14 Drama and Authority during the Reign of Queen Mary

Peter Happé
This essay will deal with a variety of dramatic forms in the reign of Queen Mary and will consider how far she deliberately attempted to influence content and performance. There are two contrasting aspects: control and restraint attempted to ensure that opposition was not damaging, and, more positively some forms of drama which had come under pressure might be revived. During Mary’s reign her position altered as she invested more and more into the intention to bring about religious change, but opposition managed to show itself in a number of ways.

The materials available are inevitably somewhat patchy. The *Records of Early English Drama* (REED) volumes do provide a good deal of positive information about what was going on in these years, but some caution is necessary because we cannot know what they have omitted editorially, and the survival of such records is affected by chance. As far as texts are concerned we have some relevant manuscripts of the cycle plays, but the survival of interludes for the period is rare, perhaps being subject to external pressures.

As a prologue we note that on 22 August 1553, when Mary’s accession was proclaimed in Kilkenny, John Bale arranged for the production of three of his anti-Catholic plays in the Market Place. This was no doubt intended as an uncompromising protest against what Bale judged was to come.¹

Control. During the reign of Edward VI, and that of his father, official control of players and playing had grown. In 1549 a Proclamation had required players not “to play in the English tongue any kind of interlude, play, dialogue, or other matter set forth in form of play in any place, public or private, within this realm” from 9 August to 1 November.² In the same year the Act of Uniformity forbade interludes and plays criticizing the new Book of Common Prayer.³ These provisions reveal apprehension of the danger to official policy of such performances and they specifically refer to the vernacular in spite of the Protestant emphasis from Thomas Cromwell onwards on the availability of the Bible itself in English. Probably those framing the documents perceived a threat that needed restraint from the common people. In 1551 a Proclamation forbade the playing or printing of plays and interludes without special license signed by six members of the Privy Council.⁴ Apparently at least some dramatic activity might have been acceptable, providing that it was of the “right” sort. Some years before, a more positive attitude to drama as a means of disseminating Protestant ideas had been urged upon Cromwell by Richard Morison.⁵


³ *Statutes of the Realm*, 4, pt 1 (reprint, London: Dawsons, 1963), 38, 2–3 Edward VI, chap. 1, sec. 3, ordering a penalty of a fine or imprisonment for violation.


After the Proclamation of Queen Mary’s accession on 19 July 1553, the new government issued another Proclamation on 18 August which asserted the need for licensing to print as well as to play interludes. Though we find elsewhere a concern for public order at large gatherings it is clear that here the intention was spiritual, if not ideological. This Proclamation specifically mentions “evil-disposed persons which take upon them without sufficient authority to preach and to interpret the word of God after their own brain.” It targets those “in the English tongue touching the high points and mysteries of Christian religion.” Because very few interludes that can be unequivocally ascribed to the Marian years have survived, it is possible that some inhibition by the government was indeed achieved. Commenting upon this Proclamation, Glynne Wickham suggests it gave due warning about the policy to be pursued, but the evidence reviewed here rather indicates that the active control increased after the Queen’s marriage to Philip II in 1554 and the return of Cardinal Pole in the same year. Meanwhile John Christopherson, the Marian Bishop of Chichester, noticed the harm he thought interludes had done during the time of Edward VI particularly in relation to the rites, ceremonies, and sacraments of the Church. This implies a continuing uneasiness about such plays and it apparently occurred before the development of a harder line towards Protestants. However, other dramatic activities as distinct from interludes were prospering at this time, especially the biblical plays and dramatic entertainment at court and in parishes, as we shall see.

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8 John Christopherson, *An Exhortation to All Menne to Take Hede and Beware of Rebellion* (London, 1554), sig. T3.
In the same year (1554) another bishop, Edmund Bonner, questioned his clergy in a general visitation for his diocese of London about games or plays and whether parishioners older than fourteen years attended plays during divine service. He enquired whether any plays slandering religion had been printed or sold. But matters were beginning to cause concern to the civic authorities in London, and in the following year, on the Queen’s behalf, they prohibited minstrelsy and interludes or plays in alehouses and taverns. Bonner himself returned to the matter at about the same time in another visitation, prohibiting the clergy of St. Paul’s from attending “ludis illicitis et inhonestis.” Wickham has pointed out that the power of the Bishop of London sitting in his Ecclesiastical Court (“the Ordinary”) was not an innovation but a continuation and strengthening of a procedure set up by Henry VIII in 1543.

In 1554 and the next two years the pressure appears to have increased. On 7 March 1555 the King and Queen instructed the aldermen of the city of London to restrain innkeepers over the provision of entertainment, including interludes, within their houses.11 A Proclamation of 13 June 1555 ordered the burning of heretical books. Among the proscribed authors was John Bale, some of whose plays had been printed abroad in 1547 and 1548, though it is not clear whether it was the plays themselves that were targeted or his substantial body of non-dramatic polemical writings dating largely from the years 1540–48.12

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12 Hughes and Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 2:57-60. Frederic A. Youngs, Jr., has noticed (*The Proclamations of the Tudor Queens* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 4)
Efforts were also being made outside London. In 1556 the Bishop of St Asaph forbade his clergy to use unlawful games or plays. But the civic authorities were also involved, perhaps as much for fear of civil disorder as on purely doctrinal grounds. The Privy Council asked the Earl of Shrewsbury, Lord President of the North, to prohibit through Justices of the Peace all plays and interludes in the North of England “whereby the people may any wayes be steryd to disorder.” He was to instruct Sir Francis Leek to send to him for examination six or seven of the latter’s liveried servants who had been performing throughout the North plays and interludes directed against Philip and Mary and the Catholic religion in general. Similarly, the Select Council set out to prevent players “strolling through the kingdom disseminating seditions and heresies.” A Royal commission sent to York prohibited interlude players to play or to go about. In Essex, in 1554, the Lord Lieutenant was instructed by the Privy Council to stop a play and report upon it. Mary herself expressed concern about this to Lord Rich, requiring him “to have special care to stop the like occasion of assembling the people hereafter.”

13 Lancashire, Dramatic Texts and Records, no. 1599.

14 Wickham, Early English Stages, 2, pt. 1:72. See also n. 43, below.

15 Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Queen Mary I (London: Public Record Office, 1998), 82 (7 May 1556).

16 Lancashire, Dramatic Texts and Records, no. 1582.

17 Wickham, Early English Stages, 2, pt. 1:71.

18 Harold C. Gardiner, S.J., Mysteries’ End: An Investigation of the Last Days of the Medieval Religious Stage (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1946), 63, n. 75. In this seminal work
documents the word “interlude” is frequently the term chosen for plays. Its meaning as understood nowadays is rather vague, but the contexts of many of these instances show that such theatrical events were to be seen in the light of a threat to civil order. The term “interlude” came to carry a negative implication for the authorities. The many-sided prohibitions, civil as well as ecclesiastical, imply that there was a good deal to be concerned about and that activities were going on in spite of repeated events to bring them to an end.

In 1557, however, a cluster of data from London and elsewhere indicates that the activities of control were still being pursued and in some cases were quite specific. On 9 March, records of the City of London prohibited stage plays and interludes on Sundays and holy days. On 13 June the players of “certaine naughtie plaies” were apprehended and sent to the Commissioners for Religion. In the case of the lost Sackefull of Newes, the Privy Council halted the performance at the Boar’s Head Aldgate, and the players were arrested on 5 September. The next day they were released but the Lord Mayor was instructed to allow plays only between All Saints and Shrovetide. This restraint may have been prompted by anxiety about public gatherings in the open air in the long summer days. Plays that were allowed must be approved by the Ordinary, which re-established the element of ecclesiastical control. Between June and August the Mayor of Canterbury had certain players arrested and “their lewde playe

Gardiner says that Mary’s policies were tolerant at the beginning of her reign and suggests that the Spanish marriage was the trigger of dissent and of a more severe policy.


20 Lancashire, Dramatic Texts and Records, no. 1104.

21 Ibid., nos. 1106–07.
booke” seized. This book and a record of the examination of the players were sent to the Privy Council, who instructed the city to proceed against the players.\textsuperscript{22} Henry Machyn records in his \textit{Diary} that a play promoted by “Gospellers” about the Eucharist was stopped by the guard at Islington on 12 December 1554 before it could begin. “Ruffe, a Skott” connected with the play may have been the “Ser John Ruffe, prest, A Skott,” who, Machyn notes, was burned as a heretic on 22 December.\textsuperscript{23}

\textit{Court Entertainment}. While some of the entertainment provided at Court may be described as interludes, which are discussed below, there are indications of what are referred to as “masks.” Much of the information about these is in documents relating to the Revels. No texts have survived, and the details we have are largely in the administrative and financial records of inventories of costumes and properties as well as the expenditure on music, tailoring, carpentry and the transport of what was needed at the appropriate times. Many payments were to named individual craftsmen, indicating that a considerable number of people were employed at the busiest periods. The titles and rather imprecise dates of performances are:\textsuperscript{24}

1554 \textit{Mask of Mariners} (preparation on 17–21 October for performance in November)

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., no. 508.

\textsuperscript{23} John Gough Nichols, ed., \textit{The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London}, Camden Society (London, 1848), 160–61. This \textit{Diary} encompasses the whole of Mary’s reign, and it is surprising that among his plentiful references to funerals, processions, trials, burnings, sermons, royal movements, and other public matters there are but a tiny handful of dramatic and quasi-dramatic events. No rationale is apparent for those he does notice.

\textsuperscript{24} Information from Alfred Harbage, \textit{Annals of English Drama, 975–1700}, revised by S. Schoenbaum (London: Methuen, 1964); Albert Feuillerat, \textit{Documents Relating to the Revels at Court in the Time of King Edward VI and Queen Mary} (Louvain: A. Uyspruyst, 1914); and W. R. Streitberger, \textit{Court Revels, 1485–1559} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).
Mask of vi Arcules with vi Mariners (also performed in November)²⁵

Mask of viii Venetian Senators with vi Galley Slaves

Mask of Venuses and Cupids

1555 Mask of Goddesses, Huntresses and Turkey Women

Mask of vi Turkes Magistrates

1556 Play of The Way of Life by William Baldwin (December)

1557 A Great Mask of Allmaynes, Pylgrys and Irysshmen (St. Mark’s Day, in honor of Philip II’s second visit, 14 March–3 July)

There are also places in these records where more general phrases are used, such as “plaies and other pastimes,” which may conceal other performance events not now ascertainable.²⁶ But from the limited details we have it seems that although there was a program of Court entertainment during most winter seasons of the reign, the activities were not particularly vigorous or plentiful. The titles of the lost masks suggest an interest in the exotic, as in Venice and the Turks, and some reflection of classical themes. Baldwin’s play is the only title to suggest a religious theme.

Other Dramatic Types. The Records of Early English Drama project has enabled us to take an ever-broadening view of the types of drama in Queen Mary’s reign. Besides the interludes it is apparent that there was a considerable amount of drama over the kingdom as a whole. We can deal with these in two categories: mystery plays or biblical drama as distinct from

²⁵ Possibly this is the same as the previous item, but the number of Mariners differs: 8 and 6 respectively; see Feuillerat, Documents, 180, 292.

²⁶ Feuillerat, Documents Relating to the Revels, 199.
other localized dramatic activities, some of which is classical or humanist in concept and some of which has been recently characterized as “Parish Drama.”

*Mystery Plays.* The polemical aspects of the biblical drama are clearly relevant to the main concern of this essay in that they may represent or reflect official attitudes and thus they are an index of the revival of Catholic values. We should, however, notice at this point that the current state of scholarship has become increasingly skeptical about the frequency and distribution of these plays, usually in the form of play cycles. The essence is that there were really not very many of them, but where they can be definitely identified, the Marian period saw a noticeable revival of interest.

Of the four surviving comprehensive cycles in English, we shall disregard *N-Town* because we have no documentary evidence for its provenance and performance other than can be gleaned internally from the manuscript itself, and none of this is in the Marian period. 27 For the York and Chester cycles we can say something because we have reliable texts, albeit of differing status, and some supporting documentation. The Towneley Cycle, usually associated with Wakefield, falls somewhere between these extremes. We have a text, but its date and provenance are controversial at present; and we have three sixteenth-century extra-dramatic references, but it is not clear how these relate to the composite surviving text. Moreover, there is no conclusive

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27 For the Cornish-language cycle, the *Ordinalia* (*Ancient Cornish Drama*, ed. and trans. Edwin Norris [1859; reprint New York and London: Benjamin Blom, 1968]) or the sixteenth-century *Creacion of the World* (ed. and trans. Paula Neuss [New York: Garland, 1985]) there is very little information available about dates of performance, but it is quite possible that some did take place as late as the period under review.
evidence that the plays in this sixteenth-century collection were ever performed in the form and order implied in the manuscript.28

Besides these full cycles we have further texts and/or information from such locations as Ashburton, Beverley, Bristol, Coventry, Hereford, London, Newcastle, New Romney, Norwich, Sherborne, Shrewsbury, and Worcester,29 but there is but little uniformity in the nature of the plays or the performance practices in these locations. One of the biggest obscurities is that the terminology used in differing circumstances is capable of different meanings. The term “pageant” for example, which was commonly used at York to mean the short plays which constitute the cycle, has to be interpreted at Bristol as an image or even a statue carried in a procession.30 Another significant feature is the association of many, but not all of these events with Corpus Christi, the feast suppressed by Henry VIII in 1548. But if such plays might be associated with the feast, there were also Corpus Christi processions which may not have had much in them to justify the term “dramatic.” Moreover, plays which were performed on Corpus Christi were not necessarily biblical cycles. The only safe interpretation of the common phrase “Corpus Christi plays” is that they were plays performed on Corpus Christi. Nevertheless, in many of the places listed, an observance of some sort was repeated or revived at Corpus Christi

28 For the status of this text, see Peter Happé, *The Towneley Cycle: Unity and Diversity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), 15–55.

29 Later evidence in 1603 reports a Corpus Christi play beginning with the Creation of the World was performed at Preston in Lancashire; see David George, ed., *REED: Lancashire* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 29, 87.

30 The term “pageant” was used by Machyn in recording the Queen’s entry into London on 30 September 1553. Here they were painted, had rich hangings, and one had three giants. Machyn also noted music and speeches (*Diary*, 45).
during Mary’s reign, no doubt in line with her policies. Machyn reports that in London on 23 May 1554, the first Corpus Christi day of the reign, there were “mony goodly prossessyons in mony parryshes.”[^31]

The accompanying tabulation (fig. 1) shows the frequency of these public events in the Marian years together with brief indications of the nature of the material.

**Fig. 1. Corpus Christi Events 1553–58**

Based upon entries in the *REED* volumes for Devon, Bristol, Cheshire, Coventry, Newcastle, Kent, Norwich, Dorset, Herefordshire, Worcester, and York, and Machyn’s *Diary*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1553</th>
<th>1554</th>
<th>1555</th>
<th>1556</th>
<th>1557</th>
<th>1558</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashburton, play</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bristol, pageant (image)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Chester, play cycle (Pentecost)]</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coventry, play cycle</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London, processions (many)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>London, Passion</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newcastle, procession</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>[New Romney, play cycle (Pentecost)]</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norwich, procession</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sherborne, play [1552]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shrewsbury, procession</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wakefield, plays</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worcester, general</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>York, play cycle</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The absence of information for individual years in fig. 1 may be simply because none has survived, but it is also possible that there was a deliberate decision not to carry out the customary

[^31]: Ibid., 63.
practice. In 1553 at York, for example, the Corpus Christi Play was cancelled for reasons of plague after plans had been started for the performance to take place. The practice was that the Council would initiate the performance each year usually in March, and preparations went ahead according to a set pattern and timetable up to the performance on Corpus Christi. For many years the York cycle was performed annually, with occasional substitution of the Creed Play or Pater Noster Play, and this had continued even under Edward VI when we know it appeared in 1547, 1548, and 1549. But for these last two years The Coronation of the Virgin and The Assumption were omitted, and in 1551 the Drapers were reassigned to another play because their Assumption was again omitted. In the reign of Mary these episodes were restored.\textsuperscript{32}

Less regularity is discernible in the ways things were arranged for the Chester Whitsun plays (which had been moved from Corpus Christi, perhaps in about 1530). A further complication arises with Hereford where there had been Corpus Christi “pageants” (now lost) until the feast was suppressed in 1548. The fact that no records from the city have survived for the Marian years does not necessarily mean that the pageants failed to be revived at that time. At Worcester, revival of some kind is more certain in 1555. There survives a general civic instruction that the “fellowships” and guilds of the city “shale prepayre there shewes vpon corpus chrysti daye as hathe bine of ould time accustomydy.” Earlier records refer to “pageants,” but

these may not have been plays as such.33 At Canterbury the pageant about the martyrdom of St. Thomas Becket which had been played from 1504 had been suppressed under Edward and was restored in 1554.34 The Corpus Christi event at Ashburton involved players acting as God and Christ as well as other unspecified parts, but for these two designated characters the costume mentioned is gloves, which may suggest a procession rather than a play.35 It appears that the Grey Friars staged a Passion in London beginning on 7 June 1557.36

At Wakefield the surviving text and the non-dramatic references cannot be closely linked. The positive aspect for this discussion is that one record of 1556 is specific about Corpus Christi plays being performed:

Item a payne is sett that everye craft and occupacion doo bringe furthe / theire pagyauntes of Corpus Christi daye as hathe bene heretofore vsed and to / gyve furthe the speches of the same in Easter holydayes in payne of everye one not so doynge to forfett / xls.

From this we see there were plays, called “pageants,” with words, and these had been performed for some years by the craft guilds on Corpus Christi day and that some preparation had gone on at Easter. The purpose of the document in 1556 is to ensure that the guilds really did come up to scratch, a serious penalty being prescribed. It might be that there had been some discontinuity or


backsliding (possibly during the reign of Edward VI), but there was now an attempt to enforce
preparation and performance, with a retrospective glance at what had been going on traditionally.
Another record for 1559 supports the basic details here.³⁷

The position at Wakefield is made more complex by the nature of the Towneley text.
Probably at least some parts of the surviving manuscript are to be associated with Wakefield on
linguistic or topographical grounds, but the relationship to what was to be performed in 1556 is
unclear. However, recent work on the manuscript itself (Huntington Library MS. HM1) has
suggested that it was actually written out in the Marian period, irrespective of the date of
individual items.³⁸ The possibility thus arises that this carefully decorated and presented
manuscript was itself part of a revival of interest in the old Catholic plays during Mary’s reign.
Later, in 1576, the Corpus Christi plays at Wakefield were sufficiently Catholic to become a
target for the now Protestant Ecclesiastical Commissioners in York in 1576.³⁹ The references
noticed here to the biblical drama and to the Corpus Christi processions with which it was often
associated show that there was much attention to these public spectacles. Often there was a
retrospective element recalling the theatrical and spiritual wealth of the past.

³⁷ The Wakefield records are reliably transcribed and discussed in A. C. Cawley, Jean Forrester,
and John Goodchild, “References to the Corpus Christi Play in the Wakefield Burgess Court

³⁸ For this Marian dating of the manuscript, see Barbara Palmer, “Recycling ‘The Wakefield
96.

³⁹ Letter from Dean Matthew Hutton “and others of the Counsell and commission,” in York
Diocesan Records; as transcribed by A. C. Cawley, ed., The Wakefield Pageants in the Towneley
Cycle (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958), 125.
Local or Parish Drama. The REED project has led to a significant shift in the appreciation of local dramatic activities. Whilst a great deal of new biblical or cyclic drama has not been uncovered, much theatrical activity in local communities outside London has been revealed. Some of this may have been less ideologically determined than the religious drama was to become, nor was it indicative of the controversies which accompanied other dramatic forms, particularly the mystery plays and the interludes, but in it we may see a persistence of traditional values and an interest in sustaining or reviving material that had been important previously. Unfortunately, little has survived textually for these entertainments, but from titles and brief descriptions it is clear that many of them were part of popular rural culture which lay outside formal religion but may have complemented it. Among these we may identify the Robin Hood ceremonies widespread in certain areas. We find that during Mary’s reign these occurred in the south and west: at Barnstaple, Bridport, Chagford, Exeter, and Antony. There were Midsummer Watches at Wells, Totnes, and in Kent, and May games at Ludlow as well as in Kent where there was a prohibition of them in 1555. Machyn records such games in St. Martin’s in the Fields in London with giants and hobby horses.40 In Lancashire rushbearing occurred at Great Harlwood in 1556 and many other locations. At the universities we find Christmas Lords at Oxford in 1554 and at Trinity College in Cambridge in 1556. Masks and bells were made for Fools at Woodbury in Devon in 1554 and 1555.41

40 Machyn, Diary, 89.
Closer to orthodox religious purposes may have been the Church Ales which were drinking parties to raise money for local church funds and which continued during the reign. There were sometimes objections to them on grounds of public order, and the churchwardens were accused of selling too-potent brews, but this is not noticeable at this period when they were particularly popular in Worcester for several years.42

A great deal of information is emerging about the frequency and direction of many journeys made by travelling players. During Mary’s reign these travelled widely over England, necessarily trading under the patronage of named aristocratic patrons. Certain areas have records showing very frequent visits, especially Dorset, Devon, Bristol, and Kent, with a marked increase of references in mid-century.43 Among these players were the Queen’s own troupe who travelled widely through most years of the reign, and also her jester, who visited Gloucester, Canterbury, Faversham, and Lydd in 1554–55.44

Interludes. The surviving interludes from the Marian period are few and the authorship and dates of composition and printing often uncertain. The construction of a narrative and its evaluation become difficult. If even a very small number of additional interludes were to come to light, the overall picture could change markedly. However, the individual status of each interlude is illuminating since each tends to demonstrate a particular approach to religious controversy and

42 REED: Herefordshire and Worcestershire, 357–60 and passim (see Index).


this is true whether they are consciously and aggressively written or whether they take a subtler approach. The evidence from the interludes and the playing at Court suggests that Mary may have been more tolerant at the beginning of her reign, and that then the entertainment could be arranged by people not fully supportive of her Catholic views. Apparently various shades of opinion or belief could cohabit at least for a time.

_Impatient Poverty_. Because of the presence of one of its important themes, that of usury, and in the absence of an indication in the text, the date of this anonymous play is conjectural.45 I want to suggest here that while the theme of usury was of interest in the reign of Edward and had led to some legislation in 1550, it remained important in Mary’s reign. Indeed, it is an issue in _Respublica_, as we shall see. The play deals with a number of financial matters, and its chief objective is to confront the question of how to use wealth in a properly Christian society. The plot shows how Poverty becomes Prosperity and then, tempted to idle living by a cluster of vices in a manner well established in pre-Reformation interludes such as _The World and the Child_ and _Youth_, he loses all, and must be rescued by the virtuous Peace, his original mentor. This dramatic mode is traditionally dependent upon the giving and changing of names in a didactic manner.

The use of wealth by the clergy is held up to some criticism in an exposition which is also pre-Reformation in objective and may be traced back to Chaucer, _Piers Plowman_, and earlier.

There is a demonstration of the corruption of law by wealth, as Abundance, a rich man, is able to

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buy himself out of the law’s grasp, whereas Poverty is forced into a humiliating act of penance because he cannot afford to bribe the Sumner.

If the play was conceived under Edward it is noticeable nevertheless that much of its minor language and ideas are compatible with Catholic thinking. Thus there is reference to Holy Church as an entity (444), to the World, the Flesh, and the Devil (5), and Envy, Covetise, and Wrath are conceptualized in the manner of the Seven Deadly Sins (17, 157). Swearing is usually traditional, like “by Our Lady” (88). Besides the value of alms giving and fasting (232, 347–48), the act of penance is employed. Biblical texts are usually in Latin, often with an immediate translation. On the contrary, there is little in the text which is specifically Protestant. At the end Peace offers a prayer for “our sovereign Queen of preclare preeminence / With all her noble consanguinity” (1073–74), a reference which has been held to be include Philip as well as Mary, with some emphasis upon her independent authority.

If this reading of the play’s stance is justified and the play is substantially Marian, it is revealing of the tact and seriousness which an interlude could offer, but it appears rather circumspect as it steers its way round important issues without taking risks. That in itself may be an indication of an expectation of some tolerance at least, such as we may also find in the next play. Though the provenance is obscure it does appear from the printed doubling scheme that this play was intended for a small acting company not obviously connected with the Court, whereas Respublica was unquestionably conceived for a royal context.

Respublica. While there is some doubt about the authorship of Respublica, the date, 1553, is conveniently written on the manuscript.\(^{46}\) The play was certainly meant for performance

\(^{46}\) Pforzheimer Library, MS. 40A, fol. 360r.
by children and has been attributed to Nicholas Udall.\(^{47}\) It was planned for the first Christmas season of Mary’s reign (1553–54), for Christmas is mentioned (6), but unfortunately an actual performance is doubtful.\(^{48}\)

The play shows an intense interest in the corruption associated with wealth centered on Avarice, the Vice, a brilliantly conceived intriguer who, by deception, seizes huge amounts of money and leads a troupe of evil associates in fleecing the country presided over by the widow Respublica. The play aims to reflect the years of corruption under Edward, “these five yeres past” (1776), and the solution of these wrongs brought about in the end by Nemesis, who represents Queen Mary (1814). As Greg Walker has carefully examined, the main thrust of the picture of corruption is cleverly diversified showing in enormous detail and with specific listing how ecclesiastical and especially episcopal wealth has been misappropriated. There is specific mention of Somerset and Northumberland, the main protagonists of the Edwardian years:\(^{49}\)

I woulde have browght haulfe Kent into Northumberlande,

And Somersett shiere should have raught to Cumberlande. (1547–48)

However, if the play had been performed at Christmas, the Court audience would have contained members of the Edwardian Privy Council still in office.\(^{50}\) Thus the play focuses upon one of the

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\(^{47}\) For Udall, see below under discussion of *Jack Juggler*.


\(^{49}\) Ibid., 180–84.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 183.
chief problems faced by Mary on her accession, the misappropriation of wealth. The ending, however, is striking in that it identifies the wrongdoing by means of Verity, one of the Four Daughters of God, and there is reconciliation, as Adulation, one of Avarice’s co-conspirators, is let off in anticipation of his amendment. But spiritual matters are carefully avoided in this play. It is hardly a celebration of the restoration of Holy Church, and this suggests that the play was written from a Protestant point of view by someone cautious and skillful enough to be persuasive in unfavorable circumstances.51 The evil results of mismanagement are shown in the sufferings of the character People, and the author is plainly hoping that his play will help towards improvement.

The character of Nemesis is not the only representation of Mary, but in noticing Respublica we should be aware of the complex potentialities in the interpretation of allegory. Each personification can carry its distinct significance, and while Nemesis is severe and uncompromising, Respublica, an explicitly female figure and a vulnerable widow, is rather more ambiguous.52 Alice Hunt has demonstrated that she is placed under the control of male deceivers, and there may be a traditional anxiety here about the weakness of womankind now exposed in the uncertainties as concerning the first Queen-regnant.53 She is the victim of deception and is saved only by the intervention of the Four Daughters. This in itself is a significant move by the author. It looks as though he is uncertain about the quality of the advice Mary was receiving.

51 Perhaps here the attribution to Udall is strongest.

52 It is tempting to see her as influenced by a similar victim, Widow England, in Bale’s King Johan.

53 Alice Hunt, “Legitimacy, Ceremony and Drama: Mary Tudor’s Coronation and Respublica,” in Happé and Hüsken, eds., Interludes and Early Modern Society, 331–51.
from her Councillors, and he has chosen the mutually acceptable Four Daughters as a means of achieving a solution—and one which, ending in the symbolic kiss (1395, deriving from Psalm 84:11; AV: 85:10), is reconciliatory.

*Jack Juggler.* We may find a similar intent in *Jack Juggler.* This play was not entered in the Stationers’ Register until 1562–63 when the first extant edition was probably printed by William Copland, but it has a number of features indicating the status of drama in the Marian period. Possibly it was written by Nicholas Udall, but the evidence is not strong. He had shown Protestant leanings as early as 1528 and had over the years received support from Anne Boleyn, Catherine Parr, and Protector Somerset.54 When Mary became Queen, he suffered losses initially, being deprived of some ecclesiastical appointments, but he seems have gained her confidence, for on 13 December 1554 a royal warrant recognized him as being in charge of dramatic productions at Court for the Christmas season. At this time the Master of Revels was ordered to provide apparel for his actors.55 He had lost some status earlier after being dismissed from the headship of Eton in 1541 for sexual misconduct, but by 1555 he would be appointed head of Westminster School. It is at this point that he may have been responsible for the performance of *Jack Juggler,* using the boys of his school as actors.

The information just mentioned is all reasonably certain except for the actual attribution of the play to Udall and the dating of the play to 1555–56. But even if these are in error, the play’s contents nevertheless provide an insightful view of political circumstances, and some features suggest precisely the mixture of conformity and dissent characteristic of a writer

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54 Matthew Steggle, “Nicholas Udall,” in *ODNB.*

55 Feuillerat, *Documents Relating to the Revels,* 159.
working in a politically oversensitive context. It should be noticed that the Master of the Revels at this time was Thomas Cawarden, who had been in office since 1544 and had Protestant sympathies. He was accused of heresy in 1544, suspected of favoring Wyatt in 1554, and suspected of treason a further twice by Mary.\(^{56}\) This and her support for Udall suggest further that Mary’s more repressive Catholic attitude was not monolithic.

There are some remarkable features in the conception of *Jack Juggler*. A number of minor phrases, commonplace of speech indeed, suggest acceptability to a Catholic audience. These include asseverations such as Careaway’s oath “by the blessed Trinitie” (209) and his reference to Saint Loy (217).\(^{57}\) Later when Careaway comes to believe that Jack Juggler is a devil, he uses a traditional conjuration:

\[
\text{Sum counnyng divell is with in thee, payne of shame,}
\]

\[
\text{In nomine patris, God and our blessed ladye}
\]

\[
\text{Now and evermore save me from thy cumpanie. (553–55)}
\]

The reference to “him that hanged on the rode” may well be Catholic (937). In using one interesting word, the first citation under this meaning in the *OED*, which may be the author’s invention, Dame Coye, angry with her husband, is determined to make things uncomfortable for him. She threatens: “he shoulde have suche a *kyrie* ere he went to bede” (653, my emphasis). This possible neologism may be derived from the liturgical *Kyrie eleison*, but here suggesting


\(^{57}\) Quotations are from Marie Axton, ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1982).
some painful treatment from which he will ask for God’s mercy, in a Catholic manner. These small verbal items would hardly be included if the play was written by a Protestant for a Protestant audience, but their occurrence might well fit with someone of a Protestant persuasion setting out to be amenable to a Catholic context like the Court. Against this, however, we should note that the word “juggling” had been applied by Bale to Catholic priests some years before.58

The Prologue begins with a lengthy justification of the value of mirth and recreation justified by classical precedents appropriate for a school-based play. But there is a specific denial “That no man looke to heare of matters substancyall” (73) because they do not “well besime little boyes handelings’ (76). This may mean just what it says, but when we come to the Epilogue we find that any suspicions we might have had about such a disclaimer are more than justified:

As this trifling enterlud that before you hath bine rehersed
May sygnifye sum further meaning if it be well serched. (998–99)
The rest of the Epilogue then discusses how people may be made to accept beliefs by force from their masters, being “by strenth, force, and vyolence oft tymes compelled / To belive and saye: the moune is made of grene chese” (1004–05). The proverbial flavor is supported by another, in an Orwellian manner: “He must saye the croue is whight, yf he be so commaunded” (1019).

These ideas follow up the main action of the play in which the plot has revealed how Jack Juggler, the Vice, has persuaded Jenkin Careaway to doubt his own identity. Jack has achieved this by making himself look like Careaway and repeatedly beating him when a challenge is made as to who is the real person. The effect of the beatings is that Careaway does begin to doubt himself in spite of evidence to the contrary. Comically, his predicament worsens because he is

also beaten by his master, Boungrace, for failings in his duties occasioned by the confusion arising from mistakes over the lookalikes. Thus, though the comedy looks innocent enough, being a simplified version of errors in Plautus’s *Amphitruo* for school boys to enjoy playing, a darker predicament is created. On the one hand there is clearly some caution, something which is backed up by the apparent innocence of the comedy itself as presented by the boys. But on the other hand, the direct attention to underlying significance is sharply underlined. A whole stanza in the Epilogue particularizes the effect of the compulsions an individual is forced to accept:

He must saye he dyd a mysse, though he never dyd offende,
He must aske forgivenes where he did no trespace
Or ells be in troble, care, and meserye with out ende,
And be cast in sum arrierage without any grace.
And that thing he sawe done before his owne face
He must by compulsion stifelie denye,
And for feare, whether he woll or not, saye “tonge you lye.” (1021–23)

Ominously this practice is described as “unyversall” and “like evermore to endure” (1029–30). The writer shows how those in power will pick a quarrel “for a cople of strawes” (another proverb) and will use the laws for their own ends to bring the victim “to the worse, other by false iniurie / Or by some craft and subtlete or ells by playne terani” (1047–48).

This Epilogue has been considered a later interpolation, but it is difficult to see how it might be more appropriate to the first few years of Elizabeth’s reign rather than to the years of Mary’s persecution when the word “terani” might have seemed apposite. The last stanza of the Epilogue tactfully offers a religious consolation linked with the hope of avoiding such a predicament.
Jacob and Esau. The interlude of *Jacob and Esau* was entered in the Stationers’ Register in 1557–58, most likely within Mary’s reign. It has been attributed to Udall, but if it is his, it is remarkably different in its dramatic style from the other putative attributions already considered. Two distinctive features concern us here: its dramatic style which adheres very closely to the scriptural account, and its reflection of Calvinist principles. It could have been written under Edward when its ideology might have been congenial to official policy, and then held back for printing until an opportune moment near the end of Mary’s reign. It has been attributed by Paul Whitfield White to William Hunnis who, though a Protestant, held office under Mary, and though accused of treachery survived to return to office under Elizabeth.59 If it was actually performed under Mary it would have been a remarkable defiance of her known stance because of its intensely Protestant aspirations.

From a dramatic point of view, it avoids the conventional allegorical commonplaces of many mid-century interludes, especially as there are no abstract characters. Instead, many of them repeat the essentially Calvinistic notions of the elect, and of God’s close control and knowledge of what happens in these notable human affairs in Scripture. Thus Rebecca speaks of the elect (891, 230), and when the action of the play, following the scriptural narrative, has shown that Isaac has given his blessing to Jacob rather than to Esau, his firstborn, Isaac immediately accepts that this was predestinate and that it must have been God’s will that it should be so.

But the final doctrinal position has to be given by the Poet who speaks the epilogue. Here the nature of the elect is again accepted and there is an avoidance of the purist Calvinist concept that everything is determined in favor of God’s foreknowledge of events which was not held to be binding:

Yet not all fleshe did he then predestinate,
But onely the adopted children of promise:
For he foreknewe that many would degenerate,
And wylfully giue cause to be put from that blisse,

So on Gods behalfe no maner default there is. (1747–51)

This leaves open the responsibility of the individual for his own wrongdoing, as expressed by Bishop Latimer and others in the Edwardian period.\(^60\) If the play was revived later under Mary this position could have been politically opportune as a means of establishing the position of some Protestants seeking influence ahead of change. The printing of the play under Elizabeth would be part of similar maneuvering for position.

*Christus Triumphans*. Though hardly an interlude, John Foxe’s *Christus Triumphans* shows us another means by which a dramatist reacted to the government’s policy. Foxe had come under pressure in 1545 and had been forced to resign his fellowship at Magdalen College, Oxford, probably for his Protestant views. In 1554 he went into exile and visited or lived in English exile communities in Antwerp, Rotterdam, Frankfurt, Strasbourg, and Basle until his return in 1559.\(^61\) In exile he appears to have written and published his Latin play *Christus*

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\(^61\) See Thomas S. Freeman, “John Foxe,” in *ODNB*. 

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Triumphans. Though there may have been an earlier printing, the extant edition appeared in March 1556.\textsuperscript{62} The play is an apocalyptic comedy influenced by the so-called Christian Terence tradition from which some plays had been published in Basle in 1540 and 1547.\textsuperscript{63} The most significant was Thomas Kirchmeyer’s \textit{Pammachius} which Bale translated, and, in another version, was performed at Christ’s College, Cambridge in 1545.\textsuperscript{64}

Both plays offer a Protestant view of history, attacking the alleged perversions of the papacy in the person of the Antichrist (“Pseudamnus” in Foxe, 5.3.44), and bringing the narrative, by allegory, up to contemporary events. But whereas Kirchmeyer had not written a fifth act on the grounds that the imminent Second Coming would provide the catastrophe, Foxe’s fifth act makes direct allusion to concurrent events in England, a feature which helps to date the play as well as to indicate a reaction to the increasing pressure on Protestants at home in 1556. These references suggest that he knew of the burning of Ridley and Latimer at Oxford on 16 November 1555, and he refers to the conferring of the pallium on Cardinal Pole on 22 March 1556.\textsuperscript{65} However, Foxe surprisingly does not refer to the execution of Cranmer which occurred the day before, on 21 March 1556. This suggests that Foxe may have presumed that the pallium


\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 43.


\textsuperscript{65} See T. F. Mayer, “Reginald Pole,” \textit{ODNB}. 27
would arrive, perhaps he was even aware that it was on its way, but that he had not been informed of Cranmer’s fate when he wrote.

The context of Foxe’s composition and publication of his play shed further light on the role of the drama at this critical time. Presumably Foxe could not have aspired to a performance in England under Mary, and he intended that the play be performed locally in Basle for the benefit and appreciation of the exiles, possibly at the University where he had recently matriculated.66 The publication of Christus Triumphans by Oporinus complements the possibility of such a performance by addressing a wider readership among reformers. Like Bale, an associate at this time who shortly afterwards published his Catalogus with Oporinus, Foxe worked in Latin, making his work accessible internationally as he had done for his Commentarii rerum in ecclesia gestarum (1554), an early version of Acts and Monuments.

Foxe makes other references to matters in England. Pseudamnus instructs a Messenger: “Go and soften up Dynastes with this golden rose. . . . Take this sword in a golden sheath to Dynamicus’ (5.3.14–16; trans. Smith). These refer to papal honors conferred upon Mary and Philip II respectively in January 1555. There is reference to streets in Oxford and to the Bocardo prison where Cranmer was incarcerated (5.2.26–31), and Pseudamnus mentions his martyr-scourges (martyromastigae), bread-worshippers, inquisitors, and incendiaries (5.3.36–37). The burnings had begun by the beginning of 1556. These “home thoughts from abroad” show both a knowledge of events far away and a brooding concern about them. It is perhaps appropriate that

this essay began with a protest by Bale and ends with one by Foxe, both being manifested some distance from London.

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