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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

English Department

**Play-making on the Edge of Reality:  
Managing Spectator Risk in Early English Drama**

by

**Nadia Thérèse van Pelt**

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

November 2013



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

## ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

English

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**PLAY-MAKING ON THE EDGE OF REALITY:**

**MANAGING SPECTATOR RISK IN EARLY ENGLISH DRAMA**

Nadia Thérèse van Pelt

This thesis places the notion of risk and the diversity of treatment that the management of risk involves, at the centre of the discourse about Early English drama. It locates the spectator's experience on the edge of reality and fiction. Offering an alternative to current theories of metatheatricality and cognitive theory, this research attempts to contribute to knowledge by arguing that the most important element of the dramatic experience exists *between* the two poles of an awareness of artifice and absorption, and that the dramatic experience is managed by playwright, actor and spectator with respect to these two poles. This thesis focuses on the spectator, not just on the absorbed spectator who 'lives' in the drama, such as one finds in cognitive studies, or on the reflective spectator who is conscious of the artifice of drama, such as in metatheatrical studies, but rather on participatory spectators, and on spectators moving between the two positions of absorption and reflection.

The case studies in this thesis are reflective of the contexts of early English dramatic performance: they show how similar issues were controlled differently in different contexts; that there might be no clear boundary between Catholic and Protestant drama in terms of spectator management; that some playwrights had political reasons to believe it best if they did not manage their spectators' experience, while other playwrights displayed a deep commitment

to controlling not only spectators' experiences and responses *during* the performance but also afterwards, suggesting that risk management is not an act but rather a process; that dramatic performance could cause disaster if not sufficiently managed, or if the performance context in which the drama was performed, was misjudged, but that the use of the dramatic medium could also be recuperated by later events of a similar nature.

Examining drama in its *specific* literary and historical context, this thesis reconstructs the play-experience not only through the plays, but also through a study of how plays were described in Star Chamber records, ambassadorial records, eye-witness accounts, and other records. It clarifies early drama's most fundamental characteristic to be an intervention in society, and as such always relating to non-dramatic issues, and inevitably carrying risk with it.

# Contents

<b>Contents .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Definitions and Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Cognitive Theory .....	2
1.3 Metatheatricality .....	7
1.4 The Edge of Reality and Fiction .....	13
<b>2. Showing or not showing in two sacrament plays: the Croxton     <i>Play of the Sacrament</i> and the Breda <i>Play of the Holy Sacrament     of the Nieuwervaart</i> .....</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	21
2.2 Setting the Scene: Breda.....	31
2.3 Setting the Scene: Croxton.....	42
2.4 Visibility .....	52
2.5 Audience Involvement: participants or witnesses.....	65
2.6 Conclusion.....	77
<b>3. From risky to risqué in two Magdalen Plays: Digby <i>Mary     Magdalen</i> and Lewis Wager's <i>Life and Repentaunce of Marie     Magdalene</i> .....</b>	<b>81</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	81
3.2 Performance Context .....	91
3.3 Spectator Identification with Protagonist .....	97
3.4 Representation of the Magdalen's Sins .....	113
3.5 Positioning of Ritual Elements .....	121
3.6 Conclusion.....	127
<b>4. Representation of kingship in royal or aristocratic households:     John Heywood's <i>Play of the Wether</i> and John Bale's <i>King Johan</i>     .....</b>	<b>131</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	131
4.2 Performance Auspices.....	137
4.3 Figures of Counsel .....	149

4.4	Representations of Regality .....	165
4.5	Audience involvement .....	179
4.6	Conclusion .....	182
<b>5.</b>	<b>Risk management based on expired tradition: the Wells performances of 1607 and the Star Chamber .....</b>	<b>185</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	185
5.2	Performance Context .....	193
5.3	May games .....	200
5.4	Civic performances .....	207
5.5	Charivari .....	210
5.6	Conclusion .....	223
<b>6.</b>	<b>Play-making on the edge of reality .....</b>	<b>229</b>
6.1	Introduction .....	229
6.2	The Queen as Spectacle .....	231
6.3	Event management .....	234
6.4	Memory of previous risk .....	238
<b>7.</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>249</b>
	<b>Appendix: material culture .....</b>	<b>253</b>
	<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>257</b>

# DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Nadia Thérèse van Pelt

declare that the thesis entitled

‘Play-making on the Edge of Reality: Managing Spectator Risk in Early English Drama’

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- parts of this work have been published as:

Nadia Thérèse van Pelt, 'Spielen mit der Wirklichkeit: Abwägen von Risiko und Verantwortung des Publikums im englischen Drama der frühen Neuzeit,' in *Das Theater des Spätmittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit: Kulturelle Verhandlungen in einer Zeit des Wandels*, ed. by Elke Huwiler, Amsterdam German Studies (Heidelberg: Synchron Verlag, 2014 forthcoming).



Nadia Thérèse van Pelt, 'Enter Queen: Metatheatricality and the Monarch On/Off Stage,' in *The Image and Perception of Monarchy in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Ellie Woodacre and Sean McGlynn (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2014 forthcoming).

Signed: .....

Date:.....

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## Definitions and Abbreviations

CBT	Conceptual Blending Theory
CSPD	<i>Calendar State Papers Domestic</i>
CSPV	<i>Calendar State Papers Venetian</i>
EEBO	Early English Books Online
EETS	Early English Text Society
MNW	Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek (The Dictionary of Middle Dutch)
OED	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary</i>
P&P	<i>Past and Present</i>
PRO	National Archives (previously, Public Record Office)
REED	<i>Records of Early English Drama</i>
Sd	Stage direction
SR	Stationers' Register
STAC	Court of Star Chamber Proceedings



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

In recent years two very strong theoretical streams have emerged, which try to explain the relationship between the two worlds of drama—the fictional one on stage and the real world which is brought by the spectator. One of these theories focuses on the artificial, although it acknowledges spectators experiencing affect. The second theory privileges spectators' complete emotional absorption in the performance, while allowing for occasional release from this absorption. I am talking about respectively metatheatricity and cognitive theory. In this thesis, I will offer an additional approach, and argue that the above theories are most valuable when they support historicist readings of the plays, and that they are also most valuable when one considers the liminal area *between* the two poles of artifice and absorption. I will argue that the dramatic experience is managed by the playwright, actors, and the spectators, between the poles established in metatheatrical and cognitive theory. This thesis is written from the position that drama's most fundamental characteristic is that it is an intervention in society. I argue that early English plays by definition have to relate to non-dramatic issues, as the drama exists as an intervention in a social, historical, and chronological context. Therefore, drama carries with it an inevitable risk, located in the way in which it intersects with those contexts, which will be a striking feature of that drama. This thesis offers a number of case studies to illustrate the diversity of treatment that the management of risk involves. First, however, it might be helpful to look at the two poles between which I am placing drama, beginning with an introduction to cognitive theory, including a discussion of blending theory and the neuroscience of mirror neurons to illuminate the study of absorption in performance, then moving to a discussion of metatheatricity and its application in theatre studies to point at the artificiality of drama.

## 1.2 Cognitive Theory

Recent theories in cognitive science have provided scholarship with new ways of studying the basic responses of human beings to their environment. In this, they follow the footsteps of cognitive linguists Lakoff and Johnson's theory on embodied perceptual systems,<sup>1</sup> which proposes that perception is structured by the interaction of the human body and brain; and phenomenological philosophy such as that of Maurice Merleau-Ponty,<sup>2</sup> which places the body firmly into the discourse on the perception of the senses and people's consciousness of the world around them: the so-called 'being-in-the-world'. Cognitive research, as it bears upon the study of drama, focuses on the workings of perception as the body is affected by visual and auditory stimuli as well as movements, and on how meaning is constructed in the brain. It does so through two important concepts: 'conceptual blending' and 'mirror neuron theory'. The former concept was introduced by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, and has been described as an unconscious cognitive activity that creates new meaning. According to Fauconnier and Turner, everyday actions such as speaking and thinking involve the construction of 'mental spaces', packets of information that help us understand language, for example grammar or metaphor.<sup>3</sup> Conceptual blending occurs when information from two or more different mental spaces is projected into a 'blended space'.<sup>4</sup> Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) has been described as 'a methodology to unpack meaning again and again'.<sup>5</sup> When applied to the study of drama, the mental spaces in question are those formed on the stage and those which the spectator brings to the experience of the play.

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<sup>1</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: the Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962).

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, 'Conceptual Blending, Form and Meaning', *Recherches en Communication: Sémiotique Cognitive* 19 (2003), pp. 57-86, p. 59. See also Amy Cook, 'Interplay: The Method and Potential of a Cognitive Scientific Approach to Theatre', *Theatre Journal* 59 (2007), pp. 579-594, p. 581.

<sup>5</sup> Amy Cook, 'Interplay: The Method and Potential of a Cognitive Scientific Approach to Theatre', p. 586.

According to neuroscientific studies, mirror neurons are cells in the brains that respond on observing or executing actions. Mirror neurons were first discovered by a group of Italian neuroscientists who observed that the same cells were discharged in the ventral premotor cortex (also known as 'area F5') of macaque monkeys when a monkey performed an action, as when an experimenter made a similar movement in front of the monkey, thus offering visual stimuli.<sup>6</sup> For example, the experimenter taking a peanut from a container and bringing it to their mouth caused the same neurons to discharge in the monkey's brain, as when the latter was given the peanut to eat.<sup>7</sup> After the positive results with the macaques, research has been extended to localizing the simulation of action in the human brain,<sup>8</sup> for example to study the biological construction of consciousness,<sup>9</sup> and the capacity of humans to experience affect: the 'neural underpinnings of embodied simulation', which lies at the basis of people's ability to identify with others and to feel empathy.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, an important cooperation between Gallese and linguist George Lakoff and other specialists in their respective disciplines have raised and explored the possibilities of correlating cognitive studies with a variety of Humanities disciplines such as linguistics,<sup>11</sup> art,<sup>12</sup> literary studies,<sup>13</sup> film,<sup>14</sup> and

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<sup>6</sup> Giuseppe di Pellegrino, Luciano Fadiga, et al., 'Understanding Motor Events: A Neurophysiological Study', *Experimental Brain Research* 91 (1992), pp. 176-180, p. 179.

<sup>7</sup> Pier Francesco Ferrari, Vittorio Gallese, et al., 'Mirror Neurons Responding to the Observation of Ingestive and Communicative Mouth Actions in the Monkey Ventral Premotor Cortex', *European Journal of Neuroscience* 17 (2003), pp. 1703-1714, p. 1703.

<sup>8</sup> Giacomo Rizzolatti, Luciano Fadiga, et al., 'Localization of Grasp Representations in Humans', *Experimental Brain Research* 111 (1996), pp. 246-252; Giacomo Rizzolatti, Leonardo Fogassi, and Vittorio Gallese, 'Neurophysiological Mechanisms Underlying the Understanding and Imitation of Action', *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 2 (2001), pp. 661-670; Vittorio Gallese and George Lakoff, 'The Brain's Concepts: The Role of the Sensory-Motor System in Conceptual Knowledge', *Cognitive Neuropsychology* 22:3-4 (2005), pp. 455-479, p. 469.

<sup>9</sup> Antonio R. Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Vittorio Gallese, 'Intentional Attunement: Mirror Neurons and the Neural Underpinnings of Interpersonal Relations', *J. of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 55 (2007), pp. 131-176. See also, Martin L. Hoffman, 'Empathy and Prosocial Behavior', *Handbook of Emotions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, ed. by Michael Lewis et al. (London: Guilford Press, 2008), pp. 440-455, p. 441.

<sup>11</sup> Gallese and Lakoff, 'The Brain's Concepts', p. 469.

<sup>12</sup> Vittorio Gallese, 'Mirror Neurons and Art', in *Art and the Senses*, ed. by F. Bacci and D. Melcher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 441-449; Vittorio Gallese, 'Seeing Art... Beyond Vision: Liberated Embodied Simulation in Aesthetic Experience', *Seeing with the Eyes Closed. Association for Neuroesthetics Symposium at the*



theatre studies,<sup>15</sup> and specifically early English drama.<sup>16</sup> In these studies, care has been taken that—in the words of Amy Cook—‘an integration of cognitive science should not simply ‘use’ research from the sciences to validate our theories’.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the potential of studying the late Middle Ages through a cognitive theoretical approach has been observed to be congruous with medieval visual theory, in which perception joined body and mind (or soul).<sup>18</sup> A ground-breaking work that has applied phenomenological and cognitive theories to a dramatic context that was saturated with an interest in the affective in relation to doctrine is Jill Stevenson’s work on the York cycle plays. In this study, she investigates the affective responses of audiences to the York plays, the discussion at times extending to royal entries and other processions. Stevenson observes that,

Cognitive theory reminds us that issues of spectatorship are not concerned strictly with representation, or even necessarily with conscious reactions, but instead that anxiety about performance often

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*Guggenheim Collection, Venice*, ed. by A. Abbushi, I. Franke and I. Mommenejad (2011), pp. 62-65.

<sup>13</sup> Hannah Wojciehowski, ‘The Mirror Neuron Mechanism and Literary Studies: An Interview with Vittorio Gallese’, *California Italian Studies* 2:1 (2011) <http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/56f8v9bv> [accessed 6 September 2013].

<sup>14</sup> Vittorio Gallese and Michele Guerra, ‘Embodying Movies: Embodied Simulation and Film Studies’, *Cinema* 3 (2012), pp. 183-210.

<sup>15</sup> For theoretical implications of this branch of research see: Bruce McConachie and F. Elizabeth Hart (eds.), *Performance and Cognition: Theatre Studies and the Cognitive Turn* (New York: Routledge, 2006). See also, Bruce McConachie, ‘Doing Things with Image Schemas: the Cognitive Turn in Theatre Studies and the Problem of Experience for Historians’, *Theatre Journal* 53: 4 (2001), pp. 569-594; Bruce McConachie, ‘Falsifiable Theories for Theatre and Performance Studies’, *Theatre Journal* 59: 4 (2007), pp. 553-577; Bruce McConachie, ‘Metaphors we Act By’, *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 8: 2 (1993), pp. 23-45.

<sup>16</sup> Importantly, Mary Thomas Crane, *Shakespeare’s Brain: Reading with Cognitive Theory* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000); Jill Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory and Devotional Culture: Sensual Piety in Late Medieval York* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Jill Stevenson, ‘Embodied Enchantments: Cognitive Theory and the York Mystery Plays’, *The York Mystery Plays: Performance in the City*, ed. by Margaret Rogerson (York: York Medieval Press, 2011), pp. 91-102.

<sup>17</sup> Amy Cook, ‘Interplay: The Method and Potential of a Cognitive Scientific Approach to Theatre’, p. 580.

<sup>18</sup> For example, it has been observed that affective spirituality acquired great popularity in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Jane Chance, ‘Cognitive Alterities: From Cultural Studies to Neuroscience and Back Again’, *Postmedieval* 3 (2012), pp. 247-262, p. 251. For a study on how moral qualities were attributed to how the world was perceived through the senses in the late Middle Ages, see Chris M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (London: Yale University Press, 2006).

stems from fears about how performance unconsciously works on and in the body.<sup>19</sup>

She observes that through conceptual blending, spectators of medieval cycle plays were capable of appreciating the biblical story while at the same time picking up on contemporary allusions made, taking in the surroundings of the city, and recognizing guild associations. Stevenson says that, 'throughout each pageant, spectators navigated these multiple visual layers, while also engaging them all simultaneously as entertainment and devotion'.<sup>20</sup> The moments when spectators mentally fused their own physical environment (for example the city of York) with the Biblical event, so that they experienced the Crucifixion as if it happened in the here and now of the streets of York, are what Stevenson calls 'living in the blend'.<sup>21</sup> This changed the spectator from an onlooker into being a witness to an important Biblical moment.<sup>22</sup> Stevenson furthermore argues that mirror neurons would have rendered spectators capable of 'living in the body of the performer'.<sup>23</sup> They would simulate in their brains the emotions and pain evoked by the actions performed on stage or on the pageant wagon. Stevenson argues,

Performance spectatorship entails the meaningful interaction with a 'false' world that we perceive and experience, in part, as an actuality. 'Living in the blend' of a play has the potential to impact a spectator in such a powerful way that it may influence future activity and meaning construction in the real world.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory and Devotional Culture*, p. 32.

<sup>20</sup> Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory and Devotional Culture*, p. 77.

<sup>21</sup> Jill Stevenson, 'Embodied Enchantments: Cognitive Theory and the York Mystery Plays', *The York Mystery Plays: Performance in the City*, ed. by Margaret Rogerson (York: York Medieval Press, 2011), pp. 91-102, p. 97. The idea that York and Jerusalem share the same ground in the York *Entry into Jerusalem* (c. 1463-1477) so that they become the same world in which the spectator watches, incorporated in the dramatic and ritual action, has also been discussed in Pamela M. King, 'Seeing and Hearing: Looking and Listening', *Early Theatre* 3: 1 (2000), pp. 155-166, p. 164; Theodore K. Lerud, *Memory, Images, and the English Corpus Christi Drama* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 102; Martin Stevens, 'The Intertextuality of Late Medieval Art and Drama', *New Literary History* 22: 2 (1991), pp. 317-337, p. 332.

<sup>22</sup> Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory and Devotional Culture*, p. 125.

<sup>23</sup> Stevenson, 'Embodied Enchantments', p. 99.

<sup>24</sup> Stevenson, 'Embodied Enchantments', p. 101.

Stevenson's study on the interaction of spectatorship and the play-world and reality, through conceptual blending and cognitive theory, closely follows Bruce McConachie's work, in which he argues that spectators have a capacity to perceive the world onstage in 'blended' form, in which they 'understand the world onstage not as an illusion, but as a different kind of reality'.<sup>25</sup> This, McConachie argues, occurs when spectators are 'living in the blend of performance and mirroring the actions of actor/characters',<sup>26</sup> that is, bodies on stage that they recognize as an actor, while at the same time understanding them as a fictional character in the dramatic plot. McConachie suggests that the fictional part of plays should not be considered 'unreal' but should rather be acknowledged to be 'make-believe'; something which he suggests could be 'part of reality'.<sup>27</sup> What this means for conceptual blending theory is that, as McConachie suggests: 'when spectators blend together actuality and fiction, the blended images they produce in their minds retain their reality for them.'<sup>28</sup>

Cognitive theory, in short, allows for spectators of any kind of live performance to feel empathy or closeness to the dramatic action performed, almost as if it occurred in the 'here and now'. Mirror neurons are said to transfer the spectator, if only mentally, to the actor's body, enhancing the affect felt by spectators. Conceptual blending, on the other hand, makes for an absorbed experience, which also occasionally allows the spectator out of the world of the play, for example when the information from different mental spaces overlap, and the spectator notices their neighbour participating in the performance, while at the same time absorbing themselves into, for example, Joseph's trouble with Mary. Stevenson has acknowledged a wide range of theatrical devices that could further the spectators' affective response to devotional culture, yet the focus on cognitive theory in the study of drama remains a study of the 'normative'. Although it can be applied to a specific historical context, such as the York cycle plays, it does not take as a *starting point* the social and political identity of a specific performance, and with that the nature of that public performance. Rather it focuses on the idea that *any*

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<sup>25</sup> McConachie, 'Falsifiable Theories', p. 566.

<sup>26</sup> McConachie, 'Falsifiable Theories', p. 566.

<sup>27</sup> McConachie, 'Falsifiable Theories', p. 567.

<sup>28</sup> McConachie, 'Falsifiable Theories', p. 567.

spectator would experience conceptual blending when presented with the different kinds of information united at *any* performance space, and that *any* spectator was capable of feeling empathy towards actions performed by an actor, through mirror neurons. Cognitive theory thus provides an insight into the *process* by which the workings of the surroundings of a play could influence the body and mind of the spectator. Mostly, cognitive theory flags up, in the words of McConachie, that performance ‘mixes up our usual categories of actuality and make-belief all the time’.<sup>29</sup> This theory, however powerful, does not seem to address adequately the individuality or diversity of spectator responses.

### 1.3 Metatheatricality

The second theory that this chapter wishes to use as a reference point is metatheatricality, which appears to oppose cognitive theory: this theory emphasises the self-consciousness the spectator feels about drama as an artificial medium. The term ‘metatheatre’ or ‘metaplay’ was coined by Lionel Abel in 1963 in his monograph *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form*, a collection of essays as much interested in tragedy as in the then innovative critical term that challenged the claim of theatre to be realistic.<sup>30</sup> Abel’s reading was focused on the author or playwright of the drama that he studied, and a clear distance was assumed between actor and spectator. The proscenium theatre was kept in mind in discussion of ‘the theatre’, a space in which stage and audience were separated by an invisible barrier called the ‘fourth wall’, through which spectators watched a different world to which they did not belong: that of the play. As Abel’s imagined spectators sat in the dark, neither to be seen nor heard, they were treated to anti-tragic dramatic forms by Abel’s contemporaries, such as Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett and Jean Genet. Working in an atmosphere of post-war dramatic performance, Abel retrospectively attributed humanity’s apparent loss of the ability to perform

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<sup>29</sup> McConachie, ‘Falsifiable Theories’, p. 566.

<sup>30</sup> Lionel Abel, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963), p. 83. It has to be noted that Abel’s later work is less extremely outspoken and more coherent, although it still does not fully define the term that Abel coined. See, Lionel Abel, *Tragedy and Metatheatre* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 2003).

tragedy to all theatre from *Hamlet* onwards. Abel sought to provide a philosophical alternative to this genre by pointing at metatheatricality, which he defined as 'the world is a stage, life is a dream'.<sup>31</sup> Abel based his 'loss of tragedy' on Robert J. Nelson's *Play Within a Play*, in which Nelson juxtaposed the genre of tragedy with the use of the theatrical device of the play within the play, which he considered to be an invention of the 'modern world'.<sup>32</sup> Abel presented his tragedy/metatheatrical dichotomy in the following way:

Tragedy gives by far the stronger sense of the reality of the world. Metatheatricality gives by far the stronger sense that the world is a projection of human consciousness. Tragedy glorifies the structure of the world, which it supposedly reflects in its own form. Metatheatricality glorifies the unwillingness of the imagination to regard any image of the world as ultimate. Tragedy makes human existence more vivid by showing its vulnerability to fate. Metatheatricality makes human existence more dreamlike by showing that fate can be overcome. Tragedy tries to mediate between world and man. Tragedy wants to be on both sides. Metatheatricality assumes there is no world except that created by human striving, human imagination. Tragedy cannot operate without the assumption of an ultimate order. For metatheatricality, order is something continually improvised by men. There is no such thing as humanistic tragedy. There is no such thing as religious metatheatricality.<sup>33</sup>

Metatheatricality was originally thus defined in opposition to tragedy in order to highlight the non-affective, cerebral, reflective and self-conscious qualities of the dramatic experience, unlike the pity and terror and catharsis of tragedy. Abel's author- and play-text focused dichotomy sought to find a description for a phenomenon which was revisited by James L. Calderwood, who explained it as a phenomenon of detachment which he regarded as reflecting more the experience of scholars than playgoers. According to Calderwood, scholars of drama had lost the ability to watch a performance and to supplement it with their own imagination. He suggested that they had become readers rather than

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<sup>31</sup> Abel, *Metatheatricality*, p. 83.

<sup>32</sup> Robert J. Nelson, *Play Within the Play: The Dramatist's Conception of his Art: Shakespeare to Anouilh* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> Abel, *Metatheatricality*, p. 183.

playgoers, detached from the original play experience because their current experience of drama was so different from that which would have been had, for example, at the Elizabethan playhouse:

We, a generation of playgoers raised on Pirandello, Brecht, Anouilh, Beckett, Pinter and Genet ... We cannot be simultaneously conscious of actor and character, of theatre and depicted life, of art and nature. We cannot be imaginatively involved in the immediate experience of the play, and at the same time, be intellectually detached from it, playgoer and critic at once.<sup>34</sup>

Calderwood observed metatheatricity to be a consequence of language and in return concerned with language,<sup>35</sup> which he demonstrated through a study of Shakespeare.<sup>36</sup> He explained his focus on the letters of the play-script in the following way:

With the illusion of heroic life shattered, we are left confronting the trumpery of theatre – costumes, actors, props, stage, words issuing from a script instead of from men's mouths.<sup>37</sup>

While privileging the work of the actor, Calderwood also allowed for the importance of highlighting the spectator's awareness. Calderwood's work initiated a glut of metatheatrical studies, some of which located the spectator's

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<sup>34</sup> James L. Calderwood, *Metadrama in Shakespeare's Henriad: Richard II to Henry V* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 79.

<sup>35</sup> Calderwood's approach has developed out of a field of study of the semiotics of metalanguage in Shakespeare. See for example, Anne Richter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964). Calderwood's work precedes Agostino Lombardo's view that metadrama is inherent to Shakespeare's usage of language as it reflects on his own condition as a playwright and artist. Agostino Lombardo, 'The Veneto, Metatheatre and Shakespeare', in Michele Marrapodi, A.J. Hoenselaars, M. Capuzzo and F. Falzon Santucci (eds), *Shakespeare's Italy: Functions of Italian Locations in Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 143-157, p. 143.

<sup>36</sup> For other studies specifically on Shakespeare and self-referentiality to the artificiality of drama, see Robert Egan, *Drama within Drama: Shakespeare's Sense of his Art in King Lear, The Winter's Tale and The Tempest* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975); Sidney Homan, *When the Theater Turns to Itself: the Aesthetic Metaphor in Shakespeare* (Bucknell University Press, 1981); Judd D. Hubert, *Metatheatre: the Example of Shakespeare* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).

<sup>37</sup> Calderwood, *Metadrama*, p. 79.

conscious awareness of dramatic artifice in devices employed by the dramatist such as the play within the play; the ceremony within the play; role playing within the role; literary and real-life reference within the play and self-reference.<sup>38</sup> Some of these theories, such as Richard Hornby's, suggested that although moments of dramatic self-reference found in plays were produced by the author/dramatist, they were inspired by human perception, and thus by spectatorship. Hornby claimed that spectators always related what they saw or heard to the play as a whole, and to other plays that they had seen, so that 'a dramatic work is always experienced at least secondarily as metadramatic'.<sup>39</sup> Peter Hyland's recent study, which also argues for the spectators' inherent awareness of the artificiality of drama, claims that '*disguise* is of its essence metatheatrical' [emphasis mine].<sup>40</sup> Both Hornby and Hyland have remarked that the degree to which plays consciously exploited the metatheatrical potential would have varied widely.<sup>41</sup>

Where Hornby and Hyland related the play's relationship to the cultural system by which it is surrounded in order to argue that the spectator is always in a sense aware of the drama as artificial, William Egginton placed the notion of 'space' at the root of drama's metatheatricality. He writes:

... A distinction is recognized between a real space and another, imaginary one that mirrors it, that very distinction becomes an element to be incorporated as another distinction in the imaginary space's work of mimesis. This second distinction becomes incorporated as the third, and so on, as a potentially infinite *mise en abîme*.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Richard Hornby, *Drama, Metadrama and Perception* (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1986), p. 32.

<sup>39</sup> Hornby, *Drama, Metadrama and Perception*, p. 31.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Hyland, *Disguise on the Early Modern English Stage* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2011), p. 15.

<sup>41</sup> Hornby, *Drama, Metadrama and Perception*, p. 31; Hyland, *Disguise on the Early Modern English Stage*, p. 15.

<sup>42</sup> William Egginton, *How The World Became a Stage: Presence, Theatricality and the Question of Modernity* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 74.

Egginton argued that, ‘there can be no theatre that is not already a metatheatre’.<sup>43</sup> Theatre, for him however, indicated the ‘modern theatre’ from the sixteenth century onwards. Egginton explained his claim by arguing that for the spectacle in the Middle Ages, the space of drama was already a ‘full space’. That is to say that the space in which medieval drama was performed was already full of meaning and imagery, ‘capable of transmitting influences between bodies and distinctly unfit for housing sharp distinctions between the real and the imaginary’.<sup>44</sup> For example, he names the doctrine of Real Presence as a phenomenon which would have filled the dramatic space with meaning, around which the distinction between the real space and the theatrical space could not be made.<sup>45</sup> At this stage one is beginning to see the extreme metatheatrical position as attempting to cope with the kinds of conceptual blending of different mental spaces such as one finds in cognitive theory, and looking to medieval instances where such blending is theologically promoted.

The view that medieval society was a space already too full of meaning to allow for a clear distinction between reality and fiction on the basis of theatrical devices used is also put forward by K. Janet Ritch in her study on medieval cycle plays. Ritch claims that the society in which medieval biblical plays took place was already so theatrical in all its facets, both secular and sacred, that it is unlikely that there was ‘space for anything extra-theatrical’.<sup>46</sup> Metatheatricality or extra-theatricality for Ritch involves an alienating effect that the breaking of impersonation—or mimesis in a play—would have on its audience. Studying the role of the Presenter in biblical cycle plays, Ritch observes that although Presenters employed direct address to the audience, this did not have an alienating or metatheatrical effect, because the theatrical devices were employed to the end of unifying the audiences with the characters on stage, bringing them closer to the doctrinal message of the play, and thus to God.<sup>47</sup> For Ritch, therefore, a particular theatrical device performed

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<sup>43</sup> Egginton, *How the World Became a Stage*, p. 74.

<sup>44</sup> Egginton, *How the World Became a Stage*, p. 105.

<sup>45</sup> Egginton, *How The World Became a Stage*, p. 36.

<sup>46</sup> K. Janet Ritch, ‘The Role of the Presenter in Medieval Drama’, in *“Bring Furth the Pageants”: Essays in Early English Drama Presented to Alexandra F. Johnston* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 230-268, p. 260.

<sup>47</sup> K. Janet Ritch, ‘The Role of the Presenter in Medieval Drama’, p. 260.



in the 'full', theatrical, space of the middle ages, did not have the same effect as it would have had when performed in the 'Brechtian' theatre, and therefore, should not share the same definition as metatheatrical.

The doctrinal use of Presenter figures in medieval cycle plays has also been studied by Peter Happé, who has observed that the aspects of these figures that directly interrupt the dramatic action—addressing the audience, summarizing parts of the play, advising the audience what to believe, and exploring doctrinal themes—caused the characters to function as linking figures, that related the play to the audience, and thus encouraged the play's devotional message.<sup>48</sup> Both acknowledging *exactly* the same effect of a particular theatrical device employed by Presenter figures in medieval cycle plays, the difference between Happé's and Ritch's studies is that the former calls the Presenter characters 'metatheatrical', where the latter does not. A third study on Presenter figures in medieval cycle plays, specifically the N-Town plays, by William Fitzhenry also refers to these characters as metatheatrical, observing their interactions with the audience as a self-reflexive commentary on the drama in which they featured.<sup>49</sup>

The confusion as to whether the term 'metatheatricality' could be productively employed for the study of medieval drama arises from the following. There are techniques to be recognised in medieval English drama, which were picked up on by Bertolt Brecht in his modern drama, and were later termed metatheatrical by scholars influenced by Brecht's theatre. Brecht employed these techniques in order to make his spectators conscious of theatrical experiences as demonstrative, fictional and exemplary, rather than naturalist or illusionist. This, however, does not mean that these techniques were used to the same ends in medieval England. The question remains whether medieval audiences and spectators were self-conscious about the

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<sup>48</sup> Peter Happé, 'Metatheatre in the English Mystery Cycles: Expositor, Contemplatio, Prolocutor and Others', *Theta* 7 (2007), pp. 89-108, p. 98; Peter Happé, 'A and Ω: How to Begin and How to End a Mystery Cycle' *European Medieval Drama* 14 (2010), pp. 1-14, p. 14.

<sup>49</sup> William Fitzhenry, 'The N-Town plays and the Politics of Metatheatre', *Studies in Philology* 100: 1 (2003), pp. 22-43.

artificiality of drama in the way that Shakespeare enabled the audience to be, and Brecht required his audience to be.

In short, it may be observed that features which the Abel-following tradition of metadramatic criticism regarded as metatheatrical may be found both in modern and early drama. This does not necessarily mean a shared metatheatricity or shared purposes for the drama. Although the definition of ‘metatheatre’ keeps shifting, depending on the scholarly context in which it is employed, its development and its encounters with the study of early English drama have shown yet another way in which scholars have tried to describe the dramatic experience as at once illusionistic and non-illusionistic, and as an experience which acknowledges itself as real in one sense and artificial in another. I have thus far observed that the two worlds of theatre—the fictional one on stage and the spectator’s world that they bring to the performance—are acknowledged by both cognitive and metatheatrical theory. Each theory however tries to bring these worlds together in different ways.

## 1.4 The Edge of Reality and Fiction

This thesis locates Early English drama on the edge of reality and fiction. I argue that the most important element of the dramatic experience exists between the two poles of artificiality and absorption, and that the dramatic experience is managed with respect to these two poles. This thesis focuses on the spectator, not just on the absorbed spectator who ‘lives’ in the drama, such as one finds in cognitive studies, or on the reflective spectator who is conscious of the artifice of drama, such as in metatheatrical studies, but rather on participatory spectators, and on spectators moving between the two positions of absorption and reflection.

I will study the experience of play as it intersects with its historical location and context, as play tries to fill up a space, answer a question, clarify an enigma, or intervene in a social setting which is not completely secure about a topic, or in a society that is divided or fragmented. Many early English plays had to relate to non-dramatic issues, as interventions in a society in which questions were not settled, and thus automatically carried with them an

inevitable risk. This risk sits on the boundary of the world of play—a provisional community—and the world of non-play, or reality, which is the larger community in which the provisional community is located. Plays too exist on this borderline, and are only successful when they stay on this line; too far into the world of play makes playwrights lose argument, intensity, or the spectators' interests. However, when a play was drawn too far into the real world of the community context, actors, participants and spectators risked getting into trouble. When drama was an intervention, spectators participated on the boundary of artificial and real communities. The spectator and the manager of their responses were delicately related to the context in which the drama was performed. The management of that delicate relationship is what I will discuss in this thesis.

Promoting the notion of risk and the management of risk at the centre of the discourse about drama, this thesis investigates dramatic experience on the basis of the following points: firstly, that theatre is not a text but an event, and that therefore play texts on the page misrepresent the real experience that actors and spectators would have had, because they do not allow for things to go differently from how they were scripted. Secondly, that if one were to base one's knowledge of a performance solely on the play text, one might infer how the drama was intended to be organised, but not how the dramatic event unfolded or was received. Thirdly, that from the measures employed by playwrights, we can infer how they saw their audiences, and how they thought about the context in which their plays were performed. By implication these measures show how spectators were allowed to think of themselves as spectators. Finally, that even where a specific spatio-temporal location cannot be established for a play it is still possible to see the dynamics of risk in a play. Similarly, we do not always know spectators' responses but we can infer from the dynamic of risk in the play what would have thrilled, or excited them.

This thesis offers case-studies using pairs of plays, set against their different contexts. This could have been done in a different way, for example by offering later or earlier plays. However, the point of this thesis is not to provide a summary of theatre in the Tudor and early Stuart period, but to

illustrate the diversity of treatment that the management of risk involves in different performance contexts.

Chapter two studies two sacrament plays: the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* (c. 1461-1500) and a play from the Low Countries, the Breda '*T Spel vanden Heilighen Sacramente vander Nyeuwervaert* (1500). In these two very different performance contexts, the playmakers employed contrasting ways of managing a similar risk to spectators, that is, the spiritual and emotional discomfort that could arise when the elements of play and ritual came too close in the performance. I will observe that both the Croxton and Breda dramatists controlled what the audience was allowed to see, the former by pointedly not staging the Mass, but instead revealing the wonders of the Host through actions that could not be confused with the Mass as it was celebrated in church. The Breda play took this strategy even further, by completely controlling the visibility of the Host on stage. I will also address the extent to which audiences were involved in both plays, to obtain insight into spectator participation as a risk-management strategy. Where the Croxton play both invited the audience to experience a kind of affect close to affective piety, as well as actively involved them in formal ritual and ceremony not unlike that of the church, the material culture available shows that the Breda play was already part of a ritual and ceremonial context related to the Holy Sacrament, and therefore had no need for in-play ritual elements. This play seeks to include the audience through sensory language.

Chapter three studies two Mary Magdalen plays, the anonymous Digby *Mary Magdalene* (c. 1490-1530), and Lewis Wager's *Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalen* (c. 1550). For both plays I examine to what extent spectators really were invited to experience moral, emotional, or erotic risk, and to what extent this risk was carefully managed by the playmakers. To this end, this chapter considers the amount of affect allowed in the play. I will observe that a play cannot be offered to an audience without generating emotional responses in the spectators, but that plays, at different moments, seem to have sought to limit the ways in which spectators relate to characters and their actions. To study this, I will first address the identification between the spectator and the protagonist that the Magdalen plays invite. Secondly, I will attend to the

representation on stage of the period of the Magdalen's sinning. Thirdly, I claim that the positioning of ritual elements in the plays corresponds to the idea of Salvation and was determined by the status of Good Works in the plays. This status was different for the Digby play with its Catholic values and the Wager play which followed Calvinist doctrine. Previous critics have argued that the playwrights writing Protestant moralities changed the *meaning* of the theatrical form by merely adopting a Catholic genre for their Protestant needs. I will argue instead that Catholic and Protestant reformers *alike* changed the *theatrical form* of the medium to strengthen its dogmatic impact, and with it, changed the medium's relation to the spectator.

Chapter four addresses two plays performed in the setting of the Tudor great halls: John Heywood's *Play of the Wether* (c. 1532-1533) and John Bale's *King Johan* (1539). The chapter contrasts the ways in which both playwrights managed the audience's exposure to their ideas, to suit their own social and political ends, to guide and to a certain extent protect audiences, and to offer counsel to spectators in high places. I argue that spectators were primarily protected by the awareness of the theatricality of the medium of the court-within-the-court play, which would have reminded them of their context at all times. Furthermore, spectators would have been managed by figures of counsel, such as Mery Report in Heywood's *Play of the Weather*, and the Interpreter, Verity, and, in a different way, Treason in Bale's *King Johan*. Playwrights worked on the expectations of these genres that spectators brought to the play with them. Moreover, spectators were managed by the dramatist's chosen representation of regality, not only the attributes that were given to the kings represented, but also the forms that these representations took theatrically. Finally, spectators were managed by audience involvement through the use of ceremony within the play. In this chapter, I will observe that playwrights at times were more than happy to subject their spectators to risk, if they believed that their performance context allowed it, or for reasons of a propagandistic nature, as in the case of Bale. Heywood on the other hand was somebody who had to make a much greater effort to manage risk and protect his audience because his play was more complexly related to the performance context.

Chapter five studies a range of civic street performances in the city of Wells in 1607. This chapter shows an instance where risk was not successfully avoided, using the *Hole vs. White et al. Star Chamber* case. The chapter shows a shift in the playmakers' and participants' perception and management of risk. They started out with a cautious approach to performing traditional plays and games that were opposed by reform-leaning members of the community, but gradually became more confident in the use of the dramatic medium. It will be observed that once the actors and participants had found that their May and summer games were condoned by the local authorities, they started to use their ludic activities to mock those opposing it. The plays and pageants grew in hostility, and rather encouraged spectators to become involved with the mockery. This is partly due to the nature of civic participatory drama and drama which included processions, in which spectators could also temporarily become actors or participants. Mostly, however, it was caused by a festive excitement based on a false sense of security on the part of the actors, who had not expected legal repercussions, and who misjudged their performance context. This chapter will conclude that risk management is not a single act, but a process which has to take account of a changing performance context; it reveals the unpredictability of dramatic performance.

Following chapter five which observes that a miscalculation of the performance context could lead to a disaster, chapter six observes that drama could also be used to set things right. This chapter addresses Anne of Denmark's visit to Wells in 1613, during which the use of the dramatic form was recuperated, and civic pageants were used as a retrospective cleansing of the antagonism that had previously been expressed through earlier shows.

I have not selected any play-house plays as case-study material. This choice is not motivated by chronology; after all, play-house plays and non-play-house plays (for want of a better word) existed side by side. Also, the play-house play as a type was *not* apolitical; in order to grasp the social and political significance of play-house plays, one only needs to think of Queen Elizabeth's much-quoted communication to William Lambert in the privy chamber at East Greenwich on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1601, when she asserted: 'I am

Richard II, know ye not that?’<sup>50</sup> Play-house plays could indeed be a *political* intervention, not unlike the plays performed at court or in great halls. However, they were less of a *spatial* intervention or interference into an existing community—perhaps with the exception of the children’s performances and Blackfriars’ theatre, which catered for niche audiences which were social communities in their own right—so that the play experience in the play-house marks the loss, to a degree, of an existing community into which the play intervened, instead imposing a new commercial community onto the existing one. When going to the play-house, spectators consciously moved away from the space that made up the setting of their everyday life, to enter a place dedicated to the extraordinary, in which they were to be entertained, thrilled, or shocked to their delight. The temporarily severed connection from the community context meant that the position of spectators of play-house plays shifted towards that of onlooker, aware of their position of leisure and their risk-free enjoyment of the fictions on stage. This meant that playwrights had the liberty, or perhaps the obligation, to create an artificial context to which the spectators could belong. This can be illustrated by the example of *Hamlet*, in which the eponymous hero ‘staged’ the Mousetrap, and purposefully metamorphosed the audience into an artificial court audience, so that spectators temporarily became courtiers, watching a play within the context of the outer play. This meant that they temporarily, artificially, became part of a community, a spectatorial body that shared the same provisional community through acknowledging the play’s artificiality. As soon as the play-within-the-play was over and the normal plot was resumed, the audience returned to its normal status and later still they left the theatre having briefly experienced the thrill of the fear without ever having been in real danger, because the context in which they were allowed to feel as implicated spectators, was as fictional as the play itself. As such, a reading of play-house plays does not contribute to my study of the spectator’s engagement with both the play and the larger context around the play in relation to risk, nor its management by playmakers.

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<sup>50</sup> E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), pp. 326-327.

One of the reasons why risk has not been prominent in the discourse around early drama is that spectatorship is only now becoming central to the discourse. Also, it has been caused by the dominance of the study of the playhouse in literary criticism. This thesis will show that earlier drama is community-based and not artificially constructed. As such, this study will be reflective of the realities of community drama, observing that it can lead to disaster or can be used to recuperate loss or set things right; that drama of opposite kinds can be used to control the same issues, as we will see in the Breda and Croxton chapter; that playwrights did not always seek to protect their spectators from risk. In this thesis, I am offering an alternative history of drama which is not shaped by the customary conceptual framework of early, late, Catholic, or Protestant. Instead, I will show that in terms of the management of the spectators' dramatic experience and risk dramatists could get it wrong in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, right in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, wrong again five years later. It shows the variability of dramatic technique, and of dramatic success in *specific contexts*.





## 2. Showing or not showing in two sacrament plays: the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* and the Breda *Play of the Holy Sacrament of the Nieuwervaart*

### 2.1 Introduction

One may encounter a number of problems when using primary sources such as letters, records and diaries to learn more about the performance and spectator experience of drama. Although we do, for example, have Juan Luis Vives' early sixteenth-century testimony in which he criticises the rowdy behaviour of spectators at a Passion play, presumably in the Low Countries,<sup>1</sup> such recorded spectator response is very rare, often biased, or written for purposes other than describing the performance experience. It is not always clear whether these accounts were first-hand, or whether the memoirist had even attended the performance that is referred to. For example, Henry Machyn's entry about the performance of *Gorboduc* (1562) seems to suggest that he only saw a scaffold in the hall that was used for the play, and noticed that it was taken down the next day:

The xviiij day of January was a play in the quen('s) hall at Westmynster by the gentyll-men of the Tempull, and after a grett maske, for ther was a grett scaffold in the hall, with grett tryhumpe as has bene sene; and the morrow after the scaffold was taken done.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Carpenter, 'New Evidence: Vives and Audience-Response to Biblical Drama', *Medieval English Theatre* 31 (2009), pp. 3-12. See also John J. McGavin, 'Figuring the Spectator' (forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> Henry Machyn, 'Diary 1562 (January - June)', in *The Diary of Henry Machyn: Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London 1550- 1563*, ed. by J.G. Nichols (London: The Camden Society, 1848), p. 275, in *British History Online*. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45529> [accessed 16 May 2012]. Also quoted in Alice Hunt, 'Dumb Politics in Gorboduc', *The Oxford Handbook to Tudor Drama*, ed. by

The account is detached, and was not written to describe the theatrical experience that historians and literary scholars are looking for. In the words of Charles Whitney, ‘eyewitness accounts seldom report or recreate in-theatre experiences simply for their own sakes’, and often, ‘these accounts cannot be distinguished in kind from accounts of non-dramatic events or of texts’.<sup>3</sup> However, together with the performance context and the play texts, they do allow for a theorizing of how ‘audiences appropriated the performances they watched’.<sup>4</sup> We cannot always know what individual spectators thought of the plays performed, how they interpreted them, and what they took from the plays as they left the performance and went back to their normal lives, when this was not recorded.<sup>5</sup> It follows that for most performances we also do not have a way to know how spectators of these events experienced risk. In most cases, the management of spectator risk by playwrights and organisers of events can be inferred only from the apparent techniques and strategies of the plays. However, we cannot always know whether or not these techniques were successful. Claire Sponsler reminds us of ‘the tendency of all activities, events, and performances to escape the bounds of their intended effects and local contexts, sometimes with unexpected consequences’.<sup>6</sup>

In the current chapter I wish to do the following: to look at the management of risk in two contrasting sacrament plays that were performed at the turn of the sixteenth century, of which one is a travelling play that was performed in East Anglia, and the other a devotional guild play from Breda in the Low Countries. The two plays are the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* (c.1461-1500),<sup>7</sup> and a less well-known miracle play from Breda in the Low Countries called *Het Spel vanden Heilighen Sacramente vander Nyeuwervaert*

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Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 547-565.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Whitney, *Early Responses to Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Claire Sponsler, ‘The Culture of the Spectator: Conformity and Resistance to Medieval Performances’, *Theatre Journal* 44 (1992), pp. 15-29, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> John J. McGavin, ‘Figuring the Spectator’ (Forthcoming), p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Sponsler, ‘The Culture of the Spectator’, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Original manuscript at Trinity College Dublin MS 652, ff. 338-356. The play is also known by the title: *Conversion of Ser Jonathas the Jewe by the Myracle of the Blissed Sacrament*. Greg Walker, ‘Croxton: The Play of the Sacrament’, *Medieval Drama: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 213-234. All references to the Croxton *Play* will be from this edition, and will be offered parenthetically in the text.

[*The Play of the Holy Sacrament of the Nieuwervaart*]<sup>8</sup> (1500). The former play is highly visual and sets out to evoke the spectators' passions and work on their memory to make an impression on their mind's eye. The latter play uses the power of words to offer a description of actions that remain unstaged,<sup>9</sup> and offers a substitute for the imagined scene and for the mind's eye, as it describes the scene instead of depicting it. My reason for contrasting these two plays is to explore what risk management might mean in very different contexts, and to show the extreme difference in how similar problems are being addressed by the playmakers in both performances.

I will discuss the Croxton play first. The current state of thinking is that the play is an educational play performed to the effect of educating its audiences,<sup>10</sup> or converting the members of the spectating community,<sup>11</sup> or bringing them together in communal—even fraternal—celebration of the divine. For example, Clifford Davidson recognizes in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* a 'celebration of the power of the Eucharist'.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Heather Hill-Vásquez and Ann Eljenholm Nicholas have interpreted the play as having been performed as an exploration of belief rather than doubt.<sup>13</sup> Others have asserted that the play was designed to control and bring together the

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<sup>8</sup> Breda, Stadsarchief Breda, Afd. III-103, inv. nr. 133. Den boeck vanden heilighen sacramente vander Nyeuwervaert, fol. 27 verso – 69 verso. The codex is also presented in a critical edition by Asselbergs and Huysmans: J.M.A. Asselbergs and A.P. Huysmans (eds), *Het Spel vanden Heilighen Sacramente vander Nyeuwervaert* (Zwolle: Willink, 1955). Asselbergs and scholars quoting him locate this play at the archives of the St Barabara church [HS Archief der Sint Barabarakerk, Breda], which was where the manuscript was kept in 1955 when Asselbergs edited his edition. However, this church was broken down in the 1960s, and its archives moved to the City Archives [Stadsarchief Breda], hosted by the Breda's Museum.

<sup>9</sup> For insights in verbal framing see Pauline Blanc's article: Pauline Blanc, 'Seeing-is-believing: Vision and the Power of Verbal Framing in the Tudor Theatre', *Theta* 8 (2009), pp. 43-56.

<sup>10</sup> Janette Dillon, 'What Sacrament? Excess, Taboo and Truth in the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament* and Twentieth-Century Body Art', *European Medieval Drama* 4 (2001), pp.169-180, p. 177. See also André Lascombes, 'Revisiting the Croxton Play of the Sacrament: Spectacle and the Other's Voice', *European Medieval Drama* 2 (1998), pp. 261-275, p. 268.

<sup>11</sup> David Bevington, *Medieval Drama* (London: Houghton, 1975), p. 754.

<sup>12</sup> Clifford Davidson, *Festivals and Plays in Late Medieval Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 75.

<sup>13</sup> Heather Hill-Vásquez, 'The Precious Body of Crist that they Treytyn in Ther Hondis': 'Miracles Pleyinge' and the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Early Theatre* 4 (2001), pp. 53-72; Ann Eljenholm Nichols, 'Lollard Language in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Notes and Queries* 36 (1989), pp. 23-25.

community that enjoyed it,<sup>14</sup> or to address fractures in the community in which the play was performed.<sup>15</sup> As Paul Strohm has suggested, ‘the sacramental society aspires to become a cleansed and purified society, in which dissent is either re-absorbed or successfully expelled’.<sup>16</sup> The Host in this reading integrates the community either through conversion as is demonstrated in the Croxton play, or through the punishment of those desecrating the Host in other host-desecration narratives.<sup>17</sup> Some scholars have observed that the Croxton play touches on contemporary concerns. For example, it has been argued that the Croxton play expresses ‘fifteenth-century anxieties ... about an expanding and potentially destabilized economy’.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Elizabeth Dutton has remarked on the economic threat of immigrants coming to East Anglia to trade, many of them coming from the Low Countries, which may have been reflected in the play through the presence of Master Brandyche from Brabant.<sup>19</sup> A further reading which has been popular for a long time is that the play displays anxieties about Jews or whatever the character Jonathas and friends may have represented (see my section 2.4 below). However, Greg Walker has convincingly argued that the play ‘is not so much anti-Semitic as about anti-Semitism’ and that it ‘plays with anti-Semitic images and ideas rather than asserting them as truths’.<sup>20</sup>

My own reading of this play has been influenced by Walker’s article, especially in the belief that the play is as much concerned with its own

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<sup>14</sup> Seth Lerer, ‘“Representyd now in yower syght”: The Culture of Spectatorship in Late-Fifteenth-Century England’, *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 29-62, p. 44.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Strohm, ‘The Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*: Commemoration and Repetition in Late Medieval Culture’, *Performances of the Sacred in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. by Susanne Rupp and Tobias Döring (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 33-44, p. 43.

<sup>16</sup> Strohm, ‘The Croxton Play of the Sacrament’, p. 43.

<sup>17</sup> Strohm, ‘The Croxton Play of the Sacrament’, p. 43.

<sup>18</sup> Alexandra Reid-Schwartz, ‘Economies of Salvation: Commerce and the Eucharist in the Profanation of the Host and the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*’, *Comitatus* 25:1 (1994), pp. 1-20, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> Elisabeth Dutton, ‘The Croxton Play of the Sacrament’, *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 55-71, p. 59. See also, David A. Lawton, ‘Sacrilege and Theatricality: The Croxton Play of the Sacrament’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33: 2 (2003), pp. 281-309, p. 292.

<sup>20</sup> Greg Walker, ‘And Here’s Your Host...: Jews and Others in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*’, *Jewish Culture and History* 11: 1-2 (2009), pp. 40-56, p. 53.

theatricality as with its didacticism,<sup>21</sup> a notion also expressed by Dutton.<sup>22</sup> This study is furthermore closely informed by Janette Dillon's study on the Croxton play and twentieth-century body art, in which she proposes that the play offered spectators 'the thrill of outraging taboo' in order to serve the didactic purpose of teaching spectators a doctrinal message and to 'reaffirm its audience's faith in the truth of that doctrine'.<sup>23</sup> In her reading, Dillon asserts that the audience is encouraged to join the collective procession at the end of the play in order to 'express their repentance and their faith', after which more participative events follow as they witness the representation of the celebration of the Host, the sermon of the Episcopus, and the conversion of the Jews, and join in the singing of the *Te Deum*. Dillon argues that the play 'must do this because it is important that the audience should take the experience and understanding of spiritual truth that the play hopes to provide back in the everyday world with them'.<sup>24</sup> Dillon makes a strong case for the idea that the Croxton play sought to 'construct' their 'ideal spectator', that is to say, a spectator who was aware that they were watching 'a piece of artifice representing aspects of the truth, and not the truth itself, which is not susceptible to being made visible other than through miracle'.<sup>25</sup> She notes that this is exactly why the episode with the quack doctor and his man are 'inserted at a crucial point in the development': to underline the theatricality of the play at the moment when it most needs the audience to remember that they are watching a dramatic performance.<sup>26</sup>

Both Dillon and Walker's readings emphasize the importance of the theatricality of the play in order to remind the audience members of the artificiality of the performance, especially in the scene in which the Host is tortured. Their readings, however, mostly differ in their attributed meanings to the bleeding of the Host. I will start with Dillon's. She recognizes that, doctrinally, the bleeding of the Host would not be a problem, even if the bleeding was caused by the most extreme physical violation, because the Host

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<sup>21</sup> Walker, 'And Here's Your Host', p. 53.

<sup>22</sup> Dutton, 'The Croxton Play of the Sacrament', p. 63.

<sup>23</sup> Dillon, 'What Sacrament?', p. 171.

<sup>24</sup> Dillon, 'What Sacrament?', p. 177.

<sup>25</sup> Dillon, 'What Sacrament?', p. 178.

<sup>26</sup> Dillon, 'What Sacrament?', p. 178.

thereby proves its triumph over suffering and death. However, she questions to what extent this doctrinal message would have been in the spectators' minds as they watched the excessive torturing of the Host on stage.<sup>27</sup> Dillon argues that the problem for the spectator lies in the physical staging of the violence inflicted on the host, and the spectators' desire for this to occur. She points out that this problem is not unique to the Croxton play but that it can be found in many a religious representation 'that aestheticize or revel in suffering while seeking to place such representations within a moral framework'.<sup>28</sup>

Walker's view on the bleeding Host is slightly different. His study argues that the bleeding of the Host demonstrates its power rather than its suffering, thus recognizing its didactic value in a way similar to Dillon. However, where Dillon sees a problem in the spectators' desire for the physical torture, Walker observes that the play encourages the audience to engage with the *effects* of the bleeding wafer: which is the discomfort it creates for the Jews. He writes, 'Our affective response ... seem[s] here to be aligned with the inflicting of pain on the Jews, not with the suffering of the host'.<sup>29</sup> In Walker's reading the violence inflicted on the Host seems less doctrinally problematic, due to the play's directing the audience in terms of affect. Where Dillon wants us to identify with the Jews, Walker does not. This does not mean that either of these readings sees the play as more didactic or less theatrical. Both conclude that the play is concerned with its own artifice, and is dramatically self-reflective.<sup>30</sup>

These two readings by Dillon and Walker appear as the culmination of recent theories that acknowledge the play's concern with its own medium, within which Lerer even goes as far as to call the play 'a kind of metadrama: a play about the possibilities of theatre and its symbols'.<sup>31</sup> As I have explained in chapter one, metatheatricity is an inadequate way of looking at early English plays, because as a theory it limits itself to the study of the self-conscious artificiality of drama. This study looks at plays in their context, and acknowledges that plays may well have created physiological effects in the

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<sup>27</sup> Dillon, 'What Sacrament?', p. 174.

<sup>28</sup> Dillon, 'What Sacrament?', p. 178.

<sup>29</sup> Walker, 'And Here's Your Host', p. 51.

<sup>30</sup> Dillon, 'What Sacrament?', p. 179; Walker, 'And Here's Your Host', p. 53.

<sup>31</sup> Lerer, 'Representyd now in yower syght', p. 47.

spectator, and may sometimes have been self-referential, thematizing the fundamental features of the medium (for example through artifice, disguise and pretence, among others), but that we understand plays better if we put them in the performance context as far as we can, and try to infer what experience the spectator had and how it was managed. In this way we may also infer the ways in which plays were managed for the risk that their subjects or circumstances posed. I argue that all we can do is look at the way in which the play's strategies try to balance or mitigate these risks. Or in the case of the Croxton play, how the play tried to *appear* as if it was limiting the audience's risk, for example through formal ritual elements seemingly leading towards a morally coherent conclusion. This will not show us how spectators *experienced* risks, but rather how playmakers, actors, and playwrights sought to balance these risks in a way that made the play socially or institutionally acceptable. I thus argue for a nuanced relationship between the play and its context through risk.

This chapter pushes both Dillon's and Walker's theories a bit further, and claims that the Croxton play does two things. Firstly, it betrays an anxiety about religion and religious change in a context in which drama is about drama. Secondly, the play assertively claims the power and authority of the Church as an institution. I will start to explain what I mean with my first claim. For some unknown reason, English drama from around the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> century began to take the nature of drama as its subject. That is to say, where drama in essence makes actors pretend to be other than they are, and makes them put on disguise in performance, the drama of this time shows characters pretending to be other than they are, and putting on disguises. This drama about drama gives apparent substance to something that is not present, makes real what is absent, or what is not normally visible. In this tradition of playmaking, the danger for the Croxton play lay in shifting the spectator from a consciousness of theatrical artifice towards absorption in a ritual act. The Croxton play's playwright knew that he had to manage this risk, expecting that the religious context in which the Host was believed to turn into Christ's actual rather than symbolic body would challenge the dramatic tradition which visualized the absent. In a tradition of drama concerned with drama any kind of dramatization of the Eucharist is potentially problematic, because of the way



in which it was visualised on stage and perceived by its audience. Believing in the doctrine of transubstantiation meant accepting that a miracle took place during every mass, when the actual body of Christ was temporarily united with the wafer presented to the believer. In this ritual, the words of the priest performed the sacrament which turned the wafer into Christ.<sup>32</sup> The priest's act of changing the wafer into Christ was a performative speech act.<sup>33</sup> Yet, one of the conditions of transubstantiation is to do with its representation, or rather its invisibility: one cannot *see* the Host changing into the physical body of Christ.<sup>34</sup> Asselbergs has more generally emphasized the *sensory* inability to perceive the transubstantiation.<sup>35</sup> The doctrine of transubstantiation therefore relied on the combination of an invisible transformation as part of a highly visual ritual. Miri Rubin even described the ritual of the Eucharist in terms of drama:

The Eucharist placed Christians within a symbolic system operating within a history of salvation, and it was lived as a drama re-enacted at every altar during every mass.<sup>36</sup>

Any dramatization of the Eucharist would have mirrored a ritual act that was both performative and theatrical,<sup>37</sup> inviting the danger that spectators might have confused *mimesis* with *kinesis*: representation with movement. Such confusion has been studied by Andrew Sofer in his exploration of the

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<sup>32</sup> Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 53.

<sup>33</sup> The most comprehensive recent study on performativity is James Loxley, *Performativity* (London: Routledge, 2007). See also J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975); Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (eds), *Performativity and Performance* (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>34</sup> Julie Paulson, 'A Theater of the Soul's Interior: Contemplative Literature and Penitential Education in the Morality Play Wisdom', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38: 2 (2008), pp. 253-283, p. 253.

<sup>35</sup> W.J.M.A. Asselbergs, 'Inleiding', *Het Spel vanden Heilighen Sacramente vander Nyeuwervaert* (Zwolle, The Netherlands: Tjeenk Willink, 1955), p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, p. 14.

<sup>37</sup> On theatricality in the late Middle Ages and Early Modern, see: John J. McGavin, *Theatricality and Narrative in Medieval and Early Modern Scotland* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Claire Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Meg Twycross, 'The Theatricality of Medieval Plays', *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, ed. by Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 26-74.

problematic nature of dramatizing the conjuring of the demons in *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1592).<sup>38</sup> Dramatically representing the performative acts of invoking the devil, or altering a Host into Christ's actual body would have been equally challenging—and risky. After all, audiences would have *believed* in the effects of the performative acts when carried out in a ritual context, and thus by evoking something similar on stage, an anxiety might have arisen among the spectators: what if the actor accidentally really conjures a devil by speaking his lines? Such anxieties are part of the excitement of such an event, which is teetering on the edge of such dangers.

The Croxton playwright carefully managed his control of the situation by not dramatizing the Mass. The Croxton play instead has Christ reveal himself in the Host but not as the consequence of the priest's act in the Mass; indeed he has Christ revealed by every means other than those which the priest uses. Thus, the play argues for the truth of the Mass by indirectly showing what is in the wafer. The play thus deliberately avoids confusion of drama and ritual, presumably because the Croxton author knew, and was trying to avoid, the problem that is implicit in a drama which thematizes its own medium. This is the play's first piece of risk management. A further piece of management that made it unlikely that spectators would have genuinely believed that the prop-Host would have unwillingly changed into Christ's real body, was the fact that only an anointed priest could change the Host into Christ, so that the prop-Host handled by an actor was in no real danger of causing that effect. In fact, as Dillon has argued, the ideal spectator of the Croxton play knew that the play was a representation of the truth and not the truth itself.<sup>39</sup> However, the problem of the Croxton play is that the theatrical experience could have made spectators feel as if it *could* happen. The danger here lies in that the performative and theatrical qualities of the 'real' ritual complicate the fictive staging of such a miracle, causing a play to very easily risk becoming too real, not necessarily for the spectators, who would have welcomed the visualisation of doctrinal abstractions which helped them in their personal relationship with

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<sup>38</sup> Andrew Sofer, 'How to Do Things with Demons: Conjuring Performatives in *Doctor Faustus*', *Theatre Journal* 61: 1 (2009), pp. 1-21. Sofer utilizes the terms 'mimesis' and 'kinesis' for his study.

<sup>39</sup> Dillon, 'What Sacrament?', p. 179.

Christ, for example through the violation of the Host which would have been understood in terms of affective piety. However, local church authorities may have found problems in the blurring of the play world and ritual world, when the spectator is moved from a consciousness of theatrical artifice towards affective absorption. The play manages this issue by ending the spectators' affective absorption and moving them to ritual fact. The local church authorities may also have had a problem with the individuality of the affective experience. Therefore, the collective ritual elements and doctrinal messages of the play surrounding the scene in which the Host is desecrated, support the necessity for priests and bishops, and thus reinforce the power of the Church as an institution.

In all this, the Breda play shows a contrastive way of risk management in a very similar sort of play, but in a different performance context. This chapter will first set the scene: I will address the performance context for both sacrament plays including the 'make-up' of the audiences, and their horizon of expectations. Secondly, I will address risk management through what the audience is allowed to see, including the visibility of the Host on stage, and the actions of the characters violating the Host. Finally, I will address the audience involvement in these plays. I will distinguish between the physical stage-audience connection in the Croxon play evoked through a sensory experience not unlike affective piety, as well as by the use of ceremony and ritual, and the mental connection stimulated in the Breda play through the use of sensory language. These matters will prove to be intricate as risk management through the controlling or stimulating of visual engagement and audience participation at times goes hand in hand. I will conclude that for the Croxon play, part of the management of spectators' risk lies in the play's being in balance: it balanced the intensity of the transformative, theatrical elements, with the ritual elements that implied the power of the Church. This may not actually have made the experience less risky for spectators, but it made it morally acceptable for local church authorities. The Breda play—concerned with a local miracle—on the other hand protected spectators from risk through the omission of dangerous moments. This play aimed to offer a festive enjoyment of the miracle, but also had to balance *imitatio Christi* with local politics.

## 2.2 Setting the Scene: Breda

The *Breda Spel vanden Heilighen Sacramente* was performed in the city of Breda in the Low Countries on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1500, by the members of the Rhetoricians Chamber 'Vruechdendael'<sup>40</sup> [Valley of joy]. The play was staged on a scaffold in front of an inn called 'De Vogelensanck' [The Birdsong], situated along the market square and next to the city hall.<sup>41</sup> Although we know only of that one performance in 1500, it may have been the case that the play was also performed in other years not registered in the ledgers; unfortunately we have no official evidence supporting this assumption. It should be noted, however, that the Low Countries do not have something like *Records of Early English Drama* so that many unregistered documents may be out there containing evidence that has as yet been overlooked. The reason, however, to presume such a dramatic tradition to have existed is that the 1500 performance formed part of the annual celebration of the miracle of the Holy Sacrament of Niervaert, a village which is now called Klundert. The 24<sup>th</sup> of June was traditionally celebrated as St John's day at Midsummer, and it is known that the Sunday before this feast day a procession, called the 'Kleine Omgang' [small walk around the church] in honour of the holy sacrament would have passed through the most important streets in Breda.<sup>42</sup> The main participants in this procession were the 'Schuttersgilden' [civic militia] bearing arms and making music,<sup>43</sup> and the members of the Breda Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament. The latter group also commissioned the Brussels' Rhetoricians' Chamber

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<sup>40</sup> Asselbergs, 'Inleiding', p. 37.

<sup>41</sup> The city accounts localize the whereabouts of 'der Vogelensanck' when recording how from 31 January 1498 one Willem Aarstzoon rented out the property for 24 rhenish guilders a year: 'die huysinghe ende erffenissen met hueren toebehoirten geheyten der Vogelensanck, die gestaen ende gelegen siin aen de Plaetse neven der stadt huys ende erve van Breda op deen side ende Joos Heys hysinge ende erffenissen op dander side'. [The housing and legacy with their accessories named 'der Vogelensanck', which is situated at the place next to the city hall on the one side and the house of Joos Heys and his legacy on the other side]. Breda's Archief, Oud-Administratief Archief der Stad Breda, Afdeling 1-1a, Inventaris nummer 1806 (previously P. 109a). This account is quoted in D. Th. Enkelaar, 'Naar Aanleiding van het Bredase Sacramentsspel', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 59 (1937), pp. 28-35, p. 33-34. See also, Asselbergs, 'Inleiding', p. 37.

<sup>42</sup> Asselbergs, 'Inleiding', p. 37.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Ernst van Goor, *Beschryving der Stadt and Lande van Breda* (Den Haag: Jacobus vanden Kiereboom, 1744), p. 90.

member Jan Smeken to write the play.<sup>44</sup> It is important to note that women were to be found amongst the members of the Confraternity, and that they were required to walk along in the procession, as is registered in the Confraternity's *Ordinancie*, or rules dating from 1463:

Item noch soe is ghesloeten alsmen dat heilighe weerdighe sacrament omdraecht dat dan die brueders ende susters sullen moeten omgaen onder haer kerse Indie processie vanden heilighen sacramento op die verbuerte van eenen stuuer.<sup>45</sup>

[Item also is decided that when the holy worthy sacrament is being carried around that then the brothers and sisters will have to walk along in the procession of the holy sacrament, carrying a candle, under penalty of five cents ['stuiver']].

Female contribution to the Confraternity's ritual activity can also be found represented in the altarpiece for the chapel of the Holy Sacrament in the Grote Kerk of Breda (see Appendix, figure 1). The altarpiece consists of a number of wooden panels presenting the legend of the Sacrament of Niervaert, and its relocation to Breda. The lower center panel shows a devotional portrait of members of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, including the depiction of a woman in a black habit (see Appendix, figure 2), whose image can also be observed in the lower right panel (see Appendix, figure 3) along figures who have been identified as Lord Henry III of Nassau-Breda and his son by his second marriage René of Chalon. This lady is likely to be Barbara of Nassau, the illegitimate daughter of Count Engelbert II of Nassau.<sup>46</sup> She was the prioress of the convent of Vredenburg and a woman of considerable fortune. A letter from her hand written to Prince William of Orange suggests that she and her brother Engelbrecht together received an annual allowance of 1000

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<sup>44</sup> Anne-Laure van Bruaene, *Om Beters Wille: Rederijderskamers en de Stedelijke Cultuur in de Zuiderlijke Nederlanden 1400-1650* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), p. 70; Samuel Mareel, *Voor Vorst en Stad: Rederijdersliteratuur en Vorstenfeest in Vlaanderen en Brabant 1432-1651* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), p. 100.

<sup>45</sup> Breda, Stadsarchief Breda, Afd. III-103, inv. nr. 133. Den boeck vanden heilighen sacramento vander Nyeuwervaert, fols. 23-24, fol. 24v.

<sup>46</sup> G.W.C. van Wezel, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk en de Grafkapel voor Oranje-Nassau te Breda* (Zwolle: Zeist/Waanders Uitgevers, 2003), p. 231.

Rhenish guilders.<sup>47</sup> If Barbara of Nassau was indeed a member of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament, this would have meant a close connection between the Nassau family and the devotional guild.

The Nassau family was strongly associated with and the sponsor of different kinds of religious activity in the city, and sought to create unity amongst the different groups. Lord Henry of Breda founded the *Begijnhof* [béguinage] in 1267.<sup>48</sup> After this, the Nassau family stayed involved with the béguinage, as appears from a request made to René of Chalon around 1538 for him to ensure that the newly appointed pastor kept to the privileges given to the béguinage.<sup>49</sup> Another initiative to develop centres of worship was made by Engelbert I of Nassau who assigned the building of a new collegiate church (Grote Kerk, or Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe kerk).<sup>50</sup> In 1446 Jan IV of Nassau arranged for the papal privilege to distribute letters of indulgence to anyone participating in the building of the collegiate church, to accelerate the building process.<sup>51</sup> Jan IV of Nassau also had a pastoral role in relation to the city's devotional culture, and in 1468 he had to intervene in a conflict between the city's devotional confraternities that were housed in the collegiate church: the Confraternity of Our Lady, the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament, and the Confraternity of the Holy Cross. Their dispute concerned the days of worship and the use of the church for their devotional purposes. Jan IV of Nassau decided that each confraternity would get its own day of worship, assigning the Thursday to the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament.<sup>52</sup> In 1476, Maria van Loon-Heinsberg who was by then Jan IV's widow founded the Augustinian Convent of Vredenburg in Bavel.<sup>53</sup> However, the most important devotional intervention made by Jan IV of Nassau and Maria van Loon-Heinsberg was their

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<sup>47</sup> Den Haag, Nationaal Archief, Nassause Domeinraad: Raad en Rekenkamer te Breda 1, nummer toegang 1.08.01, inventaris nummer 1325.

<sup>48</sup> J.M.F. Ijsseling, *Inventaris Archief Begijnhof te Breda* (Breda, 1966, reproduced by H.Huijgens in 2002), Inventaris nummer IAB001.

<sup>49</sup> S.W.A. Drossaers, *Het Archief van de Nassause Domeinraad, Het Archief van de Raad en Rekenkamer te Breda, 1170-1582* (Den Haag: Nationaal Archief, 1948), nummer toegang 1.08.01, Inventaris nummer 1352.

<sup>50</sup> Van Wezel, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk*, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> Van Wezel, *De Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk*, p. 14.

<sup>52</sup> Asselbergs, 'Inleiding', p. 14.

<sup>53</sup> A.J. van der Aa, *Biografisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden*, vol. 9 (Haarlem: n. pub., 1867), p. 87.

bringing the Holy Sacrament from Nieuwvaert to Breda, to be placed in the collegiate church, in 1449. They obtained permission to do so from the Prince-Bishop of Liège, Jan van Heinsberg, who was Maria's brother. The Breda Sacrament play commemorates and celebrates this event. The play's Afterword ['naprologhe'] summarises Jan IV's and Maria van Loon-Heinsberg's joint efforts to bring the Holy Sacrament to Breda:

*Naprologhe:* Graue Jan van Nassouv zaliger gedachten

Ende joncfrouwe Marie lofsam

Met sulcker jonst hier inne wrachten

Dat hier binnen Breda quam (fol. 66v).

[*Afterword:* Count Jan of Nassau blessed thoughts / And his praiseworthy lady Marie / With such dedication worked / That it came to Breda].<sup>54</sup>

The Breda Sacrament play was performed in the festive devotional context of a religious holiday, and celebrated a local host miracle as well as the piety of the local noble family. As such the play was not *just* a civic celebration, but also a bid for the Nassaus' favour by the members of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament. Furthermore, the play was affirming an opportunity for social wholeness. As the Host symbolized Christ's body, its veneration was the ultimate occasion to unite different parties in the city, and to attract pilgrims from outside the city. This unity finds itself reflected in the make-up of the organisers and participants of the *Sacramente*. The play was a shared effort between the local Rhetoricians' actors, the Breda religious confraternity affiliated with the feast day on which the play was to be performed, and the Rhetoricians' writer who is likely to have originated from the North of Brabant before he moved to Brussels for financial reasons, maintaining his affinity with Breda.<sup>55</sup> Importantly, all contributors to the play's end-result were members of some kind of association, and somehow affiliated with the city of Breda.

While external information about the contributors to the play's performance is extant, much less is known about who the actual audience of

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<sup>54</sup> 'It' refers to the Holy Sacrament.

<sup>55</sup> Mareel, *Voor Vorst en Stad*, p. 100.

*Sacramente* would have comprised. Luckily, the play text offers some insights as to who would have enjoyed the play, for example through the Prologue, who addresses his spectators directly:

Ter eeren onsen Heere al voren  
 Mij genediger vrouwen goedertieren  
 Ende alle haer ghetrouwe officiren  
 Allen den goeden heeren vander stede  
 Ende v allen van buijten van bijnnen (fol. 69r).  
 [In honour of our Lord above all / my merciful lady / and all her loyal  
 officials / all the good gentlemen of the city / and all of you from  
 outside and inside].

The Lord of Breda at the time of performance was Engelbert II of Nassau, a knight in the Order of the Golden Fleece. Because of the devotional nature of the play and its ritual context, however, it is likely that the ‘our Lord’ that the Prologue seeks to honour above all is not Engelbert but God. After that the Prologue pays homage to ‘my merciful lady’, who may very well have been Maria van Loon, who was Jan van Nassau’s widow.<sup>56</sup> It is known that the Lady of Nassau attended plays performed by the Chamber of Rhetoric Vruueghdendal. For example, a *Stadsrekening* [city account] from 1492 names a gift or payment to the owner of the establishment *Vogelensanck* for ‘als mijn genedige vrouwe van Nassouw metten jonffren hoerden spelen die van Vroechedendael’.<sup>57</sup> [When that my worthy lady of Nassau with the young ladies heard play those of Vruueghdendal]. Taking this in mind, along with the respect that the sacrament play is showing the late Jan IV, it would be surprising if his widow hadn’t attended the performance. The ‘good gentlemen’ addressed in the audience are very likely to have been the aldermen of the city. If one is to believe the Prologue, both people from in and outside Breda would have gathered to see the *Sacramente* performed. The Prologue ends by addressing the audience as ‘Allen brueders en susters vanden sacramento’ [all brothers and sisters of the sacrament] (fol. 69v). It is unclear whether these words should be taken literally, meaning that all the spectators would have been

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<sup>56</sup> Asselbergs, ‘Inleiding’, p. 115.

<sup>57</sup> Enkelaar, ‘Naar Aanleiding van het Bredasche Sacramentsspel’, p. 33.



members or supporters of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament in Breda, or alternatively that the onlookers would temporarily have been 'like brothers' for the duration of their watching the play. It is, however, clear that the performance of the play was intended to create harmony and amity. As to the role that the audience would have performed, the Prologue bids the audience not to scrutinize the play with too critical an eye, as it was designed for devotional purposes:

V allen biddende hier voer oogen

Wilt danckelijk nemen ons oirboren

Ter eeren onsen Heere al voren (fol. 69r).

[We pray you all openly / to take for granted our attempt / to honour our Lord above all].

The play so far has stated its purpose of performance (to honour God), has humbly asked its audience not to be too critical about the show, and concludes the Prologue with laying down ground rules: 'Ons hoirt ende zwijght werde eccellente' [Hear us and be silent worthy <spectators>] (fol. 69v). Thus the spectators were overtly managed and encouraged to remain passive throughout the performance, aware of the reverence appropriate to the play's sacred occasion and the actors' attempt to do justice to it.

The events dramatized in the Breda play have, as the manuscript explains, been based on *De Kroniek van de Wonderen* [The Chronicles of Wonders], a collection of recorded miracles which has survived in the same manuscript as the play. The manuscript carries the title: *Den boeck vanden heilighen sacramente vander Nieuwervaert*. The codex contains *De Kroniek van de Wonderen* (fols 1r-22v), a set of rules to which members of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament should adhere (fols 23r-24v), a poem detailing a collection of painted panels at the altar of the Sacrament's chapel in the church in Breda (fols 25r-27r), the sacrament play itself (fols 27v-69v), a prayer both in Latin and Dutch in honour of the Holy Sacrament of Nieuwervaert (fols 71r-73r), a poem titled 'Tlof vant heilich Sacrament vander Nieuwervaert ende van mirakel' (fols 73v-76v), and copies of letters of debt and bequests to the Confraternity (fols 80r-103v). Wedged in the codex between the other documents, the written text of the play has thus been

preserved as part of a larger body of material all related to the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament. This gathering of material suggests that the play should not be interpreted in isolation and needs to be considered as part of an annual celebration, as one of the many media (among poetry, prayer and paintings) to express reverence towards the Holy Sacrament by the fraternal body. Furthermore, the play draws on the miracles recorded in *The Chronicles of Wonders* preserved with it, and is to be understood as a record of that local historical ‘truth’.

*The Chronicles* record how one Jan Bautoen found the Holy Sacrament around the year 1300. On the man’s touching the Host, it allegedly started to bleed, so that Bautoen dropped it out of fear. A man of law was then procured to come and take the Holy Sacrament to the church of Nieuwervaart (fol. 1v). According to *The Chronicles*, Nieuwervaart soon became a place of pilgrimage, as many people were attracted to the church by the Holy Sacrament. *The Chronicles* then narrate how one ‘meester Macharius’ [master Macharius], a man of law, set off to test the authenticity of the Host:

Dat hi ter Nyeuvaert soude trecken om tondervijnden die waerheit van tghene dat men verre ende wijde seyde vanden heilighen sacramente (fol. 2r).

[That he would go to Nieuwervaart to find the truth about that which men from far and beyond said about the holy sacrament].

Macharius was then recorded by *The Chronicles* to have taken a perforating tool, and to have stabbed the host in five places, from which it bled (fols 2r-2v). Macharius can be identified as a historical rather than a legendary figure: the church canon Magister Macharius de Busco (from Den Bosch). In a charter dated 28 May 1309 Bishop Theobald of Liège orders Macharius to investigate a number of collegiate churches including the one at Breda.<sup>58</sup> The play projects a cautious attitude to Macharius, who in the play is seduced by the devils to test

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<sup>58</sup> ‘Oorkonde 779’, *Oorkondenboek van Noord-Brabant tot 1312 [North-Brabant Charters 690-1312]*, vol. 2, ed. by M. Dillo et al. (Den Haag: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 2000), pp. 934-935.  
[http://www.historici.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/OorkondenVanNoord-brabant694-1312/index\\_html\\_en](http://www.historici.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/OorkondenVanNoord-brabant694-1312/index_html_en) [accessed 12 October 2013].

the Host. In the play, he is carefully not made a representative of the clergy, and the play also pointedly does not mention Macharius' being sent on his mission by Bishop Theobald of Liège. The play *does* however represent a later Bishop of Liège: the late Jan van Heinsberg, brother of Maria van Loon. The latter may have been in the audience and would have paid particular attention to a dramatic representation of her deceased brother. This fictional representation of Jan van Heinsberg utters his surprise that ecclesiastics could make such great mistakes, to which the First Gentleman observes that sometimes a teacher may learn from his students:

*Bijsscop*: Duer sijn misdate soe versuchtic

Soude een gheestelijc man soe dolen

*1 Heere*: Heer Bisscop sij gaen somtijts ter scolen

die bet verstaen dan diese leeren (fol. 61r).

[*Bishop*: Because of his crime I wonder / How that it can be that a

spiritual man can deviate this much / *1 Gentleman*: Lord Bishop

sometimes they who go to school / know better than their teachers].

At this point in the play the character of the Bishop signals that the Nassau family should in no way be connected to Macharius' lack of faith.

Another challenge faced by the playwright was to incorporate a number of miracles from the *Chronicles* in the drama. Most of these miracles are enumerated, such as 'een vrouw in aerbeyt verlost' (fol. 45r) [a woman who was relieved in the process of child-labour], or the miracle of the child that almost drowned (fol. 45v). However, the most spectacular miracle has been given a prominent position at the centre of the play: the account which in *The Chronicles* is referred to as 'van eenen ridder die in heydenisse geuangen was' [of a knight who was captured in heathen lands] (fol. 6v). *The Chronicles* narrate how this knight, Lord Wouter van Kersbeke,<sup>59</sup> who was about to be burned to death by those who had captured him, had been saved through an intervention of the Holy Sacrament of Nieuwervaert, after he had promised in a prayer that he

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<sup>59</sup> In the play, the knight is referred to as Wouter van Roosbeke, instead of Wouter van Kersbeke.

would go on a pilgrimage to Nieuwervaert if he were spared. The miracle, *The Chronicles* say, meant,

Dattet lot viel op sinen knecht die alre naest hem stont endi hi waert  
verbrant (fol. 7v).

[That his fate fell on his servant who was standing next to him and who  
was burned].

Perhaps Jan Smeken, when adapting *The Chronicles* for performance, found himself dissatisfied with the conclusion of this recorded ‘miracle’. How could one classify a knight’s escaping death as a miracle, if it were at the expense of his own poor servant? One possible reading is that Smeken’s reluctance to dramatize the miracle in its originally recorded form is evident from the playwright’s decision to give the stage- servant the option to keep his life if he were to give up his faith. The servant in *Sacramente* responds with ardour:

Twee brijsschende beeren  
Veel lieuer gaic mij inden brant  
Adyeu schoen soet prieel van Brabant  
Ic sterue hier den ghelooue ter eere  
doch eest beeter de knecht dan de heere (fol.50v).

[Two snorting bears! / Much rather would I go into the fire / Adieu  
beautiful sweet harbour of Brabant / I die here in honour of the faith /  
still it is better (for) the servant than the lord].

In this interpretation, Smeken has given the servant a more heroic role than originally attributed to him in *The Chronicles*. Meanwhile, the ‘miracle’ that saved Lord Wouter has in its dramatized form taken the shape of the latter not having to die as a martyr for his faith, as his loyal servant has. Furthermore, Smeken took the trouble to persuade even the most cynical of spectators of the value of the miracle by equipping the servant with the opinion that it was more befitting for a servant to die than for his master to have to undergo that fate. The servant’s farewell monologue bears no grudges against his master. In fact, he praises him as a dear friend who is as close to him as a brother, and asks Lord Wouter to pray for his soul:

Adyeu meester lief vrient als broeder

Bidt doch voer mi vut caritaten

Dat mijnder ermer sielen mach baten (fol. 50v).

[Adieu master dear friend as a brother / Pray for me out of charity /  
that it may improve my soul].

Finally, the servant utters a prayer of gratitude to have been given the 'opportunity' to die as a martyr (fol. 50v). In this reading, all's well that ends well in Smeken's appropriation of *The Chronicles*, and this argues that servant and master can achieve an appropriate degree of spiritual equivalence while maintaining class distinction through their relation to the Blessed Sacrament. This would make the Prologue's final statement about the Confraternity of the Sacrament completely ambivalent: on the one hand all the spectators that were gathered temporarily become brothers and sisters of the Holy Sacrament for the duration of the play, and were addressed thus, while at the same time it would have remained clear that only the members of the Confraternity would ever really be part of this officially organised group.

However, an alternative reading of this scene is possible. One may observe that the scene strongly resembles the passage from John 15.13-17, the sermon in which Christ says that the greatest love one can show is to die for one's friends. In this sermon, Christ calls his disciples friends, rather than servants, under the condition that they will do what he commands. In the *Sacramente*, the servant sacrifices himself for the knight, whom he calls 'vrient' [friend] (fol. 50v). By ordering the knight to go and pray for his soul, the servant indirectly urges him to make the pilgrimage to Niervaert and to bring offerings to the church there. The servant dies so that the knight can live, and thus follows Christ's footsteps in giving his life for others. This would have made an appropriate motif in a play concerned with Eucharistic celebration. Furthermore, the scene is reminiscent of Christ's words at the Last Supper. As he has just washed the feet of his disciples, Christ tells them 'a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them' (John

13. 16-17).<sup>60</sup> Perhaps the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament saw a resemblance between the knights in the Crusades in which the Nassau family participated, and the early Christian missionaries mentioned in John 13.16. The scene also fits in with the theme of following Christ in humility: a theme which was popular with the Breda confraternities that were patronised by the Nassau family.<sup>61</sup>

A further event discussed in both *The Chronicles* and the play is one closer to home: how the Holy Sacrament saved Nieuwervaart from flooding, and how after this miracle, the Holy Sacrament was brought to Breda under the supervision of Bishop Johan van Loon (fol. 12r) in 1449, where it again caused many miracles to occur. The historical reality behind this legend is that the village of Nieuwervaart in Brabant was engulfed by the St Elisabeth's flood in 1421, and this may be the flood to which *The Chronicles* refer. Smeken was challenged to represent dramatically a sequence of legends which, in order to look as miraculous and awe-inspiring on stage as they were registered in the records, needed some careful tweaking here and there. He also had to be very careful that the play, performed alongside a procession and the display of devotional imagery during the annual celebration of the miracle of the Holy Sacrament of Nieuwervaart, looked like a dramatization of true history and was not confused with the ritual. At the same time, the play needed to be tailored to the audience's needs, to be made palatable, while staying as close as possible to the original records, and to the wishes of the patrons in the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament, and importantly, the Nassau family. In short, the play clearly had a dictated agenda, but the playwright used his skills

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<sup>60</sup> I have enjoyed discussing these passages from the Bible with Martin Rasenberg, current president of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament of Niervaert.

<sup>61</sup> For example, a contemporary painting likely to have been commissioned by Henry III of Nassau, *Christus en de Samaritaanse Vrouw bij de Stad Breda* (See appendix, image 4) presents an image of Christ meeting the Samaritan woman in front of the cityscape of Breda. The *Denensaga*, a legend about how the Danes brought the Holy Cross to Breda, is represented between Christ's and the Woman's heads. It is likely that this panel was made for the chapel belonging to the Confraternity of the Holy Cross, and demonstrated Christ's humility and example to the citizens of Breda to be of a central importance to this Confraternity, as well as to its patrons, the Nassau family. Catalogue: Jeroen Grosfeld, Jeroen et al., *'Een thans niet meer bestaande schilderij': Eerste verkenningen van het schilderij 'Christus en de Samaritaanse Vrouw bij de Stad Breda'* (Breda: Breda's Museum, 2013).

to find the balance between the necessary didacticism and the comical and theatrical interventions that made it watchable.

## 2.3 Setting the Scene: Croxton

Where the performance of the Breda *Sacramente* fits the context of the continental Corpus Christi performances, the local significance given to a local miracle tradition, and the urban performance context in which fraternities displayed the importance of their community, the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*'s appears harder to locate. Gail McMurray Gibson has argued for the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*'s 'festival connection' with Corpus Christi.<sup>62</sup> More recently, Clifford Davidson has supported this view but has however also pointed out that the play is 'nowhere overtly identified as attached to this feast'.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, there is no evidence that the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* was performed under the auspices of Corpus Christi celebrations, and the Banns do not mention any specific church holiday or other calendrical reference, other than simply 'on Monday' (l. 74). This does not mean that the play *wasn't* performed under such auspices: we simply do not know that it was. The use of Banns suggests that the play was a commercial or professional travelling performance designed for touring in and around East Anglia.<sup>64</sup> If the play had not been specifically designed for the Croxton parishioners, it would still have had a 'local' feel to it, having been aimed at East Anglian audiences. The play is likely to have been performed in a 'place and scaffold' setting,<sup>65</sup> perhaps using outdoor scaffolds in close proximity to the local church, and the interior of the church for the end of the play,<sup>66</sup> or in its entirety out in the

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<sup>62</sup> Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 35.

<sup>63</sup> Davidson, *Festivals and Plays in Late Medieval Britain* p. 53.

<sup>64</sup> Greg Walker, *Medieval Drama: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 214. See also, Elisabeth Dutton, 'The Croxton Play of the Sacrament', in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 55-71, p. 57.

<sup>65</sup> Meg Twycross, 'The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays', In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, ed. by Richard Beadle and Alan J. Fletcher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 46.

<sup>66</sup> David Bevington, *Medieval Drama* (London: Houghton, 1975), p. 755.

church-yard.<sup>67</sup> An open-air performance would have attracted a mixed and varied, but local audience living in a rural area. It has been argued that *because* the play had been designed for touring, it is unlikely that the interior of a church would have been used at the culmination of the play. In the words of Elizabeth Dutton: 'it would be difficult for touring players to devise an itinerary including only venues where there was a church readily available for their use and suitable performance spaces in the churchyard'.<sup>68</sup> However, realistically nearly every village or parish would have had a church, so perhaps the main problem for the touring group would have been liaising with the local church authorities and obtaining their approval for the performances to be held in close proximity to the church. In my reading of the Croxton play I allow for the possibility that the traveling actors' wish for local authorities to approve of their play and for them to take a collaborative attitude towards the performance influenced the contents of the play.

Because of the lack of evidence about the contexts and auspices under which the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* was performed, it is almost impossible to know what spectators would have expected from the performance, unless we look at Croxton's in-text evidence, or at other plays within a similar performance tradition. William Tydeman has observed that the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* is the *only* medieval English play in which a miracle 'forms the doctrinal focus of attention'.<sup>69</sup> Tydeman argues that other English medieval plays contained *features* of miracles, but that in these plays the miracle never functioned as the play's central point. The isolated position of the Croxton play as an English miracle is enough to puzzle the researcher, and to wish for connections to other plays through which to learn more about the genre of the miracle, as well as this particular Croxton staging. One way to understand the Croxton play is in relation to the narrative tradition of the Host miracle, both on and off stage. Research has provided links to continental drama, and host legends.<sup>70</sup> Lynette Muir, among others, specifies a narrative

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<sup>67</sup> William Tydeman, *English Medieval Theatre 1400-1500* (London: Routledge, 1986), p. 75.

<sup>68</sup> Dutton, 'The Croxton Play of the Sacrament', p. 66.

<sup>69</sup> Tydeman, *English Medieval Theatre*, p. 53.

<sup>70</sup> See, Florence Elberta Davis, 'The Background and Sources of the Croxton Play of the Sacrament' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Chicago, 1926); Cecilia Cutts,



tradition which relates a Jew attacking the Host with a knife and afterwards tossing it in a cauldron with boiling water, an event which is narrated to have taken place in Paris in 1290. Nothing short of a miracle occurred, so the legend tells us: a crucifix arose from the pot in which the Host was thrown, and this gave cause to the celebration of an annual mass in remembrance of the miracle.<sup>71</sup> Parallel traditions can be found in Germany, Italy, France, and the Low Countries. Other studies have been undertaken to classify miracle narratives into different types, exploring a variety of plots and motives. Rubin distinguishes between three types of Host miracle narrative. In the first, a vision, smell, taste or sound is given as reward for faith. In the second, the proximity of the Eucharist causes some strange behavior in the elements, animals, or people. The third type is rather the opposite of the first; in this type one finds 'the appearance of Eucharistic properties, usually flesh, blood or the Man of Sorrows, to a knowing abuser—a Jew, a witch, a thief, a negligent priest—and the ensuing punishment'.<sup>72</sup> The Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* seems to fit in with the third type of miracle narrative, featuring direct and indirect abusers of the Eucharist (Jews, a corrupt merchant, and a negligent priest), the appearance of blood from the Host: 'here þe [H]ost must blede' (l. 400 sd), and finally, Christ appearing in the form of a suffering child: 'here the owyn must ryve asunder and blede owt at þe cranys, and an image appere owt with woundys bledyn' (l. 632 sd). The punishment takes the form of dismemberment, as Jonathas loses his hand: 'here shall they pluke þe arme, and þe hand shall hang styll with þe Sacrament' (l. 435 sd). However, this is also reversed by Christ, who returns Jonathas' hand to him. Christ says:

*Jesus:* No Jonathas, on thyn hand thow art but lame,  
and ys thorow thyn own cruelnesse.  
For thyn hurt pou mayest þiselfe blame,  
thou woldyst preve thy power me to oppresse;  
But now I consydre thy necesse;  
Thow wasshest thyn hart with grete contrycyon

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'The English Background of the *Play of the Sacrament*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Washington, 1938); Lynette R. Muir, *Love and Conflict in Medieval Drama: the Plays and their Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>71</sup> Muir, *Love and Conflict in Medieval Drama*, p. 50.

<sup>72</sup> Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, p. 118.

Go to the cawdron pi care shalbe the lesse,  
And towche thyn hand to thy salvacyon (ll. 690-697).

The stage direction that follows says: 'here shall Ser Jonathas put hys hand into pe cawdron, and yt shalbe hole agayn' (l. 697 sd). Finally all's made well when the Jews are converted by the Episcopus and join a procession to the church singing a holy song (l. 760, l. 761 sd). Acknowledging that the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* corresponds to one of the types of miracle narrative helps one to understand the plot as part of a larger pattern of narrative structures. It should be noted, however, that the play is more complex and rich in meaningful detail, which makes it difficult to classify. The dismemberment for example is humorous, similar to the comic Jewish dismemberment found in another East Anglian play: the N-Town *Assumption of Mary* (late 15<sup>th</sup> – early 16<sup>th</sup> C),<sup>73</sup> in which the First Princeps who has been sent by the Episcopus to go and bring Mary's corpse is stuck to the bier with his hands:

*Princeps 1*: Allas, my body is ful of peyne!  
I am fastened sor to this bere!  
Myn handys are ser, bothe tweyne  
O, Peter, now prey thy God for me here!<sup>74</sup>

The image evoked by the stage direction 'hic saltat insanus ad feretrum Marie et pendet per manus' [Here the madman jumps to Mary's bier and hangs from his hands] (l. 422 sd) is comical, and this action, combined with the hysteria of the Princeps' words make for an entertaining spectacle. His cry for help and for 'sum medycyn' (l. 431), are replied to by Peter's recommendation to keep faith in Christ. The *Assumption of Mary* and the Croxton play share theatrical fun created by the temporary dismemberment of a non-believer, which is reversed

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<sup>73</sup> Stephen Spector has written that 'the cycle probably antedated the manuscript by some years, changing and growing over stages of compilation, and portions of the codex may have been comparatively late additions. But 1468 was probably the year in which the bulk of the manuscript was transcribed'. Stephen Spector, 'The Provenance of the N-Town Codex', *The Library*, 6: 1 (1979), pp. 25-33. Douglas Sugano stresses the likelihood of the N-Town plays being 'an East Anglian product of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries'. Douglas Sugano, 'Introduction', *The N-Town Plays: Introduction* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), p.2.

<sup>74</sup> *The Assumption of Mary*, in *The N-Town Play: Cotton MS Vespasian D.8*, ed. by Stephen Spector, 2 vols., EETS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 387- 409, ll. 423-426.

through solemn Christ's intervention. This is to illustrate that the Croxton play can be classified as one type of miracle narratives, but that it also fits in a dramatic tradition that is completely separate. Because of this, spectator expectations and responses are hard to predict on the basis the use of genre in the play.

Due to the lack of external evidence, a further estimation of what spectators may have taken from the performance can only be taken from the play's in-text evidence. Potential spectators were enticed to attend the performance by the Banns, which were designed to put people in the mood for the performance several days before it had started:

*Secundus Vexillator*: And yt place yow, thys gaderyng pat here ys  
at Croxtston on Monday yt shall be sen  
To see the conclusyon of this lytell processe,  
Hertely welcum shall yow bene (Banns, ll. 73-76).

The Banns also aimed to justify the performance of the play, from which one might gather that the play may not have been already justified by a calendrical occasion. Also, as a traveling play dependent on making profit, or receiving something from the performance, the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament's* Banns had to focus on the spectators' pleasure or gain from the performance by means of advertising. They did so by emphasizing that the play had been shown to other audiences, and boasting the positive effects of these performances. For example, the Banns brag that during one performance eleven people were converted in one household (l. 55) due to the great influence of the play, due to the 'maracle of þe Kyng of Hevyn' and 'by myght and power govyn to þe prestys mowthe' (ll. 53-54). It may be noticed that the Banns obfuscate the distinction between ritual and play by their references to the mouths of the priests. I have mentioned in the above that the sacrament of the Eucharist was a performative act in which only the priest had the verbal power to turn the Host into Christ's real flesh and blood. Yet the Banns seem to turn a blind eye to the fact that in the dramatic performance of the Croxton play, the 'priest' would not have been a real member of the clergy, and thus would not have the 'myght and power' to perform a real Eucharistic ritual. Thus the Banns seem to promise the blurring of the difference between the

play and the ritual in a way which the play itself does not actually do. This does not mean to say that the play could not have had the effect of converting audience members through the *play experience*. The Banns further obscure the boundaries between performance and ritual when they refer to the miracle having been ‘known well knowthe’ in Rome (l. 56):

*Secundus Vexillator*: Thys marycle at Rome was presented, forsothe,  
In the yere of our Lord a 1461  
That þe Jewes with Holy Sa[c]rament dyd woth,  
In the forest seyde of Aragon (Banns, ll. 57-60).

The syntax of the Second Vexillator’s words is confusing. At first sight it looks as if the play confidently presents itself as a dramatic representation of a miracle which took place in 1461. After all, the end of the play suggests that the ‘historical event’ of the miracle happened in 1461:

Thus endyth the Play of the Blyssyd Sacrament, whyche myracle was  
don in the forest of Aragon, in the famous cite of Eraclea, the yere of  
owr Lord God MICCCC.lxj [1461], to whom be honowr, Amen (ll. 928-  
931).

However, it is possible that this sentence was interpreted differently by the spectators of the Banns. Elizabeth Dutton has recently interpreted ‘thys marycle’ to refer to ‘the play’. She writes,

Further references to the play’s dramatic setting are perhaps as confusing as they are specific: the action which is now re-presented in your sight took place in Aragon, but the miracle of the conversion was ‘presented’ at Rome, where, apparently, ‘thys myracle’, which seems to be the play, is well known (Banns, l. 56).<sup>75</sup>

The Banns’ attempt to build authority upon authority confuses what happened where. Was, as Dutton suggests, an earlier staging of this very play presented

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<sup>75</sup> Elisabeth Dutton, ‘The Croxton Play of the Sacrament’, *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 55-71, p. 57.

in Rome?<sup>76</sup> Tydeman has looked for the historical reality behind such staging, and suggests that ‘a Spanish location was employed in a presentation of the story before Leonore of Aragon in Rome during 1473’.<sup>77</sup> If the Banns were referring to an earlier performance of the play, this would have given the re-presentation of the play in Croxton a certain dramatic authority (if they enjoyed it in Rome, a city so important to Catholicism, it must be worth watching). Or, was it the *miracle* rather than the play that was presented in the sense of being authenticated by the Pope in Rome? This would add an extra layer of historical ‘credit’ to the miracle. In effect, it does not matter, because despite the promises made by the Banns, the play does not consistently present itself as a historical representation. By choosing as its spatial temporal mooring a miracle that supposedly occurred in Spain, the Banns provided the audience with a location which freed up the performance. People would not have known very much about Spain, so that they would probably not have been thinking of this location while watching the staged action unfold. Indeed, McMurray Gibson has argued that the play is pointedly ‘East Anglian in its topography of set and mind’.<sup>78</sup> Victor Scherb on the other hand has observed that:

Heraclea is not really an allegorical representation of an East Anglian community but instead a place that offers an imagined resolution of local social and religious tensions.<sup>79</sup>

In any case, ‘Eraclea, Aragon’ does not refer to a place in Spain in the literal sense. While the play does not present itself consistently as a historical representation, it still attempts to do so in the beginning of the play: Aristorius refers to Eraclea (l. 6), and boasts that ‘for all of Aragon, I am most mighty of silver and gold’ (l. 7). The Presbiter flatters Aristorius by saying that ‘of merchauntys of Aragon ye have no pere’ (l. 50). Further references to the places come in repetition of the earlier ones: Aristorius urges the Presbiter to search Eraclea thoroughly (l. 58), Jonathas claims that there is no-one in

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<sup>76</sup> See also, Donnalee Dox, ‘Medieval Drama as Documentation: ‘Real Presence’ in the Croxton Conversion of Ser Jonathas the Jewe by the Myracle of the Blissed Sacrament’, *Theatre Survey* 38: 1 (1997), pp. 97-115, p. 100.

<sup>77</sup> Tydeman, *English Medieval Theatre*, p. 55.

<sup>78</sup> McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, p. 34.

<sup>79</sup> Victor I. Scherb, *Staging Faith: East Anglian Drama in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Associated University Presses, 2001), p. 74.

Eraclea as powerful as him (l. 113), and addresses Aristorius by calling him 'the myghtyest merchaunte of Arigon' (l. 187). The last reference before the final rubric (ll. 928-931) which again evokes the Spanish location of the play, is made by the Clericus who insists when serving 'a drawte of Romney red' that there is no better wine 'in Aragon' (ll. 260-261), a mixture of local and exotic place names which serves as a transition into localism. It is possible that the rhetorical listing of alphabetised place names also serves to maintain the exotic but effectively remove the play from a specifically foreign place to East Anglia, from whose point of view everything is exotic.

Thus it appears as if the references to the 'historical' location come to an end before the key moment in the play during which the Jews gather around the table, where they place the Host (l. 312 sd) at which they recite the doctrine of the Eucharist, after which they desecrate it (l. 388 sd). At this point in the play the spectators were no longer invited to think of Spain, but rather to absorb the moment as if in the 'here and now'. The play had moved away from its historical dimension and became an immediate event to which the spectators were witnesses. It was working towards immediate credibility as a miracle unfolding. The idea of a historical representation is further weakened by the play when the comic interlude featuring 'Mayster Brundyche of Braban' (l. 453) and his servant Colle is included in close proximity to the desecration scene. The quack-doctor and his comic servant resemble the Mummers' Plays from later-attested English 'folk' tradition, as well as the classic tradition of clever slaves and their ridiculous masters.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, they resemble the theatrical device of an interaction between a master and his servant in which one misrepeats what the other has been saying, as found in the English mystery play genre in Cain and his boy.<sup>81</sup> It is likely that Brundyche and Colle thus reminded spectators of other dramatic genres, rather than of Spanish historical miracles. Also, interestingly, Dutton has remarked that although

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<sup>80</sup> Greg Walker, *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, p. 214.

<sup>81</sup> For example, in the Towneley *Mactacio Abel*, the interplay between Garcio and Cain is based on mishearing. E.g. *Garcio*: I fend, godis forbot, that euer thou thrife. *Cain*: What, boy, shal I both hold and drife? A.C. Cawley and Martin Stevens (eds), *The Towneley Cycle: a facsimile of Huntington MS HM1* (Leeds: University of Leeds School of English, 1976), fol. 3r. For a critical edition see *The Killing of Abel in The Towneley Plays*, ed. by Martin Stevens and A.C. Cawley, EETS, Supplementary Series, 13 (London: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 12-25, ll. 38-39.

Master Brandyché lives ‘a lytyll beside Babwell Myll’ in Suffolk, he seems to be able to communicate directly with the Jews in Eraclea, Aragon.<sup>82</sup> Here it seems that the play both wants to draw the spectators in to become more involved in the play as witnesses to ceremony, and at the same time uses other elements to draw the play back into the realms of theatre, hereby changing the nature of the spectators’ engagement with the play. The theatrical and ritual elements in the play are thus completely in balance at this point, so that at least *formally*, the spectator’s risk appears as if it is being managed.

Rather than a historic representation, the play appears as a floating event incorporating different generic conventions; so that it is not completely a ‘miracle play’ in the way we understand it elsewhere. By calling it a miracle play we limit it generically in a way that it doesn’t limit itself. The reason we do that is because the play pretends to limit itself to that genre through the Banns:

*Primus Vexillator*: We be ful purposed with hart and with thought  
Off our mater to tell þe entent,  
Off þe marvellys þat wer wondursely wrowght  
Off þe Holi and Blyssed Sacrament (Banns, ll. 5-8).

However, just as the historical setting of the play which is promised in the Banns is not consistent, the ‘purpose’ of the play also does not seem to be only to share a ‘miracle’. Rather the play appears to be about conversion.<sup>83</sup> Greg Walker has observed that the head of the play, ‘þe play of þe Conversyon of Ser Jonathas the Jewe by the Myracle of þe Blyssed Sacrament’, gives a different focus from its second title ‘the play of the Blyssyd Sacrament whyche miracle was don in the forest of Aragon’. The first one promises a conversion play and the second a miracle play. Walker suggests following the first title.<sup>84</sup> One finds that the most theatrically spectacular moments are those moments of transition in which the Host bleeds as a consequence of its having been tortured by the Jews, or when the Host is changed into an image of the Christ child. The moments of miracle are thus associated with theatricality, with

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<sup>82</sup> Dutton, ‘The Croxton Play of the Sacrament’, p. 57.

<sup>83</sup> Bevington, *Medieval Drama*, p. 754.

<sup>84</sup> Greg Walker, ‘And Here’s Your Host...: Jews and Others in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*’, *Jewish Culture and History* 11: 1-2 (2009), pp. 40-56, p. 54, footnote 1.

drama concerned with drama, with over-the-top special effects, but also with the discomfort of seeing the Jews violate the Host. The moments of conversion are associated with collective ritual. The Banns appear to support the precedence of the play's conversion element over the miracle element, apart from lines 5-8 quoted in the above. In the Banns we find a reassuring message from the Primus Vexillator, in which he promises that the play will give an example of sin, but also of God's mercy following in answer to this sin:

*Secundus Vexillator:* Loo, thus God at a tyme shovyd hym there,  
 Thorwhe Hys mercy and hys mekyll myght;  
 Unto the Jewes he gan appere  
 That pei shuld nat lesse Hys hevenly lyght (Banns, ll. 61-64).

The Banns then link this uplifting message to the spectators' own lives, promising them that if they show their sin to God, they will be saved and will live their lives without 'wanhope':

*Primus Vexillator:* Therfor, frendys, with all your myght  
 Unto youer gostly father shewe your synne;  
 Beth in no wanhope daye nor nyght (Banns, ll. 65-67).

This message to the audience is supposedly the message that the Banns' boast has converted eleven people in a single household (Banns, l. 55). The emphasis lies with people being converted through the message that they should offer their sins up to God, and have faith, rather than that people should be converted through the showing of miracles, since, as Dillon and Dutton have pointed out, spectators would not have needed to see the miracle performed if they believed in the doctrine. Indeed, the ritual move to church should have been enough for them. In fact, the play itself strongly signals the importance of the Church as an institution in matters of conversion. After all, as soon as Christ has healed Jonathas' hand, he sends the Jews over to the Bishop, who takes over from there (l. 726). The Bishop then manages the rest of the play's action, after Christ has changed back into the Host (l. 745 sd).<sup>85</sup> It is also the Bishop who christens the Jews (l. 871 sd), and who forms the procession back

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<sup>85</sup> Ruth Nisse, *Defining Acts: Drama and the Politics of Interpretation in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), p. 121.



to the church, where presumably it would have been understood that a true ritual of the Mass would have followed the baptism, after the end of the play. In the following subchapter I will argue that the play's conversion element makes the miracle element permissible in terms of risk management, but the miracle makes the conversion possible within the plot.

## 2.4 Visibility

In a play that is as visual as the Croxton play, and simultaneously so problematic in its visualisations, it is important to focus on what the audience was permitted to *see*. This offers the key to understanding the management of the spectators' risk. I will therefore start with addressing the characters desecrating the Host, because of their contradictory nature: they are both to be understood in terms of their theatricality as well as in their knowledge of doctrine shared with the audience. It is this ambiguous set of roles that lies at the heart of balancing theatricality and ritual in the Croxton play, and thus at the heart of its risk-management.

The representation of a group of characters has seldom been as frequently explored as that of the Jews in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*. Some scholars read the Jews as a symbol for a group within East Anglian society. For example, Cecilia Cutts famously argued that the Croxton *Play* was designed to influence Lollards in the audience.<sup>86</sup> This idea was shared by Gail McMurray Gibson in her *Theater of Devotion*, and in Sarah Beckwith's *Signifying God*.<sup>87</sup> Sister Nicholas Maltman interpreted the play as a response to anti-Eucharistic attitudes, leaving aside whether or not those in spiritual doubt that needed to be addressed through the play were Lollards.<sup>88</sup> Both views were fundamentally opposed by Ann Eljenholm Nicholas, who regarded the play as better viewed in 'the context of fifteenth-century Eucharistic *piety* than as a

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<sup>86</sup> Cecilia Cutts, 'The Croxton Play: An Anti-Lollard Piece', *Modern Language Quarterly* 5 (1944), pp. 45-60.

<sup>87</sup> McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, p. 35. See also, Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 142.

<sup>88</sup> Sister Nicholas Maltman, 'Meaning and Art in the Croxton Play of the Sacrament', *English Literary History* 41:2 (1974), pp. 149-164, p. 162.

reaction to Eucharistic *heresy*' [emphasis mine].<sup>89</sup> Her disagreement with Cutts is most perceptible in 'The Croxton Play of the Sacrament: a Re-Reading',<sup>90</sup> although Nichols nuanced her argument in her 1989 article, in which she argued that the Jews in the Croxton *Play* are 'no more real Lollards than they are real Jews: they are stage Jews who were given the contemporary language of unbelief'.<sup>91</sup> This language, she agreed, was Lollard language used to characterize 'non-believers'.<sup>92</sup> Another popular reading consists of equating the Jewish characters to any other 'Other', such as Muslims.<sup>93</sup> In contrast to this generalising tendency, some scholars have argued that the Jewish characters in the play were 'real Jews'. Lisa Lampert, for example, claims that the Jews in the play refer to the historical Jews in Bury St Edmunds who ritually slaughtered one Little Robert of Bury in 1181.<sup>94</sup> More recently, scholarship has become interested in the purpose of the Jews as characters within the play, concerned with what these characters *facilitate* rather than symbolise, although these two concerns sometimes meet in the middle. For example, Donnalee Dox explores the idea that 'the play constructs the Jewish characters as *witnesses* to Christian truth and to testify to that truth'.<sup>95</sup> According to Dox, the Jews on stage would have been recognised as any group that could undergo the conversion into Christianity at the end of the play.<sup>96</sup> Paul Strohm reads them as a 'necessary provocation' to make possible the conversion at the end of the play.<sup>97</sup> Stephen Spector has argued that the Jews and the audience unite in the Croxton play. Spector remarks that when the audience is invited to participate in the procession, Ser Isidore refers to the participants in the procession as 'a

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<sup>89</sup> Ann Eljenholm Nichols, 'Lollard Language in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Notes and Queries* 36 (1989), pp. 23-25, p. 23.

<sup>90</sup> Ann Eljenholm Nichols, 'The Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*: a Re-Reading', *Comparative Drama* 22 (1988), 117-37.

<sup>91</sup> Nichols, 'Lollard Language', p. 25.

<sup>92</sup> Nichols, 'Lollard Language', p. 23.

<sup>93</sup> See for example Michael Mark Chemers, 'Anti-Semitism, Surrogacy, and the Invocation of Mohammed in *the Play of the Sacrament*', *Comparative Drama* 14: 1 (2007), pp. 25-55.

<sup>94</sup> Lisa Lampert, 'The Once and Future Jew: The Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, Little Robert of Bury and Historical Memory', *Jewish History* 15 (2001), pp. 235-255.

<sup>95</sup> Dox, 'Medieval Drama as Documentation', p. 109.

<sup>96</sup> Dox, 'Medieval Drama as Documentation', p. 110.

<sup>97</sup> Strohm, 'The Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', p. 43.

gret meny of Jewys' (l. 844).<sup>98</sup> This address may very well include the audience members. Spector concludes that in the play, the Jews and Christians are blended together to form a collective 'absorbed into the *corpus mysticum*, the mystical body of Christ that is both the Host and community of the converted'.<sup>99</sup> Heather Hill-Vásquez' study, leaning towards the notion of affective piety, describes the Jews on stage and the spectators in the audience as the key enablers of 'a miraculous re-creation of Crucifixion, Passion and Resurrection'.<sup>100</sup> I have already covered Dillon, Walker, and Dutton's theories in my introduction to this chapter. The amount of criticism on the subject of the Jews has obfuscated their simple theatrical effect, which becomes more apparent when studied in comparison to miracle traditions that lack such figures, but feature a different kind of character performing the same sort of role. I am here speaking of the Jews' capacity to show Christ in the Host as an alternative to having a priest make Christ appear through the Mass, as well as to explain that which needs further explanation surrounding this showing of Christ. In other words, the Jews are Expositors.

Like Croxton, the Breda play carefully preserves an expository function, but assigns this expository function to characters that are not Jews: the two comic devils, Sondich Becoren [Sinful Attraction] and Belet van Deughden [Prevention of Virtues], whose mischievous characters have been studied by Herman Pleij and more recently, by Charlotte Steenbrugge.<sup>101</sup> At first sight, these two devils may be interpreted as *Sinneken*s, described by Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé as 'destructive allegorical beings whose existence and functions are determined by the evil characteristics that they embody.'<sup>102</sup> Strietman and

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<sup>98</sup> Stephen Spector, 'Time, Space and Identity in the Play of the Sacrament', *The Stage as Mirror: Civic Theatre in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. by Alan E. Knight (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 189-200, p. 197.

<sup>99</sup> Spector, 'Time, Space and Identity', p. 199.

<sup>100</sup> Hill-Vásquez, 'The Precious Body of Crist that they Treytyn in Ther Hondis', p. 61.

<sup>101</sup> Herman Pleij, '24 Juni 1500 – Spectaculaire Duivelscenes Domineren de Opvoering van het Mirakelspel 'Vanden Heilighen Sacramente vander Nyeuwervaert' in Breda – De Duivel in het Middeleeuwse Drama en op het Toneel', *Een theatergeschiedenis der Nederlanden*, ed. by R.L. Erenstein (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), pp. 64-69; Charlotte Steenbrugge, 'Jan Smeeken: Sinneken and Devils', *European Medieval Drama* 12 (2008), pp. 49-66.

<sup>102</sup> Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé (eds), 'Introduction', *For Pleasure and Profit: Six Dutch Rhetoricians Plays*. Vol. 1: Three Biblical Plays. *Medieval English Theatre* (2006), pp. 3-8, p. 4.

Happé argue that these figures often appear in pairs, and that they take up much of the stage time ‘by their not entirely cordial exchanges between themselves’.<sup>103</sup> This is applicable to the devils in *Sacramente* who, as allegorical figures, constantly abuse one another. Strietman furthermore notes that,

On the Rhetoricians stage, the *sinneken*s are often portrayed as Lucifer’s servants. They are, however, aware that their evil influence, like that of their master, will be ultimately curtailed, even undone, by God and the sacrifice of His Son ... By attempting to influence and to tempt mankind, the *sinneken*s are therefore the strongest indicators of that which is good, namely the opposite of all that they propose and try to generate.<sup>104</sup>

This is certainly true for *Sacramente*, in which Sondig indicates the devils’ relationship to Lucifer, their master. They also show their incentive to ‘do evil’ (in this case, hiding the sacrament in the marshland) because they fear Lucifer. Yet Sondig acknowledges the holiness of the sacrament through his words, thus indicating what is good (and God):

*Sondig*: Lucifer sal ons die leden breken  
wort geuonden dit heilich sacrament  
want tes God selue (fol. 29r).

[*Sondig*: Lucifer will break our legs / if this holy sacrament is found / because it is God himself].

Sondig’s didacticism is not so different from Croxton’s Jonathas’ attempt at ridiculing the Eucharist, which ironically has the effect of Jonathas’ acknowledging the greatness of the Christian God: *Jonathas*: ‘Yowr God, that ys full mytheti, in a cake!’ (l. 205). On another occasion Sondig addresses their opposition to God, but while doing so shows their petty opposition to the divine, and actually puts the devils in the awkward position of characters that both fear their master, Lucifer, as well as his enemy, God. Sondig says:

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<sup>103</sup> Strietman and Happé, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.

<sup>104</sup> Elsa Strietman, ‘God, Gods, Humans, and *Sinneken*s in Classical Rhetoricians Plays’ *Urban Theatre in the Low Countries, 1400-1625* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), pp. 169-183, p. 175.

*Sondig*: Ey viant wij moeten buijten blijuen

Wij en dorren niet comen inde kercke (fol. 41r).

[*Sondig*: Oi, fiend, we have to stay outside / we dare not come inside the church].

Of course this speech has two functions, both to signal the devils' evil influence (or lack thereof in this case), but also to 'cut the scene' and signal to the audience that they do not take part in the same in-church gathering as Jan Bautoen and others, and thus justify why this scene is not displayed on stage. Similarly, in the Croxton play, Jonathas approaches Aristorius to go and steal the Host for him from the church, following the logic that 'for gold and sylver I am nothing agast / but pat we shall get pat cake to ower paye' (ll. 147-148). Jonathas' strategy to get his hands on the 'cake' takes for granted the unspoken idea that he himself would never be allowed in this building of worship himself.

Steenbrugge has argued that the devils in *Sacramente* are not *sinnekens*, but that the play's author, Jan Smeken, may have 'relied on other, older (non-*Rederijker*) miracle plays for this choice and characterization of devils'.<sup>105</sup> The main difference between *Sacramente*'s devils and the *sinnekens* is that where the latter 'provide a different sort of comedy by laughing at the actions and characters, 'the devils in *Sacramente* are themselves laughable'.<sup>106</sup> She acknowledges, however, that perhaps the distinction between the characters of the *sinnekens* or devils is 'a modern attempt at categorization that does not reflect the fluidity of medieval genres and types'.<sup>107</sup> Regardless of their exact category, the devils in the Breda *Sacramente* are important to the play, which becomes apparent when one considers the local historical nature of the performance of the play; after all, the devils are not mentioned in *The Chronicles*. Indeed, Smeken added the devils to the narrative as it was related in *The Chronicles*, and used the Prologue to offer his apologies for including

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<sup>105</sup> Steenbrugge, 'Jan Smeeken', p. 62. Steenbrugge follows a study by W.M.H. Hummelen which argues that in the drama of the Low Countries the devils disappeared off the stage to make room for the *sinnekens*. W.M.H. Hummelen, *De Sinnekens in het Rederijkersdrama* (Groningen: Wolters, 1958), p. 371.

<sup>106</sup> Steenbrugge, 'Jan Smeeken', p. 60.

<sup>107</sup> Steenbrugge, 'Jan Smeeken', p. 51.

the ‘duuelrije’ [devilry] (fol. 68v) that occurs in the play. Smeken commented ‘hoe dat inden boec soe niet en staet’ [though it does not say so in the book] (fol. 68v), with ‘boec’ meaning *The Chronicles*. His stated motivation for adding the devils to the plotline was ‘om alle swaerheit te belettene’ [to avoid boredom] (fol. 68v). Smeken deemed this motivation enough to justify including in his play these personifications of evil driving Master Macharius, the ‘man of law’, to test the Host. Aside from fun, the devils were very effective extra-theatrical characters that had an expository function explaining doctrinal matters, making this more palatable. Dogma sounds a lot less like a sermon when uttered by two comical devils. Furthermore, as Narrators they describe through the power of words, the actions that could not be staged.

*Sacramente*’s pivotal point in the play is similar to that in the Croxton play, and features Macharius, the ‘man of law’, who makes his way to Niervaert to test the Host. The negotiation between not showing crucial actions and still representing them is tackled by Smeken through language. It is important to note that the type of language used is very different to that in Croxton. The Croxton play uses words that are indicative of accompanying movement. For example a stage direction tells us that ‘here shall the iiij Jewys pryk per daggerys in iiij quarters’ (l. 388 sd), while the Jews are calling out:

*Jason*: Have at yt! Have at yt, with all my might!

Thys syde I hope for the sese!

*Jasdon*: And I shall with thys blade so bright

Thys other syde freshely afeze! (Croxton, ll. 389-392) [...]

The language used is designed to intensify, and indeed to make the movements more apparently frantic and maddened. This is achieved through the alliteration, stresses, the distribution of the speech amongst the various speakers, and finally the ‘movement’ of the speech, which allows for a visualisation of the action, working round the outside of the Host and eventually into the middle where the stabbing will take place: the final, dramatic act of violence. Thus, where the Jews’ speaking of ‘thys blade’ is explicitly ‘deictic’, which is to say that it points out and demonstrates what it is talking about, the language in *Sacramente* is descriptive and graphic. Furthermore, where in Croxton the Jewish characters violently assault the Host,

*Sacramente* offers the spectators a cat-and-mouse game between the two devils and Macharius. The latter is lured into the testing of the Holy Sacrament by Sondig and Belet, the play's two comical devils, and is of course convinced of the necessity of his actions through their smooth words. Words, however, are all the audience gets. Sondig invitingly asks Macharius how he will do the testing, to which the lawyer answers that he doesn't yet know. What follows is a debate in which the devils suggest ways in which to desecrate the Host, which Macharius rejects. This provides the audience with the idea of the horror, without having to experience it directly. Sondig suggests the following:

*Sondig:* Ghi sullet in een schoon vuer leggen  
verbrandet soe muedij wel beuroen  
dat gheen sacrament es (fol. 40r).

[You shall place it in a clean fire / burn it, so that you may assume /  
that it is not a sacrament].

Macharius is not too keen on this idea, and Belet suggests a different method, reminiscent of the testing of witches:

*Belet:* Werpet int watere  
Smelt het duer de natheid ontwee  
soe en eest gheen sacrament (fol. 40v).

[Throw it in the water / if it melts, falling apart by the wetness / then it  
is not a sacrament].

When Macharius is not convinced that this is the right way, Sondig offers another testing method: cutting up the Host into pieces:

*Sondig:* Willet dan al in stucken snijden  
versamet niet weder aen een  
soe en eest gheen sacrament (fol. 40v).

[Would you cut it to pieces / if it does not turn back into one / then it  
is not a sacrament].

Macharius then proposes a testing-method himself: he will stab the sacrament in five places with a sharp pen. He says:

*Macharius*: Willet tot gheen tot vijff steden bloeden  
 Soe en houdict voer gheen sacrament volmaect (fol. 41r).  
 [If it doesn't bleed in any of the five places / then I will hold it as no  
 perfect sacrament].

His comment is for the aid of the audience, who will not be offered a scene in which the Host is actually physically stabbed. After Macharius makes his statement, the scene switches to another setting, and the audience is left to imagine the horrors that Macharius will inflict on the Host, not fit to be seen. For the Breda *Sacramente* which celebrated the miracle of their own local host, even violence inflicted on a prop Host would have been unacceptable, as it would have been too real for audiences within the celebrational performance context. For the spectators of the Croxton play it might have been unpleasant to watch the stabbing-scene but it would have served a doctrinal need.

As observed, the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* is a highly visual play. It treats its audiences to a number of theatrical tricks that allow them to *see*. These tricks include a severed hand attached to the Host, mentioned in the stage direction as: 'here shall thay pluke pe arme, and pe hand shall hang styll with pe Sacrament' (l. 435 sd), which was a dummy hand hidden in the actor's sleeve; and a bleeding Host, as the stage direction tells us: 'here pe [H]ost must blede' (l. 400 sd). This was possibly accomplished through the piercing of a bladder filled with animal blood that was hidden away from the spectators' view.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, spectators were offered the excitement of an oven bubbling over with what looked like blood: 'here shall pe cawdron byle, apperyng to be as bloode' (l. 592 sd). A final element of theatrical trickery consists of the oven producing an 'image' with 'woundys bledyng':

Here the owyn must ryve asunder and blede owt at pe cranys,  
 And an image appere owt with woundys bledyng (l. 632 sd).

It is most likely that the 'image' was an actor performing the role of Jesus as mentioned in the list of *dramatis personae*, although, as Tydeman has noted,

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<sup>108</sup> Tydeman, *English Medieval Theatre*, p. 66.



there is the possibility that a 'pictorial or plastic image' was used.<sup>109</sup> It is this 'image' of Christ brought forward by the actor, which draws attention to the suffering he has experienced at the hands of the Jews: 'O mirabiles Judei, attendite et videte / si est dolor [sic] dolor meus!' [O strange Jews, behold and see if any sorrow is like my sorrow] (ll. 637-638). He continues to further express the Jews' cruelty by stressing how undeserved this 'new tormentry' is, as he has already died for their sins:

*Jhesus*: Oh ye mervaylows Jewys,  
Why ar ye to yowr kyng onkynd,  
And [I] so bitterly bowt yow to My blysse?  
Why far ye thus fule wyth yowre frende?  
Why peyne yow Me and straytly Me pynde,  
and I yowr love so derely have bowght?  
Why are ye so unstedfast in your mynde?  
Why wrath ye Me? I greve yow nowght.  
[...] Why blaspheme yow Me? why do ye thus?  
Why put yow Me to a newe tormentry,  
And I dyed for yow on the Crosse?  
Why consydere not yow what I dyd crye? (ll. 39-54).

Christ speaking out a lament to his torturers is not unlike similar scenes in the York *Crucifixion*, the Towneley *Crucifixion* and other plays staging the violation of the body of Christ, the main difference being that an image of Christ's physical body only appears *after* the abuse has been performed. Walker has argued that the audience of the Croxton play was spared the *visual* violence inflicted on Christ, since it is transferred to the Host.<sup>110</sup> However, it should be considered that the image of violence inflicted on a prop Host *could* have been more powerful to the audiences than the same torments perpetrated on the body of a human actor. The reason for this is that visually, one would not have seen a difference between the prop Host and the ritual Host used in church, which for most people present *was* Christ, rather than an actor who *dramatically represented* Christ for the duration of the play. The difference is

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<sup>109</sup> Tydeman, *English Medieval Theatre*, p. 67.

<sup>110</sup> Walker, 'And Here's Your Host', p. 50.

in the role that the onlookers had: those present at a dramatization in which visual violence was inflicted on an actor playing Christ were spectators, whereas the Croxton play turned the onlookers into witnesses, a conflicted notion, especially since the point of the play is that the believers in the audience supposedly did not need to see an image of Christ to know the Host to be the body of Christ. Through this conflict, the Croxton play encourages spectators to witness something that they, in their faith, would not have to witness to know, thus allowing them to undergo the affirmation of their spiritual enlightenment at the end of the play under the guidance of the character of the Episcopus. Furthermore, whatever the visual form of the torment, Christ's lament following the torture of the Host would have had an effect similar to laments following violence inflicted on an actor's body playing Christ, namely the effect of making the audience feel responsible for Christ's torture and death.<sup>111</sup> Jesus' accusation would have had the sobering effect of, in the words of Jody Enders, metaphorically beating truths into the audience.<sup>112</sup> This strategy is not unlike the one employed in the Towneley *Crucifixion* (14<sup>th</sup> C), in which Jesus' direct address draws the audience into the play world:

*Jesus:* I pray you pepyll that passé me by,  
 That lede youre lyfe so lykandly  
 heyfe vp youre hartys on hight!  
 Behold, if euer ye sagh body  
 buffett & bett thus blody,  
 Or yit thus dulfully dight;  
 in warld was neuer so wight  
 That suffred half so sare.  
 My mayn, my mode, my myght,  
 Is noght bot sorrow to sight,  
 And comfort none, bot care.  
 My folk, what haue I done to the,  
 That thou all thus shall tormente me?  
 Thy syn by I full sore.

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<sup>111</sup> Claire Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods, and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 150.

<sup>112</sup> Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theatre of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 61.

What haue I greuyd the? answere me,  
That thou thus nalys me to a tre,  
And all for thyn erroure.<sup>113</sup>

Christ's question put to the audience about what he has done to them for their wanting to torment him, implicates the spectators as a group. The itemisation of his suffering and the questions spectators should ask themselves is similar to that used in texts designed to exploit affective piety. His question 'answere me' however suggests spectator engagement on a more personal level, so that individual audience members could ask themselves why Christ had to be tortured for *their* sake. The unease felt by spectators was caused by their guilt, but managed by the playwright and actors who had a doctrinal reason in mind to stage the scene as they did. The pleasure to be had from the scene would have been the sense of safety, and gratitude that Christ had died for the sins of all the members of the audience to allow for their happy afterlives.

Interestingly, Jesus' address in the Croxton play does not include the audience in the same way as in the Towneley play, indeed it only directly addresses the Jews, emphasising that he died for *their* sins. This suggests that the spectators are not encouraged by the play to identify with the Jews and their actions. Heather Hill-Vásquez has observed that the play holds the Jewish characters responsible for the violence inflicted on the Host, and that 'the Croxton play ostensibly keeps all of its Christian participants at a safe distance'.<sup>114</sup> This choice of staging betrays itself as an extension of the decision not actually to dramatize the Mass, although of course the ambiguity of the play could have caused some spectators to still have *felt* anxious about the play's torture scenes.

The Breda play solves this problem radically in terms of risk-management. In contrast to the Croxton play it does not offer a complete on-stage performance of the whole plot. Spectators of the Breda play would have

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<sup>113</sup> A.C. Cawley and Martin Stevens (eds), *The Towneley Cycle: a facsimile of Huntington MS HM1* (Leeds: University of Leeds School of English, 1976), fol. 86v-87r. For a critical edition see *The Crucifixion* in *The Towneley Plays*, ed. by Martin Stevens and A.C. Cawley, EETS, Supplementary Series, 13 (London: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 287-308, ll. 233-249. This example is also quoted in Anne Righter (Barton), *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964), p. 23.

<sup>114</sup> Hill-Vásquez, 'The Precious Body of Crist that they Treytyn in Ther Hondis', p. 63.

expected this as the Prologue informed the audience that where some parts of the play were performed or shown on the stage, other parts would only be narrated or figuratively displayed. The different events in the play would have been addressed and represented in distinctive ways spread over several levels of performance. The First Prologue promises that the actors would *play* in ‘the name of the Lord’ [‘zullen wij v *spelen* in den naem des Heeren’] (fol. 67v) of how one Jan Bautoen, a local to Nieuwervaart, found the Holy Sacrament in the grounds just outside of the settlement. The Prologue further promises that the members of the Rhetoricians Chamber would perform how the man picked up the Host, which immediately started bleeding in his hand, and realising that only a priest could touch the Host, he dropped it on the ground. So far, all would have been dramatized in full according to the Prologue. Then, the Prologue indicates that they would *show* [‘tonen’] (fol. 68r) how a priest brought the Host to Nieuwervaart. Then, the Prologue informs the spectator that it would be *figuratively revealed* [‘figuerlijck geopenbaert’] (fol. 68r) how Master Macharius, a man of law, tested the Host by piercing it five times, so that it bled from five spots.<sup>115</sup> In other words, the Prologue does not promise the audience any ‘live-action’ involving an attorney attacking a Holy Sacrament with a sharp object, but rather predicts this action to be presented emblematically. This stands in sharp contrast to the Croxton Banns, which do not only promise live action, but also a spiritually stimulating event. Then, the audience watching the Breda prologue is told that they will be *informed with words* [‘met woerden worden geraempt’] (fol. 68v) of all the miracles caused by the Sacrament. That is, apart from the ‘miracle’ that saved Lord Wouter of Kersbeke from being burned to death by the ‘Saracens’. This narrative would have been brought to the audience both through narration and *figuratively* [‘figuerlijc’] (fol. 68v). Furthermore, the Prologue promises that a representation of the entry of the sacrament into the city of Breda would be *performed* [‘spelen’] (fol. 69r), and *shown* [‘togen’] (fol. 69r).

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<sup>115</sup> Asselbergs interprets in a footnote that ‘figuerlijck’ could mean ‘by play-actors’ (p. 113). However, I will adopt P. Leendertz jr.’s traditionally accepted view that ‘figuerlijck’ means that it was not performed by play-actors but conveyed in a figurative manner. See, P. Leendertz jr., *Middelnederlandse Dramatisch Poëzie* (Leiden: Sijthof, 1907), p. 137.

Elsa Strietman and Lynette Muir have shown that Dutch medieval drama comprised 'image, speech and action' and that the variety of imagery ranged from 'painted text on a cloth or board' to tableaux of actors standing in certain postures, speaking or silent. They have indicated that the means of presentation were so variable that a mixture of these forms would not have been unusual.<sup>116</sup> Strietman and Muir distinguished between messages in play being presented 'natuerlic', that is 'by means of speaking, acting characters', and 'figuerlic', which would have been 'by iconographical means'.<sup>117</sup>

P. Leendertz has argued that for *Sacramente*, where parts of the plot were figuratively revealed, the representation of the events was offered to the audience through a painted image ['schilderij'], because re-enacting the actions would have been too shocking for the play's devout audience.<sup>118</sup> Leendertz' reading suggests that Smeken expected his audience to be upset by a theatrical representation of an attorney piercing a Host with a dagger, or by that of a young nobleman coming dangerously close to being burned to death by 'the heathens' (fol. 49r). Avoiding such representation in dramatic form could have been a defence mechanism not unlike the advice described in the anonymous *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* (ca. 1380-1425), which promotes the 'deed bok' of painting and remarks that 'it is leueful to han the miraclis of God peintid'.<sup>119</sup> However, to the proposition why, since paintings were allowed, the 'quick bok' of playing should not be permitted, the *Tretise* takes a firm stance:

We seyn that peinture, yif it be very withoute menging of lesingis and not to curious, to myche fedinge mennis wittis, and not occasion of maumetrie to the puple, they ben but as nakyd lettris to a clerk to riden the treuthe. But so ben not miraclis pleyinge that ben made more to deliten men bodily than to ben bokis to lewid men. And therefore yif

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<sup>116</sup> Elsa Strietman and Lynette R. Muir, 'The Low Countries', *The Medieval European Stage 500-1550*, ed. by William Tydeman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 520.

<sup>117</sup> Strietman and Muir, 'The Low Countries', p. 520.

<sup>118</sup> P. Leendertz jr., *MiddelNederlandse Dramatische Poëzie* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1907), p. 551.

<sup>119</sup> *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, ed. by Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications Western Michigan University, 1993), f 15v, l. 197.

they ben quike bookis, they ben quike bookis to shrewidenesse more than to godenesse.<sup>120</sup>

According to the *Tretise*-writer paintings, provided that they are not ‘to curious’ were nothing more than keys to the truth, whereas the ‘miraclis pleyinge’ that he described were designed for bodily pleasure, and too frivolous to be good for its spectators. For Smeken when producing the Breda *Sacramente*, on the other hand, it may not necessarily have been the devoutness of the audience which caused him to refrain from showing shocking moments on the scaffold in live action. Indeed, one may simply argue that real-life violent actions would have gone against the tone and purpose of the play: to facilitate the festive enjoyment of a play in which the local miracle is celebrated. This dramatic ‘safety-net’ would have been, as Leendertz suggests, utilized to protect the audience. It is not to say that the piety of the expected spectators in Breda was above that of the spectators in Croxton, which is why the one audience needed to be protected from shocking visuals and the other did not. Rather, the uneasiness caused by visualising violence inflicted on either Christ or the wafer in Corpus Christi or miracle plays could be excused if it suited a doctrinal purpose, in other words, if it would be ‘functional violence’, such as in the Croxton case, but not if shown in a festive context. It is apparent that Smeken was well aware of the limitations of representing supernatural events through drama as opposed to through the paintings or poetry produced alongside the Breda *Sacramente*.

## 2.5 Audience Involvement: participants or witnesses

It is likely that spectators of the Croxton play would not have been encouraged to identify with the Jews, and thus not to feel complicit in their actions. However, it is possible that, not unlike audiences to the cycle passion plays, spectators of the Croxton play would have been invited to feel a strange desire to see Christ die for their sins so as to make possible the Salvation of humankind, contradictorily mixed with the horror they might have felt at seeing the violent actions on stage. However, they were mostly invited to feel

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<sup>120</sup> *A Treatise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, f 17v, l. 372-380.

faith. Both McMurray Gibson and Claire Sponsler have described the 'incarnational aesthetic' of East Anglian religious drama, and its tendency to visualize spiritual abstractions so that laypeople would come to a better understanding of these abstractions.<sup>121</sup> The Croxton play visualizes the abstract, and by doing so allows the spectators to experience the staged actions in the 'here and now'. The Jews' desecration of the Host appears to be a strange concoction between the celebration of the Mass, and the Passion of Christ, and thus visualizes both the abstract ritual celebrating Christ's sacrifice, as well as the Biblical moment itself. As soon as Jonathas has obtained the Host from the Merchant, he tells his servants to 'sprede a clothe on the tabyll' and says that they 'shall folow after to carpe of thys case' (ll. 311-312). What follows is a long episode in which the Jews, gathered around the table, recite Christian beliefs. The disbelief expressed by the Jews is only superficial and for the benefit of characterization, and it is clear that the Jews' recital has a didactic function. Jonathas for example says:

*Jonathas:* Syrys, I praye yow all, harkyn to my sawe!  
Thes Crysten men carpyn of a mervelows case;  
They say pat pis ys Jhesu pat was attayntyde in owr lawe,  
And pat thys ys he pat crucyfied was.  
On thes wordys ther law growndyd hath he,  
That he sayd on Shere Thursday at hys sopere:  
He brake the brede and sayd '*Accipite*',  
And gave hys dyscyplys them for to chere.  
And more he sayd to them there  
Whyle they were all togethere and sum,  
Syttynge at the table soo clere,  
'*Comedite Corpus meum*' (ll. 313-324).

Jonathas here refers to the Mass, and to the biblical historical episode behind it. It is as if his words are to remind the audience what it is that is celebrated through the Eucharist. At this point the dramatized action comes close to

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<sup>121</sup> McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, pp. 1-18; Claire Sponsler, 'Drama and Piety: Margery Kempe' in *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 129-143, p. 130.

enacting the Mass, but pointedly does not actually do so. Jonathas' next words are there to explain that Christ had given Peter the authority to preach, and that this same authority is to be found in all preachers. Jonathas thus mentions the power of the Church to perform the ritual of the Eucharist, before the Jews desecrate the Host:

*Jonathas:* And thys powre he gaue Peter to proclame,  
And how the same shuld be suffycient to all prechors.  
The bysshoppys and curatys saye the same... (ll. 325-327).

It appears as if the play wants spectators first to formally learn about the doctrine of the Eucharist, and of the power of the Church, before the central action in the play commences. As the language becomes more violent, and the Jews signal that they are ready to stab the Host with their daggers, Masphat encourages his fellow Jews by using contradictory language that both suggests the Host is only an object, through calling it a 'cake' (l. 377), while at the same time he speaks on giving it 'woundys fyve' (l. 378), assuming the Host to be a body. He then tellingly says that the reason to do this is 'to prove in thys brede yf per be eny lyfe' (l. 380). The audience knows the outcome of the 'proof', and although they have just heard Jonathas mention the power of the priests and bishops, they are about to undergo an experience which does not require them to rely on the intermediary of a preacher. As the Jews stab the Host the audience members are made into participants mentally contemplating Christ's suffering, feeling the actions inside their own bodies, in what Dillon calls a 'fetishistic' mode of looking.<sup>122</sup> Something which would have been not unlike the sensation associated with affective piety, in which the wounds of Christ, or the suffering of Christ on the cross are sensualized and experienced inside worshippers' own bodies. Margaret Rogerson describes affective piety as 'devotional acting', and observes that medieval 'actors' through an exercise of the imagination could travel back and place themselves in the present of the biblical past.<sup>123</sup> She observes that following the footsteps of Nicolas Love's *Mirror of the Blessyd Life of Jesus Christ*, medieval Christians such as Margery

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<sup>122</sup> Dillon, 'What Sacrament?', p. 173.

<sup>123</sup> Margaret Rogerson, 'Introduction: Performance in the City', in *The York Mystery Plays: Performance in the City*, ed. by Margaret Rogerson (York: York Medieval Press, 2011), pp. 1-23, p. 22.



Kempe used affective piety to become a participant in ‘the drama of the passion’.<sup>124</sup> The word ‘actor’ here is a slippery term. When used in relation to Margery, it describes someone who is completely absorbed in affective piety, so that she becomes an ‘actor’ rather than a witness or participant, the word ‘actor’ is useful for describing the depth of the engagement. Alexandra Johnston has written that Nicholas Love believed that being emotionally engaged with Christ’s suffering, death and rising, was the most direct way for believers to ‘understand the basic Christian story’.<sup>125</sup> In the Croxton play the suffering of the Host could have been experienced by spectators through affective piety, making them contemplate its suffering, and remember Christ’s Passion. When the Host bleeds the spectators are encouraged to imagine themselves present at the Crucifixion. They are encouraged to have an emotional, personal and perhaps even individual experience in which they are brought closer to Christ, without any need of a priest. After this, the Church had to reassert its institutional power, as affective piety makes a priest redundant, and the Croxton play was evidently not trying to give this message. Thus we find that the spectators’ personal devotional experiences are sandwiched between moments that emphasize the importance of the Church. Tellingly, in the ritual that follows, the audience experience again becomes abstract, collective and public. This is where the Episcopus involves the audience in a ritualistic bare-foot procession.<sup>126</sup>

*Episcopus*: Now all ye peple that here are,  
I commande yow, every man,  
On yowr feet for to goo, bare,  
In the devoutest wyse that ye can (ll. 730-733).

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<sup>124</sup> Rogerson, ‘Introduction: Performance in the City’, p. 22.

<sup>125</sup> Alexandra F. Johnston, ‘The Communities of the York Plays’, in *The York Mystery Plays: Performance in the City*, ed. by Margaret Rogerson (York: York Medieval Press, 2011), pp. 157-164, p. 161.

<sup>126</sup> Walker, ‘And Here’s Your Host’, p. 45.

The Episcopus elevates the Host as would have been done in church, and from this moment on refers to the prop host as a 'Holy Sacrament', urging all to join him in the procession to the church:<sup>127</sup>

*Episcopus*: Now wyll I take thys Holy Sacrament  
wyth humble hart and gret devotion,  
and all we wyll gon with on consent  
and beare yt to chyrche wyth sole[m]pne procession (ll. 754-757).

Also, he invites the audience to participate in singing 'Thys holy song, O sacrum convivium / Let us syng all with grett swetnesse' (ll. 758-761). The spectators of the Croxton play thus are at times encouraged to enjoy drama in all its artificiality; at other times they are educated in the meanings of the rituals of their faith, strangely enough through the mouths of the Jews instead of the mouths of the priests as promised in the Banns (!) and are then given the opportunity to personally engage with the suffering and wounds of Christ, and perhaps to meditate on the physicality of his sacrifice.

The moment when the Episcopus takes the Host into his hands is the moment in the play where any remaining abstractions are further unpacked, and where play momentarily becomes identical with ritual. This is made possible because of the theatricality of this moment, which is so full of *coup de théâtre* and dramatic action that any doctrinal confusion the spectator may have had about the moral rightness of visualizing the Host miracle is neutralized by the theatrical atmosphere. The theatre becomes a stage where everything is possible within the doctrinal framework. After this, the play reintroduces the need for an abstract, collective experience under the moral guidance of the Bishop, so that the play has come full circle: it has aimed to explain the meanings and history of a ritual known to the members of the audience, engaged them on a sensory spiritual level, and brought them back, through ritual, into the arms of the Church. The nature of audience involvement for the Croxton play is thus very changeable, perhaps for its spectators it would have felt like a doctrinal rollercoaster.

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<sup>127</sup> Bevington has observed that this movement of the audience is not unlike that in the Digby *St Paul*. Bevington, *Medieval Drama*, p. 755.

The Breda play, on the other hand did not invite spectators to be involved in the play, as the Prologue informs us: 'Ons hoirt ende zwijght werde excellente' [Hear us and be silent worthy <spectators>] (fol. 69v). Instead of participators as in the Croxton play, the spectators of the Breda *Sacramente* were made 'witnesses' to the actions performed on stage. Smeken used sensory language to emphasise spectating and witnessing. Although the play does not visualise its entire content on the scaffold, the language used would have reminded the spectator that they were both audience to a play, as well as witnesses to a greater truth centred on their very own city. The many words referring to the sensory create a verbal substitute for experience. In the first act, the play's devils Sondich and Belet comment on Jan Bautoen, who is described as having a spade and entering the 'wetland' on the stage. Of course there is nothing that signifies a marsh, so Sondich and Belet remark what the audience is supposed to imagine seeing.

*Sondich:* Hulpe, hi heeft die scuppe inde hant,

**Zieten** grauen

*Belet:* **Sieten** deluen (fol. 29v).

[*Sondich:* Help, he has the spade in his hand, look at him digging.

*Belet:* look at him delving].

It is important that these comments are made by the two Narrator-devils, whose account of the events gives them an extra layer of credibility; as such commentators would not be expected by their audience to be in favour of the Host. Sondich then says that Jan must be very close to the Sacrament, almost touching it, as he can see it in the earth, and his eyes are hurting (fol. 30r). Belet notes how the sweet smell spreading through the swamp is more than he can bear; how it torments him:

*Belet:* Ic en cans niet ghedooghen

De groote **soetheit** vanden moere

Quelt mijn helsch geest (fol. 30r).

[*Belet:* I cannot bear it / the great sweetness of the marsh / taunts my hellish spirit].

The audience, of course, cannot see anything moving in the earth, as they are facing the wooden planks of the scaffold. Nor can they smell the holy sweetness of the host, that so offends the devils' noses. The devils thus fulfil the function of Narrators by describing this to the audience, but they also function to create a drama in the mind's eye and sensory imagination. It is interesting to note how Belet speaks of the smell as an agentive; suggesting that not only is he overcome by the sweetness, but that the smell actively taunts him. The second act shows two women who come and help Jan Bautoen with his laborious digging, and their senses are also sensitive to the sweet smells.

*Tweede Vrouw:* Noyt **soeter specie!**

*Jan:* Noyt meerder **soetheit!**

*Eerste Vrouw:* Hoe **rieket** hier dus?

...

*Jan:* Hier moet ymmere wat liggen onder,  
daert dus om **riect** (fol. 30v)

[*Second Woman:* Never a sweeter spice! *Jan:* Never more sweetness!

*First Woman:* Is that what it smells like over here? *Jan:* Something must be lying underneath, which is why it smells thus].

Throughout the rest of the act, Jan and the two women refer to the words 'roec' ['smell'] (fol. 30v), 'roeck' ['smell'] (fol. 31r), and 'gaer' ['smell'] (fol. 31r). Once, they mention a 'soete here' ['sweet smell'] (fol. 31r). The next sensory theme they address is 'seeing'. The First Woman says,

*Eerste Vrouw:* Wat **sie** ick daer int moer verscieten

Ic **sacher** een dinck dat seer **claer** es (fol. 31r).

[*First Woman:* What is it that I see shifting in the swamp? / I saw something there, which was very clear].

The First Woman's words are ambiguous, 'claer' could mean that what she saw had a clear quality, and was thus a very bright and visual object, but 'claer' is sometimes also used as a line-filler that means 'without doubt' ['zonder

twijfel’],<sup>128</sup> so that the truth of the Host shines through in the woman’s words. Jan acquiesces with another sensory observation: ‘Ik **mercke** dat waer es’ [I noticed that it is true] (fol. 31r). These words are also ambiguous, as Jan both *notices* [‘opmerkzaam gadeslaan’] as a person that there is something to be found in the swamp, but he also *marks* [‘van een merk of teken voorzien’] to the audience as an instructor that this is in fact the truth.<sup>129</sup> Jan then picks up the host from the marsh, and it starts bleeding in his hand. To visualise this moment for the audience, Jan says:

*Jan:* Och ghi vrouwen lofsam  
Alsoe haest alst quam in mijn handt  
Wordet bloeyende aen elcken cant  
**Ghi sieghet selue voor ooghen naect**

Lacen wachermen (fols 31v-32r).

[Oh, you good women / Almost as it came into my hand / it started  
bleeding on every side / you see it yourself before your naked eyes /  
alas unfortunately].

The Women may be able to see the bleeding Host with their ‘naked eyes’ but this would not have been the case for the audience members. It would have been in keeping with the rest of the play for this not to have been visible for the spectators, but there is no evidence whether or not it happened. I have observed that in the Croxton play the Host was made to look as if it was bleeding by using animal’s blood contained in a hidden bladder. If in the Breda *Sacramente* the bleeding Host was visible to the audience, this would have been the only moment in the whole play when *coup de théâtre* was used rather than narrator or expositors. It would have had an iconic effect rather than the ludic quality of the events in Croxton, nor would it distract the spectator with theatrical risk from the real anxieties they may have faced by the representation of something too closely resembling the real host on stage. After all, this was not needed because the Breda play does not visualise the

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<sup>128</sup> ‘Claer.’ *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek* (MNW, The Dictionary of Middle Dutch), In *Geïntegreerde Taalbank Online*, compiled by the Instituut voor Nederlandse Lexicologie (INL) and Nederlandse Taalunie (NTU), 2007-2010. <http://gtb.inl.nl> [accessed 31 July 2013].

<sup>129</sup> ‘Merken.’ *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek* (MNW) in *Geïntegreerde Taalbank Online*. <http://gtb.inl.nl> [accessed 1 August 2013].

torture of the Host. If anything, it would work along with the ideological concern with visible blood in the Catholic Church, for example in Bruges, where the relic of the Precious Blood [‘Kostbaar Bloed’] of Christ has been revered by confraternities and brotherhoods since the 12<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>130</sup> often in the form of a procession. Therefore, if the blood was demonstrated in the Breda play, the theatrical effect would pull the play back to the liturgical context of relics displayed, but not into *ludus*.

Other elements that were visualised in the Croxton play are merely described in the Breda play. For example, where the Croxton play staged the scene with Jonathas’ severed hand, the ‘amputation scene’ in the Breda play was *not* visualised on stage. In this scene the two devils in *Sacramente* act as Narrators, telling each other what has happened to the man of law who investigated the Host, Master Macharius:

*Sondig*: Ou Belet van Dueghden, gij moet mi seggen  
waer es meester Macharijs gevaren.

*Belet*: Eenighe lieden willen verclaren  
dat hij van dulheden afghebeten heeft  
zijn handen ende die selue geten heeft  
ander seggen, hi bleef doot onderwege

*Sondig*: maer waer is de ziele? (fol. 52v).

[*Sondig*: O Belet van Deugden, you must tell me / what has happened to Master Macharius. *Belet*: Some people would declare / that he has bitten off his own hands out of madness / others say that he died while travelling. *Sondig*: but where is the soul?].

The dialogue between the two Narrators, telling the audience what has occurred ‘back-stage’ allows for the gruesome event of Macharius biting off his own hands without having to show it on stage, while at the same time it allows the audience to reconsider *Sondig* and *Belet*’s discussion on which one of the devils is to have the attorney’s soul if they succeed in making him doubt and challenge the Sacrament (fol. 41r-41v).

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<sup>130</sup> Edele Conferie van het Heilig Blood [Noble Confraternity of the Holy Blood], Bruges. [www.holyblood.com/?page\\_id=80](http://www.holyblood.com/?page_id=80) [accessed 21 February 2013].

Finally, even the miracle is not demonstrated visually but described by words. The First Woman urges Jan to drop the Host, and he does so. He says:

*Jan:* Och **siet** het valt in de stat wedere

Daert alder eerst werf inne lach

Noyt **wonderlijcker teeken** ic en **sach**

Bescaemt poogic mi hier te wandelen (fol. 32r).

[*Jan:* Oh, see it drops back in the place / where it lay earlier / I never saw a more miraculous sign / In shame I hope to better my behaviour].

The miracle has convinced Jan and the women that they have encountered an actual Holy Sacrament, and the Second Woman runs to Nieuwervaart to call the priest, who would know what to do about this matter. Jan says,

*Jan:* Spoet v dan gheringhe

Op dat hi selue **sie metten ooghen**

Hoet gheschiet es (fols 33r).

[*Jan:* Hurry then quickly / So that he himself can see with his eyes / what has happened].

The play then moves on to the Second Woman's interaction with the Priest, telling him: 'Noyt en was **gesien** schoonder teeken' [Never was a more beautiful sign seen] (fol. 33v). The characters on stage take every opportunity to signal that they are witnessing a miracle, inviting the audience to join them in witnessing, even though they can't actually transport the spectators into a marsh or produce a spontaneously bleeding Host. It is telling that when Sondig asks his companion whether he thinks that the learned Macharius will doubt the sacrament that he has just tested, Belet says: 'hij es steeck blindt' [he is as blind as a bat] (fol. 41r), and reaffirms that the devils will have his soul. Seeing and believing are paralleled concerns in this play, and although the spectator is not being given much visual aid on stage, the words used suggest that the characters on stage are at least seeing and perceiving, and thus invite the audience to hear about this. The use of the medium suggests that the audience is not invited to participate in the miracle as if it occurred for the first time, that is, *physically*, but it does invite them to be included in the act of belief,

not unlike the role people in a congregation perform when celebrating the Eucharist in church, or the citizens of Breda experienced when they joined the festivities surrounding the play in celebration of their local miracle, and paid homage to the Nassau family.

Smeken employed a further device to include the audience in the play and to control their range of responses, by linking the spectators to the witnesses on the stage, thus pretending that there is no division between stage and spectators. In the second act, when the Second Woman rushes to Nieuwervaart to speak with the Priest, a character called First Man appears. Saalborn's edition refers to this character as a man 'uit het volk' [from the people] (l. 189).<sup>131</sup> Prior to the moment of his appearance, the Priest refers to a public speech made: 'Dwelc de vrouwe zeye int openbaer' [which the woman said in public] (fol. 34r). Whether this 'public' was an on-stage audience, out of which the First Man made his initial appearance, or whether he came forward from the real audience is not sufficiently indicated. However, bearing in mind that the *dramatis personae* signifies a total of nineteen actors, it would have been possible to create an on-stage audience. It is however unlikely that Smeken would have cluttered his stage with 'extras'. The reason for this is that before the First Man's arrival on stage, the Priest says: 'the people are making a riot out of joy' ['Tvolc maect vanden vruechden een beroer'] (fol. 34r). In line with Smeken's approach to narrate events that are not staged, it is likely that Smeken would not have staged a group of people making 'turmoil' from which the First Man would have made his entrance. The Priest's words would have sufficed to indicate an action that was going on elsewhere, so that it would not have been necessary for other actors to gather on the scaffold to form a rowdy crowd. Furthermore, when the characters go off-stage in procession to make way for a new scene in which the devils Sondich and Belet star, only the Second Woman, Priest, First Man, Jan and the First Woman are scripted to have been on stage. Thus, I consider it far more likely that the First Man would have stood among the real spectators, and would have come forward on his cue. His words are significant:

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<sup>131</sup> Arnold Saalborn (ed.), *'t Spel van den Heiligen Sacramente van der Nieuwervaart, een Middeleeuws Toneelspel in Hedendaags Nederlands* (Naarden: In den Toren, 1949), p. 60.



*Eerste Man*: dus gaen wij met soeten acorden  
deuotelijc sonder yet te draelen  
om dit heilich sacrament te halen  
soe sijnder hoogher werdicheit dient  
Want tes God selue (fol. 34r).

[*First Man*: So we will go in brotherly conformity / devotedly without  
further ado / to acquire this holy sacrament / as suits its high  
worthiness / because it is God himself].

Two things are very telling from the First Man's speech. Firstly, that the 'we' of which he speaks could be the characters on stage, which are at that point the Second Woman, the Priest and himself. However, if as I believe he stepped out from the audience, he would have included the spectators in a mental collective in which the members did not physically join a procession (as was done in the Croxton play) but in which they would have felt part of a symbolic body that lead the Host to the church. This again is an example of the way in which the play seems to be inclusive through ambivalence: including the audience while marking them decidedly as part of the audience rather than associating them with the actors. Secondly, the First Man explains for the first time in the play that the sacrament is nothing less than God himself. If the First Man came forth from the audience, his voice, although that of a character in a play, would have carried resonance of the real-life place from which he came, that is, the spectators. This would have blended the fictional world of the stage with the real world of religious celebration on a festival day. The First Man thus voices the doctrinal belief that the Host and God are one and the same, a belief that was shared by the spectators watching the *Sacramente*. The First Man's assertion is confirmed by the Priest who says 'Ghi segt waer vrient' [You speak truth, friend] (fol. 34r). The corroboration between the Man 'from the audience' and the 'Priest', is a connection between two figures of the stage, both with strong links drawn to both the 'here and now' of the performance, and to the doctrinal matter at the heart of the celebrations. Their agreement connects the local and the divine with the city's historical past, as well as with the contemporary onlookers who are watching a dramatization of the miracle that was believed to have been witnessed by locals long gone. This link between actors and audience, although scripted and fictional, may signify that the citizens of Breda at the time of *Sacramente*'s performance were symbolically

included in the procurement of the Host from the marshes just outside of Niervaert where Jan Bautoen dug up the Holy Sacrament, and the Holy Sacrament's being taken into a procession to the church. At the same time, the 'soeten acorden' [brotherly conformity] (fol. 34r) to which the First Man refers in the above quotation, and the Priest's calling the Man 'vrient' [friend] (fol 34r) signal the undertone of comradeship so vital to both the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament that commissioned the play, as well as the Rhetoricians' Chamber that performed it.

## 2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to put two sacrament plays back into their contexts, to study various devices or dramatic choices that have to do with affect or physiology, and others to do with the artifice of drama, or the self-consciousness of drama. Through these devices I have shown how playwrights tried to manage their plays for the risks attached to its subject of a Host miracle, as well as to its contextual circumstances. The Breda play manages its spectators' risk by not representing key moments of action in a visual way, whereas the Croxton author manages his spectators by pointedly not visualising the Mass, choosing instead to show indirectly what is in the wafer through the actions of the Jews. The play thus deliberately avoids confusion of drama and ritual, because the Croxton author was trying to avoid the problematic side-effects of trying to reveal the truth of the Mass through the use of a medium that thematizes its own medium. Furthermore, the playwright managed risk through the use of collective ritual elements that lead towards a morally coherent conclusion to the play. This was not especially needed in order to protect the audience from the visualisation of the desecration of the Host, as I have argued that the visual nature of the representation would have encouraged spectators to ponder Christ's wounds, or even express their piety on a more personal level, that is, through their own bodies. Through affective piety spectators in the audience to the Croxton play found themselves closer to Christ, and could have even imagined themselves present at the Passion. I have argued that this personal, emotional and individual kind of worship encouraged by the Host-desecration scene needed for the sake of spiritual benefit, ecclesiastical power, and a community unity to be transformed into a

more collective, abstract kind of worship led by a priest. The play manages this issue through emphasizing the value of priests and bishops just before and after the Host-desecration scene, and by ending the spectators' affective absorption by moving them to ritual fact, as the play ends in its move to church. At this point in the play Christ metamorphoses back into the Host and is no longer represented on stage as an 'image', allowing the bishop to become the manager of the scene, returning the play's form of worship to the ritual type found in church.

I have observed that the play's overtly theatrical moments are those that are concerned with the suffering of the Host: moments during which the Host is stabbed, bleeds, and when blood streams from the oven's 'crannies' as the Host is being 'baked'. From this it follows that the Croxton play betrays an anxiety about religion and religious change in a context in which drama is often about drama. The moments in the play that claim the power and authority of the Church as an institution on the other hand take the form of a sermon and ritual. The ambiguous nature of the play fits in well with the religious context of Christian England, for late medieval assertiveness and anxiety about Catholic belief feature in the play. Theatrical exuberance and doctrinal assertiveness do not necessarily work in the same direction, even though they find themselves united in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*; even if contained within the Croxton play these two different notions are in conflict. However, these two elements of the play appear to rely on one another. That is to say that—in terms of risk management—the play's conversion elements in their ritual form make the miracle elements permissible. Likewise, the miracle elements with their theatricality allow for the conversion to be possible in terms of plot. Therefore, the Croxton play's risk management is an intricate matter. This is based on the balance between the intensity of transformative theatre and ritual elements. The first of these moved the audience to an intimate spiritual connection with Christ, but that at times may also have filled the spectators with horror, something which justified the Jews' having to be converted at the end of the play. The second of these implied the power of the Church and through this justified the performance of the play in collaboration with local church authorities. This permitted the play to be performed in the close vicinity of the Croxton church, and probably other churches while they

were on tour. In other words, the ritual elements made the play morally acceptable for local church authorities, but it is unlikely that the individual spectator's emotions were fully managed through this dramatic move. Indeed, spectators could still have experienced the confusion of the Host's representation on stage, feeling unease about having been presented with a visualisation of a miracle that they, if they were 'good Christians' would not need to see, but which also showed the wounds of Christ, which they *did* like to see.

Any blurring of doctrine and theatricality could not be allowed to exist within the Breda play. The reason for this is that it would have only confused spectators in the devotional and celebratory performance context. In Breda, where some ritualistic elements of the play were performed, such as the processional entry of the sacrament into the city, others were not: the desecration of the Host was not deemed fit for performance. Thus a distance was created between the Man of Law who assaulted the host, and the spectator, so that the latter was kept at a safe moral distance from the act of desecration. At the same time the staged procession allowed the spectators to identify with their historical counterparts: citizens who brought the Host into Breda. Thus a community was created that encompassed both the celebrating citizens and their historical predecessors, thus inviting the spectators to be physiologically absorbed at this moment, but not at others when such identification was not wanted. Perhaps the Breda play was conscious of the virtues of allowing a certain type or level of spectator engagement and of the dangers of allowing another type.

I have contrasted these two sacrament plays to explore what risk management means in very different contexts: not necessarily to point out the difference between the drama of the Low Countries and that of East Anglia, as the Channel separating these regions was easily crossed, as we gather from the jokes about Flemish immigrants in the Croxton play. Indeed, my aim has been to contrast a civic context in which the confraternity commissioning the play would have worked together with other civic groups that organised processions and other festivities in honour of the local Host miracle, with a play that was performed *on tour* in different local contexts, in each case having

to liaise with local authorities about the permission to use the church-yard as their performance space. The two performance contexts asked for different demands, which is why the problems in the sacrament plays had to be addressed differently by the playwrights performing in both contexts.

### 3. From risky to risqué in two Magdalen Plays: Digby *Mary Magdalen* and Lewis Wager's *Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene*

#### 3.1 Introduction

Recent criticism of Protestant moralities has focused on the two-tier objective of the plays. Scholars such as Rainer Pineas (1962), Peter Happé (1986), Paul Whitfield White (1993), and Lieke Stelling (2012) have identified these plays as conflicted by, on the one hand, the desire to display Protestant morality, including the avoidance of scenes that could have been interpreted as idolatrous, and following the Bible as closely as possible; and on the other hand the wish to force the spectator to reflect (mostly negatively) on the earlier—Catholic—uses of the drama.<sup>1</sup> White has observed that Reformers who mistrusted the dramatic form, used the ‘visual resources of the stage’ to illustrate the potential danger of these images, ‘to corrupt the senses, to mislead the intellect’ and ‘to incite idolatry’.<sup>2</sup> Warnings against Catholicism would have taken the form of theatrical devices, for example, by dressing the Vice of the traditional Morality in Catholic attire such as a mitre or a monk’s dress,<sup>3</sup> or through the parodying of Catholic attitudes, morals, and ritual.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Prominently, Rainer Pineas, ‘The English Morality Play as a Weapon of Religious Controversy’, *SEL* 2: 2 (1962), pp. 157-180; Peter Happé, ‘The Protestant Adaptation of the Saint Play’, *The Saint Play in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), pp. 205-240; Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage, and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Lieke Stelling, ‘“Thy Very Essence is Mutability”: Religious Conversion in Early Modern English Drama, 1558-1642’, *The Turn of the Soul: Representations of Religious Conversions in Early Modern Art and Literature*, ed. by Lieke Stelling, Harald Hendrix and Todd M. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 59-83, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Collinson, *The Reformation* (London: Phoenix, 2005), p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> Pineas, ‘The English Morality Play’, p. 175. Stelling, ‘Thy Very Essence’, p. 65. Happé, ‘The Protestant Adaptation of the Saint Play’, p. 235.

Protestant dramatists were then challenged to find a way to distinguish for the spectators the mock-portrayal of Catholic ritual form, and their preferred Protestant ceremonial forms. This may be observed, for example, in John Bale's *King Johan* (1539) in which spectators were presented with the burlesquing of Catholic formal procedure as theatrical. For example, Dissimulation says:

*Dissymulacion:* To wynne the peple I appoynt yche man his place:  
Sum to syng Latyn, and sum to ducke at grace;  
Sum to go mumming, and sum to beare the crosse;  
Sum to stowpe downeward, as ther heads ware stopt with mosse;  
Sum rede the epystle and gospel at hygh masse;  
Sum syng at the lectorne with long eares lyke an asse.  
The pawment of the Chyrche the aunchent faders tredes,  
Sumtyme with a portas, sumtyme with a payre of bedes;  
And this exedyngly drawth peple to devoycyone,  
Specyally whan they do se so good relygeon.<sup>5</sup>

The description offered by Dissimulation continues to address theatrical characteristics in Catholicism in its evocation of images, movement and 'props'. For example, Dissimulation speaks of the focus of the Catholic faith on imagery; he makes rituals involving barefoot women and men without breeches (in dresses?) sound like a barbaric custom; and he addresses inexpressible miracles and the incredible wealth of the Catholic Church:

*Dissymulacion:* Than have we imagys of Seynt Spryte and Seynt Savyer:  
Moche is the sekynge of them to get ther faver;  
Yong whomen berfote and olde men seke them brecheles.  
The myracles wrowght ther I can in nowise expresse.  
We lacke noyther golde, nor sylwer gyrdles, nor rynges,  
Candelles, nor tapperes, nor other customyd offerynges (ll. 708-713).

Furthermore, Dissimulation evokes the idea of deceit, when he reveals himself able to 'play the suttile foxe' (l. 714). This is not so different from when

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<sup>5</sup> John Bale, *King Johan*, in *The Complete Plays of John Bale*, vol. 1, ed. by Peter Happé (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985), pp. 29-99, ll. 698-707.

Ambitio in Bale's *Three Laws* (c. 1535) asks Infidelitas what he thinks of his mitre, and the latter answers:

*Infidelitas*: the mouth of a wolfe, and that shall I proue by & by  
If thou stoupe downeward,  
Lo, se how ye wolfe doth gape?<sup>6</sup>

White has noted how the Vice makes Ambitio bend over so that his mitre does indeed resemble the mouth of a wolf gaping at the audience, which must have been both comic and memorably disturbing for its spectators.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile it made a theatrical prop out of a Catholic ritual item. When we return to the study of *King Johan*, Dissimulation explains how the use of Latin in church is meant to obfuscate the message to the people.

*Dissymulacion*: Thowgh I seme a shepe, I can play the suttle foxe:  
I can make Latten to bring this gere to the boxe.  
Tushe, Latten ys alone to bring soche mater to passe;  
Ther ys no Englyche that can soche profygthes compasse.  
And therfor we wyll no service to be songe,  
Gospell or pystell, but all in Latten tonge (ll. 714-719).

Having established what he considered to be the hypocrisy within the Catholic Church, Bale sets out to offer his audience an example of 'good' Protestant ceremony that was performed in a solemn way at the climactic moment of the play, in an attempt to justify ritual acts in themselves, after having criticised the *Catholic* use of ritual. Furthermore, as the Catholic ritual has been presented in theatrical terms,<sup>8</sup> the Protestant ceremony functions to show that drama can also be used as a medium to deliver a Protestant message, thus also justifying the use of the medium. At the onset of the ceremony it is (notably) Veritas who urges Nobility, Clergy and Civil Order to kneel for Imperial Majesty,

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<sup>6</sup> John Bale, *Three Laws* (London: Thomas Colwell, 1562), EEBO. Web accessed 27 February 2013. Sig F4r. White refers to this in his introduction. White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p. 35: 'Bale skilfully and extensively exploited the player/priest analogy and the theatrical qualities of Roman Catholic worship in both his prose works and his plays'.



and to 'axe pardon' for their 'great enormyte'.<sup>9</sup> The allegory cannot be clearer in its purpose to show how the three estates are driven by Truth to express their obedience and loyalty to the King. Imperial Majesty in his turn performs three acts in front of the three kneeling subjects. First he thanks Verity for having done his 'part refourmynge these men' (ll. 2335-2336), using language that carries religious undertones that guide the listener to appreciating the sacred value of a subject's loyalty to the king. Secondly, Imperial Majesty explains both to the kneeling representatives of the estates and to the audience that all kings are God-appointed, and may not be judged by mere mortals:

*Imperial Majesty:* For Gods sake obeye lyke as doth yow befall,  
For in hys owne realme a kynge is judge over all  
By Gods appointment, and none maye hym judge agayne  
But the Lorde himself. In thys the scripture is playne.  
He that condempneth a kynge condempneth God without doubt  
He that harmeth a kynge to harme God goeth abought (ll. 2346-2351).

Finally, Imperial Majesty orders all present to honour their king and to exile the Pope:

*Imperial Majesty:* I charge yow therfor as God hath charge me  
To gyve to your kynge hys due supremacye  
And exile the Pope thys realme for evermore (ll. 2358-2360).

The message of the ritual juxtaposes King and Pope in favour of the former, and secures the audience's obedience in accepting this message by the visual, ritual form in which representatives of the different social classes give an example of this obedience, and by the scripture-claimed authority of God; Imperial Majesty suggests that if kings were appointed by God, then Popes were not. Bale uses the dramatic medium in a seemingly confident way to offer his audiences a reformist message, but his anxiety about spectators favouring Catholicism over his own views is betrayed by the great effort undertaken to mock the former. Equating Catholic ritual to theatre, Bale degrades the

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<sup>9</sup> John Bale, *King Johan*, in *The Complete Plays of John Bale*, vol. 1, ed. by Peter Happé (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985), pp. 29-99, l. 2328.

Catholic faith by means of the dramatic medium, but then validates the use of the medium through its Protestant message. It must be noted that Bale's concern is not only with the dramatic medium, but also with the actual ceremonies performed in the world outside the play. Alice Hunt has observed:

Although it is not possible to argue for the performance of *King Johan* at one particular time, or to link Imperial Majesty to a specific monarch, Bale's play uses the stage to critique ceremony and to represent a particular concept of monarchy. His play demonstrates how the reformation of ceremony at this time seems to be tied up with its dramatization.<sup>10</sup>

The parallel between ceremony reformed through its dramatization and drama reformed through its use of Protestant ceremony indicates that we need to see both plays and publicly theatrical events as participating in a reformation of spectacle. This may be true for *King Johan* in its performance context; however, not all Bale's plays formulaically followed the tendency to reform propaganda found in *King Johan*, that is, by mocking Catholicism and its ritual, and by replacing the latter by Protestant ceremony. Indeed, in some plays Bale shows his confidence in applying the dramatic medium for his own message by using Protestant ceremony without first having to vilify Catholic morals and customs, but rather focusing purely on his own moral viewpoint. For example, Bale's *John the Baptist's Preaching* (1538) is full of solemn ritual action carrying a Protestant message. The play aims to convince the audience to embrace the gospel, offering them a sermon by John the Baptist in the opening of the play. This is a form of public witness which the reformers particularly valued so that it constituted part of the reformation of drama. However, as I will show in this study, the sermon had also been used by Catholic playwrights to control the dramatic form. A further ritual element in *John the Baptists' Preaching* is John's baptising of Christ. The play does not criticise Catholicism but concentrates on dramatically representing Scripture. Other plays by Bale however shared *King Johan's* displayed aversion to Catholicism, (for example in Bale's *The Temptation of Our Lord* (1538), Satan Tentator declares: 'the vicar

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<sup>10</sup> Alice Hunt, *The Drama of Coronation: Medieval Ceremony in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 100.

at Rome, I thynke wyll be my frynde')<sup>11</sup> but yet did not aim to replace the use of Catholic ritual with Protestant ceremony. Other dramatists can be seen to have taken reform messages 'to accommodate their own concerns about salvation and society'.<sup>12</sup> It must also be observed that even some Catholic plays engaged in the mocking of what appears as Catholic ritual, for example the Digby *Mary Magdalen*, as this chapter will show. This extends to the use of mock Latin, which occurs in different contexts including those in which the drama was *not* motivated by a deriding of Catholicism, such as Mischief in *Mankind* (c. 1471).

It is important to observe that the Tudor period was a period of diversity, of plays that were compiled of several genres and themes at once, and a time that did not favour a clear distinction between different kinds of play. Where we find different beliefs and theological emphases, reforming Protestants as well as reforming Catholics, these groups can sometimes be seen to share a similar sense of the value of drama. Theatrical approaches may have differed but this was not necessarily a criticism of the drama as a medium: indeed, changing the dramatic approach to a theme or *topos* can be seen as a rearrangement and recompilation of existing ideas, used for a variety of reasons. It is important to keep in mind that some of the reasons for reusing a convention did not even have to be of a religious nature, such as the use of a trope or genre. For example, the Digby *Mary Magdalene* clearly borrows from several different genres.<sup>13</sup> The writers of mixed genre plays shared, and may have borrowed, the motifs and strategies of other plays, for example through the Croxton-like move to baptism. Playmakers' choices as to what to include in drama were determined by the attitude to what the theatre should encourage in its audiences. Spectators were traditionally managed by playwrights creating and then controlling risk. As we have seen in the previous chapter, some playwrights, such as the Croxton dramatist, superficially and formally

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<sup>11</sup> John Bale, *The Temptation of Our Lord* (Wesel: Dirik van der Straten, 1547), sig E3r. *Early English Books Online*. Web accessed 22 June 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Gary K. Waite, *Reformers on Stage: Popular Drama and Religious Propaganda in the Low Countries of Charles V, 1515-1556* (London and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), p. xvii. Although Waite's study addresses the appropriation of reform drama amongst Low Country rhetoricians, the issue of the extent to which propaganda was adopted in times of reformation remains viable when applied to the English situation.

<sup>13</sup> Alexandra F. Johnston, 'Wisdom and the Records: Is there a Moral?' *The Wisdom Symposium*, ed. by Milla Cozart Riggio (New York: AMS Press, 1986), pp. 87-102, p. 94.

‘managed’ the risks in the play, which is to say that they made the outward signs of making the play appear ‘safe’ and ‘morally sound’ in order to satisfy social or political needs, while at the same time they did not necessarily protect their *audiences* from the anxieties caused by the elements within the play or the context in which the play was performed, but rather conformed to the wishes of local authorities. Other playwrights, such as Jan Smeeken who wrote the Breda play, sought to avoid risk instead, and did so by limiting the range of affect in the play. This was achieved by him through minimizing spectator engagement or limiting the ways in which spectators relate to a character or event, or by highlighting the artificiality of the medium.

In the current chapter I will compare and contrast two Mary Magdalen plays that were performed in the first half of the sixteenth century but under very different auspices. The plays are the Digby *Mary Magdalen* (c. 1490-1530), preserved in Bodleian Library MS Digby 133,<sup>14</sup> and Lewis Wager’s *The Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene* (c. 1550).<sup>15</sup> My reason for contrasting these two plays is to explore how risk was managed in two plays addressing the same topic, but doing so with different religious agendas. In this chapter I argue three things. Firstly, I argue that both plays display anxiety about representing the Magdalen on stage, because of her ambiguous character. Secondly, both Magdalen plays display unease on the part of the playmakers about the dramatic medium as a vehicle for moral messages and for displaying sinful actions. Thirdly, this chapter makes a claim for continuity in Catholic and Protestant drama and their use of the dramatic medium to create and control risk for their spectators.

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<sup>14</sup> Bodleian Library MS Digby 133, fols 95r-145v, a digital facsimile is available in *Early Manuscripts at Oxford University*. Web accessed. 19 December 2012. In this chapter I have used the EETS edition: Donald C. Baker, John L. Murphy and Louis B. Hall jr. (eds), *The Late Medieval Religious Plays of Bodleian MSS Digby 133 and E Museo 160*, EETS, Original Series, 283 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 24-95.

<sup>15</sup> The full title reads: *A new Enterlude, neuer before this tyme imprinted, entreating of the Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene not only godlie, learned and fruitfull, but also well furnished with pleasaunt myrth and pastime, very delectable for those which shall heare or reade the same* (London: John Charlewood, 1566). *Early English Books Online*. Web accessed 21 June 2012. For this chapter I have consulted the digital copy of the MS at the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

I will start to explain what I mean by the first claim. Both plays form part of a larger tradition of works on the conversion of prostitutes, extending to their becoming saints, which was a popular motif for exempla used by the medieval Church in edification of the laity. The message issued in these exempla was a hopeful one, advocating repentance and suggesting that even the worst sins would be absolved if the sinner would just confess, show contrition, and do penance.<sup>16</sup> In the context of these exempla, the Magdalen is a symbolic figure, 'synonymous for the "sinfulness" of humankind'.<sup>17</sup> The Digby play offers the conflicted character of the Magdalen as both a sinner and a saint, and perhaps equally problematically, the Magdalen as a preacher.<sup>18</sup> Wager's play shows the Magdalen as a sinner and an ideal penitent, not a saint, and has her convert to Calvinism. She retains, however, her exemplary role. The reputation of the Magdalen would have permitted different responses and both plays used that possibility, changing the spectators' likely responses as the play proceeded. Some spectators would have found the idea of being presented with a staged representation of a 'fallen woman' shocking, others may have found it uncomfortable to acknowledge the topic of relationships outside of marriage, others again may have been prompted by this play to acknowledge their own personal failings, some may have felt pity. At the same time, there would have been a risk that people enjoyed the eroticism associated with the Magdalen, which could have been a problem for those wanting to keep up a shield of moral superiority. Furthermore, some risks are specific to each play. Spectators of the Digby play may have felt uncomfortable about the Magdalen's post-penitential power as a preacher, and spectators of Wager's play could have responded unfavourably to the Calvinist tone of the play.

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<sup>16</sup> Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 117, p. 120.

<sup>17</sup> Theresa Coletti, 'Paupertas est donum Dei: Hagiography, Lay Religion and the Economics of Salvation in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*', *Speculum* 76: 2 (2001), pp. 337-378, p. 346.

<sup>18</sup> Lawrence M. Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game: English Festive Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Period* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 245. 'Given the fact that women were not to preach ... it is daring to have Mary speak a sermon in the play'.

I argue that the Magdalen's dual character, which is a potential problem for the play's spectators as it puts them in the uneasy position of not knowing how to position themselves towards this character, is used by both the Digby play and by Wager to alleviate anxiety about using the dramatic medium for the purpose of performing sins and expressing moral messages. That is to say that in the Digby play, as a 'seductress' Mary first seduces the spectators into theatrical enjoyment, but later in her role of 'preacher' employs an 'appeal to the emotions',<sup>19</sup> as Scoville has observed, to move the audience to 'virtuous living'.<sup>20</sup> The sermon was preferred by Reformist playwrights as a form of public witness, but this does not mean that it could not effectively have been employed by a Catholic playwright. Mary's role as preacher does not only redeem pre-penitential life in terms of dogma, but also in terms of drama. Her degrading theatrical enjoyment through her seduction of the audience, but then validating the medium through an 'appropriate' connection to the audience through the sermon is, dramatically speaking, not unlike Bale's degradation of Catholic faith through equating it to theatre, and then justifying the use of the medium through the Protestant message communicated at the end of the play, as we have seen in the above. Furthermore, any apprehensions about Mary's being a woman preaching are neutralized by the playmaker's careful move to representing the post-penitent Mary as submissive to the male characters in the play, such as Peter. The Wager play is slightly less complex in that it does not show the Magdalen as a preacher, but only as one who testifies. Apart from this, the play makes the same moves to manage anxieties about the use of the dramatic medium in displaying both sin and Salvation on stage, through the theatrical seduction of the audience as well as through the moral justification of the use of the medium at the end of the play.

The spectators' risk is caused but simultaneously also balanced by the Magdalen's different roles in each play, and through the amount of affect encouraged in the plays. While no play can be offered to an audience without generating emotional responses in the spectators, these two plays seem to have sought to place a limit on the range of ways in which spectators relate to

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<sup>19</sup> Chester N. Scoville, *Saints and the Audience in Middle English Biblical Drama* (London and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Scoville, *Saints and the Audience*, p. 7.

characters, hereby managing their risk. To study this, I will first address the relationship between the spectator and the protagonist that the Magdalen plays invite. Secondly, I will attend to the representation on stage of the period of the Magdalen's sinning. Thirdly, I claim that the positioning of ritual elements in the plays corresponds to the idea of Salvation and were determined by the status of Good Works in the plays. This status was different for the Digby play with its Catholic values from the Wager play which followed Calvinist doctrine.<sup>21</sup>

This chapter will argue that the Digby play more reluctantly displayed the Magdalen as a 'sinner', despite East Anglian piety being so visually orientated,<sup>22</sup> and that the Wager play more visually (theatrically) represents the state of degeneration in which the Magdalen finds herself, despite Protestantism's assumed 'hostility towards image-centered representations of sacred history'.<sup>23</sup> Both playwrights allowed the audience to enjoy the risks attached to watching the Magdalen in her pre-conversion state in a way that was theatrical, for example, through innuendo. Spectators of the Digby play were allowed to participate in the sin through participating in drama, whereas spectators of the Wager play were invited to participate in the theatrical representation of sin. Having been exposed to risqué rather than risky stagings of 'sinfulness', spectators of both Catholic and Protestant plays were encouraged to enjoy the erotic risk and playfulness, and to appreciate the ambiguously moral and sinful business of playacting. I will conclude that contrary to what has thus far been argued that the playwrights writing Protestant moralities changed the *meaning* of the theatrical form by merely adopting a Catholic genre for their Protestant needs, Catholic and Protestant reformers *alike* changed the *theatrical form* of the medium to strengthen its dogmatic impact, and with it, changed the medium's relation to the spectator.

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<sup>21</sup> Paul Whitfield White, 'Lewis Wager's *Life and Repentaunce of Mary Magdalene* and John Calvin', *Notes and Queries* 28:6 (1981), pp. 508-512. See also Stelling, p. 64.

<sup>22</sup> Victor I. Scherb, *Staging Faith: East Anglian Drama in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Associated University Presses, 2001), p. 54.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Whitfield White, 'The Bible as Play in Reformation England', *The Cambridge History of British Theatre, vol. 1: Origins to 1660*, ed. by Jane Milling and Peter Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 87-115, p. 87.

This chapter thus argues for a continuity of dramatic form in relation to managing risk, rather than its disruption.

### 3.2 Performance Context

The exact performance auspices for both plays remain a mystery, although it is known that the Digby *Mary Magdalen* originates from East Anglia,<sup>24</sup> thus sharing its provenance with the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* and the N-Town plays. There is no external evidence and the Digby *Mary Magdalene* has no banns to offer clues as to where or why the play was performed. Therefore, one relies completely on the internal evidence in the play such as stage directions and the use of props and language.<sup>25</sup> Based on topic and scope, David Bevington has described the play as having been written ‘in honour of a saint’ but that it also aimed ‘at the panoramic inclusiveness of a Corpus Christi cycle’.<sup>26</sup> Wickham was similarly divided, proposing a ‘patronal festival’ or perhaps a performance functioning as a replacement for previous local Corpus Christi celebrations.<sup>27</sup> More recently, Theresa Coletti has referred to the play as ‘perhaps the most theologically ambitious and theatrically eclectic play in the entire corpus of Middle English drama’.<sup>28</sup> The play is likely to have had a huge cast supporting the 60 named parts,<sup>29</sup> and many unnamed parts consisting of ‘people’, ‘disciples’, ‘Jews’, and ‘mourners’.<sup>30</sup> It may be estimated that the play

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<sup>24</sup> Theresa Coletti, ‘The Digby Mary Magdalene’, in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*, ed. by David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 170.

<sup>25</sup> This difficulty over auspices is not confined to the Digby *Mary Madalene*; it has also proved a problem for another major East Anglian play, *Wisdom*. Both plays are discussed in, Alexandra F. Johnston, ‘Wisdom and the Records: Is there a Moral?’ *The Wisdom Symposium*, ed. by Milla Cozart Riggio (New York: AMS Press, 1986), pp. 87-102, p. 93.

<sup>26</sup> David Bevington, *Medieval Drama* (London: Houghton, 1975), p. 687.

<sup>27</sup> Glynne Wickham, ‘The Staging of Saint Plays in England’, *The Medieval Drama*, ed. by Sandro Sticca (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1972), pp. 99-119, p. 112.

<sup>28</sup> Theresa Coletti, *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of Saints* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Godfrey estimates the number ‘around sixty named parts’. Bob Godfrey, ‘The Machinery of Spectacle: the Performance Dynamic of the Play of Mary Magdalen and Related Matters’, *European Medieval Drama* 3 (2000), pp. 145-160, p. 145. Carter suggests ‘a cast of over 60, and thus would need at least 100 people to produce’. Susan Carter, ‘The Digby Mary Magdalen: Constructing the *Apostola Apostolorum*’, *Studies in Philology* 106: 4 (2009), pp. 402-429, p. 402.

<sup>30</sup> Darryll Grantley, *English Dramatic Interludes, 1300-1580: A Reference Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 236.



took around three hours to perform.<sup>31</sup> It used elaborate mechanics including a display of fire, dramatic devices, spectacle and song, and displayed technical savvy. Donald C. Baker in the introduction to the Digby plays, published for the EETS, has suggested that the play may have been a traveling production, like *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*, and the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*.<sup>32</sup> Baker avers that the monastery of Bury St Edmunds could have been ‘the centre of such dramatic activity’.<sup>33</sup> If it were a travelling production the play would need to make use of substantial local institutions. In terms of size, the play seems to be closer to *The Castle of Perseverance*, than *Mankind*, and from this follows that the logistics would have been more like that of *The Castle* as well. Bob Godfrey has observed how the scale of the play can help us determine what kind of performance location we are looking at:

It would need, of course, to be a community of ample size and wealth. An extended group of lay and religious, numbering something like 100 to 200 individuals would have been able to provide personnel for the large casts as well as the skilled craftsmen required for stage preparation, stage management, and if the plays are to be regarded as peripatetic, transport between locations of performance.<sup>34</sup>

Godfrey offers up the monastic auspices of Crowland abbey as a ‘serious candidate for the role of producer’ of the Digby Magdalen play, ‘outside any civic or secular patronage’. He asserts that the location ‘fulfils the criteria of wealth, size, interest and influence’.<sup>35</sup> Previous studies have addressed the possibility of the play having been performed in Lincoln,<sup>36</sup> Bishop’s Lynn,<sup>37</sup> and

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<sup>31</sup> Carter, ‘The Digby Mary Magdalen’, p. 402.

<sup>32</sup> Donald C. Baker, ‘Introduction’, *The Late Medieval Religious Plays of Bodleian MSS Digby 133 and E Museo 160*, EETS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. xlviii.

<sup>33</sup> Baker, ‘Introduction’, p. xlix.

<sup>34</sup> Godfrey, ‘The Machinery of Spectacle’, p. 147.

<sup>35</sup> Godfrey, ‘The Machinery of Spectacle’, p. 148.

<sup>36</sup> Harry M. Ritchie, ‘A Suggested Location for the Digby *Mary Magdalene*’, *Theatre Survey* 4 (1963), pp. 51-58. Ritchie argues that despite the ‘interesting links’ between Lincoln and the Digby play, ‘none is stronger than the particular connection between the derivation of the subject material used in its plot and the history of Lincoln cathedral itself’. p.54.

<sup>37</sup> Jacob Bennett, ‘The Mary Magdalene of Bishop’s Lynn,’ *Studies in Philology* 75 (1978), pp. 1-9.

Ipswich,<sup>38</sup> although it has become apparent that there is no conclusive evidence as to where the play was performed. It would be prudent not to assume, but, along with Darryll Grantley, to broadly place the play in monastic *or* civic auspices, and to consider the possibility that perhaps the play was performed in a festive context.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps we could even deduce from the play as Lawrence Clopper has done, that it was written for ‘a community with a significant devotion to the cult of the Magdalene’, perhaps written ‘for a church dedicated to the saint’ or for ‘a guild of some prominence in an East Anglian town’.<sup>40</sup> The play was performed out of doors—Wickham suggests in a field<sup>41</sup>—and it used the *locus* and *platea* (respectively, scaffold and place) convention that is also found used for *The Castle of Perseverance*, but in much more expanded form. Scaffolds were needed for the Castle of Magdalen, Emperor Tiberius, the World, the Flesh, Hell, and the tavern, for Pilate, Simon, Herod, Heaven, Marseilles, and Jerusalem.<sup>42</sup> Grantley has also referred to some minor locations, such as Mary’s arbour, Lazarus’ tomb, Christ’s tomb, the temple, Mary’s hut, an island, and Mary’s cave,<sup>43</sup> allowing for the doubling of several locations. Bevington has furthermore pointed out the minor locations of a rock in the ocean, a mountain, a priest’s cell, and a baptismal font.<sup>44</sup> The scaffolds would have surrounded the *platea*, or ‘place’, from where the audience watched the performance. However, the place would also have been used for including the different scaffolds into the dramatic action, for example through the great number of messengers delivering news to the various characters on their personal scaffolds. The *platea* functioned as a place of action, meeting and transit, as Godfrey has observed.<sup>45</sup> Bob Godfrey has observed that spectators were a dynamic force within the play, something he has called ‘participant-spectators’.<sup>46</sup> He has argued that the audience members were in ‘promenade’

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<sup>38</sup> Glynn Wickham, ‘The Staging of Saint Plays in England’, *The Medieval Drama*, ed. by Sandro Sticca (New York: State University of New York, 1972), pp. 99-119.

<sup>39</sup> Grantley, *English Dramatic Interludes*, p. 235.

<sup>40</sup> Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game*, p. 247.

<sup>41</sup> Wickham, ‘The Staging of Saint Plays in England’, p. 114.

<sup>42</sup> Grantley, *English Dramatic Interludes*, p. 241.

<sup>43</sup> Grantley, *English Dramatic Interludes*, p. 241.

<sup>44</sup> Bevington, *Medieval Drama*, p. 689.

<sup>45</sup> Bob Godfrey, ‘The Digby Mary Magdalene in Performance: a Merry Peripeteia’, Conference paper at Medieval English Theatre meeting, Bangor University, 23 March 2013.

<sup>46</sup> Godfrey, Bangor 2013.

mode and travelled along with the action of the play, for example following the Messenger or the Magdalen as they moved through the *platea*. If this were the case, spectators would have occupied different degrees of proximity to the action of the play as it switched between the different scaffolds. Sometimes, spectators would have focused their attention on a specific locus, allowing for other actions to occur unnoticed.

Current opinion holds that the dramatic use of the *platea* held a religious significance. For example, Joanne Rochester has asserted that Mary Magdalen's 'travels' through the *platea* to the different *loci* were of a spiritual nature, namely 'missionary voyages directed by Christ'.<sup>47</sup> She has also noted that the set-up of the play offers the audience a 'physical map of the play world', and allows the audience to see all the playing spaces at once, so that they 'are able to grasp the structures and implications of the space at a glance'.<sup>48</sup> Most importantly, however, Rochester has observed that it is likely that the harbour in which Mary meets the good Angel and repents her sins, 'the garden in which Mary meets the risen Christ', and 'the wilderness from which she ascends to heaven' are all situated in the *platea*.<sup>49</sup> That is to say that the scenes to do with Mary's repentance and Salvation were performed in the place that the play would have shared with the audience. Victor Scherb has remarked that playwrights producing large-scale East Anglian plays,

often initially employ the *platea* as a dramatic extension of the secular power expressed by human or vicious characters on their respective scaffolds; such structures are then suppressed or superseded as the *platea* that the audience inhabits becomes identified with sacred space.<sup>50</sup>

Scherb argues that the reason for this is that the dramatist felt the need to make the spectators aware of 'their position in the fallen world', as well as 'the

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<sup>47</sup> Joanne M. Rochester, 'Space and Staging in the Digby Mary Magdalen and Pericles, Prince of Tyre', *Early Theatre* 13: 2 (2010), pp. 43-63, p. 46.

<sup>48</sup> Rochester, 'Space and Staging', p. 48.

<sup>49</sup> Rochester, 'Space and Staging', p. 46. Godfrey puts the rock/tomb and the cell as a single point (Bangor 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Scherb, *Staging Faith*, p. 150.

transcendental, transforming power of God'.<sup>51</sup> Godfrey has observed that the stage representing the Rock, the Tomb and the Cell which were all associated with resurrection, was positioned at the centre of the *platea*. This made Salvation a spatial objective in the play, something toward which the action of the play was driven.<sup>52</sup>

Wager's *Marie Magdalene* was performed on a much smaller scale. The manuscript title page says that 'four may easely play this Enterlude' (Sig. A1r), although Carpenter has observed that this is probably a misprint as during lines 423-812 and 1679-1867 five speaking characters are on stage.<sup>53</sup> White suggests that the play could have been performed by four adult men and a boy, the latter performing the role of the Magdalen, and the adults doubling all the other parts between them.<sup>54</sup> The play is most likely to have been performed indoors, as the stage direction of l. 1388 reveals that the actors must 'cry all thus without the door'. White proposes that the play would have been suitable for performance in a 'great hall of a noble household', and suggests that perhaps the play served the education of 'wards and other privileged adolescents'.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, he also suggests that the play's evangelical theme, as well as its use of 'homely language' and 'lively dialogue and action' would have also been suitable to other audiences 'on tour'.<sup>56</sup> The play was 'offered for acting', that is to say, likely to have been performed by a touring group.<sup>57</sup> In-text evidence supports this hypothesis: for example, the Epigraph states that the actors 'haue ridden and gone many sundry waies' (sig. A1v) suggesting a travelling group. Furthermore, the Epigraph speaks of other performances: 'we haue used this feate at the vniversitie' (sig. A1v), and 'we

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<sup>51</sup> Scherb, *Staging Faith*, p. 150.

<sup>52</sup> Godfrey, Bangor 2013.

<sup>53</sup> Frederic Ives Carpenter, 'Introduction', *The Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene, reprinted from original edition of 1566* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1904), p. xvii.

<sup>54</sup> Paul Whitfield White, 'The Bible as Play in Reformation England', *The Cambridge History of British Theatre, vol. 1: Origins to 1660*, ed. by Jane Milling and Peter Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 87-115, p. 97.

<sup>55</sup> White, 'The Bible as play in Reformation England', p. 97. See also, Frédérique Fouassier, 'Mary Magdalene on Stage: 'The Sinner in the City' and the Persistent Remnant of Catholic Culture in an Anglican Society', *Theta* 7 (2007), pp. 53-66, p. 59.

<sup>56</sup> White, 'The Bible as play', p. 98.

<sup>57</sup> Kent Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 147; Grantley, *English Dramatic Interludes*, p. 192.

and other persons haue exercised / this comely and good facultie a long season' (sig. A1v). These words are spoken in defence of the 'faculty' of the players, suggesting that some audiences might not have agreed with the staged matter:

*Epigraph:* This comely and good facultie a long season,  
Which of some haue bene spitefully despised,  
Wherefore I thinke they can alleage no reason (sig. A2r).

The Epigraph continues to list the virtues of the play, asserting that it teaches spectators to praise God; that it suppresses vice through its performance; that it teaches obedience to the king; and that it inspires spectators to contemplate divine laws:

*Epigraph:* Doth not our facultie learnedly extoll vertue?  
Doth it not teache, God to be praised aboue al thing.  
What facultie doth vice more earnestly subdue?  
Doth it not teache true obedience to the kyng?  
What godly sentences to mynde doth it bring? (sig. A2v).

The Epigraph calls those opposing the play 'hipocrites that wold not haue their fautes reueled' (A2v), and notes that they slander the playgroup by criticising the group's earning money through performing this religious play, suggesting perhaps that this would undermine the holiness of the play. It appears that the Epigraph in fact uses this moment to ask the spectators for a donation in return for seeing the play performed, and defends their demand for money by a referring to Scriptural authority. The Epigraph argues that the play will offer its spectators 'wisdom', and claims that the value of wisdom cannot be expressed in monetary terms:

*Epigraph:* Truly I say, whether you geue halfpence or pence,  
Your gayne shalbe double, before you depart hence.  
Is wisdom no more worth than a peny trow you?  
Scripture calleth the price therof incomparable (sig. A2v).

It appears that the two plays are very different in terms of performance auspices, the Digby play a civically or ecclesiastically-supported open-air

spectacle, with a great number of actors, and the Wager a small-scale indoor play with very few props performed by a nobleman's troupe, potentially charging its audience. As Wager was writing for what was probably a less mixed audience, he could afford to be freer in his representation (however theatrical) of the Magdalen, than the Digby playwright who had to manage a bigger and perhaps more eclectic group of spectators whose expectations and responses may have been more varied. The Digby playwright tried harder to control his audience, displaying a greater anxiety about representing the Magdalen with her conflicting roles and characteristics on stage. In the next section I will discuss how the two playwrights managed the spectators' affect which determined their relationship to the Magdalen and through that managed their spectator risk.

### 3.3 Spectator Identification with Protagonist

One of the risks of attending a traditional morality play was the chance of falling into a theatrical trap, such as the spectators of *Mankind* (c. 1471) experienced no doubt to their satisfaction but hardly to their souls' health. The infamous 'Christmas song' initiated by vices Nowadays and Nought tempts the audience to sing along with them in 'mery chere'.<sup>58</sup> Singing, 'yt ys wretyn wyth a coll, yt ys wretyn wyth a cole' (l. 335), the Vices encouraged spectators to sing along in repetition of their line. Before they knew it, the audience members had fallen into the trap of participation, being party to chanting dirty words that continued for several sentences. One was shown a mirror in which one's sins were magnified for all to see, but one was also led into temptation in the 'here and now' along with the protagonist, who had a name representing all humankind. This risk was necessary for the doctrinal purposes of the play, showing spectators the road to Heaven. These 'theatrical traps' were not the only strategies to teach the spectator through allowing the audience to promote festive celebration above moral insight.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, even the narrative

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<sup>58</sup> *Mankind*, in *The Macro Plays*, ed. by Mark Eccles, EETS (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 153-184, l. 334.

<sup>59</sup> For example, J.A.B. Somerset has argued that 'as the vices amuse us, we can be said to share the hero's seduction. We have believed in it, have felt the springs of sympathetic laughter, and have perhaps even been called upon to assist in seduction'.

structure of the play caused spectators to be completely absorbed in interaction with the characters, causing spectators to gradually change 'sides' between the Vices and the protagonist. Robert Jones has asserted that this change of attitudes was caused by replacing 'an engagement in the entertainment of the vices' with 'judgment that places that sort of entertainment in perspective'.<sup>60</sup> In other words, the spectator was to directly experience how easy (and fun!) it was to lapse into sin, but they did also learn, along with the protagonist, that this fun had a less playful and more cruel side to it. Through this experience, the spectator identifies more strongly with the protagonist, and sympathizes with him rather than with the Vices.

Moreover, reflecting truths greater than the immediate simple plot, Morality plays focused on the spectator's reality, and the plays integrated themselves into the world of the audience in which the stakes were high, and forces were forever at work to draw people away from Heaven. In the words of Hans-Jürgen Diller, 'The World, the Flesh, and the Devil, God and the Vices and Virtues belong to the medieval man's ordinary world as much as they do to the dramatic world of the plays'.<sup>61</sup> Victor Scherb has more recently observed the close proximity of the audience to the performance spaces, such as the *platea* and other *loca*, to be 'both spectacular and intimate at the same time, simultaneously presenting eternity and the present moment'.<sup>62</sup> Thus the play world was blended into the real world. What is more, the dramatic action was set 'outside historical time'<sup>63</sup> so that the spectator supplied their own time to the play. Thus there is likely to have been no distance between play and spectator from the outset of the play blocking the lesson about the road to Heaven. In contrast to the setting of dramatic time for the Croxton play

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J.A.B. Somerset, 'Fair is Foul and Foul is Fair': Vice-Comedy's Development and Theatrical Effects,' *Elizabethan Theatre* 5, ed. by G.R. Hibbard (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 54-75, p. 65.

<sup>60</sup> Robert C. Jones, 'Dangerous Sport: The Audience's Engagement with Vice in the Moral Interludes', *Renaissance Drama* 6 (1973), pp. 45-63, p. 53.

<sup>61</sup> Hans-Jürgen Diller, 'Theatrical Pragmatics: The Actor-Audience Relationship from the Mystery Cycles to the Early Modern Comedies', In *Drama in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Clifford Davidson and John H. Stroupe (New York: AMS Press, 1991), pp. 321-330, p. 323.

<sup>62</sup> Scherb, *Staging Faith*, p. 146.

<sup>63</sup> Pamela M. King, 'Morality Plays: in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, ed. by Richard Beadle and Alan J. Fletcher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 235-262, p. 235.

described in chapter two, which was set in 1461 in Aragon, Spain, this morality play's setting of dramatic time is quite different. However, as I have pointed out in the previous chapter, the spectators of the Croxton play would not have thought of Spain when watching the dramatic action on stage, so that the effect would have still been one of the spectator experiencing the play in their own time, creating 'sameness' between spectator and play. Finally, spectators of the traditional Morality play expected to see the protagonist obtain Salvation at the end of the play, and indirectly received absolution through this surrogate. In terms of affect, the identification between audience member and protagonist could not have been stronger than in this genre. In short, in order to 'feel one' with the protagonist, spectators of the Morality play were invited to interact with the play, to consider the play as part of their own world, their own time, and to identify with the protagonist.

In both Magdalen plays we find opposing moves to increase but also, paradoxically, to limit the spectators' engagement with the drama. That is to say that the Digby play was highly interactive, as Bob Godfrey has demonstrated,<sup>64</sup> but did not invite spectators to identify closely with the character of the Magdalen. Wager's *Marie Magdalene* on the other hand was rather unparticipative in nature, but made it much easier for spectators to identify with the protagonist. One of the reasons why the Digby *Mary* did not allow for the same kind of spectator-protagonist identification as, say, one finds in *Everyman* (c. 1514) or *Mundus et Infans* (c. 1520), is that the Digby play mixed a number of traditional dramatic types, such as the miracle, biblical history and morality play.<sup>65</sup> This has the effect that Mary can be observed to carry the traits belonging to characters of the different genres. However, it is not always easy to identify the genre in each scene, as single scenes blend genres. For example, Lawrence Clopper has observed that 'the beginning of the romance legend is enmeshed in the biblical scenes'.<sup>66</sup> Because of the mingling of the genres, Mary's character in Digby invited spectators to identify with her on a personal level at some moments, but that they were encouraged

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<sup>64</sup> Godfrey, 'The Machinery of Spectacle', pp. 145-160.

<sup>65</sup> Theresa Coletti, 'Paupertas est donum dei: Hagiography, Lay Religion, and the Economics of Salvation in the Digby Mary Magdalene', *Speculum* 76: 2 (2001), pp. 337-378, p. 338.

<sup>66</sup> Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game*, p. 238.



to experience a different kind of affect at other moments. I argue that the audience identify with Mary when the play is in Morality mode, but that they are made to reflect differently on her persona at the moments in which she represents a fallen sinner, a tavern goer, or a lover. We are thus talking about the different kinds of recognition that the spectator might feel towards Mary Magdalen, and the different kinds of affect that the playwrights encouraged spectators to feel, corresponding to the play's moral message.

The following examples display these fluent, but contradictory moves. For instance, the scene that invites a close identification between the spectator and the Magdalen, and evokes spectator affect, is the scene which bears closest resemblance to the traditional Morality. In this scene the Seven Deadly Sins surround the Castle of Magdalen (A stage direction informs us that 'her xal alle be Seuyn Dedly Synnys besege þe castell tyll [Mary] agre to go to Jherusalem' (439)), and perform a dumb-show signifying the *psychomachia* of the Sins fighting against the human desire for respectable living. Metaphorically, the dumb-show was not so very different from the siege in *The Castle of Perseverance* (c. 1425), although it was of course much shorter than the elaborate battle one finds in *The Castle*. The motivation of the evil characters is very similar as well. *The Castle's* Belyal says when preparing his allies for battle:

*Belyal:* For euere I stonde in mekyl stryue;  
Whyl Mankynd is in clene lyue  
I am neuere wel at ese.<sup>67</sup>

'Clene lyue' seems to get both Belyal and the Digby's Satan on edge. The main difference between the two evil characters' motivations is that whereas in *The Castle* Belyal wishes to attack Mankind as a whole, in the Digby *Mary Magdalen* a much more personal raid is prepared by Satan, who reveals his plan 'a woman of whorshep ower servant to make' (l. 384). Jacob Bennett has observed that the Devil's wish to capture the Magdalene somewhat changes the traditional Morality in which Mankind is attacked, to a situation in which an

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<sup>67</sup> *The Castle of Perseverance*, in *The Macro Plays*, ed. by Mark Eccles, EETS (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 3-111, ll. 1909-1911.

individual is assaulted.<sup>68</sup> It is possible that Mary's individualism at this point would have increased the spectators' emotional engagement with her. In fact any 'person of worship' in the audience could have felt threatened by the prospect of their very own *psychomachia*, destabilizing their outlook, their reputation, and their social position. The spectators' affect would thus have increased during this scene.

In contrast, the tavern scene decreased the audience members' affect, in that it did not so much invite spectators to identify with the Magdalen on a personal level. However, the scene did encourage spectators to recognize the actions in the scene in relation to other play motifs. The scene thus emphasized the fictionality of the play, established a relation of recognition between the Magdalen's actions and the cultural framework in which the play was watched, while at the same time cautioning the spectators to identify with the Magdalen on a personal level, as she is about to do something 'sinful'. This scene follows the siege which has concluded with the Seven Deadly Sins winning the battle at Magdalen Castle, and shows Mary giving into Lechery's bad influence and following her to a tavern. A similar motif can be found in the Low Country *Mariken van Nieumeghen* (printed c. 1515)<sup>69</sup> in which the Devil and Mariken travel to Antwerp to a tavern called 'In the Tree' [Inden Boom], where Mariken gives in to the pleasures of knowledge offered to her.<sup>70</sup> Elsa Strietman has noted that Mary in the Digby play receives the gift of understanding all languages due to a miracle (ll. 1339-1344), and that similarly, Mariken is promised in the tavern scene that she will learn all languages from the devil.<sup>71</sup> Claire Sponsler has furthermore identified the tavern in morality and miracle plays as 'the spatial antithesis of the household'.<sup>72</sup> She has also observed that the 'connection between pleasure,

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<sup>68</sup> Jacob Bennett, 'The Meaning of the Digby Mary Magdalene', *Studies in Philology* 101: 1 (2004), pp. 38-47.

<sup>69</sup> T.A. Birrell, 'Mary of Nemmegen: Provenance, Context, Genre', *English Studies* 75: 4 (1994), pp. 322-334, p. 322.

<sup>70</sup> *Mariken van Nieumeghen*, ed. by G.P.M. Knuvelde (Den Bosch: Malmberg, 1974), l. 440.

<sup>71</sup> Elsa Strietman, 'The Face of Janus: Debatable Issues in 'Mariken van Nieumeghen'', *Comparative Drama* 27: 1 (1993), pp. 64-82, p. 72, and p. 83, footnote 13.

<sup>72</sup> Claire Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p.

play and consumption' which the tavern permits can also be found in *Mankind* and *The Interlude of Youth*.<sup>73</sup> Thus it may be perceived that the tavern scene in the Digby *Mary Magdalen* resembles several other plays from different genres, matching their well-known themes. Spectators were not necessarily aware of these other plays, but they would have been aware of the moral and social reputation of the tavern. Furthermore, the similarities (the perverse linking of the tavern with acquiring wisdom) found in these plays had a contemporary significance, so that the relationship between Mary and the spectators would have been determined, at least partially, through the knowledge of these fictional elements, rather than that the spectators considered this scene as part of their own world.

Similarly, in the scene in which Mary appears as a lover, the spectator is not encouraged to relate to her on a personal level, which is why the artificiality of this scene is highlighted, making her into a fictional character overtly placed within the literary context of the romance narrative. Mary finds herself in an 'arbour', a place reminiscent of the *locus amoenus* of the romance genre. In romance narratives, this is the place where the protagonist falls asleep under a tree or in a walled garden, and experiences an encounter with a supernatural world through a 'dream vision'.<sup>74</sup> Mary's awaiting her lovers in this 'parody of courtly love'<sup>75</sup> transforms her into a character that the spectators would have recognised as some version of the romance heroine, a character that they would have appreciated in terms of fiction. This is reinforced by the 'romance' language used by the Magdalen. However, the spectator would have been aware of this being in tension with the play's spiritual values. Mary's use of the language of romance appears debased and self-deceiving: she may pretend to be a romance heroine, but this does not romanticise her 'sins', nor would it fool the audience into identifying her as such. Here the spectator is not invited to identify with the Magdalen on a personal level but is rather encouraged to reflect on their knowledge of the

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98. See also Theresa Coletti, 'The Design of the Digby Play of 'Mary Magdalene'', *Studies in Philology* 46: 4 (1979), pp. 313-333, pp. 318-319.

<sup>73</sup> Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance*, p. 98.

<sup>74</sup> Joanne Findon, 'Napping in the Arbour in the Digby Mary Magdalene Play', *Early Theatre* 9: 2 (2006), pp. 35-55, p. 39.

<sup>75</sup> Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game*, p. 239.

romance genre, and to make a moral distinction between Mary's situation within the moral genre, and that of courtly ladies within the literary genre. Mary does not come out of this comparison favourably, so that the spectator is inevitably left to criticise her morals. Mary says:

*Mari:* A, God be wyth my valentynys,  
 My byrd swetyng, my lovys so dere!  
 For þey be bote for a blossom of blysse!  
 Me mervellyt sore þety be nat here,  
 But I woll restyn in þis erbyre,  
 Amons thes bamys precyus of prysse,  
 Tyll som lovyr wol apere  
 That me is wont to hailes and kysse (ll. 564-571).

A stage direction then informs us, 'her xal Mary lye doun and slepe in þe erbyre'. As Mary dozes off, a Good Angel appears in her sleep, telling her what horrors lie ahead of her, if she persists in indulging in the 'fleschly lust ... to þe full delectabyll' (l. 593). It is in this frame-work of the dream-vision that Mary decides on the actions she will undertake to obtain mercy and Salvation. She evokes the Biblical scene in which the nameless woman anoints Christ's feet (Luke 7:38) with the words 'swete bawmys' (l. 613):

*Mary:* I xal porsue þe Prophett wherso he be,  
 For he is þe welle of perfyth charyte.  
 Be þe oyle of mercy he xal me relyff.  
 Wyth swete bawmys, I wyll sekyn hym þis syth,  
 And sadly follow hys lordship in eche degree (ll. 610-614).

Mary's life changes after this intervention, and this marks the moment of her contrition, after which her first act is, as the stage direction tells us, that 'here xal Mary wasche þe fett of þe prophet wyth þe terrys of hur yys, whypyng hem wyth hur here, and þan anoint hym wyth a precyus noyttment' (l. 640 sd). In terms of genre-mixing one may observe that already during the dream-vision Mary alters from parodic-romance heroine into a biblical character, so that her character can be understood first in literary or theatrical terms, before it takes on its biblical significance. The play thus provides a hybrid experience in which spectators manage the different generic associations of the episode. In relation

to risk that means that spectators have the relative freedom to 'decide' when they are going to start and stop identifying, and what kind of closeness they will feel to the Magdalen in scenes that are not fully biblical or that do not follow the Morality play genre. It allows them not to fully disengage in the scenes where Mary is portrayed as a sinner, as a tavern-visitor, or as a lover.

In contrast to those scenes that show the Magdalen sinning, the play avoids mixing its genres when a moral connection is wanted. The play offers two types of connection between the play and the spectator in the scenes that wish to create a moral connection. The first type of connection is, as observed, fostered through the Morality play genre. In the Morality-resembling scene, Mary's sins are represented as the faults of humankind, and thus attention is diverted away from her personal sinning as a 'fallen woman'.<sup>76</sup> The relationship with the spectator in such scenes may seem contradictory as spectators are both encouraged to identify with the protagonist as a Morality character, as well as finding themselves diverted away from the 'shocking' specifics of Magdalen's historical character. The second type of connection between play and spectator in moral scenes is achieved through the representation of a known biblical scene, such as the foot washing scene, in which the Magdalen is a historical individual.<sup>77</sup> Yet she also presents an example of contrition inspiring the same quality in the members of the audience, as Jesus says: 'Woman, in contrysyon þou art expert' (l. 686). The spectators are thus urged to both relate to the Magdalen as one would to an exemplum, and to recognise her as a biblical character. The difference between the two types of identification in these two strategies is that in the former, the Magdalen is an allegorical representation of the spectators' world, whilst in the latter; the audience is invited to learn from a historical character, a character outside their world. Her biblical status is further emphasised by the scene in which Christ expels seven devils out of Mary's body, immediately following the 'contrition scene'. The stage direction says: 'wyth þis word seuyn dyllys xall dewoyde from þe woman, and the Bad Angyll entyr into hell wyth thondyr' (l. 691 sd). The expelling of the devils does not have an exemplary function but is

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<sup>76</sup> Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game*, p. 240.

<sup>77</sup> Keeping in mind that the Magdalen is based on several biblical women.

rather a biblical historical moment showing the power of Christ. Therefore, there is no need for this event to urge the spectators' identification, and the audience is diverted into stage spectacle.

The different types of identification that the spectator is urged to have in relation to the Magdalen betrays an anxiety to manage the risk attached to dealing with a sensitive topic: the Magdalen's prostitution. The play had to ensure that spectators recognized the Magdalen as an allegorical character when they needed to reflect on their own lives, and to avoid such reflection when the 'sinful' elements of the Magdalen's life were represented, so that the tavern and the arbour scenes emphasize the theatricality and artificiality of the play, and direct the spectator to appreciate these scenes within a wider theatrical or literary context. Deploying these two approaches meant that the reactions of the audience could be more tightly controlled when Mary's fall into lechery was represented. Generic variation combined with spectacle kept the spectator's relationship to Mary on a morally and spiritually acceptable level.

However, as the play has carefully balanced the relationship between Mary and the spectator through the devices described in the above, the second part of the play introduces a further problem, when the post-penitent Magdalen becomes a (female) preacher. In the second part of the play Mary-the-biblical-character or Mary-the-saint does not invite a special identification with the spectators as she is presented as a character to be venerated. The plot follows Mary as she works as one of Christ's disciples (l. 920), and as a teacher with her own disciples (l. 1336). Furthermore the spectators were presented with Mary converting the King and Queen of Marseilles (l. 1939), displaying her strong connection with the divine as she prays for the miracle requested by the King of Marseilles, and God promptly causes a cloud to appear from heaven, setting the temple on fire (l. 1561). Mary-the-saint in the second part of the play is presented as very distant from the spectator or disengaged from the spectator. Alternatively, one could say that she has moved into a different genre where the responses expected of the spectator are different. The two reasons for this are that firstly, the play displays sensitivity towards Mary's role as a preacher. For example, as Mary is in Jerusalem with her disciples, she

preaches to the audience about the resurrection of Christ (ll. 1336-1341) yet she ends her speech by remarking that the disciples have gone abroad,

To dyvers contreys her and ȝondyr,  
To prech and teche of hys hye damage—  
Full ferr ar my brothyryn departyd asondyr (ll. 1346-1348).

Tellingly, she speaks of her 'brothyryn' that have gone on their missions, and not of her own work as a preacher. Yet after Mary's speech, Christ appears and asks Raphaell, the Angel accompanying him, to visit the Magdalen and to tell her that 'she xall converte þe land of Marcyll' (l. 1371). Christ thus justifies Mary's expedition to Marseilles and her conversion of the King and Queen of that place, although it has to be noted that conversion as opposed to preaching is something that females were traditionally allowed to do, especially within a family setting. However, a further example of Mary's preaching being justified by a male character is when Mary is facing the King of Marseilles, her preaching a sermon is actually forcefully requested by the King, who says: 'Woman, I pray þe, answer me! / Whatt mad God at þe first begynnyng?' (ll. 1477-1478). After the miracle makes the idol tremble, Mary humbly states that 'Most mekely my feyth I recummend' (l. 1555). The play does not show Mary flaunting the authority which would come with a preaching, which is most noticeable in the scene in which the King of Marseilles wants to thank Mary for all she's done for him to acquaint him with the Christian faith, and Mary brushes off his thanks directing them to her 'mastyr' Peter, who will also take it upon himself to convert the King and Queen:

*Rex:* Now thanke I þi god, and specyally þe,  
And so xall I do whyle I leve may.  
*Mary:* ȝe xall thankytt Petyr, my mastyr, wythowt delay!  
He is þi frend, stedfast and cler.  
To allmythy God he halp me pray,  
And he xall crestyn yow from þe fynddys powyr (ll. 1678-1683).

I have already noted that spectators could have felt uncomfortable with the idea of a woman preacher, which the play tries very hard to control by

justifying why she is undertaking this and restricting her role at every possible opportunity. Mary here does not represent 'all women preachers' but rather a single historical person.

The second reason why the responses expected of the spectator are different in the post-penitent half of the play are that at this point in the play there is no dramatic need for the spectators to engage with Mary on a personal level, as the play seeks other ways to create affect. As Bob Godfrey's important article has suggested, the impact of the performance dynamics on the spectator's experience was paramount for the spectator to both experience the events as a 'lived experience', while at the same time understanding the symbolic meaning of the action. For example, the ship that Mary boards when she's on her way to convert the King and Queen of Marseilles, made its way through the audience, and, as Godfrey suggests, taking a 'circuitous route through the place' invited the audience to 'follow on and share in the journey until the ship comes to harbour'.<sup>78</sup> This, Godfrey argued, resulted in the spectators having been party to the storm which is crucial to the plot, as well as 'physically disturbed and assaulted by the action'.<sup>79</sup> If the audience 'became' the waves, or were turned into an element in what was presented as an arduous journey, there was no need for them to *also* identify with the protagonist at the same time, because emotional closeness to the character was already established.

The final moments before Mary's death again engage the audience in a close identification. More specifically, the relationship between the Magdalen and the spectator becomes more individual; this time not through the use of the Morality genre, but through staging the representation of an action that spectators would have known from their own lives and religious celebration. As her end draws near a stage direction says that 'hic aparuit angelus et presbiter cum corpus domenicum' (l. 2100 sd). The Presbiter has come to present to Mary the Host for her final communion. He says:

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<sup>78</sup> Bob Godfrey, 'The Machinery of Spectacle: the Performative Dynamic of the Play of Mary Magdalen and Related Matters', *European Medieval Drama* 3 (2000), pp. 145-160, p. 157.

<sup>79</sup> Godfrey, 'The Machinery of Spectacle', p. 157.



*Presbiter:* pou blyssyd woman, invre in mekenesse,  
I have browth þe þe bred of lyf to þi syth,  
to make þe suere from all dystresse,  
þi sowle to bring to euyrlastyng lyth (ll. 2101-2104).

Mary answers in prayer:

*Mari:* O þou mythty Lord of hye mageste,  
þis celestyall bred for to determyn,  
Thys tyme to reseve it in me,  
My sowle þerwyth to illumyn (ll. 2105-2108).

Mary's celebration of the Eucharist created an image with which the audience could identify. They had witnessed Mass plenty of times themselves, and seeing Mary partake in it would have strengthened the spectator's connection to the Magdalen. However, the real tie between the Magdalen and the audience is that she had been a sinner like them, but has been saved through divine intermission, and is reminded of that as she takes the Eucharist. As I have demonstrated in chapter two, the appearance of the Host on stage could well have had a challenging effect on some play sponsors and spectators. If the Host that Mary took was real, what did this imply about Mary within this same fictional space? Spectators knew of course that the actor taking the Host was not the real Mary Magdalen; nor was she a representative of a concept or group such as the Jews in the Croxton play. The most likely implication is that the Eucharistic scene changed Mary into a representative of Mankind again. By changing the Magdalen into an allegorical character, the action of taking the Host would have become an allegorical action, and the prop-Host an allegorical Host. This avoided the awkward dynamics of a seemingly real Host taken by the actor-performing-the-Magdalone. Despite Mary's temporarily becoming a Morality character again, the Presbiter in this scene addresses Mary with the reverence of one addressing a saint. It seems that at the points in the play where one is encouraged to identify with Mary, some elements of the play are also trying to avoid this identification and others to promote it.

The Digby playwright is using genre to make possible the staging of Mary Magdalen's ambivalent character, diverse qualities and associations, and her

complex set of relationships to the spectator. By linking her to different genres at various times, she becomes a hybrid character, but also, notably, a character that is at times highly theatrical in that it reminds spectators of dramatic and literary traditions. In the scenes which do not resemble the Morality play genre, spectators are being left to decide for themselves whether or not to identify with the Magdalen on a personal level, or whether to more distantly appreciate her character as one would a fictional character. This strategy placed part of the responsibility for the spectators' experienced risk with them. That is to say that if they wished to identify with the Magdalen in the tavern or arbour scenes where she is picking up and awaiting her lovers, they were welcome to do so. However, if people did not feel that they wanted to recognise Mary's sin, or if they were afraid of acknowledging their own personal failings, or even if such a scene would have been too tempting in the erotic sense, then they were given the option to reflect on the generic tradition instead. Offering spectators these outlets in areas of emotional or moral risk reveals considerable skill in facing up to and avoiding potential problems, such as spectators experiencing unwanted pity, recognition, or acknowledgement of personal failings. It should be noted that apprehensions about the spectators' responses to the Magdalen's conflicted role of sinner, saint, and female preacher can be revealed through the steps taken by the playwright to control these apprehensions. This play works subtly with the contrary forces of affect and theatrical self-reflexivity.

Lewis Wager's *Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene* on the other hand makes it easier for the spectator to identify with the Magdalen as a protagonist than does its Digby counterpart. One of the reasons for this is that Wager's Magdalen is not a saint, nor is she a 'full' biblical character. It has been observed that Mary Magdalen is a conflation of several women to be found in the New Testament: the sister of Martha and Lazarus, the woman who washed Christ's feet with her hair and luxurious ointment, the woman from whom Christ cast out seven demons, the woman who was present at the crucifixion, and the woman who was the first to see Christ in the garden after

he had risen.<sup>80</sup> The compilation of biblical women found themselves united in Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*, narrating the saints' lives,<sup>81</sup> and in the Digby *Mary Magdalen*. However, the *Legenda Aurea* was no longer acceptable as 'doctrinal truth' to Protestants. The Magdalen, because of her not existing as one person in the scriptures, was thus, more so than any other Catholic saint, recognised in Protestant culture as a remnant of Catholicism,<sup>82</sup> but one that was accepted as having acquired a new figurative meaning.<sup>83</sup> For Protestants, the Magdalen became a symbolic figure of penitence, rather than a literal historical or biblical character, or saint, and thus a character that did not need to be dramatically displayed with the veneration owed to a saint. Also, as the narrative in Wager's *Marie Magdalene* was stripped bare of its long hagiographical narrative, and focused on the moment of Realisation and Penance, the play invited identification between the spectator and the protagonist by offering itself as a moral exemplum rather than a historical representation, although Wager insisted on staying as close to the Scriptures as possible (sig. A2v-A3r). Finally, Wager's play does not represent the post-penitential Marie as a female preacher, but as someone who testifies to Christ's intervention.

Wager's play is simpler in structure than the elaborate Digby *Mary Magdalen*, and where the former play surrounded Mary with both allegorical and historical/biblical characters, Wager's Marie only has allegorical figures for company. I would not go as far as Patricia Badir in calling Wager's Marie Magdalene a 'Reformation Everyman'.<sup>84</sup> If anything, Marie has most in common with the characters from the educational plays that were fashionable in the 1550s, such as *Nice Wanton*, *Lusty Juventus*, and *Youth*. These interludes of

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<sup>80</sup> See, 'Introduction' in *The Late Medieval Religious Plays of Bodleian MSS Digby 133 and E Museo 160*, ed. by Donald Barker, John Murphy, and Louis Hall, EETS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. xli.

<sup>81</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea: vulgo Historia Lombardica dicta: ad optima liborum fidem* (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1969). See also, Frédérique Fouassier, 'Mary Magdalene on Stage: 'The Sinner in the City' and the Persistent Remnant of Catholic Culture in an Anglican Society', *Theta* 7 (2007), pp. 53-66, p. 54.

<sup>82</sup> Fouassier, 'Mary Magdalene on Stage', p. 53.

<sup>83</sup> Fouassier, 'Mary Magdalene on Stage', p. 55.

<sup>84</sup> Patricia Badir, 'To Allure vnto their loue': Iconoclasm and Striptease in Lewis Wager's *The Life and Repentaunce of Mary Magdalene*, *Theatre Journal* 51:1 (1999), pp. 1-20, p. 4.

course shared many characteristics with the Morality genre, but specifically gave advice about raising children, and of the dangers that a young person would risk if not brought up well by parents or guardians. The play presents itself as applicable to an audience of teenagers of noble households, although there is no evidence of the exact auspices of the performance. Wager's play is best seen as a play that entertained but also offered pedagogical instruction. It is likely that the spectators recognised Mary's significance, not as the biblical 'sinner', but in the same way as they might have criticised or pitied Dalila in *Nice Wanton* (c. 1550). That is to say, as an allegorical example, neither biblical nor historical, nor even necessarily allegorical, but exemplary. The spectator here does not depend on the use of genre or theatricals to determine their range of affect to this play, as in the Digby, but are invited to learn from the character's mistakes at all times. Perhaps we are speaking here of the more variable and shifting forms of relationship which the new play permits in the absence of a straightforward identification such as implied by the naming of characters Everyman or Mankind. In terms of upbringing, Mary explains that her family were too soft on her:

*Marie:* Certainly, my parents brought me vp in chyldhod,  
In vertuous qualities, and godly literature,  
And also they bestowed vpon me much good  
To haue me nurtured in noble ornatore.  
But euermore they were vnto me very tender,  
They would not suffer the wynde on me to blowe (sig. B2r).

Her message is not unlike Barnabas' in *Nice Wanton* who advises parents to be strict with their children to avoid their going off the wrong path:

*Barnabas:* Therefore exhort I all parents to be diligent  
In bringing up their children, yea, to be circumspect;  
Lest they fall to evil, be not negligent,  
But chastise them before they be sore infect;

Accept their well doing, in ill them reject (sig. C2r).<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, both Delilah in *Nice Wanton*, and Marie in Wager's play lament youth passing by, and think back to their innocent school days. When Iniquity asks Delilah: 'Peace Dalila, speak ye laten poore foole', she answers: 'no no, but a prouerbe I learned at scoole' (sig. A4r). Similarly, Marie muses:

*Marie:* I may vse daliance and pastyme a while,  
but the courage of youth will soone be in exile.  
I remember yet since I was a little foole,  
that I learned verses when I went to schoole (D2v).

Like the other 1550s educational plays, Wager's *Marie Magdalene* ends in a lesson to be learned by its audience. The message in this case is the Calvinist message of grace and faith.<sup>86</sup> In this play Justification and Love offer the moral of the story. Justification explains that the spectators should take Marie's example, thus expecting of them a very high level of identification with the protagonist, not just in the performance time, but especially after the play when they went back to their normal lives:

*Justification:* Praying God that all we example may take  
Of Mary, our synfull lyues to forsake:  
And no more to looke backe, but to go forward still  
Folowyng Christ as she did and his holy will (sig. I3r).

Marie has the last word, addressing the audience directly and including them in her own expectation of Salvation. It is this expectation which marks her out as probably saved: the acquisition of confidence through faith in Christ's redemptive power is the best sign that Salvation will follow. She says:

*Marie:* Now God graunt that we may go the same way,  
That with ioy we may ryse at the last day,

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<sup>85</sup> *Nice Wanton* (London: John King, 1560), *Early English Books Online*. Web accessed 19 August 2013. See also the edition *The Tudor Interludes Nice Wanton and Impatient Poverty*, ed. by Leonard Tennenhouse (London and New York: Garland Publishing, 1984), pp. 64-125.

<sup>86</sup> Paul Whitfield White, 'Lewis Wager's *Life and Repentaunce of Mary Magdalene* and John Calvin', *Notes and Queries* 28:6 (1981), pp. 508-512.

To the saluation of soule and body euermore,  
Through Christ our Lord, to whom be all honor (sig. 13v).

'We', Marie says, meaning herself and the audience. It seems that Wager had no problem in allowing the spectators to identify with Marie. Rather, he wanted them to see the Magdalen as inhabiting the world of the play as an *exemplum* figure from which the spectators could learn,<sup>87</sup> but also the world of the audience as an expositor figure, one who finally shares their spiritual space and aspirations rather than simply giving an example of what these aspirations should be. Where the Digby play constantly played with the strengthening and weakening of spectator participation, thus drawing the audience close at some points and letting them go at others, and thereby protecting them from any anxieties they might have felt in identifying with the Magdalen, Wager did not give this opportunity to his audience; they were meant to identify with Marie at all times. This does mean however, that certain kinds of risk were bound to be created if spectators were meant to closely identify with the protagonist who was a 'fallen woman', as spectators when identifying with the protagonist at a personal level, would have been encouraged to believe that the protagonist's sins could also apply to them in their own lives. This could have been morally distressing or sexually provoking. Peter Happé has argued that to appropriate the figure of Mary Magdalene on the Protestant stage, the erotic element in her persona needed to be dropped.<sup>88</sup> In the next section I will address the representation of the Magdalen's sins on stage to explore this issue.

### 3.4 Representation of the Magdalen's Sins

A good indication of the plays' different approaches to spectator engagement and identification with the Magdalen and, in particular, to their different treatment of theatrical risk can be found in the way they represent the Magdalen's sins on stage. Spectators of the Digby play were allowed to participate in the sin through participating in drama, whereas spectators of the

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<sup>87</sup> Badir, 'To allure vnto their loue', p. 2; Happé, 'The Protestant Adaptation of the Saint Play', p. 234.

<sup>88</sup> Happé, 'The Protestant Adaptation of the Saint Play', p. 226-227.

Wager play were invited to participate only in the theatrical representation of sin. Nevertheless, spectators of both plays were allowed to enjoy the erotic risk and playfulness and to appreciate the ambiguously moral and sinful business of playacting, through being confronted with the *risqué* rather than the *risky*.

It may be observed that the scenes that are concerned with Mary's sinning only take up a very small part of the Digby play,<sup>89</sup> starting from the siege of Magdalen Castle, and ending during the dream vision in which Mary tells the Good Angel of her contrition. The process of Mary being forced into sin, visiting the tavern, being warned against the sinful lifestyle, and showing contrition only takes from line 440 to line 613, betraying the play's greater interest in Mary's post-contrition life. Naturally, the Digby play could not show Mary's sin on stage, but for the same reason, extensive or lubricious discussion of the sin would have appeared indecorous to many spectators.

Instead, the idea of prostitution was only *implied*, for example in both the tavern and the harbour scenes, through the reputations both locations had received in other literary works, and had anyway in society at large. However, even if showing the sin on stage was never a possibility, the Digby play goes further in avoiding eroticism by presenting the Gallant as comically ridiculous, apparent from his opening words 'hof, hof hof!' (l. 491). The audience watches the Gallant suggestively propose that Mary should leave the tavern with him ('Wyll we walk to another stede? (l. 542)), and Mary enthusiastically replies that she would go anywhere with him or would even give her life for him:

*Mari:* Ewyn at your wyl, my dere derling!  
Thowe 3e wyl go to þe wordys eynd,  
I wol neuyr from yow wynd,  
To dye for your sake! (ll. 543-546).

The representation of Mary's 'sin' on stage is communicated to the spectator through her romantic language and through Mary and the Gallant's seeking privacy from the gaze of the spectators. It is only the Bad Angel who presents

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<sup>89</sup> Chester N. Scoville, *Saints and the Audience in Middle English Biblical Drama* (London and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 32.

their actions as more vulgar. He informs the audience that Mary has become a servant of the devil: 'For she is fallyn in ower grogly gromys!' (l. 549). It is likely that the tavern and arbour scenes caused the spectator to relate to the character with pity, assumed moral superiority, recognition, or acknowledgement of their own personal failings, but these scenes did not cause the affect that we find in the siege scene, in which the spectator is urged to identify with the Magdalen as one would with Everyman or Mankind. In other words, where the playmaker was happy to make the siege scene abstractly refer to the sins of all of mankind, including the audience members, the actual 'fall' into Lechery, was put on stage in a more distanced and artificial way. The fact that these scenes only took a very small part of the total performance time suggests that the play did not dwell on this aspect of Mary's life. And indeed, the 'good works' Mary performs after her being visited by the Good Angel are much more relevant to the message of the Digby play. In contrast, in Wager's play the process of Marie's 'fallen' life is the main objective of the play, starting almost from the very beginning of the play (sig. A4v), and continuing until the appearance of The Lawe (sig. E3v). I will show in this section that this was due to the Calvinist disregard of 'good works'. Spectators of the Digby play and Wager's play thus had a very different experience of risk when exposed to the sins presented in dissimilar ways.

Firstly, in the Wager play the spectator is involved in Marie's sexual sin by their understanding of the sexual innuendo and playfulness of the piece. This involves the many *double entendres* on clothing. Such as when Marie says that she 'wyll goe and prouide some other attire, / that accordyng to my byrthe I may appeare' (sig. B2v), Infidelity ignores the innocent meaning of her words which indicate her station in life, but makes a sexual remark out of it by saying that gentlemen '... had liefer haue you naked, by not afrayde, / then with your best holy day garment' (sig. B2v). Where Marie thinks of love in relation to a romantic dressing up, Infidelity thinks of it as taking off one's clothes. Of course Marie's words unwittingly form part of a sexual playfulness which the audience is supposed to enjoy, but it is Infidelity, not Marie, who goes all the way in making the joke, thus creating the fun. Similarly, in the scene in which Infidelity encourages Marie to play on the virginals, the Vice takes the



opportunity to pun on the playing of the flute, utilizing all its sexual connotations. He says:

*Infidelity*: If that you can play vpon the recorder,  
I haue as fayer a one as any in this border,  
Truly you haue not sene a more goodlie pipe,  
It is so bigge that your hand can it not gripe (sig. D3r).

His vulgar words are followed by dancing and singing and kissing. It is not clear exactly how erotic these actions appeared on stage, but the impunity taken by Infidelity to crack sexual jokes resembles the standard lecherous jokes made by other Vices, for example by Mery Report in Heywood's *Play of the Weather*, as chapter four will show. Infidelity's words are sooner comic than erotic, but the evoked laughter was connected to the sexual playfulness of the play. The play insists that if one is to respond to the play properly, one should be enjoying its impropriety, not unlike the vulgar singing in the Catholic *Mankind*.

In Wager's play one could say that instead of sensuality, the audience was offered an alternative for sensuality. 'Substitute' is also the key word for the ways in which Marie's 'sins' are displayed on stage, both through the use of word substituting action, and by other actions substituting the 'sinful' action. Not unlike the Digby dramatist, Wager could not show his audience how Marie lived the life of a 'fallen woman', as this would have been unacceptable for any audience. In order to protect his audience from experiencing the moral risk of being confronted with a kind of life that one would seek to avoid in one's normal life, or from experiencing the sexual risk of enjoying the staged representation of a 'fallen' woman in a context in which one should really focus on repentance and bettering one's life, Wager directed the spectator's attention to the representation of performing a part. He also exploited the vicarious and substitutive possibilities of play where mimesis does not mean exact imitation but rather representation. In this case, the substitutive capacity of the play is provided by the notion of play itself. Marie's prostitution is referred to by the Vices as 'playing a part'. For example, by *Concupiscence*: 'Neuer woman that could play a harlots part, / was either humble, or yet meke in hart (sig. C1r); and by *Cupiditi*: I doubt not but she will do right well hir part,

/ by that tyme that all we be fast within hir hart' (sig. C3v). Furthermore, in order to become what the Vices refer to as 'a goddess' (rather than a prostitute!), Marie is tutored in how to dress (by Infidelity (sig. B3r) and Cupidity (sig. B3v), and receives acting lessons:

*Pride*: You must be proude, loftie, and of hye mynde,  
despise the poore, as wretches of an other kynde:  
your countenance is not ladylike inough yet.  
I see well that we had nede to teache you more wit.  
Let your eies roll in your head, declaryng your pride,  
after this sort you must cast your eies aside (sig. C3v).

The idea of dressing is referred to repeatedly: 'garment(s)'<sup>90</sup> occurs eleven times, 'geare'<sup>91</sup> eighteen times, 'clothes'<sup>92</sup> are mentioned two times, and 'attire'<sup>93</sup> and 'aray'<sup>94</sup> also feature once each. Not only Mary dresses up; the Vices also pretend to be different from who they are through the help of costumes. This probably had the effect of making the spectators feel that whereas the Vices are really bad posing as good, Marie is only 'playing' bad but is good underneath her new garments, make-up and countenance. Pride explains the necessity of the facades that the Vices use to disguise themselves:

*Pride*: In our tragedie we may not vse our owne names,  
for that would turne to al our rebukes and shames (sig. C1r).

A further example can be found in Infidelity's description of his 'adapting' his appearances to his identity,

*Infidelity*: Therefore there, suche a name to my selfe I do geue.  
I haue a garment correspondent to that name  
... Prudence before Marie my name I will call.  
Which to my suggestions will cause hir to fall:  
A vesture I haue here to this garment correspondent

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<sup>90</sup> See sig. A4r, B2v, C4v, D1r, E2r, I1r.

<sup>91</sup> See sig. A4v, B1r, C2r, C4r, D1r, D1v, D2r, D3r, E2r, H1v, I1v.

<sup>92</sup> See sig. B1r, B2v.

<sup>93</sup> sig. B2v.

<sup>94</sup> sig. C2r.

Lo here it is, a gowne I trowe conuenient (sig. C1v).

Later on he describes how he changes his identity for every 'worke and operation' that he encounters. The idea that the Vice uses disguise, is unstable, artificial, and plays a part, frequently occurs throughout the sixteenth century. The fact that the Vice in Wager's play involves Marie in such activities seems more unusual, although one could say that it is not so different from Mankind, in the play by the same name, having his coat cut down so that he can play the part of a gallant:

*New Gyse*: I promytt yow a fresch jakett after þe new gyse.

*Mankynde*: Go and do þat longyth to yowr offyce, and spare þat 3e mow!<sup>95</sup>

Wager's *Infidelity*'s use of disguise is an example of theatrical self-referentiality in which playacting becomes the means of exposing the falsehood of playacting, as well as the means of showing the tendency of evil forces to play act, but also playacting itself becomes the space through which failures in morality can be explored. *Infidelity* says:

*Infidelity*: For euery day I haue a garment to weare,  
according to my worke and operation,  
among the Pharises, I haue a Pharises gown,  
among publicans and synners and other I vse,  
I am best I tell thee now, both in citie and towne (sig. E2r).

Tellingly, where the Vices use their disguises to appear to be better than they are, the garments also identify them with the group in which they function. And, interestingly, Wager goes to the Bible for those 'false' sinners, rather than directly to the Roman Catholic priesthood as earlier dramatists such as Bale did. This implies that Wager wanted to show how *Infidelity* and *Pride* can be found in many different groups. By dressing Marie as a 'sinner', Wager's strategy is that the appearance or even talking about the appearance will create a complicit but controlled and indirect eroticism for the spectator to

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<sup>95</sup> *Mankind*, in *The Macro Plays*, ed. by Mark Eccles, EETS, Original Series, 262 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 153-184, ll. 676-678.

enjoy, and it will simultaneously distance Marie from the sin while asserting her guilt. The Vices' attempt to fully corrupt Marie fails as they do not reach beyond the surface level of physical appearances and appearance enhancers such as make-up. Also, the recognition of Marie's inner goodness is emphasised when Christ undoes her 'dressing up' and says: 'For to saluation I haue hir dressed' (sig. F3v).

Through the use of words indicating dressing up and disguising, the play focuses on how it is that the woman plays the part of the prostitute, not on the actual act. This matter is complicated by the fact that a boy played the role of Mary Magdalene so that the artificiality was more evident and the drama more self-reflexive of its own medium. A similar interest in artificiality and self-reflection can be found in John Lyly's *Gallathea* (SR 1585) in which Gallathea dresses up as a boy, falls in love with Phyllida, and when it is found out that they are both girls, Venus offers to change one of them into a boy so that they can marry.<sup>96</sup> The play contains a great deal of play around girls in boys' clothes and boys in girls' clothes. For example, Gallathea says:

I perceive that boys are in as great disliking of themselves as maids;  
therefore, though I wear the apparel, I am glad I am not the person (ll.  
16-18).

In Wager's *Mary Magdalene*, by showing the sin through two lenses, which is through the character being taught how to behave, and by a young boy being taught how to play a woman who is being taught how to play the part of a prostitute, the audience was distanced from the sin, but strangely and perhaps erotically involved in the world of representation and playful sex. Furthermore, the Epigraph signals that the play is 'figurative', which means that it doesn't dwell on the nature of the vice but rather on faith:

*Epigraph:* Hir sinne did not hir conscience so greuously freate,  
But that Faith erected hir heart again to beleue,  
That God for Christ's sake wold all hir sins forgeue.

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<sup>96</sup> John Lyly, 'Gallathea', in *Gallathea and Midas* (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), pp. 1-74.

We desire no man in this point to be offended,  
In that vertues with vice we shall here introduce,  
For in men and women they haue depended:  
And therefore figuratiuely to speake, it is the vse.  
I trust that all wise men will accept our excuse (sig. A3r).

The assertion 'that Faith erected hir heart again to beleue, / that God for Christ's sake wold all hir sins forgeue' is the essence of the reformed faith. The Epigraph emphasises that Mary's sinfulness did not undermine her faith in Christ's redeeming power. Perhaps Wager is suggesting here that sin is the acting of a part but faith is the fundamental reality below that. Furthermore, Epigraph's notion of 'vice' can be found in both men and women, so that it was clear from the very start of the play that the vice mentioned is not limited to Marie's gender, and thus that the play will not be offering a 'historical' representation of the sin that the Magdalene was known for, but rather a 'figurative' representation of sin in general. Of course a naturalistic representation of the sin would have been too shocking for the stage, especially considering the amount of play-time dedicated to this stage in Marie's life; however, it would also have been doctrinally unnecessary as the play's doctrinal emphasis did not lie on the nature of the sin, but on Marie's expression of Faith and Repentance, and the Mercy offered by Christ. The protagonist is therefore dramatically shown as a redeemed sinner, and the period of her sinning is not presented as literal, but as fictional, artificial and playful. The management of the audience in this case was achieved by locating the action of the play in a semi-real and semi-allegorical world in which the Magdalene's sin was as theatrically real as really theatrical. That is to say that theatrically one *felt* that she had been sinning, but one was aware that it was enacted, represented and as fictional as the medium itself. Any uneasiness about Marie's 'fall' was thus taken away for the audience, thereby controlling the spiritual consequences of the erotic charge which they felt: it remained at the level of stage business, and any complicity they might feel was managed through recognising the fundamental importance of faith. In a way, the play is asserting the value of play, and implying that its spiritually negative elements nevertheless exist in a context where faith in Christ is more important. At the same time, thanks to the risqué jokes performed by Iniquity, the audience

could still have been stimulated enough for the play not to dull down the *fictional* enjoyment of sin.

### 3.5 Positioning of Ritual Elements

I have already observed that the Digby *Mary Magdalen* created affect sometimes by allowing the spectators to identify with the protagonists in the straightforward way of the Morality play as one would identify with Mankind or Everyman, appropriating the character's experiences to their own lives outside the play world; at other times they were encouraged to identify with her in the way of an exemplum, that is by learning from her actions as they take place in the play world. At other times again, spectators were incited to recognize the historical or literary value of the Magdalen's character, pitying her situation, comparing themselves to her in a way that assumed moral superiority, or in a way that suggested the spectator's acknowledgment of their own failings. Sometimes, the spectators were included in the theatrics of the play, for example through the theatrical business of the ship's motion. The play also invited audience participation in a number of ritual elements.

These elements sometimes caused the enjoyable spectator-traps that one also finds in the traditional Morality play, and at other points seem to share more with the Croxton-like baptismal ritual. At other times the ritual had an exemplary function. For example, after Mary has been visited by the Good Angel in the harbour, she ventures out to wash Christ's feet and thus shows her contrition. What followed was a scene in which Mary knelt for Christ, crying, and drying his feet with her hair. A stage direction says: 'Her xal mary wasche þe fett of þe prophet with þe terres of hur yys, whypyng hem with hur here, and þan a-noynt hym with a precyus noyttment' (l. 640 sd). The ritual following it is Christ's declaring 'woman, in contrysson þou art expert' (l. 686) and on his words 'vade in pace' (l. 691) ordering seven devils to leave her body. The stage direction that follows says: 'with þis word vij dyllys xall de-woyde frome þe woman, and the Bad Angyll enter into hell with thondyr' (l. 691 sd). The close proximity of these two rituals is significant, as the one follows the other as a consequence of the contrition she has shown. The combination of these scenes showed the audience a cause and effect of Good Works (contrition and reward)

appropriate to the Catholic doctrinal message of the play. The audience was thus engaged in a way that made them reflect on their own lives and their own Salvation, which they could obtain, according to the play, through following Mary in her good works of showing contrition and doing penance.

Later in the play the spectators were offered the highly comic mock-ritual performed by the Presbyter and his Boy, ringing a bell in front of an altar. The Boy gives a service in mock-Latin (ll. 1186-1197), in which the features of Catholicism are attributed to a 'pagan' religion. The playwright uses a comic version of known ritual to make it clear to the audience that they were watching a form of ritual, but not the sort of ritual one could expect to see performed in a church. The Presbyter comically involves the audience in a prayer to 'sentt mahownde' (l. 1205), bidding all spectators to kneel and make their offering, to obtain pardon:

*Presbytyr:* Now, lordys and ladyys, lesse and more,  
Knele all don wyth good devocyon.  
Yonge and old, rych and pore,  
Do yower oferyng to Sentt Mahownde,  
And ye xall have grett pardon,  
þat longytt to þis holy place,  
And receive 3e xall my benesown,  
And stond in Mahowndys grace (ll. 1202-1209).

The episode is specifically designed to be a comical inversion of true ritual. The audience can enjoy it as similar to other such inversions which by implication re-assert the norm in carnivalesque fashion. The result was that spectators were not morally, but at least verbally implicated in the matter, temporarily being addressed as 'heathens' like the Rex and Regina. This situation would have been highly comical, and through the ritual action superficially identified the audience with the King and Queen's moral state. The spectators therefore also received Mary's sermon (ll. 1481-1525) along with them, and were baptised by Peter through the surrogate of the King:

*Peter:* In þe name of þe Trenite,  
Wyth þis water I baptyssse þe,

pat þou mayst strong be,  
 Aȝen þe fynd to stond.  
 [Tunc aspargit illum cum aqua] (ll. 1839-1842).

We have seen a similar strategy in the Croxton play, but the effects in both plays are different. The Croxton play confronts the spectator with the uneasiness of having to watch the Jews who viciously attack the Host in what seems to be a ritual environment. After all, they have just recited the Mass (although expressed through disbelief), and have covered a table with a cloth before beginning their 'testing' of the Sacrament. In the Digby *Mary Magdalen*, the Rex and Regina of Marseilles express their 'heathen' faith in a much more lighthearted and comic way, so that the baptism of the King and Queen following up on the Digby mock-ritual does not have the same emotional importance as the conversion of the Jews in the Croxton play. That is not to say that spectators of the Digby play did not experience affective piety as the spectators of the Croxton play would have. In fact, Lawrence Clopper has argued that the Digby *Mary Magdalen* 'exhibits some mendicant ideas and is representative of the affective piety promoted by the mendicants, especially among women'.<sup>97</sup> Here the affective piety would have been evoked through the final ritual element in the Digby play: the performance of the Eucharist on stage as Mary feels her end nearing. I have already observed that spectators were invited to identify with Mary as she partakes in the celebration of the Eucharist. In this scene, the Priest addresses the audience in a last speech concluding the play:

*Pryst*: Sufferens of þis processe, thus enddyt þe sentens,  
 that we have playyd in yower syth.  
 Allemyghty God, most of magnyfycens,  
 Mote bryng yow to hys blysse so bright,  
 In presens of þat Kyng!  
 Now, frendys, thus endyt thys matere-  
 To blysse bryng þo þat byn here!  
 Now, clerkys, wyth woycys cler,  
 'Te Deum laudamus' lett vs syng! (ll. 2131-2139).

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<sup>97</sup> Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game*, p. 247.



Not unlike in the Croxton play, a clergyman ends the play, blessing the audience, and inviting all to enjoy the singing of *Te Deum Laudamus*. It is important to note that, where in the Croxton play the Jews' baptism is directly followed by the clerical authority blessing the audience and urging all to partake in a procession to the church, in the Digby play there is a significant gap between the conversion and baptism of the 'heathenish' King and Queen, and the audience-including end, so that the two ritual elements feel separate. My suggestion (as argued in chapter two) is that spectators of the Croxton play were invited to feel affective piety when meditating on the wounds of Christ during the desecration of the Host, the 'heathenish' act of the Jews, and the play was compelled to end in a formal ritual that would have satisfied local church authorities. The Digby play however, does not allow the affective piety to take place during the Presbyter's mock ritual, nor during any of the scenes involving the King and Queen of Marseilles. Rather in this play affective piety is encouraged during the formal ritual of the celebration of the Eucharist at the end of the play. In the Digby play, the spectators' personal relationship with Christ through the contemplation of his wounds and suffering, is combined with the collaborative and ritual celebration of the Eucharist as managed by the play's Priest.

Wager's play contains two moments in which the spectators' engagement is different from that in the rest of the play, through moments that can be seen as ritualistic: Jesus expelling the seven sins from the Magdalen's body, and Marie washing Christ's feet. These moments may be seen either as a recuperation of the theatrical by its use for spiritually uplifting events, so that for once in the play the power of the medium and the spiritual power of God are in exact alignment. Alternatively, these moments can be seen as a deployment of ritual in order to show the inadequacy of the merely theatrical. This would be especially appropriate considering that in the rest of the play sin is being represented as theatrical. In the scene in which Mary repents and washes Christ's feet with her tears and hair, the stage direction expresses the reason *why* this scene is being included. It reads: 'Let Marie creepe vnder the table, abydyng there a certayne space behind, and doe as it is specified in the Gospell' (sig. H2v). One could take from these explanations that the ritual element in the play was only included because of the playwright's need to stay

true to Scripture. This corresponds to the lines in the Epigraph that, in defence of the use of drama, explain that the instructions given in the play are based on the writings of 'the Apostles of Christ', and that 'authoritie of Scripture for the same we will bring'. The Epigraph continues to highlight the scene in which Mary repents and calls herself a sinner:

*Epigraph:* Of the Gospell we shall rehearse a fruietfull story,  
Written in the vii of Luke with words playne  
The storie of a woman that was right sory  
For that she had spent her life in sinne vile and vain,  
By Christes preaching she was conuerted agayn,  
To be truly penitent by hir fruictes she declared,  
And to shew hir self a sinner she neuer spared (sig. A2v-A3r).

The Epigraph expresses a great emphasis on staying true to the Gospell, following the story in Luke 7, and following the authority of Mark and Luke as 'doctours of high learning':

*Epigraph:* Out of hir Christ reiected vii spirites vncleane,  
As Mark and Luke make open profession.  
Doctours of high learning, witte, and discretion,  
Of hir diuers and many sentences doe write,  
Whiche in this matter we intend now to recite (sig. A3r).

Thus the reason given for the inclusion of ritual elements is that they are authenticated by scripture. However, the desire to stay true to Scripture seems to be in conflict with the Calvinist notion that one is not justified by good works, or indeed damned by bad ones.<sup>98</sup> Protestant plays could not argue for the efficacy of good works as a cause of Salvation, and could thus not argue for Marie's washing Christ's feet as a 'good work'. It is significant that Wager has chosen to have Marie perform her humble action of washing Christ's feet with her hair *after* the moment of Realisation which is paramount to her Salvation. In other words, the action does not influence her obtaining Salvation, yet it allows Wager to stay close to the Scriptures in including the ritual act.

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<sup>98</sup> Patrick Collinson, *The Reformation* (London: Phoenix, 2005), p. 48.

Where in the Digby play the staged ritual has a spiritual impact on the spectators, the rituals in the Wager play merely allow the spectator to enjoy the theatricals of the scene as they are of no specifically doctrinal significance. Furthermore, where the Digby play was highly participative in the physical sense, allowing spectators to form part of processions and letting the dramatic action cross through the spectator's viewing space, Wager on the other hand directly engaged his spectators with theatrical substitutes for sin, such as innuendo, play, and dress. In these scenes, Wager's spectators would have been invited to enjoy the power of theatre, but only to be re-focused on the pleasures of theatrical representation rather than being made complicit in sin.

However, even though spectators did not necessarily feel *moral* complicity, they would have certainly enjoyed erotic risk and playful innuendo, so that they would still feel complicit in the staged actions in a different way. Perhaps, the spectators' complicity is best understood by considering that spectators were allowed to feel the power of the dramatic medium *because* it had been argued that Faith is the only thing that really matters. As for Wager the power of Salvation and damnation does not lie with humans but rather with penitence and faith in redemption, spectators were welcome to enjoy the risqué feeling of being erotically aroused, or laughing at playful sexual innuendo. After all, the message of the play is that Marie's playing the part of a sinner, or the audience's enjoying the part *does not mean* that Marie and the audience cannot be saved, in fact, as it is already predicted by the Epigraph:

*Epigraph:* Hir sinne did not hir conscience so greuously freate,  
But that Faith erected hir heart again to beleue,  
That God for Christs sake wold all hir sins forgeue (sig. A3r).

Furthermore, Marie's playful sin and the audience's enjoying through drama does not mean that theatre cannot serve God as it manifestly does here, as the Epigraph says in response to the plays' critics: 'Doth not our facultie learnedly extoll virtue? / Doth it not teache, God to be praised aboue al thing...' (sig. A2v). Thus, the Calvinist doctrine justifies the use of the dramatic medium to transfer the message of Faith and Grace to the people, as well as it justifies Marie's actions and the spectators' enjoyment of it.

### 3.6 Conclusion

The Digby *Mary Magdalen* and Wager's *Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene* seem to have more in common than the latter merely being a Protestant appropriation of the former. I have contrasted the two plays in order to explore how risk was managed in these plays that dealt with the same topics, and faced almost the same problems. In contrast to chapter two, it appears that the two Magdalen plays actually *did* manage spectator risk specific to the subject and the circumstances of the performances, rather than *seeming* to formally do so in the Croxton play. I have argued that both the Digby and the Wager play display an unease about representing the Magdalen on stage, because of her conflicted character of, in the Digby play, sinner, saint and female preacher; and in the Wager play: sinner and exemplary penitent. Secondly, I have argued that both Magdalen plays betray unease on the part of the playmakers about using the dramatic medium as a vehicle for moral messages as well as for sinful actions. The Digby play seeks to alleviate any anxiety about the use of the dramatic medium through the Magdalen's ambiguous character. In contrast, in Wager's play both the risqué protagonist *and* the dramatic medium are justified through the play's doctrinal message.

First, the Digby play. In this play Mary as a 'seductress' first seduces the spectators into theatrical enjoyment, but later in her role of 'preacher' employs an 'appeal to the emotions'<sup>99</sup> of the spectators, as Scoville has observed, to move the audience to 'virtuous living'.<sup>100</sup> Mary's role as preacher does not only redeem pre-penitential life in terms of dogma, but also in terms of drama. Her degrading theatrical enjoyment through her seduction of the audience, but then validating the medium through an 'appropriate' connection to the audience through the sermon, is dramatically speaking, not unlike Bale's degradation of Catholic faith through equating it to theatre, and then justifying the use of the medium through the Protestant message communicated through the medium at the end of the play, as we have seen in the above. Furthermore, the sermon may be a favourite form in Protestant drama as it creates a

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<sup>99</sup> Chester N. Scoville, *Saints and the Audience in Middle English Biblical Drama* (London and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 7.

<sup>100</sup> Scoville, *Saints and the Audience*, p. 7.

situation in which the audience become witnesses to 'truth'; however, this does not mean that Catholic drama could not successfully employ such dramatic devices as is proved by the Digby play.

The ambiguous role of the Magdalen can be seen as something that both creates and controls risk; it controls anxieties about the use of the dramatic medium, but yet it creates problems of its own. After all, the Magdalen's role puts spectators in a position where they did not always know how to appropriately respond to the character. In the Digby play this is managed through a range of affect, which at times makes the audience aware of the play's artificiality, and at other times compels them to identify with the Magdalen as one would in the traditional Morality plays, such as *Mankind* or *Everyman*. By contrast, it appears as if the Wager play welcomes the spectators' identification with the Magdalen as an exemplum at all times. The Digby play is more controlled in its affect, particularly in the scenes displaying the Magdalen as a 'sinner' or a 'preacher'. The former is represented through the allegorical siege scene, in which Mary's sins become representative of the sins of all present in the audience, diverting attention from the notion of her personal sins. Furthermore, the tavern and harbour scenes leave the audience to manage their own identification with the Magdalen, offering the option for spectators to merely recognise the Magdalen as defined by the literary genres employed in the scenes, or alternatively allowing spectators to decide for themselves if they want to be more involved in the enjoyment of the eroticism of the play. At the same time, the Digby play is highly participative, so that affect is also created by other things than the spectators' relation to the Magdalen. The scenes in which Mary preaches could have been shocking to those opposing the idea of a female preacher, so the play makes certain that in these scenes, Mary is sufficiently humble, and subordinate to all male characters surrounding her.

The Wager play more visually represents the state of degeneration in which the Magdalen finds herself than does the Digby play, despite Protestantism's assumed 'hostility towards image-centered representations of

sacred history'.<sup>101</sup> Wager's play is not participative in the ritual or physical sense implied by using a promenade audience as found in the Digby play, yet it is participative in a different way. Where in the Digby play spectators were allowed to participate in the sin through participating in drama, spectators of the Wager play were invited to participate in the theatrical representation of sin. That is to say that Wager's spectators could enjoy the erotic risks attached to the Magdalen in her pre-conversion state in a way that was self-consciously theatrical, for example through the use of innuendo and sexually loaded jokes. This was possible because Wager's doctrinal message was a great risk manager for both Marie's 'fall', and the representation of this in a theatrical way through the dramatic medium. For Wager, who did not believe that Salvation was in any way influenced by human action, but rather by Christ's grace and man's faith, Mary's degeneration represented in theatrical terms and the spectators' theatrical enjoyment of this was necessary to spread the message of faith and grace, as the Epigraph to the play predicts.

In conclusion, contrary to what has thus far been argued that playwrights writing Protestant moralities changed the meaning of the theatrical form by merely adopting a Catholic genre for their Protestant needs, this chapter has shown that Catholic and Protestant playwrights alike changed the theatrical form of their medium to strengthen its dogmatic impact, and with that, changed the medium's relation to the spectator. Each play did so in different ways. The Catholic play limits the space given to the sin. The Protestant play, on the other hand, encourages spectators to enjoy the play in terms of playful erotic risk, to the end of learning to appreciate the ambiguously moral and sinful business of playacting. However, both playwrights sought to limit the extent to which spectators experienced risk, and sought to control this through exposing the spectator to risqué rather than risky stages of 'sinfulness'. Despite their differences, these case studies show a continuity of the dramatic form in its management of spectator risk, which was not disrupted by changes in religious climate.

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<sup>101</sup> White, 'The Bible as Play in Reformation England', p. 87.



## 4. Representation of kingship in royal or aristocratic households: John Heywood's *Play of the Wether* and John Bale's *King Johan*

### 4.1 Introduction

The fundamentals of the workings of drama appear to be that risk is related to the context in which drama was performed. I have already observed that risk is not necessarily determined by religious history, but by circumstances of performance, time, and place; and playwrights knew that the risks they had to manage were determined in these ways. The current chapter shifts the attention from plays in which the dramatic medium itself is the central reason of risk because of the subject matter which it offers to treat, to plays in which the medium is used to control a different kind of risk. To do so, this chapter moves away from the civic, rural and devotional, into the context of the Tudor court of the 1530s. I will compare and contrast two plays that were performed in the great hall setting but under very different auspices, betraying different kinds of spectator risk management: John Bale's *King Johan* (1539), and John Heywood's *The Play of the Wether* (c. 1532-1533).<sup>1</sup> Heywood was a conservative Catholic in favour of religious moderation at a court that was moving towards a break from Rome,<sup>2</sup> and so his spectator management was influenced by his going against the political grain of his time. Heywood had to

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<sup>1</sup> John Bale, *King Johan*, in *The Complete Plays of John Bale*, vol. 1, ed. by Peter Happé (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985), pp. 29-99; John Heywood, *The Play of the Wether* (London: Rastell, 1533), Early English Books Online. Web Accessed 12 November 2012. I have also consulted the modern editions in Richard Axton and Peter Happé (eds), *The Plays of John Heywood* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 184-215. And in Greg Walker (ed.), *Medieval Drama: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 213-234.

<sup>2</sup> Greg Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 100. See also, Greg Walker, 'Folly', *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, ed. by Brian Cummings and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 321-341, p. 328.



work hard to offer counsel to spectators in high places, and to guide and to a certain extent protect the rest of his audiences. Bale's work on the other hand displays a different, and perhaps more complex kind of spectator management. Bale through his drama would, as John N. King observes, have had to 'encourage the monarch to satisfy expectations for an evangelical government to which the king had a lukewarm commitment if he supported it at all'.<sup>3</sup> In other words, Bale was in part commissioned, but partly also acted of his own volition to use his plays to press on the reform message, but in doing so, had to be careful not to antagonise King Henry by pressing beyond the level of reformation that he was willing to undertake. My reason for contrasting *King Johan* and *The Play of the Wether* is to show that spectating is a political act, which is understood to continue beyond the performance. This is apparent from the techniques and strategies used by playwrights in the court context, who were concerned with managing the performance *context* as much as the play itself. They had to decide what risks their plays could run during and after the play, and what risks they could expose spectators to. Secondly, through the use of the case studies, this chapter seeks to illustrate that managing spectators' experience does not always mean that the playmaker sought to minimize risk, as indeed sometimes playwrights wanted to involve spectators in a political act. I open this chapter with an account of two contrasting spectator responses to Bale's *King Johan*, which will be used as an example to set out this chapter's main claims.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 1539 Archbishop Cranmer wrote a letter to Thomas Cromwell in which he documented the report of an examination that had been carried out the day before. The report contains the recorded opinions of one Thomas Browne of Shalwtecliff in Kent, aged 50, and his eye-witness account of the expressed opinions of John Alforde, aged 18, and one Henry Totehill, a

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<sup>3</sup> John N. King, 'Henry VIII as David: The King's Image and Reformation Politics', *Henry VIII and His Afterlives: Literature, Politics, and Art*, ed. by Mark Rankin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 34-52, p. 41. See also the earlier version of this article: John N. King, 'Henry VIII as David: The King's Image and Reformation Politics', *Rethinking the Henrician Era: Essays on Early Tudor Texts and Contexts*, ed. by Peter C. Herman (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), pp. 78-92, p. 82.

shipman, who had both been present at Browne's house.<sup>4</sup> According to the reported statement, on Thursday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January John Alforde said that 'he saw an interlude concerning King John at my lord of Canterbury's at Christmas time', and said 'that it was a pity the bp. of Rome should reign any longer, for he would do with our King as he did with King John'.<sup>5</sup> Knowing Bale's play, one might well think that Alforde was the ideal spectator who took from the play exactly what the playwright was trying to get across to his audience. A complete opposite response was given by Totehill who, Browne claimed, had answered: 'it was pity and naughtily done to put down the Pope and St. Thomas; for the Pope was a good man and St. Thomas saved many such as this deponent was from hanging'.<sup>6</sup> According to the statement, the topic was revisited the next day, Friday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January, when Thomas Browne told Totehill:

that he had heard, at my lord of Canterbury's, one of the best matters that ever he saw touching King John; that he had heard priests and clerks say that King John 'did look like one that had run from burning of a house, but this deponent knew now that it was nothing true, for as far as he perceived, King John was as noble a prince as ever was in England, and therby we might perceive that he was the beginner of the putting down of the bishop of Rome, and therof we might all be glad'.<sup>7</sup>

Browne's statement is keen to emphasize that 'priests and clerks' present at the performance had taken a suspicious view of King Johan, but, as he hastens to say, he himself did not agree with these opinions. Indeed, he thought King Johan the noblest of princes: an opinion which must be based on Bale's performance, as King Johan did not have a positive reputation prior to this

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4 James Gairdner and R. H. Brodie (editors), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, Volume 14 Part 1: January-July 1539 (1894), pp. 22-29, n. 388, in *British History Online*. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=75839> [accessed 27 November 2012].

5 L.P. XIV: 1 (1894), n. 388.

6 L.P. XIV: 1 (1894), n. 388.

7 L.P. XIV: 1 (1894), n. 388.

play.<sup>8</sup> Totehill's alleged response to Browne's opinion was one in defence of the Pope: 'the bp. of Rome was made Pope by the clergy and consent of all the kings Christian'.<sup>9</sup> Cranmer's letter records the conclusion of the debate:

This deponent [Browne] bade him hold his peace, for this communication was naught. Totehill said he was sorry if he had said amiss, for he thought no harm to any man. This was in Alford's presence. Totehill was drunken.<sup>10</sup>

So far the record reduces the event to some simple elements: a young man of 18 speaks ill of the Pope after having seen a play by Bale. A shipman defends the Pope and St. Thomas's merits, but apologizes when criticised for his opinions, and is described in the record as drunk. Yet the very fact that this letter exists indicates that the shipman's excuse and apparently intoxicated state did not mean the end of the matter.

The record shows a number of things. Firstly, it marks the failure to predict risk on part of the spectator—Totehill—who did not consider the political sensitivity of the context in which he acted as a spectator. Secondly, it shows that the playwright, Bale, did not sufficiently protect his spectators through the dramatic medium to take a less politically charged stance towards the play's contents. Rather, he used the theatricality of the medium to strengthen his political point. Thirdly, the record indicates that spectators did not respond to the play unanimously, and that even though Bale did not spell out the risks in the play, some spectators nevertheless recognised the danger in Totehill's response. We know this because Alforde, the young man, informed the authorities of the words that passed between the three men in Browne's house, as Cranmer refers to Alforde as 'the principal accuser'<sup>11</sup> in the first page of his letter. Alforde clearly saw a serious threat in the shipman's words, and felt the

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Happé, *John Bale* (New York: Twayne, 1996), p. 92; David Scott Kastan, 'Holy Wurdes' and 'Slypper Wit': John Bale's King Johan and the Poetics of Propaganda', in *Rethinking the Henrician Era: Essays on Early Tudor Texts and Contexts*, ed. by Peter C. Herman (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), pp. 267-282, p. 273. See also, Carole Levin, 'A Good Prince: King John and Early Tudor Propaganda', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 11:4 (1980), pp. 23-32, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> L.P. XIV: 1 (1894), n. 388.

<sup>10</sup> L.P. XIV: 1 (1894), n. 388.

<sup>11</sup> L.P. XIV: 1 (1894), n. 387.

need to communicate this to Cranmer. Finally, the real political implications of the letter can be taken from Cranmer's direct interest in Totehill's 'naughty communications... concerning the bp. of Rome and Thos. Beckett'.<sup>12</sup> He writes that he

has taken upon himself Cromwell's office of punishing those who break the King's injunctions; for already he has committed two priests to Canterbury for permitting the bp. of Rome's name in their books.<sup>13</sup>

Cranmer saw Totehill's statement about the Pope as a political act against the King's orders: an act of treason. Cranmer relays in his letter what kinds of punishments had been given to priests who were caught with offences similar to Totehill's. He thus illustrates the serious consequences of such actions, but without making the distinction between a layman and a priest speaking in favour of the Pope. Moreover, Cranmer's letter does not obfuscate the fact that this act of treason was a drunken voice in a conversation between three laymen about an interlude that they saw performed at the Archbishop's house. It appears that the implied justification of the 'criminal act'—that their discussion was about theatre but unfortunately slipped over a fine line into politics and treason, helped by alcoholic consumption—did not sufficiently excuse its occurrence for the authorities.

Furthermore, Cranmer's letter is a good example of how watching a play could become a political act, especially *after* the audience members had gone home. Alforde's informing the authorities of the private discussion of the interlude in Browne's home, suggests that spectators knew that they did not only risk political consequences when they gave an 'inappropriate' response *whilst* at a performance, observed by their fellow-courtiers and spectators, but also *after* the performance. Moreover, Cranmer's letter is indicative of how John Bale's *King Johan* was so obvious and extreme in its methods of audience management that it forced spectators to decide for or against that which was expressed in the drama. After seeing the performance, one could either agree with Browne that King Johan was the best prince in Christendom that ever was,

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<sup>12</sup> L.P. XIV: 1 (1894), n. 387.

<sup>13</sup> L.P. XIV: 1 (1894), n. 387.

or one would find that the Pope had been harshly depicted, along with Totehill. As we have seen, the latter opinion would have been a dangerous one, but one that Bale's play had not prevented some spectators from holding.

No spectator responses to Heywood's *Play of the Wether* survive, so we do not know whether spectators successfully predicted the risks they were taking when attending a performance of the play, and taking on the act of spectatorship. It is likely, as this chapter will show, that the spectators did not need to predict potential risk, as, from what we can infer from the dramatic text, Heywood carefully managed and protected his audiences through the use of the dramatic medium. Part of the strength of Heywood's playmaking is the play's not demanding exactly what audience members should take from it, thus making it vague enough to be safely enjoyed, but interesting enough to capture its audiences. Heywood furthermore invited spectators to laugh at any hints at politics rather than take a political stance towards the play's contents. *The Play of the Wether* displays a capacity to be dynamic and to offer many different faces, thus inviting audience members to enjoy the play for its duration and to take something out of the play to ponder later, after leaving the play environment.

Heywood's strategy was very different from Bale's strategy as implied by the spectator accounts of *King Johan*. In this chapter I argue that Heywood managed his audience by sharpening their awareness of the theatricality of the medium of the court-within-the-court play, which would have reminded them of their context at all times. Furthermore, spectators were managed by figures of counsel, such as Mery Report, and by the representation of regality on stage. That is to say, by the physical representations of stage kings, as well as their attributed traits and virtues. Finally, spectators were managed by audience involvement through the use of ceremony within the play. In short, Heywood used the theatricality of his medium to manage spectator risk for his audiences, and I will argue that Bale, in contrast, used the theatricality of the medium in order to emphasise his political point, forcing the spectator to make a clear choice about its contents and run whatever risk followed from that.

This contrast should not be regarded as exemplary of Catholic and Protestant approaches. Indeed, religion under the Tudors changed with every monarch, and it can be argued even of the reign of Henry VIII that the religious change was not so much based on Henry's own doctrinal beliefs, but rather 'a response to the political realities at home and particularly abroad'.<sup>14</sup> When Heywood performed his *Play of the Wether*, Henry had been keen to enforce royal supremacy to divorce Katherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn; by the time Bale performed *King Johan* in 1538, Henry had issued the Act of Six Articles,<sup>15</sup> which is notably orthodox, whilst his political champions Cranmer and Cromwell were trying to push forward a more reformist agenda. I argue that dramatic risk cannot be simply mapped on to religious movements but can become a means of nuancing larger historical shifts because of how they sit in their immediate context.

## 4.2 Performance Auspices

*King Johan* was performed at Christmas time in 1538 at the house of Archbishop Cranmer,<sup>16</sup> and an earlier version of the play was already in existence in 1536.<sup>17</sup> Less certainty can be provided about the exact time and place of performance of *The Play of the Wether*, which was most likely performed in 1532 or 1533. Richard Axton and Happé's edition of Heywood's plays locates the play around Shrovetide 1533.<sup>18</sup> Walker times it just after that, at Easter 1533.<sup>19</sup> It has been suggested by Walker that household dramas were often presented to their spectators during religious high seasons such as Easter and Christmas. These were contexts in which 'spiritual renewal and

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<sup>14</sup> E. W. Ives, 'Henry VIII (1491–1547)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12955> [accessed 15 March 2013]. See also, Kastan, 'Holy Wurdes' and 'Slypper Wit', p. 269.

<sup>15</sup> John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 55.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Happé, 'Introduction', *The Complete Plays of John Bale*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985), p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Happé, 'Dramatic Images of Kingship in Heywood and Bale', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 39:2 (1999), pp. 239-253, p. 239.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Axton and Peter Happé, 'Introduction', *The Plays of John Heywood* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), p. xiv.

<sup>19</sup> Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny*, p. 105.

penitential self-examination' were appropriate themes for a drama of spiritual and moral instruction.<sup>20</sup> These were also the times during which lords and patrons would host banquets in their great halls, invite important guests, and enjoy a general atmosphere of revel and festivity. The consensus is that *The Play of the Wether* was performed in such a great hall or dining setting, potentially in one of the royal palaces.<sup>21</sup> Happé suggests that perhaps *The Play of the Wether* was performed at 'the house of some important person, one sympathetic to Heywood's aims, but yet likely to enjoy the mockery'.<sup>22</sup>

Interludes were performed on a small scale, by a small number of actors. *The Play of the Wether*, for example, counts 10 roles. It has been suggested that nine of these were performed by schoolboys, for example the Chapel Children,<sup>23</sup> which is why no doubling was required.<sup>24</sup> Bale on the other hand worked with professional players, which is why he did employ a doubling scheme, so as to cut down on expenses. It is likely that for the performance of *King Johan*, only five actors were needed,<sup>25</sup> who would have had to quickly change costumes in their off-stage time. Interludes were relatively short compared to the rural devotional dramas, and took about an hour to an hour and a half to perform.<sup>26</sup> Sometimes interludes were divided into parts to suit

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<sup>20</sup> Greg Walker, 'Politics and Place in Tudor Household Drama', *Theta* 4 (1998), pp. 213-242, p. 230.

<sup>21</sup> See for example Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics and the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 135; Peter Happé, 'Henry VIII in the Interludes', *Henry VIII and his Afterlives: Literature, Politics and Art*, ed. by Mark Rankin and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 15-33, p. 23. See also, Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker, 'Performance as Research: Staging John Heywood's *Play of the Weather* at Hampton Court Palace', *Medieval English Theatre* 27 (2007), pp. 86-104, p.87.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Happé, 'Rejoice ye in us with joy most joyfully': John Heywood's Plays and the Court', *Cahiers Elisabethains* 72 (2007), pp. 1-8, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> David Bevington, 'Is John Heywood's Play of the Weather Really About the Weather?' *Renaissance Drama* 7 (1964), pp. 11-19, p. 12. See also, Peter Happé, 'Deceptions: 'the Vice' of the Interludes and Iago', *Theta* 8 (2009), pp. 105-124.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Axton and Peter Happé, 'Introduction', *The Plays of John Heywood* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Happé, 'Introduction', *The Complete Plays of John Bale*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985), p. 22. Barry Adams suggests that six actors could cover the roles. Barry B. Adams, 'Doubling in Bale's King Johan', *Studies in Philology* 62: 2 (1965), pp. 111-120, pp. 118-119.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Axton (ed). 'Introduction', *Three Rastell Plays* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1979), p.2.

the serving of meals in the great hall setting.<sup>27</sup> This custom is illustrated in *Sir Thomas More* (c. 1580s), set in a great hall in the 1530s, in which More has a play performed in his household for the entertainment of important guests. When the actor playing Good Counsel rushes off to borrow a prop-beard, so that he is unable to enter the stage when his role starts, More decides to improvise the part, and when the player returns, More says:

*More:* Art thou come? Now if thou canst give Wit any better counsel than I have done, spare not. There I leave him to thy mercy. / But by this time I am sure our banquet's ready / My lord and ladies, we will taste that first / and then they shall begin the play again...<sup>28</sup>

Plays being interrupted by banquets or banquets by plays in the great halls, suggests that these plays were performed in a playing space that was not primarily designed for playing. Players had to claim the 'floor' for their actions, knowing that their play was only *one* aspect of an evening's entertainment. The audience's motivation for spectating thus differed between that and the devotional rural and civic plays that have been discussed in the previous two chapters, because audiences to these plays would have travelled, sometimes quite a distance, to see a performance. This means that in the great halls, spectators had to be invited to assume their role as audience members from amongst their other activities. For example, Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucre*s (c. 1495) opens with character 'A' playfully commenting on the food and wine that had been freely consumed at the great hall, suggesting that it should have made the audience members merry enough to enjoy watching a play and to dutifully form a responsive audience:

A: A, for Goddis will,  
What meane ye, syrs, to stond so still?  
Have not ye etyn and your fill

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<sup>27</sup> Graham Parry, 'Entertainments at Court', *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. by John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 195-211, p. 196.

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Munday and others, *Sir Thomas More*, ed. by Vittorio Gabrieli and Giorgio Melchiori (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), III.2.279-285.



And payd no thinge therefore?<sup>29</sup>

‘A’ reminds the audience of the hospitality of the patron and host at Lambeth Palace,<sup>30</sup> probably John Morton, then Archbishop of Canterbury, so as to evoke the spectators’ goodwill towards the performance. This reminder did not necessarily manage risk but rather encouraged the good manners of showing appreciation for Morton’s generosity:

A: I trowe your dishes be not bare,  
Not yet ye do the wyne spare  
Therefore be mery as ye fare (ll. 9-11).

Similarly, the actors performing *Twelfth Night* (1601) at the Inns of Court had to work with the performance space of a great hall, their spectators dining. By means of an opening to the play, Duke Orsino refers to food, music, love and playing, combining the factors already present in the great hall, and readying the audience for a type of nourishment of a different kind than that on the table:

Duke: If music be the food of Love, play on,  
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,  
The appetite may sicken, and so die.<sup>31</sup>

These tricks that expose the similarities between courtly custom and the play, ‘warmed’ the audience for the performance to come, psychologically moving the courtiers in the hall on from being diners to spectators. Furthermore, through references to courtly customs, a ‘court-within-a-court play’ signalled

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<sup>29</sup> Henry Medwall, *Fulgens and Lucres*, ed. by Peter Meredith, Leeds Studies in English (Leeds: Leeds School of English, 1981), ll. 1-4. The facsimile of the 1512 manuscript is incomplete but can be accessed at, Henry Medwall, *Here is co[n]teynerd a godely interlude of Fulgens Cenatoure of Rome. Lucres his doughter. Gayus flaminus. [and] Publi[us]. Corneli[us]. of the disputacyon of noblenes [And] is deuyded in two p[er]tyes, to be played at ii. tymes* (London: John Rastell, 1512), Early English Books Online [accessed 4 August 2013]. Facsimile of original in British Library.

<sup>30</sup> Clare Wright comments that A encourages ‘the guests to take full advantage of the lord’s hospitality’. Clare Wright, ‘Henry Medwall, Fulgens and Lucres’, *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 177-191, p. 179.

<sup>31</sup> William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night; or What You Will*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by David Bevington, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (London: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1980), pp. 396-425, l.i.3-5.

awareness of itself, and of its performance context. By appropriating this strategy at the beginning of plays, spectators were given a frame of reference which they could keep in mind for the more politically loaded aspects of the play, thus building up the risk-management from the very beginning.

A further reminder to the spectator of their immediate context and their role in the social space, was the conscious use of the spatial dimensions of the great hall and the performance space temporarily invading the social space. The physical dimensions of the great hall meant that there was a High End of the room, a dais with a high table, where the lord or patron (or even the king) would have sat, overlooking the room. Facing this was the Screen End of the room, from where openings would lead to the kitchens. Eleanor Rycroft has observed that the hierarchical use of Great Hall space meant that ‘the status of the audience would descend from the King’s table at the dais end to the more lowly members of the household at the Screen’s End’.<sup>32</sup> Courtiers would have sat on benches at tables, and retainers and servants would have stood. Interludes reminded spectators of their specific rank within the hierarchy, for example in the anonymous *The Interlude of Youth* (c. 1550), Youth pushes through standing, probably lower-ranking, spectators, saying: ‘aback, fellows, and give me room / or I shall make you to avoid soon’.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Mery Report in *The Play of the Wether* says: ‘Friends, a fellowship, let me go by ye! / Think ye I may stand thrusting among you there?’ (sig. A4r). In *Gentleness and Nobility* (1525), sometimes attributed to John Heywood, the character of the Knight refers to ‘the unlernyd people that stand therby (l. 744),<sup>34</sup> hereby indicating the spectators of low rank. Through references such as these, spectators were unlikely to forget their station in life and would understand that the play did not alter that station or its responsibilities.

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<sup>32</sup> Eleanor Rycroft, ‘The Audience’, *Staging the Henrician Court*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (2010). Web accessed 12 April 2013.  
<http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/research/audience.html>

<sup>33</sup> *The Interlude of Youth*, in *Two Tudor Interludes*, ed. by Ian Lancashire (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980). pp. 99-152, ll. 40-41.

<sup>34</sup> John Rastell, *Gentleness and Nobility*, in *Three Rastell Plays*, ed. by Richard Axton (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1979), pp. 97-124.

Furthermore, Jean-Paul Débax has observed that interludes played with distances in the performance space. Play-spectator interactivity, whether comic or through direct address happened at the higher social end of the performance space,<sup>35</sup> with the exception of the moments when the actors address the spectators as they come in for the first time. That is to say that, different spectators would have had a different proximity to these parts of play, determined by their social rank. Spectators were therefore already reminded of their social status purely by how close they found themselves to the entertaining 'interactive' moments with the audience.

Clare Wright remarks that aristocratic spectators would have occupied and used the Great Hall outside performance time, and had a position of authority in the space.<sup>36</sup> Servants were therefore expected to acknowledge the social superiority of their 'betters' by taking an attitude of deference when entering this space. Wright observes that interlude players at the Tudor great halls embodied a different position from pageant actors in civic auspices—who were equal to the citizens for whom they performed. Interlude players were seen as servants, and therefore had to negotiate 'taking control of the performance space and being aware that they were not equals within it'.<sup>37</sup> This was further complicated by the fact that interludes staged in the great hall context were not performed on a stage, and a spatial division between the spectator and the audience was also not otherwise indicated, as Olena Lilova has observed.<sup>38</sup> John Heywood's *A Play of Love* (c. 1520s-1530s) plays with the complicated business of a player entering a space belonging to his social superiors, a place that is not demarcated for his play, and perhaps needing to interrupt conversations or dinner. As the Lover-not-loved makes his entry into the midst

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<sup>35</sup> Jean-Paul Débax, 'Deux Fonctionnements Exemplaires du Vice: *Nature* et *Fulgens and Lucres*, de H. Medwall', *Tudor Theatre* 1 (1994), pp. 15-36, p. 19 ; Pamela M. King, 'John Heywood, *The Play of the Weather*', *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 207-223, p. 209.

<sup>36</sup> Clare Wright, 'Henry Medwall, *Fulgens and Lucres*', *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 177-191, p. 182.

<sup>37</sup> Wright, 'Henry Medwall, *Fulgens and Lucres*', p. 182.

<sup>38</sup> Olena Lilova, 'Tudor Domestic Theatre: In Search of Political Consent through Folly', *Theta* 10 (2011), pp. 23-34, p. 25.

of the hall, he expresses his anxiety that the spectators might find him rude for intruding like this:

*Lover-not-loved*: Lo syr, who so that loketh here for curtesy  
and seth me seme as one pretending none  
but as unthought upon thus soddenly  
approacheth the myddys amonge you euerychone  
and of you all seyth nought to any one  
may thynke me rewde percyuying of what sorte  
ye seme to be, and of what stately porte (sig. A2r).<sup>39</sup>

Sign-posting that he is aware of the social status of his audience, is *Lover-not-loved*'s way to humbly distinguish himself from them. Furthermore, he also indicates that he knows his audience and their social custom well and that he is thus in control of what he can or cannot show them. The theatricality of such direct address underlined, in the words of Suzanne R. Westfall, that 'the real focus for a performance at a noble household was not the play itself, but the courtiers watching the play'.<sup>40</sup> It reminded the spectators of their immediate environment, their fellow-spectators of the same social class, or indeed of a different social class, and of the possibility that the player might present them with further events that they might think inappropriate, and to which they were expected to give a gracious response, befitting their role as a courtier. *A Play of Love* is perhaps Heywood's least political play, unlikely to have caused offence or to have evoked political tension. However, it may be observed that Heywood in this play formulaically apologizes for rudely entering the aristocratic space. He uses the same strategy in *The Play of the Wether*, where he has Mery Report commenting on interruption of the social space and indirectly on the status-difference between himself and the spectator:

*Mery Report*: And for the fyrste part I wyll begyn,

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<sup>39</sup> John Heywood, *A play of loue a newe and a mery enterlude concerning pleasure and payne in loue* (London: Rastell, 1534), Early English Books Online [accessed 4 August 2013], sig. A2r. Digital facsimile of original in Pepys Library. An edition of this play is also available in J.A.B. Somerset (ed.), *Four Tudor Interludes* (London: Athlone Press, 1974), pp. 52-96.

<sup>40</sup> Suzanne R. Westfall, 'The Actors are Come Hither': Literary Analogues of Itinerant Player Troupe Procedures', *Theatre Survey* 30 (1989), pp. 59-68, p. 64.

In my behaviour at my commynge in  
Wherin I thynke I have lytell offendyd  
For sewer my curtesy coulde not be amendyd (sig. 3Av).

Another indication of the entering of space and the problem of class attached to it, can be found in Mery Report's entry through the audience and his addressing a torchbearer with the words: 'Brother holde up your torche a lytell hyer' (sig. 3Ar). Kent Rawlinson and Tom Betteridge have observed that light was a class-indicator, and that the upper end of the great hall was better lit than the lower end. They write that Mery 'is asking for better light but also implicitly claiming the right to torch-light', which had a high status.<sup>41</sup> This address could have been part of Mery's assuming importance, in line with his bursting in and asking the attention of the aristocratic spectators, and his wish to become Jupiter's messenger. It is likely that its primary function, however, was that by referring to the mechanics of the play, Heywood would have momentarily broken the absorption of the spectator in the world of the play, to the effect that spectators would this early in the play have been reminded of who they were, and what their social relation was towards Mery Report, something which would help them determine their stance towards the rest of the play.

The opening of the play aside, Heywood used three specific devices to remind spectators of their role as spectators and courtiers: social satire, direct address, and references to gender. Social satire in *The Play of the Wether* reflected on several different groups that comprised the audience and which would have rung true to them.<sup>42</sup> Mery Report sufficiently humbles the Ranger with his ambiguous role, and mockingly addresses the Gentlewoman's idleness and the Gentleman's self-proclaimed efforts of taking 'pain for the wealth of the common flock' after which surely he deserves a bit of hunting 'for ease of our paynes at tymes vacaunt' (sig. B1v), the irony of which may not have escaped especially some of the lower-ranked members of the audience. By

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<sup>41</sup> Kent Rawlinson and Tom Betteridge, 'The Great Hall at Hampton Court Palace', *Staging the Henrician Court*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (2010). Web accessed 12 April 2013.

[http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/research/the\\_great\\_hall.html](http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/research/the_great_hall.html)

<sup>42</sup> Bevington, 'Is John Heywood's *Play of the Weather* Really About the Weather?', p. 14.

making spectators consider the station to which they belonged in normal life, depicted in this play, they were encouraged to remind themselves once more of who they were, so that they were not tempted to respond to the play in a way that was unbecoming to their respective stations. This would have saved audience members from what would at best be seen as a spectatorial *faux-pas*, especially necessary in a dramatic context where the limited arena and exclusive audience ensured that all audience responses would be immediately recognised and evaluated by others.

More obviously, Heywood employed direct address to tell spectators how to respond to the drama staged in front of them. For example, Mery breaks through the play/stage divide when he invites the audience to sing along with him: 'come on, syrs, but now let us synge lustly' (sig. D1r). This is an example of Mery's indicating how much fun he is, and the kind of fun that such drama as this can bring, notifying the audience that this is one of the moments that they can safely enjoy. A similar reference to the play experience is made when the Boy towards the end of the play refers to the courtiers watching, and asserts that they 'shall sure have theyr bellyes full of all wethers' (sig. D3r), signalling that the play is coming to an end, and subtly begging the audience for a bit more patience. The Boy refers to the characters of the play in the courtly world outside the play, by repeating the hear-say that Jupiter, his 'godfather, god almyghty' has come from heaven 'this nyght to suppe here wyth my lorde' (sig. D3r). Moments such as these again reminded audiences of their direct surroundings, and provided an elegant way of reminding spectators of their responsibilities and loyalties as retainers having supper at their lord's hall. As with the torch, the audience's absorption in the world of the play is qualified by reference to its real-life context.

Another strategy that was employed to remind spectators of their respective identities and to break their absorption in the world of the play was the referencing of gender. This technique was also used as a diversion mechanism. For example, in *The Play of the Wether*, Mery describes the Gentleman as 'master horner' (sig. B1r), evoking sexual puns to divert attention away from the Gentleman's pompous claim to have a right to the king's ear 'accordynge to his late proclamacyon' (sig. B1r). In the follow-up of

this joke spectators are being made acutely aware of their position as members of segregated gender groups when Mery says that the character of the Gentleman 'would hunte a sow or twayne out of this sorte' (sig. B1r). The stage direction that follows says: 'here he points to the women' (sd 249). Rycroft has argued that in order not to be rude to an individual spectator or to a specific group of women, they would have been indicated as a gender, which could only have worked if male and female spectators were separated along gender lines.<sup>43</sup> In Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucres* gender specification is used to divert the politically charged element in the plot (Lucres chooses to marry the common man rather than the nobleman, because she finds him more noble at heart) into a piece of banter about the strange choices women in general make when it comes to marriage. In this case, Character A. addresses the women in the audience directly:

A: How say ye, gode women? Is it your gyse  
To chose all your husbandis that wyse?  
By my trought, than I marvaile (ll. 2332-2334).

Reminding spectators of their gender or more importantly, reminding male spectators to which gender they did *not* belong, Medwall created a playful male/female dichotomy to take away the tension from what could have been seen as an offensive twist of plot.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, in Heywood's *The Play of the Wether* the sexual jokes about the Gentlewoman's 'foresyde so wyde' (sig. C4r), and the suggestion made to Jupiter by Mery, 'and yf yt be your pleasure to mary, / speke quyckly, for she may not tary' (sig. C4r), act as a prelude to the politically charged 'leaky moon' passage, which is generally believed to refer to the Boleyn marriage ('even now he is makynge of a new moone', sig. C4r), and to Catherine of Aragon's miscarriages ('for olde moones be leake, they can holde no water', sig. C4r). It is likely that the leaky moon passage was

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<sup>43</sup> Eleanor Rycroft, 'Gender, Performance and the Court', *Staging the Henrician Court*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (2010). Web accessed 12 April 2013. [http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/research/gender\\_performance\\_and\\_the\\_court.html](http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/research/gender_performance_and_the_court.html)

<sup>44</sup> Cameron Louis argues however that Heywood's plays *are* offensive, not politically, but in that they communicate 'a menacing and degrading message to the women in the audience'. Cameron Louis, 'Male Competition and Misogyny in Two Interludes by John Heywood', *Journal of Gender Studies* 11:2 (2002), pp. 129-139, p. 130.

appreciated in the mind-set of the jokes about the Gentlewoman, so that it became a general joke about women, particularly those of noble stock, rather than a direct attack on the very two women involved in Henry's break from Rome. In short, a political statement thus became a joke about women, and a differentiation between old, 'leaky' women, and young woman who 'make a thing spryng' (sig. C4r), which would ultimately have reminded spectators of their gender and age, but mitigated the political implications of this section in the play.

Heywood, it becomes clear, used all the theatrical possibilities of his performance space to protect his spectators from behaving inappropriately or to avoid spectators focusing too much on the political elements of the play. Bale on the other hand also highlighted the theatricality of the medium with which he was working, but to a different end: to emphasise the political point that he wished to make. As the spectator responses to *King Johan* registered by Cranmer have shown, Bale's message was blunt and did not hold back politically; he did not manage spectator risk, but indeed he did *manage* his audience to the end of making them part of the political act of spectating his play. Bale's most explicit feature in managing the audience through the use of overt theatricality is that the 'evil' Catholic characters are theatrical beings that refer to entertainment, and describe their actions in terms of playing. For example in *King Johan*, Sedition claims to have come hither 'to be merye' (l. 47); he says 'I trow wyll playe soch a parte' (l. 97); he explains that he takes on many different forms in the estate of the clergy, and calls this playing a part (l. 194): 'sumtyme I can playe the whyght monke, symtyme the fryer / The purgatory prist and every mans wyffe desyer' (ll. 203-204). Later he says that he will 'chaunge my apparel unto a bysshoppe' (ll. 296-297). Dissimulation says that 'thowgh we playe the knavys we must shew a good pretence' (l. 688). Private Wealth says:

*Privat Welth*: I trow thow shalt se me now playe the praty man.  
Of me, Privat Welth, cam first Usurpyd Powre:  
Ye may perseyve yt in pagent here this howre (ll. 784-786).

Sedition suggests having 'sum mery songe' (l. 827). Usurped Power (the pope) claims: 'thow knowest I must have sum dalyaunce and playe' (l. 840) in a way



that suggests his being known for such frivolities. Furthermore, 'popish' acts and treason are referred to in terms of playmaking. King Johan refers to the clergy as 'dysgysyd shavelynge' (l. 429), criticises 'serymonyes and popetly playes' (l. 415), and 'Latyne mummers' (l. 426). Also, the mock-ceremony in which Usurped Power as the Pope, Private Wealth as Cardinal and Sedition as Stephen Langton curse King John is concluded with the Pope's wish for 'full authority' after which all reply: 'With the grace of God we shall *performe* yt, than' (l. 1052) [emphasis mine]. Along the same lines, the act of treason is something that is performed, as Treason says, 'myself hath played it, and therefore I knowe it the better' (l. 1813). In the last part of the play there are several references to Sedition having 'played the knave' (ll. 2463, 2476, 2504) for which he shall be executed at Tyburn, hanged and quartered, and his head displayed on London Bridge. If Bale considered Catholicism to be 'a religion of performance rather than belief'<sup>45</sup> then the connection between playing a part and being punished for it is a vital and uncompromising move in his argument. It also shows Bale's determination that drama as a medium should clearly distinguish between evil playfulness and moral seriousness.

In short, the theatricality of the medium was used by Heywood to warn his spectators not to get too involved in the world of the play, and to stay at the surface level of the play. It urged spectators to remember who they were, what their function was in the social space before it became a performance space, and what it would be again after the play was finished. It signalled that the play was a temporary action, not to be taken for reality, and allowed the underlying thoughts that the play evoked to be safely taken into the real world outside the play, after the performance. In other words, through this strategy, Heywood managed both the risks spectators would have faced in the great hall, and reminded them of the risks to come after the performance. Bale's technique was different, in that he employed the theatricality of the medium to question actions and beliefs, and to uncompromisingly steer the spectators' opinion in the direction that he, or rather his patrons, favoured. By so clearly vilifying Catholicism through the references to theatricality, Bale was sailing close to the wind in trying Henry's tolerance towards the reformist agenda.

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<sup>45</sup> Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, p. 191.

Therefore, Bale needed to include in his play further management devices that indicated loyalty to the monarch, which as this thesis shows, included the strategies of using the ‘figure of counsel’, and of the controlled representation of kingship in the play. Heywood’s focus on theatricality and the artificiality of the medium as described in this section, formed a sufficiently evasive basis for the play, but Bale may have felt that he needed more risk-managing factors to be certain that his play did not offend. The next section will study the ‘figure of counsel’ as a risk management device.

### 4.3 Figures of Counsel

Drama staged in the context of the court differed from celebratory civic or rural devotional drama in terms of performative space and motif, but it was no less didactic. The Tudor court of the 1530s was a world of ceremony in which monarchs used stately spectacles such as royal entries and coronations to perform *themselves* as rulers and to construct an image of heritage, privilege and power.<sup>46</sup> This was a world in which entertainers never just entertained, but aimed to counsel, persuade, influence, and play the role of good servants; be it through masques, dances, plays, or other revels. In these forms of art the sovereign was mimetically represented. All these different simulacra contributed to a construction of royal power, in which subjects participated.<sup>47</sup> It has been noted that the royal image was used to try to give authority to political schemes at both extreme ends of the political spectrum.<sup>48</sup> Greg Walker

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<sup>46</sup> For a recent study of the drama of coronations and other stately spectacles, see Alice Hunt, *The Drama of Coronation: Medieval Ceremony in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>47</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. xxiv. Sharpe’s study moves away from the more traditional (pre-1990s) reading of royal spectacles and court plays as strong and active monarchy-steered propaganda, such as in studies by Sydney Anglo and Roy Strong—although Anglo’s study of a later date already nuanced this idea—to a reading that acknowledges that the Henrician image was partly constructed by the king’s counsellors, courtiers and servants. See, Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals 1450-1650* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1984); Sydney Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship* (London: Seaby, 1992).

<sup>48</sup> W.R. Streitberger, ‘The Royal Image and the Politics of Entertainment’, *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 39 (2000), pp. 1-16, p. 2.

has observed that 'rival counsellors' attempted to persuade the king to adopt their own visions of the monarchy as his own 'public persona'.<sup>49</sup>

Playmaking in the specific context of the Henrician court has in recent critical history been described as 'politics', a topic which has been explored in numerous studies. Most notable are Walker's *Plays of Persuasion*,<sup>50</sup> his more recent *Writing Under Tyranny*,<sup>51</sup> and Paul Whitfield White's *Theatre and Reformation*.<sup>52</sup> Other important studies are Peter Happé's 'Dramatic Images of Kingship in Heywood and Bale', and his 'Henry VIII in the Interludes'.<sup>53</sup> The current chapter has been significantly informed by these studies, but especially by Walker's 'Early Tudor Drama and the Arts of Resistance', in which he reminds the reader that the creation of the image of royal power through drama was a 'discursive' activity. He writes,

court drama was not always a strictly controlled tool of royal image-making, but ... like the court itself, might (at times at least) offer an arena for the discursive exercise of a range of ideas, not all of which were officially endorsed or approved of, which might be aired in the spirit of good counsel, with the licence that this concept allowed the loyal subject to air controversial issues before the king.<sup>54</sup>

With the ideal of 'good counsel'<sup>55</sup> Walker refers to the notion that playwrights and scholars were at liberty to offer advice to lords and patrons, as long as this was done in a dignified way; as well as to the desire in lords and patrons to be

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<sup>49</sup> Greg Walker, 'Early Tudor Drama and the Arts of Resistance', *Theta* 9 (2010), pp. 69-94, p. 88.

<sup>50</sup> Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics and the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>51</sup> Greg Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>52</sup> Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). See also, Bevington, 'Is Heywood's *Play of the Weather* really about the weather?', pp. 11-19; Kastan, 'Holy Wurdes' and 'Slypper Wit', pp. 267-282.

<sup>53</sup> Happé, 'Dramatic Images of Kingship in Heywood and Bale', p. 251; Happé, 'Henry VIII in the Interludes', pp. 15-33.

<sup>54</sup> Walker, 'Early Tudor Drama and the Arts of Resistance', p. 81-82.

<sup>55</sup> Greg Walker, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 66; Walker, 'Early Tudor Drama and the Arts of Resistance', p. 73.

*seen* to seek advice from counsellors, so as to appear a tolerant and magnanimous ruler.<sup>56</sup> Walker has observed that Henry VIII may have encouraged good counsel ‘in order ... to advertise his virtue in general terms,’ and ‘to serve specific political ends’.<sup>57</sup> This creates an atmosphere in which political debate was possible, and as Streitberger has pointed out: ‘[Henry] did not like to be told how to rule a realm, nor did he appreciate having gentlemen or husbands like himself criticised’.<sup>58</sup> The latter can be illustrated by Lord Suffolk’s letter to Cromwell on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 1537, in which he describes that he had been informed ‘of a May game played last May day “which play was of a king how he should rule his realm”’.<sup>59</sup> According to Suffolk’s informant, one actor who played ‘Husbandry,’ had ‘said many things against gentlemen more than was in the book of the play’.<sup>60</sup> It is likely that this actor went into hiding after the performance, as Suffolk notes that he ‘has been sent for, but cannot yet be found’.<sup>61</sup> The letter illustrates that it was not deemed acceptable to write or act in a play that presumed to tell the king how to rule. Even, or perhaps *especially*, in an atmosphere of ‘good counsel’ playwrights had to be careful not to cross an invisible line.

In the context of the court, some of the plays’ spectators would be those in power, such as the King and the royal family, the chief minister, and Archbishop, and other counsellors and advisors; but a higher percentage of the audience would have comprised ambassadors, courtiers, retainers, those hoping for favour, people seeking their own gain, and afraid for their own positions. In such an environment it was impossible to do anything unnoticed, including spectating. Keeping this in mind, this section will show how Heywood used Mery Report, his figure of counsel in *The Play of the Wether*, to manage spectator risk at politically-charged performances. Mery directs the courtiers with a firm hand, so as to prevent them from becoming too politically involved.

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<sup>56</sup> Walker, *The Politics of Performance*, p. 66.

<sup>57</sup> Walker, *The Politics of Performance*, p. 67.

<sup>58</sup> W.R. Streitberger, ‘The Royal Image and the Politics of Entertainment’, p. 12.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Henry VIII: May 1537, 16-20’, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, Volume 12 Part 1: January-May 1537 (1890), pp. 557-574, n. 1212, in *British History Online*. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=103377> [accessed 8 April 2013].

<sup>60</sup> L.P. XII: 1 (1890), n. 1212.

<sup>61</sup> L.P. XII: 1 (1890), n. 1212.

Furthermore, the play-text allows for the possibility that the king was present, so that Heywood through Mery goes out of his way to show his reverence towards the monarch, and to emphasise his inability to offer counsel to his sovereign. In a contrary move, Bale employed a variety of figures of counsel, their number adding authority and weight to the political points made, thus emphasizing rather than denying the importance of political counsel in the play. None of Bale's figures of counsel seem to have been designed to protect the 'general' spectator from becoming involved in the play's politics. They do however seek to protect the playwright from the king's disapproval of the play's strong message of reform, through complimenting the monarch extensively, and through the negative advice offered by Treason—who exhibits Catholic values— perhaps in order to demonstrate that no treason was meant by the play.

I will start with Heywood's Mery Report. One must allow for the possibility that Heywood himself performed the role of Mery.<sup>62</sup> Pamela King has recently observed that despite it being unfashionable to 'to associate biographical information about authors with the construction of meaning in their works,' Mery Report appears to bear a resemblance to Heywood.<sup>63</sup> It is likely that Henry favoured Heywood, and appreciated his artistic qualities. Perhaps this is why when Heywood found himself arrested and indicted for Treason in 1543, for refusing to accept the king's position as Supreme Head of the Church of England,<sup>64</sup> he was given the opportunity to formally and publically recant his previous doubts at Paul's Cross at the time of the sermon on Sunday the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1544,<sup>65</sup> rather than face execution, which was the fate of Bishop John Fisher and Sir Thomas More who also denied the Royal Supremacy. Heywood's continuing to entertain the court with his plays under three subsequent

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<sup>62</sup> Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny*, p. 107.

<sup>63</sup> Pamela King, 'John Heywood, The Play of the Weather', *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 207-223, p. 216.

<sup>64</sup> James Gairdner and R.H. Brodie (eds), 'Henry VIII: July 1544, 6-10', *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, vol. 19: 1: January-July 1544 (1903), pp. 531-552, n. 853, in *British History Online*. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=80321&strquery=Heywood> [accessed 29 October 2012].

<sup>65</sup> L.P. XIX: 1 (1903), n. 853.

monarchs with different religious opinions,<sup>66</sup> reflects his ability to function as a perfect courtier and a master in surviving the dangers of court life, betraying a survival strategy as evasive as Mery Report's. By temporarily 'becoming' Mery Report in the performance space within the courtly space, Heywood embodied a character of licensed folly, and made bawdy jokes for the best part of the play for which he would have been loved by his spectators. His 'merry' wit may have caused him to come across as a lecherous, perhaps even vulgar man within the context of the court, but it diverted attention away from his play being seen as 'malicious' or treasonous. This diverting 'wit' was combined with the play's evasive strategy through which Heywood offered a play in which he advises the king to rule in moderation without seeming to counsel.

Mery's character is referred to as the play's 'Vice'<sup>67</sup> on the first page of the printed play text (A1r). It must be observed, however, that Mery is not a 'regular' Vice, but rather a character resembling this traditional dramatic figure, and bearing similar theatrical features. Happé reminds us that,

It is noticeable that performance and theatricality are never far from our perception of him [Mery Report]. He may be a character in the play but we are being drawn to perceive his function in the play as much as his character.<sup>68</sup>

Indeed, the character of Mery Report is as much a reminder of the theatricality of the play as of the courtly context surrounding the play, as the devices discussed in the previous section (direct address, use of space, and reference to class and gender). The reason for this is that Mery, as the god-king's self-proclaimed usher, is the worst possible courtier, whose behaviour evokes laughter, but in doing so also invites the spectator's recognition that a courtier should not behave in this way. The strategy behind this appears to be, as

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<sup>66</sup> Walker, *The Politics of Performance*, p. 78.

<sup>67</sup> J.L. Styan, *The English Stage: a History of Drama and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 79; Maura Giles-Watson, 'The Singing Vice': Music and Mischief in Early English Drama', *Early Theatre* 12:2 (2009), pp. 57-90; Walker, 'Early Tudor Drama and the Arts of Resistance', *Theta* 9 (2010), pp. 69-94, p. 89.

<sup>68</sup> Peter Happé, 'John Heywood and 'The Vice'', *Research Opportunities in Medieval and Renaissance Drama* 49 (2010), pp. 60-79, p. 67.

Walker observes, that Heywood used the 'Mennipian mode', a satirical mode which Chaucer also employed, and which enabled playmakers to express critical observations without ever expressing them directly in words, but rather causing them to form meaning in the minds of the beholder.<sup>69</sup> Criticisms and advice on how to function at court are never overtly given, but suggested and implied, and often the spectator is led to a certain thought or emotion through the actions in the play.

Furthermore, the play is evasive, in that it seemingly refuses to give counsel, even though in effect the play as a whole *does* mean to influence its spectators, and would have done so. Central to the play's claim that it does not counsel, is the trouble it takes to indicate that Mery Report is a less-than-perfect messenger. First of all, he fails to tell Jupiter straightforwardly who he is ('what I? Some saye I am I perse I / but what maner I, so ever be I / I assure your good lordshyp I am I', sig. A3r). Secondly, Mery announces that no wisdom can be expected of him ('yet can ye se no wysdome in me', sig. A3v). Thirdly, Mery appears to sauce serious topics with merriness, favouring the means of delivery over its content. Yet, his redeeming factor seems to be that he always speaks the truth:

*Mery Report:* And for my name, reportyng alwaye trewly  
What hurte to reporte a sad mater merely? (sig. A3v).

Another element of Mery's character working in his favour is his complete and blind obedience to the god-king:

*Mery Report:* And for your purpose a this tyme ment  
For all wethers I am so indyfferent  
Wythout affeccyon standynge so up ryght  
Son lyght, mone lyght, ster lyght, twy lyght, torch light,  
Cold, hete, moyst, drye, hayle, rayne, frost, snow, lightnyng, thunder  
cloudy, mysty, wyndy, fayre, fowle, above hed or under,  
temperate or dystemperate – what ever yt be  
I promyse your lordshyp all is one to me (sig. A4r).

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<sup>69</sup> Walker, 'Folly', p. 340.

A loyal servant to his king, Mery has no political opinion of his own.<sup>70</sup> This virtue is, however, ambiguous, as the 'indifference' that Mery claims to possess could also be seen as a sign of bad service. After all, a good servant would do whatever pleased the king, without pointing out that he did so because he was indifferent to it. Also, a good counsellor sometimes does things that do *not* please the king, in order to serve the king's best interests. Perhaps this is the point exactly, that Mery never professes to be a good counsellor; indeed he goes out of his way to show that he is a bad counsellor, and his signalling his incompetence as a would-be counsellor is manifested throughout the play. For example, he displays a tendency to lose sight of the bigger schemes of things and focuses on trivialities. This can be illustrated by the scene in which Jupiter has appointed Mery to take the position of messenger to tell all people that they can petition the king about the unfavourable weathers, Mery fails to see the main point: that the king is generous to his subjects and wishes to hear their opinions; instead, Mery gets bogged down with the idea of the weather, something which he sees as futile:

*Mery Report:* And syns your entent is but for the wethers  
what skyls our apparell to be fryse or fethers (sig. A3v).

Mery's expression of the futility of the topic and his suggestion that there is no need for frills (he talks of costume but this could be read more generally) imply that there is no serious point behind the play. However, Mery's remark should be read as a remark made by someone who completely missed the point of the subject, so that in terms of managing the audience's exposure to dangerous ideas, Mery's pointedly saying that there is nothing to hide and that there are no risks to be taken, would have had the effect of guiding the spectators to caution, and to later deciding how to interpret issues discussed in the play.

When all petitioners have spoken, Mery summarises the claims that have been made, but he refrains from offering counsel, claiming not to be clever enough to discern the solutions to the weather-problems. He warns Jupiter that

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<sup>70</sup> Pamela King, 'John Heywood, The Play of the Weather', *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 207-223, p. 214.



he is not capable of forming judgement, and that it would be a mistake to trust him:

*Mery:* If ye trust to me, yt is a great folly,  
For yt passeth my braynes, by Goddes body! (sig. D4r).

Pretending not to be able to give the king counsel on what to do because it surpasses his brains is a shrewd bit of management where Mery pointedly takes a position of observation but not of judgement, suggesting that Jupiter was in charge all along. Jupiter appears to have had a clear vision of the solution even as the petitioners were making their complaints:

*Jupiter:* But be thou suer we need no ... thy counsel  
for in our selfe we have foresene remedy  
whyche thou shalt se (sig. D4v).

Jupiter speaks as if in control, announcing to both Mery and the audience that he has decided how to solve the problem posed by the petitioners' disparate requests. The image offered by the play is that Jupiter appreciates his servant having gone through the effort of trying to offer counsel, knowing that Mery could never offer a remedy but meant well in trying to do so. Jupiter is portrayed as a monarch, who indulgently listens to counsel even though he already knows better, and Mery as a servant offering counsel to his sovereign whilst knowing that he is in no position, and lacks the capacity, to give it properly. Heywood thus appears to have written a controlled play in which his alter ego is ineffectual, something that is in itself a controlled thing to do because it carefully places one into the situation that one desires to be seen to be in by one's spectators.

The lack of effectiveness that Mery alleges himself to have in terms of political counsel, can be contrasted to the clear power he demonstrates in theatrical terms. Mery evidently functioned as the play's master of ceremonies, a character who controls the acting space and its relation to the characters and the audience.<sup>71</sup> As the messenger to the god-king, Mery controls which

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<sup>71</sup> Lilova, 'Tudor Domestic Theatre', p. 29.

characters obtain access to Jupiter. The dynamics of the play dictate that those characters that get 'an audience' with Jupiter are not given the opportunity to directly address the audience of the play. In terms of the use of performance space, this makes sense, as most direct address would have been directed towards the high end of the hall, whereas Jupiter's throne would have been positioned at the screens end of the hall. A player could logically not be in two places at the same time, unless they moved through the hall while they spoke. Mery Report pointedly manages this movement: when he invites the Gentleman to speak to Jupiter, the latter tries to greet the audience with a 'Stande ye mery, my frendes everychone!' (sig. B1r), Mery responds: 'Say that to me and let the reste alone' (sig. B1r). Mery makes it very clear that the Gentleman has no business with the audience. By contrast, the Watermiller and the Windmiller are not to be given access to Jupiter, and Mery himself does not even stay on stage to hear the debate between the two 'brothers'. Even though there is the suggestion of Jupiter being present at a distance, as Mery says about the god-king—'No doubt he is here even in yonder trone' (sig. C1r)—it appears that the principal audience to the debate is the audience to the play, and pointedly no stage character:

*Water Myller:* Wherefore I thynke good before this audyens  
eche for our selfe to say or we go hens.  
and whom is thought weykest when we have fynysht,  
leve of his sewt and content to be banyshyt (sig. C1r).

The spatial implication is that the millers find themselves at the high end of the great hall, addressing the most prominent spectators. It is possible that by positioning Jupiter across from these prominent spectators, and by having Mery manage who is worthy of seeing the god-king, an ambiguous atmosphere is created in which it is not entirely clear what statement is made about the 'worthiness' of the characters. After all, when Mery retires at the screen end of the hall because he has no interest in the debate between the millers, the fact is that this lengthy episode is deemed good enough by the playwright to have been performed at the high end of the room, in front of the notable spectators, and perhaps even the sovereign. Similarly, the character of the Gentlewoman hesitates to enter the performance space when so many spectators are present, and she suggests that the audience is obscuring her path to Jupiter:

*Gentylwoman*: Now good god, what a folly is this!  
What sholde I do where so mych people is?  
I know not how to passe into the God now (sig. C3v).

The words imply that the Gentlewoman wants to move towards the screen end of the hall, but that this is being made impossible by the spectators blocking her way. She seems to have no desire to address the spectators at the high end of the hall, even though the station she represents would be more at home at the high end than at the low end of the hall. Mery manipulates the Gentlewoman to keep her away from the screen end of the hall in a roundabout sort of way: he first directs Jupiter into believing that the Gentlewoman has come with a mind to marriage, which is, as Jupiter points out, 'not the thyng at this time ment' (sig. C4r), so that he entrusts Mery to hear her and to draw up a report to Jupiter. It is quite clear that Mery does this in order to have some time to 'chat a whyle to-gyther' (sig. C4r) with the Gentlewoman.

*Mery*: [to the audience] I count women lost, yf we love them not well  
for ye see god loveth them never a dele.  
Maystres, ye can not speke wyth the god (sig. C4r).

This piece of stage-management shows Mery in his two roles at the same time: he is both the unreliable manager of the god-king's affairs who uses his position to give or refuse access to the king to his own advantage. At the same time, he is the master of ceremonies who organises the other characters in such a way that it allows the audience to enjoy them better.

In this evasive play, Mery is the champion of denial, and perhaps even more importantly: of ambiguity. As Mery says farewell to the Merchant, he comments that the Merchant is putting more trust in him than he should:

*Mery Report*: I pray you marke the fasshyon of thys honeste manne:  
He putteth me in more truste at thys metynge here  
Then he shall fynde cause why thys twenty yere (sig. B3r).

Here marking his untrustworthiness, Mery at other times represents himself as downright arrogant, assuming importance through his association (albeit in the form of a servant) with the king:

*Mery Report*: Now syrs, take hede for here cometh goddess servaunt.  
 vaunte, carterly keytyfs, avaunt!  
 Why, ye drunken horesons, wyll yt not be?  
 By your faith, have ye nother cap nor kne?  
 Not one of you that wyll make curtsy  
 To me that am squyre for goddess precyous body (sig. A4v).

However, the audience is also offered the opportunity to warm towards the messenger, when after the Boy has asked him ‘Syr, I pray you, be not you master god?’ (sig. D2v), he replies that he is not, but invites the boy to ‘tell me thy mynde and I shall shew yt sone’ (sig. D3r), taking his request as seriously, or perhaps more so, than those made by the other petitioners. Mery’s different faces are befitting of a play that does not tell spectators what to take from it. The changeful nature of the play makes it possible that spectators would have laughed at Mery Report’s antics, and perhaps only after the performance would have further thought about the political agenda behind the play.

Where Heywood hid his agenda behind the humorous antics of the play’s semi-Vice which he performed himself, it is not certain whether the Vice in Bale’s *King Johan*, Sediton, was performed by the playwright. As a general ‘rule’, vices were mostly performed by the principal actor in the playing group, and James Simpson has observed Bale’s tendency to keep the best roles to himself.<sup>72</sup> Happé suggests that Bale in *The Three Laws* (1538) played both the Baleus Prolocutor and the Vice, Infidelity, and it is possible that Sediton could also have been part of a double role performance.<sup>73</sup> If Bale had played both roles,<sup>74</sup> he would have presented the audience with a comic role that provided comedy, music, and ‘verbal games’,<sup>75</sup> as well as the authoritative and scholarly

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<sup>72</sup> James Simpson, ‘John Bale, Three Laws’, *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 109-122, p. 112.

<sup>73</sup> Happé, ‘Deceptions: ‘The Vice’ of the Interludes and Iago’, p. 108. Peter Happé, ‘Sediton in *King Johan*: Bale’s Development of a Vice’. *Medieval English Theatre* 3:1 (1981), pp. 3-6.

<sup>74</sup> Dermot Cavanagh (2003) argues the likelihood that Bale performed the role of the Interpretour. Dermot Cavanagh, *Language and Politics in the Sixteenth-century History Play* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 16.

<sup>75</sup> Peter Happé, *John Bale*, p. 100.

Interpreter who directed the audience in their dramatic experience.<sup>76</sup>

Interestingly, where Heywood hid behind the pretext of making fun, using the Vice (that was not quite a Vice) as a figure that could easily be excused for folly, Bale's *Sedition* brings amusement, but, in contrast to the naughty but not malicious *Mery Report*, *Sedition* is actually primarily the play's steering force of evil, whereas *Wether*'s 'evil' is caused by 'Saturne, and Phebus, Eolus and Phebe' (sig. A2r) and has already been solved as 'they have in conclusion holly surrendryd' (sig. A3r) their powers into Jupiter's hands, so that this friction is not present in the play itself. It thus appears that the pretext under which the Vice functions in both plays is already different. Furthermore, Bale's embodying two characters would have invited less of a comparison between the playwright and the character than Heywood performing *Mery Report* would have. A further difference is that in Bale's play, counsel is overtly offered, and is made authoritative by having the counsel spread over different characters: the Interpreter, Verity, and, offering counsel through the negative, Treason.

The Interpreter seems to foreshadow the coming of Verity, when he declares that the first act has been 'as in a myrror' (l. 1087) showing how King John was appointed by God—'was of God a magistrate appoynted' (l. 1088). If Bale had played the Interpreter, he would have taken a humble role, leaving it to another actor to play Verity, the Protestant ideal of the word or the truth. The structure in which a flesh-and-blood character foreshadows an allegorical ideal is part of the symmetry of the play in which the historical King Johan foreshadows the allegorical ideal of Imperial Majesty. Since the main message of the play seems to represent an ideal king defending and spreading the protestant faith, the Interpreter is an important figure in terms of counsel: he describes King John in biblical terms, connecting the invented persona of this historical character ascribing the allegorical ideal of kingship to the Old Testament, which was thought to foreshadow the New Testament.

*Interpretour*: thys noble kynge Johan as a faythfull Moyses

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<sup>76</sup> It has been observed by Happé that in the four plays by Bale that include Prolocutors, this figure is 'directly concerned with doctrinal matters, and Bale's attempt to use these plays to spread developing doctrines'. Peter Happé, 'Metatheatre in the English Mystery Cycles: Expositor, Contemplatio, Prolocutor, and Others', *Theta* 7 (2007), pp. 89-108, p. 104.

Withstode proude Pharao for hys poore Israel,  
 Myndynge to brynge it out of the lande of darkenesse.  
 But the Egyptyanes ded agaynst hym so rebell  
 That hys poore people ded styll in the desart dwell,  
 Tyll that duke Josue whych was our late kynge Henrye  
 Clerely brought us in to the lande of mylke and honye.  
 As a stronge David at the voice of verytie  
 Great Golye, the Pope, he strake downe with hys slynge  
 Restorynge agayne to a Christen lybertie  
 Hys lande and people lyke a most vycoryouse kynge  
 To hir first bewtye intendynge the churche to brynge  
 from ceremonyes dead to the lyvyng wurde of the Lorde,  
 Thys the seconde acte wyll plenteously recorde (ll. 1107-1120).

The imagery of King Johan as a Moses figure and Henry as a ‘David’ slaying the Pope, were not Bale’s own inventions. John N. King has shown that images in the Coverdale Bible and the Great Bible portrayed Henry VIII as a David figure, claiming the throne by divine right, and that through the references to Moses’ Law prefiguring Christ’s Law, ‘an ideal of evangelical kingship’ was portrayed, and the king’s authority underlined.<sup>77</sup> King writes:

The iconography of the Coverdale Bible and the Great Bible typified the transformation of Henrician style during the 1530s. Members of court who had reformist sympathies could now appropriate pre-existing regal iconography by flattering the king as a new Moses for delivering the English people or as a new David for establishing order over a unified church and state. Henry’s apologists and those who sought royal patronage created courtly works of art and literature that contained flattering portrayals of the king that imitated his published images’.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> John N. King, ‘Henry VIII as David: The King’s Image and Reformation Politics’, *Rethinking the Henrician Era: Essays on Early Tudor Texts and Contexts*, ed. by Peter C. Herman (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), pp. 78-92, p. 79.

<sup>78</sup> King, ‘Henry VIII as David’, p. 82.

Bale in his role of the Interpreter builds on existing visual material and iconography and associates King Johan with imagery normally reserved to Henry VIII, by describing him as a Moses type. Thus he combines the images to strengthen the sense of King Johan prefiguring King Henry, but obviously also has to assert the differences between the two. Indeed, King Johan can only ever be a *forerunner* of the current and true champion of England, Henry, and he therefore stands in relation to Henry as Old Testament figures do to Christ; they are the shadows, forerunners and prophets of a greater truth. Tellingly, in terms of managing the spectators and offering counsel, the Interpreter tells the audience what to believe, but only in the most general of terms. Effectually he does nothing more than praise Johan in conventional comparisons. The real giving of counsel is left to Verity, who, when appearing on stage after King Johan's death, directly addresses the audience and tells them how to remember the king:

*Verity:* I assure ye, fryndes, lete men wryte what they wyll  
Kynge Johan was a man both valeaunt and godlye (II. 2193-2194).

Verity champions King John's name, evoking the authorities that wrote histories on the king, and emphasizing his 'valeauntnesse' (I. 2200), 'godlynesse' (I. 2206) and his services to the public (II. 2214-2215). Then, as Nobility, Clergy and Civil Order enter, Verity educates them, and turns them into good subjects through his offered counsel. For example, when Nobility speaks of the late King John as a man 'of a very wicked sorte' (I. 2223), Veritas tells him off:

*Verity:* How can ye presume to be called Nobilyte  
Diffamyng a prynce in your malygnyte?  
Ecclesiastes sayth, If thou wilt an hatefull harte  
Misnamest a kynge, thou playest suche a wicked parte (II. 2225-2228).

Then, as Clergy states that Nobility is not rebelling against the throne but against a man, Verity corrects him sternly:

*Verity:* The crowne of it selfe without the man is nothyng  
Learne of the scriptures to have better undrestandynge  
The harte of a kynge is in the handes of the Lorde,

and he directeth it, wyse Salomon to recorde (ll. 2235-2238).

As soon as the three estates have given in, Imperial Majesty appears who seems to be Verity's 'prynce' (l. 2319). He compliments Verity on his 'reforming skills':

*Imperial Majesty:* I perceive, Veryte, ye have done wele your part  
Refourmynge these men. Gramercyes with all my hart! (ll. 2335-2336).

Verity's repetition of values would have aimed to 'reform' audience members as he 'reformed' Nobility, Clergy, and Civil Order in the play. However, the most complex and interesting figure of counsel informs the audience how *not* to be a courtier or subject: it identifies the nature of 'treason'. On entering, Treason is identified as a priest by King Johan, and is asked how being a priest and a traitor agree with each other (l. 1811). Treason is then questioned about his conduct by King Johan and England, and Treason lists a number of traditions and customs of the Catholic Church, emphasizing the busy nature of the clergy, their keenness for money (l. 1838), and use of Latin as a way to obfuscate the message to the people (l. 1841). When King Johan asks Treason why he 'sought no reformacyon' (l. 1843), Treason responds:

*Treason:* It is the lyvyng of our whole congregacyon.  
If supersticyons and ceremonyes from us fall,  
Farwele monke and chanon, priest, fryer, byshopp and all.  
Our conveyance is suche that we have both moneye and ware (ll.  
1844-1847).

Treason as a personification gives an 'insider's' perspective on the lifestyle of the Catholic clergy, classifying them as traitors. What follows is a verdict of Treason's behaviour by both England and King Johan, who agree that it is 'suche treason as he shall sure hange fore' (l. 1862). As King John makes the point that one cannot hang a priest, England reasons that 'I accompt hym no priest that worke such haynouse treason' (l. 1881). The implication offered in the play is that Catholic priests are no priests, and that treason against the king is treason against God, thus underlining once again the idea that echoes through the play: that kings are divinely appointed. Bale's motif for dramatically defining 'treason' may have been a protection mechanism used to



save himself from overstepping the king's boundaries by taking the reformist message further than Henry would have been comfortable with. By emphasising the behaviour of the Catholic priests as treasonous acts against God and king, Bale sought to remind Henry that he was on his side, and tried to induce him to further the reformist cause. The figure of Treason offers counsel through the negative, so that Henry is here figured as the ultimate earthly spectator, whose implied gaze governs the play, even if he was not present.

Furthermore, the other counsellor figures could be seen not as risk managers, but rather as overtly didactic figures that perform the roles of teachers. They encourage the audience to adopt the play's view, and contrary to Heywood's strategy, do not apologize for their advice when they give it. The figures are assertive, bold; they counsel, preach, persuade. They do not possess the shifting identity of Mery Report, nor any humour at their own expense. Bale's figures of counsel are never to be laughed at, but are to be taken seriously. Laughter in Bale is only invited at the expense of the Catholic figures.

In terms of risk management, Mery Report appears to be the ultimate evasive counsel character. His actions are surrounded by disclaimers that say that he cannot be trusted with a task, with the presence of a beautiful young woman, or with information that needs to be dealt with discretely, as the 'leaky moon' passage suggests. Nowhere in the play is the spectator encouraged to take example from Mery Report or to learn from his 'wisdom'. Rather, he seems a mix between a good servant and a bad courtier, signalling to spectators at times how not to behave, but at the same time showing that he has his heart in the right place, and that he is loyal to his king. Heywood's drama displays a lot of hard work undertaken to manage spectators in a critical environment and to present a play that offers counsel without making it look as if he is offering advice. Bale on the other hand offers straightforward views on how to behave, not so much as a guideline for courtiers to survive at court, but rather how to be a reformist. As we saw in the introduction to this chapter, Bale was happy for the spectators to be subjected to political risk if they agreed with a play that went further in its reform than the king did, or when

they disagreed and found themselves at the mercy of Bale's reform-minded patrons, such as Cromwell and Cranmer. It may be observed that Bale and Heywood's approaches to spectator management through figures of counsel could not be more different. The reasons for this are not to be found in their religious beliefs but rather in the status of the play as a vector of these beliefs in its specific political and theatrical contexts. In the next section I will move to the core of the danger of presenting and spectating drama at court, and discuss how both Heywood and Bale respectively represented regality on stage.

#### 4.4 Representations of Regality

When discussing the 1530s, is it important to note the changeability of this decade, and the changeable nature of the king, so as to recognize that generalisations about Henry's rulership and his use of the royal image for political purposes cannot be made. Streitberger has observed that Henry in the early 1530s appointed Cromwell 'to use the royal image in the service of reform'<sup>79</sup> and allowed this to remain so between 1535 and 1539, but that he had Cromwell executed when he started to see the political danger in such actions.<sup>80</sup> However, dramatically representing the royal image had been a dangerous business long before then, and continued to be so throughout King Henry's reign. Both Steven Mullaney and Greg Walker have observed that in the 1530s, the Treason Act (1534) made a capital offence out of speech.<sup>81</sup> The act condemned anyone who would

maliciously wyshe will or desire by wordes or writinge, or by crafte ymagen invent practyse or attempte, any bodely harme to be donne or comytted to the Kynges moste royall psonne, the Quenes, or their heirs apparaunt, or to depryve theym or any of theym of the dignite title or name of their royall estates, or sclauderously & malyciously publishe & pounce, by expresse writinge or wordes, that the Kynge oure

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<sup>79</sup> Streitberger, 'The Royal Image and the Politics of Entertainment', p. 13.

<sup>80</sup> Streitberger, 'The Royal Image and the Politics of Entertainment', p. 5; p. 13.

<sup>81</sup> Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: Licence, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (London and Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 118; Steven Mullaney, 'Lying Like Truth: Riddle, Representation and Treason in Renaissance England', *ELH* 47:1 (1980), pp. 32-47, p. 34; Walker, 'Folly', p. 338.

Soverayn Lorde shulde be heretyke scismatike Tiraunt ynfidell or  
Usurper of the Crowne...<sup>82</sup>

The terms of the Act would have encompassed speech uttered through the medium of drama, which meant that the 'politics' of performance were a risky business for playwrights, especially if one were to imagine the king's harm by words, writing or craft. Playwrights and actors across the country would have had to be very careful in dramatically representing anything that could be considered as speaking against Henry's authority, but this was particularly true for those working at or in the vicinity of the court or in the households of notable authorities, and the presence or absence of the monarch at the play was a very important factor in the performance dynamics. We have no formal evidence that Henry VIII was present at the performance of *Wether*, and thus we may not just assume that he was. However, the way in which the play seems to explore issues of kingship and pointedly shows a king in action suggests the possibility that he had been present,<sup>83</sup> or that the play was framed *as if* he were present. This latter action would itself be an important assertion of loyalty since it would argue that the physical presence or absence of the king would have no effect on the playwright's loyal behaviour. This section addresses the ways in which Heywood and Bale represented kingship in their respective plays, and how they managed not to cross the boundary to 'treason' in doing so. Furthermore, I will point out that both playwrights protected their audiences from treasonous responses to the representation of kingship, by applying two very different, but effective strategies.

It has been argued repeatedly that Jupiter as an allegorical, abstract figure could not have alluded to anything but King Henry VIII.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, I agree with Peter Happé that it would have been unlikely that Heywood, working in the

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<sup>82</sup> 'Chapter 13: Treason Act', *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. 3 (London: Record Commission, 1817), 26 Henry VIII, p. 508. Also quoted in Walker, 'Folly', p. 338.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker, 'Performance as Research: Staging John Heywood's *Play of the Weather* at Hampton Court Palace', *Medieval English Theatre* 27 (2007), pp. 86-104, p. p. 87.

<sup>84</sup> See for example, André Lascombes, 'The Selfhood of Stage Figures and Their Spectacular Efficacy in Early English Plays (c. 1450-1528)', *Selfhood on the Early Modern English Stage*, ed. by Pauline Blanc (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 8-21, p. 11; Maura Giles-Watson, 'The Singing "Vice": Music and Mischief in Early English Drama', *Early Theatre* 12:2 (2009), pp. 57-90, p. 69.

court environment, would have been able to ‘avoid incorporating Henry in ... [his] work in some form or another’.<sup>85</sup> I would add, however, that Heywood would not have *wanted* to avoid incorporating Henry for the following reasons. First of all, it actually would have been offensive if the king was not somehow acknowledged somewhere in the play. By not acknowledging the king, Heywood would have made him into an ordinary spectator, and no play of this time could and would have reduced King Henry VIII to a simple spectator. Secondly, the tradition of ‘good counsel’ was based on offering the king advice in a gracious manner, and required the comparison between the stage world and the real world; a play without some acknowledgement, perhaps even some representation, of the king would have misrepresented the reality of the court environment that Heywood sought to stage.

Heywood clearly assumed that the spectators of his play would see Jupiter in relation to the sovereign, perhaps as contrastive with him. He further facilitated this reference through the use of space in the great hall. Jupiter’s prop throne would have been positioned at the screens end of the hall, facing the dais on the other side, where the king, had he been present, would have sat. This physical set-up of a stage king facing a real king would have served as an invitation for spectators to compare and contrast the two. The connection could have been any one (or more) of the following options: firstly, the kings were like each other, so that the representation would have functioned as a mirror for princes. Secondly, that they were unlike each other so that the representation would also have functioned as a mirror for princes. Thirdly, that the play represented an example of a kind of kingship. Fourthly, that the audience members were invited to pick and choose the similarities and differences. Fifthly, that the King in the audience was also making these decisions of similarities and differences. Finally, there was the notion that the actual King watched with an awareness of being offered counsel. These potential relationships between the play-character and the sovereign were all based on the use of the hierarchical space in which the play was performed.

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<sup>85</sup> Happé, ‘Dramatic Images of Kingship in Heywood and Bale’, p. 242.

From this starting-point it would have depended on the representation of the staged king, how spectators including the depicted monarch himself would have interpreted the staging of kingship. Walker has posed the question of what spectators saw when Jupiter was in front of them, and what they heard when he spoke.<sup>86</sup> This is an important distinction because, as Kent Rawlinson and Thomas Betteridge have observed, light was unevenly distributed in the great hall, dependent on status.<sup>87</sup> Not all spectators would have necessarily been able to see the performance as well as others, but they would still have been able to hear the words spoken by the actor. Jupiter, when sat on his prop throne, was raised up high enough to be seen from most places in the hall, yet it must be recognised that some of the lower-ranking spectators did not have a good view of his actions. As most direct address and comedy would have been aimed at the higher end of the great hall, lower-ranking spectators would have faced Mery Report's back at moments during which the most politically charged topics—which required comedy—were addressed. Although the spectators in the darker places of the hall may have felt that they as spectators were not seen by others, except from spectators of their own class and their immediate superiors, Heywood still sought to manage their risk by avoiding inappropriate responses. When Mery's back is turned to those spectators of lower rank, employs his risk-managing techniques through vocal rather than visual strategies.

The first impression spectators would have been given of Jupiter was that he was likely to have been performed by a child-actor, who opens the play with a pompous monologue in which he asserts his glory and honour, and speaks the bombastic words: 'for aboue all goddess syns our fathers fate / we Jupiter were euer pryncypale' (sig. A2r). This reference to Jupiter becoming king of all gods after his father Saturn's reign could be easily read as a comment on the Tudor rulership, and Henry's father having been the first Tudor king. The next couplet asserts that Jupiter is 'beyond the compass of all comparyson', and play-comments on the idea that it would be impossible to try to represent

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<sup>86</sup> Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny*, p. 107.

<sup>87</sup> Kent Rawlinson and Thomas Betteridge, 'The Great Hall at Hampton Court Palace', *Staging the Henrician Court: Bringing Early Modern Drama to Life*, web accessed 29 April 2013.

[http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/research/the\\_great\\_hall.html](http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/research/the_great_hall.html)

Jupiter's glory so that it can be understood by mere human perception, the joke being on the young boy trying to impersonate Henry's more mature majesty:

*Jupiter:* Who coulde presume to shew for any mede  
so that yt myght appere to humayne reason  
the hye renowne we stande in at thys season  
for syns that heuen and erth were fyrste create  
stode we neuer in suche tryumphaut estate (sig. A2r).

*En passant*, the boy-actor makes Henry an elegant compliment, which he could have emphasized for example through reverent body language or a bow to the king, that kingship has never been as 'tryumphaut' as during Henry's rule. Perhaps here the actor signals that the role of Jupiter represents 'kingship' rather than a one-on-one mimetic representation of Henry.

The boy actor sets the tone, showing through his child-like appearance that this play will be humorous, in that it plays with the irony of representing power, while verbally keeping a respectful demeanour towards the king. Furthermore, the introduction promises that the king's rule will not be challenged through this drama. From the outset it is clear that the play, although signalling its conservative political opinion by advocating moderation, refrains from introducing an element of conflict or dissent into the play action. Instead the play focuses on solving the problems caused by these dissenters through a 'parliament' of subjects, by 'amending' the weather. Jupiter's aim,

is onely to satysfye and content  
all maner people whyche haue ben offendyd  
by any wether mete to be amendyd  
upon whose complayntes declarynge theyr greffe  
we shall shape remedy for theyr relese (sig. A3r).

Problem-solving rather than problem-causing for the fictional subjects in the play, the play also claims to bring 'comfort' to the spectator, including the royal spectator, in the great hall:

*Jupiter:* As we do now, wherof we woll reporte

suche parte as we se mete for tyme present,  
Chyefely concernynge your perpetuall comforte  
As the thyng selfe shall prove in experiment (sig. A2r)

Furthermore, Jupiter asserts that this play will serve to venerate the king, and to encourage the audience to do the same:

*Jupiter:* Whyche hyely shall bynde you on knees lowly bent  
Soolly to honour oure hyenes day by day (sig. A2r).

Within the first 20 lines of the interlude, the child playing Jupiter has verbally given a very neat indication of what is to follow during the play: doing away with any anxieties spectators may have about a play performed by Heywood who was known at court, and known to have religious opinions contrary to the popular current ones. The spectators sitting in the well-lit areas of the great hall would have been given an ambiguous message of kingship: combining the visual fun of the boy playing at kingship with the serious and reverent claims of the play's introduction, whereas the spectators in the sparsely-lit areas of the hall would have been given less of the irony and more of the reverence.

However, a further complication arises as to what spectators would have experienced when they saw the introduction to the play performed by the boy-Jupiter. Jupiter, the highest classical god would have been an ambiguous figure to represent kingship, with advantages and disadvantages to his character. The advantage of this figure was that he brought along no religious problems, and Jupiter fictionally compromises the notion of the play as a contemporary one on current issues. This makes the character very suitable for a play which is supposed to discuss religious issues without referring to them. At the same time, as Walker reminds us, Jupiter as a figure was not without a more sinister side:

He was a god with many attributes, many roles and embodiments, and a complex and deeply ambivalent personal—not to say sexual—history. For every story that revealed the god-king's wisdom and benevolence

there was another that betrayed his self-interest, lust, or manipulative nature.<sup>88</sup>

Heywood would have had to avoid the problems of Jupiter's sexual history in performance. First of all, Jupiter being played by a boy could have softened the effect of the god-king's sexual reputation, making any in-play references to Jupiter's sexuality comical because it would look like a boy boasting of his 'conquests'. Secondly, as Henry represented himself as, in the words of Kevin Sharpe, a 'priapic dynast and object of desire',<sup>89</sup> the king would have had no problem in a representation of kingship emphasizing male prowess and an image of fertility, because it corresponded to the image that he himself sought to portray. Furthermore, it must be observed that there was already an association of Henry with Jupiter prior to *The Play of the Wether*, as found in John Skelton's *Speke Parrott* (ll. 399, ll. 405-410).<sup>90</sup> Heywood thus did not move into territories unknown when choosing Jupiter as the representation of monarchy.

In any case, befitting the general evasiveness of the play, Heywood in portraying Jupiter both invited and rejected a comparison between the play-king and the real king, and sometimes these rejections could have had the effect of further inviting comparison. For example, when returning to the lines in which Jupiter expresses his uniqueness and asserts himself to be beyond comparison ('if we so have ben as treuth yt is in dede / beyond the compass of all comparyson' (sig. A2r)), Jupiter's denial of course opens up the possibility for the audience to make comparisons, and could have made the audience aware that this play would constantly offer them representations of kingship about which they as spectators had to make meaning for themselves, because the play was not going to tell them explicitly what to take from it. In such strategy, the playwright places the responsibility of making meaning with the spectator rather than with the playwright. Heywood makes this possible by balancing the invitations to associate play-king and real king. As a control on this Heywood ensures that Jupiter never fully embodies the kingly role. I have

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<sup>88</sup> Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny*, p. 112.

<sup>89</sup> Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*, p. 72.

<sup>90</sup> Walker, 'Early Tudor Drama and the Arts of Resistance', p. 89; Happé, 'Dramatic Images of Kingship in Heywood and Bale', p. 242.



already observed that Jupiter as Prologue addresses the audience directly, and encourages them to respect the king outside the play. Furthermore, when he asserts his power, he also remarks that he expects the audience to revel in his power, as he does in his own:

*Jupiter:* Now syns we have thus farre set forth our purpose  
A whyle we woll wythdraw our godly presens  
To enbold all such more playnely to disclose  
As here wyll attende in our foresayde pretens.  
And now accordyng to your obedyens  
Rejoyce ye in us wyth joy most joyfully,  
And we our selfe shall joy in our owne glory (sig. A4r-v).

The phrasing is odd, as why would a god take joy in his own glory? It is likely that this is where a part of the signification could be that Jupiter refers to Henry's glory, so that Jupiter does not actually signify Henry at this moment in the play, but that the moments in which deference is shown to Jupiter, this display of honour is extended to Henry, who would have shared in the compliment. Importantly, where the introduction promises that the play 'shall bynde you on knees lowly bent / soolly to honour oure hyenes day by day' (sig A2r), Jupiter does not ask the spectators to kneel. He *could* however have asked this of the spectators, as rulers in the mystery plays did. Perhaps that very fact would have dissociated Jupiter from Henry and the audience would have found such a demand unacceptable, as mystery play audiences were expected to do. The fact that Jupiter is a self-important ruler but is not threatening or making unreasonable demands on the audience marks him as in the tradition of the play ruler, but not in the tradition of the play tyrant (such as for example Herod), to the effect that the play both associates Jupiter with Henry and separates him from the sovereign, while ensuring that the general atmosphere is composed of communal celebration of regal power rather than the demand for its acknowledgement. This is further emphasised by the comical but unreasonable demand made by Mery Report, who exclaims to the audience members: 'why, ye drunken horesons, wyll yt not be? / by your faith, have ye nother cap nor kne?' (sig. A4v). Mery tries to impose on the audience that which the god-king himself does not even ask of them, thus illustrating both Mery's airs and Jupiter's congenial attitude to his doting servants.

Despite all its evasiveness, the play gives away its political stance through expressing an ideal of kingship, and does so through the voice of the god-king:

*Jupiter:* Besyde our puysaunt power of deite,  
of wysedome and nature so noble and so fre  
from all extremytees the meane devydyng  
to pease and plente eche thyng attemperynge (sig. A2v).

Jupiter's power is godly, wise, noble, and 'fre from all extremytees', in other words, moderate. Avoiding all manner of extremities, Jupiter describes himself as an ideal example of kingship in Heywood's terms. At the same time the actor diverts attention from this counsel by continuing the description to include Jupiter's wealth to be described as 'fyrme and stable', and his honour 'farre inestimable' (sig. A3r), because:

*Jupiter:* For syns theyr powers as ours addyd to our owne  
Who can we say know us as we shulde be knowne? (sig. A3r).

The 'theyr' in this passage are the powers of the trouble-seeking gods that before had been causing all kinds of contrary weather—perhaps a reference to parliament—but who surrendered their powers into the hands of Jupiter, who could be trusted to use the power wisely. If this was a reference to Henry becoming Head of the Church of England, it was subtly made, and came with another audience-protecting warning: 'Who can we say know us as we shulde be knowne' is a notice of caution directed at spectators still deciding whether they would equate Jupiter to Henry. If they did so, they were at this moment reminded that they did not know the monarch and his powers as he should be known, and that they had better tread wisely. Managing the audience's risk through the representation of regality was an intricate matter that required Heywood's balancing all the different factors that make up the image, both verbal and visual, of this version of Jupiter on stage. Heywood's strategy of putting forth his plea for moderation, is 'underpinned' by the use of both the figures of counsel and the representation of kingship, the former performed by Heywood, denying any wisdom, and the latter asserting Heywood's political opinions through the voice of a child playing a king. Carefully managed,

carefully measured, Heywood's message is clearly put and overt; not hidden but interwoven in an intricate combination of fun, pleasantries, satire, and flattery, so that spectators were indeed offered a matter 'concernynge ... perpetual comforte' (A2r) as Jupiter's opening speech promises.

Bale's *King Johan* also opened with the play-king addressing the spectators with a long monologue. However this play managed the representation of regality in a manner very different to Heywood's. Where Heywood was hesitant to tell his spectators what exactly to take from the play, Bale had no such scruples, and in fact *did* want to tell his audience overtly what they should learn from the interlude. This is reflected in the way in which he represented kingship in his play. Where Heywood at times invited spectators to associate the play-king and the actual king, and at times discouraged such view, Bale went 'all the way' in his claims about kingship, not held back by ambiguity. For a start, Philip Schwyzer has observed that spectators of *King Johan* would have been confronted with ghosts from the past: the unpopular King John who died in 1216, as well as Stephen Langton, who was once Archbishop of Canterbury, and Pope Innocent III. Schwyzer writes:

King John's opening reference to his status in chronicles must have contributed to the atmosphere of unsettled temporality—no one, unless perhaps a ghost, should be able to express knowledge of what the history books record about their lives. The figures on stage seemed to participate with the audience in the present moment, often addressing them directly, yet at the same time could be observed speaking and behaving as if events proper to the early thirteenth century were happening for the first time.<sup>91</sup>

For spectators, the worlds of play and reality would have blended in an uncanny way; here they were confronted with a king long dead whom history had taught them to hate, now appearing as a reformist king presented as one receiving divine support. The representation was only possible because Bale completely reinvented King Johan, and suggested that history offers a biased

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<sup>91</sup> Philip Schwyzer, 'Paranoid History: John Bale's *King Johan*', *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 499-513, p. 499.

account of princes, hereby opening the way for a new description of the monarch written in the current political mind-set. He reimagined the historical King Johan by adding a great number of Protestant attributes to his character. These attributes are illustrative of the message that Bale wanted to imprint on his audience members regarding the values and qualities of kingship. The assertiveness with which Bale changed historical traditions of reception, is only a prelude to the rest of the play in which Bale gives a clear definition of how a king should reign.

Many studies have been devoted to King John's kingship, and to what Bale wanted to teach his audiences about kingship. For example, Walker has described King John as 'a protestant hero and martyr, a precursor to the ideas which were to motivate Henrician caesaropapism'.<sup>92</sup> The dual role of reforming monarch and martyr has also been suggested by Thomas Betteridge, who asserts that 'as a king, John clearly has faults but as a martyr he is exemplary'.<sup>93</sup> Peter Happé has remarked that through a reading of King Johan's actions Bale's opinion can be perceived that a good king 'spreads the Gospel'.<sup>94</sup> From the play text it is clear that Bale's opinion on kingship focuses on lineage (*King Johan*: 'My grandfather was an emperowre excellent / my fathere a kyng by successyon lyneall / A kyng my brother' (ll. 10-12)); argues for the position being god-appointed (ll. 15, 124, 128, 137, 153-4, 171, 223, 1089, 1276, 1404, 1408, 1513, 1615, 1622, 2237, 2293, 2348, 2355-6, 2379, 2382, 2385.<sup>95</sup>); implies that the monarch when needs be defends a country which is cut off from 'true' religion (*England*: 'to helpe the pore wydowes cause' (l. 129)); expects a sovereign to correct 'vice' (*King Johan*: 'For non other cawse God hathe kynges constytute / And gevyn them the sword but forto correct all vyce' (ll. 1276-7); and if needs be, dies for his faith (l. 2185). Sacrificing his life for his religious beliefs means that King Johan as a character dies mid-play.

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<sup>92</sup> Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, p. 180.

<sup>93</sup> Thomas Betteridge, *Tudor Histories of the English Reformations, 1530-83* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p. 77.

<sup>94</sup> Happé, *John Bale*, p. 93.

<sup>95</sup> Due to the (perhaps tedious) repetition of the idea that kings rule by the grace of God, Clergy is permitted a little joke at the expense of King John. Clergy says: 'by the grace of God, the Pope shall be my rulare' (512). To which King Johan responds: 'What saye ye, Clargy? Who ys yowre governer?' (513). *Clergye*: 'Ha, ded I stoble? I sayd my prynce ys my ruler' (513). Such double-facedness would have invited laughter from the audience.

Hereby he leaves an opening for the allegorical character of Imperial Majesty. Different readings of this character too have been offered. Happé has argued that 'Imperial Majesty seems to be a version, idealized and deferential, of Henry VIII himself', an opinion not unlike Walker's.<sup>96</sup> Alice Hunt has claimed that it is not 'possible to argue for the performance of King Johan at one particular time or to link Imperial Majesty to a specific monarch' but argues that the function of the character was to 'represent a particular concept of monarchy'.<sup>97</sup> Sharpe has written that, 'In the final scene of Bale's drama, the figure of Imperial Majesty outlines the divine origin and authority of kingship and the dependence of true religion on the power of kings, in support of John's own claim that 'the powr of princys, is gevyn fro[m] god above'.<sup>98</sup>

Whichever monarch or concept Imperial Majesty represents (or perhaps a combination of a specific monarch and a concept of monarchy), one must observe that Imperial Majesty is the authority that confirms Verity's words, that is to say, that he authorizes the play's main figure of counsel (l. 2364). The ideal of kingship personified thus confirms the words of the counsellor, and gives weight to them; in fact, Verity appears to work on Imperial Majesty's orders:

*Imperyll Majestye*: Abyde, Veryte; ye shall not depart so sone.

Have ye done all thynges as we commaunded yow? (ll. 2318-2319).

The command entailed 'refourmyng these men', the Nobility, Clergy, and Civil Order (l. 2335). Later Imperial Majesty says: 'Yea, gentle Veryte, shewe them their dewtye in Gods Name' (l. 2363). It would be tempting to read this as one of Bale's strategies to persuade Henry to authorize or order the reform strategies of Bale's patron, Cromwell.

Imperial Majesty's reform strategy is merciful, in that he forgives the past errors of his subjects, including their 'forwarde wytt' (l. 2344), after which all thank him in unison and exclaim that, 'the heavenly governour rewarde your

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<sup>96</sup> Happé, *John Bale*, p. 99. Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, p. 210.

<sup>97</sup> Hunt, *Drama of Coronation*, p. 100.

<sup>98</sup> Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*, p. 126.

goodnesse for it' (l. 2345). Yet he is also very firm, and assertively has the last say on the relationship between rulership and religion, and asserts that there is no place for the pope in 'thys monarchie'. Where Heywood delicately managed alternatives for the different classes represented in his play, one may observe that Bale's interest was in reducing plurality to unity, which is evident from Imperial Majesty's assertion that 'no man is exempt from thys Gods ordynaunce / Bishopp, monke, chanon, priest, cardynall, nor pop' (ll. 2380-2381). He continues:

All they by Gods lawe to kinges owe their allegeaunce.  
 Thys wyll be wele knowne in thys same realme, I hope  
 Of Verytees wurdes the syncere meanyng I grope;  
 He sayth that a kynge is of God immedyatlye  
 Than shall never pope rule more in thys monarchie (ll. 2382-2386).

Clergy answers to Imperial Majesty: 'and your grace shall be the supreme head of the Churche' (l. 2389), acknowledging his submission to the monarchy. Imperial Majesty thus brings to pass what King Johan aspired towards at the beginning of the play: 'How that all pepell shuld shew there trew alegyauns / to ther lawfull kyng Christ Jesu dothe consent' (ll. 5-6). The representations of kingship in *King Johan* are two-fold: through King Johan they show the general qualities to be admired in a protestant king. However, with Imperial Majesty, Bale passes into more daring territory, as he makes the allegorical king into a figure that dominates, that takes clear (reformist) action, and that overtly expresses Bale's political opinions that were pushing the reform further than Henry would have wanted. Where Imperial Majesty authorizes Verity's claims within the play, it is Verity who in terms of drama justifies Imperial Majesty's assertions to the spectators outside the play, and who manages the spectator not to take offence at the play, for example, through his description of undisputed kingship, crucial to the representation of regality in this play:

Verity: For Gods sake obeye lyke as doth yow befall,  
 For in hys owne realme a kynge is judge over all  
 By Gods appointment, and none maye hym judge agayne  
 But the Lorde himself. In thys the scripture is playne.  
 He that condempneth a kynge condempneth God without dought

He that harmeth a kynge to harme God goeth about;  
He that a prynce resisteth doth dampne Gods ordynaunce  
And resisteth God in withdrawynge hys affyaunce.  
All subjectes offendynge are under the kynges judgement:  
A kynge is reserved to the Lorde Omnipotent.  
He is a mynyster immediate undre God,  
Of hys rygtheousness to execute the rod.  
I charge therfor as God hath charge me  
To gyve to your kynge hys due supremacyte  
And exyle the Pope thus realme for evermore (ll. 2346-2360).

It is clear that Verity uses a combination of flattery, interpretation of Scripture, and assertion of the power of kings as judges, church ministers and punishers, to make Bale's point that a king should be the Supreme Head of his own church, and that the Pope has no place in the relationship between God and king. Verity's last sentence that advises the exile of the Pope comes at the culmination of the speech, and it is Verity's rhetorical qualities that make this sound like a logical solution rather than an offence. The words 'God' and 'king' or 'prince' occurring in almost every line, Verity has created a verbal connection between kingship and the divine, to underscore his message of the power of kings. Verity makes it sound as if it is the king's duty to exile the Pope, because of his being a 'minister' under God, thus clearly telling Henry what to do through images of glory, divine authority, and scriptural justification. In terms of risk-management, Bale here takes a gamble: we have seen in the introduction that Bale did not mind his general audience suffering the political risks that his play brought about, if that meant that he had put his message across. The description of kingship in the play seems equally reckless, in that it counts on Henry being flattered and impressed by the evoked divine authority. We do not know how Henry responded to this play, whether he minded being given counsel in such an obvious way, through heavy rhetoric and lengthy monologues that would have taken the speed out of the performance. We do know from Bale's strategies that where he was constantly managing his audiences, he was not necessarily interested in managing their risk, evident from his careless attitude towards his *own* risks in staging this play.

The difference between Bale and Heywood's tactics in terms of representing regality is best summarised by the example of how they discussed the difficult subject of the Royal Supremacy. Where this receives much emphasis in *King Johan*, and even takes the form of a genuine acknowledgement from Clergy that Imperyall Majesty 'shall be the supreme head of the Churche' (2389), Mery Report skilfully reduces the debate to a joke on 'heds' (ll. 297, 298, 305, 307, 310, 311, 314, 325, 328), inducing the audience to laughter as the joke peters out.

## 4.5 Audience involvement

Having discussed how both Heywood and Bale used the theatricality of the medium, the ways in which counsel was delivered, and the image of regality that was put forward by their respective plays in relation to the managing or not managing of spectator risk *during* the performance, a final word is needed on how both playwrights engaged with the risks that spectators would have met *after* the performance was concluded.

Because of the context of the great hall, and the ways in which Tudor interludes tried to engage their audiences within that performance space, spectators would, to a certain extent, always be actively involved in the play experience. However, playwrights could manage their spectators' risk through involving spectator participation in certain dramatic episodes, temporarily including them more pointedly, or doing quite the opposite by releasing this connection and thus creating a distance. This section shows that Heywood involved spectators in the play through the use of ceremony, but that Bale had good reasons for wanting to avoid that.

*The Play of the Wether* utilizes an important spectator-management tool that would have managed the spectators' risk *after* the performance. This strategy takes the form of the ceremony at the end of the play in which the fictional subjects express their loyalty to Jupiter. They have chosen as their spokesperson the Gentleman, who does not only speak on behalf of the fictional suitors, but also on behalf of the members of the audience:



*Gentylman*: Pleaseth yt your majeste, lorde, so yt is,  
We as your subjects and humble sewters all,  
Accordynge as we here your pleasure is,  
Are presyd to your presens, beynge pryncypall  
Hed and governour of all in every place.  
Who joyeth not in your sight no joy can have,  
Wherefore we all commit us to your grace  
As lorde of lordes, us to persyhe or save (sig. D4v).

Such address could have been directed at once to Jupiter, to the audience, drawing them in so as to become participants rather than just spectators, and to King Henry, showing both loyalty and the ability to create a sense of community in which all have as a common goal the celebration of the monarch's wisdom and prudent use of power. The ceremony would have been not so different from the stately spectacles such as royal entries and coronations in which monarchs performed themselves as rulers to construct an image of power, and were helped in doing so by spectators and participants. Heywood's creating a communal experience would have been a fundamental tactic for managing the audience's experience. If the spectators had laughed at Jupiter using pompous speech, being embodied by a child, or being joked about in the 'leaky moon' passage, they had now been given a staged and scripted opportunity to 'make up' for it, and to fulfil the promise made by the introduction, that this play would lead the spectators to 'honour oure heyenes' (A2r). Through the open, inclusive veneration of the monarch, the spectators' risk was managed in that the play's message was concluded in a tone of obedience in which all spectators participated, so that there was no room for the suggestion that some spectators did not respond appropriately to the play. Thus there would not have been the danger found in the spectator responses to Bale's *King Johan*, that spectators after the event found themselves questioned for inappropriately responding to the play. Heywood, recognising that spectators continued to experience play-related risk after the performance, closed off the play in such a way that, although it would always have been possible that spectators would have privately mused about the play's political implications after the performance, the outward signs had been made to protect them from suspicion about favouring unpopular political opinions.

Bale on the other hand worked on the basis that all spectators must agree with him and his political outlook of the play, from the start. I have observed that although Bale managed the king's spectatorship, he did nothing to ease anxieties for the rest of the audience. When Bale created a fictional community comparable to the one in Heywood's final ceremony, this was a community *within* the play rather than one that connected the play and the audience. Thus, a contrast can be drawn with the end of the Croxton play in which the Episcopus encourages the spectators to join the actors in a procession to the church, hereby physically including them. In Bale's play, the action in the ceremony goes as follows: Nobility, Clergy and Civil Order, the stratified types that together form the play's 'society', are given the opportunity to repent their wayward actions and express their loyalty to Imperial Majesty (l. 2327). This action is instigated by Verity:

*Verity:* Whie do ye not bowe to Imperyall Majeste?

Knele and axe pardon for your great enormyte (ll. 2327-2328).

Here the three allegorical characters, representing the different groups in society, kneel according to the stage direction and they express their apology:

*Nobility:* Most godly governour, we axe your gracyouse pardon  
Promysynge nevermore to maynteyne false Sedicyon.

*Clergy:* Neyther Pryvate Welthe nor yet Usurped Poure  
Shall cause me disobeye my prynce from thys same houre.  
False Dissymulacyon shall never me begyle;  
Where I shall mete hym I wyll ever hym revile (ll. 2329-2334).

Imperial Majesty forgives and pardons the three estates (l. 2344), after which they all thank him in unison (l. 2345). Perhaps the audience members were not encouraged to overtly identify with the allegorical estates, because doing so would imply that they had first *disobeyed* the king, which would have been an awkward accusation to make to the guests in Cranmer's great hall. The difference with Heywood's ceremony is that it concluded a different stretch of action: where the ceremony in Heywood is a thanking one, in which the subjects revel in their monarch's giving his ear to them, and using his powers to the benefits of all, the ceremony in Bale is one in which the king forgives

earlier misconduct and conflict. Therefore, those joining in Bale's final ritual could only ever be a fictional community, yet through their movements this fictional community advised the country as a whole—but without pointing fingers at the current audience—to do away with all Catholic rites and customs.

## 4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to broaden the study of spectator risk by moving from plays in which the dramatic medium itself is the central cause of risk, to plays in which the medium is used to control a different kind of risk, that which arises from the immediate auspices of performance. This chapter has shown that although risk of some sort is inherent in any performance context, the presence of risk intensifies in the context of court, or in the presence of a sovereign. This chapter has also argued that spectating is a political act, and one that extends to the time after the performance. We can infer from Heywood's dramatic strategies that he calculated both in-play and post-performance risks well, and sought to reduce them. Bale on the other hand, was not willing to do this as it might have compromised the strength of the political argument made in the play.

My case studies have specifically focused on the Tudor court of the 1530s: and the readings of Heywood and Bale have aimed to reflect on their tactics of managing spectators in a play when one's own political opinion goes against the political grain of the time. This was a problem for both playwrights, as Heywood was a conservative Catholic at a time that the court was turning its mind to reform; Bale was too ardent a reformist for the Henrician court. Heywood managed his spectators' risk through using the elements of his performance space to indicate the theatricality of the play at various times, reminding the spectators of the politically loaded performance context surrounding them, and of their own duties as spectators but also as courtiers and retainers, at all times. Heywood furthermore managed his spectators through the figure of counsel, the Vice, which he would have played himself, a counsel which claims to be ineffectual and too dim-witted for providing counsel, a licenced fool. At the same time, this figure is dramatically very much in charge and carefully arranges the movements of all the other players,

showing that Heywood, underneath the guise of Mery Report, was in control of the situation, and hereby brought comfort to his audience: after all, through this master of ceremony-like behaviour, Mery signals that he knows his audience, and he knows how far he can go without causing any political or social anxieties. Moreover, Heywood avoided treason by carefully tailoring the representation of sovereignty on stage. His Jupiter is courteous to Henry (or perhaps in the king's absence, to his chair), and encourages the audience to venerate their king, so that his verbal signals are all clear risk-managers. His physical appearance however, gives an ambiguous twist to the representation, providing the opportunity for spectators to laugh at this ironic representation of majesty. Ambiguity in the representation of both Jupiter and Mery Report causes that spectators were not told what to take from the performance. The play was consciously evasive, and gave spectators the opportunity to enjoy the play in the great hall, and ponder on it later, in their own time. Heywood however calculated that the spectator risk would not end as soon as the spectators left the great hall, which is why he managed the end of the play in a conclusive way. Through a staged ceremony, the audience was involved in a ritual that thanked the king for his wise rule. I have argued that a temporary community was formed that included the already existing court community and the play-characters, a collective led by the character of the Gentleman. This ritual caused spectators to look as if they through their presence at the performance were ritually conforming to the rules of the court, so that they would be free to have their own opinion of the play after the performance. This is not unlike the strategy employed by the Croxton author to outwardly send a signal to the church authorities to say that the play was a morally sound community celebration under the supervision of the institution of the church.

This chapter has also shown that Bale employed the same dramatic techniques as Heywood—the theatricality of the medium, the figure of counsel, and the representation of kingship in dramatized form—but to serve a different end. He did not seek to protect his audience from any social or political risk that they might have felt during or after the performance of *King Johan*. He did however manage their political opinion in a clear, discernible way, and tried to protect himself from the suggestion of treason by introducing an allegorical figure called Treason which expresses beliefs that are pointedly

contrary to Bale's own, and through flattery in the description of kingship. Yet he found himself doing something that was only *just* acceptable, as he told his king how to rule in unmistakable terms. Perhaps Bale's play was deemed acceptable through the rhetoric that spoke of the divine right of kingship and the authority of the Scriptures. Bale turned these into a way of pressing Henry to assume responsibility for a cause that he at best had a half-hearted interest in. He did so by adjusting the tone of argument to sound more like that of a cleric speaking from the pulpit, than of a costumed play-actor in a great hall.

Building on the conclusions of chapter three, that spectator risk is not determined by religious history, this chapter has observed through addressing two very different great hall interludes that the management of spectator risk is closely related to whether a play in performance goes along with or against popular thought, and if a play went against the grain of the times, whether it did so by being too conservative, or too progressive. My aim has been to show that if playwrights were aware of their political position in relation to popular thought, they could, if they wished—which Bale clearly did not as much as Heywood did—control their work in such a way that protected themselves as well as their spectators from political or social implications. This opens the way to chapter five, in which I will discuss how in the city of Wells in 1607, citizens held on to their ludic traditions, whereas the mood of the times had changed towards different appreciations of such traditions. The next chapter will show that spectating and participating could go seriously wrong when those involved did not take sufficient account of the risks that they were taking, perhaps because they were unaware of the current societal norms, or because they underestimated the balance of power which would allow them to participate in the way they wanted.

## 5. Risk management based on expired tradition: the Wells performances of 1607 and the Star Chamber

### 5.1 Introduction

When using diaries, letters or other records as evidence for spectator experience or even spectator risk, it becomes clear that such records are written from a particular perspective, and do not appear to have been written for the purpose of recording a first-hand dramatic experience. Legal and judicial records are especially problematic, as John McGavin reminds the reader, because they ‘reduce the contending voices of original events to the voice of the text, incorporating them and subordinating them to new purposes’.<sup>1</sup> This is evident from the libel suit *Hole vs. White et al.* that was executed in the Star Chamber at the Royal Palace at Westminster, from April 1608 to November 1609,<sup>2</sup> and which involved the hearing of 45 witnesses. This libel suit forms the case study for this chapter. Despite such limitations, however, the Star Chamber records permit a reconstruction to be made of how the city of Wells in 1607 turned into a stage on which traditional festivities were performed and reacted against, where old feuds were fought out through costumed jolliness, where fiction was blended with local reality, where mimetic representations were performed and received with festive zest by some and with discontent by others.<sup>3</sup> However, when making this reconstruction it is

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<sup>1</sup> John McGavin, *Theatricality and Narrative in Medieval and Early Modern Scotland* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> James Stokes and Robert J. Alexander (eds), *Records of Early English Drama: Somerset, Including Bath, vol. 1: The Records* (London and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 596. All Somerset dramatic records, including the one cited here, are to be found in the Records of Early English Drama. It will be clear from this chapter that it is heavily indebted to Professor James Stokes’ work for Records of Early English Drama.

<sup>3</sup> Following a Marxist trend in criticism, and the translation into English of Mikhail Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and his World*, studies of theatricality in public rural and urban life conducted in the 1970s up to including the 1990s can be observed to have favoured a binary opposition between the ‘authorities’ and the ‘populace’ to explain the

important to note that the account given by the records is not necessarily a true account of how the events happened or even exactly how they were remembered by those who had been present at the events. For example, in the examination of Robert Atwell and his brother William Atwell, the record tells us the following:

... this [deponent] defendant sayeth that [that] about ye 18<sup>th</sup> day of Iune 1607 he this defendant did rid [about ye towne] through ye Citie of wells aforesayd disguised together with on other riding face to face vppon ye same horse and that this defendant carried a deske before him this defendant [and the] representing a scrivener or notarie and the other that wer with this defendant had mony baggs [before him] in his handes filled with tyle stones representing an vsurer or moneyed man but this defendant was not procured to doe this by any man but that it was his owne volontarie accord ...<sup>4</sup>

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expression, repression and counter-action of traditional customs. See for example, Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-century France', *Past and Present* 50 (1971), pp. 41-75; Michael D. Bristol, *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (London: Methuen, 1985); Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978); Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: the Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Sandra Billington, *Mock Kings in Medieval and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford, 1991). More recently, scholarship has been moving into studies that deal with smaller regions so as to avoid totalizing conclusions, and has acknowledged that social and cultural divides are not determined by class conflict, but are in fact much more complex. Such studies do not fail to acknowledge general friction such as reformist versus traditional sympathies, but are aware of external factors including economy, distribution of wealth, employability, family-relationships and other socio-political factors. See for example, Peter Fleming, 'Performance, Politics and Culture in the Southwest of Britain, 1350-1642: Historian's Response', *Early Theatre* 6: 2 (2003), pp. 97-102; James Stokes, 'Landscape, Movement and Civic Mimesis in the West of England', *Early Theatre* 6: 1 (2003), pp. 35-49; Peter H. Greenfield, 'The Carnavalesque in the Robin Hood Games and King Ales of Southern England', *Carnival and the Carnavalesque*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler and Wim Hüskén (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 19-28; Barry Reay, *Popular Cultures in England 1550-1750* (London: Longman, 1998); David Underdown, 'But the Shows of their Street': Civic Pageantry and Charivari in a Somerset Town, 1607', *Journal of British Studies* 50: 1 (2011), pp. 4-23.

<sup>4</sup> Examination of Robert Atwell, Chandler, and William Atwell, Tanner, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 124 (16 October 1609), REED, p. 308. Words between [ ] appear crossed out in the record.

The statement confidently informs the record reader of the date, the location of the 'show', and the way in which it was performed. It specifies two persons facing each other on a horse, moving around in disguise. The statement also details what was represented through this performance, and that the action was undertaken of the defendant's own accord. However, when turning to the questions that were asked during the interrogation, it becomes clear that Robert Atwell had not actually opened his narrative with 'on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of June 1607, I rode together...' but that he had been asked a number of leading questions, to which he answered in the affirmative. The interrogatory asked him the following:

Inprimis did yow on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of Iune 1607 togeather with one other ride disguised face to face vppon one horse through the streetes of welles in the County of Somerset your selfe having before yow a little deske & Standish with some other thinges representing a notary or scrivener, whoe advised, abetted, or procured yow soe to doe, whoe furnished yow with the horse & other thinges before mencioned and whome did yow represent or entend to represent or meant that the beholders should vnderstand therby and by the other that rode with yow having money bagges filled with Counters or other thinges representing an vserer, speake the whole truth herein.<sup>5</sup>

It becomes evident that the rhetoric and contents of the account of Robert Atwell, are not his own, but that of the examiners questioning him in the Star Chamber. That is to say that the performance experience described in this record was also not his own, but was in fact based on the accusations made in a letter to the king by one John Hole, a reform-minded citizen of Wells who actively opposed the traditional church ale and following May and summer shows and games. Hole writes about the Atwell brothers that they rode,

... disguised on horseback with two bagges filled with Counters or some such matters the one in his hand thither at his girdle representing an vserer with whome vpon the same horse face to face

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<sup>5</sup> Joint Interrogatories for Robert Atwell, Chandler, and William Atwell, Tanner, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 113 (15 October 1609), REED, p. 308.



[the said] Robart Atwill did ride disguised with a deske and a Standish before him representing a scrivener wherby they then & there signified that they were to lend money to the Hatter to the Pewterer to the Clothier & to the Grocer ...<sup>6</sup>

One finds that Atwell's account was thus composed by those questioning him, but indirectly really by Hole's accusations, so that Atwell's 'description' of the events is actually only a confirmation of Hole's interpretation of the representation. 'Witness' accounts in the law suit are not necessarily representative of that individual's personal experience of the events. Bearing this in mind, the case study *does* still allow for a theorizing of how risk was perceived by those involved in the shows, and how they sought to minimize it for themselves and their spectators, both during and after the shows.

A study of the perception of risk in Wells starts with the statements that are found in the legal documents; they show that for the actors and participants in the Wells shows the realisation of the legal risks they had run came late—when Hole took his complaints to a higher level and the Star Chamber case commenced. When discovering what was actually at stake, actors, spectators and participants started to deny, misremember, and forget details of the event, so as to protect themselves and their neighbours. 'Not remembering' something to have occurred was a way through which spectators and participants could deny something without claiming that it had never happened. Because the law suit took two years to complete, witnesses may indeed have forgotten some details of an event. It is also possible that some witnesses had never registered a specific detail (the presence of a certain person; the use of costume; the instruments used to make music) in the first place. Here a powerful defence strategy against accusations and the effects of the lapsing of time on memory, find themselves united in some of the witness accounts. For example, the gentleman William Williams alias Morgan, recalled his having been 'an Actor in a sporte or pastyme representing the history of St George acted and perfourmed in thopen streetes within the Cittye of wells in the goeing of the people vnto [of] chamberlayne street to the Churchale there',

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<sup>6</sup> Bill of Complaint in Hole v. White et al., PRO: STAC/8/161, sheet 219 (19 April 1607), REED, p. 264.

but ‘had not then vnto his remembrance any special place or office therein assigned him...’ He also seems to have forgotten whether any drums had been used on that occasion to make people attend to the shows.<sup>7</sup> At other times, witnesses sought to protect themselves by telling their examiners what they thought they wanted to hear, such as is exemplified by the previous mayor of Wells, Alexander Towse, who tried to safeguard his position at the interrogation by criticising the mock-pageants, although carefully using a word of description, ‘knavery’, that trivialised the action:

wherevppon this examinat waighing his speaches dyd more advisedlie, marke the sayd representacions and with great mislyking of them sayd there was knauerie in yt but concerning the other wordes of making any to seate in the Interrogatory mentioned, he remembreth not any such to be spoken in his hearing.<sup>8</sup>

Despite his defensive response to the interrogatory, it is unlikely that Alexander Towse had really disapproved of the mock-pageants at the time of performance: witness accounts by cordwainer John Isaac and clothier John Gorway suggest his beholding and following of the shows as they passed by, and eye-witness Henry Boureman even observed that during the mock-tradesman shows Mr Benjamin Heyden, the late Dean of Wells, and Alexander Towse, ‘did cheapen of the sayed disguised haberdasher a hatt’,<sup>9</sup> implying the mayor’s active participation—and thus approval—of the shows. Yet, it is possible that, as a leader of the community, Towse had to be *seen* to participate in the ludic actions,<sup>10</sup> because at the time of performance an overt refusal to participate would have been more damaging to his position

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<sup>7</sup> Examination of William Williams, alias Morgan, Gentleman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 133v (26 January 1608), REED, p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> Certified copy of Defendant’s Examinations, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 216v-17 (10 January 1608) (Examination of Alexander Towse, gentleman, former mayor of Wells, aged 65), REED, p. 328.

<sup>9</sup> Examination of John Isaac, Cordwainer, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 157-7v (Taken 26 June on defendants’ interrogatories), REED, p. 355-356. Examination of John Gorway, Clothier, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 37v (27 May), REED, p. 345. Examination of Henry Boureman, St Olave’s Parish, Hart Street, London, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 68v (10 July), REED, p. 356-357.

<sup>10</sup> I use the term *ludus* as utilized by Lawrence M. Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game: English Festive Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Period* (London and Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 19.

in the community than taking part; after all, the show had been performed in the context of civic processions and festive life that expressed the unity of the community.<sup>11</sup> By participating, Towse showed that he conformed to the local framework. At the same time, it would have been just as important for the organisers of the event that the mayor was involved in their shows, as it would have signalled to the spectators, and in particular to those who were mocked through the *charivari*-like performances, that the events had the support of local authorities. Both Towse and the organisers thus displayed willingness to manage their personal risk through their choices of action, but miscalculated where this risk would come from, and what shape it would take. As it was only at the start of the Star Chamber hearings that Towse, and other participants with him, would have realised the extent of the actual legal implications of their participation and approval, this explains the discrepancy between their actions in the shows as reconstructed from the law suit, and the answers given during the interrogatory.

It can be inferred from the choices of action of actors, participants and spectators, that they misjudged the riskiness of the performance context at the time of performance. This chapter argues two things. Firstly, that those involved in the production of the shows relied on tradition, local authority and community, or the illusion of community, as risk managers. Tradition was initially their foremost means of justifying the shows, but the acceptability of tradition was becoming disputed. I argue that the May as opposed to the June shows and games display an anxiety on the part of the playmakers that the traditional shows and games might be opposed by Sabbatarians. This is evident from the fact that the plays and games were deliberately celebrated outside of prayer time, suggesting that the playmakers were mindful that the performances should not keep people away from church, as this would cause a conflict with reform-leaning members of the community. And indeed, the revival of the traditional May and summer festivity *was* opposed by reform-leaning members of the community, notably by one John Hole and Mistress

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<sup>11</sup> Mervyn James' article on the community as a body rightly remains the most influential work on civic unity expressed through drama and ritual. Mervyn James, 'Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town', *Past & Present* 98 (1983), pp. 3-29. See also, Lawrence Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game*, p. 109.

Yard, who openly opposed the ‘crude’ activities that kept people away from church; that formed occasions for lewd behaviour and a potential danger of riots and general delinquency caused by public groups forming.<sup>12</sup> The friction between those seeking to revive and maintain the traditional entertainments, and those refusing to participate in them and seeking to prevent them, is evident from the sequence of events in the case study.

Secondly, this chapter claims that a shift in risk perception and management can be observed in the Wells playmakers of 1607, from anxiety about performing when they were only relying on an already expired tradition, to becoming more confident, and even reckless, in the use of the ludic medium when they found their revival of May and summer games condoned by local authorities. This chapter observes that once local authority support was granted, the organisers and actors of the traditional shows also started using the ludic medium to deride those members of the community who had opposed the revival of the shows. It is within the sequence of May and summer game-related mock-pageants that another shift can be detected in the actors’ and participants’ perception and management of risk. This can be observed from the fact that the earliest of the mock-pageant starts off relatively ‘moderately’ with a strong festive undertone in its mockeries. Furthermore, this pageant delivers its criticism in a roundabout sort of way, hereby carefully managing the extent to which the burlesqued member of the community could be laughed at, befitting the festive context. Supported in this by the local authorities, the actors thought their actions safe within the ludic context of the church-ale. However, the subsequent shows gradually grew more hostile as the actors and participants started to produce less controlled shows, thinking that they did not risk anything in mocking deviant members in the community, because of the support granted by the local authorities.

It will be observed that from the beginning of June 1607 onwards, criticism was no longer delivered in a predominantly ludic way, and the actors, aware that they were moving away from defending their traditional ludic customs, into the spheres of organised bullying, started to seek to manage

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<sup>12</sup> Bill of Complaint in *Hole v. White et al.*, p. 261. See also, Tony Scrase, *Wells: A Small City* (Stroud, England: Tempus, 2006), p. 84.

their performance risk in a different way: their management took the form of implicating the prominent members of the community, or through creating the illusion of the community as a whole supporting the mock-event. It is likely that by this point, the organisers, actors and participants had already realized that they had gone too far in their ludic crusade against the reformists. However, they did not yet know the extent of the legal risks they had run, which would reveal itself first at the Assizes held in Taunton in September 1607—which the actors disputed by again invoking the whole community as implicated—but more conclusively so at the start of the Star Chamber investigation. By then it was too late, and the actors and participants had misjudged both their audience, and the current political and social climate in which they were performing, in which the revival of formerly suppressed ludic tradition was not condoned.

The chapter concludes by observing that the Wells' community struggling to keep their traditional customs exemplifies the need to view drama in terms of its immediate performance context rather than through the lens of periodisation. That is to say that risk management is not an act but a process in which different elements that have to be considered are always changing. For example, as observed in chapter four, the performance of Heywood's *Play of the Wether* in 1532 would have carried very different implications than a performance of the same play in 1533. On the other hand, traditional elements could be reapplied in newer dramatic forms centuries after their first appearance without undermining the dramatic performance or in fact the spectators' appreciation of it. Although certain patterns of risk management can be observed throughout this thesis—strengthening or minimizing affect, the use of Narrator figures, the ways in which problematic aspects of the play (the Mass, Mary Magdalene's prostitution, the representation of kingship) were visualized, and audience inclusion through ritual or ceremony—successful risk management is unique to every specific performance context, and is employed productively when playwrights know what dramatic forms or what elements of the dramatic form they can safely use within that very performance context. The Wells case however shows an example of where risk was not successfully managed, where playmakers had not noticed that the central tolerance for a local framework had changed, and

with that, the framework of signals through which risk could be successfully controlled.

## 5.2 Performance Context

Between the 30<sup>th</sup> of April and the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 1607 a sequence of shows and games were performed in Wells that attempted to revive traditional entertainments which had in recent years been suppressed by the Lord Chief Justice of England and justices of Peace in Somerset.<sup>13</sup> The expression, repression and counter-action of traditional customs in Wells should be read against the backdrop of a nationwide debate on Sunday recreation, which saw, as Alistair Dougall put it, ‘radical reformers and established authority fighting not just over the question of sports and Sunday observance, but over issues of authority and power in early Stuart England’.<sup>14</sup>

The traditional entertainments were organized by the civic and the religious leaders of the community, and included a variety of May games, Morris dancing and processional dancing, religious plays or shows, Robin Hoods, and a string of pageants and shows. Where the May games were predominantly ludic, the civic shows comprised pageants and speeches, which in their totality could be seen as an ‘enacted script or drama’.<sup>15</sup> The civic shows, organised by the guilds or verderies, ran from the 15<sup>th</sup> up to and including the 17<sup>th</sup> of June that year, and have been described in great detail through the Star Chamber case, and in a libelous song written by William Gamage. The song recounts the ludic presence of a combination of Old Testament, mythical, legendary, traditional and local figures: a Lord of May with attendants, warlike captains and their followers, the Pinner of Wakefield, Robin Hood and his attendants, a painted calf, St George and the dragon with

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<sup>13</sup> James Stokes, ‘The Wells Shows of 1607’, *Festive Drama*, ed. by Meg Twycross (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), pp. 145-156, p. 146.

<sup>14</sup> Alistair Dougall, *The Devil’s Book: Charles I, The Book of Sports and Puritanism in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2011), p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> In the words of Clopper, ‘Certain kinds of events—royal entrees, for example—may have pageants with speeches, and the whole sequence can be understood as an enacted script or drama. I do not wish to separate ‘drama’, that is, enacted scripts of a whole action, from these other kinds of ‘dramas.’ Lawrence Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game*, p. 12.

knights and Irish footmen, two men balancing an egg, Old Grandam Bunch making puddings, Actaeon chased by hounds, Diana with six nymphs, Noah and the ark carried by six men, a giant and a giantess, a naked feathered boy, and an Egyptian king and queen.<sup>16</sup> In the Star Chamber Minute Book the defendants are also recorded as having spoken of a show of 'Princ<.> Authur and his knight',<sup>17</sup> but as Stokes observes, this show is not mentioned anywhere else in the records.<sup>18</sup> From the Star Chamber records a reconstruction of the sequence of civic shows and pageants can be made, showing what route the pageants would have taken to and from the church-house, where the civic groups would have held their charitable ales. One can infer that on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June there were 'severall goings of the people of Tuckarstreet ... to the Churchale there'.<sup>19</sup> The Tuckers Company was involved in the cloth trade. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 'certaine shewes were presented & acted' in the High Street of Wells.<sup>20</sup> This was the domain of the Shoemakers, Tailors and other tradesmen. A procession went along the market place and the High Street to a church-ale at St Cuthbert's churchyard, and back again. Songs and hymns were sung along the way, and men were heard calling 'Hey for highe streete' at regular intervals.<sup>21</sup> On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June shows were performed by the Mercers of Chamberlain Street.<sup>22</sup> A procession was made from Chamberlain Street to the church-house, passing the market place and then going back to Chamberlain Street. The procession consisted of the choristers of the cathedral church in white linen garments, and singing hymns,<sup>23</sup> preceding a person who 'was carried vppon mens shoulders or in a Coatche to represent the Godess

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<sup>16</sup> William Gamage, 'My Loving Friends', PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 117v, col 1 – sheet 117, col 2 (July), REED, pp. 711-715.

<sup>17</sup> Star Chamber Minute Book, Alnwick Castle, Percy Letters and Papers, vol 9 23/6, f 99, REED, p. 365.

<sup>18</sup> Stokes, REED, vol 2, p. 728.

<sup>19</sup> Interrogatories for William Williams, alias Morgan, Gentleman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 141 (24 January), REED, p. 333.

<sup>20</sup> First General Series of Interrogatories for Complainant's Witnesses, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 80 (5 May), REED, p. 338. Interrogatories for William Williams, alias Morgan, p. 333.

<sup>21</sup> First General Series of Interrogatories for Complainant's Witnesses, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 80 (5 May), REED, p. 338.

<sup>22</sup> Interrogatories for William Williams, alias Morgan, p. 333.

<sup>23</sup> First General Series of Interrogatories for Complainant's Witnesses, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 80 (5 May), REED, p. 337. Robert Hole recognises the hymns as coming from the Psalms of David. Examination of Robert Hole of London, Yeoman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 24-4v (Taken 10 May), REED, p. 339.

Diana'.<sup>24</sup> A further pageant was carried by men and women 'there on greate stoare of Plate of all sortes', and a 'tente carried by men or weomen' with inside the tent a man 'playeinge on a Shakebute'.<sup>25</sup> An eye-witness describes furthermore,

and alsoe that daye there was a Man Gyante and a woeman Gyante And alsoe a man on horseback in armor with sword & speare representing St George and the Counterfeite of a dragon with a man within him that carried the same and they boath represented or Acted the fighte betweene the dragon & St George.<sup>26</sup>

It is likely that the representation of St George and the dragon in the parade may have taken the form of a play or show,<sup>27</sup> a notion that is further invited by one William Williams having admitted at the interrogation to have been an 'Actor in a sporte or pastyme representing the history of St George acted and perfourmed in thopen streetes'.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the plays and shows, the May and summer events comprised dancing, music making, as well as ritual and processional forms, and were thus inherently highly interactive. At the heart of these ludic and theatrical events lay the charitable church-ale, a type of parish fundraising wide-spread through England,<sup>29</sup> which served to make donating money towards the needs of the parish enjoyable, for example through the serving of bread and beer at the church-house alongside the performance of different shows and pageants. Other May and June shows and games were organized to the

<sup>24</sup> Examination of Robert Hole of London, Yeoman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 24-4v (Taken 10 May), REED, p. 339.

<sup>25</sup> Examination of Robert Hole of London, p. 340.

<sup>26</sup> Examination of Robert Hole of London, REED, p. 340.

<sup>27</sup> James Stokes' article on the Cordwainers' show makes the claim that 'historie' in the performance context means 'a story represented dramatically'; so that he interprets the St Crispin and St Crispianus show to be a play rather than a tableau. James Stokes, 'The Wells Cordwainers Show: New Evidence Concerning Guild Entertainments in Somerset', *Comparative Drama* 19: 4 (1985/6), pp. 332-346, p. 334.

<sup>28</sup> Examination of William Williams, alias Morgan, Gentleman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 133v (26 January), REED, p. 334.

<sup>29</sup> Judith M. Bennett, 'Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England', *Past and Present* 134 (1992), pp. 19-41; Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 99-141.



end of celebrating religious holidays (such as Ascension Day or Trinity Sunday), but also, as James Stokes observed, 'to express civic pride and communal harmony, or to punish offenders against social norms'.<sup>30</sup> Within the context of the Wells performance tradition, all these different aspects of the May and June shows were predominantly festive, but also in the words of Stokes, 'a uniquely concerted effort to preserve traditional cultural practices in a society whose culture was already fracturing'.<sup>31</sup>

The Wells spring and summer events attracted spectators from the city, but also from 'Countrie parishes and townes aboute to beholde the sayed shewes then and there made',<sup>32</sup> as one eye-witness observes. Estimating the number of spectators that were present at such festivities is difficult. Numbers of spectators and participants would have varied on different days. For example the mock-pageants on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June are described by one witness as having attracted 'two or three hundred persons' and those on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 'aboute 4 or 500 persons', which the witness describes as 'a great multitude'.<sup>33</sup> For this same day a perhaps more exaggerated estimation of about 3000 spectators was offered by John Hole in his Bill of Complaint.<sup>34</sup> Because different individuals suggest different estimations for the same events, befitting their own agenda, witness-statements do not always prove helpful in establishing the numbers making up the crowds. Furthermore, it is likely that because the festivities ran on for about two months, some events would have attracted more spectators than others. Moreover, spectators were likely to come and go throughout the day, so that different numbers of spectators were present at different times.

For the context of the 1607 shows it is important to consider to what extent the tradition that the citizens of Wells hid behind in their (in hindsight

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<sup>30</sup> James Stokes, 'Landscape, Movement and Civic Mimesis in the West of England', *Early Theatre* 6: 1 (2003), pp. 35-49.

<sup>31</sup> James Stokes, 'The Wells Shows of 1607', *Festive Drama*, ed. by Meg Twycross (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), pp. 145-156, p. 155.

<sup>32</sup> Examination of Christopher Croker, Clothier, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 38v-9, REED, p. 348.

<sup>33</sup> Examination of William Tyderlegh, Gentleman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 51 (11 June), REED, p. 353.

<sup>34</sup> Bill of Complaint in Hole v. White et al., PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 219 (19 April), REED, p. 265.

unsuccessful) risk management, was really a tradition. The first recording of a church ale in Wells dates from 1497-8, when the money that was made at the charitable event, had disappeared:

Prouenientes ante hoc tempus de Robynhode e puellis trepudiantibus.  
communi seruisia ecclesie & huismodi.<sup>35</sup>

[That is, the profits made before this time from Robin Hood, the girls dancing, the common ale of the church, and such like events].<sup>36</sup>

Evidence tells us that Wells had a rich ludic tradition as early as 1337, when Dean of Wells Walter de London prohibited 'stage plays ... put on in the aforesaid church by the laity during Whitsuntide and also on other festivals' which contained 'likenesses of ghosts' and which apparently induced the clergy to participate and 'hinder the divine office by the obscene ravings of their gestures [and] make the honour of the clergy grow cheap in the sight of the people'.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, there seems to have been a tradition of a play being performed in the Easter week, as was recorded in 1407-8, 1408-9, 1417-8 (when two beards for two pilgrims had to be procured),<sup>38</sup> 1418-9, and finally, in 1471 mention is made of the crafting of wigs for the three Mary's playing on the night of Easter.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, there was a tradition of boy bishops (sometimes referred to as the 'boys' little bishop') on Holy Innocents' Day, first registered in 1397, and last mentioned in 1538.<sup>40</sup> The tradition of the boy bishop was abolished during the Henrician Reformation, which reached Somerset sometime between 1536 and 1539, but it is likely that not all traditional customs were abolished at this point; in April 1539 one John Goodale wrote to Cromwell 'from Sarum westward the injunctions are not observed, and will not be unless you send surveyors into these parts'.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Corporation Act Book 2, Wells Town Hall (30 September – 19 March 1498), REED, p. 252.

<sup>36</sup> James Stokes and Robert J. Alexander (eds), *REED, vol. 2. Editorial Apparatus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 841.

<sup>37</sup> Statutes of Dean Walter de London (14 July 1338) (Chapter 3), REED, vol. 2, p. 832.

<sup>38</sup> Cathedral Communars Account Rolles, Wells Cathedral Library, MB 1 (1417-8), REED, pp. 241-243.

<sup>39</sup> Cathedral Communars Account Rolles, Wells Cathedral Library, MB 2 (1470-1), REED, p. 248.

<sup>40</sup> REED, vol. 1, pp. 240-256.

<sup>41</sup> 'Letters and Papers: April 1539, 26-30', *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, Volume 14 Part 1: January-July 1539 (1894), pp. 399-424, in *British History*

In the ludic events in Wells, the church took a central position, but also involved the laity. Similarly, the church-ales in 1607 appear to have been a team effort by the church and the community to raise funds to restore the broken church bell.<sup>42</sup> Robert Creese, one of the churchwardens who organized the church-ale, was recorded as claiming that he and the other churchwarden had followed an 'ancient custome' when they organized that year's church-ale:

he and his fellowe Churchwarden according to the ancient custome of that place dyd provide a certeine quantetie of bread and beare for the neighbors to yeate & drinke ... in the Churchhowse & Churchyard, And that they the sayd Churchwardens so dyd according to auncient custome withoute any authoretie given vnto them so to do.<sup>43</sup>

However, in 1609, the former mayor of Wells, Mr. Alexander Towse, denied that Wells had had a church-ale tradition in 1607, when the shows and games were performed. Recognizing church-ales as a thing of the past, Towse observed that when church-ales had been legally suppressed within the county of Somerset, the city of Wells observed that order, and had not organized any such events:

The Lord Cheeffe Iustice of England then living & other Iustices of the peace at a general Sessions ordered that all Churchales within this Countie, of Somerset, should be from that tyme forward suppressed which sayd order was kepte and observed, within the sayd parishe for the space of 13. or 14. yeares after.<sup>44</sup>

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*Online.* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=75861&strquery=sarum> [accessed 7 June 2013]. This observation has been quoted by Stokes, REED, vol. 2, p. 452.

<sup>42</sup> Examination of Edmund White, barber-surgeon, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 8v-9v (15 May), REED, p. 284.

<sup>43</sup> Certified Copy of Defendants' Examinations, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 213 (10 January) (Examination of Robert Creese, saddler, aged 33), REED, p. 318.

<sup>44</sup> Certified Copy of Defendants' Examinations, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 216v-17 (10 January) (Examination of Alexander Towse, gentleman, former mayor of Wells, aged 65), REED, p. 327.

It is possible that, as Towse suggests, no shows had been performed between 1595 and 1607.<sup>45</sup> Yet, the May and June events were still described by some citizens as traditional. For example, the recorded statement of John Isaac, a cordwainer, speaks of a charitable custom:

... knowe that in his tyme it hath ben a Custome vsed in the sayed Towne of wells in and aboute the Monethes of Maye and Iune ^some yeares^ [yearelie]<sup>46</sup> that the Maior and inhabitauntes there [yearelie] doe meete at the Church howse, there to suppe or drinke togeather of purpose and entente to cause some small somes of money to bee spent for and towards the reparacions of the parishe Church there, the which hathe ben vsed [manye] in his tyme thrice, and hathe heard by his father and Grand^mother^ [father] that the same had ben an auntyent Custome, with certayne Pageantes Maye games and shewes with morrys daunces sett forthe for recreacion.<sup>47</sup>

The record was later corrected, and it appears that either Isaac or the authorities, who questioned them, changed his statement from the custom having occurred 'yearelie' to them having taken place 'some yeares'. Furthermore, where originally he had said that he had seen the games and shows 'manye' time, this was later corrected into 'in his tyme thrice'. Perhaps Isaac had first attempted to make the tradition appear stronger or more consistently celebrated than it really was. If Isaac had seen these activities performed 'thrice' in his lifetime, this would mean as observed by Stokes, that there would have been three church-ales since 1572,<sup>48</sup> which is far from 'yearelie'. Wells' shoemaker Thomas Petters described the bringing in of the May as a traditional event that had been performed in 'former yeares', and said that he had sounded a drum in the street,

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<sup>45</sup> Or as James Stokes observes, 'between c. 1596 and 1607', Stokes, 'The Wells Shows of 1607', p. 146.

<sup>46</sup> The information in [ ] has been later corrected from the statement, and the text within ^ has been interlineated above the line. It suggests that John Isaac's claim was first that the tradition occurred annually, but that he later changed this into 'some years'. Similarly, Isaac's grandfather was changed into his grandmother.

<sup>47</sup> Examination of John Isaac, Cordwainer, Public Record Office: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 157-7v (taken 26 June on defendants' interrogatories), REED, p.355.

<sup>48</sup> Stokes, 'The Wells Shows of 1607', p. 146.

with an intent to goe with others in m[e]eriment then also to fetch in may in such sort as had ben vsed to be done in former yeares in the saied City amongst the younger sort of people.<sup>49</sup>

These accounts suggest that perhaps the May and summer games had not been celebrated with frequency since the official suppression of these activities, but were still considered part of the city's cultural heritage. Tradition was therefore an unreliable risk-manager, as it was not perceived to be a tradition by all. Consequently, the actors' and participants' expectation that they would be opposed by reform-leaning members of the community can be observed in the way in which the shows were organized in early May, as the next section will show.

### 5.3 May games

On Thursday the 14<sup>th</sup> of May, Ascension Day, a traditional May pageant was performed, featuring the Morris troupe, the Lord and Lady of the May, and a children's pageant in which 'diuers boyes and Maydes in Woomens apparel ... goe abou<.>e the streetes of the said towne'<sup>50</sup> to perform 'a shew'.<sup>51</sup> The pageant was highly participative in nature, and would have allowed for the spectators to play the entourage of the mock-royalty. The day had not been a Sunday, but because it was a holy day, the festive community had anticipated Sabbatarian opposition to their festivities. Trying to manage the risk for all participants involved, the organisers of the events scheduled the show not to interfere with prayer time, so that 'noe persons ... did absent themselves from divine service for that purpose'.<sup>52</sup> The reform-leaning John Hole in his function of Constable however complained that the local women had been kept from

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<sup>49</sup> Interrogatories for Thomas Petters, Journeyman Shoemaker, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet, 192, REED, p. 300.

<sup>50</sup> Interrogatories for Principal Defendants in Hole v. White et al., PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 220 (10-15 May), REED, p. 276.

<sup>51</sup> These words are crossed out on the document by the scribe. Examination of Thomasine White, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 5v-6 (15 May), REED, p. 282.

<sup>52</sup> Examination of Thomasine White, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 5v-6 (15 May), REED, p. 282.

Morning Prayer because they were dressing the little children for the show.<sup>53</sup> He took offence that the celebrations had been performed on a holy day, regardless of whether they had or had not taken place outside of church time, something that was a cause of dispute in England and Scotland at that time. Hole also objected to the use of children in the pageant. Stokes has observed that the 'use of children was common among guilds in Wells', but that 'the clear connection to the Feast of the Ascension would have inflamed the Puritans'.<sup>54</sup> In defence of the shows, and in an attempt to manage the participants' risk, Thomasine White described the children's pageant as traditional and moderate, and said that involving the children in the May games was done 'in [such] honest and Civill manner as hath benn heretofore vsed to see'.<sup>55</sup>

Tradition, however, was not always a sufficient risk-manager, and at times the revellers had to seek help from local authorities. For example, on Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May a supper was held at the church-house, after which 'by a general voice of many people'<sup>56</sup> a Lord and Lady of the May were elected, respectively George Greenstreet, a gentleman,<sup>57</sup> and Thomasina White, the wife of barber-surgeon Edmund White.<sup>58</sup> After being elected, the Lord and Lady of the May were 'lifted vp above the ground to kisse togeather', and they led 30 or 40 married couples in a long dance, which they danced 'hand in hand towards the Inn or tauerne'<sup>59</sup> (the George Inn), from which they proceeded to East Wells to drink and revel.<sup>60</sup> Tony Scrase has observed that Hole was unfortunate to live at 41 High Street, from where he would have been exposed to the maximum amount of noise and inconvenience.<sup>61</sup> At this point Hole

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<sup>53</sup> Interrogatories for Principal Defendants in *Hole v. White et al.*, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 220, REED, p. 276.

<sup>54</sup> James Stokes, 'The Wells Shows of 1607', p. 148.

<sup>55</sup> Examination of Thomasine White, REED, p. 282.

<sup>56</sup> Certified Copy of Defendants' Examinations, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 218 (10 January), (Examination of George Greenstreet, gentleman, aged 28), REED, p. 331.

<sup>57</sup> Interrogatories for George Greenstreet, Gentleman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 193, REED, p. 331.

<sup>58</sup> Interrogatories for John Gylbert, Gentleman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 116v (14 November) REED, p. 313.

<sup>59</sup> Certified Copy of Defendants' Examinations, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 218v, REED, p. 332.

<sup>60</sup> Interrogatories for George Greenstreet, p. 331.

<sup>61</sup> Tony Scrase, *Wells: A Small City* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), p. 84.

attempted to use his authority as Constable to bring a stop to the merriments, disregarding their traditional nature, but Town Master William Watkins defended the revellers. The latter allegedly asked the Constable not to disturb the young people, as they were only making merry in between the time of morning and evening prayers.<sup>62</sup> Watkins's statement shows that the community had again scheduled the merriments to occur *outside* of prayer time. Their effort betrays a cautious position towards reviving the festivities that had been suppressed in former years. However, this risk-management did not satisfy Hole, who as with the children's pageant took offence at *any* festivities taking place on the Sunday or on holy days, regardless of the time of performance. Hole told Watkins,

That they should not continue, theyre vnlawfull sportes saying you are a Dogge and a rebell, to mayntayne such disorders.<sup>63</sup>

Watkins then said to Hole that *he* was the Master of the town, as good a man as the Constable, and that 'the Constable was a knave to vse him so'.<sup>64</sup> The support of the Town Master would have given the revellers not only the authority necessary for allowing them to continue their ludic activities, but this exchange also shows how estimating the risks of performance in such a context needs to be understood at the level of individual's status and character in the community.

The festive community at different times also enjoyed the support of the Bishop and the Justice of the Peace, as is evident from the shows and games that took place on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May. On this day the Morris group and their captain attended a charitable ale in Croscomb to help a poor weaver.<sup>65</sup> When at 6.00 pm a group of about forty men returned, they paraded to the High Cross, where they danced a Morris dance for an audience of a hundred people.

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<sup>62</sup> Certified Copy of Defendants' Examinations, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 213v-14 (10 January) (Examination of Stephen Millard, Tailor, aged 43), REED, p. 320.

<sup>63</sup> Certified Copy of Defendants' Examinations, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 213v-14 (10 January) (Examination of Stephen Millard, Tailor, aged 43), REED, p. 320.

<sup>64</sup> Certified Copy of Defendants' Examinations, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 213v-14 (10 January) (Examination of Stephen Millard, Tailor, aged 43), REED, p. 320.

<sup>65</sup> Examination of Oliver Martin, Labourer, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 1-1v (15 May), REED, p. 280.

According to one witness, Constable Hole appeared in the street and demanded that the Morris dancers were imprisoned for their disturbance of the Sabbath, and because they disturbed Hole's charging of the Night Watch,<sup>66</sup> to which the bystanders broke out in turmoil, allowing the tabor player to escape in the moment of confusion that followed.<sup>67</sup> The Morris dancers then went up to the Bishop's palace, and continued to make merry there for another hour.<sup>68</sup> As Stokes has observed, this event illustrates to what extent support was given by both the Bishop and the Justice of the Peace—the former by letting the Morris dancers use his garden for their revelling, and the latter for allowing three of his retainers to facilitate the music for the event.<sup>69</sup> This would have further boosted the self-confidence with which the organisers and actors of the shows and games felt they could safely pursue their revival of the local dramatic and ludic tradition, and would have altered their perception of their risks run in the participation of such events.

A similar support granted by the local authorities can be found on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May, when Hole read out the Royal Proclamation that had been issued on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 1603 by the new king James I on his arrival in London. The Proclamation read the following:

... and for that we are informed that there hath been heretofore great neglect in this kingdome of keeping the Sabbath-day: For better observing of the same and avoyding all impious prophanation, we do straightly charge and command, that no Beare-bayting, Bul-bayting, Enterludes, Common Playes, or other like disordered or unlawful Exercises, or Pastimes, be frequented, kept, or used at any time hereafter upon the Sabbath-day.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Examination of Edward Carye, Gentleman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 172 (7 June), REED, p. 297.

<sup>67</sup> Interrogatories for Principal Defendants in Hole vs. White et al, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 220 (10-15 May), REED, p. 276. Examination of Oliver Martin, p. 281.

<sup>68</sup> Examination of John Yarde, Haberdasher, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 28 (13 May), REED, p. 342.

<sup>69</sup> James Stokes, 'The Wells Shows of 1607', p. 148.

<sup>70</sup> Royal Proclamation 7 May 1603. Carol Chillington Rutter (ed), *Documents of the Rose Playhouse* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 212.



The Mayor, Alexander Towse, publicly did not support Hole's claim and told him that 'yt was lawfull to vse suche games & pastimes vppon anie Sabbath day so that they were not vsed in tyme of devyne seruice or sermon, or words to suche effect'.<sup>71</sup> Where the support of the Town Master, the Bishop, and the local Justice of Peace had involved nothing more than the figure of authority that was present at the performance letting the festive community get on with their shows and games, Alexander Towse took a more assertive stance to the revival of the traditional shows by openly contradicting Hole, and suggesting that the latter had no ground for opposing the pastimes that had been carefully planned around the times of church service. This would have signalled to the revellers that, as far as the Mayor was concerned, their original management of the performance of traditional festivities—scheduling their festivities around church services, and enjoying their recreation moderately—was judged to be sufficient within the local context. Not all local authorities coming to the aid of the performers and revellers would have necessarily been great supporters of the revival of the summer revels; some of them could simply have resented Hole's overstepping his rank as Constable, and his constant contradiction of the decisions already made by the local authorities under what they perhaps saw as the 'pretence to prevent prophanation of the Sabbath'. This opinion is illustrated by the Defendants' response in the Star Chamber Minute Book, which reads that Hole,

was then but an inferior officer, yet taking on hi<.> more then the  
maior and lustices of the towne with a pretence to preven<.>  
prophanacion of the sabaothe'.<sup>72</sup>

It is likely that the authorities had their own agenda for supporting the actors of the shows. For example, the records provide us with evidence suggesting that a long-standing feud between Hole and other local authorities had been hovering over the town since 1599, when Hole, in his function of Church Warden, quarrelled with a Master, William Williams alias Morgan. As a consequence, Hole was temporarily removed from his official position because

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<sup>71</sup> First General Series of Interrogatories for Complainant's Witnesses, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 80 (5 May), REED, p. 338.

<sup>72</sup> Star Chamber Minute Book, REED, p. 365.

he refused to withdraw some words of disrespect uttered against Williams.<sup>73</sup> Hole was supported in his quarrels by Hugh Meade who was a pewterer, John Yard who was a hatter and a publican (he owned the Crown), and the grocer Humphrey Palmer, who therefore also considerably lost popularity within the community. Regardless of the authorities' motives for supporting the ludic defence of the traditional customs, it would have strengthened the community's sense of security about the performance of such shows within the local performance context. From this moment onwards their performances can be perceived to have grown more reckless, due to the actors' extending the traditional shows and games to mockeries directed at Constable Hole. For example, in the evening of the next day, there was another dance around the Maypole, near the High Cross, led by the Lord and Lady of the May, followed by their mock-courtiers. Participants sang songs ridiculing Hole along the lines of 'heigh for Hole now for hole'.<sup>74</sup> One could say that the 1607 performances were now working on a feud which had lasted for eight years. Perhaps the longevity of the dispute had 'naturalised' it to the town and so even that satirical turn would have been felt traditionally authorised by the long-standing tensions in the town.

By the end of the month of May, there had been various encounters between the festive community, Hole and his sympathisers, and various local church and secular authorities. Throughout the month, the accumulating support from these authorities would have fed the actors' and participants' sense that they were justified in performing the traditional shows. This also meant that the reformists were forced to reconsider their own position within the community, and sought to manage this, as it seemed that the tables were turning, and looked as if the traditionalists would come out of the ludic revival squabble as victors. This turning-point can be observed to have occurred on Trinity Sunday, the 31<sup>st</sup> of May. The evidence for this can be found in Mr Yard, a friend of Hole's and a known opponent of the ludic revival, inviting the Mayor, Mr Alexander Towse, to come to his house to watch a show from 'a

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<sup>73</sup> Tony Scrase, *Wells: A Small City* (Stroud, England: Tempus, 2006), p. 83.

<sup>74</sup> Interrogatories for John Gylbert, Gentleman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 116v (14 November), REED, p. 313.

roome where hee mighte conuenientlye and priuatlye see the same'.<sup>75</sup> The shows that had been performed on the day were a Robin Hood, Morris dancing and street performances at the market place.<sup>76</sup> Although not a lot of information about this particular Robin Hood has survived, Stokes has observed how in Yeovil a similar tradition existed in which Robin Hood and his band lead the parishioners into the streets with the aid of a drummer, and one carrying a staff, to enjoy a noisy and celebrational procession to the local parish church, where they would have enjoyed a dinner together, and after that enjoyed some dancing and revelling.<sup>77</sup> The show would have been in aid of a charitable cause, and the description of the procession seems to have been not unlike the civic shows that were performed in Wells in June.

Yard pointedly invited Towse to come to his house in the evening after prayer time, in order, by exactly defining Yard's relation to the plays, to manage the risk which they might pose to him (Yard). In doing so, Yard publicly showed himself to tolerate the traditional Robin Hood, provided that it was not performed at times of divine worship, and showed himself a good neighbour who did not begrudge others their go at raising charity funds, but importantly, as someone who was also seen to receive the Mayor at his house. Since Towse had been the one to publicly disagree with Hole's assertion that any kind of festivity performed on the Sabbath was illegal, Yard's fraternizing with the Mayor could have been a public gesture to indicate that the society had not been fractured by the events which took place during the month of May. Yard thus distanced himself from Hole's persecution of the traditional festivities. Yard would have had good reasons to be seen to be on the same side as the Mayor, sharing his moderate, 'middle ground' opinion that the ludic shows *could* be revived, as long as they did not interfere with prayer time, because he may have felt that the local social climate was changing rapidly in

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<sup>75</sup> Examination of John Yarde, Haberdasher, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 28v (13 May), REED, p. 342.

<sup>76</sup> Interrogatories for Principal Defendants in Hole v. White et al., PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 220 (10-15 May) REED, p. 277. Robert Prinne, a yeoman, played Robin Hood, and the tailor Stephen Millard was 'Robinhoodes man carrieng with him a bowe & arrowes'. Certified copy of Defendants' Examinations, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 213v-14 (10 January) (Examination of Stephen Millard, tailor, aged 43), REED, p. 321.

<sup>77</sup> James Stokes, 'Robin Hood and the Churchwardens in Yeovil', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 3 (1986), pp. 1-25, p. 6.

favour of the festive community. Yard would not have wanted to jeopardise his position in the community in which he was living, and in which he also had to *make a living* through his trade. His motives for countenancing the Robin Hood and inviting the Mayor to join him may thus have had social and economic incentives. Most importantly for the purpose of this case study, Yard's changing sides provides the record reader with the impression that by the end of May the perception of risk for both performers and participants, spectators and opponents to the shows, had probably changed.

Although it is impossible to know how members of the diverse audiences to the different shows interpreted the pageants at an individual level, or how those involved in the acting out of these events experienced risk at every individual performance, a change in the perception of risk can be detected to have occurred during the month of May, causing the revelling community to have felt gradually less risk, and to consider themselves as the winning party, whilst some of the opponents of the ludic form admitted defeat. The next section will illustrate that at this point the organisers and actors of the traditional shows made a mistake in their risk-assessment, emboldened by the temporary turn in the local social climate. That is to say that in the month of June they started to become more reckless and less inclined to manage their performance risk by trying to accommodate the reformists in celebrating their traditional customs outside of church hours. They also can be observed to have crossed the boundary between defending one's culture and organised bullying.

## 5.4 Civic performances

Once the festive community had made their point about continuing the revival of their tradition, ludic activities appear to have temporarily returned to their more traditional form, with charitable fundraising as their main objective. The month of June saw a number of civic, processional pageants and shows that were performed by the different verderies of Wells to raise funds towards a

new church bell.<sup>78</sup> The shows for Tucker Street on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, for High Street on the 16<sup>th</sup>, and for Chamberlain Street on the 17<sup>th</sup>, were traditional festive events which included the community through processions. An eye-witness statement records the participation of the 'maior and his Companie' as varied, and committed:

the greatest parte of the maisters of the Towne, and diuers of the defendants weare at the Church house ... and suppte at the Churche [house] Alle there. And that the Maior and his Companie [for the most parte] weare present and beheld and followed the said shewes as they went, and came from the Churchall through the streates.<sup>79</sup>

The suggestion is offered that some community members of high standing joined the procession from the church-house to the city cross. Their presence would have given an air of formality to the exercise, and authorized the church-ale, which was officially illegal because church-ales had been banned in the county of Somerset, with their presence. The Mayor and his 'company' had also set the example for other members of the community to join the celebrations, and of course to donate money towards the church-ale. Furthermore, the Mayor's walking along with the processions would have expressed local civic pride, which explains why disguised actors and principal citizens would have walked and sung together, as described by an eye-witness account:

Att which tyme hee thincketh that the then Maior of the sayed Cittye and some others of the principall Cittizens did goe after or before the sayed person representing the Goddess Diana, and soe wente singing vnto the Churcheale, and from thence agayne retourned in the same manner singing and coninuewinge the sayed shewes throughe the street and market place.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Examination of Edmund White, Barber-surgeon, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 8v-9v (15 May), REED, p. 284.

<sup>79</sup> Examination of William Tyderlegh, Gentleman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 51, p. 352.

<sup>80</sup> Examination of Robert Hole of London, Yeoman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 24-4v, REED, p. 340.

It has been observed that ‘the Dean of Wells cathedral had given permission for the choristers to take part’, and that the Dean, as well as one of the Justices of the Peace, and a local knight, had been present to watch the performances.<sup>81</sup> At this point in time it looked as if the church-ale was supported on all sides by local church and civic authorities, and even by the local gentry.<sup>82</sup> However, it is important to keep in mind that initially, both Sir John Rodney, a knight, and the Mayor, had not been willing to authorize the church-ale.<sup>83</sup> It appears that the local authorities (apart from the Dean, who *had* given his authority for the church-ale to be held) were happy to participate in the shows, as long as they were not the ones held responsible for it. This betrays a kind of risk management on their part, as they knew the church ales to have been banned by the Somerset JPs and had no desire to break county legislation by officially counteracting the JP’s decision, but on the other hand they did not want to jeopardise their own position within the local community. Their participation in the pageant that was performed on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June however is controversial, as this pageant took the form of a *charivari* in which John Hole, John Yard, Hughe Meade and Humphrey Palmer, all known to have been opponents to the traditional shows in May, were severely mocked.<sup>84</sup> The next section will address the lack of management in the manner in which the criticisms directed at Hole and his friends were displayed and uttered in this piece of undiluted mimetic criticism, and will also observe how instead, the organisers and actors of the show relied on implicating the local authorities in the show, so as to justify their actions. Before addressing this show however, it is necessary to first examine an earlier, more moderate *charivari* that was performed in May to show the significant difference in approach to ludic mockery.

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<sup>81</sup> James Stokes, ‘The Wells Shows of 1607’, p. 150.

<sup>82</sup> David Underdown in his 1985 book argued that the Wells case was ‘a classic case-study of the Puritan individual at odds with the unreformed community’ (55). However, in his more recent article, he argues quite the opposite: that one must be careful in presuming that the May Games ‘simply amounted to a conflict between a handful of intolerant Puritans and virtually the whole of the rest of the population’. He argues that ‘the city was in fact, deeply split’ (8). David Underdown, *Revel, Riot & Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 55; David Underdown, ‘But the Shows of their Street’: Civic Pageantry and Charivari in a Somerset Town, 1607’, *Journal of British Studies* 50: 1 (2011), pp. 4-23, p. 8.

<sup>83</sup> Interrogatories for Principal Defendants in Hole v. White et al, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 220 (10-15 May), REED, p. 279. Certified Copy of Defendants Examinations PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 216v- 17 (10 January), p. 326-7.

<sup>84</sup> Examination of John Gorway, Clothier, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 37v, REED, p. 345.

## 5.5 Charivari

It is within the context of revellers having been supported by local authorities in their revival of street theatricality, that the festive community found the confidence to use the dramatic medium to attack those who opposed the traditional custom.<sup>85</sup> Initially, this corrective drama was predominantly festive in nature, and was performed in the context of the *charivari*, or 'rough music', which was a kind of processional street theatre in which the community expressed varying degrees of hostility towards individuals in the community who offended their rules or morals,<sup>86</sup> and which had much in common with the Midsummer watches.<sup>87</sup> In fact, *charivari* was part of the May and summer game tradition. In the words of Thomas Pettitt, 'summer assemblies' provided a 'convenient venue' for plays mocking local *persona non grata*.<sup>88</sup> On the 10<sup>th</sup> of May in Wells the first mock-pageant was performed by a group of Morris dancers, which was meant to parody Mistress Yard.<sup>89</sup> A week earlier, Mistress Yard, the wife of John Yard, had made a public scene about the placing of the Maypole. Mistress Yard had called it a 'paynted calf', presumably referring to the worshipped idol in the Old Testament, and claimed that she could not

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<sup>85</sup> Similar cases are described in, Elizabeth M.S. Baldwin, 'Reformers, Rogues or Recusants? control of Popular Entertainment and the Flouting of Authority in Cheshire before 1642', *Records of Early English Drama Newsletter* 22: 1 (1997), pp. 26-31; Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 222; James Stokes, 'Drama and Resistance to Institutions in Somerset', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 33 (1994), pp. 153-164.

<sup>86</sup> For studies on the charivari, see: Jacques le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt (eds), *Le Charivari: actes de la table ronde organisée à Paris, 25-27 avril 1977, par l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales et le centre national de la recherche scientifique* (Paris: Mouton, 1981) ; Adam Fox, 'Ballads, Libels and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England', *Past and Present* 145 (1994), pp. 47-83, p. 83; Joan R. Kent, 'Folk Justice' and Royal Justice in Early Seventeenth-Century England: a 'Charivari' in the Midlands', *Midland History* 8 (1983), pp. 70-85; John J. McGavin, 'Robert III's 'Rough Music': Charivari and Diplomacy in a Medieval Scottish Court', *Scottish Historical Review* 74: 2 (1995), pp. 144-158; Edward P. Thompson, 'Rough Music: Le Charivari Anglais', *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 27: 2 (1972), pp. 285-312 ; Edward P. Thompson, 'Rough Music Reconsidered', *Folklore* 103: 1 (1992), pp. 3-26.

<sup>87</sup> Martin Ingram, 'Ridings, Rough Music and the 'Reform of Popular Culture' in Early Modern England', *Past and Present* 105 (1984), pp. 79-113, p. 94.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Pettitt, 'Local and 'Customary' Drama', *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. by Michael Hattaway (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 464-476, p. 472.

<sup>89</sup> David Underdown, *Revel, Riot & Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 55.

attend church because the calf stood in her way.<sup>90</sup> The mock pageant took the form of a May procession in which the members of the summer ‘watch’ and the Morris group, a group of about a hundred young men, led by their Morris ‘captain’, the gentleman Edward Cary,<sup>91</sup> danced to the music of drums and trumpets,<sup>92</sup> with swords and daggers in their hands.<sup>93</sup> The young men carried with them a wooden board on which a picture of a calf was painted with red and white spots, matching the colours of the maypole.<sup>94</sup> According to witness William Tyderlegh, the ‘painted calf’ was taken past Mr Yard’s door many times, and every now and then ‘one of that Companie would cry ba, like a Calf, which person was attired in Satire Skynns’.<sup>95</sup> James Stokes has observed in his study that the participant being dressed in satyr skins and crying like a calf suggested that ‘the show may have unfolded as a kind of mock bullbaiting’,<sup>96</sup> though even the hybridity of such events doesn’t exactly authorise such a specific reading. The board displaying the ‘calf’ could be seen as an effigy, which was used in some ‘rough music’. However, the very use of this specific effigy demonstrates that the mock-pageant of the ‘spotted calf’ was very moderate, and controlled the way in which criticism was conveyed to Mistress Yard. The reason for this is that unlike other effigies that were used in charivari across the British Isles, which represented the ‘offending citizen’ within a community, this effigy represented the very thing that had offended Mistress Yard: the spotted calf. Thus, in a roundabout way, Mistress Yard’s opposition to the use of the Maypole tradition was addressed through ludic mockery, in a way that was creative and which superficially still included Mistress Yard as a member of the community, rather than a social outcast, even if ironically so. Christopher Croker, when examined, said that he had heard that the calf ‘was by some of the gunners shott att and by them thereon sayed to bee killed, that

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<sup>90</sup> Examination of Christopher Croker, Clothier, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 38v-9 (Taken 28 May on complainant’s first general series of interrogatories), REED, p. 347.

<sup>91</sup> Examination of Walter Smythe, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 162-3 (4 June), REED, p. 289.

<sup>92</sup> Interrogatories for Edward Carye, Gentleman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 187, REED, p. 296.

<sup>93</sup> Examination of Christopher Croker, REED, p. 347.

<sup>94</sup> Examination of William Tyderlegh, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 51 (11 June), REED, p. 351.

<sup>95</sup> Examination of William Tyderlegh, REED, p. 351.

<sup>96</sup> James Stokes, ‘The Wells Shows of 1607’, p. 147.



thereon Mistris yarde might goe to the Churche.<sup>97</sup> The criticism underlying the mock hunt is unmistakable, but the pageant does in no way compare to some extreme forms of charivari in which offenders of community morals or 'rules' were dragged through the streets, put in the stocks, or paraded around on a pole in a 'skimmington ride'.<sup>98</sup>

The controlled nature of the pageant of the 'spotted calf' suggests that by the time it was performed, the ludic community in Wells was still anxious about their position, and about the risks they would face when participating in the show. However, it is likely that the participants in this early mock-game had underestimated the risks they had run at the time of staging, and had relied on the controlled, mild nature of the mock-pageant as having licenced its performance. They only found out a year later at the Star Chamber enquiry what they had staked. By then Edward Cary, the captain of the Morris group, denied that any harm had been meant, and that it was only 'in sporte & merriment' that they 'had drvms & phifes muskettes & Calivers swords & daggers', and that they had made 'a shew' and had marched up and down the streets of Wells,

in good fasshion onely to [marke] make sporte & delight themsel<...>  
& others the beholders thereof, without willingly offering anie offence  
to anie Person.<sup>99</sup>

Although it is highly unlikely that this pageant had not offended anyone, as Carye wanted to claim, when he realised the misjudgement he had made, the pageant's aggressiveness was nothing compared to the mock-pageant that was to be performed on the 18<sup>th</sup> June, which contemptuously derided Constable Hole and his friends with a much greater ludic self-confidence, and even more so after the 19<sup>th</sup> June 1607, when actors of a mock-pageant were arrested by

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<sup>97</sup> Examination of Christopher Croker, REED, p. 347.

<sup>98</sup> Joan Kent describes an extreme instance of *charivari* in which a couple by the name of Cripple was verbally and physically abused, put in the stocks, and urinated on their heads by the local community. Joan R. Kent, "Folk Justice and Royal Justice in Early Seventeenth-Century England: a 'Charivari' in the Midlands", *Midland History* 8 (1983), pp. 70-85, p. 73.

<sup>99</sup> Examination of Edward Carye, Gentleman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 172 (7 June) REED, p. 297.

the Constable John Hole, but were released by Sir Edward Wadham, who supported them.<sup>100</sup>

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of June a civic pageant was performed by the Tanners, Chandlers and Butchers of Southover, who led a procession from South Street to the church-house for a church-ale, from there to the market place, and back to South Street. As Stokes has observed, elements of this show were similar to the 1613 show by the same civic group, ‘though modified for satiric purposes’.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, the inhabitants of Southover went ‘all out’ in their mimetic attack on Hole and his friends. A short overview is necessary to illustrate the magnitude of the mockery before describing the risk management operating in this pageant. In his letter of complaint to the King, John Hole, as principal victim of the performative shows accused Mathewe Lancaster of riding on horseback disguised ‘in womans apparell like a spinster’ representing Hole himself.<sup>102</sup> Lancaster is described as,

riding a stride in a redd petticote kercheife & muffler about the streetes in wells holding a spynning wheele vppon his horse before him & having worsted woolle vppon a distaff and that he did turne about the wheele as he rode.<sup>103</sup>

Lancaster had ridiculed Hole through his cross-dressing, the petticoat perhaps even hinting at marital infidelity,<sup>104</sup> and by undermining Hole’s trade. During the interrogatories at the Star Chamber Lancaster was accused of having said ‘Hole Hole’ but replied that he had not said this ‘nor anie words to that effecte’.<sup>105</sup> The second horse in the procession carried two men, facing each other, representing a usurer-scrivener. Robert Atwell was accused of having represented the scrivener—a prop desk before him—who was to lend money to the hatter, pewterer, grocer and clothier, ‘sayinge That because the said

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<sup>100</sup> Compert Book, Somerset Record Office (SRO): D/D/Ca 162, f [69] (15 September 1609), REED, p. 361.

<sup>101</sup> James Stokes, ‘The Wells Shows of 1607’, p. 150.

<sup>102</sup> Bill of Complaint in Hole v. White et al., p. 263.

<sup>103</sup> Examination of Matthew Lancaster, Husbandman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 4 (15 May), REED, p. 281.

<sup>104</sup> Thompson discusses the significance of the prop-petticoat in *charivari*. Edward P. Thompson, ‘Rough Music Reconsidered’, *Folklore* 103: 1 (1992), pp. 3-26, p. 5.

<sup>105</sup> Examination of Matthew Lancaster, Husbandman. p. 281.

Pewterer Hatter Clothier & Grocer were not sufficient they <shold> haue noe money of him to be letten to vse', after which Hole bitterly added that 'they scornfully insinuated to the whole multitude as it was indeed then signified by the said representation' that Hole, Mead and Palmer were poor men who needed to take money from a usurer.<sup>106</sup> It was considered shameful for traders and merchants to be accused of bankruptcy, legally as horrid an accusation as calling a woman a whore or calling a surgeon incompetent.<sup>107</sup> The third horse in the procession carried one Thomas Byson, who was also disguised, and who carried a brush and a hat in his hands. Hole interpreted this mimetic action as Byson 'vnlawfully representing Iohn yard of the Towne of Welles haberdasher who by this trade then was & yet is an haberdasher'.<sup>108</sup> During the interrogatory, Byson was accused of having said: 'as good hattes to sell as anie Mr Yarde had' but denied this, although he admitted to having said 'whoe would buy a hatt of a poore man'.<sup>109</sup> Byson for performing this part, had obtained a fake beard and a flaxen hair wig from the Dean of Wells Cathedral, Mr Heyden, so at the time of performance, he would have judged himself as enjoying the support of the religious authority. Whether he told Heyden the true purpose of the costume is another matter, of course. The fourth horse carried a John Smith, husbandman, riding disguised as a pewterer and having a plank in front of him, a hammer in one hand and a saucer in the other, parodying the trade of Hughe Mead. Smith is reported to have said that 'he had Pewter as good as anie was in Meades shoppe'.<sup>110</sup> Finally, the trade of greengrocer Humfrey Palmer was ridiculed through a representation on the fifth horse. In examination of James Lideard, butcher by trade, it appears that he and the shoemaker apprentice sat on a horse together with between them a pair of scales, a pound weight, and half a pound weight. They were recorded as having carried a sack full of 'graines & other trashe in it which they flunge

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<sup>106</sup> Bill of Complaint in *Hole v. white et al*, p. 264.

<sup>107</sup> Martin Ingram, 'Law, litigants and the construction of 'honour': slander suits in early modern England', in *The Moral World of the Law*, ed. by Peter R. Cross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 134-160, p. 148.

<sup>108</sup> Bill of Complaint in *Hole v. White et al*, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 219 (19 April), REED, p. 263.

<sup>109</sup> Examination of Thomas Byson, Miner, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 17-19 (15 May), REED, p. 286.

<sup>110</sup> Bill of Complaint in *Hole v. White et al.*, p. 263.

about in mens neckes & faces'<sup>111</sup> on the streets of Wells, meanwhile calling out that 'Humphrey Palmer had no such raisons in his shoppe' or 'who will buy anie good spices or raisons'.<sup>112</sup> The personal attack on Mr Palmer was a mock-variation of a traditional pageant that was normally performed by the Chandlers, Tanners and Butchers, in which a priest on horseback would have distributed grains from a sack. This event thus developed traditional festivity, albeit in a more savage direction. To the enquiry whether they were disguised for the performance as was claimed by Hole,<sup>113</sup> Lideard said that neither he nor the apprentice wore disguises, but that they were dressed in their usual clothes. Lideard did however admit to having worn an old canvas apron that he would also wear at other times 'when he killed beastes to [save &] keepe the blood of the beastes from his clothes'.<sup>114</sup> The point of this defence was that the festivity was not covert or consciously deceitful but could be thought of as honestly intended and traditional.

The mock 'tradesmen shows' as *charivari* were less controlled in the way in which criticism was conveyed than the pageant of the 'spotted calf' had been. First of all, the tradesmen shows were mimetic in a way that the spotted calf pageant hadn't been. Where the latter offered the mockery in a roundabout way, ironically 'helping' Mistress Yard by hunting the spotted cow, although there was no doubt that the spectators to this show were invited to laugh at Mistress Yard's petty behaviour, the mock-tradesman shows encouraged all present to laugh at the personages and trades of Hole, Yard, Meade and Palmer through much more direct representation. It is likely that the actors even overtly stated to their audience why they were performing the show. As eye-witness William Tyderlegh observes:

and moreover it was then reported that because the said Holle, Meade, and Yard, had refused to goe with the rest of their Neighbors to the

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<sup>111</sup> Bill of Complaint in Hole v. White et al., p. 264.

<sup>112</sup> Examination of James Lideard, Butcher, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 164-4v (4 June), REED, p. 291.

<sup>113</sup> Bill of Complaint in Hole v. White et al., p. 263.

<sup>114</sup> Examination of James Lideard, Butcher. p. 292.

Church alle [these] the same shewes were devised and put in practice.<sup>115</sup>

Furthermore, while the pageant of the spotted calf had been a ludic gathering of young men who belonged to the Morris group, the tradesmen shows from the outset had a different impact because the criticisms were offered as part of a procession that was traditionally meant to express civic pride. This was no longer a young persons' revelling opportunity which incidentally had a mocking character, but mockery displayed under the banner of promoting civic unity. Indeed, we find that the mock-tradesman shows comprised participants and contributors of 'all ages and stations',<sup>116</sup> being a joint enterprise between among others, butchers and schoolteachers, gentlemen and apprentices, women and men.<sup>117</sup> Unity was also expressed in the way that this pageant sought to include the spectators in the ludic action, and extended the presence of the principal inhabitants who had walked along in the other civic processions, to a kind of dramatic interaction with the players. For example, the late Dean of Wells, Mr Benjamin Heyden, that is, the Heyden who had leant the beard and wig, and the Mayor, 'did cheapen of the sayed disguised haberdasher a hatt'.<sup>118</sup> Similarly, one of the actors, Thomas Byson, confesses during his interrogation that when riding through the streets of Wells on horseback, he was approached by one Sir Edward Wadham, husband to one of the actresses,<sup>119</sup>

asked this defendant what was the price of one of his hattes,  
wherevnto this defendant aunswered halfe a Crowne wherevpon the

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<sup>115</sup> Examination of William Tyderlegh, Gentleman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 51, (taken 11 June on complainant's first general series of interrogatories), p. 353.

<sup>116</sup> Stokes, REED, vol. 2, p. 498.

<sup>117</sup> James Stokes, 'Women and Mimesis in Medieval and Renaissance Somerset (and Beyond)', *Comparative Drama* 27: 2 (1993), pp. 176-196.

<sup>118</sup> Examination of Henry Boureman, St Olave's Parish, Hart Street, London, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 68v (10 July), p. 356-7.

<sup>119</sup> Examination of John Isaac, Cordwainer, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 157-7v (Taken 26 June on defendants interrogatories), REED, p. 356.

said Mr wadham tooke one the said old hattes from this defendant and threw it away.<sup>120</sup>

Wadham's interaction with the actors seems to have facilitated Byson's saying 'halfe a Crowne', referring to the Crown, of which Mr Yard, the haberdasher who was being represented, was the publican. Wadham's taking a hat and then throwing it away as a gesture, suggests the interaction to have been part of a 'scripted drama', at least in the sense of a premeditated sequence of theatrical events, but it may have been only semi-scripted with some improvisation developing on the response of the audience. It is also likely that Wadham was the mastermind behind the shows, who organised the actors into participation.<sup>121</sup> The day after the mock tradesman shows, the actors in the show were arrested by John Hole in his function as Constable. However, they were ordered to be released by Sir Edward,<sup>122</sup> providing the actors with a sense of security that their involvement in the ludic mockery of Hole and his friends was deemed acceptable within the local context, or at least acceptable to those locals who held the power.

We cannot know whether the interaction between the disguised actors and the prominent inhabitants of the city were or were not fully scripted, but it is likely that the actors made use of 'audience plants', who shouted with the voice of the community seemingly, or on behalf of the community. An 'audience plant' would have engaged the audience by mingling with the spectators, and from this position interacted with the performance. They would have involved spectators in a more vocal kind of spectating, encouraging the kind of spectator responses that the actors needed in order to get their points across. In other words, they were an important kind of risk-manager. Hole records that this kind of interplay could be found in the 'tradesmen shows' at two moments. Firstly, when Matthew Lancaster represented the spinster on horseback, he was according to Hole,

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<sup>120</sup> Examination of Thomas Byson, Miner, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 17-19, REED, p. 286.

<sup>121</sup> Bill of Complaint in Hole v. White et al., REED, p. 273.

<sup>122</sup> Plaintiffs Summary of Charges in Hole v. White et al., Huntington Library: EL 2728, single sheet (November?), REED, p. 360.

there asked by some of the said Confederators then standing by & prepared for that purpose, whose wolle it was; he then spynned, answered it was Holes & therewithall did singe aloud Hole, Hole...<sup>123</sup>

Hole's words suggest that the person standing by and asking whose wool it was, was 'planted', and uttered premeditated lines. Similarly, John Smith when representing the pewterer, was

beinge then & there asked by some other of the said Confederators what ware he had to sell he answered aloud That he had Pewter as good as anie was in Meades shoppe.<sup>124</sup>

Aside from encouraging other spectators to vocally enjoy the spectacle, 'audience plants' also sought to make the audience members complicit in the dramatic action, or at least made them appear to be so superficially. Well-positioned audience plants would have made it look as if the community as a whole agreed with the mockeries, and were willing to participate in them. The need for players to have an at least seemingly responsive audience betrays their anxiety in performing the criticism directed at Hole and his friends through the dramatic medium. It shows a kind of risk management that does not only *rely* on the approval of the community, but in fact, manages the possibility that not all members of the community would have been as eager to see fellow-citizens ridiculed in this way, as they would have been earlier on when traditional festivities were being reintroduced.

A similar strategy for managing the risk of a potentially reluctant or unresponsive audience to the performance of public mockery that required the favour of the entire community in order to justify its performance can be found in the *charivari* that was performed on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June by the Hammermen's Company. This pageant can be seen as the culmination of the Wells' *charivari* at its most offensively mimetic. The company had procured a wooden board of about a yard in length on which on both sides a painting was shown of a woman with a hat in one hand and a brush in the other, with on both sides of

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<sup>123</sup> Bill of Complaint in Hole v. White et al., p. 263.

<sup>124</sup> Bill of Complaint in Hole v. White et al., p. 263.

her the depiction of a man. The figures were identified by the community as Mistress Yard, John Hole and John Yard.<sup>125</sup> Underneath the pictures nine holes were cut out. Another board was attached to the first board, which enabled persons to throw balls at the holes.<sup>126</sup> The board was carried by a ‘disguised person’,<sup>127</sup> on horseback, who was accompanied by one William Gamage, who was also on horseback, and who had a prop desk, book and pen in front of him, so as to represent a notary. It was he who has left us the poem about the events. Hole reports that Gamage exclaimed the following:

Holing is against the kings proclamacion & not sufferable in the  
streates & therefore yf you will needs Hole it go Hole it in the Mead.

And then to a third companion: ‘Sett it downe Notary Holinge is against the kings proclamacion’.<sup>128</sup> The reference to the king’s proclamation, the references to the names of Hole and Meade, and their well-liked mimetic representations, made for an overt accusation, delivering criticism in a very direct way. Furthermore, this pageant was the most incriminating in its accusations so far, as it indicted Hole and Mistress Yard for marital infidelity.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, the set-up of the pageant gave an opportunity to all to join the mockery, as the interactive ‘holing board’ allowed spectators to ‘hole’ the depictions of Hole, Yard and Yard’s wife with balls. In comparison, the pageant of the spotted calf was mild indeed, because the effigy used delivered the criticism of Mistress Yard in an indirect way. Even the cross-dressing in the mock-tradesman shows was more dignified than the ‘holing game’, because at least it did not objectify the victims sexually, nor did it question their morality openly. Seemingly aware that they were going too far, the Hammermen involved the use of ‘audience plants’, ensuring that the actors would not face

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<sup>125</sup> Examination of William Tyderlegh, Gentleman, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 51, (taken 11 June on complainant’s first general series of interrogatories), p. 353.

<sup>126</sup> Interrogatories for Principal Defendants in Hole v. White et al., PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 220 (10-15 May), REED, p. 278.

<sup>127</sup> Examination of Daniel Tuthil, Linen Draper, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 35v (22 May), REED, pp. 344-5.

<sup>128</sup> Bill of Complaint in Hole v. White et al., p. 266.

<sup>129</sup> Both Anne Yard and John Hole were later questioned on the basis of the accusations of marital infidelity in the Consistory of Wells Cathedral by vicar general Francis James, in the presence of Edward Huishe, a notary and registrar, see Compert Book, SRO: D/D/Ca 162, f [69], REED, p. 357.



an unresponsive audience, and to give the impression that the community was happy to participate in the insulting pageant:

sayinge with a loud voice soe as many people might heare him he  
Holes it for a Crowne, & then presently it was answered aloud by some  
other of that confederacy **standing by & then & there appointed for  
that purpose** he Holes it not within a Yard for a Crowne therby  
meaning & naming your said subiect Iohn Hole by alluding to his name  
& the said Iohn Yard who dwelleth at the signe of the Crowne After  
which speeches oftentimes vsed some other of the said confederacy  
did then & there in like sort with a loud voice often say vnto the said  
Gamage theis wordes (videlicet) Holinge is against the kinges  
proclamacion & not sufferable in the streates & therefore yf you will  
needs Hole it goe Hole it in the Mead' [emphasis mine].<sup>130</sup>

The audience members were implicated through the plant, who would have trundled the balls into the holes designed for that purpose, and became slightly more than spectators, if only through association with the plant. Where audience members had spontaneously joined the May games, and some authorities had chosen to join the civic processions in June, those June events that were most likely to offend, and that had stepped away from managing risk by balancing the way in which criticism was offered, completely relied on implicating the community or at least giving the illusion of an implicated and unified community of spectator-participants. But the fact that this activity was itself ostensibly a 'game' was intended to turn the events towards the lightness of play and away from the play's more injurious implications. Thus in the mock-tradesman shows and 'holing game' one finds audience plants, and as a reaction to the Lord Chief Justice punishing some of the 'disorders' at the Assizes in Taunton of September 1607,<sup>131</sup> two libellous ballads were spread that commemorated the May and June events and the opposition it received. The most popular libel was written by William Gamage and had the refrain: 'yet

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<sup>130</sup> Bill of Complaint in *Hole v. White et al.*, REED, p. 266.

<sup>131</sup> Star Chamber Minute Book, Alnwick Castle, Percy Letters and Papers, vol. 9 23/6, f 99, REED, p. 365.

I doe lyve in quiet rest and thinke my holing game the best',<sup>132</sup> overtly punning on John Hole. The ballad became very popular in the city and vicinity and was even brought to London to be printed.<sup>133</sup> It was noted that the song was sung 'amvngst ye children in Wells'.<sup>134</sup> Making people sing about the June and summer games was a way for the playmakers to involve the community and further implicate them in the events. The spread of the ballad would make it seem retrospectively as if everyone had enjoyed the games and shows at the time, now pleasantly looking back on it, and that only a handful of deviant members of the community had not enjoyed it.

Before the ballads were spread, actors and participants must have already reached the awareness that Hole was not going to be easily defeated, and would have recognized the risks they had been running during the months of May and June. They however continued their attempt to implicate the community in order to justify why the summer events had turned out the way they did. A piece of risk-management suggesting that notion is recorded by Hole. Hole writes that on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October, during 'a solemne feast' one of the Confederators said 'in the hearinge of many people':

of the said Edward Wadham one of the Confederators aforesaid, and a great patron procurer furtherer and director of the rest of the said Malefactors and of their said vnlawfull pastimes and proceedings That he meaning the said Edward Wadham had the love of the whole Towne of Wells except of the Tribe of manyasses thereby abusing the phrase of scripture and many personages of place that endeavoured the suppressing of the said Malefactors.<sup>135</sup>

Manasseh was a biblical king who apostatized from previous religious practices and re-embraced paganism,<sup>136</sup> which is why Hole describes this accusation as

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<sup>132</sup> Bill of Complaint in Hole v. White et al., p. 267.

<sup>133</sup> Star Chamber Minute Book, Alnwick Castle: Percy Letters and Papers, vol. 9 23/6, f. 27, col 2 (c. 11 November) (List of defendants and charges), REED, p. 312.

<sup>134</sup> Examination of Thomas Haggatt of Walbrook, London, Skinner, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 183 (21 June), REED, p. 306.

<sup>135</sup> Bill of Complaint in Hole v. White et al., REED, p. 273.

<sup>136</sup> The long title of II Kings 21 in the Great Bible states: 'wycked Manasseh restoreth agayne the Idolles'. Miles Coverdale (ed.), *The Byble in Englysh, that is to say the*

abusing the phrase of scripture – it is in fact reversing it, and implying that the community is sticking to the true religion and Hole and his friends have separated themselves from it. Furthermore, it appears that through this public statement the actors of the summer games wanted to emphasize their affiliation with Sir Edward Wadham, using his name as an authority for their actions, as well as to create a distinction between the ‘whole Towne’ and the ‘Tribe of manyasses’, or the reformists. Although it is unlikely that the division would really have been so simple, the public statement aimed to create the illusion that the whole city had been united in the shows. This action betrays unease on part of the organizers and actors that perhaps they had not had enough grounds for producing their shows and libels; that once by the end of May the reformists had been silenced in their protests, the festive community should have stuck to performing the traditional civic shows, rather than using these as a platform for neighbour-bullying; or perhaps that the times in which *charivaris* were deemed an acceptable part of the summer festivities, were no longer upon them.

By implicating the community and claiming that everyone had been in on the shows, the actors tried to shake off some of their personal responsibility, presenting themselves as the agents voicing the wishes of many, rather than that of a small group. Sir Edwards alleged speech in which he referred to the ‘Tribe of manyasses’ was made in the context of perceived negotiability, in a situation in which he believed all could still turn in his favour if he was seen to be supported by the entire community. This is the last moment at which such a perception of risk can be observed, as on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 1608 John Hole wrote his official Bill of Complaint, from which the first Star Chamber interrogatories followed between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1608. From this moment the actors, participants and spectators would have been unable to escape from the legal implications of their participation in the shows

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*content of all the holy Scripture, bothe of the Olde and Newe Testament, truly translated after the veryte of the Hebrue and Greke textes, by the dylygent men expert in the forsayde tonges* (London: Rychard Grafton & Edward Whitchurch, 1540), 2 Kings: 21.1-17. Although the Great Bible is the Bible that would have been available to the citizens in Wells in 1607, it is important to note that those who used the phrase ‘tribe of manyasses’ did not necessarily take it from the Bible, but may have picked it up from any number of scholarly sources.

and games. It is at the onset of the law case that all involved would start denying, misremembering, and ‘forgetting’ what had happened in those summer months, in order to manage their risk, now not through their actions but through their account of it.

## 5.6 Conclusion

The debate on Sabbath observance and the celebration of traditional customs turned out to be a lasting one, illustrated by records that were drawn up when something special occurred, such as a quarrel around the taking down of the Maypole in Wells in 1612, during which one Edmund Henlye ‘in furie & rage swore’ to the protesting woman, ‘that if she would not suffer him to pull downe the same (the Maypole), he would strike his pickax thorough her feete’.<sup>137</sup> In fact, the debate was only concluded locally in Wells when James Montague, the Bishop of Bath and Wells who replaced Bishop John Small in 1608, finally defended the lawful usage of recreation outside of church service time by statute in 1614.<sup>138</sup> In 1618, a year after having been published just for Lancashire, King James I’s *Declaration to his Subjects, Concerning Lawful Sports to Be Used*, was issued for the entire nation,<sup>139</sup> which allowed sports and pastimes to be enjoyed on the Sunday. Yet in 1634 a Mr Haines is recorded as saying that ‘my lord Curle the then bishop of Bathe & Wells was blinde & did not vnderstand the scripture [for tha] in respect he suffered maypoles to be sett vpp in the Towne of Wells’,<sup>140</sup> suggesting that the debate had been suspended rather than resolved, and would continue to influence people’s everyday as well as ludic lives up to the Civil War. The Wells case lies at the heart of this dispute, which was prominently fought out in Somerset. The year 1607 was a particularly troublesome year in Somerset and other parts of West England, a year in which ancient customs were expressed, repressed, and

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<sup>137</sup> Bishop’s Court Deposition Book, SRO: D/D/Cd 45, f[14v] (30 March 1612), REED, p. 370.

<sup>138</sup> Dougall, *The Devil’s Book*, p. 93.

<sup>139</sup> James I, *The King’s Maiesties declaration to his subiects, concerning lawfull sports to be vsed* (London: Bonham Norton, 1618), EEBO. [accessed 3 August 2013]. See also, Dougall, *The Devil’s Book*, p. xiii. The Declaration is also referred to as the ‘Book of Sports’.

<sup>140</sup> Bishop’s Court Deposition Book, SRO: D/D/Cd 78, f[2v] (24 March 1634), p. 381.

opposed. We know for example that in Weston Zoyland, that year's Robin Hood celebrations—that involved putting people in the stocks until they had drunk enough ale toward the church ale—interrupted the church service:

Item Mr wolfall the sundaye after Ascention daye, last, at Morninge prayer, presentlye after the second lesion, put of his Surplusse, and willed his parishioners to departe, and followe Robin hoode, according to their auncient Custome, to the Alle, and to breakfast with him, and gave them libertye soe to doe the Most parte of An howre, and then Came to the Churche, and began the service at the ten Comandementes.<sup>141</sup>

In this case the fact that we have a record shows that interrupting a church service in order for the parishioners to join the Robin Hood was not condoned by all members of the community, so that we know that the traditional custom faced opposition. From other places in Somerset we know that *when* the traditional shows and games faced opposition, elements of charivari were used to 'persuade' deviant members of the community to partake in them, as in Yeovil, where an opponent of the games recounted that,

a rude companie of the same parishe came vnto him saying that they weare for the churche, they would haue had him to the churche howse, and vsed and haled and pulled him to yat end and they seeing him most vnwilling to goe with them they offered to beare him vppon a cowlestaff...<sup>142</sup>

In this sense, the shows of 1607 Wells are not particularly unique. What makes the Wells case such a valuable study for this thesis, however, is that because of the vastness of the case and its being so well-documented, a varied range of risk management can be detected: in actors', sponsors', and participants' recorded actions, in their denials during the interrogatory, in the spectators' behaviour when they felt that the social climate around them was changing. This collection of records provides the researcher with a wealth of insight into the fluid dynamic context of street theatricality, performed at a time when the

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<sup>141</sup> Quarter Sessions Roll, SRO: Q/SR2, f 7v, REED, p. 389.

<sup>142</sup> Ex Officio Act Book, SRO: D/D/Ca 155, ff 40v-1 (19 May), REED, p. 413.

whole of England was debating Sabbath observation. In this context of national debate, the local rules would have been unclear, changeable, and unreliable; authorities confused and at odds with one another, and the different parties acted according to their own evaluation of the risks they were running by participating or opposing the events. The Wells case also shows that such evaluations could change dynamically in response to the unfolding events but might still be mistaken in the final event. It was for this reason that the actors and participants in the Wells shows started their performances in moderation, but seemingly supported by the civic and religious authorities, began to offer their audiences a less controlled sort of entertainment which relied less on tradition and more on references to current local affairs, and mockery at the expense of those opposing the traditional custom. In doing so the actors attempted to manage their risk by implicating high-placed members of the community, and by utilizing 'audience plants', who were to steer the responses of the audience. The actors however miscalculated the risks they were taking in antagonising some of their fellow-citizens, who did not accept such treatment and knew that there were now central institutions which could trump local tradition in any dispute. When the actors and organisers of the shows realized that they had taken too much of a risk, and that they were likely to face serious repercussions (such as became evident at the Assizes which foreshadowed the long-winded Star Chamber case, and its legal punishments), they went one step further than just implicating members of the audience in the actions, by attempting to create the illusion of a festive community which had operated in unity, and which was not to be separated from the more traditional civic processions which had been designed to celebrate the wealth, power and enterprise of the civic guilds.

The case study has thus shown that risk management as employed by the actors and organisers took different forms, and underwent significant change throughout the months of May and June in 1607. Furthermore, participants can be observed to have joined the games and shows those summer months because they thought this decision to be most advantageous for their own position within the local community context, only to find out in autumn that year that the risks they were now facing were much graver than any kind of social inconvenience at local level would have been. Opponents of

the shows can also be seen to have undergone shifts in managing their own position within the performance context, only to return to their support of Hole and his case when the Star Chamber hearings started.

The previous chapters have shown that risk inherent in the performance of drama in Tudor and early Stuart times, was not necessarily always related to religious change, but rather determined by the actors or organisers of performances going against the grain of their time in what they were trying to convey through the dramatic medium, or in fact, by using the dramatic medium at all. The first half of this thesis was concerned with plays in which the dramatic medium itself was the main source of risk because of the chosen subject matter. Chapters four and five discussed plays in which the dramatic medium was used to control a different kind of risk: in which drama was a means to express political views which infringed the current accepted political and social trends within its context. In such situations, playwrights used theatrical devices to manage their own risk, and that of their spectators, as we have seen through the use of Narrator figures, the distribution of affect, the ways in which those elements of the play that were likely to cause problems were visualized, and by including the audience members through ritual or ceremony.

The shows and games which can be reconstructed from the Wells case are different from the performances which have been studied so far in this thesis, in that they were a protracted set of dramatic performances rather than a single play; they were traditional, and used performance tradition consciously and overtly; and they were not produced by one particular author, but maybe co-authored by a collaboration of actors. What the Wells performances however had in common with the other plays studied is that they were performed for a possibly divided community, in which spectators had to be convinced of a particular point of view. When drama meets diversity in an audience, a degree of unpredictability is assumed, which playmakers seek to harness or control. The risk management is thus based on how playmakers think about the spectators that watch their play, and on how playmakers think of themselves within the context in which they put on the play. The core truth to emerge is that risk management is unique to every specific performance context: it is not

an act but a process in which different elements that have to be considered are always changing. It is employed productively when playwrights know what dramatic forms or what elements of the dramatic form they can safely use within that very performance context. The Wells case however shows an example of where risk was not successfully managed, where playmakers had not noticed that the central tolerance for a local framework had changed, and with that, had lost a sufficiently nuanced sense of the framework in which risk could be controlled. The perception of risk in this case-study can reveal the real nature of unpredictability in dramatic performance.





## 6. Play-making on the edge of reality

### 6.1 Introduction

Royal entries followed a convention in which town officials, members of the clergy, and civic groups such as guilds met the monarch at the city gates or some miles beyond the city gates, and led them into the town's perimeters,<sup>1</sup> where the monarch officially took possession of the town or city, and was presented with a costly gift or with the city keys. The sovereign was then treated to civic entertainments, often in the form of pageants, shows and games, which were performed to their glorification, but which also allowed for civic pride to be expressed.<sup>2</sup> The primary spectator in any royal entry was the monarch, who watched the shows and pageants, but who in their turn, was also watched as they followed the protocol, and went through the ritual motions of expressing regal power and heritage: in other words, as they performed kingship. It has long been recognised that the sovereign was an actor in such proceedings, and determined its meaning.<sup>3</sup> Here the word 'actor' is a slippery term that does not refer to the impersonation of a fictional role, but is rather used to describe the monarch's interaction with their audience: representing regal power through showing the public the Body politic, which gave spectators the opportunity to have 'visual contact' with the monarch.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the presence or absence of a monarch at ludic performances influenced the ways in which other spectators experienced shows and pageants

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<sup>1</sup> Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals 1450-1650* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1984), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Barry Reay, *Popular Cultures in England 1550-1750* (London: Longman, 1998), p. 147.

Janette Dillon, *The Language of Space in Court Performance, 1400-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, David M. Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642* (London: Edward Arnold, 1971), p. 6; Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 248; Gordon Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy, and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 19; Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 176.

<sup>4</sup> William Leahy, *Elizabethan Triumphal Processions* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 1.

that were performed in the sovereign's honour. This case study addresses the brief visit which Anne of Denmark—Queen Consort to King James I—paid to Wells in 1613, relieving the town from years of celebrational and cultural unrest in their community through a royal entry into their midst. Queen Anne, a noted Catholic who favoured traditional customs and values, and who was notorious for being a great play enthusiast,<sup>5</sup> exercised her royal authority to reinstate traditional values that had faced opposition. Queen Anne's presence also reunited the community that had been split as a result of the sequence of pageants with a highly political undertone that were performed in 1607.<sup>6</sup> Watching the 1613 pageants, some spectators' experience would have been partially informed by their memory of the 1607 events. This chapter argues that the memory of previous risk can create a self-conscious effect for participants in royal entries and other dramatic activities, and for the spectators of these events. This sense of risk nuances other elements of the event such as mimesis and genre, and is based on the plays' and pageants' immediate social and political contexts.

The reason we know about the 1607 events is because of the court case that arose from it, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Unfortunately, the 1613 pageants are not as well recorded as their 1607 counterparts, so that we cannot know what individual spectators thought of the plays performed, how they interpreted them, and what they took from the plays as they left the performance and went back to their normal lives: this was not recorded. The only eye-witness account of Queen Anne's royal entry available is that of the Venetian Ambassador Antonio Foscarini. In his letters to the Doge and Senate of Venice, he offers the description of more general reality than the local reality

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<sup>5</sup> Queen Anne was a keen patron and performer of the Court Masque. See among others, John H. Astington, *English Court Theatre 1558-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 69; B. K. Lewalski, 'Anne of Denmark and the Subversions of Masquing', *Criticism*, 35 (1993), pp. 341-355. However, it has been noted that Anne's cultural interest and involvement were much more complex. John Barroll calls Queen Anne's interest in the court masques just 'the tip of the iceberg'. John Leeds Barroll, *Anna of Denmark, Queen of England: a Cultural Biography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 58. Lucy Munro describes Anne of Denmark as the major patron of the Queen's Revels Company. Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> David Underdown, 'But the Shows of their Street': Civic Pageantry and Charivari in a Somerset Town, 1607', *Journal of British Studies* 50: 1 (2011), pp. 4-23, p. 8.

shared by the citizens of Wells, to whom the 1613 shows would have had an immediate socio-political meaning. Further documentation of the Queen's visit can be found in the Corporation Act Book, which recorded the protocol for the royal entry, so that this document is valuable for showing civic intentions, and the premeditated ritual motions of which the Queen would have been informed beforehand. However, the 'script' in the Corporation Act Book only provides evidence about the planned *management* of the event; not about the way in which the event unfolded or how it was received. In order to study the reception and audience experience of the Queen's visit, this chapter takes the protocol as it was planned, together with an outsider's experience, and aims to reconstruct the deeper, more political local reality in which the Queen's presence in Wells facilitated the expression of a political message about ritual and traditional custom. I will observe that the Queen's entry potentially had a metatheatrical effect, following from spectators comparing instances of the same genre, and that there were specific sets of spectators who would have been able to make such a comparison.

## 6.2 The Queen as Spectacle

The only eye-witness account of Anne of Denmark's entry into Wells was recorded by Antonio Foscarini, who did not share that knowledge of the local reality which would have blended an awareness of local political history with the shows and plays in performance. Indeed, he only appreciated the public reality reserved for those who experienced the royal entry at its surface level. Foscarini understood Queen Anne's double role of spectator and spectacle, but he did not see her—or at least he did not represent her to the Doge in the locally political way in which she would have been perceived by the people. In his letter the Venetian Ambassador merely observes that Queen Anne was entertained by the civic community, which hosted hunts, games and performances to her delight. The Ambassador emphasizes the generosity with which the city of Wells paid for everything, and how they strove to make the Queen's visit as pleasant as they could:

Ch'io la serua tutto 'l giorno, nel quale ha ueduto giochi, caccie, et in fine publiche rappresentatione cose tutte fatte a spese della Città, che nel riceuer la Maestà Sua et ne' i pochi giorni, che ui si troua hà fatto tutto quel più, che hà potuto.<sup>7</sup>

[Wished that I attend upon her all day long, during which (time) she saw games, hunts and finally public shows/performances, all which things were paid for by the city, which in receiving her majesty, and in the few days she stayed there, has done everything the best it can].<sup>8</sup>

Foscarini evidently had no interest in the nature or specific meanings of the performances displayed before Queen Anne, and documented the events through the eyes of an outsider, interested in his own role in the celebrations, and pointedly telling his master the Doge that the Queen wished for his company all throughout the royal visit, because courtesy expressed towards a royal ambassador reflected on his master. Foscarini also describes the Queen herself as a spectacle, noting how she allowed the people of the country visual experience of her royal presence; an important part of the celebration of regal power.<sup>9</sup> Foscarini illustrates how members of the public were even given the chance to have physical contact with the Queen:

Et udiuan uoci, che benediceuan, et augurauan prosperità à Sua Maestà, chegli ringratiaua tutti, dando anco la mano à baciare à molti, che lo faceuan con i ginocchi à terra, come pur staua la maggior parte del popolo nel punto del passare.<sup>10</sup>

[One heard voices, blessing and wishing prosperity for her majesty, who thanked them all, even given to many her hand to be kissed,

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<sup>7</sup> Letter of Antonio Foscarini, to the Doge and Senate of Venice, ASV: Senato, Secreta, Dispacci, Inghilterra, f [1] (23 August), in James Stokes & Robert J. Alexander (eds.), *Records of Early English Drama: Somerset, vol. 1: The Records* (London and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 374.

<sup>8</sup> Trans. Konrad Eisenbichler in James Stokes (ed.), *REED Somerset, 2 Editorial Apparatus* (London and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 850.

<sup>9</sup> Leahy, *Elizabethan Triumphal Processions*, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Letter of Antonio Foscarini, REED, p. 374.

which they did with their knees touching the ground, as also the greater part of the people were at her passing].<sup>11</sup>

Foscarini's interpretation of the event emphasises the citizens of Wells venerating the Queen's royal body, which in his view was the next best thing after the King's in offering the local and regional nobility proximity to the Body politic.<sup>12</sup>

Tutta la nobiltà di questa prouincia, nella quale non essendo stato già mai il Rè concorrono per ueder la Regina tutte le sorte di gente.<sup>13</sup>  
[The nobles of this province gathered here (and since) the king has never been in this (province), all sorts of people are gathering to see the queen].<sup>14</sup>

This might have been how the Venetian Ambassador experienced the gathering of the nobles, drawing on his memory of having undergone other royal entries, and ritual celebrations from the perspective of a foreign ambassador. However, for the citizens of Wells, the Queen would have symbolised something much more intricate than just the Royal Body. Indeed, the Queen's presence had local political, traditional and socio-cultural implications that could not have been perceived by a foreign ambassador, and in fact might have passed unnoticed for anyone too young to have seen the 1607 pageants, or anyone who had been absent from the community during that time. Anne of Denmark's presence also facilitated the possibility of recuperating community damage incurred through the earlier miscalculation of dramatic risk.

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<sup>11</sup> Trans. Konrad Eisenbichler in James Stokes (ed.), *REED Somerset, 2 Editorial Apparatus* (London and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996, p. 850.

<sup>12</sup> The term 'Body politic' has been extensively studied by Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957).

<sup>13</sup> Letter of Antonio Foscarini, REED, p. 374.

<sup>14</sup> Trans. Konrad Eisenbichler in James Stokes (ed.), *REED Somerset, 2 Editorial Apparatus* (London and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996, p. 849.

### 6.3 Event management

As I have observed in the previous chapter, between the 30<sup>th</sup> of April and the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 1607 a sequence of shows and games were performed in Wells that attempted to revive traditional entertainments which had in recent years been suppressed by the Lord Chief Justice of England and Justices of Peace in Somerset.<sup>15</sup> The traditional entertainments included a variety of May games, Morris dancing and processional dancing, religious plays or shows, Robin Hoods, and a string of pageants and shows. John Hole, in line with the King's Proclamation, openly opposed the 'crude' activities that kept people away from church; that formed occasions for lewd behaviour and a potential danger of riots and general delinquency caused by public groups forming.<sup>16</sup> The festive community replied to this opposition by using the dramatic medium to attack those who combatted the traditional custom.<sup>17</sup> Initially, this corrective drama was presented as a blend of the festive and the *charivari*, or 'rough music', which was a kind of processional street theatre in which the community expressed varying degrees of hostility towards individuals in the community who offended their rules or morals, and which had much in common with the Midsummer watches.<sup>18</sup> However, as reform-leaning citizens of the community kept on insisting on their opposition to the traditional festivities, the mockery of these citizens became more offensively mimetic, and more hurtful in its satire. From this followed Hole's accusations against the festive community expressed at the Assizes in Taunton of September 1607,<sup>19</sup> and later his Bill of Complaint addressed to the King himself, from which the Star Chamber suit followed. It is within this context of drama-related risks—of which Foscari

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<sup>15</sup> James Stokes, 'The Wells Shows of 1607', in *Festive Drama*, ed. by Meg Twycross (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), pp. 145-156, p. 146.

<sup>16</sup> Bill of Complaint in Hole v. White et al., PRO: STAC8/161/1, sheet 219 (19 April), REED, p. 261.

<sup>17</sup> Similar cases are described in, Elisabeth M.S. Baldwin, 'Reformers, Rogues or Recusants? Control of Popular Entertainment and the Flouting of Authority in Cheshire before 1642', *Records of Early English Drama Newsletter* 22: 1 (1997), pp. 26-31; Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 222; James Stokes, 'Drama and Resistance to Institutions in Somerset', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 33 (1994), pp. 153-164.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Ingram, 'Ridings, Rough Music and the 'Reform of Popular Culture' in Early Modern England', *Past and Present* 105 (1984), pp. 79-113, p. 94.

<sup>19</sup> Star Chamber Minute Book, Alnwick Castle, Percy Letters and Papers, vol. 9 23/6, f 99, REED, p. 365.

was not aware—that the local spectators in Wells would have watched the 1613 shows.

A recuperation of the town's dramatic traditions would undoubtedly have been on the spectators' minds as they welcomed the Queen into their community with pageants, which at times were nothing more than the 1607 displays with the omission of political references to John Hole.<sup>20</sup> The years in between 1607 and 1613 saw citizens setting up and pulling down summerpoles, but did not record any local plays and festivities.<sup>21</sup> In 1613, the suggestion was made in the Corporation Act Book that the involvement of the verderies of the town in presenting pageants adhered to 'auncient Orders and Customes'.<sup>22</sup> This was in line with the claims made in 1607 that the church ales and ludic festivities that were suppressed at the time, had followed an 'ancient custome',<sup>23</sup> and were therefore justified. Further clues to the politics of the restoration of drama implicit in Anne of Denmark's visit to Wells can be found in the event's intermediary figure. James Montague, the bishop of Bath and Wells who replaced Bishop John Small in 1608, was responsible for liaising between the Queen and the local authorities, and is known to have defended the lawful usage of recreation outside of church service time by statute in 1614.<sup>24</sup> It may well have been the case that Montague, who was a favourite of King James I, used his royal connections to invite the Queen to visit Wells, so that her royal authority could put an end to the local debate about the use of traditional drama in favour of maintaining the traditions. After all, Queen Anne had never made a secret of her religious policy which favoured traditional values over the restrictions that had been urged by Puritans. For Montague, the stakes were high: if he wanted to prove that the city of Wells was capable of hosting a number of traditional festivities performed in perfect harmony, this was his opportunity to do so. Montague thus informed the civic authorities of the Queen's intention to visit Wells on 19 July 1612, more than a year in

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<sup>20</sup> Stokes, 'The Wells Shows of 1607', p. 150.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Bishop's Court Deposition Book, SRO: D/D/Cd 44, f [149v] (23 July 1610-11), REED, p. 368.

<sup>22</sup> Corporation Act Book 3, WTH, f 377 (16 August), REED, p. 373.

<sup>23</sup> Certified Copy of Defendants' Examinations, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 213 (10 January) (Examination of Robert Creese, saddler, aged 33), REED, p. 318.

<sup>24</sup> Dougall, *The Devil's Book*, p. 93.



advance, which corresponds to the year's notice which towns in Scotland got of the visit by James himself in 1617. Montague took an advisory position in which he determined the protocol including the presence and dress-code of the authorities, the participation of the guilds, and the supervision of general propriety. The protocol shows that in 1613 any possible precaution was taken to avoid every form of disorder to be performed in front of the Queen. Montague ordered the civic authorities that,

There should bee a silver bole given to her Maiestie of the price of xxl.  
that the Streetes should bee made handsome and the towne to bee rid  
of beggers and Rogues.<sup>25</sup>

Montague furthermore advised that on Friday 20 August 1613 on receiving the Queen, the Mayor and 'his brethren' should attend the Queen at Brown's Gate, wearing scarlet gowns. Montague appointed the Mayor, Mr. Baron and one Mr. Smith to supervise the attendance of the 'residue of the xxiiijtie' in black gowns, and the 'residue of the Burgesses' to 'attend likewise in their gownes and best apparell'.<sup>26</sup> The officials were accompanied by the armed troupe of young men who also formed the Morris band on festive occasions, as the Corporation Act Book records that one Mr. Coward, a Mr. Tabor, and Henry Foster and William Atwell were chosen to be responsible for 'overseeinge of the armed men'.<sup>27</sup> In selecting Henry Foster and William Atwell for these positions of responsibility, Montague had made a bold statement about the maintenance of dramatic tradition. William Atwell had been an actor in one of the 1607 mock-pageants that lampooned the professions of John Hole and his reform-leaning sympathizers. He and his brother Robert had ridiculed Hole, Mead and Palmer through a *charivari* on horseback. Where the law suit *Hole vs. White et al.* had concluded that Robert Atwell had been an actor, William Atwell had been charged with a different but not necessarily milder offence, as one of the 'countenancers of the shows',<sup>28</sup> as had Henry Foster. Legally, countenancing

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<sup>25</sup> Corporation Act Book 3, WTH, f. 37 (19 July), REED, p. 371.

<sup>26</sup> Corporation Act Book 3, WTH, f. 375 (22 July), REED, p. 371.

<sup>27</sup> Corporation Act Book 3, WTH, f. 375 (22 July), REED, p. 371.

<sup>28</sup> Plaintiff's Summary of Charges in *Hole v. White et al.*, Huntington Library: EL2728 (November 1609), REED, p. 360.

was not deemed an innocent practice, as the Plaintiff's Summary of Charges summarises:

Forbearance is held to be consent / he who does not forbid, commands / he who does not condemn, approves / he who allows what he can forbid seems to do / widespread and careless negligence is widespread blame / those who act and those who consent are struck with equal punishment.<sup>29</sup>

By appointing two of the defendants in the *Hole v. White* case—who had been found guilty of not doing anything to stop the traditional festivities and ludic activity, and of encouraging them by their active spectatorship—to oversee the Morris band welcoming the Queen into the city, Montague made a political point. First of all, it would have been clear to the locals that here Atwell and Foster symbolized the spectators who had in the community's view been wrongly punished for enjoying traditional custom, and who were now socially and politically recuperated by Anne of Denmark's visit. In a way, the honour bestowed on Foster and Atwell by Montague is exemplary of the larger significance of the Queen's visit, which reinstated the acting and spectating of traditional shows in Wells. Secondly, Foster and Atwell's work as supervisors showed to the public that there was to be a Morris troupe, which was one of the contested ludic practices, at the Queen's arrival, but that this troupe was to be strictly controlled, leaving no space for *charivari*-like disorder this time. Montague thus showed awareness that the 'freedom' of reviving traditional customs could only be obtained through strict event planning and adherence to protocol. Montague ensured that the shows performed before the Queen were firmly supervised by the local authorities 'to giue allowance for the matter of the shewes whether they bee fit or not'.<sup>30</sup> The supervisors of the shows were given the task to ensure that 'euery companie [...] bee Contributorie as they

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<sup>29</sup> Trans. Abigail Anne Young in James Stokes (ed.), *REED Somerset, 2 Editorial Apparatus*, (London and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 847. 'Patientia pro consensus havetur / qui non prohibet jubet / qui non improbat, approbat / qui patitur quod prohibere potest, ipse facere viderur / negligentia lata & supine, est lata Culpa / Agentes & Consentientes pari poena plectuntur'. Plaintiff's Summary of Charges in *Hole v. White et al.*, Huntington Library EL2728, REED, p. 363.

<sup>30</sup> Corporation Act Book 3, WTH, f. 376, REED, p. 372.

haue binne in tymes past to the shewes aforesaid'.<sup>31</sup> It was deemed very important that all the guilds participated and contributed to the display of civic unity and success. Refusal to contribute, physically or monetarily, could even result in a prison sentence, so that what had been suppressed after 1607 had become obligatory in 1613 in the light of the Queen's visit.<sup>32</sup>

Just as it can be claimed that Montague determined the protocol for the Queen's visit with the aim of making a political point about dramatic revival, it is also likely that spectators who had been present in 1607 would have watched the ritual movements of the Queen, her entourage, and the officials appointed to welcome her, with an eye keen to find who had been given positions of privilege, and they would have been sure to have found a political message in that. However, the best place for political messages about drama would have been made through the dramatic medium itself. In the section below I will show that the shows performed in honour of the Queen reminded spectators of the 1607 shows, of performances that had had a political intention at the time of performance, and that had been severely punished by the law. Although the 1613 pageants were largely traditional, some of their topics would have obtained an additional layer of meaning after 1607, including bitter criticisms about the dangers of spectatorship and acting, so that the pageants became self-referential about making and watching drama in situations where this was not always permitted.

## 6.4 Memory of previous risk

The Corporation Act Book informs us that for the Queen's visit, six different groups of tradesmen, or 'companies', performed plays and pageants that reflected their professions, and referred to historical, biblical and mythological scenes and characters. It was recorded in the protocol that the first company to

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<sup>31</sup> Corporation Act Book 3, WTH, f. 376, REED, p. 372.

<sup>32</sup> 'Euery seuerall Companie within this towne shall make themselves readie according to the auncient Orders and Customs to shew themselves before the Queenes Maiestie And that euery Companie and euery seuerall man within the Company shall contribute such somme and sommes of money towards the said shewes as shalbe agreed vppon amongst themselves ... vppon paine of imprisonment'. Corporation Act Book 3, WTH, f. 377 (16 August), REED, p. 373.

present was the so-called ‘hammer men’: the carpenters, joiners, coopers, masons, tilers, and blacksmiths. This group of craftsmen presented a streamer carrying their arms, a representation of Noah building the ark, Vulcan working at the forge, Venus carried around in a chariot with Cupid sitting in her lap. Furthermore they staged a Morris dance and a play of a dragon devouring ‘virgins’.<sup>33</sup> The second company consisted of ‘shermen’ (who finished cloth) and tuckers (whose profession was to soften cloth) who presented a streamer with their arms. Their presentation was rather meagre compared to that of the other guild groups, and their performance has not been recorded. The third group consisted of tanners, chandlers and butchers; the same group that had staged mocking political performances in 1607. This time they presented a cart with ‘old virgins’ wearing horns and bracelets. The chariot was drawn by men and boys dressed in ox skin:

The Tanners Chaundlers and Butchers [...] presented A Carte of old virgins the carte couered with hides and homes and the virgins with their attires made of Cowtayles and bracelets for their neck of Hornes sawed and hanged about their neck for rich Jewells Their charriott was drawne by men and boyes in Oxeskins calues skins and other skins.<sup>34</sup>

For those who came from Court this pageant would have been seen as the ludicrous ‘antimasque’, so that it might thereby have claimed the tanners’, chandlers’ and butchers’ 1607 show as similar buffoonery rather than critique. However, for those spectators who had been present in 1607 this pageant would have been reminiscent of the children’s pageant in which ‘diuers boyes and Maydes in Woomans apparel ... goe abou<.>e the streetes of the said towne...’<sup>35</sup> At the time, John Hole had found reason to complain about this pageant because it had been performed by children on a holy day. By dressing men as old (and obviously rustic and unattractive) women for the 1613 parody on the 1607 pageant, the community showed that they now pointedly had not apparelled *children* in women’s clothing so that they were doing nothing that could be prohibited. In other words, with the knowledge of retrospect they

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<sup>33</sup> Corporation Act Book 3, WTH, f 376, REED, p. 272.

<sup>34</sup> Corporation Act Book 3, WTH, f 376, REED, p. 272.

<sup>35</sup> Interrogatories for Principal Defendants in *Hole v. White et al.*, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheet 220 (10-15 May), REED, p. 276.

were offering the pageant with its risks managed, several years after the risk had ceased to exist, in order to comment on the previous risk that had been run by the performers and spectators of the 1607 pageant. The 1613 show with the ox skin clothing, and jewellery made of horns and bracelets could also have reminded the spectator of the 1607 'pageant of the spotted calf', a *charivari* through which the younger men of the city had mocked Mistress Yarde, Hole's neighbour, who had claimed that the Maypole obstructed her way to the Church and thus denied her the opportunity to attend divine service. As we have seen in the previous chapter, in the 'pageant of the spotted calf' the armed young men, accompanied by the Morris troupe, had staged a hunt in which they meant to 'kill' the spotted calf, that so offended Mistress Yarde, in parody of her complaints. The 'painted calf' itself, a wooden sign with a picture of a calf matching the colours of the maypole, was taken past Mr Yard's door many times, and every now and then 'one of that Companie would cry ba, like a Calf, which person was attired in Satire Skynns'.<sup>36</sup> In 1613 the cart in which participants in 'hides and horns' made its way along the procession, was a civilized reliving of the earlier *charivari* through visual symbolism, and very likely a recycling of costumes, that temporarily took the spectators' minds back to the 1607 mock pageants that had ridiculed those members of the community that had opposed dramatic custom. Furthermore, in 1613, the tanners, chandlers and butchers also presented a St Clement, the patron saint of their profession, who rode a horse while holding a book in his hand.

St Clement their Saint rode allsoe with his booke And his ffrier rode  
allsoe who dealt his almes out of his Masters Bagge which he carried  
verie full of graynes verie plentifullie.<sup>37</sup>

In this pageant, St Clement was accompanied by a friar who rode along and dealt out alms from his master's bag. The image of two men on horseback, one dispensing goods from a bag, had also been seen five years earlier, when the tanners, chandlers and butchers presented the 'mock tradesmen shows' in which they lampooned the professions of Hole and his sympathisers, and ridiculed the trade of greengrocer Humphrey Palmer through a representation

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<sup>36</sup> Examination of William Tyderlegh, REED, p. 351.

<sup>37</sup> Corporation Act Book 3, WTH, f 376, REED, p. 272.

on horseback. The actors were said to have carried a sack of grain, and to have thrown those grains amongst the people on the streets of Wells, and to have cried ‘who will buy anie good spices or raisons,’ or ‘Humphrey Palmer had no such raisons in his shoppe.’<sup>38</sup> Seeing members of this verdery present another image of men on horseback throwing grains would have reminded spectators, once more, of the previous mock-pageants. The 1613 spectators would have enjoyed the lack of risk, but they would also have read the pageant as a retrospective cleansing of the antagonism which the earlier show had caused, while still being reminded of that earlier show and its anti-Puritan claims. John Hole (now long gone from Wells) would not have found the allusion particularly pleasing.

The last part of the pageant organised by this verdery was of a mythological nature, representing ‘Acteon with his Huntsmen’.<sup>39</sup> This pageant provided the opportunity to parade a band of armed men, such as in the 1607 May Games, led by the Morris captain, but it also offered a symbolic comment on the risks of spectatorship. Everyone in the audience would either have been familiar with the myth of the hunter who saw the goddess Diana bathe in the forest, was caught seeing her, and as a punishment was turned into a stag, to be hunted down by his own dogs, as this pageant was part of the city’s traditional repertoire. However, in performances after 1607 this pageant would have gained an extra meaning. Actaeon is the proto-type of the spectator who accidentally walked into a situation that he shouldn’t have been party to, and who paid the price. Actaeon’s situation seen in the light of the *Hole v. White et al.* court case reminded the current audience of the plights of any 1607 spectator who had been charged with being a ‘countenancer’. The third company thus did not waste any opportunity to comment on the 1607 shows, which is not surprising as the members of this verdery had been the most ardent protectors of the traditional church-ale, and the most reckless in their mockeries of reform-leaning opponents of the traditional custom.

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<sup>38</sup> Examination of James Lideard, Butcher, PRO: STAC 8/161/1, sheets 164-4v (4 June), REED, p. 291.

<sup>39</sup> Corporation Act Book 3, WTH, f 376, REED, p. 272.

The fourth company consisted of the cordwainers who presented their patron saint St Crispian and the narrative of the young shoemaker who married his master's daughter.<sup>40</sup> They also presented a streamer with their arms, and another Morris dance. The fifth group was the company of tailors, who presented a streamer, a representation of Herod and Herodias, and an interpretation of the daughter of Herodias:

The taylors who presented A Streamer Herod and Herodias, and the daughter of Herodias who daunced for St Iohn Baptists hedd. St Iohn Baptiste beheaded.<sup>41</sup>

It would have been tempting to stage a pageant of St John the Baptist, because it allowed for a theatrical sleight of hand, using a construction in which the body of the actor was hidden, with a hole at the top from which his head stuck out.<sup>42</sup> On this occasion however, the pageant would have had a deeper meaning than just to show one's dramatic cleverness. For this one needs to consider the theme of the pageant. The biblical king Herod so much enjoyed the dancing of Herodias' daughter that he told her she could ask whatever she liked because she had pleased him so. Herodias then urged her daughter to request the decapitation of John the Baptist. Having given his word, the king reluctantly fulfilled the wish. Of course, the girl's dancing, and the decapitation would have taken place at a different narrative point, but for a tableau it would have been appropriate to show the severed head in the way described in the above, with a girl dancing in front of it. Queen Anne was not in any way likened to Herod. However, it is regal power that was referred to, the power of the monarch to decide on their subjects' lives, and the implied counsel that sovereigns should use this power wisely.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the pageant addresses

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<sup>40</sup> Cordwainers' Account Book, SRO: DD/SAS SE 50/1, f. 32 (25 October), REED, p. 377.

<sup>41</sup> Corporation Act Book 3, WTH, f 376, REED, p. 272.

<sup>42</sup> Philip Butterworth describes the technicalities behind how the 'decollation of John Baptist' took place, quoting from Reginald Scot's observations in the *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Philip Butterworth, 'Substitution: Theatrical Sleight of Hand in Medieval Plays', *Medieval European Drama* 9 (2005), pp. 209-229.

<sup>43</sup> The playing out of different types of kingship by means of offering counsel has been extensively studied. See for example the work of Greg Walker: Greg Walker, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Greg Walker, 'Early Tudor Drama and the Arts of Resistance', *Theta* 9 (2010), pp. 69-94. See also, Alice Hunt, *The Drama of*

the risk of performing in front of a monarch, albeit not necessarily for the person performing it. This again touches on the self-conscious theme of spectating and acting to which the 1613 audience with a knowledge of the 1607 events had become attuned.

The sixth group consisted of mercers who also presented a streamer. Furthermore, they staged a giant and giantess, a Morris dance performed by young children, a representation of King Ptolomeus with his Queen, and a pageant spectacle in which St George and his knights rescued Ptolomeus' daughter from being devoured by a dragon.<sup>44</sup> Further along in the procession Diana and her nymphs were represented along with Actaeon, who was somehow indicated to have metamorphosed into his animal form: 'Diana & her nymphes carried in a Chariott who turned Acteon to a Harte'.<sup>45</sup> This pageant addresses once more the consequences of spectating or witnessing what one shouldn't spectate through the Actaeon theme.

I have so far observed that the pageants' protocol showed that the organiser of the Queen's entry, Bishop Montague, aimed to present the Queen with a meticulously organised sequence of events, in pointed contrast to the disordered and perilous 1607 plays and games. Montague's organisation and appointment of officials welcoming the Queen betrayed a political agenda in favour of dramatic revival, and an awareness of previous danger. Furthermore, the pageants themselves were mostly based on traditional custom, and where they deviated, this was in order for the verderies to refer to 1607 mock pageants. It may be observed that for the 1613 shows similar figures to the 1607 shows were used in the pageants, for example the goddess Diana, or St George. However, a new reading of old material was presented, such as the

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*Coronation: Medieval Ceremony in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 9; Peter Happé, 'Dramatic Images of Kingship in Heywood and Bale', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 39: 2 (1991), pp. 239-253; John N. King, 'Henry VIII as David: The King's Image and Reformation Politics', in *Henry VIII and His Afterlives: Literature, Politics, and Art*, ed. by Mark Rankin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 34-52; W.R. Streitberger, 'The Royal Image and the Politics of Entertainment', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 39 (2000), pp. 1-16.

<sup>44</sup> Lawrence Clopper, 'Why are there so few English saint plays?' *Early Theatre* 2 (1999), pp. 107-112, p. 107.

<sup>45</sup> Corporation Act Book 3, WTH, f 376, REED, p. 272.



throwing of grains, which recuperates the motif by showing it in the context of alms giving. People would remember the earlier one but the new one did not comment bitterly on what had passed before: rather, it translated the earlier event into a more wholesome and harmonious community based action. Hereby the verderies addressed the dangers of performing and spectating, and reminding spectators of the risks of the recent past, incidentally making the audience aware that these risks were no longer being run. In other words, the Queen's visit was heralded as a moment from which a new, safe, social and political climate had started, called into being by the Queen's presence and authority. The citizens of Wells watched the 1613 shows with a double consciousness, which Foscari as an outsider, could not comprehend. Foscari naively concludes in his letter to the Doge of Venice:

Qui non u'è, chi uoglia sapere d'affari, ne di noue del mondo; solo s'attende allegramente in Corte tre, e Quattro uolte maggiore dell'ordinario à feste...<sup>46</sup>

[There is no one here who wants to know of business, nor of news of the world; at court one onely happily attends to feasts and banquets, three and four times more than usual].<sup>47</sup>

Of course the main reason for the Queen's entry *was* business, which was on everybody's mind. The Queen herself used the royal entry as a platform for her own agenda. By going to Wells, where traditional customs had been fiercely attacked by reform-leaning citizens, Queen Anne did not only help the community reinstate their traditional values; she also emphasised her role as a female patron of the ludic arts. It has been observed by Clare McManus that Queen Anne sought to redefine 'female courtly authority', by her 'self-conscious use of patronage, performance and commissioning', and that she removed her patronage of dramatic performances from Whitehall to other locations to further the cause of female participation in drama.<sup>48</sup> Where

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<sup>46</sup> Letter of Antonio Foscari, to the Doge and Senate of Venice, ASV: Senato, Secreta, Dispacci, Inghilterra, f [1] (23 August), REED, p. 374.

<sup>47</sup> Transl. Konrad Eisenbichler in James Stokes (ed.), *REED Somerset*, 2 Editorial Apparatus, University of Toronto Press, London & Toronto, 1996, p. 850.

<sup>48</sup> Clare McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage: Anna of Denmark and Female Masquing in the Stuart Court (1590-1619)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 179.

Foscarini commented on the flocking of nobles to the Queen because the King had never been to the province,<sup>49</sup> he failed to see the Queen's image as anything outside the Body Politic. Foscarini also misunderstood the significance of the nobles gathered in Wells; Foscarini thought them to be provincials who were keen for a glimpse of royalty, but a list of dinner guests in the Corporation Act Book tells a rather different tale. The list of noble guests recorded to have been 'invited to dynner with Mr William Bull then Mayor of Wells' after the pageants in the Queen's honour were performed, reads as follows:

The Right Honorable the Earle of Worcester the Earle of Tumoth The Lord Buishoppe of Bath and Welles Sir Thomas Somerset The Countesse of Darbie the Lady Cary The Lady Gray The Lady Winzor the Lady Hatton The Lady Walshingham The ffower Maydes of Honor with other persons which came accordinglie except the Earle of Worcester.<sup>50</sup>

These people were not 'provincial' nobles but members of the Queen's private entourage, and favourites of her husband, all of whom were known to support the dramatic form. Edward Somerset the Earl of Worcester, was an advisor to James I in the occupation of Lord Privy Seal. His son, Sir Thomas Somerset was Queen Anne's Master of the Horse.<sup>51</sup> Lady Catherine Windsor was one of the daughters of the Earl of Worcester, and appeared in at least two masques with Queen Anne.<sup>52</sup> The Countess of Derby (Elizabeth de Vere, daughter of the famous courtier and playwright Edward de Vere, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford) and the Ladies Hatton and Walshingham had accompanied Queen Anne in the masque *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* (1604), playing respectively Proserpine, Macaria and Astraea.<sup>53</sup> Otherwise engaged with drama, the ladies of Sir John Gray and Sir Henry Carey were, like their husbands, known as patrons

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<sup>49</sup> Letter of Antonio Foscarini, REED, p. 374.

<sup>50</sup> Corporation Act Book 3, WTH, f. 376, REED, p. 372.

<sup>51</sup> Barrol, *Anna of Denmark*, p. 202.

<sup>52</sup> Barrol, *Anna of Denmark*, p. 191.

<sup>53</sup> Samuel Daniel, *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses, presented in a Maske the eight of Ianuary, at Hampton Court: by the Queene's most excellent Maiesty, and her ladies* (London: Thomas Creed, 1604), sig. A-B, *Early English Books Online*, web accessed 5 July 2013. See also Ernest Law, 'Introduction', *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1880), p. 43.

of the arts.<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth Carey was the first female dramatist in England, known for her play *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613).<sup>55</sup> Showing themselves as female *aficionados* and patrons of drama, the Queen (and her carefully selected ladies) performed much more than the Royal Body. Indeed, they performed female independence and emphasised the contribution women made to the dramatic form. Anne of Denmark thus used her presence to restate traditional values for the citizens of Wells, while they in return gave her a platform for her own socio-political agenda.

The monarch is the primary spectator in any royal entry, or show or pageant performed in their honour; however, they also play a part when they interact with protocol, ritual, and their audience. That is to say that the sovereign during a royal entry forms an occasion around which citizens act, participate and spectate. As Janette Dillon puts it, the monarch's entering a city '[r]ecreates the meaning of that ... space'.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the sovereign's presence alters the meaning of any form of local traditional drama or custom, sometimes creating a sense of anxiety in non-royal spectators, such as may have been felt when Henry VII entered York for the first time, but by contrast in the case of Wells, softening the memory of past perils and replacing risk with recuperation.

A sense of risk or the memory of previous risk can create a dual consciousness for participants in royal entries, and other dramatic activities, and for the spectators of these events. One may ask whether spectators' awareness, in this case caused by the monarch's intervention, can be called 'metatheatrical'. The metatheatrical stream of theory emphasizes the self-consciousness the spectator feels about drama as an artificial medium.<sup>57</sup> Some

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<sup>54</sup> Barrol, *Anna of Denmark*, p. 44.

<sup>55</sup> Naomi J. Miller, 'Sovereign Subversions: Ruling Women in Jacobean England', in *Form and Reform in Renaissance England*, ed. by Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, Amy Boesky and Mary Thomas Crane (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), pp. 247-270, p. 257.

<sup>56</sup> Dillon, *The Language of Space in Court Performance*, p. 49.

<sup>57</sup> Prominently, Lionel Abel, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963); Lionel Abel, *Tragedy and Metatheatre* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 2003). James L. Calderwood, *Metadrama in Shakespeare's Henriad: Richard II to Henry V* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); William Egginton, *How the World*

have located this self-consciousness in devices employed by the dramatist such as the play within the play; the ceremony within the play; role playing within the role; literary and real-life reference within the play and self-reference.<sup>58</sup> Others have taken the view that the spectator is always in a sense aware of the drama as artificial because of the intrinsic features in its language or due to other aspects of the drama.<sup>59</sup> One of these is the play's relationship to the cultural system by which it is surrounded. Richard Hornby, for example, claimed that spectators always related what they saw or heard to the play as a whole, and to other plays that they had seen, so that 'a dramatic work is always experienced at least secondarily as metadramatic'.<sup>60</sup> Peter Hyland's recent study, which also argues for the spectators' inherent awareness of the artificiality of drama, claims that '*disguise* is of its essence metatheatrical' [emphasis mine].<sup>61</sup> Both Hornby and Hyland have remarked that the degree to which plays consciously exploited the metatheatrical potential, would have varied widely.<sup>62</sup> Metatheatricality has always been studied in relation to plays, rather than to royal entries and other ludic or ritual forms in which acting occurred. In royal ritual the monarch when performing the Royal Body, does not present a fictional role, but rather presents a particular version of their own persona with which they interact with their audience. It is therefore unlikely that any metatheatrical effect could effectively be located in artificiality and disguise: in the gowns of the civic officials, or attributed to the costumes of the pageant actors, or in other theatrical devices. Metatheatrical approaches, though they may describe certain moments or types of response, do not adequately deal with a core issue in dramatic interaction: the participation which it encourages *in context*. Indeed, in royal entries, as in the other

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*Became a Stage: Presence, Theatricality, and the Question of Modernity* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003).

<sup>58</sup> Richard Hornby, *Drama, Metadrama and Perception* (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1986), p. 32.

<sup>59</sup> Calderwood, *Metadrama in Shakespeare's Henriad*; Agostino Lombardo, 'The Veneto, Metatheatre, and Shakespeare', in *Shakespeare's Italy: Functions of Italian Locations in Renaissance Drama*, ed. by Michele Marrapodi, A. J. Hoenselaars, Marcello Capuzo & F Falzon Santucci (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 143-157.

<sup>60</sup> Hornby, *Drama, Metadrama and Perception*, p. 31.

<sup>61</sup> Peter Hyland, *Disguise on the Early Modern English Stage*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 15.

<sup>62</sup> Hornby, *Drama, Metadrama and Perception*, p. 31. Hyland, *Disguise on the Early Modern English Stage*, p. 15.

dramatic forms discussed in this thesis, the spectator does not feel self-consciousness about drama as an *artificial* medium, but they feel self-consciousness about the dramatic medium within its context. This self-consciousness perceived at any such event arises from the fact that the spectator is an actor in the proceedings. It may be further intensified by the memory of risk or the appreciation of present risk, but there is a point at which self-consciousness of this kind is profoundly different from metatheatricity because while metatheatricity seems to stress the condition of the reflective, observing spectator, my understanding of context stresses self-consciousness as a dimension of the participative spectator. In this case study, it was the citizens' memory of previous politically loaded 1607 performances that created a double consciousness through which they noticed a lack of risk where previously there had been the risks which they had inadequately judged. It was with a consciousness of female patronage of the dramatic arts,<sup>63</sup> that Queen Anne accepted Montague's invitation to visit Bath and Wells, and it was because of his memory of other royal entries in which monarchs performed their Body Politic that Foscarini took the 1613 pageants at face value only and simply commented that 'one clearly sees the pleasures she [Queen Anne] gives and receives, equally great',<sup>64</sup> without quite grasping the full political truth behind his words.

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<sup>63</sup> McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage*, p. 179.

<sup>64</sup> 'Si uede chiaro il gusto, che dà, et riceue grande ugualmente'. Letter of Antonio Foscarini, to the Doge and Senate of Venice, ASV: Senato, Secreta, Dispacci, Inghilterra, f [1] (23 August), REED, 374. Trans. K Eisenbichler in James Stokes (ed.), *REED Somerset, 2 Editorial Apparatus* (London and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 850.

## 7. Conclusion

This thesis has investigated playmaking on the ‘edge of reality’, thus highlighting the interaction between spectatorship and the play-world, and the reality surrounding it. My research study has argued that where metatheatricity and cognitive theories both acknowledge the two worlds of theatre (the world of play, and the world that the audience brings along to the performance space), they bring them together in different ways. This study has proposed that a full understanding of spectatorship requires a historical, political, and cultural dimension, and, by implication, that these theories are better seen as adjuncts to such a dimension. Thus situating plays in their socio-cultural contexts, this thesis has sought to explore the leading characteristics of dramatic experience from an interdisciplinary perspective.

The current study has observed that the fictional part of play is to a certain extent ‘real’ because it has a specific social, political or religious meaning in the context in which the play is staged. Spectators were encouraged to feel close to the play throughout a performance, but were kept at emotional arm’s length when playmakers detected a problem in such absorption. This appears to have happened when playmakers feared the consequences for their spectators’ safety if they responded in a way that was deemed inappropriate within that specific context, and which might indirectly have had a negative effect on their own security; or when playwrights or organisers of ludic events did not trust the spectators’ response to the material given. Another occasion for such restraint was when the play, resembling ritual action or bearing contents too sensitively linked to the needs of the society in which it was performed, simply risked being too real. One may indeed wonder if play could ever really be entirely fictional in the early English performance contexts studied in this thesis.

One can only marvel at the daring of these playwrights, organisers of dramatic events, actors and participants. They staged and participated in plays that were politically sensitive, or controversial in their expression of religious belief. Sometimes their very expression was against the law, as we have seen in Wells. What these plays had in common was that they were performed in

changing and potentially (or actually) fractured communities in which diverse, and at points contradictory opinions circulated. These playwrights were given, or imposed on themselves, the challenge to present their ideas in a way that was fun, that kept spectators interested but that did not offend or disturb them, and that did not put them in a dangerous position. This research has shown a variety of ways of achieving this success. In such challenging social or cultural contexts as addressed in this thesis, playwrights estimated what problems they might incur when performing their drama, and set to work managing their spectators as well as the different facets of a play that might cause risk. This risk management by both playwrights and participants was a constant process. The reason for this is that spectating was a political act, and one that extended to the time after the performance. Therefore, some playwrights calculated both in-play and post-performance risks, and sought to manage these risks for their audiences, while others saw it as more politically advantageous not to manage these risks.

The manifestation of risk management itself shows us something interesting about early English expression of opinion, where freedom of speech, political choice and freedom of belief were not givens. This manifestation gives explicit evidence of playwrights' concerns with specific issues, such as religious reform, gender roles in organised religion, the role of the Institution of the Church, or the amount of power that a specific individual might have. It evidences playwrights' concern about the right to express traditional custom and defend that right. Foregrounding risk management in research may help to reconstruct parts of the social or cultural context in which drama was performed, for example in situations for which the specific spatio-temporal location cannot be found, but may also help to nuance further already well-documented social and cultural contexts. Studying the dynamics of risk in a play and its management may offer insights into the spectator's experience in situations when spectator responses were not documented for a specific play, or if such responses were found to be biased, or influenced or manipulated by third parties in its documentation. The reason for this is that attending to risk management permits a view of how playwrights thought about the spectators that watched the plays, and how they thought about

themselves within the context in which they performed, and by implication, how spectators were allowed to think of themselves as spectators.

It needs to be observed that where this thesis has offered case-studies using pairs of plays, set against their different contexts but dealing with similar issues, other choices of selection could have been made. For example, by offering later or earlier plays: I could have addressed the biblical cycle plays that feature in recent studies of metatheatre, or I could have included Inns of Court plays to enrich the investigation with another specific context in which drama intervened in an existing community. I hope that further study will permit me to address those performance contexts which have now been left unexplored, to further the study of risk in play and its management.

Particularly, further research might be conducted to include Sir David Lindsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*. This play is known to have been performed in three different performance contexts: once in 1540 in the royal palace of King James V of Scotland at Linlithgow (this was a great hall performance). The second production of the play was an outdoor performance held at Cupar in Fife on the 7th of June 1552 and the third performance was also an open air performance held in Edinburgh in the presence of many citizens, including nobility, on the 12th of August 1554. As such, this play offers a further opportunity to closely investigate the subtle nuances of change in a playwright's perception of risk, and his choices in risk management in his different versions of the play. A single play performed in changing political atmospheres, before a variety of audiences, and social contexts of different levels of prestige, would be a perfect subject to further explore the notion of risk and the diversity of treatment that the management of risk involves, in relation to the world that surrounds play.

This study of risk management in Early English drama has shown drama to be an event, rather than a text, so that what is recorded in the play script misrepresents the actual experience that spectators would have had. The play text also misrepresents the ostensible ease with which playwrights conveyed their material. Indeed, this study of risk in play has demonstrated that dramatic success was dependent on many different factors, some of which were intrinsic to the contents of the play, others of an external nature; and that



the real nature of performance was given to sudden changes, and was thus at times unpredictable. We can infer from the ways in which playwrights managed the risks of the performance how their play reflected the complex relationship between the play and the spectator, a complex relationship that reveals matters such as local context, historical change, theological problems and fragility of belief, and the status of drama itself. It shows actors, playwrights, and organizers of events, participants and spectators, playmaking on the edge of what was permissible in reality: it shows that the reality of dramatic experience is that it was a playful experience which was constantly on the edge of something more dangerous.

## Appendix: material culture



Figure 1 *Sacramentsretabel van Niervaart*, c. 1535, oil on panel, 167 x 338 cm. Breda's Museum, Breda. With kind permission of Breda's Museum.



Figure 2 Detail *Sacramentsretabel van Niervaart*. This panel shows members of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament, including one female member on the right. She may be Barbara of Nassau.

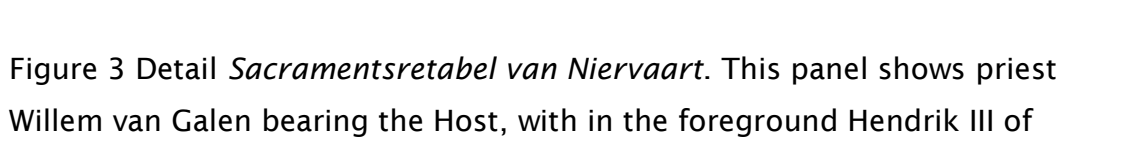






Figure 4 School of Antwerp, *Christus en de Samaritaanse Vrouw bij de Stad Breda*, c. 1518-1520, oil on panel, 53,5 x 67 cm. Breda's Museum, Breda. With kind permission of Breda's Museum.



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