

Quidditas

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The New Globe, London: Photograph by Dr. Stephen V. Beck

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From the Editor

This volume of *Quidditas* is a double issue for the years 2005 and 2006. It is the first volume to incorporate our new features: Notes, Review Essay, and Texts and Teaching, all designed to furnish readers and contributors venues not offered in most other scholarly journals. In this issue both Notes discuss college productions of medieval plays (*Everyman* and three plays by Hrotsvit of Gandersheim), but in future issues we hope to have transcriptions and translations of sources not readily available to scholars, discussions of research problems and techniques, and other, short pieces of scholarship not suited to article-length essays. Our Review Essay examines how medieval history and thought have been “discovered” (and manipulated) by sociologist Rodney Stark to explain the emergence of modern capitalism and science.

Quidditas is a Latin legal term that originally meant “the essential nature of a thing.” In fourteenth-century French the word became “quiddite.” In the early modern period, the English adaptation, “quiddity,” came to mean “logical subtleties” or “a captious nicety in argument” (OED), and is so used in Hamlet (“Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks?” 5.1.95–97). Thus, the original Latin meaning, together with the later implied notions of intense scrutiny, systematic reasoning, and witty wordplay, is well suited to the contents of the journal.

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Reviews Editor: Jennifer McNabb, *Western Illinois University*

Articles appearing in *Quidditas* are abstracted and indexed in *PMLA*, *Historical Abstracts*, and *America: History and Life*.

Notice to Contributors

Quidditas is the annual, on-line journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association. The editor and editorial board invite submissions from scholars whose work falls within the domain of all Medieval and the Renaissance disciplines: literature, history, art, music, philosophy, religion, languages, rhetoric, or interdisciplinary studies.

Quidditas also now features a “Notes” section for short articles (2 to 12 pages) pertaining to factual, bibliographical and/or archival matters, corrections and suggestions, pedagogy and other issues pertaining to the research and teaching of Medieval and Renaissance disciplines. Our “Reviews” section features a “Review Essay” and a “Texts & Teaching” focus: short (3 to 7 pages) reviews describing texts and books instructors have found especially valuable in teaching upper level courses in Medieval and Renaissance disciplines. We also welcome longer literature-review articles. Membership in the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association is not required for submission or publication.

All submissions are peer-reviewed. Submissions must not have been published elsewhere. Long articles should be 20 to 30 double-spaced manuscript pages. Long articles, notes, and review articles should follow *The Chicago Manual of Style* (14th ed.), *footnote format*. The author’s name must not appear within the text. A brief (200 word) abstract should accompany all long articles. A cover letter containing the author’s name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and title of paper must accompany all submissions. Authors of accepted works will supply a copy of the manuscript compatible with Microsoft Word on a CD.

E-mail submissions in Microsoft Word are accepted, but should be followed by two hard copies. Please send submissions for Articles and Notes to:

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Annual Conference 2007

The 2007 conference of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association will be held in conjunction with the annual Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies Conference in Tempe, Arizona. Dates are 15, 16, 17 February.

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ALLEN D. BRECK AWARD WINNER

2004

Jennifer McNabb

The Allen D. Breck Award is given in honor of Professor Allen D. Breck, founder of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association. As Professor of History at the University of Denver, he served for 20 years as department chair. As Professor Emeritus he became the university's historian, writing *From the Rockies to the World—The History of the University of Denver*. Professor Breck's scholarly interests focused on medieval and church history, particularly John Wycliffe. He also taught Anglican studies at the Hiff School of Theology, and wrote, edited, or contributed to the history of Jews, Methodists, and Episcopalians in Colorado as well as books on medieval philosophy, the lives of western leaders, and the relationships between science, history, and philosophy. In addition to his involvement with the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association, he was a fellow of the Royal Historical Society, and was a member of the Medieval Academy of America, the Western History Association, and the Western Social Science Association.

The Allen D. Breck Award recognizes the most distinguished paper given by a junior scholar at the annual conference.

***Fame and the Making of Marriage in Northwest England,
1560-1640***

Jennifer McNabb
Western Illinois University

Because England did not enact a comprehensive reform of its medieval marital law until Lord Hardwicke's Act in 1753, it was possible to construct a binding marriage outside the authority of the Church of England during the Tudor and Stuart periods. Marriages created by the exchange of present-tense consent, even if they failed to follow the church's suggested rules concerning time and place, its emphasis on clerical presence, and its stress on publicity (through three readings of the banns or the procurement of a marriage license), were considered spiritually legitimate throughout the eight decades prior to the civil wars. An examination of church court records from the diocese of Chester reveals that people in northwest England formed such "irregular marriages," although with declining frequency, into the 1640s, long after matrimonial contract litigation had all but disappeared in other regions of the country. Evidence suggests, though, that the types of people who made these irregular unions and the means by which they did so changed significantly over time, as the practice of child marriage finally receded in the northwest and as irregular matrimonial contracts ceased to be an effective means of making marriage for those below the level of the elites.

The summer of 1615 was a busy one for Jane Drinkwater, a resident of the parish of Runcorn in the northwest county of Cheshire.¹ Three men courted her with the intent of marriage, and

¹The details of Jane's courtships can be found in two bulky case files in the Cheshire Record Office, Cause Papers of the Consistory Court of Chester

while that kind of attention may not itself have been particularly unusual, the fact that Jane appears to have contracted marriage with two of them in the space of four months certainly was. John Cheshire was her preferred suitor early in the summer, but her enthusiasm for him waned as the result of persistent rumors that he and other members of his family were dissolute wastrels who had acquired considerable debt. By late August Jane's interest had settled on Robert Harvey, with whom she exchanged present-tense marital vows: "Here I Jane doe freelie, faithfullie, and hartelie give unto thee Robert Harvey my harte, my hand, and my faith and troth, neither will I marie anie other butt thee soe longe as we shall both live, and here I take thee for my espoused and lawfull husband, and thereto I give and plight thee my troth."² The giving of a gold ring, which Jane wore on "the fourth finger of her left hand," followed, and then, according to allegations, the couple retired to a private chamber for "the space of one, two, or three howres where they did ratifie, confirme, and consumate the matrimonie by carnall copulac[i]on." Three days later, the pair broke a piece of gold valued at £1 2s. Each tied one half of the coin to a ribbon for the purpose of wearing around the arm

(hereafter CRO EDC 5), 1615, no. 11, and 1616, no. 35. The primary source documents from the CRO discussed in this article were accessed on microfilm as part of the Center for British and Irish Studies collection in Norlin Library at the University of Colorado at Boulder. The evidence presented in Jane's two files will be used throughout the article as a case study of matrimonial practices in northwest England.

²The spelling in quotations from manuscript materials and older printed texts has not been modernized, save the rendering of the "thorn" character as "th," the elimination of italics that distract from meaning, the modernization of u/v and i/j, and the spelling out of abbreviations. Punctuation and capitalization have been adjusted when necessary, however, to clarify the meaning of primary source passages. While variant spellings of names have been retained when quoting from a document, all first names in the textual analysis have been rendered in a standard, modernized form using Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges, *A Dictionary of First Names* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003). The version of an individual's last name most commonly used in the source has been used in the text to refer to that person.

afterward as a public, visual marker of the seriousness of their commitment. Jane revealed her opinion concerning the legitimacy of her new matrimonial contract by telling relatives that “she had donne that day what shee could never undue while she lyved.”

But undo it she did. Within days, evidence surfaced that she had actually exchanged present-tense marital vows with John Cheshire in May but kept the marriage secret because of concerns exhibited by some of her friends about John’s character. That earlier matrimonial contract had, like the one with Robert in August, taken place in a private setting in the presence of a minister. When Jane learned that rumors of John’s financial difficulties had been greatly exaggerated, she decided that he was the one she wanted for her husband and attempted to distance herself from Robert Harvey. What followed was a long, acrimonious battle in the Consistory Court of Chester, one of the ecclesiastical courts of the diocese of Chester, to determine to whom Jane actually was married. Witness testimony and other court documents called attention to everything from the precise words used to construct each matrimonial contract to the moral character of each officiating minister in the attempt to ascertain which match constituted a legitimate marital union.

The records of Jane Drinkwater’s matrimonial adventures, while somewhat extraordinary in their complexity and detail, provide a helpful point of entry for an investigation of northwest England’s matrimonial culture during the eight decades prior to the civil wars. Like Jane and her two suitors, many residents used the Consistory Court of Chester to uphold or refute marital unions formed outside the supervision and setting of the church. Jane’s litigation highlights the irregularities of setting and circumstance that could accompany the exchange of vows in the northwest as well as some of the verbal and visual markers that helped to construct an air of legitimacy around unions formed by irregular means (her talk of the impossibility of breaching matrimonial contracts, her acceptance of a wedding ring, the breaking of money between the couple and its subsequent public display, and allegations of the commencement of sexual relations, for

example).³ Long after people in other areas of the country discontinued the practices of child marriage and spousals, those living in the northwest persisted in constructing marriage according to standards other than those propagated by the Elizabethan and early Stuart church, a circumstance that points to the maintenance of a distinct regional culture of matrimony in the northwest.⁴

³In the discussion that follows, the term “irregular marriage” signifies unions lacking some component of the church’s formula for making marriage and emphasizing instead the exchange of matrimonial consent through present-tense vows. “Handfasting” or “trothplighting” generally refers to an exchange of vows without the supervisory presence of a minister; spousals, which failed to meet the church’s requirements for place, time, or procedure, also were irregular and came to be identified as clandestine because they did not fulfill the church’s ideals concerning matrimonial publicity.

⁴Numerous works discussing marriage and its formation in early modern England inform the discussion of marriage included in the opening sections of this article. See Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People during the English Reformation, 1520-1570* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979); Houlbrooke, “The Making of Marriage in Mid-Tudor England: Evidence from Records of Matrimonial Contract Litigation,” *Journal of Family History*, 10 (1985), 339-52; Martin Ingram, “Spousals Litigation in the English Ecclesiastical Courts c. 1350-c. 1640,” in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981), 35-57; Ingram, “The Reform of Popular Culture? Sex and Marriage in Early Modern England,” in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Barry Reay (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985), 129-65; Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987); Peter Rushton, “Property, Power and Family Networks: The Problem of Disputed Marriage in Early Modern England,” *Journal of Family History*, 11 (1986), 205-19; Eric Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); R. B. Outhwaite, *Clandestine Marriage in England, 1500-1850* (London: Hambledon, 1995); David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997); Diana O’Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Christine Peters, “Gender, Sacrament and Ritual: The Making and Meaning of Marriage in Late Medieval and Early Modern England,” *Past and Present*, 169 (2000), 63-96. Additional studies on early modern marriage consulted include Beatrice Gottlieb, “The Meaning of Clandestine Marriage,” in

The later decades under investigation here, however, were a time of considerable redefinition of matrimonial theory and practice in northwest England. The percentage contributed by matrimonial causes to the consistory court's total business declined steadily, and the flood of matrimonial contract litigation in the early decades examined here subsided to a minor trickle by the eve of the civil wars. Litigation from the later decades was seldom instigated by the former child spouses or non-elites found in earlier suits but was instead almost exclusively the preserve of men and women of considerable wealth and elevated status and widows. The kinds of rituals and symbols that served to legitimate irregular unions changed accordingly. The process by which couples established a popular recognition or "common fame" of marriage became more complex and regularized over time, as new means of evaluating marital formation and its propriety gained prominence. Proving a matrimonial contract required later litigants to conform to a set of standards and expectations absent from earlier suits, meaning that the concept of marital fame itself shifted to accommodate changing circumstances.

THE COURT AND ITS RECORDS

This essay draws on all of the extant records of the archdeaconry of Chester's Consistory Court for the first and sixth years of each of the eight decades between 1560 and 1640, a

Family and Sexuality in French History, ed. Robert Wheaton and Tamara K. Hareven (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 49-83; Thomas Max Safley, *Let No Man Put Asunder: The Control of Marriage in the German Southwest: A Comparative Study, 1550-1600* (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1984); Jeffrey R. Watt, *The Making of Modern Marriage: Matrimonial Control and the Rise of Sentiment in Neuchâtel, 1550-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992); and Watt, "The Impact of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation," in *Family Life in Early Modern Times, 1500-1789*, ed. David I. Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001), 125-54.

sample of nearly 1,000 suits.⁵ The archdeaconry of Chester, which included Cheshire itself, the southern half of Lancashire, and parishes in several Welsh counties, together with the archdeaconry of Richmond comprised the diocese of Chester, a relatively new ecclesiastical jurisdiction during the decades under investigation.⁶ The new diocese, one of six established by Henry VIII in 1541, was created in part to help shore up royal authority in the Palatinate of Chester, a formerly semi-autonomous territory that was being successfully integrated into the national polity for the first time during the Tudor period. Despite the government's attempt to strengthen its ties with the northwest and to ensure greater conformity with the political, economic, and cultural

⁵CRO EDC 5, 1560-1653. These papers are organized by specific years and file numbers. The total number of suits from the collection considered in the sample years is 982, and that sample is used as the basis for the statistical information provided in this article. Additional qualitative information on the matrimonial ideals and practices in the diocese of Chester has been drawn from the Deposition Books of the Consistory Court of Chester, 1554-74 (hereafter CRO EDC 2/6, 2/7, 2/8, or 2/9); Frederick J. Furnivall, ed., *Child-Marriages, Divorces, and Ratifications, &c., in the Diocese of Chester, A. D. 1561-6* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1897); and the small handful of suits dated after 1640 in the CRO EDC 5 collection.

⁶The material in this paragraph is derived from the following sources: John Addy, *Sin and Society in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1989); Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (London: Cambridge UP, 1975); C. B. Philips and J. H. Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540* (London: Longman, 1994); *A History of the County of Chester*, vol. 3, ed. B. E. Harris, Victoria History of the Counties of England (Oxford: For the Institute of Historical Research by Oxford UP, 1980); Garthine Melissa Walker, "Crime, Gender and the Social Order in Early Modern Cheshire" (PhD diss., Liverpool University, 1994); Tim Thorton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State 1480-1560* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000); Thorton, "Local Equity Jurisdictions in the Territories of the English Crown: The Palatinate of Chester, 1450-1540," in *Courts, Counties, and the Capital in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Diana E. S. Dunn (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), 27-52; Joan Beck, *Tudor Cheshire* (Chester: Chester Community Council, 1969); and Steve Hindle, "Aspects of the Relationship of the State and Local Society in Early Modern England: With Special Reference to Cheshire, c. 1590-1630" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1992).

standards of the rest of the country, the diocese had a reputation for recusancy and religious deviance during the later Tudor and early Stuart periods.

Evidence suggests that religious non-conformity was actually just part of a larger cultural fracture between the northwest and other regions of the country. The relative geographic isolation and social stability of the northwest, in combination with its customary political and economic autonomy, seem to have allowed for the flourishing of distinctive cultural values and practices. Indeed, Cheshire residents frequently spoke of the rights and privileges of the palatinate as setting them apart from the rest of the country. Individuals called before the central courts at Westminster, for example, argued that they were not bound to answer charges in courts outside of Cheshire thanks both to the customs of their county and to Cheshire's possession of its own Exchequer.⁷ One bold litigant in a defamation suit heard before the Consistory Court of Chester stated that not even the Archbishop of Canterbury, the clergyman with the greatest authority in England, had the right to rule in a suit involving residents of Cheshire, saying that only judgments "w[i]thin the doores of Chester" were legally binding.⁸

⁷Because the palatinate had its own Exchequer, its residents were not bound to process initiated in the central Courts of Chancery, Exchequer, or Requests, a right they asserted forcefully on the occasions they were named as parties to litigation in those courts. Thomas Becket of Middlewich, Cheshire answered a Chancery bill against him in 1572 by voicing a common sentiment concerning jurisdiction: "No inhabitant within the saied countie palentyne of Chester ought to be compelled by any wryte or p[ro]ces to appear or aunswere any matter or cause out of the same countie palentyne" (National Archives, Public Record Office, Court of Chancery, C2/ELIZ/B7/27).

⁸In 1620 Edmund Hardy allegedly reported to an acquaintance that John Culcheth had two wives, despite the fact that Culcheth had secured a divorce from the Archbishop of Canterbury to end his first marriage. Hardy claimed that the divorce was "nothing" because it had not been granted within the palatinate, adding that Culcheth's "children w[hi]ch he had by the gentlewoman he then lived w[i]th could not inheritt his lande" because his previous divorce was improper. See CRO EDC 5 1620, no. 28.

The records used for this study provide us with an important glimpse into the concerns and values of early modern men and women in northwest England. The Cause Papers of the Consistory Court of Chester are typically in the form of instance suits, private litigation instigated by residents within the court's jurisdiction. A complete case file for one of these suits could consist of an array of documentation including a libel, lists of interrogatories on behalf of both litigants, witness depositions, personal responses from the parties at suit, the sentence of the court, and a bill of costs. Most files are far more fragmentary, often due to the halting of litigation in a pre-judgment stage or to the ravages of time. These instance suits indicate that a variety of issues prompted residents to invest the time and resources necessary to pursue litigation. Unfortunately, the records do pose a number of interpretive challenges. Because the files seldom contain sentences, it is impossible to determine whether the church court was attempting to modify regional culture with its judgments. And although office suits instigated by the court became more frequent in the seventeenth century, it is still very difficult to gauge the degree to which the court and its agents succeeded in altering religious and cultural policy and practice in the northwest. Perhaps most problematic from an analytic standpoint is the fact that the records of the court consist of a series of competing, subjective narratives offered for specific purposes.⁹ Even if witnesses altered

⁹Historians have described in great detail the difficulties facing a scholar who studies court documents, especially those dealing with fractured relationships. For some of the more eloquent discussions of both the caveats of and the strategies for using such records, see Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1987); Thomas Kuehn, "Reading Microhistory: The Example of *Giovanni and Lusanna*," *Journal of Modern History*, 61 (1989), 512-34; Laura Gowing, "Gender and the Language of Insult in Early Modern London," *History Workshop Journal*, 35 (1993): 1-21; Gowing, "Language, Power and the Law: Women's Slander Litigation in Early Modern London," in *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England*, edited by Jennifer Kermode and Garthine Walker (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 26-47; Gowing, "Women, Status and the Popular Culture of Dishonour,"

or fabricated their testimony in the hopes of potential gain, however, that evidence is still useful in revealing contemporary attitudes and values; social and cultural norms shaped the stories witnesses told. Commonalities in these narratives reveal patterns that uncover the kinds of matrimonial circumstances that possessed cultural plausibility and viability in the northwest.

An examination of the court's business during the last four decades of the sixteenth century and the first four decades of the seventeenth indicates an active court that served as a forum for a variety of disputes, including those involving the formation of marital unions. The records of suits heard by the court increased dramatically during these years, although some of the increase may be the result of a better survival rate for later material: extant case files from the early 1570s average 26 per year; by the early 1600s, that number rises to nearly 74, and by the early 1630s, to 105. The most common types of litigation were causes concerning marriage, defamation suits, tithe disputes, and conflicts over pews and other religious spaces, often involving questions of social status and wealth. The relative importance of these issues changed over time, however. Litigation involving marriage was the subject of a long but fairly steady decline: it constituted 63 percent of the court's business in 1565, 24 percent in 1585, 12 percent in 1615, and just 5 percent in 1635.¹⁰ A qualitative study of these suits gives important evidence as to the northwest's prolonged maintenance of

Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Sixth Series, 6 (1996), 225-34; and O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, 10-16.

¹⁰Defamation suits experienced periods of both growth and decline, accounting for 21 percent of the court's business in 1565, 24 percent in 1585, and a whopping 48 percent in 1615, before falling back to 26 percent in 1635. Tithe disputes experienced the most dramatic and sustained rise, from under 1 percent in 1565 to 27 percent in 1635. Litigation concerning religious spaces was exceedingly rare until the final decades of the study; in 1635 15 percent of the court's business concerned violations of space. The percentages for specified years do not total 100 due to incomplete or damaged records that cannot be categorized, or records that do not fit the four categories selected here for study.

distinctive cultural standards concerning marriage. It also indicates important shifts in the age and status of those who pursued contract litigation and the signs used by local communities to establish matrimonial validity.

IRREGULAR UNIONS IN THE NORTHWEST: DEFINITIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES

Matrimonial litigation indicates that residents of the northwest could have a very different vision of matrimony than the one prescribed by the Protestant Church of England. During Elizabeth's reign the church sought to regularize the construction of marriage by transforming it from a process that did not require church solemnization into a single, identifiable and legitimating act under the church's control. It called for a ceremony between partners over the canonical ages of consent (twelve for girls and fourteen for boys), performed by a minister in the local parish church after three readings of the banns or the procurement of a license from ecclesiastical authorities. The latter two procedures were designed to publicize the match and thus help ensure its legitimacy by giving those with knowledge of impropriety or impediments a chance to halt the formalization of the union. Despite the church's stress on this new set of matrimonial procedures, it failed to revoke medieval laws that sanctioned irregular marriage.¹¹ Many scholars have pointed to the decline in matrimonial contract litigation in southern regions of the country as evidence of popular rejection of irregular marriage and popular acceptance of the church's new matrimonial standards.¹²

¹¹For a concise discussion of England's failure to reform marital law in the sixteenth century, see Eric Carlson, "Marriage Reform and the Elizabethan High Commission" *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 21 (1990): 437-51. For a brief history of the English legal position concerning the making of marriage, see Outhwaite, *Clandestine Marriage*, 1-17.

¹²Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*; Houlbrooke, "The Making of Marriage," 339-52; Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*; Ingram, "Spousals Litigation," 35-57; Ingram, "Reform of Popular Culture,"

Sixteenth-century suits from the northwest, however, suggest that residents exploited the church's failure to reform marital law by continuing to form irregular marriages that were culturally legitimized by a popular emphasis on marital consent rather than church solemnization.¹³

Several historians have suggested that the decline of spousals in early modern England was in part the result of the practice's various economic limitations. Spousals did not confer the material benefits of marriage unless they were followed by solemnization; for example, a woman could not claim her jointure unless she had been married in a church ceremony.¹⁴ Christine Peters identifies the development of an increasingly money-based economy as another key contributor to the decline of spousals.¹⁵ When payments of monetary portions began to replace the customary transfer of goods to brides in the presence of friends and family, an important function of spousals, the public display and evaluation of marital goods, ceased. Also influential in changing the economic ramifications of spousals according to Peters was the

129-65; and Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*. Outhwaite cautions against equating a decline in contract litigation with the elimination of clandestinity as a problem in early modern England. See *Clandestine Marriage*, 41.

¹³This is discussed at greater length in Jennifer McNabb, "Ceremony versus Consent: Courtship, Illegitimacy, and Reputation in Northwest England, 1560-1610," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 37 (2006): 59-81.

¹⁴Outhwaite, *Clandestine Marriage*, 5. For a contemporary discussion of the differences between the spiritual and legal benefits of marriage, see Henry Swinburne, *A Treatise of Spousals, or Matrimonial Contracts* (London: S. Roycroft, 1686; repr., New York: Garland, 1985), 15, 108. Citations are to the Garland facsimile edition, vol. 3 of the series, *Marriage, Sex, and the Family in England, 1660-1800*, ed. Randolph Trumbach.

¹⁵For the discussion that follows, see Christine Peters, "Single Women in Early Modern England," *Continuity and Change*, 12 (1997), 325-45, "Gender, Sacrament and Ritual," 63-96, and *Women in Early Modern Britain, 1450-1640* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 7-44.

growing trend of endowing daughters with their portions on the basis of age rather than the achievement of marriage. This practice had the ability to change the symbolic female economic autonomy that accompanied spousals into the real thing:

For many such women the temporary independence between handfasting and church wedding could become real economic independence between the ages of majority and of marriage¹⁶

Although the evidence from the Consistory Court of Chester does not clearly reveal the degree to which these circumstances affected the practice of irregular marriage in the northwest, economic considerations may help to explain the changing face of litigants in matrimonial causes before the court. In the 1560s, 1570s, and 1580s, suits seeking marital dissolution on the grounds of the impediment of age comprised a significant portion of the court's matrimonial litigation.¹⁷ These child marriages were arranged to cement alliances between families of substantial material means and social status, and young people faced considerable pressure to ratify such matches when they attained the age of majority.¹⁸ Because they were canonically invalid, however, such unions, which often included sizable bonds of security to guarantee continued commitment, could seriously jeopardize family resources. If the underage spouses could overcome family resistance to renounce their marriages, these

¹⁶Peters, *Women in Early Modern Britain*, 20.

¹⁷For a collection of depositions in suits involving the marriage of children under the age of consent, see Furnivall, *Child-Marriages*, 1-55.

¹⁸Although unions between children under the age of consent had ceased to be a part of the cultural landscape of marriage in most areas of England by the middle of the sixteenth century, they remained a vital means of securing family status and resources in the northwest into the late sixteenth century. See Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, 128-29, for a summary of the position regarding the decline of child marriages in early modern England.

carefully plotted relationships could lead to lengthy and costly litigation.¹⁹ The precipitous decline in suits involving those under the age of consent after the 1590s suggests that elites in the northwest considered the benefits of child marriage to be outweighed by its potential problems, a development that put the northwest in line with other areas of the country in relegating the practice into disuse.²⁰

Although it is sometimes difficult to ascertain the precise occupation and status of litigants in matrimonial contract litigation, the period between 1560 and 1640 appears to have witnessed significant changes in the socio-economic profile of disputants over the age of consent in the northwest. In addition to allegations of child marriage, the first half of the period contained numerous suits filed by those who do not appear to have been of elite status.²¹ Records identify litigant Roger Bibbye as a “travailer bie the seas” in 1565, Richard Woolfall as a draper in 1575, and James Bannister as a haberdasher in 1595, for example; according to a suit from 1561, Katherine Strete canceled plans to go into service

¹⁹Examples of such litigation can be found in CRO EDC 2/8, fols. 303r-5r, 325r-27r, 336v, CRO EDC 2/9, pp. 9-12, p. 153, and CRO EDC 5 1586, no. 46.

²⁰In addition to the relatively small handful of suits after 1566 discussed by Furnivall in his collection, Addy identifies only thirty more child marriage suits for the whole of the seventeenth century. See Furnivall, *Child-Marriages*, xxi-xxxix (in which he also provides examples of child marriage before 1561), and Addy, *Sin and Society*, 165. One must also acknowledge the possibility that litigation concerning child marriages declined because elite families became more successful at frustrating the attempts at dissolution made by individuals who had been married under the age of consent.

²¹Unfortunately, it is not possible to be as precise as one would wish about the status of litigants in contract suits. Unlike records in defamation suits, contract litigation does not identify respondents and deponents by occupation, only by age and parish of residence. Conclusions about status and occupation are drawn from details provided by the court documents. What is most clear is the fact that suits from the earlier decades do not discuss the wealth and status of litigants in the degree of detail that is a key feature of later litigation.

with a grocer in order to contract marriage, litigation from 1563 identifies Anne Yate as a “victualler,” and Joanne Whitworth, a litigant from 1598, was employed as a spinster after her irregular marriage.²² By the second decade of the seventeenth-century, though, the majority of the litigants were people of economic means whose relative status and credit were carefully examined by interrogatories and extensively debated by deponents. The fact that witnesses estimated the worth of Jane Drinkwater, whose story opened this article, to be between £200 and £700 no doubt contributed to the energy expended by her two would-be husbands to prove their claims of marital legitimacy. The decline of non-elites as litigants indicates that economic changes may have been taking their toll on the practice of spousals in the northwest. Couples of limited material means could no doubt ill afford to ignore the legal and economic drawbacks of irregular marriage, and wider adoption of the means of making marriage encouraged by the church and recognized by common law could account for the reduction in the number of spousals before the courts involving laborers and other non-elites.²³

A rise in the number of widows involved in breach of contract suits accompanied the proliferation of litigants of means in the later decades of this study. The evidence provided by these suits reflects an attitude of concern about the use of irregular marriage as a means of trapping a young man or woman with a sizable inheritance into an unsuitable union or taking advantage of an economically independent but vulnerable widow with false promises of marriage. When Radcliff Kelsall sued Catherine

²²In order of appearance in the text above: Furnivall, *Child-Marriages*, 67, CRO EDC 5 1575, no. 29, 1595, no. 8, Furnivall, *Child-Marriages*, 57, 185, and CRO EDC 5 1598, no 20.

²³Although they did not deny the validity of irregular marriage, the Canons of 1604 did attempt to regularize marriage as formed under the church’s authority, and a greater adherence to those canons may also have played a role in reducing the number of matrimonial contract suits before the court in the seventeenth century. See Addy, *Sin and Society*, 162.

Fallows for breach of contract in 1641, interrogatories invited witnesses to comment extensively on the relative wealth and status of each party and to offer an opinion as to whether one party would gain decisively from the match.²⁴ Radcliff was a gentleman's son who received a pension of £3 6s. 8d. per year, and Catherine was the daughter of a deceased husbandman whose inheritance was estimated by witnesses to be between £140 and £180. While Radcliff's supporters noted that his status was higher than Catherine's, witnesses called her behalf worried that Radcliff had sought "to inveagle and intice" Catherine, who was not yet seventeen, into marriage for his economic gain. Widows, too, could be targeted by those seeking economic advantages. In 1635 widow Elizabeth Fazakerly attempted to prove her suitor, Lawrence Mather, guilty of a breach of contract by reporting that he "did sell div[er]s good[es] and thing[es] w[hi]ch were hers" and "did carry himself . . . as though hee had bene & were husband of the said Elizabeth."²⁵ Authorities and residents increasingly considered the privacy and secrecy that accompanied an exchange of vows outside the church's authority worthy of comment and censure, at least in part because of the abuses that the practice could generate.²⁶

Throughout the period illuminated by the selected suits, words of matrimony were the single most powerful determinant of marital validity among partners over the age of consent. According to the church's own rules, consent as voiced through the

²⁴CRO EDC 5 1641, no. 13.

²⁵CRO EDC 5 1635, no. 23.

²⁶It even incurred negative attention in non-matrimonial litigation. When Francis Sands of Hawkshead, Lancashire stood accused of defaming and threatening to assault Francis Magson in 1640, included among the accusations of his improprieties was a charge that Francis was "unlaw[fu]lly and clandestinely married without banes thrice published or license law[fu]lly obtayned, incurring thereby the danger of the lawes in that behalfe p[ro]vided." CRO EDC 5 1640, no. 12.

exchange of present-tense vows created a spiritually legitimate marriage, even if the union lacked legality under common law until a church ceremony was completed. For this reason, almost every libel examined includes a recital of the vows exchanged by the litigants, and nearly every case file with depositions contains some witness testimony concerning the matrimonial language used by the parties at suit. This testimony reveals the popular opinion that an exchange of vows made a man and woman “husband and wife before God,” regardless of the circumstances and setting of the event. This theory is reinforced by evidence from a variety of suits in which residents of the northwest correctly claimed that irregular unions had the power to disrupt subsequent courtship activities and even to overthrow later, more formal expressions of consent. Richard Lowe promised to marry Jane Walkden in the late 1550s and had a child with her but later married another woman, prompting a deponent in Jane’s breach of contract suit in 1561 to declare that “all the cuntrie were offendid with hit [the second match]” and causing the court to uphold the first match.²⁷

What does change over time, however, is the opinion that the expression of marital consent through language alone created a *complete* matrimonial contract. Suits from the first decades under consideration suggest that while certain parties intended a church ceremony to follow present-tense expressions of consent, others considered the occasion of the vows to be sufficient in creating a finalized union. By the time Charles Nuttall of Bury claimed in a suit from 1623 that “publique marriage is but a ceremonie of the church” and that a contract was a valid marriage in the eyes of God by virtue of the fact that “Josephe and Marie were contracted or betrothed before they were married,” the idea that church solemnization was unnecessary to the completion of marriage had largely evaporated.²⁸ More typical were expressions of the need

²⁷Furnivall, *Child-Marriages*, 57. Additional examples of the damage that rumors of a contract could do can be found in CRO EDC 2/8, fol. 335r, EDC 5 1595, no. 26, and EDC 5 1605, no. 18.

²⁸CRO EDC 5 1623, no. 14.

for finalizing or ratifying a contract with a subsequent church ceremony. Although Robert Harvey sued Jane Drinkwater to uphold the contract they made in 1615 and argued that their vows created sufficient grounds for advancing his claim that Jane was his wife, he had told friends of his intentions to “perfect” their contract when “fitter opportunity” presented itself.²⁹ After more than six months of promises to marry and the exchange of vows, John Buckeley and Ellen Chawner made plans for a church wedding, recognizing that “their s[ai]d marriage should be p[re]sently solemnized.”³⁰

Although residents of the northwest continued to contract marriage in spaces not sanctioned by the church throughout the decades under investigation, sites considered suitable for vows changed. In the 1560s, 1570s, and 1580s, couples pronounced marital vows in various recreational and occupational areas including outdoor spaces, drinking establishments, private residences, and work areas like salt houses.³¹ This evidence accords well with the fact that those decades witnessed the greatest number of non-elite litigants. Over time, the propensity for making marriages in public houses and places of employment waned, but private houses remained popular sites for contracting matrimony. These occasions could be relatively spontaneous and informal or be preceded by months of planning and attended by numerous friends and family. In 1582 brothers Robert and Richard Wilson acted as witnesses to an impromptu matrimonial contract between Margaret Younge and Richard Williamson in a private house in Chester.³² The matrimonial contract of Elizabeth

²⁹CRO EDC 5 1615, no. 11.

³⁰CRO EDC 5 1635, no. 92.

³¹See, for example, Furnivall, 64, 70, 140 (outdoor vows), CRO EDC 2/6, fols. 13v-14v (vows in an alehouse), CRO EDC 2/8, fols. 99v-100v, 111v-12r, 131r-33r, 139v (vows in a salt house). The most popular locus for contracting irregular marriage was a private residence.

³²CRO EDC 5 1582, no. 5.

Richardson alias Locker and Edward Brocke in 1595, by contrast, was created after three months of securing family support for the union, took place in the bride's father's house, and was attended by a number of the couple's friends and relatives.³³ In later suits involving parties with considerable resources, private rather than public places appeared common as the site of contracts. Jane Drinkwater's two matrimonial contracts in 1615 took place in a kiln and a stable with none present but an officiating minister; Radcliff Kelsall reportedly exchanged vows with Catherine Fallows in a private chamber in 1641, and Anne Wilding, widow, and Geoffrey Croxton recited the present-tense words of marriage while Geoffrey was in his sickbed late one evening in 1643.³⁴

Irregular marriages from the later Elizabethan and early Stuart periods increasingly included the services of a minister, indicating that residents came to believe a clergyman necessary to the creation of a legitimate matrimonial contract. Suits alleging private trothplights taking place on the way home from market or at midnight on the heath largely disappear from the records and are replaced by evidence that indicates the growing importance matrimonial order and propriety. Witness testimony reflects the practical and symbolic advantages of the presence of an officiating minister: a minister who followed the ceremony contained in the *Book of Common Prayer* helped to create the impression that a marriage was "done orderlye," even if it had been constructed in clear violation of church regulations.³⁵ In complicated litigation, like that involving Jane Drinkwater and her two reputed husbands, the moral quality of one's officiating minister could even be used in judging marital legitimacy. Interrogatories on behalf of both

³³CRO EDC 5 1595, no. 67.

³⁴CRO EDC 5 1615, no. 11, 1616, no. 35, 1641, no. 13, 1653, no. 2. The final suit appears to be labeled inaccurately, as the testimony refers repeatedly to "this p[re]sent yeare 1643."

³⁵For example, CRO EDC 5 1590, no. 53 discusses the legitimizing influence of a minister on a contract formed in an alehouse.

grooms asked witnesses to comment at length on the clerical practices and lifestyles of their rival's preferred clergyman. In the war of reputations that followed, one minister was depicted as a worldly, scheming man of God who both cheated a member of his flock out of an inheritance and sought to make money from his skills as a marriage negotiator, and the other, as a man of loose sexual morality who had cohabited for several years with a woman who was not his wife.

Presiding over clandestine marriage was, of course, a punishable offense. A suit from 1630 against John Davenport, clerk, for conducting spousals summarizes the official position against a minister's involvement in irregular marriage:

accordinge to the Cannons & Constitutions of the Church of England, noe minister is to celebrate matrimony betweene any p[er]sons w[i]thout licence or banns askinge nor soe licenced at unseasonable tyme or in a private house, but in the church or chappell where at least one of the p[ar]tys doe dwell & ... the minister so offending shalbe censured accordinge to the same Cannons & Constitutions.³⁶

Suspension was the result of a negative judgment against a minister accused of presiding over spousals, and the risk of censure may have prompted clerics to participate in irregular marriages only if they could be adequately compensated in the event of presentment.³⁷ Interrogatories suggest that Robert Dobbs, the minister who presided over the exchange of vows between Jane Drinkwater and John Cheshire, had been promised an undisclosed sum for "his paines" and assured that he would be "harmlesse from the peanaltie of the lawe & from all trouble that he should incur by the solemnizing of the said marriage"; William King, the

³⁶CRO EDC 5 1630, no. 75.

³⁷See Addy, *Sin and Society*, 162, and Outhwaite, *Clandestine Marriage*, 6-7. For a discussion of seventeenth-century suits involving the collection of fees for presiding over spousals, see Addy, *Sin and Society*, 178-9.

minister who presided over the spousals between Jane and Robert Harvey, apparently expected to receive £100 for his troubles.³⁸ Such sums and promises were obviously well beyond the capacity of ordinary laborers, which may further explain why they cease to appear as litigants in breach of contract suits in the seventeenth century.

Certain procedures required by the church were increasingly recognized as necessary for contracting marriage in the northwest. Although deponents in the early suits seemed to be aware that reading the banns and/or securing a marriage license constituted part of the church's formula for making marriage, neither requirement was apparently considered a vital part of the popular equation of marriage.³⁹ Later suits, however, put increasing emphasis on the kind of formalization church-sanctioned approval for marriage could create. Charles Nuttall obtained a marriage license from "the judge of this courte" to help convince his espoused wife Dorothy of his intent to solemnize their marriage in 1623, and when John Buckeley and Ellen Chawner of Prescott were finalizing plans for a church ceremony that would ratify their earlier exchange of vows in 1633, John went through the effort of procuring a second license from the court because he feared the first "to bee out of date."⁴⁰ In 1641 James Kelsall "did rashly and p[er]nitiously" swear before a judge of the court that friends and family of his brother, Radcliff, and Radcliff's intended

³⁸CRO EDC 5 1615, no. 11, 1616, no.35.

³⁹For example, when Philip Mainwaring and Jane Serjant contracted marriage in 1587 in a private house before the curate of Newton Chapel, a deponent noted that the marriage had been created "in order," except for its setting and the fact that "the banes nott asked iij tymes" (Furnivall, *Child-Marriages*, 140). Comments like this in other records indicate that witnesses understood banns and licenses to be part of the formula for making marriage but that their absence did not automatically render an exchange of vows deficient or disorderly.

⁴⁰CRO EDC 5 1623, no. 14, 1635, no. 92.

bride, Catherine Fallowes, supported a solemnization of marriage between the couple in order to procure a license.⁴¹ By lying to the judge about the acceptance of the match, James was able to manipulate the court into sanctioning a marriage to which Catherine's family vigorously objected.

Those living within the court's jurisdiction placed considerable emphasis on marital fame, but of a different type than that specified by the church. The audience of church-solemnized weddings had a relatively limited role as witnesses; those present at a ceremony of marriage had little power to pass subsequent personal judgment on the union's legitimacy. A union formed outside the church, however, could require members of the local community to decide whether the marriage was proper, even years after its creation. If former child brides and grooms, for example, appeared to assent to the vows they took in childhood after they reached the age of maturity, their actions could create a popular perception of marital legitimacy among their neighbors.⁴² Common fame of marriage, the wider community's recognition of marital consent between couples, was established through the reports of witnesses to present-tense vows, who were able to describe the setting, audience, and words of the participants at great length when called upon to do so by ecclesiastical authorities. It was also created by other means that changed over time. During the early decades under investigation, couples exchanged a variety of personal items, from handkerchiefs and stockings to rings and money, to demonstrate an increasing level of commitment.⁴³

⁴¹CRO EDC 5 1641, no. 13.

⁴²Testimony in a suit from 1561 between John Bridge and Elizabeth Ramsbotham nicely summarizes the close scrutiny of child marriages by members of the community: "this deponent, beyng ther neybour, did never here word spoken, or token sent, betwixe them, or any suche familiaritie betwixe them, wherbie he might *judge* that they usid them self as man and wief, or ever ratified the mariage" (the emphasis is mine). Furnivall, *Child-Marriages*, 9.

⁴³See McNabb, "Ceremony versus Consent," 73-75, for a more detailed discussion of gifts and their legal and cultural significance in the northwest.

These gifts held so much significance on the marital market that the records describe several instances in which those dissenting from marriage went to considerable lengths to return unwanted offerings.⁴⁴

The words, gestures, and actions described in the sixteenth-century contract litigation were culturally important because their acceptance by the community as proper helped to create the outward appearance of marriage. Acting like spouses through displays of affection, cohabitation, and performing duties commonly attributed to husbands and wives all helped to establish a commonly held perception of marital validity.⁴⁵ Common fame of marriage is one of the threads that connects nearly all accounts of spousals in the records of the 1560s, 1570s, and 1580s. Fame, whether described as the “vooice” or “report of the cuntry” or as a couple being “reputed & taken” as man and wife, received commentary in most suits as a chief factor in determining marital propriety.⁴⁶ Because Anne Yate and George Johnson were “reputid and taken for man and wife amonge their neighbours” and because “the parrish thought they were man and wife before

⁴⁴See, for example, Furnivall, *Child-Marriages*, 57, and CRO EDC 5 1605, no. 10. According to the latter suit, John Hargreaves participated in an assault on Margaret Walker in his attempt to return money which she had given him “to gett better holde on him.” For a discussion of the strategies of giving tokens in courtship, see O’Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, 72-77.

⁴⁵Because Anne Helyn took care of Richard Bunburie’s household (CRO EDC 5 1570, no. 24), and because William Wright performed tasks for Isabel Dawson that “belong to a husband” (CRO EDC 5 1595, no. 45), both couples were commonly regarded as married, even though their relationships lacked church solemnization.

⁴⁶That language comes from Furnivall, *Child-Marriages*, 24, 13, and 67, respectively.

God,” for example, they spent their nights together in the same house without being presented for fornication.⁴⁷

Although gifts and the performance of actions that constituted spousal behavior continued to receive attention in later suits, such signs of marriage were accompanied as well by reports of more formalized rituals of exchange and reciprocity, which were apparently gaining cultural significance. While courting men and women gave gifts of money with regularity in the sixteenth century, the practice of breaking a coin between elite partners following marital vows was unique to the seventeenth-century suits examined. A broken coin, one half of which each party had stewardship of, helped to represent the binding, contractual nature of the matrimonial relationship. In his study of the records of the diocese of Chester in the seventeenth century, Addy notes that a failure to ratify a marriage after the breaking of a coin was grounds for a breach of contract suit in the consistory court, adding that such suits usually resulted in a successful judgment for the

⁴⁷Furnivall, *Child-Marriages*, 58. Popular tolerance for the commencement of sexual relations following the exchange of vows appears to have changed over time. Peters argues that “the practice of spousals was not necessarily a license for premarital sex” and cites Swinburne’s treatise on spousals for evidence that the cohabitation which often followed spousals did not always include a sexual relationship (*Women in Early Modern Britain*, 20). The regionality of norms concerning sexual relationships, especially with regard to spousals or impending church marriage, is discussed in Richard Adair, *Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996). The evidence from the northwest indicates that sexual relations did follow spousals with some frequency. Twenty-seven percent of the trothplight suits in Furnivall’s collection, for example, include evidence of the birth of a child to the alleged spouses. Talk about sexual behavior contained in defamation suits provides an alternative source of information about social and cultural norms, and these suits indicate that the birth of children to couples whose marriages had not been completed by church solemnization was increasingly viewed as a transgression of communal values, although the acceptance of sexual relationships often seems to be determined by the credit of the individuals involved.

plaintiff.⁴⁸ The growing number of suits in the northwest that included testimony concerning broken coins may indicate adaptation to new cultural and ecclesiastical standards concerning the circumstances of matrimony. The ritual of breaking a coin became infused with so much significance that the possession of a piece of a broken coin required detailed explanations to the court. Reports in 1641 that Catherine Fallowes and Radcliff Kelsall voluntarily broke a coin together as a testament of their commitment to marriage competed with testimony of an alleged struggle between Catherine and Radcliff that came to a conclusion when “the sayd groate fell downe upon the ground and brake into two peeeces.”⁴⁹

What these later suits often lack, though, is discussion of *common* fame of marriage. They contain a good deal of specific witness testimony on words and rituals, but seldom are deponents asked to comment at length as to whether the alleged spouses were commonly taken as husband and wife in the opinion of the broader community. Testimony from someone who was “an eye and an eare witnes” to the circumstances of the contract apparently came to possess greater weight than judgments concerning a marriage’s common fame.⁵⁰

CONCLUSIONS

This examination of matrimonial contract suits indicates that both marriage and common fame were unstable constructs in the northwest region of early modern England. Making marriage outside the bounds of church authority was possible throughout the

⁴⁸Addy, *Sin and Society*, 169. For additional comment concerning broken coins in seventeenth-century courtship, see Lawrence Stone, *Uncertain Unions: Marriage in England, 1660-1753* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992), 19.

⁴⁹CRO EDC 1641, no. 13.

⁵⁰That language comes from CRO EDC 5 1615, no. 11. Broader evaluations about marital legitimacy do not entirely disappear from later court documents, but they appear with far less frequency than in the early suits.

eight decades before the civil wars, but the means by which people did so underwent significant alteration. While present-tense words of matrimony remained the key component of irregular marriage, other signs of marriage became more elaborate and sophisticated over time, perhaps as a result of the fact that the types of people involved in later contract litigation had the material means to complete the processes that would give their matches the greatest appearance of validity. The competing narratives that make up contract litigation began to change as well, incorporating evidence of these new matrimonial practices and ideals into accounts of ruptured relationships. The earlier importance of common fame was supplanted over time by an emphasis on eyewitness testimony that spoke to the completion of new actions and speeches thought to create legitimate matrimonial contracts. As the result of these changes in the definitions and practices of matrimony, privacy replaced common fame as a regular feature of fractured matches in the northwest.

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ALLEN D. BRECK
AWARD WINNER

2005

Bradley Greenburg

Henry IV, Part I

Hotspur, Worcester, Mortimer, and Glendower



ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Bangor. The Archdeacon's house.*

From *The Library Shakespeare*, vol. III, *Historical Plays &c.* Illustrated by Sir John Gilbert, George Cruickshank, and R. Dudley. London: William Mackenzie, 22 Paternoster Row
(Reprint: Trident Press International, 2000)
(Editor's choice)

***Romancing the Chronicles:
1 Henry IV and the Rewriting of Medieval History***

*Bradley Greenburg
Northeastern Illinois University*

This essay explores the ways Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV deploys Welshness as a counterforce to English national stability. I argue that the critical habit of equating the genre of romance with untruthfulness or silliness does not pay close enough attention to what Shakespeare does in his history plays. The Hal he gives us, whose youth and military training in Wales he suppresses, is, generically, a romance character. But, instead of a knight in his father's service (where his adventures would be securely in the service of the realm), or knight errant, he is an errant hunter of bad company, an adventurer (Robin Hood-like). The characterization of Owen Glendower—already Anglicized in one sense in the tri-syllabic pronunciation of the di-syllabic Welsh Glyndwr—is in a number of similar ways made to signify Welshness through a series of romantic tropes. Among these are magic, prophecy, and witchcraft, perhaps most clearly represented in 3.1, where Glendower's tendency toward historical and artistic copiousness annoys a practically minded, martial Hotspur. Here genres collide: the romance of the margin contends with the epic desire of the center.

In her study of Robert M. Bird, American novelist, playwright and poet of the first half of the nineteenth century, Nancy Buffington notes that Bird's first two novels demonstrate "on the one hand an interplay between history and romance, and on the other a philosophical tension between rights and rebellion."¹ The novels under discussion—the historical romances of her title—both

¹ "Conquering Histories: The Historical Romances of Robert M. Bird." *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Autumn, 2000), 90-91.

concern the conquest of Mexico by the Spanish in the sixteenth century. In constructing his fictional accounts of the subject Bird meticulously researched the history of the region during this period with special attention to the characters involved in the conquest and their interrelationships. He then supplemented this material with invented characters and romance plots that, as Buffington shows, eventually work to render native or 'other' characters (Moors, Aztecs) submissive. This marks the "philosophical tension" between "rights and rebellion," as Bird critiques imperialist motives and violence only to cover over the human drama of these acts by domesticating non-Spanish, non-Christian characters through love and marriage.

This, it turns out, is not an anomaly, not simply one Christian physician/writer's vision of history and the interactions of peoples in specific circumstances carried across time. When Bird's work is placed within the context of American fiction of this period, it becomes clear that there is an identifiable ideological purpose that emerges when history is supplemented by romance.²

² In her discussion of Bird's place within the "ongoing dialogue of among U.S. writers about literary definitions," Buffington comments that when "Clark reviews Brown's 1800 essay 'The Difference Between History and Romance,'" in which the Philadelphian offers a narrow definition of history that expands the realm of romance," the latter does so by arguing "that the only 'real' historian is one 'who carefully watches, and faithfully enumerates the appearances that occur'" (Clark 40). But the more typical historian who speculates as to cause and effect "is a dealer, not in certainties, but probabilities, and is therefore a romancer." (Clark 40) Once one departs from a purely factual historical account, as most historians do, all is romance" (91). See Robert Clark, *History, Ideology and Myth in American Fiction, 1823-1852* (London: Macmillan, 1984). "Brown" is Charles Brockden Brown,

Two elements lacking in Buffington's otherwise very useful article are a more complex discussion of historiography itself (along the lines of Michel de Certeau and Hayden White, to name the most obvious) and, what is more conspicuous in the context of the above quotation, a recognition that the conflict between the writing of history and the writing of fiction, especially poetry, has occurred before. Readers of early modern texts will have already noticed that this debate is one that, among others, Philip Sidney takes up at great length in

As John A. McClure sums this up:

imperialism suddenly becomes the enemy of romance. And at the same time, the actual history of imperial suffering is curiously rewritten, with ‘romance’ replacing the human victims of imperialism in the story of its expansion.³

Despite differences in periods, hemispheres, and peoples, this account of the relationship between history and romance shares a number of interesting similarities with the way genres of history and romance intersect in Shakespeare’s history plays. When, again, we read the comment that

As Bird asserts, history leaves things out, and romance puts those things back in. His interest in the personal consequences of war, of guilt and remorse, would be difficult to communicate in a conventional historical account. Intentional or not, the addition of romantic subplots to the history of the conquest allows him to interpret the conquest on a more personal, more critical level, as a menacing, treacherous action. Such resonances of treachery in historical conquest are made possible by the combination of genres, clumsy though it may often be. But Bird was not all that daring. After setting up his critical perspective, through the use of each genre, he takes it all back in the same way, using the contradictory ideological nature of the romance to question and then reaffirm the European (and by extension, the American) “inalienable right” to conquer the world.⁴

his “Defense of Poesy.” For a comprehensive study of such defenses and their attention to the unsettled relations between history and poetry, see Margaret W. Ferguson, *Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defenses of Poetry* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983).

³ John A. McClure, “Late Imperial Romance.” *Raritan* 10.4 (1991): 111-130. Subsequently included in his book of the same title (London: Verso, 1994). Quoted in Buffington, 93, n3.

⁴ Buffington, 96. Just before this she quotes William Prescott’s comments regarding the accuracy of Bird’s historical detail:

This raises a number of questions not only about what the writer who supplements history with romance does, what he or she intends, but about what other possibilities arise in connection with this phenomenon. How, we might wonder, could the writer employ this supplemental strategy to perform something counter to what Bird and others did?

To begin an exploration of this in regard to Shakespeare's *Henriad*, we might first consider a series of articles in the 1980s by Paul Dean, following Anne Barton, in which he argued that Shakespeare's history plays make use of "romance" history plays such as Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* as well as his *James IV*, Peele's *Edward I*, the anonymous dramas *George a Greene*, *the Pinner of Wakefield* and *Fair Em*, *the Miller's Daughter of Manchester*, and even Lyly's *Campaspe*.⁵ "Criticism," he remarked, "has not treated 'romance' histories kindly." These plays had the unfortunate fate of being contrasted with the chronicle histories characterized as "dramatizations of

He claims the privilege of the romancer; though it must be owned he does not abuse this privilege, for he has studied with great care the costume, manners, and military usages of the natives. He has done for them what Cooper has done for the wild tribes of the North—touched their rude features with the bright coloring of a poetic fancy.

From his *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (New York: Modern Library, 1843), 430-431.

⁵ "Chronicle and Romance Modes in *Henry V*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 32 (1981), 18-27; and "Shakespeare's *Henry VI* Trilogy and Elizabethan 'Romance' Histories: The Origins of a Genre," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 33 (1982), 34-48. Anne Barton, "The King Disguised: Shakespeare's *Henry V* and the Comical History," in *The Triple Bond: Plays, Mainly Shakespearean, in Performance*, ed. J.G. Price (University Park: Penn State Univ. Press, 1975), 92-117.

serious history.”⁶ “Romance histories,” he continues, quoting Irving Ribner and E.M.W. Tillyard, “‘must not be confused with the *true* history play’ since they treat ‘romantic themes which have no relation to the *serious* purposes of history.’”⁷ The point Dean makes, in the context of both Shakespearean tetralogies, is that critics have been too insistent upon privileging chronicle history plays over romance history plays as serious ruminations on history and the conceptual ideas such drama explores. Further, he insists that to divide these two kinds of plays produces a false dichotomy that ignores the romance history’s work of historical probity, and even more so the debt that chronicle history owes to its earlier romance counterpart in pursuing many of the most important themes of historical drama.

What Dean’s work opens up is the possibility of reading *I Henry IV* not simply as a history play that follows ‘serious’ chronicle sources, leavening the details with comic subplot as interlude, bending the narrative or a character’s age or behavior where it suits a ratcheting-up of the dramatic tension. Instead, the features of romance, as a generic counterpoint to a play’s use of chronicle historical material, allow the drama to explore the conceptual issues that make history dynamic. In other words, rather than ascribing to ‘romance’ a negative, silly quality, as if it were constitutively less ‘real’ or relevant to our consideration of big ideas, of comparative political possibilities, a closer look at those moments in a play such as *I Henry IV* suggests that it is here that the most ‘serious’ of historical issues are in play.

Elizabethan drama’s links with history cannot be simply summed up, that is, by reference to ‘source’ as simply a site for the removal of narrative detail. The decisions Shakespeare made when

⁶ Hardin Craig, “Shakespeare and the History Play” in *Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies*, eds. Brander Matthews and Ashley Thorndike (Folger Shakespeare Library: Washington, D.C., 1948), 56. Quoted in Dean (1982), 35. The italics are Dean’s.

⁷ Ibid. The italics are, again, Dean’s.

writing a history play are of course dramatic ones, but they are also necessarily imbued with a complex set of contextual pressures. Let us take just two out of many possibilities: similarities in religious controversy in the period in which the play is set—the first years of the fifteenth century, with ample incursions into preceding and subsequent years—and in the period in which it was written, by which I mean the persecution of Lollards and of recusant Catholics. This sets the stage, as we will see, for one important facet of the Falstaff-Hal relationship, one that embeds within its comedy a kernel of romance fatality.

The other contextual pressure is that of rebellion, particularly that arising in the border areas of England itself. It is one thing for French citizens of, say, Calais, to want to throw off the English yoke, but quite another when what has officially become part of an emerging nation spurns that nation in terms of a precedent, more fundamental claim to the land. In declaring themselves the ‘real’ Britons, the Welsh rebel as an other to the English nation that threatens to disrupt such nation-building at its very heart. When Owen Glyndwr refers to the English in his letters to the Scots, Irish and French as “Saxons”—to which he might have added “Normans,” had he not been writing to the French king—he touches on a subject, nationhood, very much on the minds of the English near the close of the sixteenth century.

While we cannot, of course, say with any certainty what Shakespeare thought about Wales or the Welsh who had been coming to London in great numbers after the 1530s, we can observe in the *Henriad* a great deal of attention paid to Wales as a source not only of continual trouble but more so one that offers fascinating, crucial transfusions of spirit in contrast to a melancholy, worn Englishness.⁸ In *1 Henry IV*, and again two

⁸ Much has been written about the *Henriad* and its various relationships to nationalism, colonialism, the Tudor ‘myth’, gender (or lack thereof), and so on. As Terence Hawkes has reminded us in his excellent essay entitled “Bryn Glas,” of the many political issues in the *Henriad*, all roads lead

plays later in *Henry V*, the playwright makes extensive use of a genre that is anything but silly or un-serious.

It would perhaps be more useful, instead of referring to a play such as *I Henry IV* generally as a “History Play,” as if that were thoroughly descriptive of its genre, to inquire into how the play works with its material. While the catchall “History Play” describes its subject matter, the provenance of its story and characters and their links to a nation’s past, that such details can be found, in whole or part, in chronicles and compilations, it does nothing to describe in which conceptual mode or modes the play functions. We know, for the most part, where Shakespeare has gotten his material, but this does not help us answer the question of what he is doing in deploying it in particular ways. And this he does aggressively, purposively.

The ready answer is that this is in service of the drama. The playwright collapses the two Mortimers, following a convenient error in Hall and Holinshed; he reduces Hotspur’s age to that of Hal’s setting them up as rivals for the king’s attention, here following Samuel Daniel. Indeed these moves make better drama. But such textual manipulations make better drama by infusing one *mode* of dramatizing with another. It is the tension between these modes, between genres, that makes better drama while simultaneously doing the greatest conceptual work on the most substantive questions. I would suggest that we think of genre operating in such plays differentially, the signification of each coming to bear relationally, instead of as discrete, positive entities.

Thus in *I Henry IV*, the narrative skeleton—battles fought, rebels and their rebellions, plots, alliances, the political sinews of chronicle—finds its musculature by recourse not to comic interlude but rather to elements of romance. These elements are: prophecy, magic, quest, love stories, role-playing and disguise, outlawry, foreignness/otherness, and so on. Without such elements playing

to, or at least through, Wales. “Bryn Glas,” in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, eds. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (London: Routledge, 1998), 117-140.

differentially with and against the narrative lifted from the chronicles, the History Play would be reduced to dumb show.

Let's take an example. In *1 Henry IV*, 3.1, Hotspur, his uncle Worcester, and Mortimer, pretender to the English throne, are in the Welsh court of Owen Glendower to plan their tripartite division of the island as well as their impending military clash with Henry's army. There is an immediate disagreement over which genre they are going to inhabit as they engender this new, divided nation. While I'm aware that Hotspur is here a 'rebel', his claim is that he and his family have helped put Henry on the throne and England is now in need of a new monarch. The Percy rebellion, in other words, is conservatively English, returning Edward III's line to its proper recipient. The Hotspur-Glendower argument concerns what we might call the discursive ground rules: what sort of story are we going to be in as we set off on this adventure? It begins at line 12 when Glendower refers to the king's anxiety about having such a foe:

I cannot blame him. At my nativity the front of heaven was
full of fiery shapes, of burning cressets; and at my birth the
frame and huge foundation of the earth shook like a coward.

Hotspur's reply:

Why, so it would have done at the same season if your
mother's cat had but kitten'd, though yourself had never been
born.

Obviously a humorous riposte that allows Glendower the option of laughing off such silliness, it leads him only to press his personal narrative—"I say the earth did shake when I was born . . . The heavens were all on fire, the earth did tremble . . ."—only to be interrupted by an exasperated Hotspur who counters such mystical discourse, pointing as it does immediately and confidently to the ideas of fate and prophecy for which the Welsh were well-noted, by reference to a more 'logical' explanation:

Diseasèd nature oftentimes breaks forth
 In strange eruptions; oft the teeming earth
 Is with a kind of colic pinched and vexed
 By the imprisoning of unruly wind
 Within her womb, which for enlargement striving
 Shakes the old beldam earth, and topples down
 Steeples and moss-grown towers. At your birth
 Our grandam earth, having this distemp'rature,
 In passion shook. (3.1.25-33)

Hotspur's use of a kind of gynecological/intestinal geophysics, with the implied insult that Glendower was, as a 'strange eruption', not so much birthed as shat out violently into the world, attempts to counter one genre, one discursive mode, with another.

Instead of calling this something like 'Saxon logic' or rationality, and rehearsing the old saw that Shakespeare presents a struggle between English logic and Celtic irrationality, I want to suggest that we read such a scene as a clash of discourse symptomatic of the more fundamental clash of cultures, of modes of conceiving of how people should live and govern and conceptualize themselves as subjects. In this context I would call Hotspur's language game that of epic and Glendower's romance.

What is at stake here can be glimpsed in a comment in Holinshed's chronicle, the substance of which is taken from Hall, that the tripartite division of the island of Britain was done "through a foolish credit given to a vain prophecy . . ." "Such," he continues, "is the deviation and not divination of those blind and fantastical dreams of the Welsh prophesiers."⁹

⁹ *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, 1587 revised edition (London: J. Johnson, 1808), Vol. 3, 23. Hall has: "O, ye wavering Welshmen, call you these prophecies? Nay, call them unprofitable practices. Name you them divinations? Nay, name them diabolical devices. Say you they be prognostications? Nay, they be pestiferous publishings. For by declaring & credit giving to their subtle & obscure meanings, princes have been deceived, many a noble man hath suffered, and many an honest man hath been beguiled and destroyed." Edward Halle, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre*

While it is well known that the Welsh had a taste for prophecy, we should take note of the work of medieval historians such as Paul Strohm, who have demonstrated that Henry IV and his son were also vigorous users of prophecy as a tool of “symbolic action within which adversarial claims might be discredited and even extirpated at their point of origin.”¹⁰ The Lancastrian use of prophecy and revisionist history was a far more discursively aggressive, plotting effort to secure legitimacy for dynastic claims and military conquest than anything the Welsh could offer. Shakespeare, in his presentation in this scene *not* of a direct conflict between King Henry and Wales, but rather of the discourse mustered by center and margin—Baronial England versus Welsh uprising—demonstrates how Hotspur participates in a mode of English rapaciousness.

What Glendower wants is what he views as his birthright, genealogically stretching back in time through successive ancestral claims to Welsh territory and self-governance. When Hotspur, in contrast, is to sign for the one-third division that the Percies will receive, the land lying north of the River Trent, he hesitates. Hotspur does not like the way the river runs:

Methinks my moiety north from Burton here
In quantity equals not one of yours.
See how this river comes me cranking in,
And cuts me from the best of all my land
A huge half-moon, a monstrous cantle, out.
I'll have the current in this place dammed up,
And here the smug and silver Trent shall run
In a new channel fairly and evenly.
It shall not wind with such a deep indent,
To rob me of so rich a bottom here. (3.1.93-102)

Families of Lancaster and York 1548 revised edition (London: J. Johnson, 1809).

¹⁰ Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998), 1. See Chapter 1, “Prophecy and Kingship,” 1-31.

This is not found anywhere in the chronicles, and is one of those Shakespearean inventions that builds character, the ‘hot’ in Hotspur coming in at such moments to infuse the scene with a rush of choler.

But it does more. Not content with Welsh ‘divination,’ Hotspur resorts to a mode of ‘deviation’ that would physically alter the landscape to enforce his claim to a share of land. In so violently straightening what is naturally curved, winding, meandering, Hotspur stands here for a discourse that would alter anything that does not suit his program of acquisition. It is the Lancastrian mode throughout the *Henriad* to perform such deviations precisely in the service of scripted divination, finding its fullest expression in *Henry V* with that king’s persistent, successful, and deadly use of textual and rhetorical sleight-of-hand to consolidate power and reconquer territory.

The response comes from Glendower. Aghast at Hotspur’s proposed feat of imperialist engineering, he replies: “Not *wind*? It shall, it must; you see it doth.” If Percy stands here for the power of epic construction, of an origin that must be retroactively gouged out in order to give form to what is not otherwise available, Glendower, in his apparent naïveté, his defense of the map, of the land as inviolably ‘what it is,’ is in the service of such ‘winding.’ It is important to note that it is not *his* land in dispute; he is standing up for the free range of the river itself. This is consistent with the mode of the Welsh court as it is presented in the remainder of the scene.

While the contract of division is being drawn up, the ladies are called in and the men take a short rest before their leave-taking and preparation for battle. This, famously, is where much Welsh is spoken; where Glendower, according to Hotspur, “held me last night at the least nine hours in reckoning up the several devils’ names that were his lackeys . . .”; where Glendower causes music to play seemingly out of thin air; where the men are tempted to indulge in what nearly all critics call Welsh “effeminization.”

This latter charge seems to me to miss the point, as if following Hotspur’s estimation of the Welsh court as though it

were the play's. There is another possibility here, and it again leads through the clash of genres to an opening, an alternative space, opened up by romance elements coded as Welsh. These are, to be brief: music, poetry, prophecy, magic, historiographical copiousness, and female seductiveness. That Hotspur thinks these dangerous and not the sort of things a warrior ought to get up to is clear, but the attention the play itself shows to this scene is important as an alternative to the violent single-mindedness of a Hotspur or a Hal who has abandoned his tavern companions and become the determined Prince without time or patience to enjoy, to learn from, the "unyoked humour . . . of idleness."¹¹

Near the end of the scene that we have been discussing, Hotspur trades jibes with his wife, who reproaches him with a mild "Now God help thee!" to which he replies "To the Welsh lady's bed." This slip of Hotspur's mask, where he reveals an attraction for someone he has just been disparaging, is about as close as he gets to falling into typical medieval romance trope. He retreats from this by urging his proper English wife to sing and swear and be at least a little bad, though she is having none of it. Alternatives exhausted, Hotspur suddenly rises and announces that he is off to prepare for battle. This English knight has no place in romantic structure, and so strides off to meet his epic destiny.

But since the first act of the play, young Harry, Prince of Wales, has been found carousing determinedly amongst the sort of common folk poised against the court where we, and indeed his

¹¹ Paraphrasing Hal's soliloquy at 1.2.174, a speech revealing his calculations through a mode of deviation that belies the chronicle historians' attempts (especially those in the sixteenth century) to explain his sudden transformation upon becoming king. Shakespeare's Prince Hal/Henry V is an inveterate splitter of the divine: for purposes of controlling the forces that shape the future, he will assiduously manipulate the boundary between 'divination' as prognostication and 'the divine' as the legitimating power behind kingship and dynastic stability. His deviance in *1 Henry IV* is thus not a historical trait, generically consistent with chronicle historical drama, but rather the trace of generic deviance, where the play turns to romance to explore concepts and themes about which the chronicles are silent.

father, would expect to find him. From 1.1, where his father laments the sad tale of his son in relation to Hotspur, that “theme of honour’s tongue,” to 1.2, where Hal first appears, trading barbs with Falstaff, the Prince is apparently a ne’er do well, a corrupted youth hanging about the taverns, enjoying disreputable company. He is also, to be sure, a keen planner for the future, as he announces in his “I know you all . . .” speech that ends 1.2.

Where the chronicles have Hal transformed miraculously upon accession to the throne, Shakespeare locates his mingling with meaner sorts of people as purposeful. In the play, Hal uses the space of the tavern as one of questing for a kind of discursive prowess that will allow him to gain a certain facility with language, with playing the language game of ‘the people’, as well as obscuring himself in perfidious circumstances in order later to better ascend to relatively greater heights. Hal understands and wants nothing of the straightforward approach of Hotspur, preferring instead to meander his way, to wind through the country—or at least its capital—he will rule in order to pick up a store of useful knowledge at his leisure. Such a path in the two parts of the *Henry IV* plays amounts to a concentrated picaresque, where Hal has adventures that, while not always concealing his true identity, conceal his purpose, like an Arthur too lazy to draw the sword from the stone. This of course worries a father who inhabits the play in full epic mode, seeking to legitimize his rule in shaky circumstances, needing desperately to keep order and ensure that threats from his borders are taken care of.

For the father of chronicle history, this must have been far less worrisome, since Hal was off in Wales and in the Marches from age 13 until things calmed down. The future Henry V that Shakespeare found in his chronicle reading was, with few exceptions, and these without detail, a hard-working prince and field commander in the border wars of the early part of the reign. Here he received his martial and political education from a number of older men, including Sir John Oldcastle. By changing Hal from a character whose adolescence is spent fighting in Wales, attempting to put down rebellion and consolidate his father’s

control over an unruly, inchoate English nation, to an urban education and other sub-cultural places in the city and its environs, Shakespeare suppresses the border wars and the very rift that Hal will address upon becoming Henry V.

Among the many interesting things revealed by scholarly discussions elicited by the Oldcastle controversy is the depth to which the characteristics and acts of this historical personage underpin the character of Falstaff, seen all too often as simply a comic character. Falstaff is rather a character shot through with the historical dynamic: his very body, bloated as it is relative to the ideal, muscular form of the Oldcastle of Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, is an evidentiary marker for the excesses and vices, the deviations of a man of leisure. He is, in short, the perfect romance figure, part alluring danger and part salvation, offering to his royal young companion all of the meandering possibilities that might either lead him to ruin or teach him the true way.

Since in the chronicle frame of the history as Shakespeare found it, Oldcastle would have been with Hal campaigning in Wales, it is not too much of a stretch to suggest that where we find these two together, the London underworld, is a space not unlike the Wales of 3.1. They are both spaces counterpoised against the Lancastrian discourse of epic, of solidifying monarchical rule. The tavern and Welshness are both in various ways counter forces to English stability, to the stable narrative of monarchy and dynastic succession that the Lancastrians sought so assiduously to promote by using chroniclers to spin things their way.

It is left to Shakespeare to dramatize a Henry IV and V from sources favorable to them while at the same time finding a way to allow for a critique of the way in which such a discourse tries to suppress difference, to produce a unanimity of thought not just about past events, but about how the narrative of events is or can be produced. Through disruptions of genre as the institution of difference, a play such as *1 Henry IV* takes the time to meander around, to indicate where in winding it is attempting to dramatize the complex work of history.

I'll close with a leap into the latter part of *Henry V*, where Fluellen, that conspicuously named Welsh captain, purveyor of copious historical detail, from military history, romance, and epic, speaks to the English captain Gower, also a conspicuous name, referring as it does to the medieval writer of romances and Lancastrian sponsored verse. The former has just brought up the fact of King Henry's birth in Monmouth, that border county neither quite Wales nor England, neither fish nor . . . pork. In his Welsh pronunciation, saying 'p' for 'b', he asks "What call you the name where Alexander the Pig was born?" (4.7.10-11) Gower's reply attempts correction—"Alexander the Great"—but Fluellen is having none of it:

Why I pray you, is not 'pig' great? The pig or the great or the mighty or the huge or the magnanimous are all one reckonings, save the phrase is a little variations.

At this point we might feel firmly ensconced in comic interlude, laughing at Fluellen as a silly Welsh character. That is, until he presses the comparison to allude to the damaging idea that Henry has forsaken his best friend, Falstaff, and in the process, killed him. His suggestion, with which I will leave you, returns to maps, rivers, and that imaginative place where history is combined with romance. For Fluellen, in what we might call the spirit of Welshness in the plays, to abandon it is to lose something precious.

I tell you captain, if you look in the maps of the world I warrant you shall find, in the comparisons between Macedon and Monmouth, that the situations, look you, is both alike. There is a river in Macedon, and there is also moreover a river at Monmouth. It is called Wye at Monmouth, but it is out of my prains what is the name of the other river—but it is all one, 'tis alike as my fingers is to my fingers, and there is salmons in both. If you mark Alexander's life well, Harry of Monmouth's life is come after it indifferent well. For there is figures in all things. Alexander, God knows, and you know, in his rages and his furies and his wraths and his cholers and his moods and his displeasures and his indignations, and also

being a little intoxicates in his prains, did in his ales and his
angers, look you, kill his best friend . . . (4.7.19-32).

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Henry V
Fluellen and Gower



Act IV.

Scene 1—*The Field of Agincourt.*

From *The Library Shakespeare*, vol. III, *Historical Plays &c.* Illustrated by Sir John Gilbert, George Cruickshank, and R. Dudley. London: William Mackenzie, 22 Paternoster Row
(Reprint: Trident Press International, 2000)
(Editor's choice)

***Monasteries as Financial Patrons and Promoters of Local
Performance in Late Medieval and Early Tudor England***

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The elaborate cycle plays produced in the larger, wealthy municipalities of York, Chester, Wakefield and Coventry receive the lion's share of attention among scholars of medieval theatre. Until recently, performance activities in smaller communities have received little or no attention, except perhaps as something of antiquarian interest. And one area of theatre history that has been largely overlooked is the involvement of monasteries in local performance activities. Yet the precious few, fragmentary, monastic records that survived the dissolutions of the monasteries under Henry VIII and Edward VI, suggest that several monasteries gave active financial support to local theatre in England before and during the early Tudor period.

I

Theatre history texts are replete with descriptions of theatrical activities in England during the late medieval and early modern periods. They offer images of churches full of plays where priests and laity joined hands to put on theatrical works, streets full of pageant wagons holding various scenes from different plays, lawns packed with feasts and celebrations that included traveling players, homes of aristocrats and royalty that were bursting with dramatic activity, and roads well-traveled by large numbers itinerate players.

For some theatre historians these times are treated almost as a fantasyland in which theatre was important, or so we say.¹

The elaborate cycle plays produced in the larger, wealthy municipalities of York, Chester, Wakefield and Coventry receive the lion's share of attention among scholars of medieval theatre. Though, in fact, just four scripts for cycle plays in England are extant—and some of those are only fragments—they have enchanted medieval theatre historians for centuries. Until recently, local performance activities in smaller communities have received little attention, except perhaps as something of antiquarian interest. And one area of theatre history that has been largely overlooked is the role of the monastery in theatre production. Yet based on the precious few, fragmentary, monastic records that survived the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII and Edward VI, it appears that several monasteries played active roles in supporting local theatre in England before and during the early Tudor period.

Previous research has shown that productions of the cycle plays in places like Chester, Coventry and York were funded and organized by an interlocking network of civic authorities and craft guilds. In smaller communities most performance activities were organized and funded by the townspeople and/or the local church. As more and more information about local performance activities becomes available through the on-going publications of the *Records of Early English Drama* (REED) from the University of Toronto, it is becoming evident that a vibrant and lively network of local performances and performers existed in England prior to the religious reformations begun by Henry VIII. These performances included plays, elaborate processions, church ales, which involved players, minstrels, dancers, and animal keepers. Most performers played in their own and nearby communities and earned modest amounts of money for their parishes and sometimes themselves.

The records also show that some communities received financial help from local monasteries. Though records are

¹ This article was presented in abbreviated form at the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference, October 2002, in San Antonio, Texas.

fragmentary, in good part because they were lost or destroyed during the Dissolution, records that do survive suggest that many monasteries were especially active as financial patrons of local performances. In fact, it appears that some monasteries paid more to local performance activity than to performers traveling to their communities under aristocratic sponsorship. This study examines what available monastic records suggest about financial support provided to local performance activity by certain monasteries, and, by implication, demonstrates what J. Thomas Kelly has asserted:

The pecuniary impact of the Dissolution was of secondary importance to the psychological and social impact of the sudden death of a structure deeply involved in political, economic, religious, social, and traditional life of the nation.²

As we shall see, just as historians have shown that monasteries contributed to the social welfare and education of surrounding communities,³ they also contributed to the traditional performance activities that permeated the communal fabric of local life.⁴

II

Before progressing further, it is important to define the varying types of performance activities occurring in late medieval and Tudor England. After London became the epicenter for licensed theatre activity in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, there is no need to be confused regarding the terms “professional” and “amateur” performance activities as used by theatre historians.

² J. Thomas Kelly, *Thorns on the Tudor Rose* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1977), 28.

³ See, for instance, Paul A. Fideler, "Poverty, Policy and Providence: the Tudors and the Poor," in *Political Thought and the Tudor Commonwealth*, ed. Paul Fideler and T. F. Meyer (London: Routledge, 1992), 194-222.

⁴ N. J. G. Pounds, *A History of the English Parish* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 266-8.

By that time acting companies bearing the names of aristocratic patrons clearly were professionals, earning their livings through performance. Prior to that time, however, there were varieties of performance activities in England. There were local, part-time performers, and troupes of entertainers sponsored by aristocrats, and independent, traveling entertainers, usually termed “minstrels” in the sources. But in terms of locus of activity, some of those minstrels could be classified as “locals.” Most theatre historians still use the term “amateur” to describe the local, part-time performers whose activities were centered in their own or neighboring communities. However, there are reasons why the term “amateur” may be somewhat inappropriate for these types of performers and their activities.

Rather than “amateur,” I prefer the terms “local” or “part-time,” to refer to performers that were sponsored by local authorities (civic or religious) and usually performed as a service to their community, or for little or no money. To describe these performers and their performances as “amateur” creates a false impression. The term usually implies a lack of polish and investment on the part of the local performers and others involved in their productions. This is untrue. Countless records reveal incredibly complex and well-developed performances created by these local performers in smaller communities. The REED volumes are full of entries like those from Devon, Dorset and Cornwall that describe, for example, seventeen shillings, ten pence paid for costumes for the Corpus Christi procession in Exeter in 1415 (a sum, for example, equal to the cost of 160 chickens),⁵ or payments to guild members in compensation for the time they, or their apprentices spent in rehearsal, or the purchase of sacks of wheat to create the image of Lot’s wife as a pillar of salt, and purple satin gowns to costume Jesus, and crimson vestments, and gloves and devils’ coats. Even the seemingly simple ceremonies

⁵ *Records of Early English Drama* (henceforth *REED*), Bristol, ed. Mark C. Pilkinton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 18.

accompanying the Easter sepulchers set up in many a small parish involved elaborate technology featuring what we today would call “technical effects”—machinery to open Jesus’ tomb, sometimes including also effigies of angels descending from above to the mouth of the tomb.⁶ In fact, for the time, these local performances were more elaborate and polished than those by traveling “professional” entertainers. Performances by minstrels and other entertainers were *ad hoc*, either the result just showing up in town, or being imported to supplement planned, civic events such as a church ales or Christmas festivities. Performances by traveling, aristocratic sponsored companies were rare,⁷ and, as Greg Walker and Paul Whitfield White have demonstrated, their performances often were tied to the political power and designs of their patrons.⁸ And in both cases, the traveling entertainers were paid flat fees; there is no mention of providing costumes or props or “special effects” for those performances.

The role of religious officials on medieval performance history always has been discussed in connection with the rise and development of the liturgical play. Once the performances of religious drama moved outside the immediate orbit of religious establishments—like the ubiquitous Corpus Christi pageants, processions and plays produced by the laity—many theatre historians gloss over the continued influence of religious officials on performance activities. Nor do they give much shrift to the continued involvement of monastic institutions in the local performance activities of the laity. In 1959, for example, theatre

⁶ REED, *Dorset, Cornwall*, eds. Rosalind Conklin Hays, C. E. McGee, Sally Joyce, and Evelyn S. Newlyn (1999), 267-8, 471-3; REED, *Devon*, ed. John M. Wasson (1986), 17, 360, 382

⁷ See Christine Sustek Williams, “The Troupe’s the Thing: The Traveling Royal Players During the Reign of Henry VIII,” *SRASP*, 24 (2001), 40-1 and James H. Forse, “The Flow and Ebb of Touring Amateur Acting Troupes in Tudor England,” *SRASP*, 22 (1999), 47-68.

⁸ Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, (New York, 1991), 7, 9, 227 and Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation*, (Cambridge, 1993), 46.

scholar Glynne Wickham posed the following questions in his enormously influential work *Early English Stages 1300 to 1660*:

Monks, for example, may legitimately be expected to have had an intimate connection with strictly liturgical plays: but what business had these men, who had so firmly abjured the wicked world, to be concerning themselves with plays performed outside their cloistered retreat? Did they in fact do so?"⁹

The latter question raised by Wickham has been left largely unaddressed for decades. Wickham himself failed to mention the Chester records, which credit the authorship of its cycle plays to a monk at the local monastery, and fifteenth-century records from Exeter (Devon) which list expenditures for food and drink for the friars who participated in the annual Corpus Christi celebrations. However, in his later, shorter work, *The Medieval Theatre*, Wickham did note that for a Cornwall passion play, "text and performance both appear to have rested with the monastic community of the collegiate church of Glasney, near Penryn."¹⁰ The REED project has made it possible now to address the question: did monks, nuns and friars play a role in the development of late medieval performance activity besides liturgical plays? And the simple answer to Wickham's question "did they in fact do so?" is, at least in terms of documented financial support, "yes, they did." Monasteries, the surviving records suggest, tended to patronize local performances and performers far more often than they did traveling troupes of minstrels or aristocratic players.

⁹ Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages*, v. I, (New York, 1958), 8.

¹⁰ REED. *Chester*, ed. Lawrence M. Clopper (1979), 27; REED. *Devon*, 360; Glynne Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 70.

III

One type of financial patronage given to local performance activities by monasteries involved support for local performances outside the cloister. Thetford Priory (Norfolk) is one of the few monastic institutions for which we possess easily accessible, fairly extensive records, though they are sparse for the period before the mid-fifteenth century.¹¹ Thetford's surviving records indicate that the priory was active in helping to finance public performances in several towns and parishes in East Anglia. Two references to plows suggest the priory's support for the annual "Plow Monday" celebrations of nearby parishes.¹² "Plow Monday" was celebrated on the first Monday after Epiphany, the beginning of the plowing season. Often the celebration involved a procession of plowmen and boys in costumes drawing a plow from door to door in the village. Each household was expected to offer money for the parish or else the plough would be let loose on their yard.¹³

An expenditure of 138 pence was recorded in Thetford's accounts for 1499 for making a plow for Snarishill. Perhaps this entry refers to buying that parish a new community plow. But a second sum in 1510—which notes that the priory contributed 28 pence towards the "plow drove" of the parish churches of Thetford—clearly refers to "Plow Monday" activities.¹⁴

The Priory also gave financial support to plays, games and various other entertainments in neighboring towns. In 1508 the

¹¹ David Dymond, *The Register of Thetford Priory*, (Norfolk, 1996).

¹² Dymond, 96-275.

¹³ E. C. Cawte, "It's an Ancient Custom—But How ancient?" *Aspects of British Calendar Customs*, eds. Theresa Buckland and Juliette Wood (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1993), 50; E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage* (New York: Dover, 1986), 121, 150, 209; Alex Helm, *The English Mummers' Play* (New York: Folklore Society, 1981), 17, 52.

¹⁴ Dymond, 119, 274.

priory sent sixteen pence to support the Ixworth (Suffolk) play, and four pence to support a play in Shelfanger (Norfolk).¹⁵ In 1505, twelve pence was sent to the town of “myldenale” for its play.¹⁶ Probably this reference is to the town of Mildenhall, which did, in fact, produce a St. Thomas play that year.¹⁷ The priory sent twenty-four pence in support of a play performed by the parish of St. Cuthbert (Norfolk) in 1510, and in 1511, eight pence was donated toward the costs of the Kenninghall (Norfolk) play.¹⁸

Thetford Priory also sent Snarishill a tub of ale and bread for its Rogationtide procession in 1499,¹⁹ gave an eight pence donation to the Lopham game in 1504, twelve pence to the game of Berdewell in 1505, and sixteen pence to the Walsham game being put on at Gyslyngham in the same year. Accounts for 1510 list a twenty-four pence donation to the Mayday celebrations of near-by St. Peter’s parish, and a ten pence donation to the “recreation of Hockham.” In 1527 the priory provided money to pay trumpeters for the Corpus Christi Guild’s celebration in the town of Thetford.²⁰ It is clear that Thetford Priory actively contributed to local performance activities in East Anglia, not only supporting events in its home county of Norfolk but also the adjoining county of Suffolk. Here alone I have listed over 300 pence, over the short space of twenty-eight years, donated to local performance activities in several East Anglian communities.

¹⁵ Dymond, 251.

¹⁶ Dymond, 204.

¹⁷ *Records of Plays and Players in Norfolk and Suffolk*, eds. David Galloway and John Wasson, (Oxford: Malone Society, 1980), 192.

¹⁸ Dymond, 276, 288.

¹⁹ Dymond, 275.

²⁰ Dymond, 196, 209-10, 275, 393, 523-4

Thetford Priory was not the only Norfolk monastic institution to subsidize local performance events. Hickling Priory donated twenty-seven pence to help support a play held at North Walsham in 1512. The entry in the priory's records seems to refer to the play as a joint production put on by the parishes of North Walsham and Hickling. The editors of the Malone Society's Norfolk/Suffolk volume question the accuracy of that entry. They believe that such a joint production is improbable because of the distance between the two localities.²¹ Yet they may be ignoring the very data they themselves compiled. There are several entries in the volume that show cooperative activity among many East Anglian communities in terms of costume exchanges, as well as several incidences of communities sharing production costs.

Though fragmentary, records from several monasteries around England reveal their financial support for local performances. Account rolls from Durham Abbey listing expenses in the 1300s show payments to what is termed a "company of players" from nearby Bewdley in 1326, 1329, 1333, 1338, 1342, 1368 and 1372. Bewdley was a dependant village of the Abbey, and monks often traveled there on business, so it is unclear in the records whether the performances were at Bewdley, or the "company of players" performed at the Abbey, or both.

The payments are substantial ones, generally in the range of three to nine shillings, and there is one whopping payment of sixty-one shillings in 1329. In 1338 there was a payment of three shillings, eight pence to players at Witton, another dependant village. In 1333, 1335 and 1342 the records clearly indicate part-time, or local, players performing at the Abbey on St. Martin's Day and St. Cuthbert's Day (St. Cuthbert was the patron saint of Durham). The troupes are unnamed, save for players specified as from Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1335. Those payments were in the range of three to five shillings. All of these payments are well above the usual sums paid out to players in the records of other

²¹ *Norfolk and Suffolk*, 17.

monasteries. It is clear, then, that Durham Abbey's contributions to local players must have added greatly to the local economy.²²

Surviving records from county Devon yield only one instance of monastic involvement in local performance activities. In 1475 Cowick Priory accounts list a contribution of forty-two pence toward the celebrations connected with the local boy bishop.²³ Due to poorly preserved monastic records from Devon, this is our only glimpse into monastic involvement in local performances in that county.²⁴ While this one payment does not prove long-standing support by Cowick Priory of local activities, it does hint that such may have been the case.

In Chester, one of the most famous theatrical cities outside London, a monk from the local abbey was, as noted above, credited with the authorship of its cycle plays,²⁵ and records also show that the Carmelite Friars leased their carriage house at low rent to the Carpenter's Guild for storage of its pageant wagon used in the annual cycle plays.²⁶ This cooperation of monastic houses with local guilds is seen in many of the large cities that sponsored annual cycle plays and processions. Monastic houses not only rented storage areas to guilds, but often housed their playbooks as well.²⁷

²² *Extracts from the Account Rolls of the Abbey of Durham*, 3vs. (Durham: Whittaker and Co., 1898 [v. 1], 1899 [v. 2], 1901 [v. 3]), 15, 16, 47, 71, 116, 129, 170, 210, 511, 527, 552. Since pages for all three volumes are consecutive, specifying volume number is unnecessary. The Durham Abbey *Extracts* are volumes XCIX, C, CIII of the Surtees Society Publications.

²³ *REED. Devon*, 287.

²⁴ *REED. Devon*, xxiii.

²⁵ *REED. Chester*, 27.

²⁶ *REED. Chester*, 31.

²⁷ Wickham, *Theatre*, 70.

IV

Another form of monastic patronage of local performances includes the importing of local performers into the monastery itself. This too yielded financial support to the local community. Thetford Priory, mentioned above in connection with donations to local performances, also imported local performers inside its walls to augment celebrations on religious feast days. Between 1498 and 1529 the priory spent a total of 790 pence on imported local East Anglian performers. These ranged from the waits of Norwich, to local players at Christmas, to bearwards. Most common were performances by minstrels, however, players from local parishes often were brought in for the Christmas celebrations. The records show payments to the Norwich waits five different years during that time and payments to bearwards in seven years. An unnamed jester (most likely local due to the low payment of only eight pence) was paid in 1529.²⁸ It would be tedious here to list all the various payments to, and appearances by, local performers, but the numbers of payments to local performers make it clear that Thetford Priory frequently used local performers as part of the monastery's feast day celebrations. The records also reveal that Thetford paid as much, if not more, to imported local performers as it did to traveling minstrels and the Norwich waits.

Records from Selby Abbey (Yorkshire) for the 1400s and early 1500s reveal a substantial number of performances there by local players. While only four from Yorkshire communities are named (Doncaster, Howden, Leeds, York), twenty-nine unnamed troupes probably also were "locals," for the records show that groups of entertainers sponsored by aristocrats always are named. Further, the payments to the unnamed troupes are consistent with those made to the players from Doncaster, Howden, Leeds and York, ranging from six to twenty-four pence per performance. Entertainers traveling under an aristocrat's name generally

²⁸ Dymond, 100-704.

received slightly larger payments.²⁹ Though only covering the years 1456 and 1457, records from the famous Yorkshire monastery, Fountains Abbey, hint at a similar use of local troupes for monastic celebrations. Accounts from those two years show the appearance at the monastery of players from the Yorkshire towns of Ripon, Thirsk, and Topcliffe; each troupe was paid twelve pence. There also is a large, un-itemized lump sum of money noted that was paid to an unspecified number of unnamed troupes.³⁰

Similar indications about the use of local players in monastic celebrations are found in surviving, fragmentary records from St. Mary's Abbey in Boxley (Kent) and Peterborough Abbey (Northamptonshire). In 1365, 1367, 1376, 1400, 1405 and 1408, St. Mary's hosted players from Maidstone (Kent) usually as part of its Christmastide celebrations. In one instance—and a rare one for all records—we have a named play. In 1408 on St. Thomas à Becket's day the Maidstone troupe performed *The Miracle of St. Mary*.³¹ The records from Peterborough Abbey list payments to local troupes of players who performed at the Abbey on Christmas 1404, St. Oswald's Day 1414, St. John the Apostle's Day 1433, and again on Christmas in 1504 and 1505.³²

Lancashire records concerning any kind of performance activities in the county are haphazard and miniscule for the entire late medieval and Tudor periods. Only fragmentary records from four Lancashire towns during the Tudor period are extant, and the surviving records of two monasteries, Lytham Priory (1484-1525)

²⁹ Wickham, *Stages*, v. I, 332-38.

³⁰ J. T. Fowler, *Memorials of the Abbey of St. Mary's Fountains* (Durham: Surtees Society, 1918), 59-61.

³¹ REED, *Kent*, ed. James M. Gibson (2002), 906-09.

³² Joan Greatrex, ed., *Account Rolls of the Obedientiares of Peterborough* (Peterborough: Northamptonshire Record Society, 1984), Publications of the Northamptonshire Record Society, xxxiii, 7, 153, 170, 199.

and Whalley Abbey (1485-1536), yield only information about performances during the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII.

Yet those fragmentary records suggest these two monastic institutions in Lancashire sponsored performance activity. In both sets of records the use of the term “ministralles” may refer to musicians or players. Clear distinctions between the two types of performers do not start to be made until the second or third decade of the sixteenth century. Hence, though I term them here as “minstrels,” the possibility that they were players does exist.³³

Since Lytham Priory was a relatively small monastery, it is surprising that there would be a large amount of performance activity going on there, and yet there was in the years for which records have survived.³⁴ Lytham Priory paid “minstrels” annually from 1484 to 1509 and again from 1514 to 1525. Since these “minstrels” appear to have no noble patron, it is quite likely that they were local performers. An overwhelming majority of dramatic records, whether from town or monastery, name the performers’ patron when that patron is a noble. Lytham’s accounts do not reveal what type of performance was given; therefore, we cannot determine whether these “minstrels” were musicians or players, or combinations of performers. Yet the records do suggest strong support by the priory for local performance activity. In 1454 and 1455 the only payments of this priory that are recorded are to local “minstrels,” so it is clear that this house had a commitment to local entertainers. Furthermore, Lytham Priory made annual payments toward the boy bishop celebration at its motherhouse.³⁵

Whalley Abbey, founded in Lancashire in 1485, paid “minstrels” every year from 1485 to 1505 and again from 1509 to

³³ REED. *Lancashire*, ed. David George (1991), xxxiv.

³⁴ REED. *Lancashire*, xxxiii.

³⁵ REED. *Lancashire*, xxxiii.

1537. The abbey also brought in bearwards sporadically.³⁶ Annually, the Abbey spent an average of 491 pence on performance activities, a substantial amount of money when considered alongside the fact that the abbey was not a very prosperous or well-endowed institution. And the records also show that among its required expenses the abbey paid out £200 for stipends to support four dependent churches and fees to temporal officers.³⁷ Like the performers at Lytham Priory, most likely the performers at Whalley Abbey also were locals, since no aristocrat's name is linked to them. When the abbey was dissolved, there were only thirteen monks in residence. Given the substantial amount of entertainment at the abbey, most likely the audiences for performances there included nearby townsfolk as well as the monks. Interestingly, when the abbey was dissolved in 1537, its inventory of goods listed "a minstrelles skochyn and a little scochen with a black lyon,"³⁸ suggesting that Whalley Abbey may have possessed its own stock of costumes and properties or stored those belonging to local performers.

Records from the county of Sussex show that two monastic houses, Battle Abbey and Robertsbridge Abbey, supported a prolific number of performance activities in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.³⁹ Battle Abbey's records show payments to a number of entertainers stretching from 1346 until 1522. During the fourteenth century minstrels, players, and a fool were paid. Between 1478 and 1482, a nobleman's bearward and royal and noble entertainers were all paid. Additionally, a number of local performers were paid. These include performers from Winchelsea (Sussex) at Christmas, local players in January and

³⁶ REED. *Lancashire*, 121-144.

³⁷ REED. *Lancashire*, xxxiii.

³⁸ REED. *Lancashire*, 104.

³⁹ REED. *Sussex*, ed. Cameron Louis (2000), xxxvii.

some form of local entertainers at Pentecost and Dedication day for the abbey church. In 1498 clerks of St. Nicholas Church from the town of Battle were paid twelve pence and other local players were paid a total of 140 pence for playing at the monastery on three different occasions. Local players were paid twenty pence on the feast of the Epiphany in 1508. A total of 298 pence was paid to various local players and entertainers in 1513. Players from Cranbrook (Sussex) were given forty pence for “playing before the lord” (the abbot) in 1520, as were players from Tenterden, Maidstone, all from neighboring County Kent. Players from “elsewhere on another occasion” were given twenty-four pence.⁴⁰ The final record concerning performance shows 202 pence given to players performing before the abbot. These records more than suggest that there was on-going patronage by Battle Abbey in support of local performers from Sussex and nearby Kent.

The sixteenth-century records for Robertsbridge Abbey do not give many details concerning performances there. However, it is important to mention that what records that do survive from the fifteenth century indicate that the abbey did have a history of supporting performances at the monastery. From 1416 until 1437, payments were made to minstrels, for candles for a show, to unspecified entertainers, an harper and to players. One minstrel, Nicholas Hope from Etchingham, was paid, in conjunction with two other unnamed, fifty pence in 1426, and twelve pence in 1437.⁴¹ While fragmentary records from the monastery after 1437 list no expenditures for performances, there is an entry in records from Rye in 1517 that suggests that the abbot of Robertsbridge was sponsoring a troupe of traveling players.⁴²

In the county of Herefordshire, accounts from the monasteries of Abbey Dore, Limebrook and Wigmore show those

⁴⁰ *REED. Sussex*, 254-5.

⁴¹ *REED. Sussex*, 256-7.

⁴² *REED. Sussex*, 324.

houses taking part in theatrical activities in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Unfortunately, there are no extant records of performance activity records from those monasteries dating from the sixteenth century. Abbey Dore paid a number of minstrels traveling under aristocratic patronage in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but no performances by locals are listed. For Limebrook and Wigmore we have prohibitions in the records that reveal participation by some of the religious in performance activities. The Register of Abbot Thomas Spofford of Limebrook contains a reprimand given to nuns in 1437 for attending feasts, “spectacles and otheir wordly vanytees and secyally on holydayes.”⁴³ Furthermore, Spofford ordered that no longer were minstrels, interludes, dancing and reveling to be allowed within the establishment. At Wigmore Abbey in 1318 the abbot commanded that the monks should no longer be bled or be allowed to take part in songs and other such activities. Likewise, from the records of Canonsleigh Abbey in Devon, nuns were reprimanded in 1329 and forbidden to travel outside the convent for more than a day-trip so that they would be “cut off entirely from common and worldly shows in this way.”⁴⁴ Obviously, residents of these religious houses had sponsored performances outside and inside their communities, attesting again to the involvement of religious houses in performances of one kind or another within their localities.

V

A third form of monastic financial support for local performances was the involvement of individual monastic officials as patrons. In records published to date we find an abbot serving

⁴³ REED. *Herefordshire, Worcestershire*, ed. David N. Klausner (1990), 188.

⁴⁴ Abigail A. Young, “Theatre-Going Nuns in Rural Devon?” *Records of Early English Drama Newsletter*, 22 (1997), 25-6.

as patron to a performer as early as 1289. Monastic records from Reading for that year noted that the abbot of Reading Abbey was patron to a harper touring about the area.⁴⁵ In 1337 the prior of Worcester Cathedral was named as the patron of a minstrel.⁴⁶ The abbot of Gloucester Abbey was recorded as the patron of a harper in 1345 and of a minstrel in 1347. Probably the records refer to the same man.⁴⁷ Records from 1351 mentioned that the abbot of Evesham was patronizing of a troupe of minstrels.⁴⁸ Records from Worcester show that minstrels patronized by the abbots of Gloucester and Evesham performed there, away from their home base,⁴⁹ and, in 1448, records indicate that pipers sponsored by the prior of Ash Priory performed in Bridgwater (Somerset) during the Corpus Christi celebrations.⁵⁰ Another such occurrence already has been mentioned above. In 1517, players traveling under the patronage of the abbot of Robertsbridge Abbey performed in Rye.⁵¹ Unfortunately, no further information concerning this troupe has surfaced, so we cannot know if the players were lay people from the community adjacent to the monastery or a group of monks themselves presenting a play. A hint to the troupe's composition may come from the payment of eighteen pence noted in the Rye Chamberlains' Accounts. This payment suggests the abbot's company of players were laymen. Rye had a long tradition of hosting traveling troupes of town and parish players dating back

⁴⁵ REED. *Herefordshire*, 610.

⁴⁶ REED. *Herefordshire*, 622.

⁴⁷ REED. *Herefordshire*, 610.

⁴⁸ REED. *Herefordshire*, 610.

⁴⁹ REED. *Herefordshire*, 610.

⁵⁰ REED. *Somerset and Bath*, ed. James Stokes (1994), 1007.

⁵¹ REED. *Sussex*, 89.

to 1456, and the usual payment to those troupes was twelve to twenty pence. Payments to aristocratic and royal troupes usually were twenty pence and higher.⁵² While anecdotal, these instances of musicians and/or players traveling under the patronage of abbots hint that the practice was not too unusual.

One of the better documented of monastic patrons was Prior William More of Worcester Cathedral Priory who served as prior during the first third of the sixteenth century. His accounts detail his patronage of dramatic activity from 1518 to 1535. Over the years Prior More paid local players for several performances at the priory or his country residence when entertaining visitors during Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter, Rogation week and Whitsun week.⁵³ His accounts also note numerous payments to local parish plays in and around the city of Worcester, including Robin Hood fundraisers.⁵⁴ Among those he supported, he sent money to the nearby parishes of St. Helen, St. Andrew, St. Martin, St. Swithin, St. Peter, and St. Giles to support their performative activities.⁵⁵ He contributed a substantial forty pence to the town of Tewksbury to support their Robin Hood event.⁵⁶ His accounts also detail a performance in Worcester by traveling, lay players from Cleeve Priory in Worcester in 1530.⁵⁷ The notation reads, “in rewardes to the tenantes of clyve. Pleying with Robyn Whot Mayde Marion & other.”⁵⁸ Prior More’s personal role as patron of

⁵² REED. *Sussex*, 51-105.

⁵³ REED. *Herefordshire*, 541.

⁵⁴ REED. *Herefordshire*, 306.

⁵⁵ Ethel S. Fegan, *The Journal of Prior William More* (London, 1914), 77, 168, 293, 309, 313, 386-8, 392, 404; REED. *Herefordshire*, 306.

⁵⁶ Fegan, 87, 309, 327-8, 405; REED. *Herefordshire*, 513.

⁵⁷ REED. *Herefordshire, Worcestershire*, 628.

⁵⁸ REED. *Herefordshire*, 513.

lay performances is clear in the records, which reveal that few performances occurred when he was ill or absent from the priory.⁵⁹

VI

Unfortunately, very few other sources are readily available concerning the patronage of troupes by monastic officials and institutions. However, the little information that has survived gives us a glimpse into the complexities of performance history during the late medieval and early Tudor periods. That glimpse suggests that monasteries played a more active role in the performance traditions of their nearby communities than has been suspected. Barbara Harvey asserts that:

when . . . monks looked at the world outside the cloister, at any time from the twelfth century onwards, they liked much of what they saw and paid it the compliment of imitation.⁶⁰

The surviving records seem to bear Harvey out. They do suggest that monks (and perhaps nuns) in late medieval and Tudor England imitated the entertainment choices of neighboring villages and towns, and often imported those entertainments into their religious houses. And, though time after time ecclesiastical officials chastised them for allowing such “ribaldry” inside their houses, they still gave financial support to lay performance activities, and continued to import lay performers into the religious houses to take part in holiday festivities.

Clearly, surviving sources cannot suggest that every monastery took part in local dramatic activity, but those same sources do seem to indicate that many did so. What we must ponder is the effect upon local dramatic activity that may have

⁵⁹ REED. *Herefordshire*, 306.

⁶⁰ Barbara Harvey, *Living and Dying in England 1100-1450: The Monastic Experience* (Oxford; Oxford UP, 1993), 210.

occurred with the dissolution of these religious houses. Referring to effects upon laypeople who earned their livings as servants and suppliers to religious houses, Harvey states:

. . . large or small, the size of monastic establishments at the end of the Middle Ages does indeed illumine one of the social problems in the mid-sixteenth century, that of finding employment for the servants of the religious after the Dissolution.⁶¹

I would shift the focus to dramatic performers and say that a problem of this period became “what happened to local performers and performances after the Dissolution?”

Not only were local performances greatly curtailed by the restrictions imposed by the Henrician and Edwardian religious reforms, but the closing of the religious houses also removed one source of financial patronage. Given the assets of wealthy monasteries like Thetford Priory, sums like the 138 pence Thetford gave toward Plow Mondays to Snarishill in 1499, or the twenty-eight pence it donated to Thetford parishes and the twenty-four pence it gave to St. Cuthbert parish toward its play in 1510 seem paltry.⁶² So too does Hickling Priory’s donation of twenty-seven pence in 1512 toward the North Walsham play,⁶³ and Prior William More’s several donations to parish activities in and around Worcester. Yet from the perspective of parishes that received this financial support these sums were not paltry.

Though I cannot cite parish financial information about the parishes mentioned in Thetford and Hickling records, I can provide some information about the finances of some other representative parishes. The following figures are based on examinations of selected extant churchwardens’ accounts for small to middling

⁶¹ Harvey, 147.

⁶² Dymond, 119, 204, 251, 274, 276, 288.

⁶³ *Norfolk and Suffolk*, 17.

sized parishes of Cratfield (Suffolk), Prescott (Lancashire), Lewes (Sussex), Pyrton (Oxfordshire) and Smarden (Kent) over the years in which the various religious reforms of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I were mandated for all English parishes. Cratfield, Suffolk, was a middling size parish with an average income of 819 pence per year, and average expenses of 243 pence, a good deal of which came from its Plow Monday celebrations and church ales. Costs for the successive religious reforms averaged 14% of its income at a time one of its traditional sources of income were curtailed by Edward's religious proscriptions.⁶⁴ Prescott, Lancashire, was a similarly sized and endowed parish, but its average annual income over this period, 997 pence, was exceeded by its average expenses, 1343 pence, of which 7% of its income was spent in conforming to the religious mandates of successive Tudor regimes.⁶⁵ Lewes, in Sussex, was a smallish parish. Its annual income in this period averaged only 264 pence per year, and like Prescott its accounts were "in the red" with annual average expenses of 303 pence, and the costs of reform in Prescott averaged 18% of its annual income.⁶⁶ Pyrton, Oxfordshire, another smallish parish, managed to operate "in the black" with an average income per year of 476 pence and average expenses of 341 pence, but 31.5% of those annual expenses went towards the costs of reform.⁶⁷ Smarden, Kent, a similar small parish, also operated "in

⁶⁴ W. Holland and John James Raven, eds., *Cratfield: A Transcript of the Accounts of the Parish, from A.D. 1490 to A. D. 1642* (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1895), 49-93.

⁶⁵ F. A. Bailey, ed., *The Churchwardens' Accounts of Prescott, Lancashire 1523-1607* (Preston: R. Seed and Sons, 1953. *Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society*, CIV), 12-63.

⁶⁶ H. Michell, Whitley, ed., "The Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Andrew's and St. Michael's, Lewes from 1523 to 1601," *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, v. 45 (1902), 44-57.

⁶⁷ F. W. Weaver and G. N. Clark, eds., *Churchwardens' Accounts of Marston, Spelsbury, Pyrton* (Oxford: Oxfordshire Record Society, 1925), 67-77.

the red” during this period. The parish averaged 267 pence in annual income, but spent on average 298 pence in expenses. Costs of reforms for Smarden averaged 59% of its annual income.⁶⁸

But the average incomes for most of these representative parishes are somewhat distorted, because their annual parish incomes before the religious reforms went into effect tended to be higher, and, of course, their average expenses were lower. For instance, in order to comply with Edward VI’s prohibitions, the Suffolk parishes of Boxford and Cratfield abandoned their church ales. Boxford also abolished its Hocktide festivities and Cratfield its Plow Monday celebrations in 1548, losing in one fell swoop activities that until then had averaged over 27% of their annual incomes. At the same time all the parishes in England were required to remodel the interior of their churches completely so as to conform to Edward’s Protestant standards.⁶⁹ The average income for the Lancashire parish of Prescott for this time frame is inflated because of a one-time influx of money the parish received in 1548 when it sold off its church goods to comply with Edward VI’s reforms. That influx of money did help pay for some of costs of remodeling the church mandated by Edward’s government, but after 1548 Prescott’s annual income plummeted, and during the first two years of Mary’s reign, the parish was forced to spend large sums to restore its images and altars, and in legal fees suing for the return of the church goods it had sold under Edward. Similar patterns of decrease in income and increase in expenses in order to meet the demands first of Edward’s and then of Mary’s government appear in the records of other parishes, and many of the parishes now were forced to assume new expenses, like poor relief, foster care for orphans, taxes and rent for the church building itself now paid to the crown, or providing money and

⁶⁸ Francis Haslewood, ed., “Notes from the Records of Smarden Church,” *Archaeologia Cantiana*, v. 9 (1874), 225-35.

⁶⁹ Christine Sustek Williams, “Hocking and Ploughing: Performative Money-Makers in Tudor Suffolk,” *SRASP*, 26 (2003).

military equipment to citizens enrolled in the local muster rolls—expenses previously borne by the now defunct religious establishments.⁷⁰

Looking at these average incomes and expenses suggests that before the Dissolution, the monies contributed by Thetford and Hickling Priors and other monasteries to the performance activities of middling and smallish parishes must have been a boon. For instance, the twenty-four pence Thetford donated to the St. Cuthbert Parish play in 1510, or Hickling Priory's donation of twenty-seven pence to North Walsham in 1512, amounts to almost 10% of the annual parish income of the similar parishes of Lewes or Smarden cited above.

Hence the loss of monastic financial patronage, when coupled with the loss of religious days for celebration, and the increased costs of conformity to four sets of religious reform over the short space of twenty years almost guaranteed that local performances would almost completely disappear by the first few years of the reign of Edward VI, and have only a brief and tepid revival in the short reign of Catholic Mary. The smaller parishes and towns not only faced the expenses of successive religious reforms, but also lost their previous financial support for their plays, processions, games, and ales from the now defunct also

⁷⁰ John Amphlet, ed., *The Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Michael's in Bedwardine, Worcester, from 1539 to 1603* (Oxford: J. Parker and Co., 1896. Worcestershire Historical Society, v. 8), 13-22; J. Meadows Cowper, ed., "Accounts of the Churchwardens of St. Dunstan's Canterbury." *Archaeologia Cantiana*, v. 9 (1887), 115-25; Allison Hanham, ed., *Churchwardens' Accounts of Ashburton, 1479-1580* (Torquay: Devonshire Press, 1970), 111-56; John V. Kitto, ed., *St. Martin-in-the-Fields. The Accounts of the Churchwardens, 1525-1603* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Kent, Halilton and Co, 1901), 141-9; W. T. Mellows, ed., *Peterborough Local Administration. Churchwardens' Accounts 1467-1573* (Kettering, Northampton: Northamptonshire Record Society, 1939), 154-63; Peter Northeast, ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts 1530-1561* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1982), 43-8; C. C. Webb, ed., *The Churchwardens' Accounts of St Michael, Spurriergate, York 1518-1548* (York: University of York, 1997), 205-87; Holland and Raven, 82-3, 90-3.

monastic houses.⁷¹ Beginning with the reign of Edward VI, and culminating in the reign of Elizabeth, the provincial records show that licensed professional players traveling under the patronage of great peers of the realm replaced local entertainments, and, in the records from some of smaller communities that had long traditions of local performances before the Dissolution, evidence of any kind of locally based entertainments disappears completely.

Very little scholarship has focused on the relationship between local theatre and monasteries. Elissa B. Weaver's "The Convent Wall in Tuscan Convent Drama,"⁷² discussing Italian nuns in the sixteenth century who sponsored dramatic performances, is one of the few recent studies exploring the relationship of monastic institutions to performance history. This brief examination of monasteries and their financial support to performance in late medieval and early modern England shows that, records allowing, more work needs to be done. The fragmentary evidence we possess suggests far more involvement by monasteries in the social life of neighboring communities than has been heretofore described.

Here too we see yet another effect at the local level of the impact of the Dissolution of the religious houses and religious reforms beginning with Henry VIII and ending under Edward VI. Much has been written about the loss of schools, hospitals, part-time clergy for small parishes, and poor relief to local communities that resulted from the Dissolutions of Henry VIII and Edward VI.⁷³

⁷¹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1992), 461-8; Harvey, 31.

⁷² Elissa B. Weaver, "The Convent Wall in Tuscan Convent Drama," *The Crannied Wall*, (Ann Arbor, 1995).

⁷³ For example, Susan Brigden, *New Worlds, Lost Worlds. The Rule of the Tudors, 1485-1603* (London: Penguin, 2000), 126-31, 175, 185-90; Duffy, 395, 461-86; Pounds, 327; Fidler, "Poverty," 194-222.

Here we see the Dissolution affected local recreation and vibrant community activities as well. As J. Thomas Kelly writes:

The Dissolution involved more than the institutional Church and people who shared the monastic life. It affected the lives of many who had some direct or indirect contact with the monasteries. The disruption of such a social corporation had many adverse effects upon the nation. These are not totally measurable in the statistics relating to charity or to corruption but they relate to ideals and traditions. This is not to say that monastic charity and corruption are not valid concerns of historical study, but they should not be isolated from other considerations to which they might contribute a deeper understanding.⁷⁴

Monasteries and convents in England were not isolated institutions staffed by monks, friars and nuns that never left their houses. They were vibrant components of English communities that greatly influenced the very fabric of society. Historians of theatre such as Wickham have mentioned the effect on dramatic literature caused by the closing of the monasteries in terms of the destruction of their libraries, which housed the performance texts.⁷⁵ Yet historians have given little attention to how the Dissolution affected not only the opportunities for local performances, but also how the anti-monastic policies of Henry VIII's and Edward VI's governments affected subsequent historical interpretations of late medieval and early Tudor performance activity. In numerous cases, by the end of the 1540s the mere mention of monastic officials as authors of the great cycle plays (as was the case with most of them), let alone monastic involvement in productions, was stricken from the local records. To give one example: in Chester, the monk attributed with writing the cycle plays was incrementally removed from Chester's records. Beginning in 1532 mention of

⁷⁴ Kelly, 25.

⁷⁵ Wickham, *Stages*, v. I: 215.

his role as author became diminished in those records, and by the end of the 1540s his name and role had completely disappeared.⁷⁶

Since after the Dissolution surviving monastic records are so scarce, and other Tudor sources downplayed the positive aspects of pre-reform monasteries, scholars like Wickham have attributed the decline and disappearance of English local performance activities in part to the costs of production.⁷⁷ Such an interpretation seems valid when focusing only upon the numerous complaints by the guilds and civic authorities about costs of producing the cycle plays in the civic records of urban centers like York. This, however, is missing the “forest” for the “tree.” Provincial records for the first third of the sixteenth century do not reveal these financial strains or complaints in most of the smaller communities, and even in York (and Chester and Norwich) the records show the guilds and city officials coming to grips with the problems of performance expenses.

Something more than money made the smaller communities abandon performance activities so rapidly. The loss of religious days and saints’ days to celebrate certainly played a role. But if lack of money was a factor in these smaller communities, perhaps the loss of the monastic monies subsidizing smaller parishes was the monetary component in the demise of local performance traditions. For instance, the support of Thetford Priory to neighboring parish performances ended when the house was dissolved, and so too did most local parish performances. Thus, for the theatre as well as the social historian, the demise of the monasteries was involved with a chain reaction that lead ultimately not only to the “nationalization” of poor relief under Elizabeth, but also what me might call the “nationalization” of entertainment represented by the traveling, professional, acting companies of the late sixteenth century.

⁷⁶ Wickham, *Stages*, v. I: 136.

⁷⁷ Wickham, *Theatre*, 186-7; Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, (New York, 1994), 67.

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*Ruins of Fountains Abbey, Yorkshire
One of the more famous English abbeys that subsidized local performances.
Photograph by Casey Gooding*



Enchanted Islands Floating on the Foam of Perilous Seas

Jean MacIntyre
University of Alberta, Emerita

*In localizing *The Tempest* on “an uninhabited island,” the 1623 Shakespeare Folio associates the setting with the floating island that some masque machines represented. Such machines acted as movable stages to transport masquers from within the set to the spot from which their dances would begin; other masques allege that their immobile sets were also floating islands. Though the stages, permanent or temporary, on which *The Tempest* was performed were not mobile, they nonetheless were a kind of island surrounded by spectators, on which the magician Prospero, aided by Ariel, writes, casts, and directs a play whose roles are unwittingly performed by the Neapolitans who think themselves wrecked on an island that itself may be considered to be floating as the islands of masque were alleged to be.*

Despite living in an island kingdom, Shakespeare rarely says anything about islands even incidentally. In *Two Gentlemen of Verona* Panthino mentions voyages “to discover islands far away” (I.iii.9), in *Richard II* John of Gaunt blazons “this scepter’d isle . . . set in the silver sea” (II.i.40-46), in *Othello* a Turkish fleet aims “toward the isle of Rhodes” (I.iii.16) and Cassio addresses “the valiant of [this] warlike isle” (II.i.43). In *The Winter’s Tale*, Leontes’ envoys praise Delphos with “fertile the isle” (III.i.1-2).

In contrast to these limited references to islands in very few plays, dialogue in *The Tempest* uses “island” and its synonym “isle” twenty-four times and “islanders” twice, repeatedly reminding the audience that, after the opening scene on the ship, the stage represents the island where Prospero creates, casts, and watches a multi-plot theatrical performance. The Folio’s “The scene, an uninhabited Island” (whatever its authority) relates this imagined setting to the machines of Stuart masques, which transported up to sixteen noble masquers (with as many or more attendants) from within the set to the space for their dances on the masque house floor. To persuade viewers that mobile machines did not rumble forward on wheels but floated on stage water, Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones employed their own “most potent art[s].” In three masques, *Beauty*, *Neptune’s Triumph*, and *The Fortunate Isles*, such machines were called floating islands; similar machines under different names were used in *Blackness* and *The Temple of Love*. Dialogue asserts that the scenic object through which masquers came in the 1592 Gray’s Inn show called *Proteus and the Adamantine Rock* has floated to its present location in Elizabeth’s court, and the island in Chapman’s *Memorable Masque* (1613) also moved only verbally.

Jones’s first marine scenic device, in *Blackness* (1605), is called “a great concave shell,” not strictly a floating island but a kind of boat “made to . . . rise with the billow”¹ as wave machines turned. Jonson’s text does not say how the masquers dismounted from this bobbing “pageant,” though the machinery must have stopped for their descent, or how, at the end, they “took their shell” for their exit, perhaps contrived by pulling the machine through the painted “night-piece” behind it, or by pulling up the curtain which had concealed it before the masque began. In *Beauty*, three years later, the masquers were “discovered” on a much more elaborate machine built by “the King’s master-carpenter” William

¹ Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness* in *The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven: Yale UP, 1969), lines 51-3.

Portington.² Jonson's text calls this machine "an island floating on a calm water,"³ implying that Portington did not venture to construct wave machines. His "island moved forward on the water" while its various levels "turned with their several lights. And with . . . three varied motions at once, the whole scene shot itself to the land,"⁴ alias the front of the stage (which may not have been much elevated above the floor of the masquing house where the masquers were to dance). The "island" remained in place until "they danced their last dance into their throne again, and that turning, the scene closed."⁵ Except for the perspective seascape behind it, this machine differed hardly at all from wheeled pageants of Henry VIII's reign, like the one "devised like a mountayn," on Twelfth Night 1511

with vices brought up towards the king, and out of the same came a ladye appareiled in cloth of golde, and the chyldren of honor called the Henchemen, . . . and danced a Morice before the king. And that done, re-entred the mountaine and then it was drawen back.⁶

² Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Beauty*, ed. Orgel, line 235.

³ *Ibid.*, line.146.

⁴ *Ibid.*, lines 222-3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, lines 353-4.

⁶ Edward Halle, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Houses of Lancastre and Yorke* 1548, reprinted in 1809 as *Hall's Chronicle containing the history of England* (New York: AMS Press, 1965), 516. On Shrove Tuesday 1511 what must have been an even larger "pageaunt of a great quantite . . . opened . . . and out issued . . . foure knyghts, . . . on horsebacke with great plumes on their heddes." (Halle. 517). Martin Butler observes that in both *Beauty* and *Blackness* "the masquers . . . arrived on what underneath were old-fashioned pageant cars" (*The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, ed. A.R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway [Cambridge UP, 1990], 139).

For *Neptune's Triumph*, prepared to celebrate Prince Charles's and Buckingham's safe return from Spain in 1624 but cancelled to prevent a diplomatic contretemps, Jones created a similar machine, which Jonson's text calls "a Delos,/ Such as when fair Latona fell in travail,/ Great Neptune made emergent."⁷ Along with much text from *Neptune's Triumph*, this machine was revamped for *The Fortunate Isles and their Union* (Twelfth Night 1625, the last masque of James's reign) and named "Macaria . . . That hitherto hath floated as uncertain/ Where she should fix her blessings."⁸ Both texts give the same directions; like that in *Beauty* the machine moves forward,

the masquers take time to land" during celebratory songs, "the island goes back . . . the masquers dance their entry. Which done, the first prospective of a maritime palace . . . is discovered."⁹

During the revels "*the first prospective*" was replaced by a seascape, and when the revels ended and the masquers were dancing the sortie, this changed to the "discovery" of a fleet of ships. Neither script explains how, or even if, the masquers exited into the machine, so we cannot tell whether there was a further use for it once it had "gone back."

After James died in 1625, official court masques were suspended until the 1630s, when masques of men, led by King Charles, did not ride in or come down on machines but marched in processional triumphs. In masques of ladies, Queen Henrietta Maria and her companions appeared in elevated bowers or rode in machines.¹⁰ For their entry in *The Temple of Love* (1635) Jones

⁷ Ben Jonson, *Neptune's Triumph*, ed. Orgel, lines 99-133.

⁸ Ben Jonson, *Fortunate Isles*, ed. Orgel, lines 299-301.

⁹ *Neptune's Triumph*, lines 291-302; *Fortunate Isles*, lines 372-83.

¹⁰ Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion: Queen Henrietta Maria and Court Entertainments* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1989), 118-19.

designed a variant floating island in a marine setting. The queen and her ladies entered in

a maritime chariot [made of] a spongy rock stuff mixed with shells, seaweeds, coral, and pearl, borne upon an axletree with golden wheels without a rim, with flat spokes like the blade of an oar coming out of the naves . . . and floated with a sweet motion in the sea

rather like the great shell in *Blackness*, but when it came to the front of the set the “billow” machines flattened to become the “dry land” onto which the masquers stepped from their “maritime chariot” before descending to the dancing floor.¹¹ This may show how Jones had arranged a graceful dismount for the masquers from the *Blackness* machine, which Jonson's text does not describe.

According to surviving published texts, some physically immobile sets represented floating islands. The fiction of Gray's Inn's 1595 show, *Proteus and the Adamantine Rock*, declares that Proteus has brought “The Adamantine Rock,” inside which the Inn's Christmas prince and his seven companions are voluntary prisoners, from “those still floating regions where he dwells” to Queen Elizabeth's court. Because this rock, “the seas true star,” forces iron to point north, Proteus has wagered that no stronger attractive power exists, but “an Esquire of the Prince's company” proves that the Queen, the “Adamant of hearts,” has more power, compelling Proteus “with his bident” to open the rock, which he then entered with his many attendants. After this “the Prince and the seven Knights . . . came forth of the Rock in Couples, and before every couple came two Pigmies with torches”¹² who “danced a new devised Measure, &c,” and after dancing with court

¹¹ *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, ed. Roy Strong and Stephen Orgel, 2 vs. (London and Berkeley: Sotheby Parke Burnet & University of California Press, 1973), v. 2, lines 409-14.

¹² *Gesta Grayorum*, ed. Desmond Bland (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 1968), 85-6.

ladies “took their Order again, and with a new Strain went all into the rock” which closed behind them.¹³ George Chapman’s *Memorable Masque* for Princess Elizabeth’s 1613 wedding also moved only in his masque’s fiction; indeed, in descriptions outside the dialogue, Chapman uses the old-fashioned term “mount” for something like the Gray’s Inn structure, though visually and mechanically more elaborate: “an artificial rock, whose top was near as high as the hall itself, . . . run quite through with veins of gold.”¹⁴ Above, on one side stood the temple of Honor, on the other a grove and dead tree for the anti-masque “Baboonery.” The mid-section was hinged to move forward “some five paces [and] split in pieces” to eject Capriccio,¹⁵ who tells Plutus that this rock is a

rich island lying in the South-sea, . . . by earth’s round motion moved near this Britain shore. In which island, . . . a troop of the noblest Virginians inhabiting attended hither the god of riches, all triumphantly shining in a mine of gold.¹⁶

After the anti-masques, the rock’s upper part “turned to a cloud” which

opened and spread like a sky, in which appeared a sun setting, beneath which sat the twelve Masquers, in a mine of gold, twelve torchbearers holding their torches before them.¹⁷

¹³ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁴ George Chapman, *The Memorable Masque of the two honourable houses, or Inns of Court, the Middle Temple and Lincoln’s Inn*, in Inigo Jones, *The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, lines 109-115.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, lines 144-5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, lines 295-308.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, lines, 509-11.

Led by their "Indian" torchbearers, the "Indian-like" masquers then descended to the dancing floor.

These floating islands (visibly mobile or not) exploit the commonplace that insular Britain was a world apart, mythologized as a "demi-paradise" and protected by the sea from "the envy of less happier lands." Jonson's *Blackness* calls "Britannia, this blessed isle . . . A world divided from the world."¹⁸ Chapman's *Memorable Masque* calls Britain

(for the excellency of it) divided from the world (*divisus ab orbe Britannus*), and that though the whole world besides moves, yet this isle stands fixed on her own feet, and defies the world's mutability.¹⁹

In *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly* Jonson makes Cupid answer the Sphinx's riddle with "Britain's a world the world without."²⁰ The *Blackness* and *Beauty* floating islands carry seekers of a boon from the king of this "world the world without," but the remaining floating islands bring gifts and blessings from afar. From "The Adamantine Rock, the sea's true star . . . The wide Empire of the Ocean . . . Should follow . . . wheare e'er it should be sett".²¹ Chapman's "mine of gold" promises metallic wealth from Virginia; to reciprocate, the king will teach the Virginian princes true religion. In *The Memorable Masque* and *The Fortunate Isles*, floating islands joined the one "isle . . . fixed on her own feet," suggesting the incorporation of Britain's Irish and American colonies with the mother country. In *Neptune's Triumph* the god (though representing King James, he does not

¹⁸ *Blackness*, lines 226-8/

¹⁹ *Memorable*, lines 294-7.

²⁰ Ben Jonson, *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly*, ed. Orgel, line 241.

²¹ *Gesta Grayorum*, 82.

appear in the masque) has sent “a floating isle” from Britain to “the Hesperian shores” to fetch his son Albion, his comrade Hippius/Haliclyon, and Proteus, “master of disguise,” a transparent allegory of the fleet that fetched Prince Charles, Buckingham, and the diplomat Francis Cottington from Spain. Both Charles and Buckingham would have danced in the masque, but the singing role of Proteus would have gone to a professional. In *The Fortunate Isles*, Macaria (glossed as “happiness” in Daniel’s *Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*), having “hitherto . . . floated as uncertain/ Where she should fix her blessings, has “adhered to . . . Britannia.”²² In *The Temple of Love* the “maritime chariot” carried Queen Indamora of Narsinga, where the East India Company’s chief factor in its new headquarters at Masulipatam was “to have command over those factories that shall be planted [there].”²³

All floating islands were laden with emblems of beauty, love, fertility, and/or riches. *Beauty*’s was “adorned with lights and garlands . . . curious and elegant arbors . . . a grove of grown trees laden with golden fruit.”²⁴ *The Memorable Masque*’s barren rocks and dead tree were replaced by a “mine of gold,”²⁵ the foundation of the Temple of Honor. The floating island in *Neptune’s Triumph* bore the self-replicating “tree of harmony, [whose] boughs . . . taking root afresh,/ Spring up new boles, and those spring new, and newer.”²⁶ On the floating island of Macaria,

²² *Twelve Goddesses*, lines 300-02

²³ K.N. Chaudhuri. *The English East India Company: The Study of an Early Joint-Stock Company 1600-1640* (London: Frank Cass, 1965), 47.

²⁴ *Beauty*, lines 153-205

²⁵ *Memorable*, lines 510-11

²⁶ *Neptune’s Triumph*, lines 143-49

nothing grows but smiles, . . . no intermitted wind/ Blows
 here, but what leaves flowers or fruit behind, . . . no sickness
 . . . old age . . . grief . . . hunger . . . envy of state . . .
 ambition.²⁷

These name conditions all-too-present on Twelfth Night 1625, as hostility to Buckingham increased and James, visibly failing, would die within three months. (Though Jonson would not have dared to imply the king's death, his list of what Macaria does *not* contain displays the overemphasis of denial.) In *The Temple of Love* the "maritime chariot" bore exemplars of chaste Platonic love from Narsinga to the court of England; when "Indamora did appear," the gates of "Love's true temple . . . would open and the mists dry up/That . . . concealed it from the general view."²⁸ After dancing as Indamora, the queen joined the king as herself while "the sea . . . changed into the true Temple of Chaste Love,"²⁹ from which emerged a symbolic ballet as tribute to their exemplary marriage.

Masque floating islands by whatever name were stages to display noble masquers amid symbolic accoutrements. The masque stage had to make room for those that delivered the masquers to the dancing floor, waited for the masquers' exit as in *Beauty* (and perhaps in *The Fortunate Isles*), or moved back to be hidden by new scenery as in *The Temple of Love*. The commercial theatre's fixed platforms could not accommodate such machines, yet on them were enacted fictions contrived to evoke wonder just as did Jonson's verses, Jones's machines, and dances to elaborate music by costumed courtiers. The "uninhabited Island" of *The Tempest*, though neither mobile nor able to produce much in the way of wondrous changes in appearance, gives a name to a stage

²⁷ *Ibid.*, lines 316-47.

²⁸ *Temple of Love*, lines 248-56.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, line 458.

which could represent anything any play's fiction required with little but language, costumed actors, and portable properties.

The island of *The Tempest* is initially placed in the Mediterranean between Tunis and Italy. Dialogue names cities—Milan, Naples, Tunis, and Argier—well known to England's trade and diplomacy. Maps, sea charts, and the experience of diplomats, travelers, merchants, and ship-masters, would have meant that many in the audience would have an idea of their relative locations and distance from each other. Yet the marriage of Claribell, "she that is Queen of Tunis," has removed her "ten leagues beyond man's life" (II.i.241-42), unbridgeably far from Naples. Words link the island to "the still-vex'd Bermoothes" in the Atlantic and may suggest other "islands far away." Real geography thus becomes fictional—inland Milan in *The Tempest*, like inland Bohemia in *The Winter's Tale*, is relocated to the coast—so translating the island from the world of its named places into a floating island like those in masques, findable only by the witch Sycorax on the Argier ship, or by the white magician Prospero in the Milan "hulk." By his controlling magic, through Ariel Prospero creates the storm that seemingly brings the royal fleet to the island, but may equally be thought to bring the island to the fleet.

The word "this" governs "island" and "isle" nine of the twenty-four times these synonyms occur. Caliban asserts that "This island's mine" (I.ii.333) and that Prospero "by sorcery . . . got this isle/ From me he got it" (III.ii.52-53). Elsewhere he names "the isle" and "the island" with but slightly less emphasis. In the epilogue Prospero, clad "as I was sometime Milan" (V.i.86), begs the audience *not* to make him "dwell in this bare island" (Epilogue.7-8). "This" implies gestures by both actors to encompass the stage, designating "*this* place," a bare platform surrounded by spectators seated, as at a masque, on three sides. When Prospero halts the betrothal masque, he calls it a "pageant," the name for scenic cars in Henry VIII's court entertainments and in London's Lord Mayors' shows. "The isle" and still more "this island" direct audience attention to the site of performance,

whether to the permanent stages of the Blackfriars and Globe or to temporary court stages in 1611 and 1613. Though perhaps the King's Men, like the boy actors, sold seats on the Blackfriars stage, any stage belonged to the players, not to those who paid to intrude upon it. Like Caliban and Prospero, any actor could assert "This island's mine" while playing his role.

Although dialogue never calls Prospero's island a stage, the experiences it offers to Caliban, Miranda, and the Neapolitans are theatrical. Script, direction, and machinery (a rotating table and a flying device) allegedly originate with Prospero as magician-playwright-designer. Like all actors, those who give his script body assume multiple roles. Ariel, Prospero's chief actor as Burbage was Shakespeare's, enacts many parts: as invisible spirit, "nymph of the sea," musician to Ferdinand, "taborer" to Stephano and Trinculo, Harpy to the king's party, Ceres in the masque, and huntsman to chase Caliban and his two allies. Besides these visible roles, he recalls the multiple parts he played on the royal ship:

... now on the beak,
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin
I flamed amazement;
Sometime I'd divide; and burn in many places
... then meet and join (I.ii.198).

Near the play's end Ariel becomes a tireman who transforms Prospero/Burbage from magician to duke by helping him into a different costume (V.i.85-94, and SD). Ariel's fellow spirits, too, play many parts, among them the "Shapes" who like "necessary attendants of the stage" fetch the laden banquet table, mutely invite the king's party to partake, and, after Ariel's Harpy act, "with mocks and mows" carry out the bare table. Later they enact goddesses, nymphs, and reapers in the masque, and then become the "dogs and hounds" (IV.I.1.254,SD), which hunt Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban.

Prospero himself is a "Johannes Fac Totum" who as playwright assigns Ferdinand the successive roles of spy, usurper,

and replacement Caliban to “remove/ Some thousands of these logs” (III.i.10). Having acted the “heavy father” to Miranda, he then becomes the audience for her role of disobedient child and Ferdinand/Caliban's of her wooer-servant. From his godlike position “on the top, invisible” Prospero observes as the King's party act like those masque spectators who “assaulted” refreshment tables after the performance. Caliban declares that Prospero is always both director and watcher, sometimes controlling his slave with pain from hedgehogs underfoot and pinchings (by invisible agents, as if they were grotesque antimasques), sometimes with “sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not” (III.ii.136) (like main masque harmonies of music and patterned dance). Ariel haunts the king's ship with illusions suggestive of the lights and changing scenes of masque, before the king and courtiers undergo their purgatorial experience in the island's bounded space. The theatre and the masquing house were likewise bounded spaces, each accessible only through a controlled entryway. As on the island, so in the theatre and the masquing house, things impossible in reality were, for the time of performance, presented to suspended disbelief, at least the disbelief of an ideal audience.

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***Getting your name out there: Traveling acting companies and
Royal and Aristocratic prestige in Tudor England***

James H. Forse
Bowling Green State University

Records published to date concerning early English drama suggest that in the first third of the sixteenth century touring activity by municipal, amateur acting companies exceeded that of royal and aristocratic troupes. But after about 1535, the religious, social, and economic policies of Henry VIII, and Edward VI, severely limited locally based performances. At the same time tours by royal acting troupes substantially increased. Yet of all the Tudors, it was Elizabeth who seems to have realized the potential of her acting troupe representing the monarch's presence throughout the kingdom. From the beginning of her reign the Queen's Men appeared in the provinces on average thirteen times per year. It was under Elizabeth, too, that aristocrats seemed to perceive an advantage to sponsoring acting companies. Provincial records show a virtual explosion in touring by their troupes. Political ends of some sort must have been perceived by nobles who patronized acting troupes, even if nothing more than having their names and liveries shown about the kingdom. But provincial records also show that their actor-servants found they could make a good living as touring players.

Dramatic records for over half of England's counties, and several prominent municipalities, already are published in the volumes of the University of Toronto's on-going *Records of Early English Drama*, the Malone Society volumes for Counties Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincoln, and Kent, Ian Lancashire's *Dramatic Texts and Records of Britain*, and several other records are included in works

the focuses of which are not upon the dramatic records *per se*.¹ I have been creating an on-going spreadsheet spanning the time from the earliest extant records through the reign of James I, which includes troupes, dates and places of performances, fees received and plays performed, if named. So far it contains 6068 instances of traveling acting companies performing in 256 smaller localities in forty-five counties, and in the larger cities of Bristol, Cambridge, Chester, Coventry, Gloucester, Leicester, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Norwich, Nottingham, Oxford, Plymouth, Shrewsbury, Southampton, Worcester, and York.

The amount of data looks overwhelming at first glance. By old-fashioned methods I would have to sort, and re-sort, almost 43,000 index cards, but sorting the spreadsheet quickly reveals patterns for further inquiry. Though the spreadsheet grows as more data is published, at present it offers a large enough sample over time and place to make some analyses of Tudor theatrical activity. One fact, alas, immediately emerges. No matter where or when, descriptions of plays performed are rarely given in the records. My focus here concerns traveling royal and aristocratic acting companies during the Tudor Era with a particular emphasis on the reign of Elizabeth.

Records published to date suggest that up into the first third of the sixteenth century touring activity by municipal, amateur

¹ *Records of Early English Drama* (REED): *Bristol* (1997), *Cambridge* (1984), *Chester*, (1979), *Coventry* (1981) *Cumberland* (1986), *Devon* (1986), *Dorset* (1999), *Herefordshire* (1990), *Kent* (2000), *Lancashire* (1991), *Newcastle-on-Tyne* (1982), *Norwich* (1984), *Shropshire* (1994), *Somerset* (1996), *Sussex* (2000), *York* (1979) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979-2000); *Malone Society: Records of Plays and Players. Kent, 1450-1642*, (1965), *Lincolnshire 1300-1585* (1974), *Norfolk and Suffolk* (1980) (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965-1980); Ian Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts and Records of Britain . . . to 1558* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984). Substantial amounts of dramatic records also are included in the following: John H. Astington, *English Court Theatre 1558-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999); E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vs. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965); Alfred Harbage and Samuel Schoenbaum, *Annals of English Drama 975-1700*, ed., rv. Sylvia Stoler Wagonhaim (London: Routledge, 1989); Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth Maclean, *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998); John T. Murray, *English Dramatic Companies 1558-1642*, 2 vs. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963); Edwin Nungezer, *A Dictionary of Actors . . . Before 1642* (New York: AMS Press, 1971, rpt. of 1929 ed.).

acting companies exceeded that of royal and aristocratically sponsored troupes. The various feast days celebrated in English parishes afforded numerous opportunities for performance activities by the laity. Provincial records show local plays and pageants performed for Corpus Christi Day, patron saints' days, and May Day. The size and scope of these performances reflected the size and wealth of the parish or community involved—from the elaborate and costly cycle plays of York and Chester to what, based on expenditures, were simple Robin Hood skits. Some communities even took their performances off to other towns—a practice the records suggest was growing in popularity from the mid-fifteenth up into the beginning of the sixteenth century. Between 1323, the earliest record of such activity to date, and 1535 there are almost 500 instances, involving ninety-eight towns or parishes in twenty different counties that toured performances to other locales. In some cases, as among the three Kentish towns of Hythe, Lydd, and New Romney, there seemed to be a tradition of the towns exchanging performances. But after about 1535, religious, social, and economic policies under Henry VIII, and later under Edward VI, severely limited locally based performance activities. Feast days were drastically reduced; church goods, including costumes and properties were sold or seized, and severe restrictions on “unauthorized” travel especially curtailed civic theatre on tour. By the end of the first year of Edward's reign, touring by community acting companies totally ceased.²

At the same time, as Henry VIII was establishing the Church of England, tours by royal acting troupes substantially increased over what had been their pattern in the first twenty-five years of the sixteenth century. Actors under the patronage of Henry VII show up in the records as touring away from Court only twenty-nine times in the twenty-two years between 1497 and

² James H. Forse, “The Flow and Ebb of Touring Amateur Acting Troupes in Tudor England,” *SRASP*, 22 (1999), 47-68; Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998), 96-101.

1509.³ Under Henry VIII the number of tours by the king's actors increases to fifty-six such instances in the first sixteen years of his reign, jumps to seventy-six for the next ten years, 1527-1537, and numbers forty-eight for 1537-1547.⁴ In other words, 68% of touring activity by Henry VIII's troupe occurred during the last half of his reign.

Yet in effect Henry had not one royal troupe, but three. He seems to have continued the patronage of the king's troupe he inherited from his father, but each of Henry's successive wives also was patron to an acting troupe, and so too were his successive heirs. Queen Catherine of Aragon had actor-servants touring under her name. So too did Queens Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves (with a reign of only seven months), Catherine Howard, and Catherine Parr, Henry's sixth and last wife. Detailed records about the queens' troupes are sparse, but the information that exists strongly suggests that the same actor-servants served Henry's successive queens. We know that John Slye moved from Henry's troupe to Princess Mary's, to Anne Boleyn's, and to Jane Seymour's, and his brother William moved from Henry's troupe to Princess Mary's, and then to Anne Boleyn's. John Young moved from Henry's troupe to Jane Seymour's, and later to Prince Edward's troupe.⁵ It looks as if their actor-servants were passed from successive queen to queen just as were their crowns.

At first glance it seems Henry also created acting troupes for whoever was his presumptive heir. Princess Mary's acting troupe first appeared about the time she turned nine and assumed duties and her own court as Princess of Wales. Her actor-servants toured about the kingdom from 1525 until her bastardization in

³ *Malone: Kent*, 6-8, 32, 50; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 105; *REED: Cambridge*, 67-75; *Somerset*, 252-3.

⁴ *Lancashire, Dramatic Texts*, 350-2, 371; *Malone: Kent*, 42; *Malone: Norfolk/Suffolk*, 166, 230-2, 238; *Lincolnshire*, 15-17, 72-4; *REED: Bristol*, 79; *Devon*, 52, 207, 234, 239; *Dorset, Cornwall*, 213, 242, 495, 507, 516; *Lancashire*, 160, 165-70; *Newcastle*, 53-5; *Shropshire*, 352; *York*, 382.

⁵ *Nungezer*, 331-2, 403; *REED: Devon* 42; *Somerset*, 57; *Lancashire*, 373, 378-9, 389, 395; *Herefordshire*, 513.

1532. Two years before that time, in 1530, another acting troupe appeared under the name of Henry's illegitimate son Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond. The appearance of this troupe coincides with the time Henry began giving his illegitimate son prominence at Court, and several scholars, like David Loades, believe Henry was granting Richmond titles, lands, and recognition in order to legitimize Richmond as a replacement for Mary. Finally, within a few months of his birth in 1537, Prince Edward, Henry's legitimate son by Jane Seymour, had a troupe traveling under his name comprised in part of actor-servants reassigned from his father's and mother's troupes.⁶

The glaring exception to this pattern, however, is Princess Elizabeth. Does the lack of any troupe traveling under her name suggest Henry's misgivings about her status as his presumptive heir? Elizabeth was born in 1533. By 1534 it was becoming clear at Court that there was a rift between Henry and Anne, and that Henry was showing interest in some of the ladies attending the queen.⁷ Though technically Henry's only legitimate child and heir for almost three years (until her mother's fall and execution), Henry never created an acting company under Princess Elizabeth's name. Yet, during those same three years, the troupe patronized by his illegitimate son, the Duke of Richmond, continued touring until Richmond's death in 1536.

The three most frequented counties in which each of the royal troupes performed were Kent, Devon, and Shropshire. Royal actors first appear in Sandwich records in 1517. From then on, until Henry's death in 1547, records show 64 visits to Kent by various royal troupes, an average of two appearances per year. Canterbury and Dover, arguably the most important cities in Kent, were the most frequent playing sites, but other important towns

⁶ Malone: *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 148; *Kent*, 10; Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 381, 397; David M. Loades, *Mary Tudor: A Life* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), 36-7; Alison Plowden, *The House of Tudor* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), 102.

⁷ Retha M. Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1989), 175-6; Karen Lindsey, *Divorced, Beheaded, Survived* (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1995) 107.

such as New Romney, Lydd, Feversham, and Folkstone also received frequent visits. The only years that royal troupes are missing from Kentish records are 1519, 1521-24, and 1528.⁸ Records from Devon reveal 41 visits by royal actor-servants over the years of Henry's reign. The first appearance of a royal troupe in the county was in 1509, and, except for three years (1529, 1536, 1543), royal troupes toured there annually until 1544, most often in Exeter, Plymouth, and Dartmouth.⁹ Dramatic records from Shropshire list 35 visits by royal players, beginning in 1509 and continuing on an almost annual basis throughout Henry's reign. All performances by the royal actor-servants were at Ludlow, the traditional seat of the Prince of Wales, and Shrewsbury, Shropshire's most important city.¹⁰

Patterns emerge concerning years in which there were more frequent appearances by royal troupes in the provinces. The first spike in numbers of provincial performances occurs in 1526-7, when there are ten recorded performances at sites spread out over Kent, Devon, and Shropshire. In the next years, 1527-8, there are nine recorded performances in the provinces. Perhaps these appearances by royal troupes were planned to reinforce steps being taken to ensure the king's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. They certainly coincide with the years in which Henry was beginning that process within the church, and was orchestrating a polemical campaign aimed at questioning the validity of his marriage. The next spike in provincial performances coincides with the years 1533-35, years in which Henry annulled his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, married Anne Boleyn, secured the Act of Supremacy, began the dissolution of monasteries, and Elizabeth was born. In

⁸ *Malone: Kent*, 8-154.

⁹ *Malone: Kent*, 35-41; *REED: Devon*, 39-308.

¹⁰ *REED: Shropshire*, 77-200.

those years twenty performances by royal troupes are recorded in records from counties Kent, Devon, Norfolk, and Shropshire.¹¹

Another spike in touring activity occurred during 1536-37 when there are thirteen recorded performances by royal troupes. Then, in 1540-41 there was an even larger jump in provincial performances. That year royal troupes appeared eighteen times in records from Bristol, Feversham, Lydd, New Romney, Ludlow, and Shrewsbury, eight of which were performances by actor-servants traveling under the patronage of three-year-old Prince Edward. These years correspond to the major uprising we call "The Pilgrimage of Grace," the passage of the Six Articles defining the official theology of the Henrician church, and Henry's swing back to a more conservative religious stance. During the years 1543-45 while there is only one recorded provincial performance by Henry's actor-servants, there are twelve recorded for the actor-servants of Prince Edward.¹²

There is limited evidence concerning the repertoires of royal troupes during Henry's reign. Only the titles of two plays performed at Court by Henry's company are named, *Friendship, Prudence and Might* (1522), and *Against the Cardinals* (1533),¹³ but perhaps the royal troupes on tour performed *Johan, Johan, The Four PP, The Pardoner and the Friar* by John Heywood, and *Roister Doister* by Nicholas Udall. Heywood and Udall were favorites at the Court. Heywood was invited to write plays for Court performances, and Udall received patronage from Queens

¹¹ Rosemary O'day, *The Tudor Age* (New York: Longman, 1995), 14; Diarmaid MacCullough, et al., *The Reign of Henry VIII* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 135-45, 155-7, 171-5.

¹² Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 122, 125, 130, 148, 156, 266, 352-5, 359-64, 366, 369-70, 374, 389-9, 381-3, 385, 389-92, 397; *Malone: Kent*, 8-12, 32-3, 35-42, 57, 69-70, 86, 99-106, 127-35, 152, 154; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 13-114, 135-7, 188, 194; *Lincoln*, 4, 12-14, 70-1, 80, 83, 91-2; *REED: Cumberland*, 347; *Bristol*, 42, 45-6, 49-51, 57; *Cambridge*, 82, 84, 86, 99, 101, 106, 108, 111-16, 119, 124, 130-1, 144, 149, 154, 156; *Devon*, 23, 38-40, 62, 110, 120-38, *Dorset*, 212, 240, 485, 494, 499, 504, 519, 529; *Hereford*, 463, 465, 469, 485, 490, 494, 499, 501, 504-513, 529-30; *Norwich*, 3, 24-6; *Shropshire*, 77-201; *Somerset*, 44-5, 252; MacCullough, 177-9.

¹³ Harbage and Schoenbaum, 22-5.

Anne Boleyn and Catherine Parr, and from Edward Seymour, the brother of Queen Jane. All three of Heywood's plays are theologically conservative, but rife with the anti-clericism that marked Henry's break with Rome.¹⁴ There are a few references to other plays touching upon the Henrician reforms--a play performed at Grey's Inn called *Governance and Lady Public Weal* (1526), two performances by unnamed troupes in London described as *Henry Cutting off the Heads of the Clergy* (1533) and *Priests were Railed Upon* (1536),¹⁵ and another performed before Queen Catherine Howard called *Godly Queene Hester*. Scholars believe this play may have been an allegory meant to compliment the Queen and her supposed influence in downfall of Thomas Cromwell. Norwich records from 1546 mention a play performed by Queen Catherine Parr's actor-servants called *The Market of Myscheffe* that stirred up controversy in the city because of its religious overtones.¹⁶ Perhaps John Bale's plays like *The Treason of Thomas Becket* or *King Johan* also were used by royal troupes, but they are more closely linked with Thomas Cromwell's troupe.

Interesting patterns emerge when attention is paid to the touring of various aristocrats' troupes during Henry's reign. For instance, actor-servants patronized by Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk first appeared in 1514 about the time he married Henry's Sister Mary, and was elevated to a dukedom. Brandon's actor-servants show up intermittently in records from Cambridge, Gloucester, Hampshire, Kent, Lincoln, Norfolk, Shropshire, Suffolk, Sussex, and York until 1543. The most frequent mention of performances by his troupe, however, appears in records from Norfolk and Kent between 1520 and 1538. Those years correspond to Brandon's appointment as Lord Lieutenant in the eastern coastal region and certain local disturbances connected

¹⁴ Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), 1993, 68, 129.

¹⁵ Harbage and Schoenbaum, 22-3, 28-9; MacCullough, 183-5.

¹⁶ Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 17, 22.

with opposition to Henry's religious reforms.¹⁷ An acting company patronized by John deVere, Earl of Oxford, briefly appears in records from Norfolk and Suffolk (1537), and Devon (1540), where the play performed by his actor-servants, John Bale's *Upon the King's Two Marriages*, actually is named (a rarity in provincial records).¹⁸ Oxford was a strong supporter of Protestant reforms, and for a time was patron to the playwright and player John Bale. The year in which his troupe became inactive is the year in which Henry's hardening attitude towards Protestant reforms and reformers led to the execution of Thomas Cromwell, the flight of John Bale to the Continent, and the public burning of Bale's works as heretical material.¹⁹

An acting company patronized by Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford and later Lord Protector for Edward VI, first appeared in 1536, when his sister Jane became Henry's newest queen.²⁰ Jane died shortly after the birth of the future King Edward VI. After Jane's death, Seymour's actor-servants only traveled sporadically until 1547, when, at Henry's death, he became Lord Protector to Edward VI. More on this later.

Virtually every Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports during Henry's reign sponsored acting troupes: George Neville, Baron Abergavenny, Warden, 1513-35, George Boleyn, Lord Rocheford, Warden, 1535 until beheaded as was his sister Anne in 1536, Arthur Plantagenet, Viscount Lisle, Warden from 1536 until his death in 1542, and Lisle's successor Sir Thomas Cheney who held the post until his death in 1558. Cheney was especially active in local Kentish politics, often interfering in Parliamentary elections

¹⁷ *The Register of Thetford Priory*, ed. David Dymond (Oxford: Oxford UP and Norfolk Record Society, 1995), 602, 708; Harbage and Schoenbaum, 28-9; Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 203, 376-7; *Malone: Lincoln*, 82; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 38, 189; *REED: Cambridge*, 115-6; *Kent*, 422, 576, 691-3; *Shropshire*, 77-8; *Sussex*, 107-08; *York*, 269, 273.

¹⁸ *Thetford Priory*, 693; Harbage and Schoenbaum, 26-7; *REED: Devon*, 229.

¹⁹ MacCullough, 191-2.

²⁰ O'day, 54; Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 403-04.

in the Cinque Ports towns, but for most of the sixteenth century every Lord Warden sought to exert political dominance over local gentry and authorities in Kent. Most of the time, with the exception of Viscount Lisle's troupe, which seems to have predated his tenure as Lord Warden, the various Wardens' actor-servants toured almost exclusively in locales under the Lord Warden's jurisdiction, playing in Kentish towns, and sometimes in Rye in Sussex.²¹ No names are recorded to tell us if the same actors were passed down from Warden to Warden, and we have almost no indication of repertories, but it does seem obvious that the Lords Warden probably viewed a touring actor-servants as yet another way to keep their name and authority before the gentry and common people under their jurisdiction.

The records concerning touring activities by troupes sponsored by the Stanley Earls of Derby seems to reflect their usual political behavior. Always known as "trimmers" who sat on the sidelines until they could see which way the wind blew, every successive holder of the earldom sponsored an acting troupe from the appearance of a troupe in 1494 traveling under the name of the first Earl, Thomas, down into the reign of King James. Edward Stanley, the third Earl, succeeded his father in 1521 at thirteen years of age, and survived into the reign of Elizabeth. Actor-servants under his patronage are first named performing in Shrewsbury in 1524, in Shropshire in 1525 and 1527, and they began to tour the rest of England in 1530, after Earl Edward had reached his majority. From 1524 to 1538 the troupe appears seventeen times in the records of nine counties: Shropshire, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridge, Gloucester, Essex, Wiltshire, Leicester, and even in remote Durham. After 1538, when the religious and political scene in Henry's Court had heated up considerably, Stanley's strong affiliation with Catholicism may well have caused him to curtail his troupe's activity so as to keep a

²¹ *Malone: Kent*, 10, 39, 57, 69, 103-5, 134-5, 151, 154; *REED: Kent*, 156, 397, 403, 408, 433, 436, 438, 442-3, 576-8, 590, 675, 772-3, 775, 835, 850-1, 855; *Sussex*, 87, 89, 103-06, 108-09; Michael Zell, *et al.*, *Early Modern Kent, 1540-1640* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2000), 9-10.

lower profile. Or, perhaps he was ordered to stop public performances by his actor-servants.²² At any rate, until 1564, six years into the reign of Elizabeth, there exist no records of public performances by the Earl of Derby's Men. In that year, however, as the Earl maneuvered for a place in Elizabeth's inner circle, and political and religious controversies seemed quiescent, touring performances are recorded for two troupes sponsored by the Stanleys: one under the name of Edward, as Earl of Derby, and a second under the name of his putative heir, Henry, Lord Strange.²³

A similar parallel to between political fortunes and sponsorship of an acting troupe exists with an acting troupe touring under the patronage of John Russell. Russell first found royal favoritism under Henry VIII whom he served as a diplomat and military commander. Russell was created Baron Russell in 1539, and was named as one of the executors of Henry's will. Russell was a strong supporter of the Protestant reforms begun under Henry VIII, and upon Edward VI's succession in 1547 he was named to the Privy Council and made Earl of Bedford. Within the Council, Russell was active in implementing the more radical religious reforms undertaken by Edward's government. Within a year of being elevated to the peerage an acting troupe bearing his name began to tour the kingdom, appearing twelve times in records from the counties of Cambridge, Devon, Gloucester, Norfolk, Shropshire, and Somerset. Not surprisingly, the majority of those appearances were during the reign of Edward VI.²⁴

John Foxe's various editions of *Actes and Monuments* portray Thomas Cromwell as one of Henry's chief proponents of Protestant reform, using any means at his disposal to spread the new religion. When he was beginning *Actes and Monuments*, Foxe became a close associate of John Bale, and it was from Bale that he

²² *Dictionary of National Biography*, v. 18, 938-9; *Malone: Norfolk/Suffolk*, 113, 114, 182; *REED: Bristol*, 43; *Cambridge*, 105; *Shropshire*, 181-2.

²³ *Malone: Norfolk/Suffolk* 114, *REED: Newcastle* 114.

²⁴ *DNB*, v. 17, 444-6; *Lancashire, Dramatic Texts*, 403; *REED: Bristol*, 51; *Cambridge*, 130; *Devon*, 40, 229, 232; *Somerset*, 45.

received most of his perceptions about Cromwell.²⁵ Cromwell brought Bale under his wing perhaps as early as 1534, and by 1536 Bale was touring as leader of an acting troupe under Cromwell's patronage. From then until 1540, Cromwell's troupe appeared in several important sites throughout the kingdom: in Cambridge thrice, in Thetford (Norfolk) twice, and in Shrewsbury twice, and once each in York, Ludlow, Leicester, and Canterbury.²⁶ The touring activity of Cromwell's troupe under Bale's leadership matches a time when King Henry's Men also were more active. The appearance in the provinces of both troupes coincides with the years in which Henry's government was dissolving the monasteries and instituting the most radical of the Henrician reforms. There is the tantalizing possibility that the activities were coordinated, but there is no documentary proof.

For Cromwell's troupe, and perhaps for Oxford's troupe, for which Bale himself tells us he wrote plays²⁷ we have some indications of a repertory, for Bale has left us an inventory of plays he wrote. Most significant of Bale's plays to literary historians is *King Johan*, because of its clear message that papal supremacy means ruin for the kingdom of England, and because of the play's probable influence on Shakespeare's *King John*. But his other plays, like the *Treacheries of the Papists*, the *Treason of Thomas à Becket*, *The Life of John the Baptist*, stressed not only royal supremacy, but the new doctrines as well. They contained enough radical material that they were burned after Cromwell's fall in 1540. A letter of 1537 from the Protestant vicar Thomas Wylley offered three plays he had written for the use of Lord Chancellor Cromwell's actor-servants. Wylley describes one play as a drama about how to receive the sacrament; another as denouncing the pope's councilors, and the third Wylley entitled *Rude Commonalty*, probably a play denouncing the participants in the Pilgrimage of

²⁵ John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London: John Day, 1563), 598; Peter Happé, *John Bale* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 16, 21-2.

²⁶ Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 54-65, 104; MacCullough, 187-90.

²⁷ White, 15, 17-19.

Grace of the previous year.²⁸ Wylley's scripts have not survived; nor is there any evidence the plays were performed, but Wylley's offer shows that Cromwell was perceived by many Protestant reformers to make use of theatrical performances to promote religious reform. Obviously performances of the repertory we attach to Cromwell's troupe not only reminded viewers of Lord Chancellor Cromwell's power and influence, but also made clear to those viewers what the government (or at least the Lord Chancellor) considered legitimate policy and religious belief.

Touring by all types of troupes shrank during the reign of Edward VI. There are no instances of community troupes on tour, and touring by aristocratic actor-servants also diminished. Edward's own troupe performed five plays at different times before the Court that were described by contemporaries as anti-Catholic. During his short reign, Edward's actor-servants appeared 25 times in eleven different counties. The majority of those appearances fall in the last three years of the reign when Edward and his Council were mandating the *Book of Common Prayer* as the official liturgy for the church and vigorously enforcing the Protestantization of the church calendar and church interiors.²⁹ Interestingly, King Edward's Men was the only royal company throughout the Tudor era to play in Cornwall.³⁰ Its appearance there in 1550 suggests it was sent as a reminder of royal power on the heels of the suppression of the Prayer Book Rebellion that broke out in Cornwall the year before.

In comparison to records of at least one public performance in the provinces by 31 aristocratic troupes under Henry VIII, only nineteen such troupes are recorded during the reign of Edward VI, and only eight appear in the records five times or more. All of

²⁸ *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of Reign of Henry VIII*, ed. James Gairdner and R. H. Brodie (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1896), v. 12, no. 529.

²⁹ Suzanne R. Westfall, *Patrons and Performance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 122; White, 17-19; Walker, 7, 9, 227.

³⁰ *Malone: Lincoln*, 13; *REED: Cambridge*, 149, 154, 156; *Dorset*, 212, 505; *Kent*, 167, 170, 447, 451, 454, 544, 693-4; *Norwich*, 24-6; *Shropshire*, 201; *Sussex*, 112-14; Murray, v. 2, 296; *Lancashire, Dramatic Texts*, 296.

those eight peers were members of Edward's Privy Council, and avowed Protestants.³¹ For instance, the troupe of John de Vere III, Earl of Oxford, is absent from provincial records after 1540, but in a letter by Bishop Gardiner we find Oxford's Men again performing almost immediately after Henry's death. Gardiner complained Oxford's actor-servants planned a "solemn play" in London in competition with formal eulogies to Henry VIII planned by the bishop to mark the King's death.³² From 1549 to 1552 Oxford's troupe is named four times in provincial records as giving public performances, twice in Essex and once in Gloucester and Surrey.³³

Other aristocratic troupes for which we have records of public performances display the same intimacy with the inner circle. Records show a performance by a troupe sponsored by Sir Edward Bray, Constable of the Tower in 1549, and one by his brother John's troupe in 1550. Sir Anthony Kingston sponsored a troupe, which performed in Gloucester in 1551, 1552, and 1553. It first appeared in provincial records almost immediately after he was made a Privy Counselor.³⁴

Edward Seymour, in his new role as Lord Protector and Duke of Somerset clearly seems to have used his acting troupe as a means of displaying influence and power. Once Seymour took control of the Council at Edward's succession in 1547, annual public performances in the provinces by the (now) Duke of Somerset's actor-servants suddenly leapt to four, with two performances in Cambridge and two in Kent. In the next year, 1548, Seymour's troupe appeared in Kent four times and once each in Leicester, Dorset, Somerset and Norfolk. By 1549 Somerset's actor-servants averaged over four provincial performances per

³¹ White, 44, 57, 59.

³² Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 406.

³³ Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 256, 407; *REED: Bristol*, 62.

³⁴ Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 403; *REED: Devon*, 41; *Shropshire*, 201-03.

year, and had appeared in at least eight counties.³⁵ Two surviving scripts, printed under Elizabeth, tell us something of the repertory of Seymour's troupe. Both suggest a repertory based on religious themes. One, by Seymour's chaplain Thomas Becon, is entitled *A Newe Dialog betwene Thangel of God and the Shepherdes in the Felde*; the other by Lewis Wager is named *The Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene*. We also know that letters were exchanged between Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and Seymour in which Gardiner complained of players meddling in such religious matters as questions of justification and the sacraments.³⁶ Whether or not these "meddling" players were Seymour's or those of other noblemen is not clear, but the letters suggest Seymour was doing little to suppress acting troupes performing dramas presenting the Protestant beliefs.

The public activity of Seymour's troupe parallels his political fortunes. Provincial appearances by his troupe decline after 1549; its last recorded performance in the provinces is in 1550 in Gloucester. In late 1549, the Lord Protector's chief rival on the Privy Council, John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, charged Seymour with various crimes, and the Duke was imprisoned briefly in the Tower. Though Seymour was released and restored to some of his property, his power within Edward's government was gone.³⁷ The Council was now lead by Warwick. Since Edward's Council held a much tighter rein on dramatic activity than had his father's,³⁸ it is no wonder that Somerset's enemies now controlling that Council curtailed activities which seemed to promote Somerset's interests.

³⁵ Westfall, 233; Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 403-04; *Malone: Kent*, 11-41; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 11, 41, 136; *REED: Bristol*, 59; *Cambridge*, 149-54; *Norwich*, 25.

³⁶ A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed . . . 1475-1640*, 2nd ed., rev., W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson, and Katharine F. Pantzer, 2 vs. (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1976), nos. 1735.5, 24932; Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 68.

³⁷ Westfall, 234.

³⁸ White, 44, 57, 59.

The fortunes of Edward Seymour's younger brother Thomas also rose with his sister's marriage to King Henry. However, his greatest power came when his brother Edward became Lord Protector. Thomas made several attempts to arrange favorable marriages for himself, including proposing a match with Princess Elizabeth, and ended up marrying the dowager Queen Catherine Parr. Just like his elder brother, we find actor-servants patronized by Thomas Seymour began traveling in 1547, concurrent with his appointment as Lord Admiral and member of the Privy Council. His troupe toured Dorset and Kent in 1547 and Cambridge and Kent in 1548. Understandably, his troupe becomes inactive after 1548. Thomas Seymour fell from power and was executed for treason in 1549.³⁹

The Earl of Warwick, John Dudley, after disposing of Edward Seymour as Lord Protector, was raised to the title of Duke of Northumberland. There is evidence of an acting troupe appearing on tour in 1544 in Dorset under his patronage, but (and this should come as no surprise) the bulk of his troupes' activity occurs in 1551, 1552, and 1553, at the same time his political fortunes peaked. His actor-servants visited Devon and Somerset in 1551, Devon and Dorset in 1552 and Warwick in 1553. Likewise, his troupe disappears from records of public performances once Mary took the throne in 1553. An inventory of Dudley's goods, taken after his beheading, lists five plays attacking the pope, including a manuscript of the play *Old Custome*.⁴⁰ Perhaps this helps explain the seeming taste for theatre, and the long-lasting patronage of an acting troupe by his more famous son, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.

The evidence for the repertories of acting troupes during Edward's reign rests primarily on performances by Edward's own actor-servants at Court and John Bales' inventory. Though no script ascribed to Edward's troupe has survived, contemporary

³⁹ Westfall, 235; *Malone: Kent*, 41-136; *REED Cambridge*, 163; *Dorset*, 211.

⁴⁰ Westfall, 121; Lancashire, *Dramatic Records*, 69; *REED: Devon*, 40-1; *Dorset/Cornwall* 211, 241; *Somerset*, v. 1, 47.

descriptions of performances by Edward's actor-servants suggest that his troupe served as an active voice for reform. In 1549, at Court, his troupe performed a play with the following characters: a king, a dragon with seven heads, six priests, and seven hermits. In 1552 at the Christmas revels the King's Men played *Esopes Crowe*, a play most scholars believe was a satire on the Catholic mass. In 1553 the troupe performed a play about conditions in Ireland. Devils are described as prominent characters. Another play used by Edward's troupe is named, *The Passion of the Christ*, performed in Shropshire in 1548. This may well be one of John Bale's plays, for a title of that name appears in his inventory, and Bale himself returned from exile at Edward's succession.⁴¹ Sources from the reign of Mary describe Edward's actor-servants as performing interludes that mocked rites and ceremonies of the Catholic Church.⁴² The probable repertory of Oxford's troupe included several of the anti-Catholic dramas John Bale lists in his inventory, such as: *On Popish Sects*, *On the Treacheries of the Papists*, *Against the Corrupters of God's Word*, *On the Council of the High Priests*, and *On the Lord's Supper*. And John Foxe notes in his *Actes and Monuments* that certain players "set up by God to bring down the pope, as having done meetly well already."⁴³

Clearly, Henry VIII and Edward VI, and/or their Privy Counselors, began to realize the potential power for propaganda that acting troupes offered. Records of their troupes' activities attest to that fact, as do the growing regulations placed on the activities of amateur and aristocratic troupes.⁴⁴ Records suggest the touring activity of royal troupes increased in times of increased political and religious agitation or changes in royal policies. Both

⁴¹ REED: *Shropshire*, 201.

⁴² Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 68, 73, 208, 211.

⁴³ Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 64-5.

⁴⁴ MacCullough, 191-92; White 44, 57, 59; Walker, 7, 9, 227, Westfall, 122; Forse, "Flow and Ebb," 47-63.

kings seem to have sought to give the royal household a dominant voice in the plays being presented across the countryside.

While it is unclear whether or not noblemen used their troupes to further their individual political agendas, as can be more readily inferred concerning royal troupes, it does seem clear that acting companies were used as trappings of power and preference. The tours of many aristocratic troupes clearly matched the rise and fall of the political fortunes of their patrons, and records also show that the actor-servants of aristocrats were more often away from the seats of their patrons than in residence.⁴⁵ In short, the role and status of aristocratic acting troupes seems to have been shifting from sometime entertainers within the private confines of this or that powerful household to public performers whose tours took them far from the seats of their patrons. Perhaps we might say that the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI mark the beginnings of a process leading to the acting companies of Shakespeare's day.

Mary's accession and the restoration of Catholicism did little to reverse this trend. There were some attempts to restore traditional, local religious plays. New Romney in Kent disbursed sums to revive its passion play in 1555. Ashburton, Devon, tried to re-start its theatrical activities in 1554, but abandoned those efforts with Elizabeth's accession, and Lincoln brought back its *Corpus Christi* play in 1553, but abolished it in 1559. There are only three instances of touring performances by civic players, one in Norfolk, one in Dorset, one in Worcester. Perhaps thirteen unnamed troupes mentioned in records scattered about England also were troupes from nearby localities.⁴⁶

Economic issues militated against the revival of local theatrical activities. Even a cursory glance at parish records shows the enormous expenses communities laid out for two sets of

⁴⁵ Westfall, 134-5.

⁴⁶ Allison Hanham, *Churchwardens' Accounts of Ashburton, 1479-80* (Torquay: Devonshire Press, 1970), 121, 131-8, 140-50; Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 350-2, 371; *Malone: Kent*, 42, 64-8, 202; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 166, 230-2, 238; *Lincoln*, 15-17, 72-4; *REED: Bristol*, 79; *Devon*, 52, 207, 234, 239; *Dorset*, 213, 242, 495, 507, 516; *Lancashire*, 160, 165-70; *Newcastle*, 53-5; *Shropshire*, 352; *York*, 382.

religious reform within the space of five or six short years. Edward's government ordered the removal of vestments, books, images, altars, communion implements, and any other symbols of Catholicism—all, of course, at the communities' own expense. Now Mary's government ordered the restoration of all those things that Edward's government had removed, again at the communities' own expense. Much of this removal and restoration involved major construction within the churches themselves, not just taking down some pieces of statuary and then putting them back. Calculations I have made based on thirty-four published churchwardens' accounts from nineteen English counties shows that in larger, wealthy parishes the total costs of reform averaged 4% to 5.5% of annual income. In smaller parishes costs skyrocketed to 40%, 56%, to 75%. The overall average cost for the 34 parishes, and roughly the median cost too, was 20% of annual income.⁴⁷ With such costs, how could localities quickly

⁴⁷ Forse, "Flow and Ebb," 47-63; John Amphlett, ed., *The Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Michael's in Bedwardine, Worcester, from 1539 to 1603* (Oxford: J. Parker and Co., 1896), *Worcestershire Historical Society*, v. 8; F. A. Bailey, ed., *The Churchwardens' Accounts of Prescott, Lancashire 1523-1607* (Preston: R. Seed and sons, 1953), *Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society*, v. 104; Thomas H. Baker, ed., "The Churchwardens' Accounts of Mere," *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, v. 35 (1907-1908); E. R. C., Brinkworth, ed., *South Newington Churchwarden's Accounts 1553-1684* (Headlington, Oxford: Banbury Historical Society, 1965); J. M. S. Brooke and A. W. C. Hallen, eds., *The Transcript of the Registers of the United Parishes of St. Mary Woolnoth and St. Mary Wollchurch Haw* (London: Bowles and Sons, 1886); John Bruce, ed., "Extracts from Accounts of the Churchwardens of Michinhampton," *Archaeologia*, v. 35 (1853); Charles Cotton, ed., "Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of St. Andrew, Canterbury, 1485 to 1625, Part III, 1524-1557" *Archaeologia Cantiana*, v. 34 (1920) and "Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of St. Andrew, Canterbury, 1485 to 1625, Part IV, 1553-4-1596." *Archaeologia Cantiana*, v. 35 (1921); J. Meadows, Cowper, ed., "Accounts of the Churchwardens of St. Dunstan's Canterbury." *Archaeologia Cantiana*, v. 9 (1887); Charles Drew, ed., *Lambeth Churchwarden's Accounts 1504-1645* (London: Surrey Record Society, 1940); J. P. Earwalker, ed., *East Chester: Past and Present: or A history of the Hundred of Macclesfield in the County Palatine of Chester*, 2vs. (London: Private printing, 1880); *Extracts from the Account Rolls of the Abbey of Durham*, 3vs. (Durham: Whittaker and Co., 1898, v. 1, 1899, v. 2, 1901, v. 3); J. E., Foster, ed., *Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Mary the Great Cambridge from 1504 to 1635* (Cambridge: Cambridge Antiquarian Society, 1905); Francis N. A. Garry and A. G. Garry, eds., *The Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of St. Mary's, Reading, Berks, 1550-1662* (Reading: Edward J. Blackwell, 1893); J. L., Glasscock, ed., *The Records of St. Michael's Parish church*,

restore their costumes, properties, and play books, most of which had been dispersed under Edward?

Nor was the pattern of close watch on the activities of aristocratic troupes relaxed under Mary. Published records from 1553 through 1558 identify only 22 public performances in the provinces by aristocratic actor-servants. One of those performances, in 1554, was by the troupe of the Duke of Suffolk, Lady Jane Grey's father, who at the time was seeking to rally support for the upcoming Wyatt rebellion. After that rebellion,

Bishop's Stortford (London: Elliot Stock, 1882); Alison Hanham, ed., *Churchwardens' Accounts of Ashburton, 1479-1580* (Torquay: Devonshire Press, 1970); Francis Haslewood, ed., "Notes from the Records of Smarden Church," *Archaeologia Cantiana*, v. 9 (1874); W. Holland and John James Raven, eds., *Cratfield: A Transcript of the Accounts of the Parish, from A.D. 1490 to A. D. 1642* (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1895); William Hudson, ed., "Extracts from the First Book of the Parish of Southover," *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, v. 48 (1905); John V. Kitto, ed., *St. Martin-in-the-Fields. The Accounts of the Churchwardens, 1525-1603* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Kent, Halilton and Co, 1901); Caroline Litzenberger, "St Michael's Gloucester, 1540-80, the Cost of Conformity in Sixteenth-century England," *The Parish in English Life 1400-1600*, eds., Katherine L. French, Gary G. Gibbs, and B. A. Kümin (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997); Jennifer L. McNabb, ed., trans., *Churchwardens' Accounts St. Mary's, Devizes, Wiltshire* (From WRO 189/1. In manuscript form, 2001); W. T. Mellows, ed., *Peterborough Local Administration. Churchwardens' Accounts 1467-1573* (Kettering, Northampton: Northamptonshire Record Society, 1939); Peter, Northeast, ed., *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts 1530-1561* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1982); William Henry Overall, ed., *The Accounts of the Churchwardens of the Parish of St. Michael, Cornhill, in the City of London, From 1456 to 1608* (London: Private printing, 1871); Anthony Palmer, ed., *Tudor Churchwarden's Accounts (for town of Ashwell and Baldock), Hertfordshire Record Society*, v. 1 (1985); Frank Somers, ed., *Halesowen Churchwardens' Accounts (1487-1582)* (London: Mitchell, Hughes and Clarke, 1955); A. D. Stallard, ed., *The Transcript of the Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of Tilney All Saints, Norfolk 1442 to 1589* (London: Mitchell Hughes and Clarke, 1922); Henry James Swayne, ed., *Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Edmund and St. Thomas, Sarum, 1443-1702* (Salisbury: Bennet Brothers, 1896); V. J. B. Torr and Amyer Vallance, eds., "Eltham Churchwardens' Accounts," *Archaeologia Cantiana*, v. 47 (1935), and v. 48 (1936); F. W. Weaver and G. N. Clark, eds., *Churchwardens' Accounts of Marston, Spelsbury, Pyrton* (Oxford: Oxfordshire Record Society, 1925); C. C. Webb, ed., *The Churchwardens' Accounts of St Michael, Spurriergate, York 1518-1548*, 2 vs. (York: University of York, 1997); H. Michell Whitley, ed., "The Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Andrew's and St. Michael's, Lewes from 1523 to 1601," *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, v. 45 (1902); Thomas Wright, ed., *Churchwardens' Accounts of the Town of Ludlow in Shropshire from 1540 to the End of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (London: Camden Society, 1849, rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint, 1968).

only the actor-servants of the powerful Duke of Norfolk (six recorded performances) and those of the Earl of Oxford (eight) performed publicly more than once. Queen Mary's troupe appeared at least twenty-five times in thirteen different counties, an average of almost five performances a year away from Court.⁴⁸

Probably the turmoil surrounding her accession, and the early rebellion led by Sir Thomas Wyatt months after Mary took the throne made the Queen, and her Council, more determined than ever to control the activities of touring troupes. In 1556 the Council ordered the Earl of Shrewsbury to arrest a troupe traveling in Lancashire under the name of Sir Thomas Leek (otherwise unknown) for presenting plays defaming King Philip and Queen Mary. In September 1557, the London performance of a play in named *A Sacke Full of News* was suppressed. In Kent an unnamed actor was detained and then sent to London for further questioning about some sort of seditious play, but there is no evidence of a performance of the play in question, nor is its content described.⁴⁹

The pattern of a general decline in theatrical touring activity reversed with a vengeance with Elizabeth's accession. Excluding performances at Court, and those in and around London, the spreadsheet shows that from 1323 (the earliest date on record) to 1603, 62% percent of all touring activity occurred during Elizabeth's forty-four years on the throne. All told, records published to date reveal that 193 acting companies performed at least once in the provinces during her reign. But the pattern of

⁴⁸ *Malone: Kent*, 12, 157; *Lincoln*, 84; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 4, 210; Murray, v. 2, 2, 198, 265, 298, 327; *Lancashire, Dramatic Texts*, 397; *REED: Cambridge*, 30, 184, 200; *Cumberland*, 297; *Devon*, 42, 147-8; *Dorset*, 241; *Norwich*, 45; *Shropshire*, 81; *Sussex*, 34, 116.

⁴⁹ *Lancashire, Dramatic Texts*, 73, 74, 119, 159, 215-6, 223-4, 248, 266, 284, 371-3, 397-407; *Malone: Kent*, 12, 42; *Lincoln*, 71, 84, 94; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 14, 210, 222; *REED: Bristol*, 61-3; *Cambridge*, 200, *Cumberland*, 297, *Devon*, 41-2, 147-8; *Dorset*, 241; *Norwich*, 37; *Shropshire*, 81, 205; Edmund Lodge, *Illustrations of British History . . . in the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, and James I . . . Selected from the MSS. of the Noble Families of Howard, Talbot, and Cecil* (London: G. Nicol 1791), v. 1, 212-13.

decline in theatrical touring by local acting companies, which began under Henry VIII, continued during the reign of Elizabeth.

By the time of Elizabeth the policies of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary had produced a milieu in which an actor's legal status to perform depended upon his identification as the servant of an aristocratic patron, and audiences, save in the most remote areas of England, had to depend upon those aristocratic actor-servants for theatrical entertainment. In Coventry, for example, records list only two instances of visiting troupes playing there before 1570, but from 1574 until the end of Elizabeth's reign, there were 180 appearances by aristocratic troupes, never less than two a year, and in some years as many as ten or eleven. The yearly average was six. Coventry entertained (or was entertained by) the major aristocratic acting companies active during Elizabeth's reign. The list of actor-servants includes those of the Queen, the Lord Admiral, the Lord Chamberlain, the Earls of Hereford, Huntingdon, Leicester, Lincoln, Oxford, Pembroke, Sussex, Warwick, Worcester, Bath, Derby, and Essex, and those attached to the Viscounts Lisle and Montague and the Barons Berkeley, Chandos, Compton, de la Warr, Darcy, Strange, Eure, Howard, Monteagle, Mordaunt, Morley, Mountjoy, Ogle, Vaux, Sheffield, Stafford and Willoughby.⁵⁰

There were some middling class men who attempted to form acting companies in Elizabeth's first ten years. Their efforts probably reflect tendencies by members of the middling classes to find new, and more lucrative, occupations than those offered in traditional trades. By Shakespeare's time most members of acting companies were middling class men moving from identification with a traditional trade into the profession of actor.⁵¹ Provincial records show eighteen troupes identified solely by the names of leaders or partners within the troupes: players of William Martyn, Peter Moone, James Candler, Players of Beeston, Players of

⁵⁰ REED: *Coventry*, 251-362.

⁵¹ James H. Forse, *Art Imitates Business. Commercial and Political Influences in Elizabethan Theatre* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State UP, 1993), 7-10.

Cavendish, *et cetera*. Most of these self-generated troupes arose within specific geographical areas, and most performed only in a small number of towns that were close to one another. Most appear in provincial records only once; the maximum number of recorded performances by a single troupe is three. With four exceptions, after 1573 no troupe identified by the name of one of the players appears in provincial records. Between 1568-74, fourteen troupes also appear in provincial records bearing the names of local gentrymen: Players of Mr. Tewks (Sheriff of Essex), of Mr. Edgecombe, and so on. These gentlemen's companies also played in limited geographical areas.⁵²

Perhaps these troupes were *ad hoc*, that is, actors (perhaps household servants) gathered for a specific performance or two. However, Elizabeth's government not only continued the injunctions against unlicensed playing and travel instituted by Henry VIII and Edward VI, it increased them. In 1559, a royal proclamation specified that in order to give any performance, acting companies must secure a license from city or county officials, or two Justices of the Peace; a proclamation in 1572 forbade nobles from bestowing liveries on any persons except personal servants or personal lawyers. In the same year, a Parliamentary Act "for the punishment of Vacabondes" required that traveling players must be the servants of a "Baron of this Realme or . . . any other honorable Personage of greater Degree," as well as possessing a "Lycense of two Justices of the Peace." That act was reaffirmed in 1576 and 1598, and reinforced by no less than seven royal proclamations between 1576 and 1600.⁵³ Such actions guaranteed that only acting companies sponsored by a peer of the realm could survive, and explain the swift disappearance of self-generated acting companies and companies sponsored by local gentry.

⁵² Chambers, v. 2, 104; Harbage and Shoenbaum, 52-5; *Henslowe's Diary*, ed., R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1961), 21.

⁵³ Chambers, v. 4, 268-71, 324; *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. Paul L. Hughes and James P. Larkin (New Haven: Yale UP, 1969), v. 2, 115-16, 350-2, 419, 438, 495-7, 539, and v. 3, 83, 157-8, 204-10.

Of all the Tudors, Elizabeth used the Royal Progress to full use in presenting the monarch to her subjects with ceremonial splendor. Her grandfather and father also used that practice, but neither to as much effect and frequency.⁵⁴ Therefore it should be no surprise that of all the Tudors it was Elizabeth who seems to have realized the potential of her royal acting troupe representing the monarch's presence throughout the kingdom. Despite differences in the lengths of reigns for her predecessors (Henry VIII, thirty-six years, Edward VI and Mary, five years each), the average number of provincial appearances by royal actor-servants remains relatively constant, about five per year. Under Elizabeth that average jumped to thirteen per year.

That increase appeared at the very beginning of her reign. In her first few months, provincial records published to date reveal eight performances around the provinces by the Queen's Men (also termed Court Interluders): twice in Kent, Gloucestershire, and Shropshire, and once in Lincolnshire and Sussex. For Elizabeth's first five years provincial records show a total of forty-nine performances by the Queen's Men, in Kent, Gloucestershire, Lincolnshire, Shropshire, Leicestershire, Devon, Norfolk, Essex, Hampshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Sussex, and as far north as Yorkshire and Northumberland. Combining the ten years of her brother's and sister's reigns, records published to date show their royal troupes performing in the provinces fifty times, and in far fewer counties. Hence in Elizabeth's first five years the presence of the royal troupe around the kingdom equaled that of both reigns. For her next five years (1564-68) provincial accounts record fifty-four appearances by the Queen's Men, in fourteen different counties. At a total of 103 provincial performances, the presence of the Royal troupe throughout the realm increased 100% over appearances by royal troupes in the ten years spanned by reigns of

⁵⁴ MacCullough, 5, 59-66. See John Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, 3 vs. (London: John Nichols and Son, 1823), for the frequency and lavishness of Elizabeth's Progresses throughout her reign.

her royal siblings. Indeed, the Queen's troupe played exclusively in the provinces from 1561 until 1583.⁵⁵

Some scholars note the letter to the London authorities drawn up by Sir Francis Walsingham in 1583 as marking the "real" beginning of the Queen's Men.⁵⁶ Perhaps it does indicate the troupe was given some greater autonomy or legal identity, but actor-servants identified as the Queen's Men or Court Interluders before that date played at least 153 times at forty-three different locales in twenty counties. If we include five instances when actor-servants are ascribed to the patronage of the Masters of the Revels Sir Thomas Bengar and Edmund Tilney (as I think we must) the number rises to 158. Only eleven performances, 7% of the total performances recorded to date, were at Court, all of them within the first two years of the reign.⁵⁷ The number of provincial performances by King Henry's Men during his thirty-six year reign was 189. In her first twenty-five years, therefore, Elizabeth's company already had performed 84% of the grand total for Henry's entire reign. Even if we push the number for Henry VIII to 300 royal performances by including the actor-servants traveling under the patronage of Henry's putative heirs and wives,⁵⁸ Elizabeth's one troupe still reaches 51% of the total provincial performances by all three royal troupes during the reign Henry VIII.

⁵⁵ Murray, v.2, 289, 299-301, 373, 375, 382; *Malone: Kent*, 12-14, 42-4, 55, 70, 87, 106-07, 137-8; *Lincoln*, 13, 14; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 210; *REED: Bristol*, 65, 67, 69; *Cambridge*, 216, 222, 226, *Cumberland*, 298-300; *Devon*, 43-4, 65, 150, 235-6, 279-80; *Newcastle*, 32; *Norwich*, 48-51; *Shropshire*, 82, 206-08; *Somerset*, 1: 49; *Sussex*, 117-21.

⁵⁶ Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986), 46-7.

⁵⁷ Astington, 222; Chambers, v. 2, 84-5; Murray, v. 2, 195-6, 205, 256, 287-81, 299-301, 373, 378, 390, 402, 404-07; *Malone: Kent*, 12-116, 42-44-6, 59-60, 70, 75, 87, 106-08, 114, 138-9; *Lincoln*, 13-15; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 14, 166, 210; *REED: Bristol*, 65, 67, 72; *Cambridge*, 216, 222, 226, 249, 257, 259, 266; *Cumberland*, 298-302, 307-08; *Devon*, 43-3, 65, 67, 150, 235-9, 279-80; *Hereford*, 362; *Newcastle*, 32; *Norwich*, 32, 48-52, 55, 59, 66-7; *Shropshire*, 82, 209-10, 235; *Somerset*, 49.

⁵⁸ Christine Sustek Williams, "The Troupe's the Thing: The Traveling Royal Players During the Reign of Henry VIII," *SRASP*, v. 24 (2001), 40-1.

After 1583, for her final twenty years on the throne, the Queen's Men were recorded in provincial accounts published to date 426 times, at seventy-eight locales in thirty-one counties, some as distant from London as York, Cumberland, Cheshire, Northumberland, and Lancashire. There were only twenty-seven appearances at Court, a piddling number when compared to the appearances in the provinces.⁵⁹ Walsingham claimed in 1583 that the Queen's troupe was licensed to play in and around London so as to be practiced to play at Court when summoned.⁶⁰ Yet her actor-servants only played in and around London twelve times from 1583 to 1594 (1583, 1586, twice in 1588, and eight times in 1594).⁶¹ After 1594 her acting company never again appeared at Court or in the London area. Perhaps this was due, as Andrew Gurr believes, to the efforts of Lords Hunsdon and Charles Howard to stabilize the London theatre by creating "a duopoly" in which only two companies had permanent residency in the London area.⁶² Whatever may be the case, when a total of thirty-eight Court performances is compared to a total of 558 recorded performances before the public,⁶³ Elizabeth's actor-servants spent

⁵⁹ Astington, 231-4; *Malone: Kent*, 16-17, 46-8; 61-4, 71-2, 77, 87-8, 108-10, 115-6, 140-1, 144; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 64-7, 157, 210-11; *REED: Bristol*, 73, 76, 81, 124, 128, 131, 133, 135, 140, 142, 145, 148, 150-01; *Cambridge*, 311, 313, 319, 332, 337, 369; *Chester*, 159, 162, 166, 184; *Coventry*, 313, 317, 320, 324, 328, 332, 336, 338, 341, 344, 346, 348, 358; *Cumberland*, 174, 310-13; *Devon*, 46-7, 68, 163-6, 173-5, 252, 254, 257; *Hereford*, 146, 147, 448-50; *Lancashire*, 18-20; *Newcastle*, 79; *Norwich*, 20, 82, 84, 93, 96, 98, 102, 105, 107, 115, 119; *Shropshire*, 19, 20, 88-90, 245, 248, 284-6; *Somerset*, 13-18, 53-6; *York*, 409, 413, 430, 449, 451, 471, 473, 481-2, 487-8, 501.

⁶⁰ Chambers, v.4, 296-7.

⁶¹ Astington, 232; Murray v. 2, 198, 287-9, 299, 374; Nungezer, 82, 246, 254; *Malone: Kent*, 106-07, 137; *Lincoln*, 74; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 226; *REED: Coventry*, 257, 265, 313, 336; *Cumberland*, 301; *Devon*, 43, 52, 53, 65, 235-6; *Dorset*, 127, 242; *Somerset*, 13, 50, 53, 57.

⁶² Andrew Gurr, "Three Reluctant Patrons and Early Shakespeare." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, v. 44 (1993), 159-74.

⁶³ Chambers, v. 2, 84-5; Murray, v. 2, 195-6, 205, 256, 289, 299-301, 373, 375, 378, 382, 390, 402, 404-07; *Malone: Kent*, 12-116, 137-9; *Lincoln*, 13-15, 210; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 14, 166, 210; *REED: Bristol*, 65, 67, 69, 72; *Cambridge*, 216, 222, 226,

only 6% of their time entertaining the Queen, and 94% of their time performing around her kingdom. Elizabeth may have liked plays, but such percentages suggest the Queen intended more than her own entertainment for the royal acting troupe.

Except for a Court performance in 1559 of a lost play called *Papists*, what little we know of the repertory of the Queen's Men does not, at first glance, reflect overtly political or anti-Catholic plays like those performed by her father's and brother's troupes. Also, most plays ascribed to the repertory of the Queen's Men are dated after 1583. Scholars have ascribed the following plays to the Queen's Men: *Job*, a Biblical play, *An Antic Play*, perhaps a farce, six histories—*Mucudorus*, *Alphonsus King of Aragon* and *Famous Victories of Henry V*, a version of *Richard III* (perhaps *The True Tragedy of Richard III*), perhaps *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, and *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*—two pastorals—*Felix and Philomena*, and *Phyllida and Coran*—a tragedy, *The Jew of Malta*, three morality plays—*A Looking Glass for London*, *Three Lords and Three Ladies of London*, and *Three Plays in One* (possibly a version of *The Seven Deadly Sins*)—and eight comedies—*Selimus*, *Orlando Furioso*, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, *The Fair Maid of Italy*, *The Old Wives Tale*, *The Ranger's Comedy*, *Scottish History of James IV*.⁶⁴ All of these plays, however, are derived from records pertaining to performances at Court or in the London public theatres. Not one play is named or described in the 558 performances by the Queen's actor-servants listed in provincial records.

This repertory seems to avoid overt religious and political themes, but Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean assert that there are subtle political and religious messages in these plays. The English history plays, they maintain, subtly point to the

249, 257, 259, 266; *Cumberland*, 298-302, 307-08; *Devon*, 43-4, 65, 67, 150, 235-9, 279-80; *Hereford*, 362; *Newcastle*, 32; *Norwich*, 32, 48-52; *Shropshire*, 82, 206-10; *Somerset*, 49; *Sussex*, 117-21; *Astington*, 222.

⁶⁴ McMillin and Maclean, 33, 44, 48-9, 129, 133, 135, 149-50, 166-8, 189-93; *Henslowe's Diary*, 21; Harbage and Schoenbaum, 38-9, 52-7, 76-7; *Astington*, 221-2, 231; *Forse, Art*, 220-2.

culmination of an ideal state under the Tudor monarchs, the pastorals to the reign of England's "Gloriana," and the others, both by their "simple speech" and parodies of Catholic and Puritan excesses, offer strident comparisons to the moderate Protestantism of Elizabeth's religious settlement. Such were the messages McMillin and MacLean believe Elizabeth, Walsingham, Leicester and the other moderate Protestant Privy Counselors wished carried about the kingdom.⁶⁵

Perhaps these plays, if we can assume they were performed in the provinces, did present those messages. Aside from that, it is highly probable that the touring actors served as unofficial couriers and "intelligencers," sometimes carrying messages and bringing back tidbits of information about people, events, and potential unrest in the provinces. We know the Privy Council had "intelligencers" who brought them information about the London theatres, and that at least once the Earl of Leicester used Will Kempe, the comedian in his troupe, to carry information across the Channel.⁶⁶ If nothing else, it is likely Elizabeth believed the mere presence of an acting company wearing her livery reminded her subjects of her own "presence" and power to reach any nook and cranny in the realm. Certainly the 558 provincial performances of the Queen's Men published to date, an average of over thirteen per year, overshadow the appearances by any other troupes, be they aristocratic, civic, or unnamed. In provincial records published to date appearances by the Queen's Men account for 21% of all provincial performances during her reign, and if all acting companies except those sponsored by aristocrats are excluded, the Queen's Men accounts for fully one-third.

Provincial records make it clear that theatre quickly became the domain of aristocratic actor-servants after the accession of Elizabeth. In the one hundred years that preceded Elizabeth (c. 1457-1557), approximately ten knights and seventy-three peers are named, at one time and one place or another, as patrons of acting

⁶⁵ McMillin and Maclean, 32-6, 133-43.

⁶⁶ McMillin and MacLean, 22-32

companies. The frequency of public performances by these troupes, and their life spans, were generally limited. During Elizabeth's forty-four years the patrons of that status rose to approximately thirty-four knights and ninety-six peers and peeresses.⁶⁷ Included in these numbers, of course, are some successive generations of patrons like the Stanley Earls of Derby, de Vere Earls of Oxford, and FitzAlan Earls of Arundel, who seemed to have passed on acting companies to their heirs much like they passed on their titles and lands. Yet, even counting those successive troupes as single, continuous ones, provincial records, at one place and time or another, reveal 106 other acting companies attached to gentle or noble patrons. Most of these acting companies were short lived. All of the troupes sponsored by knights, and forty-four sponsored by aristocrats functioned less than ten years. Troupes formed and dissolved, and some actors shifted from troupe to troupe.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, in raw numbers Elizabeth's reign saw an increase of over 45% in noble patrons of acting companies over the hundred years that preceded her. Table 1 lists nobles who at one time or another during Elizabeth's reign gave their names to acting companies, indicating the first and last years the troupes appear in provincial records published to date.

⁶⁷ Astington, 225-7, 230; Chambers, v. 2: 118; Harbage and Schoenbaum, 54-5, 74-5; *Malone: Kent*, 12, 13, 42-4, 62-4, 107, 146; *Lincoln*, 15, 73; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 66, 215, 224, 227; Murray, v. 2, 91, 196, 201-05, 209, 217, 255-6, 281, 288-9, 291, 294, 298, 303, 373, 394, 402, 406, 411; Nungezer, 316; *REED: Bristol*, 69, 110, 155; *Cambridge*, 264, 338; *Coventry*, 286, 296, 300, 302, 310, 346, 349, 360, 362, 373, 381; *Cumberland*, 102, 298, 300, 302, 306; *Devon*, 43, 162, 174, 176, 235=6, 239, 257, 281; *Dorset*, 153, 213-4, 278; *Lancashire*, 166-7, 180-2, 188; *Newcastle*, 71; *Norwich*, 84-6, 105, 108, 121; *Shropshire*, 84-5; *Somerset*, v. 1, 11, 12, 15, 17, 51, 55; *York*, 382, 418, 436, 455, 496, 509.

⁶⁸ *Lancashire, Dramatic Texts*, 374, Murray, v. 1, 3, 386-7; McMillan and MacLean, 106; Nungezer, 1, 3, 11-12, 14-25, 28-30, 36-8, 48-9, 59, 66-70, 98-103, 105-06, 114-22, 179, 192, 206-22, 234, 263-4, 280-2, 285-7, 315-20, 324-5, 329-32, 336-7, 347, 374-6, 381, 394-6; *REED: Shropshire*, 233; *York*, 481.

Table 1: Aristocratic Patrons of Acting Troupes during Elizabeth's Reign

Patron	1st Year	Last Year
Lord Admiral (Charles Howard)	1574	1603
Lord Abergavenny (Henry Neville)	1560	1565
Lord Audrey (George Touchet)	1559	1560
Lord Bartholomew (not identified)	1581	1581
Lord Beauchamp (Edward Seymour III)	1589	1596
Lord Berkeley (Henry Berkeley)	1577	1602
Lord Burgh (Thomas Burgh)	1590	1596
Lord Burghley (William Cecil)	1580	1580
Lord Chandos (Edmund Brydges)	1558	1558
Lord Chandos (Gyles Brydges)	1577	1594
Lord Chandos (William Brydges)	1594	1603
Lord Chandos (Grey Brydges)	1603	1603
Lord Cobham (William Brooke)	1563	1571
Lord Compton (Henry Compton)	1573	1578
Lord Cromwell (Edward Cromwell)	1599	1599
Lord Darcy (John Darcy)	1578	1602
Lord Darcy (John Darcy II)	1602	1602
Lord de la Warr (William West)	1575	1577
Lord Dudley (Edward Sutton)	1583	1583
Lord Dudley (Edward Sutton II)	1590	1603
Lord Durand (unidentified)	1592	1592
Lord Eure (Ralph Eure)	1601	1603
Lord Hastings of Loughborough (Edward Hastings)	1565	1565
Lord Howard (of Bindon or Walden?)	1599	1603
Lord Hunsdon (Henry Carey, Lord Chamberlain)	1564	1596
Lord Hunsdon (George Carey, Lord Chamberlain)	1596	1603
Lord Kinderton (Thomas Venables)	1577	1578
Lord Lattimer (John Neville)	1562	1654
Lord Lumley (John Lumley)	1571	1571
Lord Monteagle (William Stanley)	1569	1581
Lord Monteagle (William Parker)	1583	1598
Lord Mordaunt (Lewis Mordaunt)	1602	1602
Lord Morley (Edward Parker)	1581	1602
Lord Mountjoy (James Blount)	1558	1577
Lord Mountjoy (William Blount)	1583	1583
Lord Mountjoy (Charles Blount)	1598	1598
Lord Norris (Henry Norris)	1593	1593
Lord North (Roger North)	1591	1591
Lord Ogle (Cuthbert Ogle)	1578	1596
Lord Rich (Richard Rich)	1563	1567
Lord Rich (Robert Rich)	1568	1587
Lord Rocheford? (title extinct after 1537)	1577	1577
Lord Sandys (William Sandys)	1589	1597

Patron	1st Year	Last Year
Lord Scrope (Henry Scrope)	1564	1576
Lord Sheffield (Edmund Sheffield)	1577	1586
Lord Stafford (Edward Stafford)	1574	1602
Lord Strange (Hen. Stanley, Earl of Derby in 1572)	1560	1569
Lord Strange (Ferd. Stanley, Earl of Derby in 1594)	1576	1593
Lord Vaux (William Vaux)	1599	1599
Lord Vaux (Edward Vaux)	1560	1596
Lord Wharton (Philip Wharton)	1581	1599
Lord Willoughby (deEresby, deBorke?)	1582	1582
Lord Willoughby (de Broke, prob. Fulke Greville)	1571	1571
Lord Yden (Alexander Yden)	1577	1577
Lady Manches (unidentified, prob. Lady Mountjoy)	1574	1592
Viscount Lisle (Robert Sidney)	1593	1595
Viscount Montagu (Anthony Browne)	1585	1585
Viscount Montagu (Anthony Maria Browne)	1570	1578
Earl of Arundel (Henry FitzAlan)	1560	1561
Earl of Arundel (Philip Howard)	1564	1565
Earl of Bath (William Bourchier)	1602	1602
Earl of Bedford (Francis Russell)	1594	1594
Earl of Bedford (Edward Russell)	1564	1565
Earl of Cumberland (George Clifford)	1603	1603
Earl of Derby (Edward Stanley)	1564	1569
Earl of Derby (Henry Stanley)	1574	1593
Earl of Derby (Ferdinando Stanley)	1594	1594
Earl of Derby (William Stanley)	1594	1603
Countess of Derby (Alice, widow of Ferd.)	1594	1594
Earl of Essex (Walter Devereux)	1572	1576
Earl of Essex (Robert Devereux)	1576	1596
Countess of Essex (Lettice Knollys, widow, Walter)	1577	1580
Earl of Hertford (Edward Seymour II)	1591	1602
Earl of Huntingdon (Henry Hastings)	1582	1588
Earl of Huntingdon (George Hastings)	1596	1603
Earl of Leicester (Robert Dudley)	1558	1589
Earl of Lincoln (Edward Fiennes)	1566	1577
Earl of Lincoln (William Fiennes)	1599	1603
Earl of Oxford (John deVere)	1559	1562
Earl of Oxford (Edward deVere)	1562	1601
Earl of Pembroke (Henry Herbert)	1575	1600
Earl of Shrewsbury (George Talbot)	1572	1572
Earl of Southampton (Henry Wriothesley I)	1573	1573
Earl of Suffolk (Thomas Howard)	1562	1588
Earl of Sussex (Thomas Radcliffe)	1565	1583
Earl of Sussex (Henry Radcliff)	1583	1593
Earl of Sussex (Robert Radcliffe)	1593	1603
Countess of Sussex (widow of Thomas)	1587	1587
Earl of Warwick (Ambrose Dudley)	1559	1590
Earl of Westmorland (Thomas Neville)	1567	1567

Patron	1st Year	Last Year
Earl of Worcester (William Somerset)	1562	1585
Earl of Worcester (Edward Somerset)	1589	1603
Marquess of Northampton (William Parr)	1559	1559
Duke of Norfolk (Thomas Howard)	1558	1558
Duchess of Suffolk (Katherine, widow, Chas. Brandon)	1560	1565
Duchess of Suffolk (Frances, widow, Henry Grey)	1559	1567

To hone down these raw numbers, let us exclude those troupes that appear less than six times in provincial records (for example, a citation in 1580 that Lord Burghley's servants performed at Ludlow during the Queen's visit).⁶⁹ Records concerning such players may refer only to *ac hoc* performances staged for special occasions.

Yet even with these exclusions, provincial records still reveal an explosion of aristocratic-sponsored acting companies performing in England under Elizabeth. Using this "6+" rule, in the hundred years before Elizabeth's reign, provincial records published to date yields a list of aristocratic patrons containing one knight and twenty-five peers. In the forty-four years of Elizabeth's reign, the provincial records yield a list containing three knights and fifty-one peers—more than double the number of aristocratic patrons than under all her Tudor predecessors, and in less than half the amount of time.⁷⁰ Clearly the virtual disappearance of local performance activity and tours by local civic companies⁷¹ was being replaced by traveling troupes wearing the badges of their aristocrat patrons. All of these numbers will grow as more records are made available.

⁶⁹ REED: *Shropshire*, 85.

⁷⁰ Malone: *Kent*, 4, 27, 40, 42, 70, 98, 104, 147, 154; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 22, 43, 49, 112-15, 188-9, 197; REED: *Bristol*, 54, 62; *Cambridge*, 44, 48, 69, 71, 79, 112, 144, 173, 176; *Cumberland*, 296; *Devon*, 38, 41, 133, 147, 220, 229; *Dorset*, 211; *Hereford*, 505; *Lancashire*, 186; *Norwich*, 30; *Shropshire*, 159, 173, 177, 181, 202-03; *Somerset*, 44; *Sussex*, 117-50, 182-6; *York*, 494; *Lancashire, Dramatic Texts*, 73-4, 257, 355, 375-8, 386, 394, 396, 399-405, 408; Murray, v. 2, 205, 224, 277, 298, 361, 396.

⁷¹ Forse, "Flow and Ebb, 47-68."

As noted earlier, several of the traveling acting companies have some continuity with earlier Tudors in the tradition of great families who maintained minstrels, jugglers, jesters as personal “entertainment corps.” The deVere Earls of Oxford patronized minstrels and players over five successive Earls from 1488 to 1600. Six FitzAlan Earls of Arundel were patrons of troupes from 1388 to 1561. From 1494 until the end of the reign of James I, the Stanley Earls of Derby patronized acting troupes, with a thirty-year hiatus between 1538-1568--a period of time, incidentally, that corresponds to an ebbing of Stanley influence at Court. During Elizabeth’s reign the Stanleys patronized two troupes, one under the present Earl, the other under his putative heir, Lord Strange. Five Radcliffe Earls of Sussex patronized acting companies from 1535 to 1618, with a lapse during the reigns of Edward and Mary, and resuming in 1564,⁷² when the Radcliffe star was rising. In 1572 Thomas Radcliffe became Elizabeth’s Lord Chamberlain.⁷³

However, fifty-one out of seventy acting companies sponsored by peers and peeresses during Elizabeth’s reign, were brand-new, or, in one or two cases, resuscitations of patronage moribund for over twenty years: those of the Earls of Nottingham (Lord Admiral Charles Howard), Essex, Hertford, Huntingdon, Leicester, Lincoln, Pembroke, Southampton, Suffolk, Warwick, and Worcester, of the Duke of Norfolk, dowager Duchess of Suffolk (Frances Grey), the dowager Countesses of Sussex and Essex, Viscounts Montagu and Lisle, and of Barons Abergavenny, Bartholomew, Beauchamp, Berkeley, Burgh, Cobham, Compton, Cromwell, Darcy, Dudley (Edward Sutton), Durand, Eure, Hastings of Loughborough, Howard, Hunsdon (later Lord Chamberlain), Kinderton, Lattimer, Lumley, Monteagle,

⁷² Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 408; *Malone: Kent*, 15, 16, 42, 43, 59, 62, 114; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 213, 224, 228; Murray, v. 2, 196, 198, 202, 205, 217, 256, 277, 289, 291, 298, 299, 301, 302; *REED: Bristol*, 55, 62, 65, 114, 142, 155; *Cambridge*, 226, 238; *Coventry*, 300, 313; *Cumberland*, 102, 177, 298, 300, 302, 306; *Devon*, 24, 41, 65, 174, 156, 162, 176; *Dorset*, 242; *Newcastle*, 71; *Norwich*, 45, 98; *Shropshire*, 206; *Somerset*, 10, 13, 17, 51, 57; *Sussex*, 117-50.

⁷³ Kinney, 4.

Mordaunt, Morley, Mountjoy, Norris, North, Ogle, Rich (made infamous by Bolt's *Man for All Seasons*), Sandys, Scrope, Sheffield, Stafford, Vaux, Wharton, Willoughby, and Yden. Of these fifty-one troupes, fifteen (29%) sprang into existence in the first five years of Elizabeth's reign. Another twenty-seven appeared in her next ten years. In other words, about 82% of the new Elizabethan acting companies were formed in the first fifteen years of Elizabeth's reign.⁷⁴

As mentioned above, throughout the Tudor era provincial records indicating the repertoires of traveling troupes are extremely rare. In the thousands of entries noting performances in towns or manor houses only twenty-five play titles, or descriptions of plays, appear. For the reign of Elizabeth there are only thirteen named plays, and six of them (46%) appear in the records of the Bristol City Chamberlain for the years 1574-79. For whatever reasons, that chamberlain saw fit to indicate "the matter" of the play as well as its cost to the town treasury. Of the ten remaining named plays, the naming is random; one (*Harry of Cornwall*) is known only because the actor Edward Alleyn mentioned it in a letter he sent home while on tour in 1593. Table 2 details the information about named plays in Elizabethan provincial records.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 408; *Malone: Kent*, 15, 16, 42, 43, 59, 62, 114; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 213, 224, 228; Murray, v. 2, 196, 198, 202, 205, 217, 256, 277, 289, 291, 298, 299, 301, 302; *REED: Bristol*, 55, 62, 65, 114, 142, 155; *Cambridge*, 226, 238; *Coventry*, 300, 313; *Cumberland*, 102, 177, 298, 300, 302, 306; *Devon*, 24, 41, 65, 174, 156, 162, 176; *Dorset*, 242; *Newcastle*, 71; *Norwich*, 45, 98; *Shropshire*, 206; *Somerset*, 10, 13, 17, 51, 57; *Sussex*, 117-50.

⁷⁵ Murray, v. 2, 210, 288; Harbage and Schoenbaum, 46-9, 58-9; *REED: Bristol*, 11, 114-16, 119, 143-4; *Cumberland*, 309; *Hereford*, 376-7; Siobhan Keenan, *Travelling Players in Shakespeare's England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 13-4.

Table 2: Named Plays in Elizabethan Provincial Records

Yr.	Title	Company	Location
1560	<i>The Court of Comfort</i>	Leicester	Bristol
1564	<i>Barbarous Terrine</i>	Unnamed	Ipswich
1574	<i>The Red Knight</i>	Worcester	Bristol
1576	<i>Myngo</i>	Lincoln	Bristol
1577	<i>Corpus Christi Play</i>	Unnamed	Kendal
1577	<i>Queen of Ethiopia</i>	Leicester	Bristol
1577	<i>What Mischief Worketh the Mind of Men</i>	Berkeley	Bristol
1578	<i>The Lady of May</i>	Leicester	Wanstead
1579	<i>Quid pro Quo</i>	Sheffield	Bristol
1579	<i>The Court of Comfort</i>	Berkeley	Bristol
1583	<i>Phedrastus</i>	Oxford	Gloucester
1583	<i>Phigon & Lucia</i>	Oxford	Gloucester
1592	<i>Summer's Last Will & Testament</i>	Chapel Boys	Croyden
1593	<i>Harry of Cornwall</i>	Strange	Bristol
1593	<i>Harry of Cornwall</i>	Strange	Gloucester
1595	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>	Unknown	Barley-on-Hill
1600	<i>The Lady of May</i>	Chandos	Evesham

From sources such as printed plays (some of which name the acting company, or companies that performed them), and Henslowe's *Diary*, an account book listing expenses and income from 1592-1602 for his London area theatres, the Rose, Newington Butts, and the Fortune, and the accounts of the Master of the Revels listing performances at Court, and other plays tentatively can be ascribed to various companies. The following is a small sample of some of the plays ascribed to companies active in the provinces: Admiral's Men—*Tamburlaine*, *Spanish Tragedy*, *Sir John Mandeville*, *The Jew of Malta*, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*; Chamberlain's Men—*Beauty and Housewifery*, and after 1594, of course, plays by Shakespeare including *Titus Andronicus*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, and the Henry VI and Henry IV and V plays; Derby's Men—*King Leir*, *The Soldan and the Duke*, *1 Henry VI*, *Looking Glass for London*, *Sir John Mandeville*; Leicester's Men—*King Leir*, *Mamilla*, *The Collier*, *Cataline's Conspiracies*, *A Virgin Play*; Sussex's Men—*Duke of*

*Milan, Serpenda, History of Ferrar; Warwick's Men—The Irish Knight, The Three Sisters of Mantua, The Four Sons of Fabius.*⁷⁶ Obviously, over time, some plays were performed by more than one company, though generally most plays belonging to the repertory of one company probably were not acted by others.

The performance of *Titus Andronicus* at Barley-on-the-Hill in 1595 may, or may not have been by the Chamberlain's Men. The play belonged to its repertory, but the name of the acting company performing the play in this instance is not recorded in the sources.⁷⁷ It also must be remembered that like the repertory ascribed to the Queen's Men, most of the plays ascribed to these several companies date only to the late 1570s, 1580s, and 1590s, and their only known performances were before the Court or in the London area. Probably some were played when the companies toured the provinces, but there is almost no concrete evidence to prove that is so. For most of the acting troupes active only in the provinces we have no titles to ascribe because provincial records do not mention what those companies performed.

For the most part the plays listed above, and many others identified as part of the major companies' repertories, reflect the seeming lack of controversy seen in the repertory ascribed to the Queen's Men. Dominant are English histories, romantic comedies, and some plays based on Greco-Roman themes. Given the mechanism for the censorship of plays and the press that Elizabeth's government created, and the severe penalties imposed upon those accused of sedition, it is no wonder the repertories in London, and no doubt, if the few named plays we possess from provincial records are typical, the repertories of traveling players avoided any but the most subtle political or religious overtones.⁷⁸

Provincial records are almost silent about the repertories of the traveling acting companies, but most yield much information about payments to them, some detailing amounts spent to provide

⁷⁶ Astington, 226. 229-31, 236; Harbage and Schoenbaum, 54, 66-7, 74-9.

⁷⁷ Keenan, 73.

⁷⁸ Keenan, 13-14, 37-8, 57-8; Forse, *Art*, 33-43, 161, 173-6.

them with food, beer and wine. From the Chamberlain's Accounts of Leicester, it is clear, at least from 1556 to 1600, that money was gathered at performances to pay the players. Several entries note sums disbursed to players from the city's coffers "above what was gathered." However, there is no consistency in those amounts. Disbursements range from sixteen pence to 600 pence.⁷⁹ Nor can we assume, as some scholars have, that gathering was the usual way of doing business in other localities. Most records simply note sums of money disbursed to players by town officials or by private households.

The amounts of money given to players in other provincial records are as inconsistent as for the city of Leicester. A mere five pence was disbursed to the Earl of Worcester's Men at Coventry in 1578, but the company received eighty pence two years earlier in 1576, 160 pence later in 1584, and 120 pence in 1602. At York the Queen's Men was given 800 pence in 1584, a whopping 2400 pence in 1587, 240 pence in 1593, and 640 pence in 1596.⁸⁰ Given these discrepancies, a raw average of the 1994 payments published to date is meaningless. Yet comparisons of sums disbursed does reveal that 120 pence represents about 23% of all recorded payments, and also represents the median payment. The varied amounts disbursed, for example to Worcester's Men at Coventry and the Queen's Men at York, also bear no correlation to the passage of time. Therefore there is little indication those discrepancies result from the inflation that affected England in the late sixteenth century.

Perhaps the best way to calculate a tentative estimate of the income-touring players could expect is by calculating average payments, company by company, based on the number of years each appears in provincial records. Table 3 presents some of those calculations, listing (in descending order of average reward) the most prominent and active troupes of Elizabeth's reign, and a few representatives of less prominent troupes. Troupes marked with an

⁷⁹ Murray, v. 2, 298-307.

⁸⁰ *REED: Coventry*, 276, 286, 302, 360; *York*, 409, 451, 471, 481.

asterisk indicate those for which published records to date span less than ten years of touring activities.⁸¹

Table 3: Average Payment Based on the Number of Recorded Payments

Acting Company	Av. Pay in Pence	No. Recorded Pays
Queen Elizabeth's	272	498
Earl of Pembroke's	228	26
Earl of Hertford's	181	22
Earl of Leicester's	184	155
Lords Hunsdon's	176	41
Lord Admiral's	179	79
Earls of Sussex's	170	96
Lords Strange's	160	30
Lord Beauchamp's	158	16
Earls of Essex's	156	81
Earls of Derby's	151	88
*Countess of Essex's	145	6
Lord Berkeley's	140	52
Earls of Worcester's	137	128
Lord Darcy's	137	29
*Lord Compton's (1573-78)	130	7
*Lords Rich's (1563-70)	127	10
Lords Chandos'	122	67
Earl of Warwick's	121	33
*Earl of Bath's (1570-8)	120	10
Lord Morley's	120	31
Lord Stafford's	116	51
Earls of Oxford's	110	56
Lords Dudley's	107	11
*Lord Cobham's (1563-71)	106	10

⁸¹ *Malone: Kent*, 12-19, 42-8, 59-65, 70-7, 87-8, 106-16, 137-44; *Lincoln*, 13-14, 73; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 54-7, 106, 115, 156-7, 165-6, 196-7, 210-27; *Murray*, v. 2, 94, 199-205, 221, 238, 256, 273-81, 287-332, 373-8, 389-90, 396-413; *REED: Bristol*, 62, 65, 67, 69, 72-3, 76, 79, 83, 114, 116, 119, 124, 126-35, 140-53; *Cambridge*, 212, 216, 222, 226, 249, 257-9, 266, 273, 311-13, 319, 323, 332, 337, 355, 369; *Chester*, 135, 159, 162, 166, 184; *Coventry*, 251, 265-6, 270-302, 313-97; *Devon*, 43-8, 64-8, 150, 156-7, 159-66, 173-5, 234-42, 251-7, 279-81; *Dorset*, 214-17, 278; *Hereford*, 146-9, 362-3, 361, 367, 448-54; *Lancashire*, 46, 170-93; *Newcastle*, 86, 90, 93, 103; *Norwich*, 20, 45-84, 93-8, 105-34; *Shropshire*, 19-20, 81-90, 206, 233, 235, 238, 242, 245, 248, 276-7, 284-6; *Somerset*, 10-19, 48-56, 219, 257; *Sussex*, 117-50, *York*, 397, 409-19, 430, 435-6, 442-9, 451, 455, 471-3, 481-8, 496, 501, 509, 517.

Acting Company	Av. Pay in Pence	No. Recorded Pays
*Sir James Fitzjames' (1575-6)	105	7
*Lord Sheffield's (1577-86)	101	19
*Lord de LaWarr's (1575-7)	94	3
*Duchess of Suffolk's	90	10
Lord Montjoy's	83	40
*Lord Abergavenny's (1570-5)	82	40
*Lord Latimer's (1562-4)	77	5
*Sir Henry Fortescu's (1560-5)	64	10
*Sir Francis Smith's (1569-70)	43	5
*Players of Finch (1560-61)	30	4

Some of the discrepancies among average payments per troupe in Table 2 result from the fact that the averages are based on unequal numbers of payments. Such differences probably skew those average payments. However, other factors contributing to those discrepancies need to be considered. For instance, the higher average payment to the Earl of Pembroke's company might be explained by the fact that half of the payments came from localities where the Earl's political and economic influence was strong. Many of these towns had long-standing ties to the Herbert Earls because of proximity to substantial Herbert family holdings in Wiltshire and Wales, and some were subject to the Earl's oversight as Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, Wiltshire, and the Marches of Wales, and Lord President of the Council of Wales.⁸² Perhaps the similarity of average payments to the companies of the Lords Hunsdon, Strange, and the Lord Admiral's was due to their reputations for quality, but also it must be remembered that the Lords Hunsdon and Admiral were Lords of the Privy Council and cousins to the Queen. Yet the average payments to the companies of the Earl of Hertford and his son Baron Beauchamp, who were not Privy Council Lords, nor favorites of the Queen, were somewhat higher than those of most other earls and barons. Perhaps, however, those averages stem from the fact that the payments coincide in time with attempts to reverse Beauchamp's technical bastardary, the reversal of which would make him a

⁸² Haigh, *Elizabeth* 48-9; Davies, 265; Kinney, 52.

prime contender to succeed Elizabeth.⁸³ Hence, until more records of payments become readily available, the averages of recorded payments for these, and other acting companies listed in Table 3, makes using them as typical payments somewhat tentative. Table 4 probably presents a more accurate average for most troupes. It lists only troupes for which the numbers of recorded payments published to date are fifty or more.

Table 4: Average Payments Based on Troupes with Fifty or More Payments

Acting Company	Av. Pay in Pence	No. Recorded Pays
Queen Elizabeth's	272	498
Earl of Leicester's	176	155
Lord Admiral's	174	79
Earls of Sussex's	168	96
Earls of Essex's	155	81
Earls of Derby's	151	88
Lord Berkeley's	140	52
Earls of Worcester's	137	128
Lords Chandos'	122	67
Lord Stafford's	116	51
Earls of Oxford's	110	56

Lest the 116 or 137 pennies average payment listed for Stafford's and Worcester's players in Table 4 seem paltry to modern eyes, let us put those sums in the context of earning and buying power in the last half of the sixteenth century. Records from Southampton for the year 1577 tell us that each of those two troupes comprised ten players, and that each troupe was paid 120 pence,⁸⁴ a sum fairly close to the averages given in Table 2 and only slightly lower than averages in Table 3. That sum of 120 pence translates to roughly twelve pence per player. By comparison to average wages in London from 1560 to 1600—eight to fifteen or twenty pence per day—wages per performance for

⁸³ Breight, 20-48.

⁸⁴ Murray, v. 2, 397.

Stafford's and Worcester's actor-servants fall towards the higher end of London's pay scale.⁸⁵

However, wages and costs of living in the provinces were lower. For example, in 1586 three workmen in Bristol were paid twenty-four pence, or six pence each, for a day's labor removing timber and "laying rubble about the walks in the marsh." In Lancaster in 1595 a master mason or a master carpenter received four pence a day, plus food; in Chester in 1594, a smith or a shoemaker earned two pence per day. Those figures suggest that Stafford's and Worcester's actor-servants were earning double to triple the daily wages of the artisans and workmen in their provincial audiences. Leicester's, Sussex's and the Admiral's actor-servants made almost four times, and the Queen's actor-servants made almost five to seven times more.⁸⁶

The sums paid to these troupes per performance also represent enormous buying power in late sixteenth-century England. The average payment of 140 pence given to Berkeley's Men would buy about thirty-five pounds of butter (four pence per pound), or seventy pounds of beef (two pence per pound), or seventy hens (at two pence per hen), or twenty pairs of children's shoes (at seven pence per pair), or eleven ready made shirts (at twelve pence per shirt), or twenty-three pigs (averaged six pence apiece), or fourteen sheep (about ten pence each), or twenty-three geese (about six pence each), or thirty-five pounds of raisins (four pence per pound), or (at twelve pence per gallon) twelve gallons of sack.⁸⁷ The actions of Elizabeth's government reveal almost an obsession with regulating wages. Between 1563 and 1597 no less than fifty royal proclamations addressed to twelve towns and fourteen counties attempted to fix wages for certain occupations.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Forse, *Art*, 173.

⁸⁶ REED: *Bristol*, 129-30.

⁸⁷ Byrne, 168-9, 308-11; REED: *Bristol*, 18, 129-30.

⁸⁸ *Proclamations*, v. 2, 210-28, 265-70, 283-5, 294, 335, 337-9, 372-4, 392-4, 401-09, 419, 422-5, 471-4, 499-503, 512-14, 522-5, 536-9; v. 3, 18, 22-5, 36-43, 117, 122-5, 136-41, 142-51, 158-9, 173-4, 265-70.

Given that concern to fix wages, both the individual actor's wages and combined income of these acting companies suggest it is no wonder that Elizabeth's government sought to restrict the numbers of traveling acting companies. Nor is it any wonder that there seemed no shortage of those who sought to make a living as touring actors, especially since, as John Wasson demonstrates, many of the costs of touring were absorbed by free bed and board often given players at the houses of peers and the gentry. There are over ninety instances in various provincial household accounts detailing amounts spent to feed visiting players.⁸⁹ All of this suggests it would be interesting to try to find out if would-be aristocratic patrons sought out actors, or would-be actors sought out aristocratic patrons.

The tables illustrate that the troupes of powerful and favored aristocrats performed more frequently than most others. The champion in that competition was the Earl of Leicester's Men. Leicester's troupe first appeared at Elizabeth's accession, and numbers so far show nineteen performances at Court, and 189 in twenty-three counties for the years 1559 to 1588 when the troupe dissolved after his death. Next in number, at seventeen performances at Court and 161 provincial performances in twenty-three counties, are the troupes under the patronage of the Stanley Earls of Derby, but that number includes not only the troupes specifically attached to the Earls, but those traveling under their heirs, two successive Lord Stranges.

Close behind performances by Stanley family troupes, with fourteen performances at Court, and 149 performances in seventeen counties, is the troupe attached to the three Radcliffe Earls of Sussex, and right on that troupe's heels is the company patronized by the two Somerset Earls of Worcester. The Earls of Worcester's troupe only performed twice at Court, but records to date show 143 performances on tour in nineteen counties. The Lord Admiral's company performed thirty times at Court, and 111 times on tour in twenty counties. The troupes touring under the

⁸⁹ John M. Wasson, "Elizabethan and Jacobean Touring Companies," *Theatre Notebook*, v. 42 (1988), 51-7; Keenan, 66-73.

patronage of the two Earls of Essex (Walter and Robert Devereux) never appeared at Court, but records so far indicate ninety-four provincial performances by those actor-servants, in eighteen different counties. Actor-servants attached to the Earls of Oxford (John and Edward de Vere), who also never played at Court, appear sixty-seven times in records from seventeen counties. The actor-servants of Henry and George Carey (Barons Hunsdon and Lords Chamberlain) first appear in provincial records in 1564, but though appearing at Court thirty-three times after the company was reorganized in 1594 with its two most famous partners, Richard Burbage and William Shakespeare, records from seventeen counties list only fifty-nine performances by the Chamberlain's Men in the provinces.⁹⁰

Most of the other long-lived aristocratic troupes active during Elizabeth's reign have about fifty notices in the provincial records published to date. But no favored aristocrat saw his badge carried about the kingdom as often as did the Queen. Even the actor-servants of that special and ambitious favorite, the Earl of Leicester, displayed his Arms less than one-third the number of times that the Queen's actor-servants displayed hers.

Something obviously is going on here, but all I can do at this juncture is to suggest some possible avenues down which further research might travel. Elevation in status seems to have some relationship to giving one's name to an acting troupe. Many

⁹⁰ Astington, 222-37; Chambers, v. 2, 85, 89-01, 100-03, 118, 120, 124, 127, 135, 160192-6, 206-07, 220-4; Harbage and Schoenbaum, 46-9, 54-5, 74-9, 84-7; Knutson, 60; Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts*, 220, 405; *Malone: Kent*, 13-18, 43-7, 60-64, 70-9, 87, 106-16, 114-15, 138-40, 154; *Lincoln*, 15, 73; *Norfolk/Suffolk*, 65-8, 113-15, 148, 156-7, 165-7, 182, 197, 213-19, 222, 228; Murray, v. 1, 57, 75, 113-4; v. 2: 196-8, 203-10, 221, 238, 256, 273, 279, 281, 287-308, 324, 332, 372-8, 387, 396-9, 402-05, 411-12; *REED: Bristol*, 43, 66-85, 114-6, 121-9, 133-6, 143-50, 154; *Cambridge*, 106, 110, 212, 216, 246, 249, 259, 264, 266, 291, 338, 355; *Chester*, 135; *Coventry*, 251, 265, 270, 276, 286, 290-302, 310, 313, 317, 320-3, 328, 332, 336, 346, 349, 350-3, 360-02; *Cumberland*, 117, 172, 298-314; *Devon*, 41-7, 64-8, 154-7, 159, 163-4, 234-40, 248, 251, 280-1; *Dorset*, 214, 216-7, 243, 361, 363; *Hereford*, 146-7; *Lancashire*, 46, 169, 180-2; *Newcastle*, 43-5, 60, 67, 73, 79, 90-1; *Norwich* 45, 48, 50-2, 58-9, 62-6, 80-1, 87, 89-6, 102-05, 119-20; *Shropshire*, 84-9, 173, 176, 181-2, 187, 233, 238, 242, 276-7; *Somerset*, 10-19, 47, 49-52, 54, 56; *York*, 382, 409, 418-19, 430, 435-6, 442, 445, 455, 471, 486, 488, 509.

patrons of acting troupes became so upon succeeding to superior titles or to positions at Court. Walter Devereux was named Earl of Essex, dubbed knight of the Garter, and became patron of a troupe in 1572.⁹¹ Henry Herbert became knight of the Garter in 1574, and succeeded as Earl of Pembroke in 1575, the same year an acting company appeared under his patronage.⁹² Charles Howard became Deputy Lord Chamberlain in 1574 and patron of a troupe in that same year; George Hastings became Earl of Huntingdon in 1595, and in 1596 resuscitated an Huntingdon's Men that had lain dormant for eight to ten years.⁹³ Edward Fiennes was recreated Earl of Lincoln and made Lord Steward in 1572. His acting troupe appears in 1573.⁹⁴ Henry Compton was created Baron Compton in 1572, and early in 1573 we find a company under his name.⁹⁵ And Robert and Ambrose Dudley, prince charmings to Elizabeth, both named to her Privy Council in 1559, and Robert made knight of the Garter in the same year, had acting companies touring under their names almost at the beginning of her reign.⁹⁶

But we cannot think of this patronage solely in terms of Astors or Vanderbilts endowing the Arts; nor is it simply that early in her reign nobles sought to please the new Queen because they knew she liked plays. Though these actor-servants did not directly serve their lords on a regular basis, they did so on occasions when they specifically were called to do so. For instance, they received livery allowances and wore their patron's livery, and marched as part of these patrons' entourages on ceremonial occasions, such as did the Admiral's Men and the Chamberlain's Men in the funeral cortege of Queen Elizabeth—both troupes received allowances

⁹¹ *REED: Somerset*, 10; Kinney, 37, 66.

⁹² *Malone: Kent*, 15; Kinney 52, 66.

⁹³ *Malone: Norfolk/Suffolk*, 213; *REED: Coventry*, 310; Kinney, 41.

⁹⁴ Astington, 226; Kinney, 5, 45.

⁹⁵ Murray, v. 2, 196; Kinney, 32.

⁹⁶ *REED: Bristol*, 65, *Norwich*, 45; Kinney, 43, 65.

from their patrons for new livery for the occasion—or the participation of the newly “royalized” Queen Anne’s Men (formerly Worcester’s), Prince Henry’s Men (formerly Admiral’s) and the King’s Men (formerly Chamberlain’s) in the triumphal procession of James I through London in 1604. In two rare instances in 1604, King James’s Men and Queen Anne’s Men were given new livery allowances for serving as attendants to the Spanish ambassador, and it appears their duties had little or nothing to do with acting.⁹⁷ Hence the members of these acting troupes were numbered, and more importantly *seen*, among the entourages of their patrons’ servants, dependents and clients, and large entourages of servants, and dependents, and clients signaled power in Tudor England.⁹⁸

The days were over when feudal magnates could display raw power through armed bands of retainers wearing their patron’s arms. The raising of troops now was from the ranks of the free citizenry and in the hands of the local gentry named as commissioners of the musters. Many of these gentrymen also served as Justices of the Peace, and their powers in their respective counties had been expanded under Henry VII to include administering the law in the monarch’s name, carrying out prescribed punishments, overseeing local regulation in such areas as public order, vagrancy, and maintaining highways and bridges. Though still tied to the local nobility through patronage networks, their royal appointments ultimately caused obligations to the crown to supercede obligations to local, noble patrons, and the local gentrymen’s acquisition of monastic lands under Henry VIII not only increased their hold on local and regional power, it also increased their independence from the great nobles.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Gerald Eudes Bentley, *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare’s Time, 1590-1642* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), 150-0, 221, 270; Astington, 164.

⁹⁸ Paul E. J. Hammer, “Patronage at Court, Faction and the Earl of Essex,” *The Reign of Elizabeth I. Court and Culture in the Last Decade*, ed., John Guy (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 65-86.

⁹⁹ David Loades, *Power in Tudor England* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1997), 71 and *Tudor Government* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 127; Susan Brigden, *New Worlds*,

These developments led Elizabethan aristocrats to compete fiercely for influence and clients in local royal appointments and Parliamentary elections, and to guard jealously the local influence they already held. Displays of their wealth and power were important in gaining and maintaining that influence. On the other hand, the Tudors' governmental measures, like the royal proclamation of 1572 restricting and specifying the number and types of dependants who could wear a noble's arms,¹⁰⁰ limited, somewhat, an aristocrat's ability for such displays.

An acting troupe, however, was a cheap way to puff up an aristocrat's *appearance* of power. There is no evidence suggesting any more than meager and sporadic financial support given to actor-servants by their patrons. For instance, nowhere in ten years of accounts contained in *Henslowe's Diary* do we find any payments from the Lord Admiral to his actor-servants.¹⁰¹ The acting companies of aristocrats seem to have paid their own expenses and earned their own income. Yet by carrying their patron's badges about the country, and in official processions like that for Elizabeth's funeral, actor-servants helped serve the interests and prestige of their patrons just like public processions, civic and aristocratic entertainments and welcomings, Court disguisings and masques served Queen Elizabeth, as Leonard Tennenhouse aptly puts it, as "power on display."¹⁰²

And perhaps this aristocratic display comes so early, and so quickly in Elizabeth's reign, because the nobility thought, or hoped, they had a pliant monarch whom they could impress, influence, or intimidate. After all, England now had a monarch who must have looked vulnerable to the nobility. She was a

Lost Worlds. The Reign of the Tudors, 1485-1603 (London: Penguin, 2000), 141-8, 165-9; S. T. Bindoff, *Tudor England* (Penguin, 1978), 50-6, 116; Zell, 13-17; Haigh, 48-50.

¹⁰⁰ *Proclamations*, v. 2, 350-2; Haigh, 48-50; Brigden, 144-6.

¹⁰¹ Sally-Beth MacLean "The Politics of Patronage: Dramatic Records in Robert Dudley's Household Books," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 44 (1993), 179-80. *Henslowe's Diary*, *passim*.

¹⁰² Leonard Tennenhouse. *Power on Display* (New York: Methune), 1986.

twenty-five year old female, the *last* choice in her father's order of succession, and completely overlooked as a Protestant successor by her brother and John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, when they tried to engineer the exclusion of Mary from the throne.¹⁰³ She lacked any spousal protector, unlike her sister and predecessor who married Philip II of Spain, son and heir of Charles V, the most powerful monarch in Christendom, and she was bastardized by both Roman and Anglican canon law. Indeed, within the first few months of her reign, letters exchanged between Philip II and his ambassador in England (29 December 1558 and 24 April 1559) stated that Philip himself was contacting the Pope to ask the pontiff to keep silent on the issue of Elizabeth's bastardy so as not to weaken the new Queen. He earlier had blocked Queen Mary's wish to declare Elizabeth's illegitimacy publicly.¹⁰⁴ Certainly when Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, accompanied by 300 mounted retainers, met Elizabeth and her entourage as it reached his seat at Elvetham, Hampshire, that display was meant to show both the Queen and his fellow peers that *his* was a power with which to be reckoned. The lavishness of Hertford's multi-day royal entertainments, surpassed only by those of Leicester at Kenilworth, must have served to reinforce that point.¹⁰⁵ As Christopher Haigh aptly put it: "Elizabeth flattered and favoured her nobility for two reasons: she was afraid of their power, and she needed their power."¹⁰⁶

Political ends of some sort must have been perceived by the nobles who patronized acting companies. Probably they saw them as a means of extending the appearance of power and influence into various areas of the realm. As mentioned earlier, the Lords Warden of the Cinque Ports sponsored acting troupes during the

¹⁰³ *Calendar of Letters and State Papers Relating to English Affairs Preserved Principally in the Archives of Simancas*, ed., Royall Tyler (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1944-59), v. 17, 70-1; Brigden, 197, 213-17; Plowden, 147-52.

¹⁰⁴ *Calendar: Simancas*, v. 17, 60-1; Goodman, v. 1, 4.

¹⁰⁵ Breight, 20-48.

¹⁰⁶ Haigh, *Elizabeth*, 58; Brigden, 235-8.

reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary that toured the region under their jurisdiction. Leicester's acting troupe does seem to have been most active over wider areas of the kingdom from the mid-1560s to late 1570s, when he was seeking to extend his influence in local appointments, and hence enhance his influence over the military and in Parliament.¹⁰⁷

Perhaps a closer examination, noble by noble, of performance sites visited by their troupes, and their lands, and or clients, near those sites might yield some fruit. But a cursory examination of playing sites *vis à vis* touring companies does not lean strongly in that direction at present. Though the Earls of Pembroke's actor-servants performed about half of their tours in areas under the Earls' influence, such is not the case for those of many other peers. The Barons Chandos (Brydges family) were the dominant noble family in Gloucestershire, but between 1549-1603 the actor-servants of five successive Barons Chandos played only seven times in Gloucestershire. There are, however, fifty-three other provincial performances of Chandos' Men recorded in fifteen counties scattered about England. The Stanley Earls of Derby dominated the counties of Lancashire and Cheshire, and from 1494 to 1603 six successive Earls sponsored acting troupes that were among the most active of any touring companies. Yet only four of 173 provincial performances by Derby's or Strange's Men were in Lancashire, and three of those four were private performances at the Stanley manor at Knowlsey. No Stanley troupe ever performed in Cheshire.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, the Stanley actor-servants performed in twenty-one other counties, and few of the sites visited by the Stanley family's actor-servants, and also by the Barons Chandos' actor-servants, were contiguous to their patrons' seats of power.

Possibly the acting troupes only were going where the money was, but nonetheless it still meant that their patrons' badges

¹⁰⁷ MacLean, "Politics of Patronage," 179-80.

¹⁰⁸ REED: *Bristol*, 155; *Cumberland*, 298, 308-12; *Lancashire*, 46, 18—1, 374; Murray, v. 2, 277; Haigh 48-50.

often were being seen outside their patron's spheres of influence—in the southeast, southwest, and midlands of England, and even as far north as York and Northumberland.¹⁰⁹ There also does not seem to be any patterns in touring activities that suggest touring by aristocratic troupes spiked during years that Elizabeth summoned Parliaments, but scrutiny of local patronage networks might reveal that certain troupes frequently visited localities in which rival nobles competed to send their clients to Parliament.

Surely it cannot be sheer coincidence that the Earl of Worcester's Men were granted leave by the Privy Council to play in London (1599) at the very time that Earl had joined the Privy Council as a staunch ally of the Lords Admiral and Chamberlain, and Robert Cecil in their efforts to diminish the influence and prestige of the Earl of Essex. And I think it not coincidence that Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, and his eldest son by Lady Catherine Grey, Lord Beauchamp (bastardized by Elizabeth's church courts), both became patrons of touring troupes about 1589, the same time they initiated proceedings in the church courts to overturn Beauchamp's bastardy.¹¹⁰ These were high stakes indeed, for legitimizing Beauchamp would put him to the forefront in the line of succession. According to Henry VIII's will, should his children die without issue, the succession would pass to the progeny of his younger sister Mary, and Beauchamp was the eldest surviving male in that descent.¹¹¹

Wherever the evidence may lead, I think that the appearance and activities of troupes like the Earl of Leicester's Men, the Earl of Derby's Men, the Admiral's Men, the Lord Admiral's Men, the Chamberlain's Men cannot be (as it has in the past) lightly dismissed only as efforts by would-be courtiers

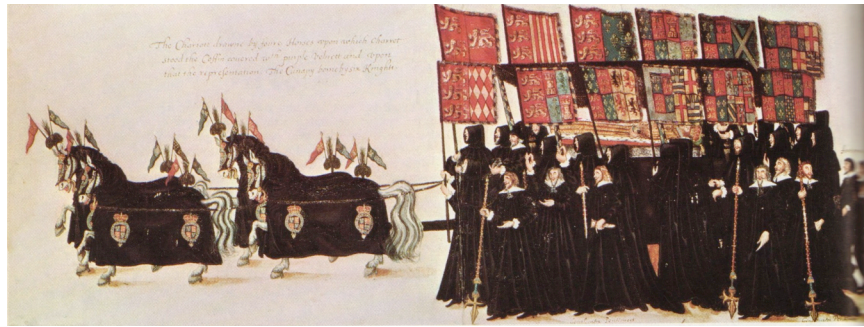
¹⁰⁹ *Malone: Norfolk/Suffolk*, 66, 216; *Murray*, v. 2, 298, 376, 404; *Chambers*, v. 2, 118; *Lancashire, Dramatic Texts*, 405; *REED: Bristol*, 43, *Cambridge*, 106; *Coventry*, 341; *Devon*, 299; *Kent*, 193; *Newcastle*, 45; *Shropshire*, 101, *Somerset*, 12, *Sussex*, 128; *York*, 471.

¹¹⁰ Breight, 20-48.

¹¹¹ Brigden, 197.

seeking the favors of a Queen who liked to watch plays. Nor can we attribute the appearance of the Queen's Men nine and a half times more often on tour throughout the realm than playing before its royal patroness, solely to wanderlust, or search for profit, or Elizabeth's infamous stinginess about paying her servants.¹¹²

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Detail from Queen Elizabeth's Funeral Procession, 28 April 1603, for which the Lord Admiral's and Lord Chamberlain's Men were given livery allowances by their patrons.

A contemporary watercolor, perhaps by William Camden

¹¹² Goodman, v. 1, 96; Brigden, 197.

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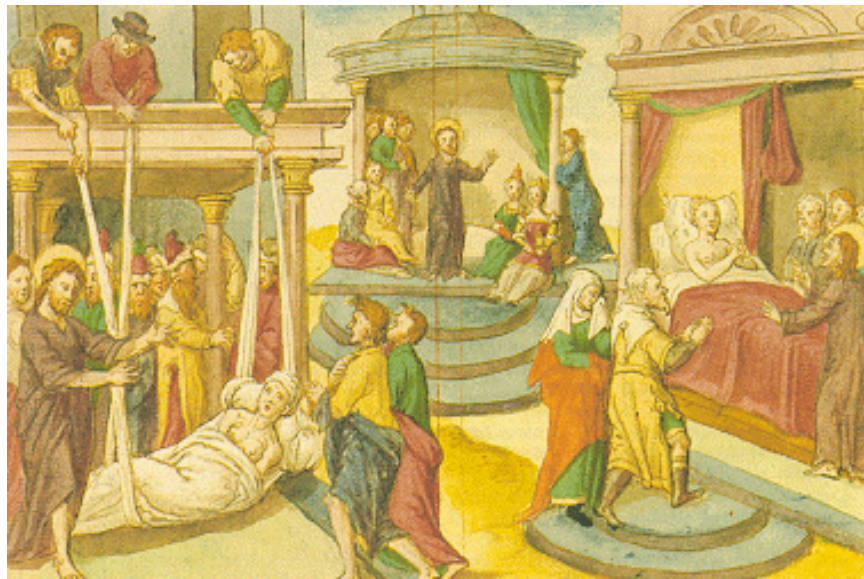
Susan Stakel

***The Miracles de Nostre Dame par Personnages:
Saints and Sinners on the Stage***

Professor Stakel has declined publication of her award-winning essay since she is revising and incorporating its contents for a larger study on fourteenth-century urban drama.

Susan Stakel is Associate Professor of French at the University of Denver where, since 1982, she has taught courses at all levels: from beginning language to intermediate culture and film through advanced seminars on literary topics. Professor Stakel also serves as undergraduate advisor for the French section of the Department of Languages and Literatures. Her research specialty is French literature of the Middle Ages. Professor Stakel's publications include two books: False Roses: Structures of Duality and Deceit in Jean de Meun's Roman de la Rose, Stanford French and Italian Studies 69 (Saratoga, CA: Anma Libri, 1991) and The Montpellier Codex (translation and introduction), Recent Research in the Music of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, 8 (Madison, WI: A&R Editions, 1985), and several articles including: "Skeptical Takes on Courtly Culture in the Miracles de Nostre Dame par personages," Courtly Arts and the Art of Courtliness, ed. Christopher Kleinhenz Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, forthcoming. December 2006), "Language, Culture, Film and now the Computer," Exploring New Directions in Language Learning Technologies, ed. Ute S. Lahaie (Waco: Language Acquisition Center, Baylor University, 2001), "Teaching Culture Through Film: Pitfalls and Possibilities," SOCALL 2000:

Uniting Language, Culture, and Technology in the New Millennium, ed. Ute Lahaie (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing, 2000), "Pilgrimage and Dream Vision in Christine de Pizan," *Journeys Toward God: Pilgrimage and Crusade* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), "Affirming the Writer: The Subtext of Christine de Pizan's *Lavision Christine*," *Continental, Latin-American and Francophone Women Writers: Selected Papers from the Wichita State University Conference on Foreign Literature, 1986-87* (University Press of America, 1990), "Allegory and Artistic Production in the Poetry of Charles d'Orleans," *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 14 (1988), and a translation of Jean Guiget's, "Jeu de miroirs: jeu de massacre" in *Critical Assessments of Writers in English*: Virginia Woolf, ed. Eleanor McNees (London: Helm Information Ltd., 1994).



Passion de Valenciennes (1547)

(A) Paris, BNF Rothschild 1-7-3

(B) Paris, BNF fr. 12536 [inédit]

Notes

Everyman in Production: A Dance of Death A Staging at California State University, Chico (2004)

*Jan Hawkley
California State University, Chico*

Medieval dramatic works, while historically significant and intellectually interesting, may seem irrelevant and even incomprehensible in our day. The language is problematic in pronunciation, phrasing and word meaning. Allegory today often is considered didactic and overly simplistic, yielding only one-dimensional characters. Medieval society appears obtuse to modern students, functioning with a totally different worldview and social hierarchy; medieval concepts of comedy and religion are difficult for us to grasp today. Additionally, we obviously have no recordings of actual performances, so we do not know how a given play was staged; we must surmise medieval staging from descriptions of performances and artwork from the time.

In spite of these difficulties, or perhaps because of the challenge, California State University, Chico, mounted a production of *Everyman* in the spring of 2004. The Theatre Department endeavors to provide students with a wide range of acting experiences, and to that end, the department carefully selects works from various genres, styles and time periods. A medieval drama had not been done for quite some time, and since the performance dates were scheduled for the week before Easter, Professor Susan Hargrave Pate, the director, believed *Everyman*, with its religious themes, was a good fit. The production team, on

which I served as assistant director, wanted to provide the modern audience with a medieval experience that would connect to our time. And in a most unusual move, we decided to stage this text-based show as a dance-drama—not a musical *per se*, but a show in which dance and dialogue work in conjunction to convey the human experience.



Strength, Discretion, Beauty and Five Senses: Photo courtesy of IMC, CSUC

Knowing that the majority of our audience, mostly college students, would be unfamiliar with the English language of the late fifteenth century, we opted to contemporize the text rather than provide pages of notes that would most likely remain unread. Professor Ernst Schoen-René, a talented faculty member of the English Department, modernized unfamiliar words and phrasings while maintaining the rhyme scheme of mostly four-stressed rhyming couplets; thus “Five Wits” becomes “Five Senses,” “perceyue” becomes “see” and “ghostly syght” becomes “spiritual

wisdom.” A comparison of the God’s first lines from the original and revised texts gives a sense of the differences:

I perceyue, here in my maieste,	I see here in my majesty
How that all creatures be to me vnkynde,	How those I created are to me unkind.
Lyuyng without drede in worldely prosperyte.	Living without fear—in worldly prosperity.
Of ghostly syght the people be so blynde,	Of spiritual wisdom they are so blind
Drowned in synne, they know me not for theyr God. ¹	They drown in sin and know no God.

There is an historical precedent for script variation as a number of medieval and renaissance texts survive in more than one version. Since it is quite likely that some scripts were transmitted orally, variations such as ours seem appropriate. In general, the contemporization remains meticulously close to the earlier text in structure and in sense, but it weighs more lightly on the modern listener’s ear. In altering the words we carefully maintained the integrity of the sense of the story.

Everyman tells the story of one universal human experience—death. In this representation of the experience, God calls on Death to summon Everyman to God and make an accounting of his life. Everyman fears Death and doesn’t want to go, but not dying isn’t an option; with the arrival of Death, the death process has already begun. Most of our actors had little religious background. We therefore found it necessary to define

¹ *Everyman* ed. A. C. Cawley (Manchester, University of Manchester Press, 1961), 1-2, lines 22-6.

religious terms, explain Catholic ritual, and discuss such Christian concepts as sin and redemption as part of the rehearsal process. Our actors found that in spite of the specificity of the theology, they related easily to the human universalities, which we found in abundance, for instance, the need for others, the desire for material things, the fear of death. We did not imagine or manufacture these commonalities by changing words or adding a dance sequence; we found them embedded in the original text.

In the play, all of the characters are allegorical. Everyman is both an individual and representative of the entire human race. Fellowship symbolizes all social ties. Confession represents an act. Our cast felt some trepidation at acting such abstractions. Actors need action to reach a goal; they can't simply *be* knowledge or *be* beauty. There is no action in being. Robert Potter points out that playwrights crafted morality plays to be acted on a stage before an audience.² Indeed, it is that action that makes the moral exemplum accessible. The script is only the blueprint for a play; it cannot be considered fully realized except through performance. Readers often fall into the trap of considering the characters of *Everyman*, named for abstractions, as abstractions; when directors and actors make that mistake the action of the play dies. Once actors embody those abstractions with actively pursued objectives, and employ tactics to overcome obstacles to those objectives, dramatic action abounds. According to the text, Good Deeds tries desperately to rise, but lacks strength because Everyman has done so little good in life. Here we have an objective, to rise, and an obstacle to that objective, lack of strength. In another example, Everyman fearfully resists Death but over the course of the play comes to embrace Death as the way to God. When acted, the story comes alive through shared human experiences—those events that occur at the time of the performance as well as the remembered experiences of each individual that shape his or her reception and interpretation. Through performance, flat abstractions become

² Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play: Origins, History and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition* (Boston: Routledge, 1975) 33-34.

dimensional specifics. Death wants to take Everyman to God; Everyman does not want to go. The action begins.



Death Arrives: Photo courtesy of Wayne Pease

Modern stagings of *Everyman* generally follow one of two options: either to replicate as nearly as possible what is generally believed to be the original conditions of performance or to test the tolerance of the text by mounting a completely modern version.³ Any depiction of the past will be influenced by the present, and in our efforts to convey the human experience, we drew on modern experiences to illuminate an understanding of Everyman's medieval experience. Thus in evaluating our target audience, we

³ Marion O'Connor describes a performance by the Royal Shakespeare Company in which the plot line is "enriched" and one actor's costume consists of a black corset, a red motorcycle helmet, a black boot on one foot and a pink spike heeled slipper on the other. See her article "*Everyman, The Creation and The Passion: The Royal Shakespeare Company Medieval Season 1996-1997,*" *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 11 (1999), 22-24.

decided that the closest approximation of Fellowship for college students would be the “party animal,” so we expanded the scene to include multiple Fellowship characters. We envisioned Fellowship as self-absorbed and bent on the pursuit of pleasure. In his extremity, Everyman turns to his friend because he believes he can rely on him. At first, Fellowship professes a desire to help; but once Fellowship finds out the nature of Everyman’s need, he quickly back-pedals, saying that he will not go with Everyman. Fellowship is willing to eat, drink, be merry, carouse with lusty company, and even commit murder, but not to go to God.

We easily connected this medieval allegorical figure to a contemporary one familiar to a college audience. In envisioning a crowded frat party and creating the medieval equivalent, the Fellowship segment becomes a raucously chaotic carnival, complete with tumbling, juggling, streamers and tambourines, with dance and dialogue occurring simultaneously throughout. Masks hide the true identities of the partygoers and literally give them two faces. Everyman despairs, isolated in the confusion of duplicitous, self-centered, pleasure seeking.



Everyman's Frustration with Fellowship: Photo courtesy of Wayne Pease

We determined that dance could convey some ideas better than dialogue, so in some instances, such as when Good Deeds rises, we eliminated dialogue and let the action progress through dance. Cutting dialogue also gave us the opportunity to change an issue we found particularly problematic, the scourging scene. In the text Everyman engages in self-flagellation as part of his repentance. Self-punishment as part of repentance was an accepted medieval practice, but we were not sure how our audience would receive this masochistic enactment. We chose to replace those lines with a dance in which Everyman gives up the things of the world and then offers those symbols of worldliness to God.

The comic aspects of *Everyman* can seem confusing to the modern audience. R. D. S. Jack writes that the more distant we are from the original “values and world outlook of earlier comic works, the more difficult it becomes to appreciate them;” we simply cannot re-experience the earlier context.⁴ Comic elements have a firm grounding in vernacular drama. In the Wakefield *Second Shepherds’ Play*, another well-known play from the late medieval period, the sacred is juxtaposed against the comic, mirroring the tragicomic nature of life. W. A. Davenport notes: “the foundation of comic design is the antithesis.”⁵ In keeping with the comedic tradition, we chose to play up the humorous elements of the play present in the text as irony and satire, of which the episode of the cramped toe is just one example. When Everyman turns to his family, Kindred and Cousin, they declare that they will all “live and die together,” standing firm in good times and in bad. But once they understand what he needs, Cousin declares a preference for fasting five years on bread and water, and then justifies the refusal to accompany Everyman by claiming a cramp in a toe. Kindred will not go either, but in an example of

⁴ R. D. S. Jack, *Patterns of Divine Comedy: A Study of Medieval English Drama* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989), 1.

⁵ W. A. Davenport, *Fifteenth Century English Drama* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1982), 37.

the human tendency to try to get someone else to do the dirty work, he does offer the services of his maid.

Death toys with Everyman from the beginning of the play. When he first informs Everyman of God's summons, Everyman tries to bargain, attempting to bribe him for twelve more years of life and then pleading for a one-day reprieve. But Death can't be bought with gold and silver. When Everyman asks if he can bring someone with him, Death responds, and I paraphrase, "Sure, if you can find someone who'll do it." But Death knows that Fellowship, Kindred and Cousin, and Goods won't and indeed cannot go along for this ride. So here we find another common human trait, the desire to tease. Even Death cannot resist having some fun on the job. And inspired by the Dance of Death tradition, Death is present in every scene, sometimes participating in and sometimes observing the action.

William Tydeman⁶ and Alan H. Nelson⁷ note that the original texts of medieval dramas provide minimal clues to the specifics of their original staging. Indeed, there is no record of when, where, or under what circumstances *Everyman* was performed. We find no definitive evidence of author, cast, or audience. The performance space could have been indoors in a hall or outdoors in a market square or the yard of an inn. We find no indication of the size or configuration of the staging area. Was it on a raised platform or on the ground? How elaborate was the scenery? Did the audience surround the players or did the actors play to a single facing? In trying to create a medieval experience, we must work with speculation and invention because specifics remain unknown. For our production, we worked from the

⁶ William Tydeman, *English Medieval Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1986), 1.

⁷ Alan H. Nelson, "Some Configurations of Staging in Medieval English Drama," *Medieval English Drama: Essays Critical and Contextual*, eds. Jerome Taylor and Alan H. Nelson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 116.

premise that our players formed a hypothetical group of actors who performed in local towns. When discussing medieval drama as a community activity, Alexandra F. Johnston cites evidence of a town paying to see a play imported from another town.⁸ Such players probably performed in found spaces, incorporating a minimum of easily adaptable scenic elements into existing features of the local space.

Historically, God would have been portrayed on a raised level, perhaps on a balcony or even in a tree, because medieval staging practices visually emphasized the metaphysical differences between heaven, earth, and hell through the use of levels. In our production, God reigns visibly omni-present at the top of a spiral staircase, overseeing from above all the action of the play. At the death of Everyman, according to biblical precedence, he would have stood on the right hand of God;⁹ unfortunately, our pre-existing spiral staircase wound clockwise, so in our show, Everyman stands at God's left side.

⁸ Alexandra F. Johnston, "What if No Texts Survived? External Evidence for Early English Drama," *Contexts for Early English Drama* eds. Marianne Briscoe and John C. Coldeway (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989), 9.

⁹ *Matthew* 25:34, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."



God Reigns Above: Photo courtesy of Wayne Pease

For our production we chose a round configuration that, according to Tydeman, allows the audience to

feel part of that unit, and hence become participants in an action taking place all about them. The medieval theatre-in-the-round epitomizes the desire to make theatre a communal experience.¹⁰

¹⁰ Tydeman, 103.

Following the original text, our players address the audience directly. They also move through, enter from, and exit to, the audience, bringing spectators into the place and time of the action.

In the Goods scene, dancers move through the audience seducing spectators as they simultaneously seduce Everyman with the riches of the world. All his life, Everyman has loved riches. His Goods have brought him pleasure. In this scene we saw a tie between addiction to things and then a subsequent enslavement to debt to pay for those things. The lure of things is very seductive; Death and Everyman physically struggle over Everyman's efforts to bring his goods with him to God. The allegorical character Goods personifies both the addictive quality of acquisition of and the subsequent enslavement to those goods. In this seductive dance, the multiple performers of Goods wear snake costumes and use ropes to lure and entangle Everyman.



Bound with Ropes of Gold: Photo courtesy of IMC, CSUC

Though our modern world differs greatly from the medieval world, the inevitability of mortality forms a common

bond with all humanity. Using dance as an integral part of our production allowed us to present a uniquely rich exploration of Everyman's journey of death. Through dance, Everyman experiences the seduction of worldly goods. Through dance, Everyman experiences the joy of ascension to God. In our production, we contemporized the text and omitted some of the text. We left out action that was indicated in the text and added action that wasn't. Our production was not true to the original in every point, but it was true to the original in its intent. We portrayed a human universality, Everyman's journey of death, in a manner accessible to our audience. One audience member, a young man, commented: "The scene where the snake dancers gave lap dances was really awesome." Of course they actually did not give lap dances, but following medieval tradition, they did move through the audience. Another young man said, "I cried at the end when God hugged Everyman. It felt real." Like those much earlier audiences, our audience experienced the story on both sensual and spiritual levels. Our production of *Everyman: Dance of Death* did effectively transmit something of the medieval experience to our modern audience.



Celebration of Death: Photo courtesy of IMC, CSUC

Jan Hawkley attends California State University, Chico, where she earned undergraduate degrees in Humanities and Musical Theatre, and expects to graduate with a Master of English Literature in the Spring of 2007. Jan received an Irene Ryan nomination from the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival for her work on Everyman and the Kate Drain Lawson Award for costume and soft-prop designs for Quilters. Jan presents An Action-Driven Perspective of Shakespeare's Cressida at RMMLA in October 2006, a comparison between the writings of Emile Zola and Mahaswata Devi in The Decay of the Social Body at PAMLA in November 2006, and a discussion of the influence of African spiritual practices in plays by August Wilson at NEMLA in March 2007. Her work with community theatre includes choreographing scenes from Oliver and directing Peter Pan. Most recently, she directed 350 teenagers in a segment of a 4500-person celebration at the Arco Arena in Sacramento, California. Jan and her husband are the parents of six children ages 10-24.

***Tenth-Century Drama in the Twenty-first Century
A Staging of Three Plays by Hrotsvit of Gandersheim
at Stetson University (2005)***

*Julia Schmitt
Stetson University*

During the fall semester of 2005, the Department of Communication Studies and Theatre Arts at Stetson University undertook a unique, but highly rewarding production challenge. Professor Ken McCoy and I were asked by The English Department of Stetson University to stage a medieval play in conjunction with the Southeast Medieval Association Conference to be held at Stetson during the month of September. The English Department was eager to offer conference attendees an opportunity to experience a live production of a medieval play.

Professor McCoy and I considered many different medieval dramas, but in the end we decided upon three plays written by the tenth-century, German, canoness Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: *Dulcitius*, *Calimachus*, and *Abraham*. These three were chosen because we felt that they offered a nice sampling of Hrotsvit's diverse style, and yet when performed together, they offered a unifying theme of heroic martyrdom. Both Professor McCoy and I found ourselves excited at the prospect of staging Hrotsvit's work.

The rehearsal process for each and every live theatre production inevitably will encounter challenges and difficulties along the way to opening night. Our production of "Three Plays by Hrotsvit" seemed fraught with an unusually large number of them, many of which seemed entirely unique to this particular production. Looking back, the challenges for this production

primarily fell into two categories: staging difficulties that arose from the texts themselves, and lack of student interest.

Perhaps the most difficult moments to stage were the scenes in the plays we referred to as “miracle moments.” These were moments when the all-powerful hand of God was to be made evident to the audience. One example, from *Dulcitius*, portrays the execution of Hirena in *Dulcitius*. Her body is pummeled by arrows shot by soldiers from below, and yet she remains unharmed,



Hirena welcomes the arrows coming at her from the soldiers below. The staging of this moment included the act of shooting the arrows in pantomime while Hirena's body reacted as if it were being hit.

Another example occurs in *Calimachus*, when a serpent stalks and kills Calimachus to prevent him from violating Drusiana's corpse.



For the serpent's arrival, we staged a statue cradling the serpent in her arms.



Once awakened, the statue and the serpent in her hand stalked Calimachus as he began to realize the magnitude of the evil deed he was about to commit.

The discussion as to how we could successfully stage these “miracle moments” lasted several weeks. In the end, we found that a combination of several different theatrical elements aided us in achieving the desired effect. We settled upon a minimalist set with several different playing areas. The downstage area was comprised of three different platforms set at three different levels. When viewed from overhead, these playing areas formed the shape of a cross. In the upstage area, we placed another raised platform of uniform height, which ran the length of the stage. A rather large archway was placed midstage and was used to separate the upstage platform from the downstage area. This highly conceptual set combined with dynamic lighting and stylized movement enabled us to stage the many miraculous events Hrotsvit incorporated into her plays.



After having prayed for a miracle to dissuade Dulcitius from entering their chamber, the three sisters (Agape, Chionia, and Hirena) watch in amazed wonder as he mistakenly makes love to a collection of pots and pans.

Miracles aside, the different language styles and the episodic structure of each play proved to be a challenge as well. Often, there seemed to be a blending of types of dialogue in each play. In *Calimachus*, for example, a rather frank exchange over the exciting possibility of making love to a corpse is juxtaposed with long extended speeches on Christ's benevolence and mankind's inability to truly understand the divine. These many shifts in dialogue styles, and the highly episodic nature of each play, pushed us to discover staging solutions that maintained the pace of the production. The total performance time for the play *Dulcitius* is roughly twenty minutes, but the play is comprised of thirteen scenes, which take place in approximately eleven different locations. The minimalist set and dynamic lighting allowed us to shift from scene to scene without interfering too much with the play's forward momentum.

Perhaps, though, the biggest challenge we encountered, and certainly the most disappointing aspect of this entire production, stemmed from the lack of interest displayed by the student body in general, and by our theatre majors in particular. Many of the students we expected to audition were conspicuously absent from the Hrotsvit auditions. When asked why they weren't auditioning, answers ranged anywhere from "I don't think it's very interesting" to "I don't get it" or even "those plays are really boring." While we always try to incorporate newcomers into each show, it is also nice to cast some veteran actors as well. They seem to serve as mentors to new actors and aid the director in conveying the importance of "on time arrivals" and "off-book rehearsals." With this show however, our veterans were nowhere to be found, and so we were left with a very young and very inexperienced cast. Each actor was either new to Stetson University, or new to the theatre entirely. Staging a production with stylized movement and verse dialogue therefore became even more difficult.

Much of our rehearsal time was dedicated to making many of these inexperienced actors look and feel more comfortable with speaking the verse text of the play. As directors, we tried to find ways in which these actors could embody the text, and appear less

awkward as they spoke. Many of the inexperienced student actors had a very hard time breaking their staccato rhythm of speech. Every actor seemed hesitant to embrace a more bombastic style of speech. We had to work to gain our actors trust and to convince them that their shy and rather quiet approach actually looked and sounded more unnatural.

We tried many different exercises to get the actors to experiment with volume and rhythm. Some of the exercises were more successful than others. We copied monologues from Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and *Henry V*, and read them out loud as a group. We analyzed each line to discern the subtext, and then we watched film clips of those same monologues. Many students commented on the film actor's ability to break away from the verse feel of the monologue by observing only the punctuation of the sentences rather than pausing at the end of each line. We worked with many actors on developing this skill, and by the end of the rehearsal process, many actors had succeeded in learning to carry the arc of their voice through to the end of the sentence and to resist the impulse to pause at the end of each line in a stanza.

One of the most effective exercises we tried focused on both volume and rhythm. Each actor had to choose an extended speech (at least four or more lines) and had to recite that speech as though it were a choral chant or prayer. After a few brave souls stepped forward and experimented with the exercise, more actors overcame their embarrassment, and by the end, many of the actors were finding new and innovative ways to verbalize the dialogue. By forcing them to sing out their lines, many actors were able to break themselves out of the rather boring speech pattern that they had developed while memorizing their lines. Over the entire rehearsal period, we continually worked with the look and the sound of the actors both individually and as an ensemble, and by the end of the rehearsal period many of our new actors had embraced a more broadly stylized characterization.

Not only were most of our actors inexperienced, but most of them were female. After the first few weeks of rehearsal, we were down to only eight male actors, and so many men were asked

to play more than one role. Within any given play, a single male actor might have to play a soldier, a guardsman, and a governor. In order to make these shifts in character as seamless as possible in the interest of maintaining the pace of the show, we elected to use iconic costume pieces to symbolize characters. These costume pieces needed to be added and discarded easily and quickly while always conveying the character type to the audience. For example, a beret symbolized “soldier,” a hooded robe symbolized “monk.”

This decision to embrace a presentational style of performance and abandon any idea of fourth wall realism led us to a moment of creative inspiration. Originally, we thought to include a rather long set of director’s notes in our program, which would include a brief biography of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, as well as the incipits (introductory summaries of the plays) written by Hrotsvit herself. With a plethora of female talent at our disposal, and with a highly stylized production concept in place, we decided to try something very experimental by creating the role of “Hrotsvit of Gandersheim.” One of our more talented actresses accepted the part, and served as narrator for each drama and for the production as a whole.

Using Hrotsvit’s own prefaces to the dramas, we were able to offer the audience an opening monologue spoken by the character Hrotsvit which explained who she was, why she wrote the plays, and how she is relying on the dramatic form to tell her stories. The character of Hrotsvit provided a narrative throughline for the entire production. She would appear before the start of each show and recite the incipit. The final image of the play involved the character of Hrotsvit surrounded on both sides by the martyred female characters from all three plays. This image conveyed a strong connection between the playwright and the martyred women she chose to glorify. The character of Hrotsvit served as a successful framing device for this highly stylized and contemporary production of a thousand year old script.



Female characters from all three plays take their place side by side as Abraham and Effrem discuss their hope that the imprisoned Mary will be redeemed. (Left to right: Chionia, Agape, Hirena, Hrotsvit, Mary, and Drusiana).

Although the challenges we encountered were numerous, we consider “Three Plays by Hrotsvit of Gandersheim” as one of our more successful productions. The creative efforts of directors, designers, and actors culminated in an uniquely beautiful production of a rarely performed body of work.

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Production photos by Professor Ken McCoy, Chair Department of Theatre Arts, Stetson University

Reviews

Review Essay: Rodney Stark's Vision of Medieval Christianity

Elspeth Whitney

Rodney Stark. *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003, 504 pages, and *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success*. New York: Random House, 2005, 304 pages.

A recent study of medievalism in American popular culture suggests that contemporary perceptions of the Middle Ages serve more often not to situate the writer and his or her reader in relationship to the medieval period itself, but instead to our contemporary situation: "Medieval images are used to construct new conflicts as old ones, reclaiming a past to incite the present to certain reductionist modes of thought and behavior."¹ This judgment is particularly apt in reference to two recent books by the veteran sociologist of religion, Rodney Stark, which put the Middle Ages front and center of the Western march toward modernity, rationality and morality.

In promoting the Middle Ages, and, more specifically, medieval Christianity, as the point of origin of Western

¹ Angela Jane Weisl, *The Persistence of Medievalism: Narrative Adventures in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 3.

progressivism, Stark runs counter to the more usual characterization in the popular press of the Middle Ages as a repository of barbarism, religious violence and repression. It is routine for journalists in *The New York Times* over the past year to refer, for instance, to the “medieval views that dominate Islam.” The identification of the “medieval” as antithetical to the modern values of democracy, tolerance and rationality seems to have acquired new life since 9/11 and often functions as a kind of temporal Orientalism.² Unfortunately for scholars of the Middle Ages, the more positive picture described by Stark, no less than the negative rendering in the popular media, is at bottom a mere appropriation of the medieval era for the author’s own purposes, which have more to do with current political controversies than with an informed understanding of medieval history and culture.

The theses of both books under review here are deceptively simple and straightforward. In *For the Glory of God*, Stark examines four major historical episodes (the Reformation, the rise of modern science, the European witch-hunts and the eventual

² See, for example, Alan Cowell, “World Briefing Europe: Britain: Far-Right Party To Print Muhammad Cartoon,” *New York Times*, 23 February 2005, linking Muslims with “medieval values and undemocratic views”; Martin Burcharth, “A Cartoon in 3 Dimensions; Capture the Flag” *New York Times*, 12 February 2006 and comments such as that by columnist David Brooks that “the Arab world remains caught in its own medieval whirlpool of horror,” “It’s Not Isolationism, but It’s Not Attractive,” *New York Times*, 5 March 2006. In a series of editorials on the Middle East over the past five years, Friedman has characterized, variously, the Iraqi insurgency, the Iraqi state, the Saudi regime, the Taliban, Muslim terrorists in general and bin Laden in particular, and Saddam Hussein as “medieval”: Thomas L. Friedman, “Foreign Affairs; Iraq of Ages,” *New York Times*, 28 February 1998; “Foreign Affairs; Smoking Or Non-Smoking?” *New York Times*, 14 September 2001; “Foreign Affairs; Yes, But What?” *New York Times*, 5 October, 2001; “Spiritual Missile Shield,” *New York Times*, 16 December 2001; “The American Idol,” *New York Times*, 6 November 2002; “The A, B, C’s of Hatred,” *New York Times* 3 June, 2004; “Too Much Pork and Too Little Sugar,” *New York Times*, 5 August 2005; “What Were They Thinking?” *New York Times*, 7 October, 2005; “Iraq At the 11th Hour,” *New York Times*, 31 March 2006,

abolition of slavery in the West) in order to make the case that Christian monotheism has been the driving force behind the creation of the modern West. In *The Victory of Reason*, he sharpens his focus to argue that the Western “victories” of capitalism, modern science, and political freedom were due entirely and exclusively to medieval theology’s unique insistence on the rationality of God and belief in progress.

Stark, therefore, largely without acknowledgement, taps into a number of long-standing arguments about the genesis of the Scientific Revolution, the origins of capitalism, and the role of Christianity in western culture going back at least to the early twentieth century. Stark himself explicitly situates his narrative as a revisionist response to “Western intellectuals”, who he says, have been eager to blame Christianity and religion in general for imperialism, intolerance and the suppression of scientific progress. “Nonsense,” he says. “The success of the West, including the rise of science, rested entirely on religious foundations, and the people who brought it about were devout Christians.”³ Without Christianity, Stark concludes “we would have a world truly living in the dark ages with astrologers and alchemists but no scientists, a world of despots w/o universities, banks, eyeglasses, chimneys, pianos and a world where most infants do not live to the age of five and many women die in childbirth.”⁴

If scholars of the medieval and early modern periods can be expected to remain skeptical in the face of such breathless claims, the popular press seems to have seized upon Stark’s views with alacrity. Although *For the Glory of God* had little discernible impact outside academic reviewing, *Victory* hit a nerve and received an exceptional amount of coverage, not only in overtly Christian or conservative venues but in mainstream newspapers and magazines. In the *New York Times*, for example, *Victory* was

³ Stark, *Victory*, xi, 6.

⁴ Stark, *Victory*, 233.

the subject of two lengthy reviews, five letters to the editor and a highly enthusiastic column, "The Holy Capitalists" by David Brooks. *Victory* thus garnered as much, or more, attention in *The Times* as any single book published during the past year.⁵ *The Boston Globe* printed an extended interview with Stark reiterating the thesis of *Victory*, and reviews appeared in *The New Republic*, *New Criterion*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, as well as a number of other newspapers.⁶ The blogosphere also reverberated with praise for *Victory*, along with a smaller number of negative reviews.

The largely sympathetic attention paid to *Victory* in the *Times* and elsewhere clearly reflects aspects of the current political landscape, including the increased interest in the role of religion in history since 9/11, the rise of organized religion (especially among conservative evangelical groups) as a force in American politics, and an influential business community eager to assert the social and economic benefits of unfettered capitalism. Stark himself was trained as a sociologist, not as an historian, and gives his readers fair warning of his ideological stance beginning with the titles of his books. It is all the more important, therefore, that professional

⁵ John Meacham, "Tidings of Pride, Prayer and Pluralism," *New York Times*, Book Review, 25 December 2005; William Grimes, "BOOKS OF THE TIMES; Capitalism, Brought to You by Religion," *New York Times*, 30 December 2005; "Letters-Glad Tidings" *New York Times*, Book Review, 8 January 2006; David Brooks, "The Holy Capitalists," *New York Times*, 15 December 2005; "Letters- Religion and Reason," *New York Times*, 25 December 2005.

⁶ The following are generally laudatory about the book: Peter Dizikes, "Faith and Reason: Was Christianity the Engine of Western Progress?" *Boston Globe*, 25 December 2005; Michael Novik, "What Dark Ages?" *New Criterion*, 1 February 2006; Roger Kimball, "Want Progress? You Gotta Believe: Crediting Christianity with spurring Western achievement, a new book asks: If the Dark Ages were so dark, why was so much innovation going on?" *The Wall Street Journal*, 25 December 2005. Alan Wolfe, *The New Republic*, Jan 16, 2006, however, concludes, "This is the worst book by a social scientist I have ever read."

historians address the issues raised by Stark in a serious and systematic manner.

Much of both *For the Glory of God* and *Victory of Reason* are given over to synthetic narrative descriptions of historical events. Chapter 1 of *Glory* describes the history of Christian heresies from the first century through Luther, Chapter 3 describes the European witch-hunts and chapter 4 surveys the history of slavery and its abolition. The final two-thirds of *Victory* is a description of European economic development from thirteenth-century Italy through European colonization of the New World.

Although the tone of these narratives sometimes resembles that of a bright undergraduate discovering basic facts for the first time, they are largely unexceptional, although Stark consistently minimizes recognition of the human cost in lives and suffering justified by religion, and overemphasizes the direct influence of Christian morality on events. The discussion becomes more problematic when Stark begins to provide explanations for historical events culled from his review of the secondary literature. Sometimes Stark's explanations are difficult to quarrel with because they amount to tautologies, for example, when he concludes that Protestantism succeeded where (1) Catholicism was weak, (2) governments responded to popular sentiment which favored Protestantism, or (3) where political regimes could gain from becoming Protestant. Elsewhere he shows a distressing tendency to use long out-dated scholarship as a foil for his claim that many historians are explicitly anti-religion and anti-Catholic, while ignoring or distorting recent scholarship that qualifies or contradicts his own position.⁷

The most egregious examples of Stark's misuse of the scholarship of others occur in his discussions of science and capitalism and will be discussed below. However, even in the less polemical sections of the books he commits this fundamental

⁷ Stark, *Glory*, 12-13, 116.

methodological fault. He implies, for example, that much of “current” scholarly work on the witch-hunts accepts the figure of nine million executions for witchcraft and is dominated by “defective explanations.” This “current” work, however, dates from the 1920s, 1950s and 1960s when the historical study of the witch hunts was in its infancy, making Stark’s rebuttal less than earth-shaking to anyone who has read more recent work on the topic.⁸ On the other hand, it is not surprising that Stark omits mention of virtually all serious scholarship on gender and the witch-hunts and includes “sexism” as one of the “defective” explanations, along with greed, fanatical clergy and insanity.

When Stark’s ideology is more directly engaged, however, his manipulation of the historical record and historical scholarship becomes more blatant. This is particularly true of *Victory*, in which his presentation, while admittedly lively, depends heavily on creating straw men, which only a public largely ignorant about the medieval period would accept. According to Stark, for example, “every educated person” knows that the years from the fall of Rome until the Renaissance and the Enlightenment were the “Dark Ages,” and dictionaries and encyclopedias accepted the “Dark Ages” as historical fact “until recently” (checking his notes, “recently” turns out to be 1934 and 1958).

In order to present a long-standing consensus as his own recent discovery, Stark frequently employs the technique of marginalizing scholarly research which *supports* his position. He treats his discussions of technological innovation in the Middle Ages, for example, as new and startling, borrowing shamelessly from Lynn White, jr., whose name occurs occasionally in the notes but is found nowhere in the text.⁹ Stark deals in much the same

⁸ Stark, *Glory*, 202, 208-225.

⁹ Stark’s argument is, in many ways, a broadened version of Lynn White’s thesis. On some of the methodological problems with White’s thesis see Elspeth Whitney, “History, Lynn White, and Ecotheology,” *Environmental Ethics*, 15 (1993): 151-169 and “Changing Metaphors and Concepts of Nature,” in *Fluxes of Nature, Fluxes of Thought: Ecology, Theology and Judeo-Christian*

way with the relationship between Christianity and science in the Middle Ages, suggesting that no significant scholarship on this issue other than his own has been done since the days of Andrew Dickson White and Alfred North Whitehead.¹⁰

Dealing fully with the difficulties in Stark's argument in *Glory* and *Victory* would require a book-length manuscript. Here I would like to merely address two examples: Stark's treatment of the development of science and his discussion of Thomas Aquinas on property, both of which have echoes in contemporary political discourse. In his discussion these topics, Stark rides roughshod over inconvenient complexities which threaten his equation of Christianity with the origin and essence of modernity. Symptomatic of Stark's steamrolling approach is his cavalier attention to historical detail. References to primary sources are absent or incomplete, sleights of hand abound (Ockham, for example, born around 1290, wrote "shortly" after the Magna Carta), and secondary sources he cites do not turn out to say what Stark says they say.¹¹ Overall, accuracy, nuance and any real understanding of medieval society and culture are sacrificed to an essentializing narrative promoting the uniqueness of Western economic and political success.

Environmental Ethics, ed. David M. Lodge and Christopher S. Hamlin (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 26-52.

¹⁰ In *Glory*, 124, Stark admits that, to his great surprise, his view that Christian theology supported a scientific worldview had "already become the conventional wisdom among historians of science;" nevertheless, he presses on because this truth is unknown beyond "narrow scholarly circles, and because "no one has actually pulled all of the essential themes and findings together to formulate a coherent overall picture of the history of the creative relationship between theology and science."

¹¹ Despite his reliance on Aquinas in both his discussion of capitalism and slavery, Stark gives only absent or incomplete references to the *Summa theologiae*, *Victory*, 244, n109; *Glory*, 412, n173 and n.174; *Victory*, 79.

First, let us turn to science, which Stark discusses at length in *Glory* and more briefly in *Victory*. In Stark's view, Christian theology and science are not only compatible but inseparable. His statement of this claim in *Victory* is worth quoting in full, not only because it sums up his argument but also because its "sound bite" character has resulted in it being widely quoted:

Real science arose only once: in Europe. China, Islam, India, and ancient Greece and Rome each had a highly developed alchemy. But only in Europe did alchemy develop into chemistry. By the same token, many societies developed elaborate systems of astrology, but only in Europe did astrology lead to astronomy. Why? Again, the answer has to do with images of God.¹²

Aside from noting that, in fact, alchemy did become chemistry in medieval Islam, and astrology became astronomy in both ancient Greece and the Islamic world, it is tempting to put this paragraph next to the almost 300 pages of closely reasoned, detailed analysis of scholarship on the causes of the Scientific Revolution in H. Floris Cohen's *The Scientific Revolution: A Historiographical Inquiry* (Chicago, 1994). Arguing specific facts, however, is to miss the point of Stark's convoluted logic, which is to strike a blow in the contemporary culture wars for Christian belief, and against "irreligious" social scientists, who, according to Stark, as a group have aimed to discredit religion in the name of science since the Enlightenment.

In order to sustain his argument that Christian theology is the *only* cause of the rise of modern science, Stark must first eliminate non-Christian antecedents. The gods of China, India, and the ancient Greeks and Romans were "too impersonal and too irrational" to sustain the practice of science; Greek efforts in this direction faltered because they failed to link empirical observations to testable theories and *vice versa*; Islam did not develop science

¹² Stark, *Victory*, 14.

because “Muslim intellectuals regarded Greek learning . . . as virtual scripture to be believed rather than pursued” and, moreover, came to adopt a belief that God sustained the natural world through continuous intervention rather than through natural laws. The logic of Stark’s position forces him to jettison *every* achievement of classical and Islamic science and philosophy, resulting in such absurd statements as “After Plato and Aristotle, very little happened beyond some extensions of geometry.”¹³ Counter examples from both ends of the spectrum are ignored: there is almost no mention of the Stoics, despite the influence they exerted on Christian notions of natural law, human technological progress, and a rational God, and no mention at all of the Jews, no doubt because, while they shared much about Christian “images of God,” they produced little in the way of scientific thought until the seventeenth century.

An even greater difficulty arises because Stark must also show that “real science,” arose in the Middle Ages. While much can be said about how medieval science paved the way for the Scientific Revolution, it is difficult to argue that medieval scientists practiced the *same* science as Galileo, Kepler and Newton. Stark solves this problem by locating the emergence of “real science,” which he defines as a methodology based on a combination of theory and “systematic observation relevant to empirical prediction,”¹⁴ in the work of Jean Buridan, Nicole Oresme and Nicholas of Cusa as precursors to Copernicus. Stark then argues that the Scientific Revolution did not begin with Copernicus, because it began *earlier* with the work of medieval scholastics who suggested the possibility that the earth rotated on its axis.

Personally, I am a booster of medieval science, and I am quite happy to argue that medieval scientists laid the groundwork

¹³ Stark, *Glory*, 148; Stark, *Victory*, 13, 20, 21.

¹⁴ Stark, *Victory*, 12.

for the Scientific Revolution. Stark, however, pushes this argument beyond the point not only of credibility but of intellectual honesty. On the one hand, he fails to acknowledge (1) that Buridan, Oresme and Nicholas of Cusa were speculative thinkers interested in mathematics but not in making systematic empirical observations of the physical world, (2) that they floated the idea that the earth rotated on its axis but never suggested that the earth rotated around the sun, and (3) that Oresme in the end rejected the movement of the earth as “contrary to natural reason” and in conflict with the literal reading of Scripture and the demands of faith.¹⁵ On the other hand, Stark uses the respectable position that the Scientific Revolution did not *begin* with Copernicus because his heliocentric system retained much of the apparatus of the Ptolemaic system, as if that were evidence that the Scientific Revolution was already underway in the late Middle Ages. Stark, for example, caps his discussion with a quotation from I. B. Cohen, the distinguished historian of science: “the idea that a Copernican revolution in science occurred goes counter to the evidence . . . and is an invention of later historians.”¹⁶ Unfortunately, although Stark uses this statement as support for his own position that “real science” started in the Middle Ages, Cohen’s point, which he makes explicitly several times in the chapter from which this quotation is taken, is to demonstrate that the Scientific Revolution (i.e. “real science”), did not occur until *after* Copernicus with the work of Kepler and Galileo in the seventeenth century.¹⁷

¹⁵ Nicole Oresme, *Le livre du ciel et du monde*, ed. by Albert D. Menut and Alexander J. Denomy, trans. with an Introduction by Albert D. Menut (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 537, 539.

¹⁶ Quoted in Stark, *Glory*, 139.

¹⁷ I. Bernard Cohen, *Revolution in Science* (Cambridge, Mass and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 106, 105-27.

All of this goes to show, I think, that Stark and his intended audience are not really interested in medieval science. Rather, Stark is concerned to counter claims by others that *contemporary* conflicts between scientific and religious viewpoints have been influenced by proponents of religion. Indeed, he argues in *Glory* that perceived conflicts between science and religion are merely trumped up efforts on the part of militant atheists to use science to attack religion, a campaign which has captured all intellectuals *except* scientists. Not surprisingly, Stark focuses much of this discussion around evolution, in which he trots out all the arguments of intelligent design (without mentioning the term), while accusing supporters of Darwinism of socialism, underhanded tactics, and the suppression of scientific data. In the end Stark asserts that “the fracas over evolution was and remains largely a conflict between true believers of both varieties—strident evolutionists being as unscientific as *any* fundamentalists.”¹⁸ Stark claims no religious or political affiliation. A hint, however, emerges in his highlighting in the conclusion to *Glory* of David Aikman’s, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Washington, DC: Regency Publishing, Inc., 2003); Aikman is also the author of *A Man of Faith: The Spiritual Journey of George W. Bush* (W Publishing Group, 2004).

Stark’s treatment of Christian theologians on economic theory, a primary focus of *Victory*, is similarly one-dimensional. Stark wants to draw a clear straight line from Christian faith to democracy, capitalism, and private property as a God-given right. Capitalism itself for Stark is entirely unproblematic. The only hint that there might be a Christian *critique* of capitalism occurs in a few passing references to asceticism as a value largely abandoned by the Church by the time of Constantine. Just as Stark erases any and all dissonance between Christianity and science, all references to sin vanish from his account of medieval attitudes toward money.

¹⁸ Stark, *Glory*, 124, 172, 176.

One therefore finds oneself in the odd position of reading a book on Christianity and economics in which the morality of economic transactions never comes up as a serious question.

Stark's discussion of Thomas Aquinas, whom he features as a chief architect of a theology of the free-market, illustrates the distorting lens of Stark's argument. As was the case in Stark's account of the rise of science, classical philosophy, because it is not Christian, cannot be acknowledged as influencing medieval economic thought. Nowhere, therefore, in Stark's account is the influence of Aristotle on Aquinas mentioned, even though Aquinas's rationale for private property as contributing to the common good in the *Summa theologiae* relies heavily on Aristotle's *Politics*, and Aquinas specifically references "The Philosopher" at several points.¹⁹

Stark makes much of Aquinas's lengthy discussion of "just price," emphasizing the degree to which Aquinas argues that "just price" is simply what the market will bear, so long as the seller deliberately does not deceive, or coerce, the buyer. Stark is not wholly off base; Aquinas does go surprisingly far in allowing the seller leeway to take advantage of circumstances. However, Aquinas also places issues of property within the context of the limitations of human life in the fallen world. The state might be natural (following Aristotle) but private property, according to Aquinas, is part of positive law, not of natural law. Moreover, Aquinas, like the canonists, allowed for a range within which the just price might fall, retained the notion of "unjust price," and never abandoned the view that, from a theological and ethical perspective, the gaining of wealth remained problematic.²⁰

¹⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* Pt. II-II Q. 66, art. 1. Aristotle's arguments for the usefulness of private property, on which Aquinas relies, are found in the *Politics*, 2.5.

²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* Pt. II-II Q. 66 article 2. It has also been pointed out that Aquinas's discussion, unlike modern capitalist attitudes toward property, ultimately subordinates the right of private property to

Medieval Christian thinkers, including Aquinas, continued to consider commercial activity as a perennial temptation to sin. Indeed, Aquinas's whole discussion of property in the *Summa theologiae* comes under the heading of "Vices—thief and robbery".²¹ Absent from Stark's narrative is any recognition that the acceptance of trade as directed toward some necessary and even virtuous end by medieval theologians was a concession to practical exigencies, even while the primary message of Christianity remained anti-wealth, a point strenuously made by J. Gilchrist, the main secondary source Stark cited for this section.²²

Instead of writing history, Stark essentializes a streamlined version of Christian theology and institutions, giving them a life of their own unperturbed by historical accidents, or internal contradictions and ambiguities, or outside influences. Stark's progress narrative of Western movement toward capitalism and modern science ignores, or forcibly absorbs, all contrary moves in alternative directions. In Stark's vision of medieval Christianity, there is apparently no tension between faith and reason, no Fall, no original sin, no heaven or hell. Asceticism and mysticism become mere passing interludes, as do moral qualms about acquiring wealth—all these are soon bypassed by a rational Christianity bent on developing free markets and a mechanistic worldview.

Stark's modern Middle Ages thus emerges as the obverse of the violent, repressive and fanatical Middle Ages more favored by popular culture. Neither vision functions as historical representations of the actual Middle Ages. Rather, both visions work to displace contemporary anxieties onto an imagined Middle

the common good, Daniel Westberg, "The Relation between Positive and Natural Law in Aquinas," *Journal of Law and Religion* 11 (1994-95), 14.

²¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Pt. II-II Q. 66 "Of Theft and Robbery."

²² J. Gilchrist, *The Church and Economic Activity in the Middle Age* (London: Macmillan, 1969; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969), 5-7, 50-52.

Ages that serves to define “us” in the present either as who we inevitably are or by who we absolutely are not. Since 9/11 these anxieties have increasingly been framed in terms of religion, “ours” and “theirs.” The reliance placed in *The New York Times* on the Middle Ages and the “medieval” as code for a “clash of civilizations” rhetoric grounded in religious difference is a useful barometer of these anxieties, but does nothing to get beyond a polemics grounded in polarization.

Ironically, Stark’s efforts to turn Christianity into the seamless partner of modernity does at least as much disservice to religion as it does to history. By ironing out the complexities, ambiguities and subtleties of Christian belief and practice, Stark also empties Christianity of its spiritual power and emotional appeal as a religion. His is a Christianity viewed only in instrumental terms, as a technique but not as something which can draw us out of ourselves. Christianity as a set of values may often have promoted the application of reason to the world, but if this is all Christianity had to offer it would not have had the success it demonstrably has.

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Texts and Teaching: Books Recommended for Courses

Entertaining yet Erudite Social History

Barbara A. Hanawalt. *Growing Up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History*. New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993. 300 pages. \$18.95.

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In Growing Up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History, Barbara A. Hanawalt tackles the difficult yet intriguing history of childhood in the busy urban environment of London. She takes on a topic that, along with that of the history of women and the poor, has not been adequately dealt with because it has been deemed unimportant or simply too difficult. While a few other works on the topic of medieval youth have been published since Hanawalt's, this topic continues to be elusive and the historiographical gap remains. Two collections of essays, one edited by P.J.P. Goldberg and Felicity Riddy entitled *Youth in the Middle Ages* (2004), and another called *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: the Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of Mentality* (2005), edited by Albrecht Classen, deal with a wide range of topics from medieval motherhood to the Jewish concept of childhood. While they make an effort to analyze the larger picture through different aspects of youth, however, they make no comprehensive attempt to deal with them as Hanawalt has in the form of a monograph. The *lacunae* in medieval sources mean that we have a difficult time seeing a comprehensive picture.

Hanawalt, therefore, recognizes that she must use a myriad of sources in novel and unexpected ways to ferret out the history of medieval London youth.

She writes this social history by filling in the proverbial blanks. Where social history lacks narrative, Hanawalt provides it by creating vignettes using composite information. Historical “purists” and those preferring their history in more “concrete” event-based form will have some difficulty with this approach, as I have discovered in my classes. I have used this work in my History of Medieval England class for a number of years. Overall, about 95% of my students enjoy this book and the social historical approach in general. However, in each class there are a few students who challenge a historian’s “right” to add detail, or to fill in the unfortunate and copious blanks. Hanawalt seems unconcerned with the criticisms that these purists make, writing that these narratives “redress an imbalance in the records” (p. ix).

On the other hand, students delight in Hanawalt’s use of her sources, which include wills, letter books, poems, advice books, city ordinances, court records and wardship accounts, and her trademark coroner’s records. This use of varied sources, qualitative and quantitative, is certainly one of the strengths of the work. They allow students to experience what it might have been like to live as a youth in fourteenth-century London. Furthermore, the informal and highly personable nature of the material, particularly of the coroner’s records, gives them information about the daily lives of people about whom no one much cared. Because a coroner’s inquest was performed in the case of unnatural death in medieval London, the records contain information about the mundane activities in the lives and deaths of these people. Students feel a connection to the person who died from a fall from a solar, the child who drowned in the river, or the person who fell to his death through the rotten floorboards of the outhouse! The personality of this information, therefore, evokes sympathy, and even humor, in the reader. They feel as if they “know” the victim, or could have experienced the same fate.

Students especially appreciate this personal and evocative approach compared to certain other types of history they read. I also assign works with other methodological approaches, such as political and economic, which the majority of my students find much less entertaining and readable. For example, when they read Christine Carpenter's *The War of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England c. 1437-1509* (1997), a much denser, traditional, and to many students, difficult read, they find it highly impersonal and connect with it very little if at all. Those students, however, who find Hanawalt's historical methods to be too "soft" appreciate the concrete, event-based history that Carpenter's work offers, and they considered it to be less contrived.

The work follows the life stages of childhood and adolescence throughout medieval London as dwellers progressed from "wild and wanton" to "sad and wise." She addresses the various mechanisms for delimiting these stages, from biological to social. For girls, the liminal event may well have been marriage, whereas for boys it may hinge on the completion of an apprenticeship contract or a guild membership. For her argument that medieval youth did travel through distinct stages, Hanawalt argues against Philippe Ariès's *Centuries of Childhood* (1962). Ariès argued that, based on medieval illustrations, children had no distinguishable childhood, but were rather seen as "miniature adults." He concluded that the child and adolescent, and the love and sentiment that we have for them, are modern notions. Hanawalt illustrates through careful consideration of medieval mentality the question of liminality, ceremonies, expectations, and parameters, that then as now, adolescents desired to establish personal identity and independence, while adults wished to direct, train, and control their behavior (p. 11).

There was, according to Hanawalt, no full-fledged "youth culture" in the Middle Ages where peers were the chief influence on their lives, and where they controlled their own wages and leisure time. This claim may be considered a weakness of the work, since she gives numerous examples of times when adolescents began to distinguish themselves from adults by

becoming more involved in games and other role-playing activities. Adolescents began moving away from childhood games to play games that involved more violence, such as sword play. Hanawalt, however, points out that these games mimicked adult activity, providing evidence that they were not necessarily creating their own subculture in London. London did provide great temptation to youth, which apprenticeship contracts attempted to counteract by setting limits on gaming, drinking, consorting with prostitutes and spending money (p. 115). For many of my students, these activities do indeed seem to suggest a “youth culture.”

Students feel very strongly about the presence of a distinct youth culture, in part because they feel as if there are similarities between the experiences of these medieval adolescents and their own. Particularly, they argue that their distinct youth customs, fashion, music, and activities, parallel the games and riots of medieval youth. One student pointed out that today’s “tweens”—children between nine and twelve years of age—do not fit Hanawalt’s definition of having a distinct youth culture, which includes complete control over time and money, and yet it is undeniable that one exists for them. Advertisers market to this particular demographic despite the fact that they do not earn any money, and they have distinct fashion trends, music, games and activities, just as medieval youths did.

Hanawalt uses a confluence of sociology and anthropology, but has not, as she points out, let the categories within these disciplines restrict her material or her arguments. She follows youth from birth through childhood, education and training, adolescence, apprenticeship, and service, and finally, the entrance into adulthood. Using Victor Turner’s concept of liminality and his “binary discriminations,” Hanawalt illustrates the male rituals and rights of passage demarcating adolescence and adulthood. However, for females, she argues, we do not see the easy opposition of this binary system. The binaries of domestic and public space, for example, are less significant for females because they changed only by degree during their lifetime. Young women

moved from one domestic space to another by marrying, which was attached to biological puberty, or by becoming apprentices or servants, part of social puberty. Like boys, therefore, girls could experience this period of social transition, but unlike boys, their space was primarily domestic, not the city streets or markets (p. 12).

The book deals also with apprenticeship and service as vehicles for adults to direct and train youth in craft and social skills alike. The vertical and horizontal ties of the relationship between apprentice and master and those of the guild were vital to the survival and maturing of youth in London without a family structure. Girls could occasionally apprentice, but were often part of long-term service contracts during their adolescence. Hanawalt also addresses what could happen to youth in London in the absence of these ties, including abuse, both physical and financial, and death. For “orphans,” those children without the benefit of paternal, legal protection, circumstances could be dire. Control of wardship was a major financial advantage, and orphans, especially girls, could be forced to marry, or worse. City laws legislated that no one who could potentially benefit from a ward’s death could be given custody (p. 95).

The chapters on apprenticeship provide strong evidence for Hanawalt’s claim that youths had no control over their time or money. Apprentices entered contracts between fourteen and eighteen years old and spent from seven to ten, or more, years in this intermediate stage between childhood and adulthood (p. 129). They were thus prolonging adolescence while living within a quasi-familial environment. The apprenticeship was a privileged position usually offered to young men and women who came from outside London and it provided potential for wealth, security and increased status. Apprenticeship was a major way of assimilating the large numbers of country or market-town youth into London’s skilled labor force (p. 171). It created horizontal ties extending across crafts and status groups. Apprentices were able to experience the thresholds of the changes of life stages by undergoing ceremonies and rituals not unlike marriage. The guild

and city government both had initiation rituals, including an oath-taking ceremony and the wearing of the livery, special clothing that guild members wore for ceremonial meetings.

Service was another phase in the life cycle that moved the adolescent from the natal home to that of the master so that they could learn skills, accumulate capital, especially for a dowry, and perhaps eventually emerge ready to occupy adult roles (p. 13). In this way, service was analogous to apprenticeship. Both acted to extend adolescence. However, some servants never emerged into these adult roles, and they would never meet the requirement of those roles or life stages. Within these new domestic spaces and roles, servants also experienced a quasi-parental relationship as well as a quasi-sibling relationship with other servants, although they did not necessarily live in the home in which they worked. In this way we see similar vertical and horizontal ties, albeit more intimate.

Parents in London often placed their children directly into service, or wardship arrangements could turn into a service contract with the master as guardian (p. 175). The length of the contract varied but could extend from early teens to early adulthood for those who did move on. The master was responsible for the protection of his servants, as well as for their behavior. Male servants and journeymen, day laborers who had passed the guild test for mastery of the craft but who were too poor to become masters, were prone to organize against their masters to force higher wages and were considered a dangerous group by London adults because they had been detained in the adolescent stage beyond a reasonable age (p. 196). Some guilds divided their members into two groups: those with livery and those without. Hanawalt makes a convincing argument that the subordinate journeymen guild membership forms a useful way in which to examine the markers of exit from adolescence. These young men were caught in an intermediate category, a limbo between childhood and adulthood. My students also occasionally feel this way, noting that the university experience also acts to prolong

adolescence, and is an intermediate period before they must become “real” adults.

These sections on apprenticeship and service, therefore, go a long way toward answering Hanawalt’s overarching question, that of whether medieval people marked the “coming of age,” becoming an adult. Clearly the answer then, as now, was not a simple one. But as Hanawalt illustrates, there are certainly events, markers, and rituals that allowed people to claim adult status. Gender, wealth, social status, occupation, length of apprenticeship, as well as conditions of disease and other variations affected the move to adulthood. As apprenticeship contracts and journeyman status lengthened during the era after the Black Death when labor was scarce, and as the age of inheritance for men kept creeping up in the fifteenth century, the recognition of adulthood became later and more elusive. Marriage for women, inheritance, and guild membership did, however, allow many London youth to become “sad and wise.”

I have only used this book in my upper division history class, and I think that it is particularly useful at that level. Students in an introductory western civilization class would probably enjoy the information and the examples, although the methodological intricacies may be lost on them. Instructors of medieval and early modern literature courses also would find Hanawalt’s book a useful source of information for presenting “context” for works like *Canterbury Tales* and *Romeo and Juliet*, and for examples of how literary works can be used as historical source material. Yet I would not recommend its adoption for such a course. While it contains parts of many medieval literary works, it is specifically intended as an historical analysis and narrative. The work lends itself well to class discussions about its arguments, methods and sources. Students can also debate the “purist” versus synthetic approach to this kind of history. I have used it in small groups in which I give each an “age” or life stage to debate and then to present to the class. In large group discussions students often seem to want to discuss the abstract notion of “feeling” like an adult, then and now.

Of all the works that I have my students discuss, this one seems to elicit the most willing participation; agree or disagree with Hanawalt, everyone has an opinion they are willing to share. In addition, this work can be used to assign book reviews and papers about methodology, pointing out the other approaches to history. For example, I have had the students write essays comparing Hanawalt's approach to apprenticeship or service with a quantitative economic work, or a feminist history. This assignment assesses their ability to distinguish the benefits and limitations of each kind of approach, method and historiography, and their ability to note the potential for each type. I have been extremely successful in teaching this text, and would recommend it to others who want their students to be exposed to a novel approach to medieval history.

This work is an extraordinarily useful one for teaching socio-economic history of the Middle Ages and specifically of England. It is also useful for teaching about methodology. The paradigm shift in the 1970s that made social, children's and women's history respectable topics meant that those historians who undertook these tasks had to engage new methodologies and historiographies in order to do so. As Hanawalt points out, her methodology is a synthetic one through which she is able to achieve a coherent and fluid narrative where others have not. The imaginative vignettes act as the glue that binds her uneven information together. They are also what set this work apart and places it in the ranks entertaining yet erudite social history.

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Representing a Bigger Middle Ages

Barbara H. Rosenwein. *A Short History of the Middle Ages*. Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2002. 362 pages. \$42.95.

Colin McEvedy. *The New Penguin Atlas of Medieval History*. London: Penguin Books, 1992. 112 pages. \$13.95.

Patrick J. Geary. *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002. 261 pages. \$19.95.

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This review of publications useful for the medieval history classroom assembles three works (none of them very new and one of them now nearly fifteen years old) of particular interest in meeting a central challenge in early twenty-first-century teaching of the European Middle Ages: that the period is no longer strictly European. These works support the historian trained in a prior generation of medieval scholarship to present medieval European civilization in its world context.

Within the past twenty-five years, the stolidly Eurocentric identity of medieval studies as an interdisciplinary enterprise has gradually leached away. Today, not only scholarly publications but graduate training and even undergraduate interest in medieval civilization stretch Europe's old boundaries. Cross-cultural contacts, especially connections with the Islamic world, elicit lively interest on the part of neophytes as well as mature scholars in medieval studies. Indeed, Europeanists centrally interested in a medieval past—in literatures, art history, history of science, and history of the family and material culture alike—increasingly adopt either a comparatist approach in their professional work or focus their attention on the eastern or southern fringes of what used to seem the coherent and self-sufficient world of Latin Christendom.

Meanwhile, perhaps lamentably but nonetheless understandably, the great majority of teachers of medieval history and the constituent sister-disciplines of medieval studies generally vamp, as teachers, to keep up. Like most contemporary academics, they affirm the desirability of attention to various medieval cultures in relation to contemporary global civilization, but they generally lack any formal training in even closely related Byzantine and Islamic histories. A majority of well-trained medievalists in North American tenured ranks today lack any useful Greek; only a few know Arabic. And although most historians, art historians, and especially historians of science command a basic knowledge of the principal traits of medieval Muslim cultures in their contact with the West, their knowledge of historical Islam is uncomfortably thin. Yet students even in the medieval survey are eager to learn about all three great successor-civilizations of the Roman Empire. This review article points to a few resources of special usefulness for the confessedly narrowly educated European medievalist interested in accommodating these burdensome if laudable contemporary demands. Its argument for employing these works rests on the reviewer's teaching experience in a small, highly selective liberal arts college, but the pedagogical tactics it proposes seem equally suitable to a broad variety of undergraduate programs.

The first teaching text addressed here is Barbara Rosenwein's medieval survey, *A Short History of the Middle Ages*. The conservative title of this handsomely, even lavishly illustrated and beautifully written volume belies its spirit of adventure; here Rosenwein, in her own scholarly production principally a historian of monastic culture, smoothly knits together an account of the central developments of medieval Europe with thorough yet accessible attention to both the Islamic world and the Byzantine Empire. Effectively she builds—from the perspective of the Eurocentrically trained faculty member—from the most solid points of his/her knowledge of Western political and ecclesiastical developments to enrich the narrative construction of medieval Europe with reference to fresh scholarship on cultural and social

history. All the while, she lays out alongside an engaging portrayal of European civilization an outline of its eastern and southern analogs buttressed, from the student's point of view as well, by constant connections to the more familiar material of the western Christendom. Solely from the European perspective, there is no better textbook of medieval civilization available today. The added contextualization of two contemporary Mediterranean cultures further distinguishes Rosenwein's survey. Images from the medieval world and frequent maps are fully addressed in the text, investing this introductory volume with yet another level of usefulness for today's highly visual undergraduate learner.

The present reviewer has used Rosenwein's *Short History* for the medieval survey twice since its appearance in 2002. In other years, despite appreciation for the volume's encouragement to develop her own and her students' knowledge of the Muslim and Byzantine worlds, she has entirely avoided the use of any survey text, as is likely possible only in the all-seminar liberal arts college context and in a department in which many courses are built from all primary reading lists contextualized by faculty-provided historical context. But again, in the new medieval history classroom, students' knowledge of the basic shape of European history and even geography is thinner than was the case in prior decades—although their sense of world history is richer. Given that pedagogical context, another tried and true teaching tool assumes particular usefulness: the old *New Penguin Atlas of Medieval History*. This slim book shares with Rosenwein's introductory volume an emphatic appeal to the sensibilities of a student generation especially attracted to and skilled in its attention to images. Like Rosenwein's *Short History*, Colin McEvedy's atlas presents medieval European civilization in the Mediterranean context, emphasizing the connectedness of the western church and kingdoms with the military and economic circumstances of the Middle East, even the Seljuk and Mongol khanates of the Asian steppes. In accompanying its lucid, dynamic maps with a crisp outline narrative of European events in their world context, this volume too supports the instructor and students committed to a

wide perspective on medieval Europe. Functioning as a minimalist textbook, the *Penguin Atlas* enables the daring faculty member and students effectively to build their own interpretations of primary European texts inside a sturdy and economical, if minimalist framework of chronology and historical geography.

Finally, Patrick Geary's 2002 volume from Princeton, *The Myth of Nations*, presents a less detailed but powerfully suggestive way of supporting even the beginning student of the European past to understand medieval Europe in a larger geographical and narrative framework. In this volume, Geary recurs to his long-term theme, that "Europe"—in the earlier Middle Ages in particular—is more a heuristic device for moderns than a historical reality for the western peoples. His much-debated argument that medieval nationhood is not only a misleading fiction but an untruth with devastating implications in driving and retrospectively justifying modern conflict is among the most provocative of critiques of the conventional metanarrative in which most of today's teaching medievalists received their intellectual formation. As such, it stands us on our heads—a situation it does our students great good to observe. While Rosenwein's elegant beginners' history of medieval civilization breaks Europe's boundaries to spill challengingly across the Mediterranean and McEvedy's little atlas, correspondingly, graphically maps the expansion of the historiography of Europe into Byzantium and the Muslim world, Geary's essay explodes the borders of the continent from the inside out. Still more effectively than the other volumes addressed here, *Myth of Nations* explains why medievalists, who are themselves the intellectual progeny of a Europe internally anguished by national identities and conflict-ridden in a world theatre by their own flawed historical assumptions, should make the supreme effort to reinvent a past they once thought they understood.

Together and separately, these works—two intended as propaedeutics to medieval studies and one the manifesto of a scholar incidentally useful as a schoolbook—suggest that the great effort with which professional medievalists are today faced, to reframe their teaching in a world-historical context, may indeed be

worth it: students respond to these works with enthusiasm. Without the blessing or the burden of our rich specialization, they consider it normal and necessary to view historical cultures in mutual comparison. Watching them do so with the help of these works is heartening enough that even the middle-aged historian of the Middle Ages wishes to stay by them as they construct a new past for old Europe.

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Al-Idrisi's world map from 1154. Note that south is at the top of the map.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_al-Idrisi (Accessed 12/6/2006)