby knowe thou maye
thy folke from other men (187-88)

The sign is written on the flesh as circumcision. This covenant is interpreted by the Expositor as prefiguring baptism

As followeth nowe verament,
soe was this in the owld testamente.
But when Christe dyed away hit went,
and then beganne baptysme. (197-200)

The covenant therefore descends to us all today:

Alsoe God a promise behett us here (201)

Baptism was read by Puritans as a renewal of the covenant between the individual and God:

Baptism is a Sacrament by which such as are within the covenant

are washed with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that being thus engrafted into Christ they may have perpetual fellowship with him. Within the covenant are all the seed of Abraham, or the seed of the faithful.²³

Isaac's sacrifice is separate from this covenant preface and is interpreted in typological and exemplary terms by the Expositor (4/460-83).

Play 5, the Cappers' Play of 'Moses and Balaam', begins with the presentation of the tables of the Law, the third covenant, written in stone. The recital of the Law is a feature of all the cycles, but in York and Towneley it is given to the infant Christ before the Doctors in the Temple and in N-town, God delivers the tables from the burning bush, and tells Moses to preach them to the people. In Chester God first addresses the individual with whom the covenant is made, and then the people on behalf of whom Moses makes it:

Moyeses, my servant leeffe and dere,
and all my people that bine here (5/1-2)

again embracing the contemporary play-audience. He reminds them of the Israelites' obedience in following Moses into the desert in the Exodus:

yee wotten in Egipte when yee weare
out of thraldome I you brought. (5/3-4)

Moses is evidently holding the tables, since the Expositor says that he broke them in anger at the Israelites' subsequent disobedience (55-56). But we are told that Moses carved out other tables:

The which tables [shryned] were
after, as God can Moyeses leare
and that [shryne] to hym was dear
therafter evermore (61-64)

and Moses mimes the inscribing of the second set of tables on stone. These lines are the only reference to the Ark of Covenant in our cycles, and perhaps suggest that the Ark is a stage property in which the tables were ceremonially deposited. Finally Moses emphasises to the people the ritual act to mark this covenant, the observance

of the Sabbath with due formality. As he leaves and Balak enters, we learn of the consequences of that covenant in the victorious march of the Israelites towards the land of Moab.

Such is the power of God that Balaam is unable to curse them but is compelled by God to declare their elect status ('that people that God blessed hasse', 281) and to prophesy that a star will rise on Judah – symbolically the Magi's star, allegorically Christ – which points on to the Nativity and the 'light to lighten the Gentiles' (320-27).

Once Balaam has uttered his Messianic prophecy, Balak announces that he is resigned to the fact that he cannot defeat God and prepares to leave. But Balaam suggests that God's wrath could be visited upon the Israelites by getting the most attractive Moabite women to seduce their young men and persuade them to abandon their faith in exchange for their favours. The sequel is abridged by a long speech from the Expositor (388-455) which explains that Balaam's plan succeeded and Moses proved powerless to prevent the young men. But:

Anon Phinees, a yonge men devowte,
captayne hee was of that whole rowte,
and of these wretches, without dowbt
xxiiii thowsand the slewe.
And then God was well content
with Phinees for his good intent (428-33)

This reference conceals another covenant allusion. Phinehas' intervention is described in Numbers 25 vv. 7-13. Phinehas was the son of Eleazar who in turn was the son of the high priest Aaron. When the Israelites succumbed to the Moabite temptation, he killed an Israelite prince called Zimri and his Moabite wife, stabbing her through the abdomen with his javelin, and so deflected God's wrath from Israel. In return for his obedience God covenanted with him:

Wherefore I say, behold, I give to him my covenant of peace; and he shall have it, and his people after him, even the covenant of the everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

His virtue was his zeal.²⁴ This covenant was distinct from those discussed above, the priestly covenant given to the tribe of Levi and specifically to the house of Aaron

(Numbers 18 and 19).

The Phinehas coda seems the more significant because an alternative version of Play 5 exists which has a different ending. The version copied by James Miller and his fellow scribes in 1607, and the one usually anthologised, follows Balaam's Messianic prophecy with a sequence of seven Jewish prophets whose words were traditionally explained as references to various moments of Christ's life, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension. In all this, Balak is silent, but at the end he utters his parting quatrain of resignation and the play concludes. The version which I have quoted, from the other manuscripts, concludes with an indication that Play 5 ended the day's performance. Possibly the difference between the two versions arises from a new division of the performance. The 'Group' version stresses the triumph of the Israelites, whereas Miller's version bridges the time between the last Old Testament play and an immediately following 'Nativity' Play. Even so, the Phinehas episode suggests consciousness of the recurring covenant theme and, if the division relates to the four-day performance of 1575, may suggest that the covenant theme was part of that late revision.

The manifestations of that theme in the Old Testament plays represent the covenant of works. A new covenant replaced it, not written materially but within the heart of Man. That idea of internalising the covenant within each individual is alien to a cycle of salvation history which focuses upon the externals of revelation. But in Chester we see it in Jesus' words at the start of Play 13, 'The Healing of the Blind Man and the Raising of Lazarus':

But or we goe hence, printe these sayinges in your mynd and harte;
recorde them and keepe them in memorye.
Contynue in my worde; from yt doe not departe.
Therby shall all men knowe most perfectlye
that you are my disciples and of my familie. (13/29-33)

This internal covenant is a contract made with each individual believer, of redemption in exchange for faith, written in the blood of Christ.

Jesus' speech at the Last Supper (15/65-104) instituting the Eucharist, makes that transition clear:

For knowe you nowe, the tyme is come
that sygnes and shadowes be all donne . . .
For nowe a newe lawe I will beginne

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to helpe mankynd owt of his sinne. (69-70, 73-74)

Or, in the words of the influential theologian William Perkins in chapter 31 of *A Golden Chain* in 1591:²⁵

The old testament or covenant, is that which in types and shadows prefigured Christ to come and to be exhibited. The new testament declareth Christ already come in the flesh and is apparently showed in the gospel.

These covenant passages can all be reasonably seen as modifications to a pre-existent text. Since the primary opposition to Chester's plays came from among theologians of Puritan persuasion, I would postulate that covenant theology was introduced into the cycle to assuage their opposition.

Phinehas and Reformation

Moreover, there may be a further significance to the Phinehas allusion. Authenticating God's favour towards him, the text continues:

as the prophett wryteth verament,
and here wee shall yt shewe:
' Stetit Phinees, et placavit, et cessavit quassatio, et reputatum est
ei ad justitiam in generatione sua, etc.' (5/434-35+Latin)

The text cited does not come from the book of Numbers but from Psalm 105 (AV 106), vv. 30-31

Then stood up Phinehas and executed judgement, and so the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.

We do not know if this text is an explanatory gloss or was declaimed by the Expositor; but a biblically versed Puritan would recognise it and recall the full context – God's mercy to his undeserving people, who had turned from His ways:

David Mills

Many times did he deliver them, but they provoked him with their counsel and were brought low for their iniquity . . . And he remembered them for his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.

This implicit reference to a wayward nation brought back to its true faith from apostasy by the heroism of one who kept the covenant has obvious resonance for the Puritan in the world of the Elizabethan settlement.

NOTES

¹ *Records of Early English Drama: Chester*, ed. by Lawrence M. Clopper (Toronto 1979), p. 104.

² Ruthin, Clwyd County Record Office, Plas Power MSS, DD/PP/839, p. 121.

³ R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills, *The Chester Mystery Cycle: Essays and Documents* (Chapel Hill 1983), p. 292, ll. 155-56.

⁴ See R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills, *Essays*, 'The Texts of the Chester Cycle'.

⁵ Clopper, *Chester*, p. 27. Clopper prints the version from the Chester Assembly Files, which is damaged. Lost readings are added here in square brackets from the copy in BL Harley 2013, f. 1, supplied in Clopper's footnotes.

⁶ References and quotations from *The Chester Mystery Cycle: Vol 1, Text*, ed. by R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills, EETS SS 3 (London 1974). On the objections to such references, see Goodman's list:

'20 Peter onely is said to create Matthias an Apostle . . .

23 Purgatory affirmed, preaching of merits of man.'

⁷ Clopper, *Chester*, p. 114.

⁸ On Salvation History, see entry in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. 12, 998-1001.

⁹ *New Catholic Encyclopaedia* 12, 999b.

¹⁰ *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 'Covenant Theology', vol. 4, 405a-b.

¹¹ cf Ecclesiasticus 17 vv. 1, 12: 'The Lord created man from earth and sent him back to it again . . . He established a perpetual covenant with them and revealed to them his decrees.' (*New English Bible* translation). Could something of this idea be implicit Adam's dream, Chester's Play 2, 441-72?

¹² On Melchizedek, see William Smith, *A Dictionary of the Bible* (London 1983), vol. 2, 314a-15a; James Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Edinburgh 1899), vol. 2, 331-32; *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York and London 1904) vol.8, 450a-b. Melchizedek is invoked in the Epistle to the Hebrews cap 5, v. 6: 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedech', quoting Psalm 110 v. 4; he is 'an image of priesthood in contrast to Aaron's'.

¹³ cf Genesis 17, vv. 9-14.

¹⁴ cf Genesis 2, vv. 2-3, Exodus 20, vv. 8-11.

¹⁵ cf. Matthew 26/28, Mark 14/24, Luke 22/20; and Hebrews 13/20: 'Now the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant'. Also James D.G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of*

Christianity (Philadelphia 1991)

¹⁶ cf. Selden, Table Talk: 'A king is a thing men have made for their own sake for a quietness sake' (quoted by Baker, p. 274).

¹⁷ This account relies entirely upon Richard L. Greaves, 'John Knox and the Covenant Tradition', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 24:1 (1973), 23-32.

¹⁸ John Knox, *Admonition or Warning* (1554)

¹⁹ *Early Writings of John Hooper D.D., Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Worcester, Martyr 1555* (Parker Society, Cambridge 1843), pp. 255-56. The reference is cited by Greaves.

²⁰ Philip Zarrilli, 'From Destruction to Consecration: Covenant in the Chester *Noah* Play', *Theatre Journal* 31:2 (1979), 199.

²¹ Zarrilli, 209. See also Kathryn Wells, 'The Rainbow as Archer's Bow in the Chester Cycle's Noah's Flood', *N&Q* 42 (1995), 27-29, who draws attention to a similar allusion to the rainbow as bow in Deguileville; the reference, however, lacks the precision of that in Chester.

²² Text in *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments*, ed. by Norman Davis, EETS SS 1 (London 1970), pp. 43-57.

²³ William Perkins, 'A Golden Chain, or The Description of Theology', chapter 33, in *The Work of William Perkins*, ed. by Ian Breward, The Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics (Appleford, Abingdon, Berks 1970), p. 219.

²⁴ 1 Maccabees 2 v. 54: 'Phinehas, our father, never flagged in his zeal, and his was the covenant of an everlasting priesthood.'

²⁵ Perkins, cap. 31, p. 213.

The Living Text: The Play, the Players, and Folk Tradition

Thomas Pettitt

It would be reasonable to assert that on balance the influence of folklore studies on theatre historians has as yet been more confusing than beneficial. Above all, as it emerged earlier this century theatre history inherited from folkloristics both a fascination with origins and a belief that the traditions and customs studied by folklorists – i.e. 'folk drama' – derived from a primitive fertility ritual that contributed significantly to the emergence of drama-proper, be it in Greek Antiquity or in medieval Europe. Although some theatre historians have yet to notice, such 'survivalist' notions were abandoned by folklorists some time ago, and the 'evolutionary' notions on which they were based were abandoned by anthropologists even earlier.¹ This is all the more regrettable in that folklore studies have other assumptions, other insights, other approaches, which have proved more resilient, and which might well be deployed beneficially in the study of early theatre. The present essay will glance at one of them, the phenomenon of textual instability (and its concomitant textual multiplicity) which folklorists have been struggling with pretty well since the time (in the 1840's) when Motherwell persuaded Grundtvig (who persuaded Child) that 'reconstituting' the original of a folk ballad from the surviving, disparate variations was a hopeless or senseless task, and that we might as well publish, study and appreciate each variant individually.²

Medieval plays rarely, alas, survive in sufficient versions for their variety to be an issue: but the phenomenon is, notoriously, acute for the early popular stage.³ The reproduction of texts on the Elizabethan stage was, in relation to the script, very likely to have been inexact, mainly as a result of the sheer pressure on the memories of the actors,⁴ The Elizabethan companies, to judge from Henslowe's records, operated with a rolling repertoire in which in a given season a particular play was performed a limited number of times (say three to fifteen) at irregular intervals, and a considerable number of plays, in which a given player might have several parts, were performed

over any period. With Henslowe's help, we can assess the pressure on the memory of a player in the Admiral's men on 7 November, 1594.⁵ That day he would be performing in *The Knack* (presumably *The Knack to Know an Honest Man*), but would also need to have in his memory his parts in many other plays. Just how many is difficult to say, but as a minimum, certainly, those plays performed in the 1594-95 season both before and after 7 November; of which there are twelve. Presumably there were others from earlier in the season which he might not know would not be coming back, and yet others which would figure later, and for which he was in the process of learning his parts. This would certainly apply to *Cæsar and Pompey* which (taking the conventional interpretation of Henslowe's 'ne') had its first performance the next day, 8 November, and probably also to *Diocletian*, which entered the repertoire just over a week later, on 16 November.

We are accustomed to seek reassurance in the strength and capacity of the memory in oral cultures, which the Elizabethan still partly was, but it is by no means certain that the oral memory is inevitably geared to the verbatim reproduction of texts. Nor is it certain, given the ambiguous status of the playwright in this particular phase of theatre history, that the verbatim reproduction of his text, as opposed to keeping going and keeping the audience satisfied, was a decisive consideration with the players. As late as the mid-eighteenth century, David Garrick was still struggling to inculcate 'a proper respect to the audience and the author' in players 'who had fallen into an unlucky habit of imperfection in their parts, and being obliged to supply that defect by assuming a bold front, and forging matter of their own'.⁶

Such lack of respect for the author, from whom the Elizabethan players bought the text outright, and for less than they spent on costumes, will also have enabled the more deliberate changes – subtractions, additions, substitutions – to which the poet's text would have been submitted before it became the prompt copy for the first performance. Rather than artistically motivated, these changes are likely to have been utilitarian – reflecting a collective sense of what was feasible in the context (the given resources of people and machinery; the known expectations and tolerances of the audience). The latter factors are also likely to have applied in later (deliberate) changes between performances responding to stage experience (not to mention those anticipating a new context, for example taking the play on tour).

Given the virtual certainty therefore that as a result of both of these processes the text performed on stage will have differed from what the author wrote, it is reasonable (I think I mean vital) to ask: how much? in what way? and does it matter? In view of the recent controversies on the nature of tradition and the processes of oral transmission it is not enough to offer sensible suggestions on the implications of

interpolations, anticipations and recollections. Nor can we rely on the experience and opinions of actors in the modern theatre: training is different, attitudes to the author (especially to the immortal bard) are different, and anyway field studies in folk tradition suggest that while performers may claim they are reproducing a text verbatim, they are in fact changing it.⁷ My thesis is that on the Elizabethan stage (as in folk traditions) these changes will have shown distinct tendencies and that their impact is both detectable and amounts to a process of recreation which produces authentic new versions in a distinct, 'vernacular' aesthetic,⁸ but which nonetheless also tells us something significant about the 'artistic' original.

* * *

In a still respected study, originally published in German in 1909, the Danish folklorist Axel Olrik identified and discussed what are known in English as the 'epic laws' of folk narrative.⁹ 'Epic' translates Olrik's *epische*, which means narrative in general as opposed to lyric and dramatic forms, and the 'laws' concerned indeed applied to most forms of traditional narrative: folktale, myth, legend, and folksong. As presented the thirteen or so laws are somewhat complex and overlap, but they can be resolved into the two basic rules of *concentration* and *patterning*. Traditional narratives are concentrated in focusing on a single-stranded plot, with one hero and one major antagonist (as diametrically opposed to the hero as can be), and in being composed of incidents each of which confronts only two characters (the law of 'two to a scene'). Patterning manifests itself in a narrative progression and content deploying symmetries according to an inner logic which is stronger than everyday plausibility and realism. Thus the narrative progresses between major peaks of striking 'tableaux-scenes', and does so in a manner highly characterized by symmetry and repetitions. The narrative is rendered according to a distinct, traditional aesthetic, which involves restricting content to the absolutely necessary: 'Everything superfluous is suppressed and only the essential stands out salient and striking.' The familiar repetition of sequences of action in groups of three is merely a specific manifestation of this stylizing, the urge to simplify, it seems, matched by a craving for repetition: 'Every time that a striking scene occurs in a narrative, and continuity permits, the scene is repeated'.

By 'laws' Olrik meant 'common rules for the composition' of such narratives, but they are more likely to have been common tendencies in their transmission. In another influential study the later (Swiss) folklorist, Max Lüthi, suggested that the focus and symmetry characterizing much folk narrative (he was particularly interested

in folktales and legends) were not there from the start in the *Urform*, but achieved in the course of transmission. The 'finished' form of a given narrative (in the craft sense) is also the final (in terms of transmission): it is the *Zielform*, the goal or target form to which the text is shaped in the hands – in the memories and voices – of the narrators who tell it and pass it on. A story is, in Lüthi's term, *zurechterzählt*, 'told into shape': a shape evincing, I would claim, precisely the kind of concentration and patterning Axel Olrik identified as characteristic of traditional narrative.¹⁰

Lüthi offered no empirical documentation for this intriguing theory, but it is to hand, however, in the case of the narrative folksongs that I have studied in the course of my research into the oral transmission of the popular ballad. We are fortunate in that some news ballads, issued on broadsides in the seventeenth, eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, have been recorded by folksong collectors in what have to be derivative oral versions decades or even centuries later. Comparing the oral versions with the printed original, especially when the same symptoms are shown by several oral derivatives, and when the same results occur in the study of several ballads, demonstrates exactly what tradition, the pressure of reproducing textual material from memory before an audience, does to a narrative.¹¹

The results are not surprising, except to those who see all oral tradition as inevitably destructive, but the laws of narrative transmission can now be formulated with greatly enhanced confidence. The impact of oral tradition on narrative involves:

subtraction:

the loss of material not essential for the progress of the narrative, typically introductory and concluding business, description of people and places, analysis and commentary, and even narrative transition between points of maximum crisis;

external contamination:

the intrusion of material from:

other narratives in the same genre

formulaic material common to the tradition as a whole

internal contamination

the replacement of original material at one point in the text by material from a similar point elsewhere, resulting in patterns of conceptual and/or verbal repetition whose exact configuration depends on the relative positions of the two segments concerned.

The Living Text: The Play, the Players, and Folk Tradition

Together these processes account for most of the concentration and patterning encompassed by Olrik's narrative 'laws', and whose emergence in the text cumulatively moves it towards Lüthi's *Zielform*.

I offer by way of brief illustration extracts from parallel texts of the ballad, 'Maria Marten': the original broadside, published in connection with the hanging, in 1828, of William Corder, for the murder of his sweetheart, and the derivative oral version, recorded by Cecil Sharp almost three quarters of a century later:¹²

Original Broadside, 1828

Oral Tradition, 1911

- | | |
|---|--|
| 5. If you will meet me at the Red-barn,
as sure as I have life,
I will take you to Ipswich town,
and there make you my wife; | 4. If you'll meet me at <u>the Red Barn Floor</u>
as sure as you're alive
I'll take you down to Ipswich Town
and make you my dear bride. |
| 6. I then went home and fetched my gun,
my pickaxe and my spade,
I went into the Red-barn,
and there I dug her grave. | 5. He straight went home and fetched his gun
His pickaxe and his spade,
<u>He went unto the Red Barn floor</u>
and he dug poor Maria's grave. |
| 7. With heart so light, she thought no harm,
to meet him she did go
He murdered her all in the barn,
and laid her body low;
... | 6. This poor girl she thought no harm
but to meet him she did go,
<u>She went unto the Red Barn Floor</u>
and he laid her body low, |
| 11. Her mother's mind being so disturbed,
she dreamt three nights o'er,
Her daughter she lay murdered
beneath the Red-barn floor. | 7. Her mother dreamed three dreams one night
she ne'er could get no rest,
She dreamed <u>she saw her daughter dear</u>
<u>lay</u> bleeding at the breast. |
| 12. She sent the father to the barn,
when he the ground did thrust,
And there he found his daughter
mingling with the dust. | 8. <u>Her father went into</u> the barn
and up the boards he took.
There <u>he saw his daughter dear</u>
<u>lay</u> mingled in the dust. |

As I cite for reasons of space only part of the text it is necessary to note that the inessential material subtracted in transmission includes the opening address to the

audience, the gory aftermath of the murder and the restlessness of the victim's mother prior to her dream. We also lose the entire (highly circumstantial) trial-scene: It is evidently enough to know, for the tragedy's closure, that the speaker is to die. It is possible to see the centre of the song moving towards a rather schematic *Zielform* comprising essentially a triad of significant visits to the red barn: by the lover; by the girl, and by the father, the last two forming a balance (the burial and finding of the body) framing the mother's dream of where it is. There is some contamination by external material, largely in the shape of commonplace formulations from general English folksong idiom, within the text cited for example the 'dreamed . . . dreams' phrase which emerges in the oral version's stanza 7. Particularly striking are the patterns of verbal repetition (of words and phrases) emerging through the process of internal contamination, both in adjacent and separated segments of the narrative. The mother's dream of the body's location, and the father's discovery of it which immediately follows, and which have quite distinct formulations in the original (st. 11 & 12), are in the oral version expressed with the identical phrase, 'saw her/his daughter dear lay . . .' (sts. 7 & 8). In two instances, similar events occurring at some distance in the narrative similarly achieve, through internal contamination, identical or near-identical formulations, producing patterns of verbal repetition. The entries of the murderer, the victim and her father into the fatal barn, expressed differently in the original (sts. 6, 7 & 12), in the oral version share the formulation '. . . went into/unto the . . . barn' (sts. 5, 6 & 8). Additional contaminations make a particularly close and ominous repetition of the juxtaposed entries of villain and victim (sts. 5 & 6): 'He went unto the Red Barn floor/ and he . . .'; 'She went unto the Red Barn Floor/ and he . . .'). Most strikingly, as these last quotations indicate, the law of symmetry is so powerful on this particular memory that the Red Barn is referred to consistently (and illogically but powerfully) as 'the Red Barn Floor' (sts. 4, 5, 6): the phrase actually deriving from a stanza of the original (st. 8) itself lost in the course of transmission.

That similar patternings can emerge in drama is suggested by the instance of a mummers' play performance recorded in the West Indies in 1968, compared to its printed original, published in 1895. We should not expect much by way of massive subtraction or substitution of material, for the original is itself based ultimately on traditional mummers' plays, which (from wherever they started) have already gone through the process of concentration and patterning towards their *Zielform*. It is consequently revealing that nonetheless a sequence of references to a sword in the original have been regularized in tradition to conform with one of them, verbal repetition being the result:¹³

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Printed Original, 1895

Oral Derivative, 1968

Slasher:

So with my trusty broadsword,
I soon will thee disable.

For with my trusty broad sword,
soon will I disable

St Andrew:

Disable, disable? It lies not in thy power,
For with a broader sword than thine
I soon will thee devour.
Stand off, Slasher, let no more be said,
For if I draw my broadsword,
I'm sure to break thy head.

Disable, disable, it's not in your power,
For with my trusty broadsword
nations soon I will devour.
So stand off Slasher and let nothing more be said,
For if I draw my trusty broadsword
I'll surely break thy head.

* * *

From this folkloristic vantage point it is possible to predict that some changes to which the texts of Elizabethan stage plays were subject to under the conditions obtaining in the Elizabethan theatre followed distinct trends which, as in the case of oral folk tradition, likewise moved a text towards its *Zielform*. This would involve concentration, through the subtraction of non-essential material – be it words, action, or characters – and with a corresponding greater focus on the remaining critical scenes and major antagonists. As already noted, some of the larger-scale subtractions will be the result of deliberate decisions before and between performances, which nonetheless to my mind remain 'traditional' if determined by a vernacular (making it work) aesthetic rather than a purely artistic one. What remained, of action and words, would be increasingly marked by external standardization in conformity with tradition, and internal standardization, patterns of repetition, within the play itself. At the level of action-sequences with accompanying dialogue, external standardization could involve the addition, or more likely the substitution of existing material, with routines, what I have called 'dramatic formulas', similar to the *lazzi* of the *commedia dell'arte*, common to the theatrical tradition as a whole.¹⁴ On the verbal level commonplaces or formulas like 'I warrant you . . .', 'How now . . .', 'Leave me alone for that . . .', 'Come, let us . . .', would become increasingly prominent, while repetition patterns would emerge as similar sequences of action and dialogue came to resemble each other more and more.

If this is what did happen there is one person who (as both an author and a

player) was well-placed to notice, who would have thought about it, and who would have commented on it, and that of course is Shakespeare. Unlike Ben Jonson, Shakespeare was not given to expressing his views on the theatrical art in Prologues and Prefaces, but he did sustain an intense debate on that art in the metadramatic perspective of his plays, and as we might have guessed, the question of the unstable text is closely examined and illuminated in his plays-within-plays, notably in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. With the mechanicals' interlude we are privileged to follow a play from the moment the players are given their parts, through the difficulties of rehearsal, to the first (and doubtless last) performance, or from what the play itself calls 'The most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe' (I.ii) to 'A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus And his love Thisbe' (V.i.56-57).¹⁵

The change in title from 'comedy' to 'brief scene' accurately reflects what must have been a massive subtraction of material in the course of preparing the author's text for performance. The original play contains parts (written and handed out for memorization) for Thisbe's Father (Quince), Pyramus's Father (Snout), and Thisbe's Mother (Starveling). They are sacrificed to solve problems encountered in rehearsal (Shakespeare also pursuing a discussion on stage illusion) and the players assigned the new (and very brief) roles of Prologue, Wall and Moonshine. Since we gather (from the play and from Ovid) that the parents of the lovers opposed their match, we have evidently lost a couple of scenes in which this opposition is expressed, and perhaps another lamenting the outcome. And in consequence of the subtractions the play is reduced to what must be close to a *Zielform* of the two essential scenes: the meeting in the garden between the lovers to express their love and plan their escape; the foiled meeting in the woods by Ninus' tomb which leads to tragedy. There is even a balance between them in that in each case their coming together is thwarted by the intervention of a third character: in the first instance, comically, by Wall (replacing and effectively symbolizing the excised parental opposition); in the second, tragically, by Lion.

The balance between the scenes is reinforced, ballad-like, by some verbal echos:

Thanks courteous wall

...

I thank thee, Moon

My cherry lips

...

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These lily lips, this cherry nose.

And there are more local repetitions within Bottom's parallel addresses in the first scene to night and Wall:

O grim-look'd night! O night . . .

O night . . .

O night, O night, alack, alack, alack

. . .

O wall, O sweet O lovely wall . . .

Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall.

Often acclaimed as parodying earlier dramatic poetry, the dialogue of *Pyramus and Thisbe* may equally be a poet's wry tribute to what 'fribbling' players did to his text, and that some improvisation did occur may be suggested by the discrepancy between the lines spoken by Pyramus and Thisbe in rehearsal (III.i.78ff.) and in the performance (V.i.192ff.): the latter is briefer and also contains some repetition (196-7):

Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true

As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

(One would have expected a new pair of lovers, or a least a reversal of their order, in the second line.) Shakespeare's reconstruction of a text under pressure also includes instances where the player's incompetence or fright leads to garbling (e.g. the mis-punctuating of the Prologue) and where audience pressure prompts total textual collapse (Moonshine's reduction of his part to a prose paraphrase). And one wonders what embarrassment Shakespeare is recalling by having Ninus's Tomb become 'Ninny's'.

* * *

Against this background one turns, with the utmost caution, to the question of whether such symptoms of change-in-transmission and steps towards a *Zielform* may actually be discernible in surviving Elizabethan play texts. Early printings based on an author's 'foul papers' or the 'book of the play' sold to the players would be of no relevance in this respect, while one based on a prompt copy would reflect only the

deliberate changes involved in readying the script for the stage. But there remains the hope that some at least of those notorious 'bad' quartos of plays by Shakespeare and other dramatists may reflect the state of the text at a stage further along its theatrical career by virtue of some way constituting recordings of performances: either by being taken down during performance by some form of shorthand, or by being 'memorial reconstructions' written or dictated by players to replace a lost prompt copy or to facilitate a 'pirate' edition by a printer without legitimate access to the play.¹⁶ I would assert that the studies and examples of folk tradition invoked above provide as reliable a tool as we are ever likely to achieve in detecting the symptoms of a play's passage through oral transmission. And the most reliable of those symptoms is the presence of repetition-patterns generated through internal contamination.

The classic Shakespearean case is of course *Hamlet*, whose notoriously 'bad' first quarto of 1603 is generally reckoned to be a reported text, i.e. a memorial reconstruction,¹⁷ and that this text has been through a phase of oral transmission at some point is strongly suggested by the way it generates verbal repetitions by internal contamination of the original (more closely represented in the Folio and second quarto texts). For example in the 'Nunnery Scene':¹⁸

Q2

Ham. Get thee a Nunry.

...

crawling betweene earth and heauen,

wee are arrant knaues, beleeeue none of vs,
goe thy waies to a Nunry.

Where's your father?

Oph. At home my Lord.

Ham. Let the doores be
shvt vpon him,
That he may play the foole no where
but in's owne house. Farewell.

Oph. O helpe him you sweet heauens.

Ham. If thou doost marry,

...

Get thee to a Nunry, farewell.

Q1

Ham. Go to a Nunnery goe.

...

crawling between heauen and earth?

To a Nunnery goe,
we are arrant knaues all, Beleeue none of vs,
to a Nunnery goe.

Oph. O heauens secure him!

Ham. Wher's thy father?

Oph. At home my lord.

Ham. For Gods sake let the doores be
shut on him,
He may play the foole no where
but in his Owne house:
to a Nunnery goe.

Oph. Help him good God.

Ham. If thou dost marry,

...

to a Nunnery goe.

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<p>Or if thou wilt needes marry, ... <u>To a Nunry goe</u>, and quickly too, farewell. <i>Oph.</i> <u>Heauenly powers restore him.</u> <i>Ham.</i> I haue heard of your paintings shall keep as they are: <u>to a Nunry go</u>. <i>Oph.</i> O what a noble mind is heere orethrowne!</p>	<p><i>Oph.</i> Alas, what change is this? <i>Ham.</i> But if thou wilt needes marry <u>to a Nunnery goe</u>. <i>Oph.</i> <u>Pray God restore him.</u> <i>Ham.</i> Nay, I haue heard of your paintings shall keepe as they are, <u>to a Nunnery goe</u>. <u>To a Nunnery goe</u>. <i>Oph.</i> <u>Great God of heauen,</u> what a quicke change is this?</p>
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The original's five expostulations about the nunnery become eight in the first Quarto, and through internal contamination all acquire the same formulation, based on one (twice-occurring) variation of the original's three distinct formulations. And five times (as against twice in Q2) the phrase functions as the signal for an exclamation by Ophelia, the dialogue acquiring a highly patterned, almost liturgical quality. Ophelia's exclamations punctuate Hamlet's tirade like the 'Good Lord, deliver us' responses of the Litany (and indeed Ophelia now has four appeals to heaven as opposed to the two of Q2).¹⁹

But while this merely confirms a generally agreed status for the bad quarto of *Hamlet* there is a less consensual scholarly context for the case of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, whose two printed texts (the A-Text of 1604; the B-Text of 1616) have long vied for editorial favour as closer to Marlowe's original (at least in the days when this was a significant editorial question). As the following instance indicates, the A-text is characterized by a striking concentration of verbal patternings, most of which can be seen to have been generated by the repetition (through internal contamination) of phrases used only once in the B-text:²⁰

B-Text (1616), III.ii.1073ff.

Pope. Lord Archbishop of Reames,
 sit down with vs.
Bish. I thanke your Holinesse.
Faust. Fall to, the Diuelle
 choke you an you spare.

A-Text (1604), vii.880ff.

Pope. My Lord of Lorraine, wilt
 please you draw neare.

Fau. Fall too, and the diuel
 choake you and you spare.

Pope. Who's that spoke?

Friers looke about,

Lord Raymond pray fall too,

I am beholding

To the Bishop of Millaine,

for this so rare a present.

Fau. I thanke you sir.

Pope. How now?

who snatch't

the meat from me!

Villaines why speake you not?

My good Lord Archbishop,

heres a most daintie dish,

Was sent me from

a Cardinall in France.

Pope. How now,

whose that which spake?

Friers looke about.

Fri. Heere's no body, if it like your Holynesse.

Pope. My Lord

here is a daintie dishe

was sent me from

the Bishop of Millaine.

Fau. I thanke you sir.

Pope. How now,

whose that which snatch

the meat from me?

will no man looke?

My Lord,

this dish

was sent me from

the Cardinall of Flo-rence.

We are at the Pope's banquet, where his holiness offers greetings and dishes to his guests, only to be interrupted by the invisible Faustus. In the B-text he addresses 'Lord Archbishop of Reames', 'Lord Raymond', and 'My good Lord Archbishop'; in the A-text they have all become 'My Lord'. Twice interrupted, in the B-text he exclaims in different formulations ('Who's that spoke?'; 'How now? who . . .'), while in the A-text he uses identical phrases, conglomerating words of the two original formulations (How now, whose that which . . .?). And the instructions to 'look' and 'speak' in the B-text are regularized to 'look' in the A-Text. Offering two dishes, he presents them with quite different formulations in the B-Text (I am beholding to . . .'; 'here's a most daintie dish'), in the A-text with an identical formulation ('. . . dish was sent me from the . . . of . . .'). It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the A-text derives, via oral transmission, from the B-text, although since conventional wisdom (on the basis of orthodox philology) currently makes the B-text less authoritative/authorial than A,²¹ the conclusion would need to be formulated carefully, say along the lines of: The A-version derives, via oral transmission, from an original whose text, *in those parts common to both versions*, is better represented by the B-version.

But while it can – to this degree – be demonstrated that some texts have been through a phase of oral transmission, in the case of 'bad' quartos displaying these symptoms (e.g. *Hamlet*; another clear instance is Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*) there

remains the question of where exactly to place this oral phase. Do the verbal repetitions just illustrated, along with other focussing and patterning that moves a text towards its *Zielform*, occur during the process of memorial reconstruction itself,²² or were they already in progress during those earlier acts of recall undertaken by the players on the stage; i.e. were they an aspect of the text as performed? The folklore parallel suggests the latter,²³ but against this is the frequent assertion that some roles in a reconstructed play are preserved better than others, suggesting that the imperfections (the reshapings) occur in those parts with which the reporter is least familiar, and therefore in the act of reporting, rather than on stage. In the case of 'bad' texts for which we do not have the original the accuracy or otherwise of this or that part is inevitably a matter of subjective assessment; where it can be documented by comparison with the original it may be that the reporters had had more recent access to the written texts of some roles than others.²⁴ But whatever the case with individual plays or instances it could be asserted that the process of recalling the text for a memorial reconstruction differs in degree rather than kind from recalling it on stage: the effort of reporting merely speeds up the process, and given sufficient time and pressure, the sort of focussing and patterning evinced by the bad quartos would sooner or later manifest itself in performance.

* * *

Watching the Elizabethan play-text change shape under stress has a more than philological significance. The inexact reproduction of Shakespeare's text on stage is corruption only from a bardolatrous, literary perspective which privileges one variant of a text (the author's) over others (the collective achievement of author and performers). Folklore research suggests that it is to such collective achievement that we owe the glittering steely surface and unyielding narrative logic of the classic folktales, and the much acclaimed stark simplicity of the traditional ballads. As Axel Olrik noted, the 'rigid stylizing of life' characterizing traditional narrative 'has its own peculiar aesthetic value',²⁵ like the liturgical patterns emerging in the Nunnery scene in Hamlet or the series of stylized slayings to which *The Massacre of Paris* is in the process of being reduced. There is in other words a vernacular aesthetic operative in this process whose products, even at the expense of Marlowe's mighty lines and Shakespeare's rhymes and images, may warrant appreciation.

Bardolatrous skeptics may take refuge in the notion that the changes in a text under pressure, whatever their own aesthetic value, also reveal something about the original. Retention and subtraction reveal inner strengths and weaknesses, ruthlessly

separating what is essential from what is not; repetitions emerging at the verbal and dramaturgical levels emphasize, or reveal, similarities and rhythms already present at deeper levels. As Max Lüthi says of the *Zielform* of a legend: it is not constructed from the original, but emerges out of it, tradition being effectively a form of interpretation of a story, 'so that the narrative concept inherent in it emerges more purely, more clearly, more logically than in the original'.²⁶ Much of this may have been true of Elizabethan theatrical performance as well, where a company's 'interpretation' of a play was not so much something they achieved, deliberately and as a reflection of their command of the material, getting it right, in the way they wanted to, but equally or rather a constructive failure, reflecting their loss of control of the material, which as in folk tradition is living, and so changing, and so free to interpret itself.

NOTES

¹ For major statements in this process see E.R. Leach, 'Golden Bough or Gilded Twig?', *Daedalus* 90 (1961), 371-87; Georgina Boyes, 'Cultural Survivals Theory and Traditional Customs. An Examination of the effects of privileging on the Form and Perception of Some English Calendar Customs', *Folk Life* 26 (1987-88), 5-11; Thomas Pettitt, 'Early English Traditional Drama: Approaches and Perspectives', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 25 (1983, for 1982), 1-30.

² Mary Ellen Brown, 'Mr. Child's Scottish Mentor: William Motherwell', in *Ballads into Books: The Legacies of Francis James Child*, ed. by Tom Cheesman and Sigrid Rieuwerts (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997), pp. 29-39; Flemming Andersen, "'All there is . . . as it is": On the Development of Textual Criticism in Ballad Studies', *Jahrbuch für Volksliedforschung* 39 (1994), 28-40.

³ I am grateful for the encouraging reception given by both actors and scholars to an early formulation of the ensuing notions at the conference, 'Within this Wooden O', at the International Shakespeare Globe Centre, London, in April 1995.

⁴ Michael Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 54-55.

⁵ *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. by R.A. Foakes & R.T. Rickert (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1961), p. 25.

⁶ Stephen Joseph, *The Story of the Theatre in England* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1963), p. 93, citing Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick* (1780).

⁷ A.B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (New York: Atheneum, 1974), pp. 26-29. For the controversy on oral transmission see Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts. A Guide to Research Practices* (London: Routledge, 1992); John Miles Foley, *Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research: An Introduction and Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1985).

⁸ On the thinking behind this term see my 'The Ballad of Tradition: In Pursuit of a Vernacular Aesthetic', in *Ballads into Books: The Legacies of Francis James Child*, ed. by Tom Cheesman & Sigrid Rieuwerts (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997), pp. 111-23.

⁹ Axel Olrik, 'Epische Gesetze der Volksdichtung', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 51 (1909), 1-12, trans. as 'Epic Laws of Folk Narrative', in *The Study of Folklore*, ed. by Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965), pp. 131-41.

¹⁰ Max Lüthi, 'Urform und Zielform in Sage und Märchen', *Fabula* 9 (1967), 41-54, particularly pp. 48-49; for a summary of the thesis in English see Max Lüthi, 'Aspects of the Märchen and the Legend', in *Folklore Genres*, ed. by Dan Ben-Amos (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), pp. 17-33, at pp. 26-28.

¹¹ For these findings, so far based on four ballads, each with numerous oral derivatives, see Flemming G. Andersen & Thomas Pettitt, "'The Murder of Maria Marten': The Birth of a Ballad?", in *Narrative Folksong. New Directions*, ed. by Carol L. Edwards & Kathleen E.B. Manley (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 132-78; Thomas Pettitt, "'Worn by the Friction of Time": Oral Tradition and the Generation of the Balladic Narrative Mode' [on 'The Berkshire Tragedy'], in *Contexts of Pre-Novel Narrative. The European Tradition*, ed. by Roy Eriksen (Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 341-72; 'Ballad Singers and Ballad Style: The Case of the Murdered Sweethearts' [on 'The Downfall of William Grismond'], in *The Entertainer in Medieval and Traditional Culture: A Symposium*, ed. by Flemming G. Andersen *et al.*, (Odense: Odense University Press, 1997), pp. 101-31; 'The Ballad of Tradition: In Pursuit of a Vernacular Aesthetic', in *Ballads into Books: The Legacies of Francis James Child*, ed. by Tom Cheesman & Sigrid Rieuwerths (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997), pp. 111-23.

¹² Charles Hindley, *The Life and Times of James Catnach* (1878; repr. Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1968), p. 187 (Original Broadside); *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs*, ed. by Maud Karpeles (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), no. 69A (as sung by William aka Robert Feast at Ely Union).

¹³ Material kindly supplied by Peter Millington in connection with his paper, 'Textual Origin of the St. Kitts Mummies' Plays. A Study in Textual Variation', Traditional Drama Conference, Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, University of Sheffield, July 1994; the latter now published as 'Mrs. Ewing and the Textual origin of the St Kitts Mummies' Play', *Folklore* 107 (1996), 77-89.

¹⁴ Thomas Pettitt, 'Formulaic Dramaturgy in Doctor Faustus', in *A Poet and a Filthy Play-Maker. New Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. by Kenneth Friedenreich, Roma Gill & Constance B. Kuriyama (New York: AMS Press, 1988), pp. 167-91.

¹⁵ Quotations from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Harold F. Brooks, Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1979).

¹⁶ The most authoritative recent examination of these questions is Laurie E. Maguire's *Shakespearean suspect texts: The 'bad' quartos and their contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), which deploys criteria derived in part from the ballad studies invoked above.

¹⁷ *Hamlet*, ed. by Harold Jenkins, Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1982), pp. 19-20; 39.

¹⁸ *The Three-Text HAMLET*, ed. by Paul Bertram & Bernice W. Kliman (New York: AMS Press, 1991), pp. 126-29.

¹⁹ In insisting (*Shakespearean suspect texts*, p. 170) on a certain length for repetition to qualify as significant in this question, Maguire is able to conclude (255) that there are no internal repetitions in Q1 *Hamlet*: I would assert that these are very much on a

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par with the ballad examples given above, especially as the repetitions can be seen emerging from internal contamination in the original.

²⁰ *Doctor Faustus. 1604 - 1616. Parallel Texts*, ed. by W.W. Greg (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950). Maguire (p. 241), again applying criteria which demand more substantial repetitions than the ballad model warrants, concludes that there is no internal repetition in the A-text of *Doctor Faustus*.

²¹ See Eric Rasmussen's *A Textual Companion to Doctor Faustus* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

²² Maguire's *Shakespearean suspect texts* deploys textual features as criteria for detecting memorial reconstruction rather than the impact of oral transmission on stage performance.

²³ See also R.A. Cave's review of three editions in the Oxford Shakespeare in *Theatre Research International* 9 (1984), 141-45.

²⁴ David Bradley, *From Text to Performance in the Elizabethan Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), p. 9, points to a badly reported scene in the bad quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* in which both of the supposed reporters (in the roles of Paris and Romeo) were on stage, but this in the context of a general argument questioning the whole business of memorial reconstruction.

²⁵ Olrik, 'Epic Laws of Folk Narrative', p. 138.

²⁶ Lüthi, 'Urform und Zielform', 48 (my translation).

Impersonating Spirits: Ghosts and Souls on the Medieval Stage

Rafael Portillo

One of the most fascinating and yet puzzling aspects of medieval plays is their method of presentation, that is the techniques and devices that might have been employed in their performance. In most cases, the dramatic texts either lack reliable stage directions or are not particularly explicit about stage business.¹ So, when a direction indicates in pageant II (The Drapers Play) of the Chester mystery cycle that 'Then God doth make the woman of the ribbe of Adam . . .' (128), it is really hard for a modern reader to envisage what fifteenth-century actors could have actually done.² Similarly, in N-Town 25 (The Raising of Lazarus), Lazarus dies saying, 'To God in hevyn my sowle I qweth./ Farwell, systeryn, for hens I wende' (107-08), and a stage-direction adds: *Hic Lazarus moritur, et cetera* (108sd).³ It is difficult to know what that mystifying *et cetera* could refer to, but there surely existed a well-known code of signs and gestures, easily recognizable by the audience, which made it possible for an actor to pretend to lie 'dead' onstage while his 'soul' was rising up to heaven.

There are many other similarly puzzling cases in medieval drama. This paper focuses precisely on the problems posed when actors – mostly in the English theatre – have to impersonate spirits. As well as attempting to show the difficulties involved, whenever possible I shall suggest practical solutions with regard to acting methods and devices. In each case, the main reference is the dramatic text, which is here treated as the 'script' for a conjectural performance. When the purely theatrical-speculative method fails or is not sufficient, medieval iconography is used as a complementary aid.

Although medieval English theatre is mostly religious, not very many 'spirit' characters appear. Angels and devils should perhaps not be regarded as such, since they seem to be usually treated as corporeal, even when they are shown descending from an upper level – heaven – or coming up from the low depths of hell. There is, however, a group of characters who are unmistakably

considered spirits and should have appeared as such onstage. They are either souls or ghosts, and their roles are quite significant for the dramatic action and for the doctrinal – theological and/or moral – teaching of the plays. The following is a tentative typology of all spirits found in the English plays:

- a. The Holy Ghost, visible to other personages and to the audience in a fair number of plays, with or without a speaking part.
- b. The souls of dying people which, as soon as their bodies drop dead, fly up to heaven or are dragged down to hell.
- c. The character known as Anima Christi – the Soul of Jesus after crucifixion – who acts as Heaven's champion in the 'Harrowing of Hell' plays.
- d. In the same plays, the procession of souls freed from hell – Adam, Eve, Abraham, John the Baptist etc. – which appear and walk on stage too.
- e. Souls – like that of Mary in the N-Town Assumption – which go back to their bodies, bringing about their resurrection.
- f. Good or bad spirits, similar but not identical to angels or devils, who enter the body of other people and act as their counsellors.
- g. The Human Soul, to be found as an allegorical, independent character in *Wisdom* only, even if it appears with some allegorical features in other moralities as well.⁴

The Holy Ghost is necessarily represented in a number of English mysteries, especially in the Parliament of Heaven (N-Town), and the Annunciation, the Baptism of Jesus and Pentecost (all cycles).⁵ Since in most cases this character does not have a speaking part, one may assume that a dummy in the shape of a white dove was lowered down with the help of ropes or a pulley. This is recorded as the standard practice in medieval Lincoln at Whitsun.⁶ Such a procedure seems to be intended when in N-Town 22 (The Baptism) a stage direction reads: *Spiritus Sanctus hic descendat super ipsum, et Deus, Pater Celestis, dicet in celo* (92sd); and likewise, in the Digby *Conversion of Saint Paul*, when Ananias blesses Paul: *Hic aparebit spiritus sanctus super eum* (291sd).⁷ In N-Town 40 (Pentecost), the stage business – whatever it was – would have been fairly conventional, as it is taken for granted in the first stage direction: *Modo de die Pentecostes. Apostoli dica[n]t genuflectentes; Spiritus Sanctus descendat super eos, et cetera* (1sd).

Other plays are much more explicit about the devices employed. For instance, in N-Town 10 (The Marriage of Mary and Joseph), an angel speaks on behalf of (actually in lieu of) the Holy Spirit (120-32), and in Chester XXI (Pentecost), flames or 'tongues of fire' are placed by angels on the heads of the

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apostles, thus avoiding the appearance of the Holy Ghost. In order that the audience may be aware of His coming, God the Father, probably speaking from above, announces: 'Nowe will I send . . . my Ghooste . . . in lycknes of fyre freelye . . .' (231-35). Similarly, in Chester VI (The Annunciation) Gabriel announces that the Holy Ghost will 'shadow' Mary (29).

The most exciting case of a speaking Holy Spirit is in N-Town 11 (The Parliament of Heaven), for in the first section of this play the three Persons of the Holy Trinity converse in heaven about the fate of mankind, and then speak to Gabriel, sending him down to Mary's house. The part of the Holy Spirit would have been undertaken here by a living actor, since he would have had to appear sitting by God the Father, and then speak. This uncommon presentation of the Holy Ghost – usually portrayed in most pictures as a dove – would have been familiar to a medieval audience, as in Jacobus's *Homilies* (a twelfth-century manuscript) He is depicted as a real person, and the *Book of Hours* of the Duchess Catherine of Cleves (c.1420-30) shows Him as a priest – wearing an alb and a stole – sitting by the Father.⁸ Also, in an alabaster panel in the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Holy Spirit appears as a man holding a book.⁹

The second part of that same pageant is more striking, for here must be shown the three Persons descending to Mary during the Annunciation episode. This is explained in a very puzzling stage direction:

*Here þe Holy Gost descendit with iij bemys to oure Lady, the
Sone of þe Godhead nest with iij bemys to þe Holy Gost, the
Fadyr godly with iij bemys to þe Sone. And so entre all thre to
here bosom, and Mary seyth (292sd).*

Here, not only the Holy Ghost, but all three Persons must have been either dolls (handled by actors from behind) or pictures, linked to each other by means of gilded wires (the light beams or rays). From the thirteenth century onwards some paintings of the Annunciation showed the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost in a descending line, all linked by rays which point to Mary. How they entered her bosom remains unclear, but a convenient trapdoor strategically placed in the stage floor may have solved the problem.

When human souls did not have speaking parts, an easy solution would have been to use either puppet-birds, small dolls or statues. Souls had often been equated with birds in ancient Egypt, an idea later taken up in Christian iconography; some pictures show doves coming through the mouths of dead

bodies.¹⁰ On the other hand, a fair number of medieval paintings and sculptures portray the soul as a miniature person. Illustrations of the Death of the Virgin, for instance, show Jesus or an angel holding a miniature Mary, which presumably has come out of her body, and will eventually return to it so that She may rise again.¹¹ The N-Town Assumption (41) probably employed a doll when, according to a stage direction, *Hic exiet anima Marie de corpore in sinu[m] Dei* (329sd); the same method must have been used in the Antichrist plays, which show people reviving. A similar practice prevails in the performance of the Elche mystery today.

The only case of a speaking soul seems to be that of Anima in *The Castile of Perseverance*,¹² and therefore a living actor would have been necessary once again, as the initial directions demand that 'Mankyndeis bed schal be vndyr þe castel/ and þer schal þe sowle lye vndyr þe bed tyl/ he schal ryse and pleye'. A living actor (a child?) would have had to undertake that part, since after the death of the body (3007) Anima has to speak and act, and in 3593 he (she?) actually climbs up to the scaffold that stands for God's throne. Apart from Anima in *Wisdom* (which is an independent character), this is the most active role of a 'soul' in medieval English drama, probably because it is the spirit counterpart of Humanum Genus, an allegory of mankind.

Everyman's spirit, on the other hand, does not speak, but his presence is essential for the outcome of the morality *Everyman*, as only when his soul is seen going up to heaven is salvation finally accomplished.¹³ An angel greets him with the words 'Come, eccellente electe spouse, to Iesu!' (894) which bear a strong resemblance to the angel's song in the York Assumption (XLV) *Veni electa mea* (208, 312), actually a liturgical text (the fourth antiphon of the Common of Virgins) inserted in the play in order to stage the mystical 'marriage' of the human soul to Jesus. In a very enlightening paper, Cowling wonders whether Everyman's soul may be '... a separate female figure who ascends from the grave to the tower of heaven' (p. 302);¹⁴ but, as has been suggested elsewhere, an angel hauling up a doll – by means of a pulley – from the grave to the space above, would have been more effective. Alternatively, the angel could have carried the 'soul' in his own arms, just like Jesus in the N-Town Assumption play quoted above.¹⁵ Similar methods would have been employed in the Digby play of *Mary Magdalen* when a group of angels is supposed to lift up Magdalen's soul (2119-20), and in Bodel's *Le Jeu de Saint Nicolas*, since an angel collects the souls of the dead, while their bodies are being removed from the stage by Saracens.¹⁶

So far, only the souls of the saved have been mentioned, but the

presentation of damned souls must have been even more exciting. A simple way of disposing of bad souls is already suggested in the Anglo-Norman *Le Jeu d'Adam*, where characters are simply dropped body and soul into hell's mouth.¹⁷ Similarly, a devil disposes of Herod and two soldiers – dragging away body and soul to hell – in N-Town 20 (The Death of Herod, 233-45). The Chester Herod play (X), however, seems to require the carrying of Herod's very soul to hell, as a devil remarks: 'From Lucifer, that lord, I am sent/ to fetch this kinges sowle here present/ into hell' (442-44).

Although the texts are not explicit enough, English actors would have been familiar with the picture of devils opening up Herod's body in order to seize his soul, for a 'Norwich roof-boss shows devils dragging Herod's soul from his body';¹⁸ a doll – probably in the shape of a devil, or even a black bird or dove – could have been used in these cases. In the *Cornish Ordinalia*, several devils appear after Adam's death, and a stage direction reads: *Hic accipiat animam et portabit ad infernum*.¹⁹ In Chester XXIII (Antichrist) there is no doubt that devils seize the body and soul of Antichrist separately, since the text indicates: *Tunc capient animam eius, et potius corpus* (678sd); then, a devil says 'His soule with sorrowe in hand have I hent' (679), which seems to demand the practice employed in the 'Peniarth Antichrist': *Tunc ibunt demones ad infernum cum animam Antechristi*.²⁰

The episodes enacting the death of Judas might have involved a detailed process of disembowelment in order to seize his soul, as a devil says in the *Cornish Ordinalia*: 'But your soul, you loathsome wretch, won't come through your mouth because you have kissed the Christ'.²¹ According to an old tradition, Judas's damned soul could not come out through his mouth, for his lips had been in contact with Jesus's face. Certain medieval paintings echo this tradition and the English would have certainly been familiar with the practice of disembowelling the bodies of criminals at the scaffold.²²

The souls of Christ and other biblical characters in the Harrowing of Hell episodes are even more relevant to our topic: they all speak, and therefore would have certainly been played by living actors. These souls, however, would have been fairly different from those mentioned by Meg Twycross, as she actually refers to *bodies* that have come back to life in the course of Doomsday, not to single souls.²³

All four English cycles include the Harrowing of Hell – N-Town devotes two pageants to it – whose characters are spirits, even if little is said about their actual performance. The N-Town Anima Christi first declares in pageant 33 (The

Harrowing of Hell, I) 'I am þe sowle of Cryst Jesu./ . . My body is ded' (9, 11), but then (35: The Harrowing of Hell, II) it has to carry out the following puzzling business: *Tunc transiet Anima Christi ad resuscitandum corpus* (72sd). In the Towneley and York cycles, Christ's soul just states that his body is in the grave. It is not easy to envisage the outward appearance of these souls, but since it has been proved that there existed a type of costume (black or white) to indicate the 'nakedness' of the Doomsday 'souls' (Twycross, 1989), one may assume that some kind of 'spirit' uniform was worn by actors to impersonate souls without bodies. A fifteenth-century painting – the Golden Panel from Lüneburg, Hanover – depicts the Harrowing-of-Hell souls as white figures;²⁴ also, Paris, B.N. MS de Cangé 819 identifies the soul of a pope as a man wearing the triple crown, dressed up in a white loose shirt and trousers.²⁵ It is very likely then that those souls would have worn a special 'spirit' garment.

As for the likely costume employed for Christ's soul, the *Cornish Ordinalia* may again be relied upon, since in those plays Jesus distinguishes himself from angels in that angels wear a white robe, whereas His is red.²⁶ At the moment of his Ascension, Jesus explains the symbolic meaning of that colour: 'Red is mine by right, seeing that my coat of mail/ became a coat of blood . . .'.²⁷ The playwright here echoes the Vulgate (Isaiah 63: 1-3 and Revelations 19: 13) which refers to a warrior, stained in red (blood) after treading alone the *torcular* or winepress of war. The actor could have worn a red gown to signify Christ's spiritual nature; at the moment of the resurrection (N-Town) he could have simply taken the gown off, thus appearing in his 'naked' costume beneath. The practice of wearing two different costumes, one on top of the other, is found in *Wisdom*, as a stage direction reveals: 'And aftyr þe songe entreth LUCYFER in a dewyllys aray wythowt and wythin as a prowde galonte' (324sd).

Finally, the good and bad spirits who seem to influence the conduct of other characters should be considered. Good spirits are normally portrayed as good angels in *The Castle of Perseverance* and the Digby play of *Mary Magdalen* and so their outer appearance was probably that of angels. Bad spirits, however, may have taken different shapes. A devil enters the body of Pilate's wife in her sleep – N-Town and York cycles – whereas devils, bad angels and the allegories of the seven deadly sins all seem to appear in *Mary Magdalen*, where the following stage direction can be read: 'Wyth þis word vij dyllys xall de-woyde frome þe woman . . .'. (691sd). It is not easy to figure out the type of device employed here, but it may be assumed that a trap, appropriate disguises, and skilful theatre practice were involved.

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Impersonating spirits must have entailed a great deal of ingenuity on the part of medieval players and producers, as those characters are involved in pivotal scenes. Beyond the evidence of sparsely surviving theatrical records, however, actual theatrical practice may be surmised from medieval iconography as well as from traditional and folk customs.

NOTES

¹ This article follows up Meg Twycross's enlightening articles, "'With What Body Shall They Come?': Black and White Souls in the English Mystery Plays', *Proceedings of the Sixth Triennial Colloquium of S.I.T.M.*, Lancaster, 13-19 July 1989, 207B-215A [later published in *Langland, the Mystics, and the Medieval English Religious Tradition: Essays in Honour of S.S. Hussey*, ed. by Helen Phillips (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), pp. 271-86] and 'More Black and White Souls.' *Medieval English Theatre* 13 (1991), 52-63.

² *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by R.M. Lumiansky and David Mills, 2 vols, Early English Text Society, SS 3 and 9 (London: Oxford University Press, 1974 and 1986), 2 vols. All references cited are to volume 1 of this edition.

³ *The N-Town Play*, ed. by Stephen Spector, 2 vols, EETS SS 11-12 (London: Oxford University Press, 1991). All references cited are to this edition.

⁴ *Wisdom in The Macro Plays*, ed. by Mark Eccles, EETS 262 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 113-52.

⁵ See also *The Towneley Plays*, ed. by Martin Stevens and A.C. Cawley, 2 vols, EETS SS 13-14 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); *The York Plays*, ed. by Richard Beadle, (London: Edward Arnold, 1982).

⁶ Peter Meredith et al. *Acting Medieval Plays* (Lincoln: Lincoln Cathedral, 1985), p. 24.

⁷ *The Digby Plays*, ed. by F.J. Furnivall, EETS ES 70 (London: Oxford University Press, 1896, repr. 1967).

⁸ Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, 2 vols (London: Lund Humphries, 1971), I: pp. 9, 11.

⁹ M.D. Anderson, *Drama and Imagery in English Medieval Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 132.

¹⁰ Pamela Sheingorn, 'For God is Such a Doomsman', in *The Iconography of Just Judgement in Medieval Art and Drama*, ed. by David Bevington et al. (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1985), plates 7 and 11.

¹¹ Luis Quirante Santacruz, *Teatro asuncionista valenciano de los siglos XV y XVI*

(Valencia: Generalitat valenciana, 1987), pp. 314-40.

¹² *The Macro Plays*, pp. 1-111.

¹³ *Everyman*, ed. by A.C. Cawley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961).

¹⁴ Douglas Cowling, 'The Angels's Song in *Everyman*', *Notes and Queries* 233 (1988), 301-03.

¹⁵ See also R. Portillo, 'Everyman and the "Craft of Living": The Staging of Man's Last Day on Earth', in *Formes Teatrals de la tradició medieval*, ed. by Francesc Massip (Barcelona: Institute del Teatre, 1996), pp. 321-36, 326.

¹⁶ *Medieval French Plays*, trans. by Richard Axton and John Stevens (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971).

¹⁷ *Le Jeu d'Adam (El drama de Adán)*, ed. and trans. by Ricardo Redoli Morales (Málaga: Universitat de Málaga, 1994).

¹⁸ *The N-Town Play*, p. 480.

¹⁹ *The Ancient Cornish Drama*, ed. by Edwin Norris, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859), I, p. 68.

²⁰ *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, Appendix IIB, 702sd.

²¹ *The Cornish Ordinalia*, ed. by Markham Harris (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1969), p. 125.

²² Schiller, *Iconography*, II, p. 77.

²³ See note 1 above.

²⁴ Schiller, *Iconography*, II, plate 22.

²⁵ A.M. Nagler, *The Medieval Religious Stage: Shapes and Phantoms* (New York: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 75.

²⁶ Harris, *Ordinalia*, pp. 243-44.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 245-46.

Cornelis van Ghistele's Defence of Rhetoric

Elsa Strietman

In a monumental study¹ about the rhetorician and humanist Cornelis van Ghistele, Mireille Vinck-van Caekenberghe concluded that Van Ghistele was neither a great poet nor a great translator. However, his translations of the Ancients into the vernacular and his extensive use of classical material in his own Dutch and Latin writings, made him an extremely important figure in the context of Rhetoricians' culture as well as in the budding Renaissance culture of the Low Countries in the later sixteenth century.

Vinck-van Caekenberghe's work elicited admiration but also received some substantial criticism from reviewers, criticism that was understandable since in the thirteen years between the completion of the research and the date of publication Rhetoricians' studies had moved on. The main objections were that the evaluation of Van Ghistele's work remained somewhat hampered by Vinck-van Caekenberghe's ahistorical approach and that her ultimate conclusion did not do justice to either the humanist/Rhetorician or his work.

Nevertheless, the great merit of this study was founded on precisely the painstaking detail with which the author showed both the wider context of sixteenth-century Rhetoricians' culture and that of the early Renaissance and the multifarious ways in which Van Ghistele participated in both. He was a highly significant figure whose work shows the expansion of a Rhetoricians' culture which gradually allowed the infiltration of the classics and fused its own traditions with the new literary culture. We should adjust Vinck-van Caekenberghe's image of Van Ghistele as a somewhat clumsy forerunner to the great and canonized literary lions of the Dutch Golden Age to that of a positive creator in his own time and his own right. This does not deny the merits of Vinck-van Caekenberghe's work, whilst allowing Van Ghistele his place under the stars.

Van Ghistele was the literary leader, *factor*, of the Antwerp Chamber of Rhetoric De Goubloeme (The Marigold) and must have written many plays in his period of office (1550?-1570?). None of these plays has survived except a few

contributions to the, by now famed, Rhetoricians' competition (*Lantjuweel*) in Antwerp in 1561. These consist of a *Presentacie*, introducing the proposed contribution of *The Marigolds* to the competition, a *Prologhe* and the *spel van sinne* (a morality) itself, as well as an epilogue. The *Presentacie* expresses joy that peace has chased away discord and sorrow and that it is now possible for the flowers of Rhetoric to lift their heads to the sunshine. The peace referred to is that of Cambrai, 1559, which ended one of the many wars between France and Spain. Many Chambers of Rhetoric had flower names and this enabled the comparison in the *Presentacie*: *De Goubloeme* and the other Chambers can now, in loving harmony, practise their art. The *Prologhe*, a dialogue between the allegorical character *Antwerpia* and *Honest Art*, a lady, elaborates this theme and outlines the aims of the competition: to cherish and to promote the art of Rhetoric and to further the glory of Antwerp.

The theme of the 1561 competition was the relationship between commerce and art, worded as a question '*Dwelck den mensche aldermeest tot consten verweckt*'? (What inspires mankind most to the arts?) The answers to this question were expected to centre on commerce as a source of inspiration. The organizers had been very concerned indeed to come up with a theme that avoided any religious or political controversy, not surprisingly, since the Low Countries were increasingly troubled by both in this latter part of the sixteenth century.

Van Ghistele's *spel van sinne* concerns itself with the origins of the liberal arts, amongst them, prominently, the art of Rhetoric; the form is that of a discussion between a number of allegorical figures. The central figure is that of *Mankind* who is besieged by the ideas of *Avaricious Heart*, the spirit of all that is mean and grasping, the evil face of capitalism. Fortunately, *Mankind's* other instructors are of a different ilk; *Reason*, *Honourable Fame* and *Intelligent Spirit* counteract *Avaricious Heart's* malicious suggestions and demonstrate with a wealth of mythological, historical and biblical detail how the liberal arts developed and how they became the instruments of all that is good in the hands of scholars and philosophers. Trade and commerce, if conducted with integrity and without greed, can only be beneficial to the arts, in particular the art of Rhetoric. Indeed, without the skills of the *artes*, trade and commerce would not flourish.

As is so often the case in Rhetoricians' plays the message is enforced by an extra medium, that of the *toog* or *figuere*, a pictorial aid to understanding, which sometimes can take the form of a *tableau vivant*, sometimes of a text or picture. In the edition² of the plays performed in the competition which the printer Willem Silvius published in 1562 a picture is included of what could have been presented as a *tableau vivant* on the stage, but might also have been a painted pictorial aid.

Certainly, the explanation given, detail by detail, to *Mankind*, tallies with Silvius' representation.

The antecedents of the picture are complex and link this Rhetoricians' play with the popular and immense emblemata production³; the fact that Van Ghistele chose to use it shows his knowledge of the humanist culture of his time and demonstrates also how much, at that time, the vernacular culture of the Rhetoricians was widening out and becoming a Renaissance culture.

Van Ghistele does not omit to include God the Father and the Holy Spirit as ultimate sources of inspiration for the arts but the major part of his text is a roll-call of mythological and classical sages whose part in the promotion of Rhetoric and her sisters seamlessly fits into the frame formed by the Christian history of creation and salvation. Many of the descriptions and legends referred to must have come from encyclopedic writings or from the florilegia used in schools or universities, and here too the emblemata literature makes its presence prominently felt.

In the edition of 1562 the text of the play is accompanied by short glosses, sometimes no more than the name of the philosopher or scholar referred to in the discussion. Some are difficult to decipher and I have had to let some go without explanatory annotation. Though it is a task not undertaken for this contribution, there is much to be discovered and to be discussed with reference to Van Ghistele's material and sources and the annotations in the printed text which were very likely supplied by the author rather than the printer. Vinck-van Caekenberghe discusses in detail Van Ghistele's sources and the poetic theories which he implicitly voiced in these contributions to the competition and she refers to a number of other studies as well.⁴

In this case, however, I have limited myself to giving a translation of Van Ghistele's *Presentacie*, the *Prologhe* and the *spel van sinne*, with a few annotations. There is no modern edition of the Antwerp plays in their entirety and none of the texts has so far appeared in translation.

I offer this translation, with due modesty and acknowledging its defects, to one who has done a very great deal for the noble art of Rhetoric and its modern revival: to Meg Twycross, *A lady dressed in many colours with a pen and a scroll in her hand, seated upon a waggon, next to a pile of masks and pointing to Many Characters. Selete. Here they sing and play.*

Elsa Strietman

De Goubloeme van Antwerpen.



PRESENTACIE

Just as the Marigold always closes
itself in the night with a sad aspect
and is unfolded again by the sunshine,
waking in the blessed dawn,
so also we, growing flowers, likewise,
with all our fellow-brothers unified,
have woken up. For sorrow has vanished
in the light of the peace which shines brightly upon us
and they, for whom the oppressive darkness of discord

5

caused endless suffering and heavy burdens, 10
are now inspired, as is clearly apparent,
to artistic endeavour and the creation of joy
because of the peace which lightens all hearts.

And also (for you, artistic Gillyflowers,⁵ inspire us, you who are
inclined to gentleness in lovely ways 15
and to all that a real artist can achieve),
we Marigolds as one man address you
with a loving presentation
so that we can inspire everyone
to increasing virtue, without disturbance, 20
and to a loving accord, shunning
all argument which might hinder or prevent;
for virtue nor joy can be maintained,
even if all her laws are just,
if discord sets her face against them. 25

And therefore we now unite in harmony
amongst all flowers of Rhetorica
which we now see here gather.
Yes, I hope to be as unfalteringly faithful
as was incomparable Pylades to Orestes, 30
and to bring all together in a loving accord;
to make this clear to all
we now show you our honourable Motto
with an honest willing heart,
urged to do this by the active spirit 35
which inspires an ingenious find,
so that love will be elevated
now that discord has been banished.

Therefore, noble princes, receive graciously
that which our art offers you; 40
even if the art is in itself imperfect.
Only our willing heart,
which directs itself so passionately towards you,
aspires, not to glory (inviting criticism)
which often generates a doubtful rule, 45
but because we would show virtuously

according to the meaning of our Motto,
that we, as gentle brothers, in all honour,
would arouse in ourselves the nature of our art,
avoiding all that would hinder, and thus increase
joy, virtue and loving togetherness. 50

PROLOGHE

Characters

Antwerpia
Honourable Art, *a woman*

My soul rejoices thoroughly
because the tempest of bloodthirsty Mars
has now vanished and his standard is broken,
and the banners of peace are now unfurled
which have been hidden for a long time. 5
Now joy is rising everywhere
and all are inclined to the solace of art.
Therefore I, Honourable Art,
am now cherished by all,
especially by incomparable Antwerpia, 10
which now shows her pleasure like a maiden,
her love for me in a triumphant mode,
and has received all my lovers graciously.
Now to her I will wend my way
and honour her with thanks in my heart. 15
I have seen her, so will turn to her
and greet her most joyfully:
May Noah's grace, Abraham's blessedness,
Joseph's prosperity and audaciousness
be bestowed on you always. 20
Oh, unblemished maiden, worthily bepearled
who are a flower in this world
and whose nourishment benefits all.

Antwerpia

Oh Honourable Art, be welcome.
To serve you pleases me greatly 25
though all that praise makes me ashamed,
for I am not worthy of such accolades.

Honourable Art

On the contrary, I would endeavour
to voice even more praise.
Just as we see the moon shine clearly 30
under all the stars in heaven's firmament
so you shine, oh, maiden excellent,
brighter than any in all of Europe.
Would you not be worthy of praise?
It would be an uncouth character 35
who would in any way denigrate you.
To me you reveal now instantly
your virtuous intelligent nature,
for to arouse enthusiasm for me,
you desire that all good arts 40
will be revealed in all their benevolence.

Antwerpia

Reason and nature both advised me:
for those who spurn you, flower most worthy,
are useless parasites here on earth.
The world which was wild and uncouth 45
and mankind which was very uncivilized,
you have educated so graciously
that the intelligent person who embraced virtue
now acknowledges freely how greatly
you help us and how miserably 50
you are spurned by the blockheads.

Honourable Art

Why you, Antwerpia, should amply be lauded,
is that you want to broadcast my name and my fame

Elsa Strietman

so that all should delight in me,
and to cause the coarse of mind, 55
who are cruel and stern and in everything fierce,
to incline towards me and artistic endeavour.

Antwerpia

Yes, you should by all men alive
be honoured, as is befitting.
The coarse of mind scorn your doctrine 60
which is, however, divinely enriched.
Thus I have desired for the sake of your love
(as you have declared here yourself) to know,
by means of my townsmen, the Gillyflowers,
how best to arouse in the vulgar of mind 65
a wish to serve you and to cherish
your artistic gifts in every respect;
for you are the flower and you wear the crown,
oh loveliest beauty, curing with joy the sick of heart.

Honourable Art

I cannot thank you sufficiently 70
and barely repay you for all you have done:
you have summoned all rhetoricians
here into Brabant, to attend this great feast,
so that all those inclined to the art
can delight in joyous and refined experiences. 75

Antwerpia

That's my intention, for those who engage
in you, noble art, mild, pure and modest,
must endeavour, gently and tranquilly,
to profit from a harmonious unity.
Should that fail, then small comfort 80
or profit will ensue from the art.
Love and unity enable us all
to gain fame full of honour
from serving you, here on earth,

since you improve a true and valiant artist.

85

Honourable Art

Where conflict and discord have the upper hand,
there I am rejected and exiled and hurt.

But now we will yield to my true lovers
and let them speak, as they do it so well.

We will be the audience and we'll listen
in what manner they will enhance my fame.

90

The subject of their speech will be seemly;
All bad behaviour will be nipped in the bud.

Antwerpia

For my subjects will now perform

(they are Marigolds growing in virtue)

95

not for fame but for love, as befits youthful artists,
and show how you are truly worthy of praise!

Honourable Art

We hope to have pleased you so far,
noble lords, with this simple admonition,
may you graciously receive it as our Prologue.

100

**TSPEL VAN SINNE OF THE AFOREMENTIONED
MARIGOLDS.**

Characters

Mankind, *dressed in an antique mode, with in his hand the litteram*
*Pythagoræ.*⁶

Avaricious Heart, *dressed in red, with in his hand a rattle.*⁷

Intelligent Spirit, *a Youth dressed in white, singing.*

Honorable Fame, *a lady, clad in a golden yellow silk costume, with two*
wings.

Reason, *a lady.*

Mankind,

Avaricious Heart, you torment me too much,
where I go or stand, woman or man, your clutch
holds me tight, whether I eat or drink,
you're near, eager and diligent, I think.

Avaricious Heart

That's so you can use his wealth, Mankind, 5
like an honourable lord, in body and mind.
For she is a powerful lady, excellent,
who rules all the world's regiment.
Everything around her is luxurious,
like a Queen's ambiance, 10
well-known amongst the most famous,
an earthly Goddess' radiance,
and you could have her and gain profit,
only through me, and you well know it.
Adhere to her, with your heart and your mind, 15
for wealth is the blood and soul of mankind.

Mankind

But she is fickle and faithless.
Today towards this one she gives her riches,
tomorrow she smiles on the other and helps him.
And that on the whim 20
of Fortuna, whose moods are her laws;
and many she mercilessly draws
away from her in just a moment;
then their lifestyle, so opulent,
such is Fortuna's government, 25
will perish in miserable sadness.
He who was in Croesus' regiment,
she causes to plummet, like Icarus,
it's clear everywhere, into wretchedness.
Even though wealth is a great Princess 30
and helps many out of danger, yes,
Fortuna rules her as a mistress.

Avaricious Heart

I know: don't trust Fortune's machinations
nor build your foundations
on her: she rules over man's passion 35
in an untrustworthy fashion.
But I, Avaricious Heart, will not fail you,
since you will maintain love true
for wealth, and through my inspiration
will last its domination, 40
until Lybitina's temptation⁸
destroys you. That smile
of Lady Fortuna will bring oppression
in a very short while.
With a friendly mien she will beguile 45
some, (by no means all mankind)
whom she will later despoil. But I'll,
Avaricious Heart, never leave you behind.

Mankind

And if in riches I took my delight
and through your crafty cunning might 50
have them day and night in my possession
causing my destruction,
would virtue (I cannot help but ask you)
allow this and be able to bear it too?
He who is upright in his opinion, 55
for him wealth holds no attraction
but he feels great condescension,
(which shows that he is wise)
towards all wrongs, whatever their temptation.
Equally, riches cannot entice 60
him; in no way does he rise
to their false promises;
fragile, sickly human nature's demise
is caused by this short-lived rubbish.

Pausa

Intelligent Spirit

No lovelier solace is given
to mankind, in all the wide world,
by pure art when shame is driven
out and sets the wretched man free.
Those who practice art as it should be
and use their mind when they do,
eternal fame shall their share be
and they'll please the virtuous too.

That is why I, Intelligent Spirit,
do love her with virtuous affection,
for she will give honour and merit,
and rewards me without exception.

Such a reward is a more costly gift
than gold or silver however bepearled,
for even though mankind is but short-lived
such a prize will endure in the world.

The title of Princess should be the share
of art pure and chaste in her habits;
more than riches beloved everywhere
her fame is the prize for her merits.

Mankind

Whose voice does sound in my ear
so pleasant and sweet to hear
that melancholy thought is chased out?

Avaricious Heart

Keep away, there's Intelligent Spirit about,
he tends to be thoughtless, unfeeling.

Mankind

I have received from his singing
a heart full of solace and ease;
I must engage him in speaking.

Intelligent Spirit appears, singing

65

70

75

80

85

90

Avaricious Heart

Your grief will increase
if you deal with him much
but wealth will not cage you as such;
be wise: do not give him credence!

95

Mankind

Surely I can give him audience,
that is my intention, I wish it.
Well, why silent, Intelligent Spirit?
You can be vociferous, I inferred from your singing.

Intelligent Spirit

Those hearts which are frightened need cheering,
but going on for too long is a bore.

100

Mankind

Do tell me what makes your heart sore,
For your spirit plays in joyous fashion.

Intelligent Spirit

It's for her whom I love with a passion,
the most worthy I know in world's place,
for she does possess divine grace
and her being is without comparison;
and she's pure and chaste in addition;
she's worthy of my praise above all,
of my veneration the object principal,
and I loyally laud her with singing.

105

110

Mankind

Who is this whose praise you like spreading
for whom you carry a torch with such flame?
Tell us her name.

Intelligent Spirit

She's called art.

I tell you straight out: she is famous. 115

Avaricious Heart

And often (as can be seen) quite ravenous.
If you love her with such fire, begad,
then you're truly an amorous lad –
but this falls on deaf ears, I surmise.

Intelligent Spirit

Oh Avaricious Heart, you are unwise 120
to speak of the nature of art so derisory;
it is because you act mostly advisory,
urging people to chase after powerful wealth;
and many a person lost spiritual health,
I tell you no lies, in the most cruel way. 125

Avaricious Heart

Nonsense, who's able to hinder or to gainsay
the chap who gains riches on earth?

Intelligent Spirit

Amphias et Phocylides⁹

War and Fortuna can certainly mean a dearth
of the power of wealth and make it vanish;
but art you will not be able to banish, 130
neither war nor Fortuna's army
will diminish her steadfast constancy;
by your side she will remain
and many she's given great gain
who erstwhile sat in a place quite low. 135
She'll give you the means and she'll show
you the way to honest and virtuous endeavour,
and all who decently use her
she's made brave and always held in esteem.

Avaricious Heart

True, but also so poor, it would seem, 140
that they can barely touch with their bread

the end of another loaf; instead
in poverty's hamlet they forage.

Intelligent Spirit

Those are the ones who with manners savage
and unwise abuse the art foolishly. 145
If the captain steers his ship stupidly,
is his trouble the fault of the sea?
Art wants to be used with dignity
from folly of mind no delight she derives:
they are not all cooks who carry long knives, 150
that they meddle with art is a shame.
See this valiant figure, 'tis Honourable Fame,
one of art's lovers and respected no end.

Mankind

I think she's got ten on each hand,
but you alone are not in her troupe. 155

Intelligent Spirit

Many love her and she loves the whole group,
noble and ignoble, as is her nature
and all her followers of respectable stature
who favour her in harmony
form a sweet unified company. 160
You, Honourable Fame, of great reputation
will certainly give us your confirmation
that art gives her bounty in ways quite manifold.

HF appears blowing a trumpet

Honourable Fame

No sweeter sound than that which I, Fame, unfold
who announce honest gain in all crannies and nooks; 165
and as is attested in so many books
honest gain was born in the land of Greece.
So I'll blow my trumpet once more with force
for to my actions many pay heed.

Mankind

What sound is that, that tone so sweet? 170
I don't hear that often, I have to say.

Intelligent Spirit

It's Honourable Fame, who is on her way,
and what I said before is still true about art:
Fame showed her always the highest regard.
Without Fame the love of art would loose its worth. 175
Just as fortune rules wealth on this earth
(wealth which is praised by Avaricious Heart),
so what greatly increases the standing of art
is the power unparalleled, the power of Fame.

Avaricious Heart

Do I have to suffer much more of the same 180
and listen to the drivel that is given voice?

Mankind

Avaricious Heart, do hold your noise,
I want to listen to what Fame has to say.

Honourable Fame

All those who live under heaven's choir
can leave nothing behind that's immortal 185
to their benefit except praise eternal,
which is only achieved with perfection
by Intelligent Spirit who holds in affection,
with all his powers, the noble art
and those who adore her with all their heart. 190
Without boasting I can praise their worth
and call them blessed even whilst on this earth.
They bestow honour on every country and town,
all immoral behaviour they cause to go down
and within a short span of time they receive 195
praise which will never decrease but will achieve
that it shines forever as a clear light.

Look, here is Intelligent Spirit, all his might
is bent upon art, with great concentration.
I look forward now to his presentation. 200
But why does Avaricious heart occupy
the place next to him, with unrest as ally,
that enemy of all art, to what end?

Intelligent Spirit

Honourable Fame, you are my friend,
your voice is balm for my spirit, 205
and honest gain is sweetly nourishing it,
it's a medicine for the soul and won't fail.

Honourable Fame

Out of love for you I come with my tale.
But first tell me, answer me freely
why do I see you here in the company 210
of Avaricious Heart, no friend of ours,
who panders to wealth as a slave at all hours
and denies virtue to himself and mankind.

Intelligent Spirit

Fame, fame you are of such powerful mind;
I shall explain the reason and make this clear: 215
It's art alone that gives me joy and cheer,
and Avaricious Heart can't harm my health
but he would like to lure mankind to wealth;
I hate it as I hate a spider full of poison.

Honourable Fame

Blessed are those who use wealth within reason, 220
for honest benefit, and know its deprivations;
for them art's lustre will know no limitations.
But Avaricious Heart will gain no ground,
for him my trumpet will make no triumphant sound
but only for those, wherever they may dwell, 225
whom I can enlist to cause art's ranks to swell,

even if Avaricious Heart goes on mocking
mankind, with restless grief tormenting
and inciting him to all kinds of serious mischief.

She blows again

Mankind

Honourable Fame, your sweet words make me believe 230
that I can put my trust in you, without hesitation,
but I would like to ask you for information:
what do you call your instrument, that trumpet?

Honourable Fame

I call her Honest Gain; that's what you'll get
when, like art's lovers, you like to hear her play. 235
Avaricious Heart, restlessly, longs to make you sway
and pursue dishonest gain which causes great corruption.
Just like a sick man develops a lasting aversion
to the sweetness of food, and, I'm not unjust,
likewise Avaricious Heart views with great disgust 240
Honourable Fame whenever she appears
and honest gain sounds discordant in his ears;
it makes him vomit, it's often proven, truly.

Mankind

I think I understand your declaration fully;
it makes me desire to practice art unblemished, 245
through honest gain, for which my heart is famished;
you sang its praises. And you get lost, away from here,
Avaricious Heart, leave me alone, I don't want you near,
your sharp practices I fear; they make me shiver.

Avaricious Heart

Well, Honourable Fame, I don't exactly quiver 250
with excitement at any of your games, they're a bore!
I'll try another place, a more promising shore.
There's little point in staying, no advantage.

Cornelis van Ghistele's Defence of Rhetoric

Honourable Fame

Look, here comes Reason, there's a worthy personage,
he'll help us show that it's just and wise 255
that everyone should bow to art and realise
that she's greater than wealth, whatever its reputation.

Reason appears, clad in blue with a bridle in her hand

Reason

Who could still doubt what is the true situation?
Aided by me, Reason, art will greatly benefit
and you, Honourable Fame, will send her honest profit, 260
forever in this world and in such a fashion
that wealth (hunted by avaricious people with a passion)
is not heeded for itself; 't will be quite natural
to use it in a manner, entirely beneficial.
For art, a philosopher once said, and wisely, 265
makes mankind great, and gives liberality,
which is why we speak of the liberal arts
which with various gifts enrich people's hearts,
suitable to each; this is, Intelligent Spirit, through you.

Intelligent Spirit

Grammar is a sweet kernel from which we do 270
receive the first inspiration for our art.
Dialectic also plays her well-mannered part
and also Rhetoric, very praise-worthy,
a gift which not only makes us happy
but stirs, teaches, shows what is virtuous. 275

Honourable Fame

Astronomy has made many famous
and given them greatness through the ages
And Cosmography describes, in all its stages,
the world with the help of the arts.
Geometry who measures all parts, 280
gives each satisfaction, one mustn't forget.

Reason

And Arithmetic needs to be added to that,
whilst Music must not be left behind:
she plants joy in the heart of mankind
and chases away melancholy with her might. 285

Intelligent Spirit

These are such gifts of which scholars write
(which the ignorant may well despise).
but for art's lovers it is a great prize.
Without the enhancing spirit of art, I can tell,
no realm can be governed at all well 290
as Fame will explain now in detail.

Honourable Fame

Therefore Aristippus¹⁰ considered, without fail,
'twould be better to beg for a living
than to lack art's talents and teaching,
which dignifies not just the individual 295
but gives to the common weal in general
honourable profit which can't fail to please.

Mankind

Your words, Honourable Fame, do increase
my feelings, ever more, ever better,
of the love towards art that I harbour 300
and which makes me reject with passion
wealth, which is only a temporal possession,
and much inferior to art, as I hear.

Reason

They must be foolish or mad, it is clear,
or like creatures without reasonable thinking, 305
to cast doubts on art's wonderful blessing,
and despise what we all should adore,

Cornelis van Ghistele's Defence of Rhetoric

Intelligent Spirit

which we all need,

Reason

which is worth more
than any other thing under the sun's light.
A wise philosopher¹¹ once did write
that all the gifts that art can bestow
are given by God to us here below;
Art's fame'll never die but with all her might,
will serve her, you see, far and wide,
will encourage her lovers with benefits,
reveal art's gifts and all well-deserved profits
which have ever been given to man.

Philon 310

315

Mankind

Such great gifts! Is't possible that I can
receive those and that her grace so sweet
will also come to me?

Intelligent Spirit

Indeed!

320

I, Intelligent Spirit, will be helping.

Reason

I, Reason, will assuage your great longing;
for without me you would not achieve it.

Honourable Fame

True, it's needful for all to perceive it
for just as God governs the world and mankind
so reason is ruler over man's mind,
a Microcosmos, that is the name:
a small world, which derives its fame
from wise scholars with a great reputation.

325

Intelligent Spirit

The body, I'll give you this explanation, 330
consists of four different elements,
but the spirit is of divine components;
we humans need Heaven's inspiration
for art.

Reason

I can say without hesitation,
and it's written: when the mistress is away Phocylides 335
the household is often thrown into disarray
by servants and by conflictuous perturbation.
Just so the senses are often affected by disturbance
when reason is not there to help complete
or start a thing.

Honourable Fame

Be clever, try to meet 340
Reason and dog his footsteps in pursuit;
then you can use pure, honest art for good,
her decent gifts will bring you joyous gain.
But first I must, without causing you pain,
unveil the origins of art with a visual explanation 345
so that your heart will sense a great elation
He opens [the curtain]
and you'll desire to live in virtue and honesty.

Mankind

Here is a lovely picture,¹² see,
but what does it mean? I haven't got a clue.

Honourable Fame

Now, Mankind, I'm happy to help you construe 350
its significance and to help clarify
what art is. Look, seated there on high,
on that vast pillar, that square stone,
that is Mercury, placed as on the throne

HONOS ALIT ARTES.



*Ut Sphaera Fortuna, cubo sic insidet Hermes,
Artibus hic varijs, casibus illa praest
Lubrica sed casus fortuna minatur iniquos
Ast certam miseris ars bona praestat opem.*

fiedene.

of noble art, written in free expression, 355
for he first held art's gifts in his possession
and lent them to us, as many witnesses agree.

Reason

Look, there is Fortune who must bend her knee,
standing on a round globe, in precarious balance,
and as a counterweight against her force 360
is Mercury, ready, at all hours; if she should fall,
brought down by her unstable poise upon that ball,
she'll try and get his help: he's constant,
for the nature of art is valiant and reliant,
while Fortune's promises are 'easy come and easy go', 365
whom she favours today, tomorrow tumbles low;
she holds out greatness as often as she makes it disappear.
Her riches aren't gifts but loans; they don't linger here.
Today she proffers truths which are tomorrow's lies.

Honourable Fame

It's easy to be deceived; Fortune's ties 370
consist of sudden cruel accidents,
like fire, mishap, illness' torments,
trading disasters, be it on water or on land.
Lovely art gives with a generous hand,
no creature would be denied her bounty. 375

Mankind

Honourable Fame, can you explain to me:
why does Mercury who fosters art's progression,
hold that rod, with such a brave expression,
with two knotted snakes? What a strange sight!

Honourable Fame

I'll do my best to clarify, to shed some light: 380
It's a sign of peace, that rod he grasps
and the two fearless writhing asps,
one a sweet female, the other is a male,

signify that his wise reason must not fail
to avail itself of arguments worded in such a way 385
that neither clerk nor layman can gainsay
their great wisdom, nor contradict by right.

Mankind

And who are those people standing aside,
as if they're there to help, as faithful as they can?
One is a woman, the other is a man; 390
I'd like to know: what's their significance?

Intelligent Spirit

The lady's name is given as Experience,
the man, depicted as Mercury's neighbour,
holds a spade called Diligence; his name is Labour,
so it is a fitting tool. Their help is stable; 395
without it Mercury would not be able
to bring the blessed arts to earth
for us. These are helpers of great worth,
who've given loyal service without intermission
for centuries.

Honourable Fame

I have a strong suspicion 400
that art cannot achieve any success
without diligent Labour, and I must stress
that Experience plays an essential part.

Mankind

This explanation has gladdened my heart;
I'm happy now I understand the depiction; 405
a heart of stone would surely feel emotion
and warm to art and all her lovers too.

Honourable Fame

In the beginning God was the first Creator, who
used the Holy Spirit and its powerful nature,

described so well and with such truth in Scripture. 410
Philosophy also came into existence *Philo[sophia]?*
through God, and then made her presence
felt in our hearts, a gift incomparable
and of great use and help to spirits mortal,
encouraging us to look beyond our earthly cares. 415

Reason

So that we will be able to have our share
of Heaven; as Philon openly stated.
He thought Philosophy was so elevated,
saying that she is a science which clearly explains 420
all that to Divine and human concerns pertains,
as mother of all science worthy of great esteem.

Honourable Fame

It was Philosophy's invention, it would seem,
that made Mercury adorn with statues of gold
the land of Egypt. She caused Lycurges¹³ bold
to give good laws to Lacedemonia. 425
And it was also through Philosophia
that Solon¹⁴ gave Athens great prosperity;
that Pythagoras had the inventivity
to give the towns in Greece good laws
and ordinances; that there were no flaws 430
in what Plato did in Arcadia,¹⁵ as we find;
that the thoughts of his philosophical mind
and that of others, that is for sure,
have left a legacy that will endure
in this world, of honourable fame. 435

Reason

We cannot omit from this Astrology's name, *Laus Astrologie*
the spirit of nature found her worthy of praise
and Mercury too thought her divine;
Thales Milesius,¹⁶ with her help, earned
great fame; the first to have learned 440

about the sun's eclipse, through experiment.

Honourable Fame

Ptolemaeus¹⁷ did research into the firmament
of heaven, whilst he lived in Greece.

He learned from Atlas' expertise
about the stars and their condition:

445

in that science Atlas held a top position.

Poets sang in his honour, of old,
he carried the world on his shoulders, they told,
and their songs spread his fame far and wide.

Cleostratus' knowledge¹⁸ we should not deride:
he revealed the signs of heaven. All these men
were clever scholars with great acumen,
whose learning earned them immortality.

450

Reason

Neither must we forget Geometry,
that is an art most laudable
and in many ways very valuable
with a subtlety which shows perfection.

Laus Geometrie

455

Intelligent Spirit

She needs Arithmetic for her correction,
sisters born of one mother, very loyal.

Reason

Forts and castles, cities and palaces royal
were built precisely as they calculated.

460

Honourable Fame

It was in Egypt, Plinius¹⁹ narrated,
that this subtle art was first employed,
because the river Nile destroyed
and inundated all its separate parts,
which were rebuilt with the help of these arts
and every one as good as new.

465

Reason

Before Abraham, Josephus²⁰ knew,
came into Egypt, it was an unknown art.
After that 'twas Plato, who was very smart,
who brought her into Greece, so much is plain;
and pupils who could not master or attain
this art, were from his school expelled.

Josephus de antiquitatibus

470

Honourable Fame

Pythagoras, who in virtues excelled,
a hundred oxen for a sacrifice donated,
a hecatombe it's called (that's stated),
because he judged he'd found the apogee
of perfection in this art; who would not agree
that his fame should be broadcast all over the earth?

475

Reason

Arithmetic is also of great worth
because it makes the merchants affluent.
'Twas Mercury who first did invent
this art in Phoenicia; 'twas important in trade
which needed accurate sums as an aid.
So from Phoenicia this art then came
and was held in high esteem, her fame
increased, since God himself set great store
by it.

Laus Arithmetice 480

485

Intelligent Spirit

Without this art, what's more,
trade and commerce could not progress,
and it's important that we stress
its practitioners, many of enormous repute.

490

Honourable Fame

So it's important that we should
remember Archimedes and Eudoxus²¹ too.
Of great importance in this is Euclid, who

should be honoured for his contribution, 495
since he made all that was in a rough condition²²
very smooth: his name should live forever.

Mankind

It is right: these scholars are all clever,
these masters of art of divine inspirations
should be the rulers and lords of all nations, 500
for without the arts and their learning
the world would be coarse, rough and unfitting
for people; we would all be, I bet,
like dumb beasts.

Intelligent Spirit

Laus Rhetorice

However, we mustn't forget
Rhetoric, which is the food of eloquence, 505
which helps to sweeten man's existence;
without her, without reason he would be,
like animals.

Honourable Fame

Aristides²³ would agree:
Mankind would not be fit to rule
if eloquence had not been the tool 510
with which unreason was put down;
Mercury gave her a pearly crown;
her merit is greater than all silver or gold.

Reason

Diffinitio Eloquentie

This is an art which gives riches untold
to mankind; his wise words she enhances. 515
She will not allow wrong utterances,
she's considered Queen of humanity
by Princes and Emperors.

Honourable Fame

Take oratory,

which, in Athens, she created;
but to sum up all that was narrated 520
by Athenian orators long ago,
would be tedious.

Reason

I'm sure you know
that the Lacedemonians embraced
this art soon after and then raised
it to new heights of sense and wisdom. 525

Honourable Fame

The Romans too made her very welcome
and showed that they were quite ingenious
in using her; at least that is what Tullius²⁴
tells us in *Oratore* of the excellence
of orators and their eloquence, 530
and that it is most desirable to find
orators with a scientific mind,
who will be able to teach the ignorant
or a simple person.

Reason

So they were adamant
that orators who were very smart 535
should be revered as masters of their art,
even though hate and envy tried their best
to diminish that

Honourable Fame

in their own evil interest.
But their names forever more will live!

Intelligent Spirit

And now we come to Music who can give
joy to Mankind and stir their feeling
and get even those creatures moving
Laus Musice 540

who have no reason, as Orpheus found,
who first in Thrace with Music's sound
inspired wild beasts to dance and sing. 545

Honourable Fame

Mercury possessed a very special thing
(which he gave to Orpheus), an instrument.

Reason

It's very true that Musica is excellent
for David (a man much loved by God)
drove out all melancholy thought 550
with Music, made odes and Psalms also.

Honourable Fame

With his harp he calmed Saul's heart, long ago,
for when Saul suffered his fits of insanity,
inspired by the devil (this happened frequently),
then David would come to him and play 555
and sing songs of praise to God; the way
he played his harp evoked sweet calm,
which always chased away the harm
done to Saul's spirit by devilish inspiration;
this Scripture tells us.

Reason

Its strongest exhortation 560
is that we should express our gratitude
with psalms, honouring Our Lord's beatitude,
and also with all the instruments of Musica.

Honourable Fame

Once upon a time wise laws in Arcadia,
in a manner most efficacious, decreed
that everyone had to learn Music sweet
till they were thirty years at least.
And when this custom then decreased

Caecilius Plinius et Raphael
*volescet anima?*²⁵ 565

and disappeared, as Plinius outlines,
they fell into such evil designs 570
that they incurred the hate of all humanity.

Reason

There's no shame in singing excessively
in praise of Music. In all provinces
she was, and is, loved by Kings and Princes
who honour her and treat her graciously. 575

Intelligent Spirit

She is the foundation of Poetry, *Artis Poetice Laus*
and Poets are exalted beings
who in all their writings 580
use song and clever composition.

Honourable Fame

The praise of Poets should have no limitation 580
for a Divine Spirit sets them aflame;
Philon gave them the gracious name
of Children of God with sacred art.
This same gift lodged in Ovidius' heart;
there is in each of us, he states, *Est Deus in nobis; agitante*
a God, who evidently activates *calescimus illo. &c.*²⁶ 585
and sets alight these passionate fires
with which the heavenly spirit inspires
us, as if we're a field divinely sown.

Reason

Music gladdens our heart, as is known, 590
as does Poetry, but she helps to better
our morals; this is according to the letter *Omne tulit punctu[m] qui miscuit*
of Horace: in amusing and teaching, he said, *utile dulci*²⁷
he hits the nail on the head
who can instruct and entertain. 595

Honourable Fame

Homer is the father, I am certain,
and the head of all the famous bards;
Euripedes was a master in these arts:
he did it through his tragedies,
Aristophanes through clever comedies, 600
princely compositions, it's well known,
just as Sophocles has shown
a learned doctrine, of great value.
But I must stop; if I'd pursue
all these great poets and their fame, 605
I would need to be better at this game
than Mercury himself; he is the peak!
Had I a hundred tongues with which to speak,
and yet a hundred, I must stress again,
I could not even begin to attain 610
the proper level of praise that's due
to these poets laureate.

Reason

Very able too
were the Romans and very expert;
and eternal praise is their just desert.
We should to Virgil first award it 615
for his great work.

Honourable Fame

He was rewarded
by St. Augustine, who took his part,
he was a devout lover of all art.
He wrote a poem, forty lines in length,
in which he honours, with considerable strength, 620
Maro's name and his eternal memory.

*Ergo ne supremis potuit vox
improba verbis.&c.²⁸*

Intelligent Spirit

Petrus Crinitus wrote a wonderful history
which long ago did bring to light

Petrus Crinitus

all the poets' lives which might
be worthy of being lovingly remembered. 625

Mankind

I think that you have engendered
a fire, Honourable Fame, in my heart
to serve the very core of lovely art,
just as the Poets have done long before;
and I would like to hear some more: 630
which art should I, with steadfast application,
pursue the most; which will improve my station,
from which will I receive most benefit?

Honourable Fame

The art by which you will most profit,
I almost forgot, but it's essential, 635
of all the arts esteemed she is the principal
and will show you the way without doubt:
that's Grammar. She can be proud,
and with reason; she is the very base
of all the good arts; turn your face 640
towards her: and then you'll progress.

Reason

That is why Mercury did stress
that he practised this art primarily,
for no other art (however much you study)
can without Grammar be understood. 645

Honourable Fame

Many scholars however expert and good
took Vives²⁹ advice and paid heed
when he said: Grammar's what you need!
Grammatici they called themselves with pride
and set other epithets aside 650
even if they had brought them reputations
as poets or orators.

Mankind

These secret foundations
Of all noble arts in God found their origin.

Reason

Without Grammar it is impossible to begin,
they who try are deceived by stupid folly, 655
like young birds who are in a frenzy
to fly whilst their wings are not yet grown.

Honourable Fame

There are other arts which are known
as clever craft: you must recall
Masonry is one, famed above all 660
because countries and towns receive decoration
from her; so much skilful ornamentation
with which Architecture lends her a hand.

Reason

And there are others, you understand,
we can't name them all; 'tis too much. 665
But there is one which I must name as such,
worthy of mention, you'll agree,
as one of the arts that are called 'free',
every bit as important as Poetry divine.

Honourable Fame

Laus picture

That is Pictura, painting, an art so fine,
esteemed everywhere and considered to be
worthy of honour as a form of silent Poetry.
For just as Poetry can evoke emotion in Mankind
so also is Pictura able, as you'll find,
but without words, to make his senses aware. 675
Just as a Poet can, with learned verbal care,
tell tales and stories of days long ago,
so can a painter wars and battles show
and bring to life things that have happened

as if we saw them before our eyes at present; 680
painting should be esteemed to a high degree.

Reason

And what's more, everywhere you now see
that a Painter with his brushes and skills
shows forts, castles, countries, cities and only fills
a small canvas which depicts all that. 685

Honourable Fame

That is why Zeuxis³⁰ was not at all sad
to show off the tricks of his trade,
against famous Parrhasius,³¹ and made
(and this was meant as a test
to see who could use his skills best) 690
a painting of a vine so natural,
that he managed to deceive all
the birds; he deserved to be well-known!

Reason

But hear what then Parrhasius has shown:
a linen cloth painted with such perfection 695
that Zeuxis thought it was a real protection
for a painting that he wanted to exhibit.
But when Zeuxis wanted to remove it,
he found himself deceived and defeated.

Honourable Fame

The birds had found themselves cheated 700
by Zeuxis' craftsmanship, so delicate,
but what Parrhasius managed to create
was even better: so that the art
did cheat the artist.

Reason

Wasn't that smart?
That's why for ever and a day 705

that art and its practitioners may
and must, be praised in worthy chronicles.

Honourable Fame

The same is true of Apelles,³²
revered as a painter without parallel,
by Alexander the Great as well. 710
Alas, after his death he left a legacy
of Venus unfinished; there is no country
where you can find anyone, any way,
to complete it.

Reason

Finally I want to say
that these Gillyflowers, noble and excellent 715
deserve poetic praise as a great compliment
and have deserved it in several ways.

Honourable Fame

Their rhetorical skills first merit praise:
they have earned plenty of poetical fame
and can proudly give themselves the name 720
of Poets; and they proved their mastery
as accomplished Painters.

Mankind

Their silent Poetry
earns praise, as do all good arts refined;
they wished this question to be defined:
what gives Mankind in the practice of the arts 725
the greatest inspiration?

Intelligent Spirit

From our simple hearts
as Marigolds, we give our answer, this is it:
that honourable fame which causes honest profit
to be renowned in every corner of the land

Conclusio

gives Mankind the greatest encouragement
to practise the arts to their lasting benefit. 730

Honourable Fame

Because without honourable fame, what profit
would an artist be able to enjoy? I believe,
his work would almost make him grieve
and his love of art would soon disappear. 735

Reason

That's why we build on honourable fame here,
and intelligent spirit must then use its influence
to attain art for all clerks of poetic excellence.
that's what I, Reason, wish to make clear.

Honourable Fame

Therefore Princes and Lords must bow here
to art, for she brings great prosperity
to countries and towns. 740

Mankind

She brings harmony,
in short, and love to brothers in art,
wisdom and virtue are very much part
of an artist and show his honest nature. 745

Reason

Avarice, who is an evil figure,
who darkens wisdom and virtue,
should be exiled; we should listen to
honest profit, spread her fame and reputation
and that of art.

Honourable Fame

This is our salutation,
to you, my Lords, from all the Marigolds,
we hope you liked what you were told: 750

that all noble arts evoke our admiration.

755

May this provide Mankind with ample inspiration.

FINIS

NOTES

¹ M. Vinck-van Caekenberghe, *Een onderzoek naar het leven, het werk en de literaire opvattingen van Cornelis van Ghistele (1510/11–1573), rederijker en humanist* (Gent: KANTL, 1996).

² *Spelen van sinne vol scoone moralisacien* (Antwerp: W. Silvius, 1562).

³ Vinck-van Caekenberghe, *op.cit.*, pp. 205-07.

⁴ Vinck-van Caekenberghe, *op.cit.*, pp. 289-342.

⁵ *De Violieren* was the name of the Antwerp Chamber which organised the competition in 1561.

⁶ The letter Y, symbol of the choices to be made in life: the narrow steep road to salvation on the right and on the left the wide and easy road to perdition.

⁷ Literally: unrest or trouble, but here portrayed as a thing that does not stop, hence the translation 'rattle'.

⁸ Lybitina is the Roman goddess of funerals; here therefore a metaphor for death.

⁹ Not clear, though Phocylides was a term referring to a gnomic hexameter poem composed in Miletus in the first half of the 6th century BC or to its poet. Cp. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford, 1996), p. 1173 (hereafter *OCD*).

¹⁰ Aristippus was an associate of Socrates; the first to charge a fee for teaching; *OCD* (1996), p. 161.

¹¹ Philo of Alexandria, c. 20 BC–50 AD, Jewish hellenist philosopher; *OCD*, p. 1167-68.

¹² This is an emblem from a collection by Andreas Alciatus, first published in Augsburg 1531, then in Venice, 1546; cp. A Henkel and A. Schöne, *Emblemata. Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI und XVII Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1978) and M. Vinck-van Caekenberghe, *op. cit.* pp. 204-06. The text above the picture reads 'Honour feeds the arts', the quatrain below is paraphrased in Van Ghistele's text, ll. 353-401.

¹³ Lycurgus, c. 820 BC, Thracian king, founder of Sparta or Lacedaemon; *OCD*, p. 897.

¹⁴ Solon, sage, lawgiver and poet, laid the foundation of the society of classical

Athens; *OCD*, p. 1421.

¹⁵ Plato (*Republic*, 10) refers to the long-standing quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry and to the superiority of Philosophy. Only if the Poets are willing to take advice from Philosophy can they be admitted to the ideal state. *OCD*, pp. 1169-70.

¹⁶ Thales of Miletus, c. 640–546, one of the seven sages of Greece, mathematician and astrologer, was thought to have prophesied the eclipse of the sun of 28 May 585; *OCD*, p. 1491.

¹⁷ Claudius Ptolemaeus of Alexandria, active c. 142–c. 170, geographer and astronomer; his writings were the main source of geographical and mathematical knowledge in the Middle Ages; his cosmographical writings were a summary of the entire astronomical knowledge of the Ancients; *OCD*, p. 1273-75.

¹⁸ Cleostratus of Tenedos, astronomer; cp. H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorosokratiker* (1952), 6; *OCD*, p. 196.

¹⁹ Gaius Plinius Secundus or Pliny the Elder, 23/4–79 famous for his *Naturalis historia*; *OCD*, p. 1179-98.

²⁰ Flavius Josephus, c. 37–95, Jewish historian; *OCD*, p. 798-99. Van Ghistele refers here to his *Antiquitates Iudaicae* which were by 1561 available in Dutch translation.

²¹ Eudoxus of Cnidus, c. 390–c. 340 BC substantially advanced number theory and strongly influenced Euclid; *OCD*, p. 565-66.

²² Euclid's *Elements* were enormously influential in the Middle Ages as in more recent times. This particular remark may refer to the fact that he clarified and advanced our understanding of mathematics; *OCD*, p. 564.

²³ Publius Aelius Aristides, 117–after 181, was a sophist and man of letters who studied in Athens and Pergamum; cp. *OCD*, p. 160-61.

²⁴ Marcus Tullius Cicero's *De oratore* was very influential in humanist poetic theory and Van Ghistele's 'Diffinitio Eloquentia', too, clearly owes much to Cicero.

²⁵ Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus or Pliny the Younger, c. 61–c. 112; *OCD*, p. 1198. The rest of this gloss is unclear.

²⁶ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6, 5.

²⁷ Horace, *Epistula ad Pisones*, l. 343.

²⁸ M. Vinck-van Caekenberghe, *op. cit.* pp. 323-24 explains this confusing reference to St Augustine as stemming from an ode to Vergil by the Roman emperor Octavius Augustus, which was included in a work by the Florentine humanist Petrus Crinitus, *Libri de poetis latinis* (1505) which Van Ghistele mentions in l. 624. I should add that Van Ghistele's gloss is incomplete and should read: 'Ergo ne supremis potuit vox improba verbis/tam dirum mandare nefas?' ('Could then the wicked voice cause such a dreadful crime to the noblest words?').

Cornelis van Ghistele's Defence of Rhetoric

²⁹ Juan Luis Vives (born Valencia, 1492 – died Bruges, 1540), a Spanish-Dutch humanist.

³⁰ Zeuxis of Heraclea, c. 397 BC (?), painter; *OCD*, pp. 1638-39.

³¹ Parrhasius, c. 397 BC, painter, *OCD*, p. 1116.

³² Apelles of Colophon and Ephesus, c. 332 BC, was the only painter whom Alexander the Great allowed to paint his portrait; *OCD*, p. 118-19.

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*First known production this century

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Philip Butterworth is Reader in Medieval Theatre at the University of Leeds, Bretton Hall. His latest book is *Theatre of Fire* (1998), published by the Society for Theatre Research. He is currently working on a complementary volume, titled *Theatre of Magic*. He attended the inaugural meeting of METH, run by Meg Twycross at Lancaster. She also gave him his first publishing opportunity and does not yet appear to have discovered sufficient reason for stopping the process.

Sarah Carpenter first knew Meg Twycross while a student at Oxford as a performer in her productions there of the *Mary Play*, the N.town 'Woman Taken in Adultery', *Piers Plowman* and others. After working on a DPhil thesis on morality drama, and for a year as a tutor at Exeter University, she moved to the English Literature department of Edinburgh University where she has remained. Her research has focussed on medieval and Tudor performance of various kinds and she joined Meg and Peter Meredith as a third editor of *Medieval English Theatre* in 1988. Sarah's ongoing practical, academic and personal collaboration with Meg has resulted in their book on *Medieval Masking* forthcoming in 2001.

Peter Happé retired as Principal of Barton Peveril Sixth Form College in 1989. Since then he has been Professor Invité at the Université François Rabelais, Tours, and he is now Visiting Fellow at the University of Southampton. He has edited mystery and morality plays and works by John Bale and John Heywood. He has also published editions of two plays by Ben Jonson for the Revels Series, and is a contributing editor to the New Cambridge edition of Jonson's works. He is currently working on a study of cycle plays in England and Europe.

Max Harris is Executive Director of the Wisconsin Humanities Council at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Born in England, he studied medieval theatre at Cambridge University, where he directed outdoor productions of *Robin and*

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Marion, *Mankind* and other medieval plays. He earned his PhD from the University of Virginia. He remembers reading early issues of *Medieval English Theatre* and later being delighted to meet Meg Twycross for the first time in a pub in Toronto. His most recent book is *Aztecs, Moors and Christians: Festivals of Reconquest in Mexico and Spain* (University of Texas Press, 2000).

Olga Horner graduated from Lancaster University with a degree in English. Her subsequent research has been eclectic, with a particular interest in medieval theatre and the law. Her publications include: 'Fulgens and Lucretia: An Historical Perspective' *METH* 15 (1993); 'Christmas at the Inns of Court', in *Festive Drama*, ed. by Meg Twycross (Cambridge: D.S.Brewer, 1995); 'Us Must Make Lies: Witness, Evidence, and Proof in the York *Resurrection*', *METH* 20 (1999). She has taught for the English Department at Lancaster University and been a stalwart of the *Joculatores Lancastrienses*. She has been a researcher for Records of Early English Drama, is an associate of the York *Doomsday* project, and Subscriptions Secretary of *METH*.

Wim Husken is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland and specializes in late medieval and early Renaissance Dutch theatre and drama. He has published widely in this area. He edited with colleagues the complete play collection of the Haarlem Rhetoricians' Chamber 'Trou moet blijcken', and is editor of *Ludus: Medieval and Early Renaissance Theatre and Drama*. He shares Meg's interest in late medieval pageantry and, in 1982, had the good fortune to be with her when she rediscovered the *Liber Boonen* in Leuven.

Stanley Hussey is Emeritus Professor of English at Lancaster University. He taught at University College, London (1950-52), Queen Mary College (1952-66) and Lancaster University (1966-91). He has written books on *Piers Plowman*, Chaucer, Shakespeare's Language, and the History of the English Language and is (still) editing Book II of Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* for the Early English Text Society. His main interests are later Middle English literature (nowadays especially devotional literature) and Shakespeare.

Alexandra F. Johnston is a professor of English at the University of Toronto and director of Records of Early English Drama (which she was instrumental in founding) since 1975. She has written extensively on many aspects of early drama. She has been closely associated with Toronto's early drama group, the

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Poculi Ludique Societas, since 1974. Their shared scholarly and dramatic interests have brought her and Meg Twycross together on many occasions.

Pamela King is co-director with Meg Twycross of the York *Doomsday* Project, based in Lancaster. After graduating from Edinburgh University, she studied for an MA and DPhil at the Centre for Medieval Studies, York. In 1978 she attended the first meeting of METH in Lancaster, run by Meg. In 1994 she returned to Lancaster, moving from London University to St Martin's College, where she holds a personal chair in English and is Associate Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. She is co-editor of *York Mystery Plays* (with Richard Beadle, 1984), and *The Coventry Corpus Christi Plays* (with Clifford Davidson, 2000), and has written a number of articles on the medieval theatre, many in collaboration with Meg.

Gordon Kipling is professor of English Literature at UCLA. His published research, which focusses upon medieval theatrical spectacle and courtly festivals, includes: *The Triumph of Honour: Burgundian Origins of the Tudor Renaissance* (Leiden University Press, 1977); *The Receyt of the Ladie Kateryne*, EETS 296 (London: OUP, 1990); *Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). The last-named received both the Gründler Prize in Medieval Studies and the Bevington Prize for Early Drama Studies. He is one of the editors of *METH*.

Guido Latré was born in Belgium in 1954. He studied English and Dutch literature and linguistics at Leuven University (PhD 1982). He teaches English Literature at K.U.Leuven as a permanent staff member, and on a part-time basis at the French-speaking university of Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium) and PNLU in San Diego. His main focus for teaching and research is English Literature and Culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. From 1990-96, he was a member of the Board of Governors at Westminster College, Oxford. Currently he co-ordinates a large-scale project on early English bibles printed in Antwerp. He has co-operated with Meg Twycross intensively for at least a dozen years, initially in the Erasmus scheme and more recently within the context of a joint research project on: Civic and Religious Pageantry – Links between York and the Low Countries in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries.

Contributors

As a student of English Literature at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, Dick McCaw acted with The Cambridge Medieval Players. After graduating in 1978, he joined the Actors Touring Company as on-stage musical director, and was co-founder of the professional company in 1979. In 1981 he created the Medieval Players with Carl Heap. In 1993 he was appointed Artistic Director of the International Workshop Festival. He began a PhD thesis on the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin and Eastern European Theatre at Royal Holloway College in 1997, where he was appointed a research assistant in 1999. He first met Meg Twycross, who was to prove a generous and loyal supporter of the Medieval Players, on their maiden tour in 1981.

Sally-Beth MacLean is the executive editor of the Records of Early English Drama series at the University of Toronto. She is co-author (with Scott McMillin) of *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998). Other publications include articles on patronage and politics, parish drama, and the touring routes of medieval and Renaissance performance troupes. She has been an enthusiastic member of the audience for some of Meg Twycross's productions and, as the Toronto producer, shares a special interest in the *Chester Purification*, which Meg directed and designed in England.

John McKinnell is Reader in Medieval Literature at the University of Durham. His main research interests in early drama are in the reconstructive production of rarely-seen plays and the collection of records of early drama from Durham. He has recently written on the York Cycle and on the sequence of the sacrament in medieval Durham. His article in this volume results from a survey of evidence for performance in manuscripts of the plays of Seneca and Terence in the Vatican, carried out while he was a research professor at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza'.

John Marshall is Senior Lecturer in Drama at the University of Bristol. In addition to writing on aspects of medieval English drama, he has directed a number of student productions of medieval plays. These include the first revival in England of *Wisdom* and, like Meg Twycross, *The Mary Play*. Recently, he has developed a practical and research interest in the Robin Hood myth in performance. He first met Meg at the inaugural meeting of METH in Lancaster (7 April 1979) where, with characteristic foresight and judgement, she took the photograph of participants, reproduced in *METH* 21, rather than appear in it.

Contributors

Peter Meredith is Emeritus Professor of Medieval Drama at the University of Leeds. He and Meg Twycross were fellow-students in Oxford in the 1950s, but never met. He has acted in and directed medieval (and other) plays when any appropriate opportunity offered, but especially in Adelaide and Leeds. He was a co-founder, with Meg, of *METH*, a founder member of the Executive Committee of REED, and part of the team which inaugurated SITM (Leeds. 1974) and put on the York (1975) and Chester (1983) plays at Leeds. Editing and performance have been twin delights which he has been able to indulge all his academic life, especially in relation to the N.town plays.

David Mills is Professor of English Language and Literature at Liverpool University, a member of the REED Executive and the *METH* Editorial Boards. Publications include the jointly edited EETS two-volume edition of the Chester Plays; a co-authored collection, *The Chester Plays: Essays and Documents*; and a book-length study of Chester's plays, *Recycling the Cycle*. He is co-editing the Cheshire drama records for the REED series. He first encountered Meg at her production of the York *Resurrection* at Lancaster (his car broke down on the M6 on the return journey!). A member of the first *METH* conference and a 'regular' thereafter.

Thomas Pettitt is a lecturer in the Institute for Literature, Culture and Media Studies at the University of Southern Denmark's Odense Campus, where he teaches literary and cultural history in the late-medieval and early-modern periods within the English degree programmes. He is also a member of the University's Centre for Medieval Studies, under whose auspices he has been happy to welcome Meg Twycross to Odense on several occasions. His research focusses on tradition-borne cultural forms such as ballads, legends, customs and folk drama, as cultural productions in their own right, and in relation to conventional literary and cultural history.

Rafael Portillo is Professor of English at the Department of English Literature, University of Seville. He became acquainted with Meg Twycross at the Lancaster SITM Colloquium (1989), and since then has contributed to *METH* on several occasions. In March 2000 he was a Visiting Scholar at Lancaster (as a guest of St Martin's College), working together with Meg on a number of research projects. His field of research is theatre and drama, and he is also an amateur actor and director. He and his Seville students performed the N.town 'Joseph's Doubts' at

Contributors

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Elsa Strietman is the Senior University Lecturer in Dutch at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow and Tutor of New Hall. Her research interests and publications centre on the drama of the Rhetoricians in the Low Countries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in particular on the religious and topical aspects of the plays and on the involvement of the Rhetoricians and their Chambers in urban life, a topic on which she at present writing a book-length study. She has translated a number of plays, and a volume of translations and one of essays by various contributors about aspects of Rhetoricians drama is in preparation.