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Article Abstracts

[**York Guilds and the Corpus Christi Plays: Unwilling Participants?**](#) by Clifford Davidson

Abstract

Maud Sellers, in 1912, introduced the notion that the York guilds which produced the civic Corpus Christi plays found them to be “an intolerable and vexatious burden.” The idea has persisted. However, the picture of guild support for the plays is complex, especially during the period of economic and civic decline which in fact impoverished some guilds and left others with a membership deficit due to the inability to maintain their numbers. York, like other cities, was unable to maintain its population without immigration from outside since the death rate exceeded the birth rate. Pestilence and disease played a part in this with consequences for the plays, including the effect on the personnel available for playing the roles. Other indicators, such as strong support for parish churches, are signs of enthusiasm for efforts to maintain the cultural memory involved in recalling salvation history. The result was a play cycle, albeit not without changes, that continued to be produced over a very long run of two centuries.

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Biography

Clifford Davidson <cliffodavidson@yahoo.com> is Professor of English and Medieval Studies Emeritus at Western Michigan University. He founded the Early Drama, Art, and Music project <<http://www.wmich.edu/medieval/research/edu/index/html>> in 1976, and for many years was an editor of *Comparative Drama*. His most recent book is *Selected Studies in Drama and Renaissance Literature* (AMS Press, 2005). His *Festivals and Plays in Late Medieval Britain* will be issued by Ashgate Publishing next year.

Napping in the Arbour in the Digby *Mary Magdalene* Play by Joanne Findon

Abstract

This paper analyzes the Digby *Mary Magdalene* play's use of a motif or 'meme' common in medieval romance, in which a character's slumber in an orchard, garden or arbour precipitates a supernatural encounter with the Otherworld. In depicting Mary Magdalene's pivotal meeting with an angel when she falls asleep in an arbour, the Digby *Mary Magdalene* play recalls analogous situations in secular romance and thus situates its depiction of Mary as both saint and anti-romance-heroine within a web of intertextual references. As a powerful fusion of romantic and spiritual adventure centred on a strong female protagonist, the play is best viewed within a broad range of late medieval literature that was popular with its increasingly literate late medieval East Anglian audiences.

Biography

Joanne Findon <jfindon@trentu.ca> is an Associate Professor in the Department of English Literature at Trent University. She has published on medieval romance and medieval Irish literature, and is currently working on late medieval drama. She is working on a book-length project about the Digby *Mary Magdalene* play and its literary context.

The Repertory of Prince Charles's (I) Company, 1608-1625 by David Nicol

Abstract

Prince Charles's Men was a Jacobean playing company that operated between 1608 and 1625. At present, twenty-six plays have been listed as belonging to this company, of which only eight have survived. However, additional plays may plausibly be added to the company's repertory if the available evidence is looked at in a new light. By demonstrating the likelihood that dramatist William Rowley wrote exclusively for the company between 1608 and 1622, and by reinterpreting a fragmentary document from the Revel's Office, I argue that fifteen more plays, eight of which are extant, may be added to the company's repertory.

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Biography

David Nicol <David.Nicol@Dal.Ca> is Assistant Professor of Theatre at Dalhousie University. He has published articles on the plays of William Rowley in *Comparative Drama* and *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*. He is currently working on a stage and music history of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the New Variorum Shakespeare edition.

The Borrowed Expositor by Michelle M. Butler

Abstract

If, as Peter Travis has argued, Expositors were incorporated in the Chester cycle in the early sixteenth century, what model did the reviser draw upon to construct them? I argue that the reviser could not have found a suitable template in cycle dramaturgy; rather, in bringing presenters into the Chester cycle, the reviser has adopted a technique hitherto found, in English drama, only in non-cycle plays — an innovation which is part of a wider pattern of rethinking cycle plays in the sixteenth century.

Biography

Michelle M. Butler <mmb5@pitt.edu> is an adjunct professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh, specializing in medieval and sixteenth-century drama. She is currently working on a book about the transition between audience address and soliloquy in the sixteenth century. Her most recent publication, about John Bale's Prolocutor, appeared in *Tudor Drama Before Shakespeare, 1485-1590: New Directions for Research, Criticism, and Pedagogy*.

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Ram Alley and Female Spectatorship by Andrew Griffin

Abstract

Lording Barry's *Ram Alley* (1608) stages or describes various perversions, oddities, and problems that were often associated with early modern London generally and with Ram Alley — an area notorious for prostitution and gambling — specifically: the play features, for instance, an unruly masterless man, a cross-dressed woman, a prostitute who wears too much makeup, an economically independent and erotically determined widow, and a story about baboons who do tricks at the zoo. This paper draws specific attention to Barry's treatment of the gendered dynamics of spectatorship, visibility, and visibility, arguing that, according to Barry's vision, Ram Alley is a space in which these norms are also troubled. Although watching and acquiring knowledge through watching were generally thought to be masculine prerogatives in early modern London, Barry's play repeatedly stages concealed, disguised, or otherwise inscrutable

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women who watch the legible bodies of men. This paper also argues that the play's conclusion is marked by a reversion to the "appropriate" gender assignments vis-à-vis spectatorship by ending with scenes in which female bodies are made dramatically visible as objects of specular comprehension.

Biography

Andrew Griffin <griffiar@mcmaster.ca> is a graduate student in the department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University, expecting to complete his dissertation, *On Untimely Deaths in Renaissance Drama*, by the spring of 2008. He has published articles in *Early Modern Literary Studies* and the *Ben Jonson Journal*, and has edited *King Leir* for *The Plays of the Queen's Men*, a forthcoming internet edition to be housed at *Internet Shakespeare Editions* and eventually to be available on DVD with performances, annotations, and interviews. He is the assistant editor of *All's Well that Ends Well*, with co-editors Helen Ostovich and Karen Bamford, also for *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, still a work in progress.

Issues in Review Abstracts

Popular Theatre and the Red Bull a collection of essays by Lucy Munro, Anne Lancashire, John H. Astington, and Marta Straznicky

Abstract

Governing the Pen to the Capacity of the Stage: Reading the Red Bull and Clerkenwell by Lucy Munro

This essay introduces the Issues in Review section 'Popular Theatre and the Red Bull', which highlights new work on the Red Bull theatre and its Clerkenwell locality. It suggests ways in which this group of essays relate to current ideas about repertory approaches to early drama, and concludes with a look at the career of actor-dramatist Thomas Jordan at the Red Bull in the Caroline, Interregnum and Restoration periods.

Biography

Lucy Munro <lucy.c.munro@btopenworld.com> is a lecturer in English at Keele University. Her publications include *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge, 2005), an edition of Edward Sharpham's *The Fleer* (Nick Hern Books, 2006), and various essays on early modern drama. She is a contributing editor to the *RSC Complete Works of Shakespeare* (Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming 2007) and to forthcoming major editions of the works of James Shirley and Richard Brome.

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Multi-day Performance and the London Clerkenwell Play by Anne Lancashire

Abstract

Although it has recently been suggested that the multi-day play performed at least occasionally at Clerkenwell, in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, either was not a theatrical performance or was a single-day play performance repeated over several days, evidence strongly points to a multi-day biblical play. Possibly the play was performed with some regularity but was only noted in royal records and/or chronicles when it was made use of, and therefore perhaps performed with greater elaboration, in response to special royal circumstances. When the Red Bull theatre was built in the same general area in the early seventeenth century, following the locating of the royal Revels Office there from 1560 to 1607-8, it was thus apparently continuing a tradition of Clerkenwell as a major London performance district.

Biography

Anne Lancashire <anne@chass.utoronto.ca> is Professor of English at the University of Toronto, author of *London Civic Theatre: City Drama and Pageantry from Roman Times to 1558* (2002), and editor of the in-progress REED volumes of London civic records of theatre, pageantry, and music to 1558.

Playing the Man: Acting at the Red Bull and the Fortune by John Astington

Abstract

The seventeenth-century playhouses of north-west London, especially the Red Bull, have suffered a bad press, from their own day to the present. This paper attempts to assess the basis of the evidence for their low reputation, through an examination of the companies which occupied them, their repertoires, and their actors. While there are a number of indications of a somewhat populist and old-fashioned character in both repertory and acting style, there are balancing signs of high levels of performance and production in the companies which used the theatres, and of the acquisition of up-to-date and fashionable plays throughout the Caroline period. The difference in standards, as well as in audience, at the Red Bull in particular, has been overemphasised by modern historians and commentators, influenced as they have been by anecdotal comments on the theatres composed in the interregnum and Restoration.

Biography

John H. Astington <director.gradrama@utoronto.ca> is Professor of English and Drama at the University of Toronto, and currently Director of the Graduate Centre for Study of Drama. He has published extensively on the drama and theatre history of the early modern period, and is currently working on a book dealing with actors and their professional lives.

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The Red Bull Repertory in Print, 1608-1638 by Marta Straznicky

Abstract

Plays from the Red Bull repertory were not only published but identified as Red Bull productions in a surprisingly large number of quarto editions in the first half of the seventeenth century. The design, typography, and ownership of the Red Bull quartos suggests that, as reading material, the Red Bull plays were not identified with a strictly 'low' cultural or social sector. The position of these plays in early modern print culture thus contradicts the familiar rhetorical construction of Red Bull playgoers as unlettered, or even illiterate, and demands a reassessment of the social and educational make-up the audience for a 'popular' theatrical repertory.

Biography

Marta Straznicky <straznic@post.queensu.ca> is professor of English at Queen's University. She has published on early modern closet drama, play publication, and play reading. She is author of *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550-1700* (Cambridge, 2004), and editor of *The Book of the Play: Playwrights, Stationers, and Readers in Early Modern England* (U of Massachusetts P, 2006). Her current project is on the relationship between theatrical repertories and print culture in the early modern period.

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