

Skepsi



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BAD BEHAVIOUR IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN EUROPE

The Role of Ecclesiastical Stairs, Galleries and Upper Spaces in Medieval 'Bad Behaviour'

Toby J. Huitson: University of Kent, Canterbury

'I do mistake my person all this while': Blindness and Illusion in *Richard III*

Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone: University of Kent, Canterbury

Robbing Churches and Pulling Beards: The Rebellious Sons of Henry II

Elizabeth J. Anderson: University of Huddersfield

Between Menace and Utility: Handguns in Early Sixteenth-Century Bohemia

Christopher Nicholson: University College London

The Bad Behaviour of Friars and Women in Medieval Catalan *fabliaux* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

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Foreword

I am very pleased to have been invited to introduce this selection of lectures given at the recent *Bad Behaviour in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* post-graduate colloquium organised by the University of Kent's Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies.

My first duty is to congratulate the organisers on their choice of title — what inspired vagueness! It enabled contributors to address 'a multitude of sins', as, indeed, the present representative sample of papers delivered at the colloquium amply demonstrates.

And the thirteen speakers were equally cosmopolitan — Kent students were well represented, of course, but so were students from other British universities, as well as international researchers from Spain and Italy. We ranged widely chronologically too, from Anglo-Saxon times (Malte Ringer's discussion of anti-social behaviour in three of Wulfstan's homilies), via the consideration of works by such 'mainstream' writers of the European Renaissance as Shakespeare (James Smith) and Tasso (Marianna Orsi), to Joel Swann's fascinating paper on the frequently scurrilous verse libels of the English seventeenth century — by way of early sixteenth-century Bohemian gun-culture (Christopher Nicholson — *within*).

As befits such a multifarious theme, methodological approaches were just as varied, ranging from the old-fashioned comparativists — exemplified in my own art-historical keynote address — to post-structuralists, in Krista Bonello's reading of *Richard III*, both on the page and in performance (*within*).

More than one contributor reminded us that — then as now — bad behaviour was by no means the prerogative of the laity. While Eduardo Santamaria regaled us with examples of late medieval religious misbehaviour in the choir-stalls of Spanish cathedrals, Toby Huitson entertained us with the equally reprehensible misdeeds contemporaneously taking place in the 'upper spaces' of English cathedrals (sleeping it off in the gallery! — *within*). Of course — as medievalists won't need telling — it was above all the lubricious escapades of the 'wandering' friars that inspired many a medieval satire throughout Europe: Jerónimo Méndez's valuable contribution introduced us to some little-known yet compelling parallels in Catalan *fabliaux* with Chaucer's treatment of the mendicants (*within*).

Lastly — but far from leastly — Elizabeth Anderson, in considering the youthful misbehaviour of the rebellious sons of Henry II, reminds us of the importance of symbolic gesture (a subject dear to my own heart) in her *Robbing churches and pulling beards* (*within*).

As the Oldest Contributor (and one of exemplary moral rectitude), it was a truly invigorating experience for me to observe with what vitality the (mostly) younger scholars who

animated this colloquium delivered their papers — there is hope yet for historical cultural studies! (And the only bad behaviour I observed at first hand during the colloquium was a cartoon drawn of myself on the lunchtime table-cloth — which I intend to frame and hang on the wall of my retirement home as a fitting memento of a truly inspiring occasion).

Malcolm Jones

The role of Ecclesiastical Stairs, Galleries and Upper Spaces in Medieval 'Bad Behaviour'¹

Toby J. Huitson

University of Kent, Canterbury

This article draws on my thesis on the practical functions of medieval stairs, galleries and upper spaces in church buildings from the eleventh to mid-sixteenth centuries.² My research has considered the uses to which the higher levels of church buildings were put during the Middle Ages. Foremost among these was the use of galleries for musical and dramatic performance, and of upper rooms for ancillary functions such as dovecotes. However, the nature of the source-material is such that unusual and exceptional events are surprisingly well-documented. Many instances involve a measure of 'bad behaviour', and it is these which I wish to consider here.

Attributions of good or bad behaviour by the author often depend on context and outcome. The examples discussed here fit into the broad categories of unintended function, unauthorised access and unfortunate mishap. The sources, to be found mainly in medieval chronicles and miracle stories, relate mostly to high-status cathedrals and monastic (rather than parish) church buildings. Some chroniclers put special emphasis on miracle stories, especially those relating to local cults, while others recorded contemporary events of an unusual or bizarre nature with some incredulity. Humour is present in many of these sources, and one should bear in mind that many stories were probably intended to entertain as much as instruct. If ecclesiastical upper spaces represent a very obscure aspect of medieval architecture, finding documented instances of bad behaviour in them is even more difficult. For this reason, secondary literature is not readily forthcoming.³ Many of the manuscript sources on which this article draws were edited and published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the medieval dramatic texts edited by William Tydeman in 2001 are a further invaluable resource which would be rewarding for further study.⁴

¹ This article was first presented as a paper at the Colloquium on *Bad Behaviour in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* organised by the Centre of Medieval and Early Modern Studies at the University of Kent at Canterbury, 3rd December 2009.

² Toby Huitson, 'Hidden Spaces, Obscure Purposes: The Medieval Ecclesiastical Staircase, Gallery and Upper Chamber in East Kent', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Kent, 2008).

³ See the comments of Bligh Bond and Camm towards the end of this article.

⁴ William Tydeman (ed.), *The Medieval European Stage 500–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

The first type of ‘bad behaviour’ I wish to consider here concerns instances where upper spaces were commandeered for purposes which one can be fairly sure they were never intended to have but are nonetheless documented as having happened in them. To start near Canterbury, one example concerns a French pirate raid on Dover Priory in the 1290s. According to a chronicle written at Bury St Edmunds in the late fourteenth century, when the pirates attacked the church, the monks, except a certain Thomas, ‘fearing for their lives, all ran together to higher hiding-places (*ad latibula superius*) in the church’.⁵ Of the buildings that originally comprised Dover Priory, the church has now completely disappeared, although the gatehouse, built around the time of this incident, survives (Fig.1).

FIGURE 1 THE GATEHOUSE AT DOVER PRIORY, KENT; C. 1300



While it is no longer possible, therefore, to reconstruct exactly the monks’ strategy, it is reasonable to assume that they sought refuge in a triforium gallery or clerestory wall-passage similar in form to those in the choir of Canterbury Cathedral (Fig. 2). The incident is important

because it is one of several sources which suggest that, contrary to the opinions of some scholars, refuge in ecclesiastical buildings was generally improvised rather than intended.

⁵ ‘Vita Thome de la Hale’, (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 240, f. 798) in *The Library of Dover Priory: A History of the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin and St. Martin of the New Work*, ed. and trans by C.R. Haines, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), p. 161.

FIGURE 2: THE LATE 12TH CENTURY TRIFORIUM GALLERY (CENTRE) AND CLERESTORY WALL-PASSAGE (TOP) IN THE CHOIR OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL



At Durham Cathedral in 1165, a gallery was also used for the purpose of refuge, but this time by a thief. The incident is recorded in Reginald of Coldingham's *Libellus de admirandis Beati Cuthberti virtutibus*, (The Little Book of Admiration for the Virtues of St. Cuthbert

— Durham's patron saint). According to the miracle story, the fact that several groups of people were visiting the cathedral enabled a thief to gain unauthorised admittance, as each group assumed that he belonged to one of the others. Improvising an unlikely hiding-place under a large pile of prayer-mats, he managed to get himself locked in the church at the end of the day. During the night, he climbed up to the great pulpitum loft, from where he stole a valuable gospel-book. He then hid himself for a second time, 'climbing higher by spiral staircase to the arches of the church above the roof-tiles, secured with beams of wood', probably the nave triforium gallery.⁶ By this stage, however, the church servants had realised that a thief was at large and so, at first light, they began a top-to-bottom search of the building:

[...] [s]oon Aurora appeared with rays of sun, awakening the church servants who were searching for him, and never once deviating from their path, the former was then brought out from where he had hid himself. Then everything became known [...]⁷

The discovery of the robber is ascribed to the direct intervention of St. Cuthbert, which surely explains why this comical story of confusion and attempted robbery was documented for posterity. It suggests that any incident, no matter how small, or embarrassing for the

⁶ Reginald of Coldingham, *Libellus de admirandis B. Cuthberti virtutibus*, ed. by J. Raine, Publications of the Surtees Society. 1 ([n.p]: [n. pub], 1835), ch. 82, p. 175 (author's translation). In church architecture, the triforium is the space above the nave arcade but below the clerestory and extending over the vaults or ceilings of the side-aisles. The term can also be applied to any second-floor gallery opening onto a higher nave by means of arcades or colonnades.

⁷ *Ibid.*

community, could be turned around and used to bolster the cult of a saint, enhancing its prestige, dependability and power.

Eadmer's famous twelfth-century description of Canterbury Cathedral also mentions an attempted theft from an upper space, probably a chapel on the north transept bridge gallery, but this time the offender was of higher rank:

Not long before the death of Archbishop Radulf [1121], a certain Teutonic knight named Lambert, who came into England under the patronage of the new queen (Adelais), visited Canterbury, and remained there for some time, residing with the brethren. He became fond of frequenting the place where the relics of the archbishops were deposited, to pray there, to celebrate daily mass there, and was wont to ask all manner of questions, as to who this or that one had been, and what might be the name of one who rested in this or that coffin. At length he conceived a vehement desire to obtain the body of St Bregwyn, and take it to his own country [...] when his own death put a stop to the matter.⁸

The gallery at Canterbury has long since disappeared, although there is a surviving parallel at Winchester Cathedral (Fig. 3 on following page). In this instance, the respect shown by a secular, foreign knight to the community's historic Anglo-Saxon relics would normally be regarded as exemplary behaviour. However, the allowing of special access backfired on the Canterbury monks when his interest turned to an obsession which almost deprived the community of one of its relics. To avoid a similar situation repeating itself, the monks decided to rebury the relics near an altar at ground level where they would be less at risk. Arnold Klukas has interpreted references to relics in upper chapels at Canterbury as an indication of their marginal status at this time, but the fact that they were considered valuable enough to protect surely suggests the exact opposite.⁹

⁸ Eadmer, 'Vita Sancti Bregwini', (Anglia Sacra t. ii. p.188) abridged in *The Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral*, R. Willis (ed. and trans.), (London: Longman, 1845), §25, pp. 18–19.

⁹ A. W. Klukas, *Altaria Superiora: The Function and Significance of the Tribune-Chapel in the Anglo-Norman Romanesque* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1978), pp. 336–37; 344.

FIGURE 3: THE ROMANESQUE GALLERY ACROSS THE SOUTH TRANSEPT IN WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL



Thieves (such as that at Durham) were by no means the only people to use ecclesiastical galleries for ad-hoc sleeping. The *Life of Simon the Hermit* contains a reference to a young scholar at Trier in Germany called Wigericus, who:

[...] having drunk too much wine on a certain day, chose to hide himself, as he was accustomed, to rest in a secret place; he climbed up to the highest parts of the church, and there he stretched out to sleep amongst the columns.¹⁰

The explanation given by the chronicler (and that generally accepted at face value by modern historians) is that he was simply sleeping off bouts of drunkenness. However, an alternative explanation is suggested by Barbara Harvey's observation that younger monks were sometimes allowed a light meal after High Mass. At Peterborough Cathedral in the early sixteenth century, it was claimed that if the novices were denied this morning snack, they overate at lunch and then fell asleep during the afternoon when they were supposed to be studying.¹¹ Therefore, this may not be the example of bad behaviour which it first appears to be. One could draw a parallel with the elderly Canterbury monk Alfwin in around 1100: whilst in a gallery, he had a vision of angels ascending a spiral staircase to reverence St. Wilfrid's relics. This happened when he was semi-alert, somewhere between sleep and waking.¹² Presumably, then, tiredness and sleep in upper spaces was not just a problem affecting novices!

¹⁰ Eberwinus abbas S. Martini Trevienis, *Vita Symeonis eremite de monte Sinae* [...], *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores*, ed. by G. H. Pertz and others, 32 vols (Hanover, 1826–1913), quoted in Klukas, *op. cit.*, p. 70 (author's translation).

¹¹ Barbara Harvey, *Living and Dying in England, 1100–1540: The Monastic Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 157, citing *Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1517–1531*, ed. by A. Hamilton Thompson, 3 vols (*Lincoln Record Society* 33, 35, 37), III, p. 82.

¹² Eadmer, 'Breviloquium Vitae Sancti Wilfridi' in *Historians of the church of York and its archbishops*, ed. by James Raine, Rolls Series 71, 3 vols (London, Longman, 1879), I, pp. 236–37; abridged and trans. by Willis in Willis in *The Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral*, §21, pp. 16–17.

However, novices might sometimes behave better than their superiors did. Thomas Eccleston's *De Adventu Fratrem Minorem in Anglia* (On the Arrival of the Friars Minor in England) tells the story of two Franciscan friars lost in a storm in 1224. Passing by Abingdon Abbey's grange near Oxford, the travellers sought shelter from their fellow-monks but met a frosty reception and were turned away by the prior. However, a novice monk took pity on them and allowed them to sleep in a hay-loft. That night, he had a dream in which Christ sat in judgement on his superiors who were first disowned by Benedict and then hanged by Christ for failing to welcome a stranger as they would Christ Himself. As a result of his dream, the novice decided to join the friars.¹³ Here, the novice's action (an act of disobedience which would normally be regarded as bad behaviour) was interpreted by the writer as good because it implied disaffection with the inflexibility and hypocrisy of conventional Benedictines.

Acts of aggression, as one might expect, do not feature prominently in accounts of everyday church life. However, there is a handful of notorious examples of such behaviour in ecclesiastical upper spaces. These demonstrate a combination of unauthorised access with unintended function. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records one of the most notorious incidents, which took place at Glastonbury Abbey. According to the Peterborough version of the *Chronicle*, a dispute in 1083 between the French abbot and the English monks of Glastonbury concerning the abbey's management escalated into open conflict in the chapter house. The monks then barricaded themselves inside the church:

[...] but a pitiful thing happened there that day, in that the French men broke into the choir and pelted the altar where the monks were; and some of the knights went up to the upper floor and shot arrows downwards towards the sanctuary, so that many arrows stuck in the rood which stood above the altar.¹⁴

Some scholars interpret 'the upper floor' as a timber gallery at the west end of the nave or perhaps an upper chamber above a side-aisle.¹⁵ However, a more likely interpretation is that the knights had gained access to a tribune or triforium gallery at the east end of the building. According to Florence of Worcester's account, the monks defended themselves vigorously using stools and candlesticks, with the result that eighteen men-at arms suffered injuries and

¹³ See Julie Kerr, *Monastic Hospitality: The Benedictines in England, c. 1070–1200* (Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, 2007), pp. 197–98.

¹⁴ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud 636), ed. and trans. by M. Swanson, (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), pp. 214–15.

¹⁵ Swanson in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, p. 215, n. 13, citing Harold M. Taylor and Joan Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1965–78), III, pp. 1017–19.

three were fatally wounded.¹⁶ The incident recalls another example of unwelcome intrusion by soldiers into a church, one which resulted in the assassination of Charles the Good in Bruges in 1127 while he was praying at an altar close to a gallery connecting the church to the royal palace. This incident surely deserves to be equally as infamous well known as the assassination of Becket later in the twelfth century.¹⁷ Ecclesiastics would doubtless have been outraged by such events, in which sacred space was invaded and defiled.

Acts of aggression in ecclesiastical settings were sometimes instigated by defenders rather than attackers, especially in medieval Ireland. For instance, in 1228 the monks of Monasteranenough, Ireland, took to the church roofs in order to repel Stephen of Lexington,¹⁸ and in 1498 Abbot Troy's attempt to visit a daughter-house of Mellifont Abbey met with similar results, when the provosts, commendatories and other armed men sought a place of vantage behind the church and belfry parapet; from here they loosed a hail of javelins, stones and arrows from on the Abbot.¹⁹ At first sight, such hostile activity seems very uncharacteristic of monks. However, ecclesiastical independence from unwelcome outside interference (whether from secular or ecclesiastic authorities) was often jealously guarded, and these incidents suggest that when infringement was a very real concern, a religious community might resort to using force to defend it if necessary.

Another aspect of bad behaviour in upper spaces is that of accident and mishap. Children and youths often feature heavily in accounts of medieval misbehaviour. According to an anonymous chronicle written at Ramsey Abbey in Cambridgeshire around the year 1000, four teenage novices looking for entertainment one afternoon decided to ring one of the abbey bells very hard, so hard, in fact, that it cracked and made a strange noise. The boys, threatened with a severe beating, burst into tears and were forgiven by the kindly abbot, much to the annoyance of the other monks.²⁰ Large bells, which were usually presented by noble patrons and high-ranking ecclesiastic dignitaries, were extremely expensive artefacts which belonged to the community. As a result, it was the monks who were accusing the *abbot* of bad behaviour by

¹⁶ Florence of Worcester, *Chronicon ex Chronicis*, ed. by B. Thorpe, 2 vols (London: Bentley, Wilson, & Fley, 1848–9); and trans. by J. Stevenson, *The Church Historians of England*, 8 vols (London: Seeley, 1853–68), II, p. 17.

¹⁷ Norman Housley, 'Crisis in Flanders, 1127–28: The Murder of Charles the Good', in *History Today* 36 No. 10 (Oct. 1986), pp. 10–16.

¹⁸ Roger A. Stalley, *The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland: An Account of the History, Art and Architecture of the White Monks in Ireland from 1142–1540* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

¹⁹ Fr. Colmcille O.C.S.O., *The Story of Mellifont* (Dublin: M.H. Gill, 1958), p. 157, cited in Stalley, *The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland*, pp. 144–45.

²⁰ *Chronicon Abbatiae Ramesiensis*, (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS B. 333) ed. by W. D. Macray, Rolls Series 83 (London: [n. pub.], 1886), pp. 112–14.

being too merciful towards the children, an interesting paradox. Nevertheless, the chronicler includes the incident as a cautionary tale for his readers.

One of the most interesting and complex examples of ‘bad behaviour’ in an ecclesiastical upper space appears in a collection of medieval miracle stories relating to John of Beverley, the Anglo-Saxon saint associated with Beverley minster, Yorkshire. One day around 1220, large crowds had gathered one day on the occasion of the performance of a Resurrection play outside the church, making viewing of the play very difficult:

[...] And so some small boys who had entered the church happened by chance to find half-open a certain door from which steps led up to the upper parts of the walls. The little boys ran lightly to it and climbed step by step to the vaulting of the church above the walls, intending, as I suppose, to see more easily, through the high windows of the turrets or through any holes there might be in the glass of the windows [...] But just then the sextons discovered what the boys were doing; and presumably afraid lest the boys, in their eagerness to see the actors performing the said show, should carelessly make holes in the glazed windows or somehow damage them, they ran after the boys; and forced them to return by boxing their ears hard. Now one of the boys [...] afraid of falling into [his] pursuer’s hands, retreated upwards until, climbing very rapidly, he reached the great cross which at that time was placed at the end of the altar of the blessed Martin. And standing there looking down, he put his foot carelessly on a block of stone which, loosened and falling from the wall, crashed on to the stone pavement and despite its hardness was smashed into fragments. The boy, losing his foothold and shocked by the terrible crash, fell to the ground [and lay there motionless].²¹

The crowd and the boy’s parents believed him to be dead, but he recovered ‘so completely unharmed that no injury was to be seen anywhere on his body.’ ‘And so’, the writer concludes, citing many biblical analogies, ‘it was brought about that those who, because of the crowds of people, could not be present at the representation outside the church, were able to see a miraculous token of the Resurrection inside the nave’.²² This is a particularly interesting case of bad behaviour because one might assume that it was the boys who had misbehaved by gaining access to an unauthorised space. However, one could equally argue that it was the sextons’ heavy-handed response to a very minor situation which was directly responsible for precipitating the events which followed.

The third category of bad behaviour in ecclesiastical upper spaces concerns some of the most daring displays of bravery recorded. One unexpected way in which church towers functioned in this period (and indeed beyond) was to provide places for tightrope and trapeze acts. An example appears in the *Chronicles of Froissart* on the entry of Queen Isabel into Paris in June 1389. When the queen’s retinue arrived at Notre Dame in the early evening, they found:

[...] plays and pastimes greatly to their pleasure. Among all other there was a master came out of Genes: (*sic*) he had tied a cord on the highest house on the bridge of Saint Michael over all

²¹ Raine, *Historians of the church of York and its archbishops*, pp. 328-30; also trans. by Tydeman in Tydeman, *The Medieval European Stage 500–1500*, p. 181.

²² *Ibid.*

the houses, and the other end was tied on the highest tower in Our Lady's church [...] because it was late this said master with two brenning [i.e. burning] candles in his hands issued out of a little stage that he had made on the height of Our Lady's tower, and singing he went upon the cord all along the great street, so that all who saw him had marvel how it might be [...] he was such a tumbler that his lightness was greatly praised.²³

A similar tightrope act which had taken place at Durham Cathedral some 150 years earlier concluded rather less successfully. The event is recorded indirectly in a list of objections to the election of Prior Thomas Melsanby to the bishopric of Durham around 1237, one of which was the perhaps rather harsh accusation that:

Likewise, [...] he should be excluded as a murderer; because a certain performer in his churchyard going along a string made taut from tower to tower, with the goodwill of the said Prior, the same fell down and was killed; which Prior [...] should expressly have prevented such thing from taking place.²⁴

Presumably the act was intended to entertain the monks; we can only speculate whether this was a chance accident in a regular event or in a special, one-off performance destined never to be repeated. Had the tightrope walker at Durham completed his act successfully, the incident would, presumably, have been applauded as good behaviour; the fact that it ended in a fatal accident meant that it was seen retrospectively as very bad.

As well as acts of tightrope walking, experiments in human-powered flight also made use of towers, and several examples from the early medieval period are recorded. The earliest of these took place around 875 in Cordoba, when a certain scholar by the name of Firnas covered himself with feathers to attempt flight from an unspecified high-level location, only to hurt his back.²⁵ Similarly in 1003 or 1008, the Iranian scholar al-Jahuri jumped from the roof of a mosque while attempting to fly, with fatal consequences. However, one of the most famous attempts was undertaken in the early eleventh century by Eilmer, a monk of Malmesbury Abbey. According to the twelfth-century writer William of Malmesbury in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (The Deeds of the English Kings):

[...] by the standards of those days Aethelmaer [Eilmer] was a good scholar, advanced in years by now, though in his first youth he had taken a terrible risk: by some art, I know not what, he had fixed wings to his hands and feet, hoping to fly like Daedalus, whose fable he took to be true. Catching the breeze from the top of a tower, he flew for the space of a stade and more; but what with the violence of the wind and the eddies, and at the same time his consciousness of the temerity of his attempt, he faltered and fell, and ever thereafter he was an invalid and his legs were crippled. He himself used to give as a reason for his fall that he forgot to fit a tail on his hinder parts [...]²⁶

²³ *The Chronicles of Froissart*, ed. by G. C. Macaulay, trans. by J. Bouchier, (London, Macmillan, 1899), p. 385.

²⁴ *Durham Cathedral Muniments*, (Loc.VI:20), Publications of the Surtees Society, 9 ([n.p]: [n. pub.], 1839), App., p. lxxiii (author's translation).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64.

²⁶ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. by R. A. Mynors and others, 2 vols (Oxford, 1998), I, pp. 413, 415.

The date of the flight (an event unique to this source) is not stated, although, according to historian of science and technology Lynn White who has researched the subject, it probably took place around 1000-1010.²⁷ While Eilmer's flight is traditionally associated with a launch from the top of one of the abbey's towers, William does not record any specific details about the precise location of the event. His tone is far from condemnatory and is probably best described as one of faint incredulity tinged with mild amusement.

Most of these examples of bad behaviour relate to greater abbeys and cathedrals. However, upper spaces in parish churches, such as rood lofts, were by no means exempt from misdemeanour.²⁸ Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, a Protestant commentary on the religious persecutions of the sixteenth century,²⁹ cites one Kentish case-study in detail, and his account is worth quoting here at length:

In the sayd Q. Maries daies, I may not omyt the tragedye of one John Drayner of Smarden, in the Coūty of Kent Esquire [...] This sayde Drayner afterward, beinge chosen Iustice, to shewe him selfe diligente therin, in seking the trouble of his neighbours, made on the roode loft, ix. great holes, that he might looke about the church in Masse tyme. In whych place alway at the sacring therof, he would stand to se who loked not nor held vp their handes thereto, which persons so not doinge, he would trouble and punish very sore [...] Wherby he purchased a name ther, & is called to this day Iustice nine holes.³⁰

Depending on one's perspective, his action could be interpreted as questionable, even if well-intentioned. However, the story does not end here:

[...] It so fell out, that since this was published, the sayde Drayner came to the Printers house, with other associate, demanding: Is Foxe here? to whome aunswere was geuen, that maister Foxe was not within. Is the Printer within (quoth Drayner?) It was aunswered, yea: Wherevpon being required to come vp into his house, was asked what his will was. Mary, sayth he, you haue printed me false in your booke: Why sayth the Printer is not your name M. Drayner, otherwise called Iustice nine holes? It is false sayth he: I made but v. with a great Augure, and the Parson made the rest. It was answered: I haue not read that a Iustice shoulde make him a place in the Roode loft to see if the people held vppe theyr handes. He sayd where as you alleadge, that I did it to see who adored þe sacrament, or who not, it is vntrue: for I set as litle by it, as the best of you all. In deede sayth the Printer, so we vnderstand now, for you being at a supper in Cheapside among certaine honest company, and there burdened with the matter, sayd then, that you did it rather to looke vpon fayre wenches, then otherwise. He being in a great rage, sware to the purpose, saying: Can a man speake nothing, but you must haue vnderstāding therof? But sayth he, did I any man any hurt?³¹

²⁷ Lynn White Jr., 'Eilmer of Malmesbury, an Eleventh-Century Aviator', in *Medieval Religion and Technology* (Los Angeles, 1978), ch. 4. pp. 59–74

²⁸ The rood screen is a feature of later fifteenth and early sixteenth century church architecture. It is a screen separating the chancel from the nave, and thus the clergy from the laity during a celebration of the Mass. It is so-called because it was surmounted by the Rood, or Cross, on which was a representation of the crucified Christ. The loft above could be used as a gallery for reading, singing or playing small organs. Often, the staircase is the only evidence for its former presence.

²⁹ Also known as Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.

³⁰ John Foxe. *Acts and Monuments* [...], (1563 edition), [online] (hriOnline, Sheffield, 2004). <<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/index.html>>, [consulted 28 Dec 2009], Part V iii, p. 1746.

³¹ *Ibid.*, (1583 edition), Book XII, p. 2112.

The incident is cast as a mockery of Drayner's supposed morally upright character, as well as of broader Catholic practices, Foxe's main motivation. One wonders if the really bad behaviour was shown by the printer for his outrageous accusation, or if the angry reaction which it provoked suggests that there may well have been some substance to the allegations.

The final example, to bring the discussion full circle, is another instance of behaviour in a rood loft which was assumed to be bad, not by contemporaries but by modern commentators. In their book *Roodscreens and Roodlofts* of 1909, Bligh Bond and Camm express their outrage at finding documentary evidence for the installation of a pew for the 'maidens' in an early sixteenth-century Bristol rood loft:

It certainly comes as a shock to find evidence of the invasion of the roodloft itself by pews [...] that a place set apart for uses so sacred could thus be employed seems to point to a great degeneracy of custom and a loss of the older ideals of reverence in the worship of the period [...] ³²

Such emotive language assumes a *de facto* segregation of sacred and secular, which tells us little about medieval practice but much about Bligh Bond and Camm's late Victorian and Edwardian ethos which expected roles of class, gender and social status to occupy sharply polarised physical and cognitive domains. Astonishing as their comments may seem today, they also alert us to the fact that what scholars identify today as 'bad behaviour' may not necessarily have been viewed in the same way in the medieval period and vice versa.

What, then, can one make of these examples of 'bad behaviour'? First, they suggest that definitions of good or bad behaviour in the medieval period depended on context and were often socially constructed. Good behaviour could turn into bad (seen at its clearest in the Canterbury relic chapel incident) and much depended on the eventual outcome. At Beverley Minster, the boys showed good behaviour by wanting to see the Resurrection play but bad behaviour by climbing the staircase. The sextons arguably showed good behaviour by following them, but bad behaviour by their heavy-handed response and, arguably, by leaving the door open in the first place. The boys who escaped and climbed higher demonstrated further bad behaviour and were punished by the accident in which one fell from a great height. Ultimately, however, the fact that he recovered and all was well makes the whole story a positive one, much like the foiled robbery attempt at Durham Cathedral fifty years previously, because it shows the saints at work and therefore ultimately has to be good.

The behaviour of the monks in Ireland who defend themselves on the parapets would have been seen in official circles as very bad, yet amongst the community it was presumably seen as

³² Frederick Bligh Bond & Dom Bede Camm, *Roodscreens and Roodlofts* in 2 vols (London, 1909), I, p. 99.

good because they were defending their rights from intruders. The behaviour of the Oxfordshire novice when he allowed the friars to sleep in the hay loft, in defiance of his superiors was in the first instance bad, the more so when he defected to the new Order, yet in his dream it was the officials who were condemned by Christ for their bad behaviour. Even though this is not normal behaviour for monks, the chronicler implicitly sees the attack against their French superiors by the candlestick-wielding monks of Glastonbury as good but that of the men-at-arms who shot arrows from the gallery as bad. John Drayner's questionable behaviour in a sixteenth-century rood loft was initially well-intentioned (according to him) but is 'unmasked' by Foxe as bad behaviour, in the light of the allegation of checking on liturgical posture during services to spy on unsuspecting women below. These examples raise interesting questions about the inclusion of such material by chroniclers which might not normally feature prominently in scholarly discussions.

One of the wider themes of conference at which the article was presented as a paper was the role of text and its limits in history. Given that none of the examples in this paper would be possible to recover from material evidence alone, the text emerges as absolutely critical. However, chroniclers often recorded events which were noteworthy or exceptional rather than typical and everyday, giving a disproportionate weight to acts of misbehaviour. The examples which have illustrated this article are exceptionally rare instances and it is dangerous to extrapolate general principles from them. More research is needed into what went on at ground-floor level in ecclesiastical buildings to see if upper spaces were more or less likely to be venues for of misbehaviour or misadventure. Within the building, such spaces were generally less visible and more secluded, whereas anything taking place outside on a roof was more likely to be visible to a public audience. This may explain why an event here which resulted in a fatal accident seems to have been especially condemned. Finally, the scenarios above demonstrate that medievalists in general need to expect the unexpected. One suspects that there may well have been many more acts of 'bad behaviour' in ecclesiastical upper spaces at which we can hardly begin to guess.

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‘I do mistake my person all this while’: Blindness and Illusion in *Richard III*¹

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[...] and in those holes
Where eyes did once inhabit there were crept,
As ’twere in scorn of eyes, reflecting gems, (*R. III*, I. 4. 27–29)

To be disfigured means primarily the loss of the eyes, turned to ‘stony
orbs’ or to empty holes²

Despite the fact that the site of Richard’s grave was apparently both known and marked in the early 17th Century, that same century was to witness the growth of an extraordinary legend. According to this legend, at the time of the Dissolution, Richard’s body had been dug up, dragged through the streets of Leicester by a jeering mob, and finally hurled into the river Soar near Bow Bridge. [...] The legend has unfortunately become self-perpetuating, [...] so well known that to this day, it is still widely accepted as fact.³

In 1995, David Troughton’s Richard appeared in a jester’s outfit.⁴ Richard certainly shares attributes with the Fool, just as both have common roots in a third figure, the Vice.⁵ Although this is no straightforward case of shared identity, establishing a link may provide a point of departure for a reading of the play based on the necessarily related notions of inscription and circumscription, interrelationships of ‘texts’,⁶ and the ‘blind spot of the text as the organiser of the space of the vision contained in the text, and the vision’s concomitant blindness.’⁷ The displacement and replacement of Richard’s *corpus* by another corpus, one of self-perpetuating myths and an intricate intertext, further reinforces this enthralling impression of an extending web around an elusive figure.

¹ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard III*, ed. by John Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), i. 2. 237. All subsequent references are to this edition, which will be referred to in the text as ‘*Richard III*’ or in quotations as ‘*R. III*’. This article was first presented as a paper at the Colloquium on *Bad Behaviour in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* organised by the Centre of Medieval and Early Modern Studies at the University of Kent at Canterbury, 3rd December 2009.

² Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 100.

³ John Ashdown-Hill, ‘The Fate of Richard III’s Body’, in *BBC: Legacies – Myths and Legends – England – Local Legends: Leicester* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/legacies/myths_legends/england/leicester/article_1.shtml> [accessed 21 July 2009].

⁴ David Troughton played Richard in the RSC’s production at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, in 1995. John Jowett delivers a compelling description of the production, in his introduction to *The Tragedy of King Richard III*, ed. by John Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 108.

⁵ Robert Weimann, ‘Performance-Game and Representation in *Richard III*’, in *Textual and Theatrical Shakespeare: Questions of Evidence*, ed. Edward Pechter (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996), pp. 74-75.

⁶ Following Jacques Derrida, in the term ‘text’ I include all ‘symbolic’ formulations that ‘always already’ stand between us and absolute presence and are also the only point of (indirect) access. ‘Text’ in its Derridean sense is ‘not merely [...] “writing in the narrow sense”’, Spivak, in her introduction to Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1976), p. lxix.

⁷ Wlad Godzich, in his introduction to Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 1983), p. xxix.

It is generally acknowledged that one of the factors that connect Richard, the Vice, and the 'Fool' is their apparent awareness of a meta-theatrical dimension to the 'text'.⁸ The additional awareness suggested by this meta-dimension may appear to exceed the frame.⁹ Richard himself draws attention to his kinship with the Vice figure: 'like the formal Vice Iniquity' (*R. III*, III, 1. 82). However, the word 'like' poses some difficulty, disconnecting while it offers similarity.¹⁰ This essay will attempt a deconstruction of the meta-dimension, exploring both its extent and its limitations. It is my thesis that, within Richard's meta-awareness, lies the seed of its undoing: a blind spot. For Richard does not merely stand at the borders but also casts himself as protagonist in his own script. Already this indicates a split, opening up a 'space of writing'.

1. 'Now [...]': Richard writing Richard

Significantly, as John Jowett points out, 'of Shakespeare's major protagonists, Richard is the only one to begin the play addressing the audience'.¹¹ Richard instantly establishes a link with both his offstage audience and the immediate present, thus contributing to the illusion that all is being written 'Now' (*R. III*, I, 1. 1). Richard seems to be writing himself into being, just as he manipulates other characters and the audience. He announces entrances and seems to envelop events in his consciousness;¹² so long as events appear to occur, as it were, on cue, the illusion is sustained. Richard's heightened awareness and control of the situation are indeed accepted as givens by some critics, who, by adopting Richard's point of view as their filter and implicitly incorporating the character's own (initial) assumptions into their reading, bind themselves to the same 'blindness' that afflicts Richard. John Palmer is a striking example: 'What we like and admire in Richard is that he knows, as the politicians seldom know, precisely what he is doing.'¹³ But although Richard seems to claim both pivotal centrality and control of boundaries and opens the play in a manner implying an act of framing and a movement towards a monologic resolution, neither the end nor the refusal to end belongs to him.

⁸ '[Richard's] capacity to isolate himself from the action, to manipulate events, and to form a special relationship with the audience all reflect his consanguinity with Marlowe's Barabas in *The Jew of Malta* (c.1590) and, behind him, the Vice of medieval drama' (Jowett, p. 27). David Wiles charts the development from Vice to Fool, noting their shared meta-theatricality. David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 1–10.

⁹ See Colin Counsell on exceeding the frame, Colin Counsell, *Signs of Performance: an introduction to twentieth-century theatre* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 207-230. 'Metatheatricality' (a term introduced by Lionel Abel in *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963)) involves the use of intensely self-conscious devices which draw attention to the medium and its status as art or textual construct. My interest here is precisely the awareness it implies, with its apparent leap over the frame.

¹⁰ 'This recognition of similitude also admits difference' (Jowett, p. 31).

¹¹ Jowett, p. 27.

¹² 'Here Clarence comes', *Richard III*, I, 1. 41.

¹³ John Palmer, *Political and Comic Characters of Shakespeare* (London: MacMillan, 1965), p. 101.

The assumptions which govern meta-theatricality/meta-textuality, are, in this instance, more complex than might be suspected. The level of the relationship between actor and embodiment of role may usefully, but provisionally, be viewed in Meyerholdian terms: where the actor = A₁ shaping A₂.¹⁴ Richard is such an actor in his turn: in the manner of A₁, he takes on the task of shaping his role as A₂ in ‘his own’ play. A comment by Jan Kott on a performance he had watched is particularly revealing: ‘Woszczerowicz is a great actor, but his Richard is an even greater actor.’¹⁵ Kott’s suggestion is that Richard may usurp the actor who plays him; my suggestion is that this is only one in a series of displacements.

As Linda Hutcheon asserts, ‘no text is without its intertext.’¹⁶ *Richard III*, and Richard (setting even his own body up as ‘text’), are no exceptions. Richard’s assumption of supremacy in his own script is ‘always already’ undermined by the complex interplay that results from the multi-layering of ‘texts’ in *Richard III*: its own internal weave and the surrounding texts with which it has connections, namely those that with it comprise the First Tetralogy¹⁷, and, still within the web of extending textuality, its sources and influences, both literary and historical.¹⁸ Richard is a ‘spider’ (*R. III*, I. 3. 242) in a web of his own devising but he fails to see that it becomes subsumed into a larger network. The textual weave marks out the space Shakespeare’s Richard is to occupy, ‘overdetermining’ even while it offers potentiality.¹⁹

¹⁴ ‘The formula for acting may be expressed as follows: N = A₁ + A₂ (where N = the actor; A₁ = the artist who conceives the ideas and issues the instructions necessary for its execution; A₂ = the executant who executes the conception of A₁)’, the ‘material’ being the actor’s body as a ‘means of expression’. Vsevolod Meyerhold, *Meyerhold On Theatre*, ed. and trans. by Edward Braun (London: Methuen, 1969); p. 198.

¹⁵ Jan Kott on Woszczerowicz’s production of *Richard III* at the Atheneum Theatre in Warsaw, 1960. Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (New York: Norton, 1964), pp. 52-53. Kott already invokes this metatheatrical awareness when he specifies that ‘actor’ in this context implies someone ‘above the part’ (p.53); applying this term to both Woszczerowicz and Richard.

¹⁶ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. vii.

¹⁷ The First Tetralogy comprises Shakespeare’s *King Henry VI Part 1*, (ed. Edward Burns (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2000)), *King Henry VI Part 2*, (ed. Ronald Knowles (Surrey: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1999)), *King Henry VI Part 3*, (ed. John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001)) and *King Richard III*. Further references will be to these editions. The plays themselves will be referred in the text respectively as ‘1, 2 or 3 *Henry VI*’ and in quotations as ‘1, 2 or 3 *H. VI*’, as the case may be.

¹⁸ Jowett explores Shakespeare’s sources and influences, both literary and historical (pp. 22-25). The very notion of ‘history’ is itself perhaps inconceivable outside historiography, the writings that could be held to constitute it. ‘History’ itself, in any case, is ‘a text [that] conserves the values of legibility’ (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. lxxxix-xc). Marjorie Garber sees Richard as emblematic of this process of writing and defacing history. Marjorie Garber, ‘Descanting on Deformity: *Richard III* and the Shape of History’, in *Shakespeare’s Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 28-51.

¹⁹ The word ‘overdetermined’ here recalls Garber’s argument that Richard’s deformity is a meta-historical ‘suppositious presupposition’, a ghostly rewriting and deformation of history: with ‘every misshaped part an overdetermined text to be interpreted and moralised’. Garber, pp. 36-37.

2. '[...] all these bitter names': Richard's manipulation of Margaret's countertext

Perhaps the most obvious 'counter-text' to Richard's manifests itself in Margaret. Margaret's first appearance in the play is in effect as a shadow (she stands on the margins) and an echo, taking her cue from what is said, inserting her bitter invectives within the gaps between dissenting voices. Since her comments occur initially on the margins of the scene and she herself has been relegated to the status of 'outsider', she sets up another centre of consciousness to rival Richard's, also an outsider in this 'weak-piping time of peace' (*R. III*, I. 1. 24). Her containment and freedom are alike curtailed and incomplete. She is on a border, not merely in the implied spatial dynamics of the scene onstage, but also a temporal one; she is furthermore the most visible vehicle for the echoes of the preceding plays in the First Tetralogy that haunt *Richard III*. She sees that the future is already inscribed in the past, and the past in the future. Her power of seeing turns her curses into what may be seen as a rival script within the play and makes her strength equal to Richard's. However, unlike Richard's energy, which seems positive and progressive, hers seems negative (betokening the power of reversal feeding parasitically on another's power). Richard's 'Now' confirms the immediacy of theatrical 'presence', sharing the illusion with the audience, while Margaret complicates these assumptions of 'present' and 'presence', ushering in the voices of past and future, and with them the unsettling murmurs of absences.

Her text, employing reversal and erasure as devices but never completely effacing the text upon which it depends, is, in effect, a *palimpsest* as Gérard Genette uses the term.²⁰ Richard's rise must occur in order for him to fall; her curses and prophecies must inhabit the world of those they target, even while they seem to spin a web around it. Texts are set up *in relation to* others, in a relationship of mutual dependency. A palimpsest does not entirely drown out the text it inhabits and rewrites, for it derives its power from that very text, and vice-versa.²¹ The 'hypertext' after all carves out its space within the space of the 'hypotext'.²² they share the space. Furthermore, Margaret inscribes her curses within the terms of her own tragedy, in a play of substitutions: 'Edward thy son, which now is Prince of Wales, / For Edward my son,

²⁰ 'On the same parchment, one text can become superimposed upon another, which it does not quite conceal but allows to show through.' Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), pp. 398–99.

²¹ The relationship is typically bi-directional; her curses and prophecies empower even as they undermine; the women later ask her to 'teach [them] how to curse' (*Richard III*, IV. 4. 111); and as characters fall victim to Richard they realise their only hope for revenge is through her text (*Richard III*, III. 3. 15-7), lending it their own voices even posthumously, through ghostly apparitions.

²² Genette, pp. 5–7.

which was Prince of Wales' (*R. III*, I. 3. 196–97). Margaret tells Richard as much: '[I make] but repetition of what thou hast marred' (*R. III*, I. 3. 165).

Richard becomes the medium for the revenge she wills against others, a fact that undermines his sole authorship.²³ He is required by both his text and hers to perform actions that are, initially, of benefit to both; the texts exist within each other, for now, as it were, symbiotically though the relationship might later turn parasitic. Margaret thus attaches her own counter-signature to Richard's signature, not thereby obliterating it but rather using and undermining it. Her tragedy is past; she is no longer ostensibly the 'centre'; her place has been usurped, but the very frustration of her desires fuels her power. The only power Margaret has is that of *words*. She has neither illusion nor hope of any other kind of power.²⁴ Her words, later compounded by the 'chorus' of women, are indeed those of mourning but also of remembrance.

Richard's response, his effort to silence or suppress the (re)writing, takes an interesting turn in the scene in which Margaret first appears in this play. Unable to stem the flow of her curses, his tactic is instead to deflect them, to turn them against their speaker simply by *inserting* her name; his retaliation operates within her own words, searching for the loophole in which to turn them around. Richard seems to recognise the power of 'writing' and is here able to manipulate the curses and deflect them from the target intended by their 'original' speaker. Words thus severed demonstrably from their 'source' and lines between speakers become blurred, their intended targets seemingly interchangeable. It is, therefore, slightly startling to hear Richard himself, in a moment of alarming blindness, reclaim the curses for himself: 'I had thought / That thou had'st called me all these bitter names' (*R. III*, I. 3. 235–36). In voicing this, he attaches to the words his own reading that reinforces Margaret's. Richard has already shown himself dextrous in his use of language and equivocation, especially in the matter of names.²⁵ However, not realising that he, too, is textually bound by the language he uses and abuses so dextrously and that the act of writing himself into being is only enabled by the pre-existence of the text, Richard still thinks that he can mould both the play's text and himself. Language itself is more 'dissembling' even than he, concealing as much as it reveals, hiding the blind spot. In Paul de Man's words: 'We try to protect ourselves against [the persistent negative movement that resides in being] by inventing stratagems, ruses of language and of thought that hide an

²³ As Jowett writes, 'Richard prospers by becoming her avenging demon' (Jowett, p. 25).

²⁴ See *Richard III*, I. 3. 193; IV. 4. 110–25.

²⁵ "'G' / Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be,' (*R. III*, I. 1. 39–40); 'Plantagenet [...] / The selfsame name, but one of better nature,' (*R. III*, I. 2. 139–41); 'I moralise two meanings in one word.' (*R. III*, III. 1. 83).

irrevocable fall. The existence of these strategies reveals the supremacy of the negative power they are trying to circumvent.’²⁶

Richard’s ‘ruses’ are many; his use of words is matched by the use of his body as a kind of medium, indeed, a text. His appeals to corporeality and presence occur alongside his claims to greater flexibility and instability of shape (he describes himself as both ‘rudely stamped’ and as having eluded ‘fair proportion’ (*R. III*, I. 1. 16–18)) and suggest a more atavistic ‘body’, ‘like to a chaos’ (*3 H. VI*, III. 2. 161). Derrida asserts that body language is not an escape from the bonds of text into something ‘essential’ and ‘personal’ and close to the source: as soon as they materialise, the shape (and shaping) of a body, its figuration and disfiguration, are ‘always already’ figured as signs, never as an intrinsic attribute of the source. *Richard III* is ostensibly Richard’s story but one that has ‘always already’ been ‘stolen’ from him: ‘Furtiveness is thus the quality of dispossession which always empties out speech as it eludes itself.’²⁷ Richard is indeed ‘*curtailed* of this fair proportion, / *Cheated* of feature’ (*R. III*, I. 1. 18–19: my emphases) but appears blind to the full implications of his own words.

3. ‘Methought I saw [...]’: the intrusion of spectres

In the tightly-woven fabric of Richard’s textual self-realisation appear loopholes that allow other texts to intrude, insert and attach themselves. However, this intertwining is not so much an avenue *out* of the state of textuality as ways *into* the text(s) which is ‘simultaneously infinitely open and infinitely reflecting on itself, “*an eye in an eye*”.’²⁸ In this view, intertextuality is conceived as texts which lead into other texts, embed themselves within texts and contain *within themselves* loopholes through which other texts can insinuate themselves, in the manner of the Derridean ‘countersignature’. A kind of osmosis occurs across the boundaries between texts, but the implied free play cannot escape the intertwining of the network.

Is death an exit, an escape? ‘O no, my dream was lengthened after life’ (*R. III*, I. 4. 40). The autothanatology (as ‘a study of the impact of death’s *completed* approach on one writing a self-portrait’²⁹) implied by Clarence’s dream extending beyond the moment of death prefigures the later emergence of ghosts in its evocation of the ‘impossible’ scenario of the voice from beyond the grave. Clarence, imprisoned in the Tower as a result of his brother Richard’s

²⁶ De Man, *Blindness and Insight*, p. 73.

²⁷ Derrida, ‘La Parole Soufflée’, in *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 222–23.

²⁸ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, pp. 298–9. Derrida further writes: The ‘field’ of language is ‘that of *play*, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite.’

²⁹ Ivan Callus, ‘(Auto)Thanatography or (Auto)Thanatology?: Mark C. Taylor, Simon Critchley and the Writing of the Dead’, *Forum of Modern Language Studies*, 41. 4 (October 2005), p. 427–8 (p. 432).

schemes, dreams of dying and damnation. Death here is only an *apparent* exit, only an entrance into a text closely interwoven with the other texts, for death cannot be articulated or represented in any other way: ‘the writing of the dead resists being understood as anything but the script of the living.’³⁰ Clarence’s vision of hell is declaredly informed by that which ‘poets write of’, including ‘that grim ferryman’, ‘a shadow like an angel’, and ‘Furies’ (*R. III*, I. 4. 40–60). Graham Holderness observes, ‘Clarence’s [...] individual nightmare is formalised into a classical visit to the underworld, clearly signalled by overt literary reference.’³¹ Clarence, like Hastings, misreads the dream. Their ‘failure’ to read lies in their refusal or inability to acknowledge their life as characters in yet another text, subject to the same mechanisms as a dream, susceptible to the same ‘insight’ and ‘blindness’ and partaking of the dream’s status as a text to be read. Clarence’s reading of the dream places himself at its centre. The persistence as the centre of vision of the first person’s ‘I’ and ‘eye’, even throughout its submersion in water, is striking in this speech: ‘Methought I saw [...] Methought I had [...]’ (*R. III*, I. 4. 23, 34, respectively). Richard’s role remains shadowy and peripheral: ‘Methought that Gloucester stumbled’ (*R. III*, I. 4. 17). The extent of Clarence’s vision, even as it seems to transcend time and space by continuing after death is however cruelly undermined by the mockery of the unseeing ‘reflecting gems’ (*R. III*, I. 4. 29), replacing eyes that see with blindness.

Thus ‘spectres’, allowed entry, threaten to occupy the same space and steadily gain ground on the ‘flesh-and-blood’ characters, exposing their shared characteristics as textual constructs. It is the nature of the spectre to trespass, to intrude, to challenge those boundaries, to be undecidable: ‘one does not know if it is living or if it is dead.’³² The proliferation of texts all possess a ‘remainder’³³ that ensures that their reading is incomplete: the centre itself that organises them and around which they revolve always an absent presence.

4. ‘like to a chaos’: the formlessness of Richard’s self-portraiture

By the very act of (*self-*)*inscription*, Richard is necessarily *circumscribed*. His ‘shape’ is always one that has ‘always already’ been established by necessarily-preceding texts. Furthermore, it now informs future ‘Richards’ (in stage-productions, readings of Shakespeare’s Richard, or indeed any writing that attaches itself to the historical or literary figure that is

³⁰ Callus, p. 238.

³¹ Graham Holderness, *Shakespeare: The Histories* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 2000), p. 87. Jowett also describes Clarence’s dream as ‘classically informed’ (p. 24).

³² Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. 5.

³³ See Jacques Derrida, ‘The Purveyor of Truth’, in *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida and Psychoanalytic Reading*, ed. by John P. Muller and William J. Richardson (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 73–212.

‘Richard’) that, whether adopting or rejecting this Richard, forever evoke him. Harold Bloom provocatively suggests that a strong text informs our reading of related weaker texts, intertextual influences working both backward and forward in time.³⁴ Indeed, in the manner of Bloom’s ‘Apophrades’, Shakespeare’s *Richard III* cannot help but be evoked by other representations of Richard whether preceding or following.

Richard’s self-portraits in *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III* are attempts not simply to draw form but to emphasise formlessness; they are exercises in deformation. This harking back to what is almost a pre-formed state, a malleable ‘essence’ of shapelessness (‘unfinished’; ‘like to a chaos’ (*R. III*, I. 1. 20, and *3 Henry VI*, III. 2. 161, respectively)) is offered as a prelude to reconstruction, reshaping: the apparently infinite possibilities thus glimpsed turn Richard’s deformity into strength. What he seemingly fails to realise is that the notion of ‘possibilities’ also carries within itself the sinister evocation of ‘impossibilities’, which in turn delimit and define those possibilities. Richard seems blind to the irony of using a classical allusion (‘Proteus’) to describe his ability to ‘change shapes’ (*3 Henry VI*, III. 2. 192), for he is acknowledging a precedent, without totally recognising its significance: Richard is ‘always already’ precluded from being the ‘original’. ‘Change shapes’ is indeed key here, for it presupposes shape and its substitution by another shape, in a ‘chain of supplementarity’,³⁵ rather than an originary shapelessness. The equivocal word ‘like’ in ‘like to a chaos’, as previously noted, introduces a play of difference and *différance* alongside similarity. As we have seen, Richard opens *Richard III*, but the play’s (and his) ‘beginning’ stretches back into the other plays of the First Tetralogy and beyond ... the ‘original’ historical Richard himself has ‘always already’ been displaced by texts. The ‘beginning’, as well as the ‘end’, eludes Richard.

This elusion returns us to the issue of the blind spot. Blindness is a necessary condition for self-portraiture, which is what Richard attempts in *3 Henry VI* and in *Richard III*. Richard’s self-portrait takes its vantage-point from *within* the text, and his vision is therefore incomplete, necessarily adopting

the monocular stare of a narcissistic cyclops: a single eye open, [...] fixed firmly on its own image. [...] The staring eye always resembles an eye of the blind, sometimes the eye of the dead [...] Looking at itself seeing, it also sees itself disappear right at the moment when the drawing tries desperately to recapture it. For this cyclops eye sees nothing, nothing but an eye that it thus prevents from seeing anything at all.³⁶

³⁴ Thus, a stronger text appears to have given rise to its ‘sources’, which are invariably read *through* it. ‘Apophrades, or The Return of The Dead’, in Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 139–55.

³⁵ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 153–57.

³⁶ Jacques Derrida, ‘From Memoirs of the Blind’, in *The Derrida Reader: Writing Performances*, ed. by Julian Wolfreys (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), pp. 179–80.

Similarly, one of Richard's hands is overactive in an effort to compensate for his other, 'withered' (*R. III*, III. 4. 74) hand. The incompleteness of his self-writing gesture is ensured.

Richard, 'scarce half made up' (*R. III*, I. 1. 21), presents his own body as raw material amenable to moulding, the text born even as he himself is born. However, although the play *appears* to be within the describing arc of his shaping, misshapen hand, his genesis outside the text is seemingly beyond his control. His birth is not actually presented in the text,³⁷ but *re-presented* by the text. Its existence outside the text is elusive, the 'truth' surrounding its circumstances indistinguishable from proliferating myth and the over-determination of conflicting accounts. He is both 'sent before [his] time' (*R. III*, I. 1. 20) and has spent too much time in his mother's womb, as his mother's admonishing 'I have stayed for thee' (*R. III*, IV. 4. 155) would seem to imply.

The 'sun' is a key image in the play, both in presence and absence, as on the sunless morning of the final battle: 'The sun will not be seen today' (*R. III*, v. 5. 12). It enables vision but is also blinding, resisting capture.³⁸ At one point, Richard proposes to replace the sun, as a condition for vision, with a simulacrum that seems self-derived: 'Shine out, fair sun – till I have bought a glass' (*R. III*, I. 3. 247). However, the mirror image is as inaccessible as the sun and the shadows cast by the sun; yet shadow or reflection is the only way in which he can view himself. Although the image, in both cases, is never the thing itself, it acquires a force of its own.³⁹ The mirror-image is inadequate and incomplete in the picture it reflects (and projects); it implies presence, while forever making it elude us, fostering an illusion of control over the self by its manifestation as 'other', while decentring 'self': 'the unreachable reflection of Narcissus, the manifestation of shape at the expense of its possession.'⁴⁰ Richard's own vision of himself is not unmediated and never complete.

Richard is both right and wrong when he tells the young Prince:

Nor more can you distinguish of a man
Than by his outward show, which God He knows
Seldom or never jumpeth with the heart (*R. III*, III. 1. 9–11).

In his textualisation of the very body, the grotesquely over-visible representation has displaced the essence: 'It is the strange essence of the supplement not to have essentiality.'⁴¹ As a text to be read, it represents and reveals the absent presence of any 'heart', and there remains nothing

³⁷ Nor in the preceding plays of the Tetralogy.

³⁸ De Man's discussion of the sun image in Shelley is enlightening: see de Man, 'Shelley Disfigured', in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, pp. 93–123.

³⁹ See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 147.

⁴⁰ De Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, p. 109.

⁴¹ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 314.

to hide. The text is all there is to 'distinguish', and Richard *is* readable. However, Richard seems blind to the irony that his 'lie' also taps a 'truth': the erasure of essence always leaves a trace, which reveals itself in other texts, the dreams, conscience and curses that Richard tries to suppress, and, in so doing, testifies to the dislocation between 'heart' and 'outward show', which he experiences as a loss of centre on the eve of battle and which 'double layers' his awareness, while painfully accentuating the 'absent presence' of the pivot which structures this association.

In the play, the only prophecy and curse apparently unfulfilled is Anne's and this concerns Richard's child: 'If ever he have child, abortive be it' (*R. III*, I. 2. 20–23). The convolutions of this curse are interesting, for it analeptically looks back to an event that has *already* occurred. Richard's child can only refer back, in a striking reversal, to Richard's attempt at self-[re]creation, abortive and curtailed as it is.

5. Theme and variations: Richard parodies Richard

Richard is circumscribed by the relentless circularity and onward course of the play, in its progression via convolution and reversion. Richard's text eventually turns around, folding in upon itself, and entraps him within its folds. Palmer writes, 'Richard, after the death of the princes, is like an artist who has put the finishing touch to a masterpiece.'⁴² And that 'masterpiece' is his apparent self-creation. Reflection makes us blind. It turns us relentlessly back to the realm of the 'visible', the articulable. The women, in the manner of a chorus, increasingly emphasise the boundaries of his world. Once he gains the crown, episodes start to mirror earlier episodes with a difference that makes them parodic in their effect.⁴³ This recreates the dynamics of the previous 'text', with conditions changed and the balance altered.⁴⁴ Thrown back into the textual weave, Richard can only parody Richard. Palmer draws a striking analogy: 'The musical counterpart to "Richard III" would be, not a symphony, but a set of variations of the early classic type. Our interest lies in the composer's ingenious, almost playful, embroidery of a theme which remains essentially the same.'⁴⁵ The subtle turns and re-turns are a feature of

⁴² Palmer, p. 103.

⁴³ Bakhtin views parody as 'repetition' with 'difference'. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson, Introduction by Wayne C. Booth (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 194–9. Genette identifies the parodic formula as one of 'imitation' and 'transformation' (*Palimpsests*, pp. 1–30).

⁴⁴ The parodying text, in the manner of a palimpsest, also inscribes within it the parodied text and thus creates a relationship of mutual dependence. See Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985) p. 26.

⁴⁵ Palmer, pp. 85–86.

Richard ‘Crookback’ himself; his bent back, his web-weaving, his ability to use others’ words against themselves.

Parody is never an innocent mirroring; the influence works both ways: the parodying text depends, of course, upon the anteriority and coexistence of the parodied but it also affects the way we read, or reread, the parodied text, rereading a parodied text through the parodying one, the question of anteriority wraps itself in a ‘double-bind’.⁴⁶

As Palmer notes, ‘the scene in which Richard sets out to persuade Elizabeth to further his suit to her daughter is but a pale reflection of the earlier scene in which he wooed the Lady Anne.’⁴⁷ Palmer is right in seeing more ‘artificiality’ on this second occasion⁴⁸, for here, the artificiality is heightened: the elusiveness of the thing becomes apparent, even as that thing escapes. Palmer however fails to read backwards and see what the second episode discloses about that first, apparently unequivocal, triumph, for it underlines what was always there: supplementarity. Richard’s efforts to cast himself in and occupy fully and adequately a role or break the textual mould to fit his own (necessarily incomplete) self-conceived image are always foiled by the interminable *différance* of an endless ‘supplementarity’.⁴⁹ Both wooings occur by proxy, by substitution: in his wooing of Anne, Richard leaps into the place of both Edward and Henry, bound by ‘selfsame name’ (*R. III*, I. 2. 141); he wholeheartedly offers himself as supplement: ‘The readiest way to make the wench amends / Is to become her husband and her father’ (*R. III*, I. 1. 154–5). Incidentally, this substitution bodes ill for Richard, in terms of Margaret’s text; for he ‘casts’ himself precisely (though inadequately) in those roles that Margaret demands of him: ‘A husband and a son thou owest to me’ (*R. III*, I. 3. 167). In the case of Elizabeth, she represents her daughter. Richard’s failure in this latter enterprise exposes both his grasp of naught but the supplement and the fact that Richard never held anything *but* the supplement. This also extends to Richard’s opening address to the audience ‘now’, at the beginning of the play. Derrida writes: ‘supplementary mediations [...] produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage [...] of immediate presence’.⁵⁰ Moreover, the inadequacy of the supplement necessitates its ‘exorbitance’.⁵¹ Margaret’s hunger for revenge makes demands

⁴⁶ On the double-bind’s problematisation of the question of anteriority, see Jacques Derrida, ‘Aphorism-Countertime’, in *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 414–33.

⁴⁷ Palmer, p. 104.

⁴⁸ Palmer, p. 105.

⁴⁹ For Derrida’s discussion of the ‘supplement’, see Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 152–57.

⁵⁰ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 157.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

that exceed her loss of a son: the deaths of eight enemies ‘match not the high perfection of my loss’ (*R. III*, iv. 4. 61).

6. ‘— But where tomorrow?’: the hunted boar

Holderness notes that ‘towards the play’s close [...] both the voices he has sought to still, and the ghosts of those dead he has endeavoured to silence, return’.⁵² Dreams, prophecies and curses abound and insert themselves in the manner of texts into the gaps in Richard’s text/consciousness. Richard is given a glimpse of what the ‘blank page’ *may* hold. But the reversal has started before that, in the self-parody of the text. Richard has had his game, now it is the text’s turn to reveal its own ludic potential.

When Richard’s ‘text’ reaches its bounds, he can only turn and re-turn, like a hunted boar.⁵³ Things move frighteningly into reverse; as the illusion of the end forces the text to turn back upon itself, the past to return, and Richard to haunt Richard (‘I and I’ (*R. III*, v. 4. 162)). Richard’s vow ‘by the time to come – ’ (*R. III*, iv. 4. 307) is tellingly *curtailed*, cut short, by a turn back to the past in Elizabeth’s swift (and too-precipitate) response: ‘That thou hast wronged in time o’erpast’ (*R. III*, iv. 4. 308–09). Richard is haunted both by the return of the past and the uncertainty of the blank pages of the future (‘Here will I lie tonight – / But where tomorrow?’ (*R. III*, v. 3. 7-8)). Richard here recognises the blind spot and his limitations; however: ‘locat[ing] its functioning’ does not facilitate his *reading* of it.⁵⁴ Rather, he accepts his role as one component in the sometimes-savage interplay of texts. Jowett maintains that ‘it could even be argued that the entire play’s vantage point is that of Richard on the eve of the battle, a Richard on the point of death.’⁵⁵ This Mallarméan terror of the blank page evokes its haunting *potential* as well as its implications of the unreadable and thence of blindness, an inscrutable blankness that stares back at him, returning his gaze and turning his gaze onto himself and into the text.⁵⁶ Richard’s sun-deprived day of death perhaps signals this acknowledgement of his finitude that, however, takes place in the night that refuses to end, even as it turns into dawn; the night that surrenders him to the infinite. He is already cohabiting with the spectres of the night.

⁵² Holderness, p. 84.

⁵³ The Boar was Richard’s heraldic personal device and is an image frequently associated with Richard in the play, for example in Stanley’s dream: ‘He dreamt tonight the boar had razed his helm.’ (*Richard III*, iii. 2. 9).

⁵⁴ ‘It does not suffice to locate [the blind spot’s] functioning in order to *see* its meaning.’ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 149.

⁵⁵ Jowett, p. 67.

⁵⁶ See also: Maurice Blanchot, *Space of Literature*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press).

Richard's confession that shadows may strike more terror than substance can is revealing.⁵⁷ The substance marching upon him becomes the shadow: following, even perversely aping, by coming unnaturally *after* its shadow. Richard has already faced combat with the ghosts; Richmond's advance is the mere re-enactment of what has already, in a sense, happened. Richard is past fear, as he is past the worst. Perverse reversal this might be but it awakens in him the recognition that the text he thought himself to be writing has limitations, and he is upon its edge just at the break of a sunless dawn, between day and night, between life and death, unredeemed.

Just as the dead Richard is displaced by his literary, historical, and dramatic counterpart(s), in order to appear, the ghosts must acquire a status similar to that of the 'living' characters, possessing equal rights to space-and-time and sharing a common textuality. Furthermore, the irrepressible myths involving the displacement of the historical Richard's physical body and multiplicity of possible grave-sites are symptomatic of the tendency of narratives to proliferate and the fascinating elusion of bodies trapped in a winding and restless circularity.

It has become increasingly evident throughout that Richard's shoulders can neither 'bear [the] burden' nor 'endure the load' (*R. III*, III. 7. 211–12). They are furthermore unable to bear the weight of the crown that, instead of *being borne* by his 'misshaped trunk', 'round impale[s]' it (*3 H. VI Part 3*, III. 2. 170–71), undermining his capacity to bear and reversing the positions of possession and containment. I would like to borrow one of Richard's own metaphors, a metaphor that later becomes terrifyingly literalised in a changed context. The 'horse', as a symbol of bearing,⁵⁸ is shown to be furtive *and* necessary, not at Richard's command. The vehicle, the container and carrier, language itself, the containing text, overtakes Richard. In yet another reversal, Richard's cry, 'A horse! A horse!' (*R. III*, v. 6. 7), recalls an earlier metaphorical 'horse' and invites us to read the text backward: where before he has 'run before [his] horse to market' (*R. III*, I. 2. 159), the horse has now overtaken him, and it is he who becomes the *pursuer*. Yet it is a necessity that Richard recognises too late. He is at first dismissive, thinking it possible for him to 'run before', but the truth is that his 'horse', language and the text, is always before *and* after, beginning *and* end, and forever eludes capture.

7. Richard III or *Richard III*?

⁵⁷ By the Apostle Paul, shadows tonight
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers
Armèd in proof and led by shallow Richmond (*R. III*, v. 4. 195–98).

⁵⁸ In at least one sense of the word; though 'bearing' in its connotations of genesis and birth may also be recalled.

The play's title contributes to the illusion that Richard is the centre. But is the title identifiable with the 'entity' that is Richard? Richard is, in a sense, defeated by Richard, but which Richard – Richard III or *Richard III*? 'Richard III' is self-evidently eponymous; but the issues raised cannot be so readily resolved. Does Richard write his own play, or are he and his playing-field 'always already' pre-established by the name of the play?

Richard III is not exclusively about Richard III. Among other things, the play charts the story of Richard of Gloucester's transformation into Richard III. Richard seems to possess the play but he does not possess its name from the outset. Once he becomes king, neither can he free himself from the shackles of that name (King Richard III) that bind him to the text *King Richard III*; nor can the illusion of control can be sustained. He can no longer delude himself that he could 'put on some other shape' (*R. III*, iv. 4. 262) or control the text that bears his name and relentlessly and endlessly inscribes and re-inscribes him. He is displaced by a name, yet cannot dissociate himself from it. The nature of the name's double-bind⁵⁹ entails that it is simultaneously *other than* himself, and *inalienable* from him. The name *precedes* and *survives* the person. 'The scandal is that the sign, the image, or the representer, become forces and make "the world move".'⁶⁰

The paradox is that while Richard seems to possess awareness of himself as text, he is blind to the supplementarity that this entails. He assumes, at least initially, that he is the source and can retain control; but as soon as writing touches 'Chaos', it is bound. Added irony lies in the fact that Richard does not have the last word. Perhaps there is no last word, for the play ends on a hope, not a certainty, still overshadowed by the lingering traces of 'blood' and 'treason': 'Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord, / That would reduce these bloody days again / And make poor England weep in streams of blood' (*R. III*, v. 7. 35–37). Ricardian traces, echoes and images contaminate Richmond's closing speech, infiltrating the very promise and potential present in the future (or present-in-the-future; or indeed, carving out a debt in the present of the future that Richmond seems to offer). Richmond's promises of 'peace' moreover, only acquire their full force when set in opposition to the memory of terror. Replacement itself is never complete; it never eradicates the traces of what went before or lies beneath and it reminds us constantly of what it seeks to erase (or deface), for, in Margaret's words, it always 'buildeth in [another's] eyrie's nest' (*R. III*, i. 3. 270).

Conclusion

⁵⁹ Derrida, 'Aphorism–Countertime'.

⁶⁰ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 147

Richard's quest for an origin, in seeking to create it and encompass it, poses interesting questions for the process of literary creation itself. If Richard is 'author' only in a limited sense, where then, should we look for the 'real Author': that shadowy figure *par excellence*, Shakespeare, simultaneously 'Everything and Nothing'?⁶¹ May one posit a circle of control 'beyond'? Yes, and another, on and on, in our endless quest for one organising consciousness. One may posit more than one centre or circle, but as for seeking the ultimate centre of authorial voice, that is likely to remain a blind-spot, whence one may indeed deduce that Shakespeare's singular dissemination⁶² is deeply and inextricably bound to this continued elusion.

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⁶¹ Jorge Luis Borges, 'Everything and Nothing', in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, ed. by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1964), pp. 248–49.

⁶² On the 'dissemination' of the 'singular', 'that which cannot be picked up or sublated', the 'dissemination [which] pluralises any singularity that allows one to say "the"', see Jacques Derrida, *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 284. See also: Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). In the course of a discussion on Shakespeare and *Hamlet*, Derrida observes that a masterpiece 'always resists and defies after the fashion of a spectral thing'. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, pp. 20–21.

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Robbing Churches and Pulling Beards: The Rebellious Sons of Henry II¹

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Throughout the medieval period, a young nobleman's behaviour could enhance, diminish or even destroy his attempts to establish an adult, masculine identity. Correctly displaying the expected or 'good' behaviour patterns would increase his image as a fully adult male, while displays of behaviour deemed to be 'bad' were likely to be seen in terms of immaturity, with the inevitable drop in masculine status. Sometimes, acts of incorrect behaviour could be excused, either because the motivation behind them displayed 'good' masculine reasoning, or on account of youth if the individual was under or close to the age of majority. In the latter case, while the behaviour might delay the development of a masculine reputation, it would do so with minimal damage to the young man's final standing as a royal adult male.

We are fortunate that the activities during their father's lifetime of the unruly sons of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, Henry the Young King,² Richard (later King Richard I), Geoffrey of Brittany and John (later King John), are well documented. Unsurprisingly, many contemporary chronicles detail incidents of behaviours on their part that fell outside the accepted norms for men of their status. Perhaps the most notable examples of their poor behaviour are those of their two failed rebellions in 1173 and 1183. Only three of the four sons were involved in these rebellions. In the first, John, at just seven years old, was too young to join his brothers and, having been established as his father's favourite following the first rebellion, in the second he alone among the four brothers remained loyal to their father. However, as we shall see, this does not mean that John was by any means the best-behaved of the princes.

Whilst contemporary norms of the behaviour appropriate to adult manliness are, arguably, the root cause of both rebellions, youth was certainly an important factor in the dispensing of fatherly forgiveness on the first occasion, as shall be seen. In 1173 the three older brothers rebelled against Henry in order to force him to provide them with the lands and power that were

¹ This article was first presented as a paper at the Colloquium on *Bad Behaviour in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* organised by the Centre of Medieval and Early Modern Studies at the University of Kent at Canterbury, 3rd December 2009.

² Henry, the second born and eldest surviving of the five sons of King Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine, was crowned in his father's lifetime in an attempt to guarantee a smooth transition of power. Because of this, he was known in his own lifetime variously as 'Henry III', 'the king the son' or most commonly 'Henry the Young King' to distinguish him from his father. Because he predeceased his father, he is never included in the sequence of English monarchs.

linked to the titles their father had already bestowed upon them. Without the land, they could not fulfil the major adult responsibility of providing for their households. When the rebellion was crushed, Henry was quick to forgive the sixteen-year-old Geoffrey and Richard, who was just one year older. William of Newburgh records that ‘very little question was raised about them, since their youth was their excuse’.³ The Young King, however, at the age of nineteen, must have already been deemed a man: he was required to give his father a pledge of good conduct and swear fealty to him as a subservient lord before he was formally forgiven. It would seem that this first rebellion did minimal damage to the reputations of the princes; all were swiftly brought back into their father’s favour, and youth served as a means by which this could happen without damaging Henry’s own reputation.

The second rebellion in 1183 serves as a backdrop to some individual incidents of bad behaviour by two of the three oldest sons. In January of that year, the Young King and Geoffrey had united with the rebellious barons of Aquitaine who were at war with Richard and had taken and occupied the castle at Limoges. Initially welcomed as liberators, the brothers were soon besieged, first by Richard and shortly afterwards by their father as well. The Young King and Geoffrey repeatedly offered to discuss peace with Henry but each time they did so dishonestly.⁴ Henry seems, however, to have been determined to believe his sons, as he attempted to deal honestly with them, only to be disappointed each time. The final straw appears to have come in March, when local feeling at last turned against them because they had committed an act that was, to many, unforgivable. In order to pay the mercenaries they needed to hold Richard and their father back, they robbed both the townsfolk who had welcomed them and, worse still, the shrine of St. Martial.⁵

Roger of Howden relates the incident in detail while explaining the level of dishonesty of which these devious young men were capable. He tells us that:

[Geoffrey] being again desirous to hold a conference with his father, came in perfect security to his father, and, deceitfully treating about making peace, requested of his father leave to enter the castle in order that he might prevail upon the king his brother, and the other enemies of our lord the king, to comply with the wishes of the king.⁶

We are told that Geoffrey, having entered the castle, then:

³ William of Newburgh, *History*, II, *The Church Historians of England*, vol. IV, Part II, trans. by Joseph Stevenson (London: Seeley’s, 1856), ed. by Scott McLetchie (1998), <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/williamnewburgh-becket1.html>> [Accessed 20 June 2009] (p. 43).

⁴ *Chronica magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. by William Stubbs, 4 vols, Rolls Series: Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores (London: 1868–71), p. 277.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

spoiled the shrine of Saint Martial, and carried off the other vessels of that monastery, both gold and silver, and then, returning with the booty, requested his father to prolong the truce till the next day.⁷

The truce was granted but, we are informed, on the same day Geoffrey, rather than honour it:

renounced the truce with his father as being at an end, and out of the proceeds of the sacrilege and robbery, of [...] Saint Martial, paid their wages to his Brabanters. The amount of this theft was, according to the estimate made by worthy men, fifty-two marks of gold and twenty-seven marks of silver.⁸

While Howden implicates only Geoffrey as the plunderer of the shrine, the fact that the Young King was present in the town and, given the level of deviousness in calls for peace that had previously occurred at the Young King's instigation, it is possible, but not likely, that Geoffrey was acting alone in this robbery. Perhaps it was because this was not the first time that Geoffrey had stolen from religious sites in order to pay his troops that Howden felt able to place the blame solely on Geoffrey's shoulders. Earlier in the same work, Howden makes a point of Geoffrey's light-fingeredness, informing us that he had repeatedly committed similar acts. For example, we are told that Geoffrey 'ravaged his father's territories', and that, as well as 'burning towns and villages to the ground [and] emptying the fields and sheepfolds', he also was in the habit of 'carrying off the ornaments of the churches'.⁹

The motivation behind the robbery of St Martial was a simple one: by rebelling against their father, the Young King and Geoffrey had effectively cut themselves off from their usual supply of money, and mercenaries need to be paid in a timely fashion. The immediate consequences for the two badly behaved princes appear to be have been minimal; as we shall see, they continued their rebellion even after Limoges fell to Henry in May of the same year and the full consequences of their actions would come only after the rebellion was over. However, there was an attempt to quash the revolt on a wider level: the archbishop of Canterbury along with several bishops and (according to Howden) 'all the abbots and clergy of Normandy pronounced a sentence of excommunication against all who should prevent peace being made between the king and his sons'.¹⁰ Interestingly, we are informed that the Young King was the sole exception to this sentence and although, frustratingly, we are not told why this was the case, one possibility is that they simply did not feel able to place such a sentence on a crowned king.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

The relief of Limoges neither quashed the rebellion nor reduced the Young King's bad behaviour. Increasingly desperate for money, the Young King repeated Geoffrey's actions in other locations. After he left Limoges in order to raid Angoulême, the frustrated and angry people of Limoges refused to allow the Young King to re-enter the town upon his return. Still desperately short of money, he was forced to embark on a somewhat disorganised journey around Aquitaine, where he despoiled the monastery of Grandmont before travelling to St. Mary de Rocamadour, where he proceeded to strip the tomb of St. Amadour and steal the treasures of the church. This time, however, the while Young King may have escaped being punishment by his father, he would not avoid retribution from a divine authority. Howden, with his monk's prejudices, reports that the Young King 'in consequence of [...] rancour of mind' was struck down with a severe illness (which we now know is most likely to have been dysentery).¹¹ The Young King, aware that his illness was serious, sent a letter to his father begging his forgiveness, but Henry, finally made wary by the Young King's past perfidy, sent only a token to his eldest son and so the Young King died shortly thereafter at the town of Martel, still awaiting the forgiveness he sought. While the Young King did not live long enough to gain his father's forgiveness, Geoffrey was certainly more fortunate, although this took some time: he was clearly back in favour with his father by December 1184, when Henry sent him to Normandy. This was not a task one would expect to be given to either to such a troublesome son or to a man who was perceived as having failed to live up to society's expectations of him, given his sex and position. We have to assume, therefore, that any harm to his standing that Geoffrey had suffered had been repaired, at least in the eyes of his father, by the time he sailed for Normandy.

The actions of both the Young King and Geoffrey were ambivalent in the context of their burgeoning masculine reputations. On the one hand, their acts of theft were carried out in order to fulfil a role that was a significant responsibility for an adult male: they had to pay their men.¹² Failure to do this would lower both their ability to attract loyal troops at a later date and their standing as men who could provide for their own and their men's needs. On the other, stealing was behaviour that was in no way appropriate for a man of good standing and, in these cases, the behaviour was doubly inappropriate because the thefts were being perpetrated against the Church. As a crowned monarch and a ruling duke respectively, the Young King and Geoffrey

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Vern L. Bullough, 'On Being a Man in the Middle Ages', in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Clare A. Lees (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 31–46.

were both expected to protect the Church: they had sworn oaths to do so and the breaking of any oath could and would expose an individual to a loss of status.¹³

In addition to this, both brothers had, during the conflict, committed the extremely dishonourable acts of lying, breaking their word and dishonouring their father. If a man had no honour, he was no man. The description of the brothers by contemporary chroniclers bears this out: Ralph of Diceto claimed that the world was a better place without the Young King, and William of Newburgh claims that only people's gullibility made them admire him.¹⁴ For Geoffrey, the observations are even more damning: Gerald of Wales uses feminising language when he states that 'his tongue is smoother than oil; his sweet and persuasive eloquence has enabled him to dissolve the firmest alliances and [...] throw two kingdoms into confusion' and adds that he was 'a hypocrite in everything'.¹⁵ Howden's opinion of Geoffrey is similar but he is far blunter, describing Geoffrey simply as 'that son of perdition [...] that son of iniquity'.¹⁶

The year after Geoffrey had been sent to govern Normandy, Henry II found a role for his youngest and, up to that point, most loyal son. Back in 1177, John, at the age of eleven, had been designated king of Ireland by his father. An application was sent to Pope Alexander for permission to do so and the application also requested a crown for John. The crown was eventually made and delivered to Henry, but John would never fulfil the role of king in what was Henry's most troublesome holding. He would, however, find that Ireland was not only to play a part in developing his adult identity several years later but was also to be the site of one of his more politically significant incidents of inappropriate behaviour. In 1184 when John was eighteen, Henry knighted him and, at the same time, created him Lord of Ireland.

Gerald of Wales reports that, around the time John was created Lord of Ireland, the situation there had become unstable: battles were taking place between the Irish and the Norman Lords and, following the death of one Roger le Pour:

a secret conspiracy against the English was formed throughout Ireland, many castles were destroyed and the whole island was thrown into confusion.¹⁷

¹³ David Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England and France: 900–1300* (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), pp. 71–79.

¹⁴ *Radulfi de Diceto decani Landoniensis opera historica: The historical works of master Ralph de Diceto, dean of London*, ed. by William Stubbs, 2 vols, Rolls Series: Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, 68 (London: Longman & Co, 1876).

¹⁵ Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topography of Ireland*, trans. by Thomas Forester, rev. and ed. by Thomas Wright (Cambridge, Ontario: In Parentheses Publications, 2000), p. 90.

¹⁶ *Chronica magistri Rogeri de Houedene*.

¹⁷ Giraldus Cambrensis, *Conquest of Ireland* trans. by Thomas Forester, rev. and ed. by Thomas Wright (Cambridge, Ontario: In Parentheses Publications, 2001), p. 78.

It was into this turmoil that John was sent across the Irish Sea to stamp his authority on the Irish chiefs as Lord of Ireland just one year after his entry into knighthood. Gerald of Wales travelled with John and his entourage, which Gerald describes as ‘a retinue and outfit more sumptuous than profitable’, and recorded the events that were to prove John’s downfall in Ireland.¹⁸

The problems started as soon as the nineteen-year-old John made landfall in his new dominion. Gerald tells us that John was met at Waterford by a greeting party made up of ‘a great many of the Irish of the better class in those parts’. These were men whom Gerald describes as ‘having been loyal to the English and disposed to be peaceable’, explaining that they had come ‘to congratulate him as their new lord, and receive him with the kiss of peace’.¹⁹ It is here that things went badly wrong for John, as the behaviour of his companions left a great deal to be desired: in fact, it was downright insulting to their hosts. John’s friends and their accompanying Normans not only treated the Irishmen with contempt and derision but according to Gerald, they ‘even rudely pulled them by their beards, which the Irishmen wore full and long, according to the custom of their country’.²⁰ We are not told explicitly if John participated in the wayward behaviour of his friends but nor are we reassured that he remained aloof from it, meaning that at the least we can assume that he did nothing to discourage it, and we *can* be certain that it was John who reaped the immediate consequences of such uncouth actions.

Again, it is Gerald who informs us of the action taken by the Irish chiefs in the greeting party. We are told that no sooner had they made their escape than they ‘withdrew from the neighbourhood with all their households’ and travelled immediately to the King of Limerick, the Prince of Cork, and the King of Connaught, where they are reported as giving ‘full particulars of all they had observed during their visit to the king’s son’.²¹ Their description of John was understandably unfavourable and it also reflected upon his adult status, as according to Gerald, ‘they said that they found him to be a mere boy, surrounded by others almost as young as he; and that the young prince abandoned himself to juvenile pursuits’.²² Further to this, ‘they declared, that what they saw promised no mature or stable counsels [and] no security for the peace of Ireland’.²³

John’s motives for allowing and possibly partaking in such obviously bad behaviour are not recorded. It might well be that on this occasion youth was the cause, if not the excuse for

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

it; or perhaps it was simply the natural arrogance of his party, which consisted mainly of young men like himself, from privileged backgrounds and with no experience of facing the consequences of their actions. Given the outcome, it would seem that the personal consequence of John's behaviour in Ireland was simply that he was not considered mature enough, indeed not man enough, to be lord of these proud men. This was something that Gerald hoped John would grow out of in time, pointing out that:

it is no disgrace to have enjoyed the pleasures of youth, but the shame lies in not bringing them to an end. Juvenile levity is excusable if the mature age be commendable; and that stage of life is blameless, if age sets bounds to indulgence'.²⁴

While John may have been later than usual in doing so, he did eventually manage to achieve the transition from being viewed as a youth to being viewed as an adult man.

The political consequence was far more serious. Upon hearing about John and his entourage's insulting behaviour, the Princes of Limerick, Connaught and Cork were immediately deterred from making their planned submission to John as their overlord, and we are told that they then 'resolved unanimously to resist the English'.²⁵ Moreover, they were driven to cease long-held and by now traditional hostilities with each other and become allies for that cause. The poor conduct in Ireland of John and his friends had succeeded only in creating a stronger enemy for Henry II. Unsurprisingly, John was not permitted to enter Ireland again during his father's lifetime.

It seems, then, that youth was a viable excuse for bad behaviour among twelfth-century princes; it also seems, however, that 'youth' was a relative term in this context. The Young King was around nineteen years of age when his younger brothers were excused by youth for their part in the first rebellion but he was not: instead he was obliged to give his father a pledge of good conduct and swear fealty to him as a subservient lord before he was formally forgiven. This is in sharp contrast to the treatment of John at the same age: he was forgiven, with youth as the excuse for his abysmal and politically damaging performance of bad behaviour in Ireland. This could be because, as the youngest, John was permitted a longer period of youth but as the eldest, the Young King was expected to set an example to his siblings, a pattern that is frequently the case in larger families even today.²⁶ Or it could be that the Young King, who deliberately led his younger brothers into open rebellion against their father, was deemed to be

²⁴ Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topography of Ireland*, p. 91.

²⁵ Giraldus Cambrensis, *Conquest of Ireland*, p. 78.

²⁶ For a comprehensive study of siblings and the effects of birth order in large families within today's society, see: Judy Dunn, *Sisters and Brothers: The Developing Child* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985) pp. 69–88.

responsible for the actions of all, whereas John's behaviour was a case less of instigating the behaviour but more of failing to control his companions. One final explanation for the difference in the treatment, on the one hand, of the three oldest sons, and, on the other, of John could simply be favouritism on the part of Henry II, who was well known for preferring his youngest son over all of his others.

Finally, it appears that bad behaviour could actually stem from duty rather than waywardness. The Young King and Geoffrey, while attempting to maintain the loyalty and service of their mercenaries, were also trying to fulfil an adult obligation, that of paying their troops, when they displayed what was not simply bad, but both illegal and sacrilegious behaviour. This, however, had huge potential for backfiring: the attempt to enhance one's adult standing could in fact have the opposite effect and instead imply childishness. Therefore, young men could find themselves in a situation where they were facing a decision between behaving badly but fulfilling an adult role, or behaving correctly but failing to meet age-appropriate responsibilities. Under such circumstances, it comes as no surprise that on these occasions Henry II's rebellious sons could do no right.²⁷

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²⁷ I would like to thank Dr. Katherine J. Lewis for her help with early drafts of this article.

Between Menace and Utility: Handguns in Early Sixteenth-Century Bohemia¹

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The spread and use of firearms was a common problem in early modern Europe,² and the Kingdom of Bohemia was no exception.³ In 1500 the Bohemian Diet promulgated a Land Ordinance (or code) containing an Article that forbade hunting with a handgun (*ručnice*). This article was based upon a resolution of the Diet held at Posonium (present-day Bratislava, Slovakia) in 1499.⁴ The Diet would also rule against handguns in 1510.⁵ Yet another Diet, in 1514, looked into the problem of handguns when it resolved that in towns no one was to carry weapons; members of the higher and lower nobility would no longer carry a *končír* (foil), *kůl* (stake), *sekyra* (axe) or *halapartna* (halberd), while townsfolk were obliged to leave their handguns at home and not to fire them.⁶ It seems that none of these measures had the desired effect, and in 1524 a new ordinance was promulgated which stretches to twenty-two Articles in the new modern edition.⁷ It was produced at the Lent Diet of 22nd February 1523 by forty-two people: fourteen from each of the Three Estates, that is, the Lords (upper nobility), Knights (lower nobility) and Burghers.⁸ It was, therefore, the most comprehensive effort yet to control

¹ This article was first presented as a paper at the *Bad Behaviour Colloquium* (Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies at the University of Kent at Canterbury, December 2009).

² Julius R. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 50–1 (hereafter Ruff, *Violence*).

³ Firearms had been produced in Bohemia from the second half of the fourteenth century. See František Hoffmann, *České město ve středověku* (Prague: Panorama, 1992), p. 150 (hereafter Hoffmann, *České město ve středověku*).

⁴ ‘Vladislavské zřízení zemské’ in *Vladislavské zřízení zemské a navazující prameny*, ed. by Petr Kreuz and Ivan Martinovský (Prague: Scriptorium, 2007), pp. 107–266 (Art. 554, p. 258) (hereafter VZZ).

For the 1499 Diet see ‘Zuostanie Prešpurské, w kwaternu trhowém léta tisícého CCCCXCIX, w pátek o suchých dnech adventních’ in *Archiv český*, V, ed. by František Palacký (Prague: Fridrich Tempský, 1862), p. 502.

The Bohemian Diet took place at Posonium despite the fact the city was in Hungary. See Jan Pelant, ‘České zemské sněmy v letech 1471–1500’, *Sborník archivních prací*, 31, 2, (1981), p. 355.

⁵ Karel Malý, *Trestní právo v Čechách v 15.–16. století* (Prague: Univerzita Karlova, 1979) (hereafter Malý, *Trestní právo*), p. 109.

⁶ Josef Macek, *Jagellonský věk v českých zemích (1471–1526)*, 4 vols (Prague: Academia, 1992–1998), III, p. 85.

⁷ ‘Zřízení o ručnicích’ in *Vladislavské zřízení zemské a navazující prameny*, ed. by Petr Kreuz and Ivan Martinovský (Prague: Scriptorium, 2007), (hereafter, ZR).

Ručnice clearly comes from the Czech for hand (*ruka*) and was the generic term for any hand-held gun. On the generality of the term, see very briefly Leonid Křížek, *Zbraně & zbroj: stručný průvodce sbírkami* (Libice nad Cidlinou: Vega-L, 1994) (hereafter Křížek, *Zbraně & zbroj*), p. 30. I am grateful to David Short (Dept. of East European Language and Culture, SSEES, UCL) for bringing this publication to my attention and lending me his copy.

⁸ ZR, Art. 1, p. 287, n. 1. With one exception, a list of the representatives is given in František Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého w Čechách i w Morawě*, 5 vols (Prague: Fridrich Tempský, 1867), v, p. 435. The name of the

the use of handguns in Bohemia. This article will analyse how handguns, their use and their users were perceived in Bohemia, and position the Bohemian response in the context of European anti-gun provisions in the sixteenth century.

1. The scope of gun crime

The 1524 Ordinance covers a small group of crimes in which handguns feature. However, in the earlier 1500 Code the transgression had only concerned the carrying of a handgun when going hunting.⁹ This ban seemed to curtail the activity of both the nobility and the peasantry, for it stated that nobody was permitted *chodit* (to walk) or *jezdit* (to ride) with handguns to a hunt. The roots of this Article show that it was initially concerned neither with hunting nor, indeed, only with handguns. When it was drafted at the 1499 Posonium Diet, the Article also covered the carrying of crossbows whilst walking and riding. Furthermore, it fails expressly to mention *myslivost* (hunting). The 1499 document is also more specific about those who are to be bound by the Article, stating that members of the Three Estates should not carry these weapons.¹⁰ Thus the panic, if there had been one, did not concern the use of the handgun alone. The attitude towards the handgun was comparable to that towards the crossbow: obviously negative, but not at all unique.

The situation appears to have been worse for the peasantry: indeed, as pointed out by Petr Kreuz and Ivan Martinovský, the 1500 Code does not include those Articles from the 1499 Diet that permitted peasants to have their hunting rights confirmed by the king.¹¹ Such efforts to curtail the hunting activity of peasants were commonplace in Europe during this period; as Erasmus puts it: ‘Common folk can cut up an ox or a sheep of course, but only a gentleman has the right to carve wild game’.¹² This was certainly true of Hungary, for instance, where the 1504 *decretum* states that,

from now on in the future no peasant or countryman of this kingdom shall dare in any way or art to hunt deer, does, pheasants or hazel grouse, but all of them must sweat and work in the cultivation of arable lands, meadows and vineyards and other handicrafts, whence both they themselves and their lords can gain income and profit [...].¹³

representative from the town of Hradec Králové must remain a mystery, as Palacký merely puts: ‘[...] z Hradce Králové’.

⁹ See VZZ in note 4 above.

¹⁰ Jiří Veselý, *Příspěvky ke kritice právních pramenů šestnáctého století. II. Zůstání prešpurské* (Prague: Bursík a Kohout, 1935), p. 14.

¹¹ Stated by Kreuz and Martinovský at VZZ, Art 555, p. 259, n. 3.

¹² Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, trans. by Betty Radice (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 60.

¹³ 1504:18. This English translation is from a draft of the new, as yet unpublished, parallel Latin-English edition, circulated by Professor Martyn Rady (Dept. of History, SSEES, UCL) at ‘The Workshop on the Laws of Hungary, 1490-1526’ held at SSEES-UCL, September 2008. See also the Latin version in *Magyar Törvénytár/Corpus Juris Hungarici: 1000–1526*, ed. by Márkus Dezső (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1899) (hereafter *MTvT/CJH*), p. 682.

The Hungarian view corresponds to that in England, where it was thought ‘that hunting was not a fit activity for those who should be following the plough or working at a trade, because it encouraged idleness’.¹⁴

A similar set of hunting arrangements was in force in German territories and can be seen as a cause of the Peasants’ War of 1525. The fourth of the *Twelve Articles of the Upper Swabian Peasants* requested that ‘custom’ be overturned to allow a ‘commoner’ to hunt, largely so that he might protect his crops and thus his income.¹⁵ Similarly, peasants in Speyer complained, as early as 1502, that hunting ‘had become a princely prerogative’ that should ‘be returned to the public so that a peasant might hunt [...] whenever and wherever he had a mind to, without being hindered or oppressed by anyone’.¹⁶

Although the Hungarian example does not specifically target hunting with firearms, it is clear that the hunting ban would certainly cover any such activity. This, moreover, is motivated not by any fear of a particular weapon but by the financial concerns of the Hungarian nobility.¹⁷ Similarly, German territorial rulers were reacting against hunting not the use of firearms. Whilst neither the German or Hungarian examples refer to the means by which the peasants of these countries hunted, there is an indication of this in the case of the peasants from Stühlingen and Lupfen: on the grounds that wild game was wrecking their crops, these peasants wanted their ‘common law’ right to hunt wild game upheld, so that they ‘be henceforth permitted to hunt, shoot, and trap all game found on our fields and properties and use it to fill our requirements’.¹⁸

¹⁴ Roger B. Manning, *Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England, 1509-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 286.

¹⁵ See ‘Appendix 1: The Twelve Articles’ in Peter Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525: The German Peasants’ War from a New Perspective*, ed. and trans. by Thomas A. Brady Jr. and H.C. Erik Midelfort (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 198. Also see Blickle’s comments at pp. 37–41. The Twelve Articles were accepted by a peasants’ parliament held at Memmingen in March 1525. Peter Blickle, ‘The Popular Reformation’ in *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600* ed. by Thomas A. Brady Jr., Heiko A. Oberman and James D. Tracy, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1995), II, p. 173.

¹⁶ ‘The Articles of the Bundschuh in the Bishopric of Speyer (1502)’ in *Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation*, ed. and trans. by Gerald Strauss (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1971), pp. 146–47.

¹⁷ It would not be until after the peasant uprising of 1514 that Hungarian law would specifically address firearms. See 1514:60, *MTvT/CJH*, p. 732. On the uprising see Norman Housley, ‘Crusading and Social Revolt: The Hungarian Peasant Rising of 1514’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 49, 1, (1998), pp. 1–29. As well as being disarmed, peasants were condemned to *perpetua rusticitas*; 1514:14, *MTvT/CJH*, p. 712 and confirmed later in the *Tripartitum* (printed in Vienna in 1517): see *Tripartitum opus iuris consuetudinarii regni Hungariae per Stephanum de Werbewcz editum: The Customary Law of the Renowned Kingdom of Hungary in Three Parts edited by Stephen Werbőczy*, ed. and trans. by János M. Bak, Péter Banyó and Martyn Rady (Idyllwild California: Charles Schlacks, Jr./Budapest: Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, 2005), III:25 [2]. See also Vera Zimányi, *Economy and Society in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Hungary (1526–1650)* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987), pp. 37–39.

¹⁸ ‘Articles of the Peasants of Stühlingen and Lupfen (1525)’ in *Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation*, ed. and trans. by Gerald Strauss (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1971), pp. 163–64.

This final example is perhaps the most intriguing case, for it mentions shooting. However, quite what they were shooting with, be it gun, crossbow or bow, is unclear.

The Bohemian situation as presented in the 1500 Code is arguably not identical to that in either Hungary or Germany, but it is clear that the Bohemian nobility was anxious to preserve game, just as had been happening in the neighbouring countries. There is no suggestion here of concerns regarding social violence involving firearms, only a desire to keep game and the hunting of it the preserve of the nobility.

Since the publication of the 1500 Code, the definition of handgun crime had seemingly been extended to the carrying of handguns in general. This is suggested by the resolution to forbid the public bearing of these weapons passed by the 1510 Diet,¹⁹ although it is also possible that this law was referring back to the Diet of 1499. Either way, the motivating factor seems to be neither preserving game populations nor preventing peasants from shooting and thereby forcing peasants to rely on growing their food and increasing noble incomes. In fact, hunting is not mentioned in the 1524 Ordinance at all, perhaps because the 1500 Code was in force and the 1524 Ordinance was merely amending the existing legislation. In any case, the ban on carrying handguns in the 1524 Ordinance is almost total, in that it applies as much to members of the Estates as to *obecní lidí* (the common people), just as it had in the 1500 Code. Thus, a *pán* (lord) or *rytíř* (knight) was trusted no more or less to *carry* a handgun in public than a *služebník* (servant), *poddaní* (subject) or *přístavný člověk*.²⁰

The 1524 Ordinance, following the Diet of 1510, makes no distinction between *dluhý* (long) or *krátký* (short) firearms: both were banned. It is not clear what distinguished a ‘long’ from a ‘short’ firearm. It has been suggested that ‘virtually every major western European state [...] attempted to control concealable guns less than about two feet (65cm) in length’.²¹ This is certainly true of England, where *An Acte concerninge Crosbowes and Handguns* (parliamentary session 1541–1542) stated that handguns had to be a yard in length, while a hagbutt (hackbut, arquebus, harquebus) or demyhake had to be three quarters of a yard in length (about 69cm).²²

¹⁹ Malý, *Trestní právo*, p. 109.

²⁰ ZR, Art. 1, p. 287; Art. 13, p. 290. All quotations from primary sources retain the original orthography. All translations from Czech are my own. I am grateful for David Short’s assistance in this respect. *Přístavný člověk* is a troublesome term. While *člověk* means ‘man’, one Old Czech dictionary defines *přístavný* thus: ‘(concerning subservient [*služebný*] people) hired (for a fixed period), a servant [*sloužící*] in (temporally limited) hire.’ See *Elektronický slovník staré češtiny*, through <<http://vokabular.ujc.cas.cz/>> [last accessed 7 January 2010].

²¹ Ruff, *Violence*, p. 50.

²² 33 Hen. VIII, c. 6, *Statutes of the Realm*, 12 vols (London: Record Commission, 1810–1828), III, p. 832 (hereafter *SR*).

A yard is about 91 cm. The term *pistole* did not enter Czech until the late sixteenth century, via German. However, the German term has its origins in the Czech word for flute or fife (*píšťala*) which was used as a name for a Hussite weapon well known for its high-pitched noise when fired. An illustration of a *píšťala* can be found in Křížek,

Nevertheless, although we do not know exactly what the 1524 Ordinance means when it says ‘short’ and ‘long’, we can conclude that all firearms were considered too dangerous to be carried in public, regardless of their length.

The new legislation, in addition to prohibiting the general bearing of handguns of all types, proscribes certain activities using firearms. These may be seen as obvious given the weapon involved. The abbreviated form of Article 19 states that ‘[k]do vystřelí z ručnice k komu, má hrdlo ztratiti [he who shoots at someone from a gun shall lose his life]’.²³ Furthermore, as Karel Malý found in court records dating from the late 1550s, it also appears to have been illegal to fire a handgun even if it could not be proved that the defendant had intended to kill or injure anyone. As he puts it: ‘Vystřelení z ručnice i bez prokázaného úmyslu někoho zabit nebo zranit bylo trestné [...] [Shooting from a gun even without proven intent to kill or injure someone was criminal]’.²⁴ Those who killed someone through the use of a firearm were seen, unsurprisingly, as murderers, a fact expressed, indeed, by the short form of Article 20, which states that ‘[z]abili kto koho z ručnice, morděř jest [if someone kills someone from a handgun, he is a murderer]’.²⁵ It is, perhaps, the crime of murder that is the key to understanding why the 1524 Ordinance concerning handguns was introduced. The Preface to the Ordinance recites, ‘neb se jimi mnoho nestatečných a nerozšafných mordův [...] přihází [for by them many cowardly and careless murders [...] happen]’ and the gun appears to be characterised in a particular way because of this. It is an overwhelmingly negative view of the handgun as ‘zbraň velmi ukrutná a tak nekřesťanská i nemušská, více ke zlému nežli k dobrému [a weapon very cruel and thus unchristian and unmanly, more for evil than for good]’.²⁶ It might be assumed that those who used them in murdering someone were similarly cruel, unchristian, unmanly and evil. Quite why the handgun is stigmatised in this way is unclear. What is clear, however, is that Bohemian law was not unique in expressing such attitudes where crimes involving firearms were concerned. Indeed, a similar phenomenon occurred in England. In the English statute, in ‘the customary Tudor era preamble reciting the evil it proposes to cure’,²⁷ the gun crimes in

Zbraně & zbroj, p. 26. On the term, see David Short, ‘The Broader Czech (and Slovak) Contribution to the English Lexicon’, *Central Europe*, 1, 1, (2003), p. 20; Jiří Rejzek, *Český etymologický slovník* (Prague: Leda, 1991). Basing his information on an early edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Short states that ‘pistol’ first appears in English in 1570. This date has since been revised to (an uncertain) 1560. See <www.oed.com> [last accessed 7 January 2010].

²³ ZR, Art. 19, p. 291

²⁴ Malý, *Trestní právo*, p. 109. Malý is commenting on the case of Jiřík Táborský which is referred to later in this article.

²⁵ ZR, Art. 20, p. 291.

²⁶ ZR, Předmluva, p. 287.

²⁷ John H. Langbein, *Prosecuting Crime in the Renaissance: England, Germany, France* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 6.

question, particularly murders, robberies and riots, were seen to be ‘detestable and shameful’. Moreover, those involved were of ‘malicious and evil myndes’.²⁸ The equivalent English statute is more robust in its descriptions of crimes involving the use of guns and the character of the criminals it sought to detain and punish but, unlike the Bohemian Ordinance, does not comment on the gun itself.

One can only speculate as to why these views were held in Bohemia. Perhaps a short, concealed firearm could be described as ‘unmanly’ because it was considered a cowardly and underhand way in which to attack someone; another reason might be the ability of the assailant to attack his victim without a physical confrontation. Further, the nature of wounds and injuries caused by a firearm might contribute to the perception of it as a ‘weapon very cruel’. Although muscle-powered weapons can certainly cut flesh and break bones, the wounds and breaks associated with firearms are of a very different order. Instead of the relatively clean cuts and bones broken in just one place resulting from wounds inflicted by the former, the lack of integrity of the bullet itself results in ‘horrible’ wounds, which can include shattered bone. In the sixteenth century, such fractures were generally treated by amputation, putting the victim at further risk, particularly from infection. Infection from gun-shot wounds was such a problem that it was widely believed that they were in some way poisoned, possibly by the powder. This idea was first seen in print in Hieronymous Brunschwig’s 1497 tract *Cirurgia, ein handbuch der Wundartznei* and was repeated by Giovanni da Vigo but it would be discarded by the end of the sixteenth century.²⁹ However, it is hardly surprising that infection was a major problem associated with gun-shot wounds, given that any attempts to remove bullets from a body were undertaken by grubby hands using unsterilised equipment

2. Procedures and punishment

In general, it appears that the dealing with those in breach of the firearms regulations depended upon their first being denounced. Initially, however, the 1524 Ordinance suggests that anyone seeing the criminal in action was supposed to disarm him. If no one was able to disarm the

²⁸ 33 Hen. VIII, c. 6; SR, III, p. 832.

²⁹ The remedy to cure such wounds famously suggested by da Vigo — hot oil mixed with treacle — would be rejected later in the sixteenth century by Ambroise Paré in favour of his own accidentally discovered concoction of turpentine, oil of roses and egg-yolk on account of its greater efficacy and comfort for the patient. Richard A. Gabriel and Karen S. Metz, *A History of Military Medicine*, 2 vols (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1992), II, pp. 53–56; Richard D. Forrest, ‘Development of wound therapy from the Dark Ages to the present’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 75, (1982), p. 269; Ambroise Paré, *La Méthode de Traicter les playes Faictes par Harquebutes et Aultres Bastons de Feu* (1545), but we have used the English translation, Ambrose Parie, *The Method of Curing Wounds made by Gun-shot*, trans. by Walter Hamond (London: Isaac Jaggard, 1617), pp. 3–4.

miscreant or willing to challenge a man with a deadly weapon, he was to make a *pokřik* (a cry).³⁰ The purpose of this was to alert others in the area to the fact that a criminal was at large and that help was needed. Indeed, anyone who failed to react to the *pokřik* was liable to a fine.³¹ In the event that a servant encountered someone carrying a handgun, he was expected to report the fact to his lord.³²

Assuming the offender had been caught, either with or without the aid of a *pokřik*, he had to be dealt with. The accused was summoned to the court of the duke, who was the *nejvyšší hejtman království* (highest governor of the kingdom), in this period Duke Karel z Minsterberka.³³ The ensuing case would then have to go to court within four weeks.³⁴ If the defendant failed to appear, without having first informed the court of his inability to attend, he forfeited the case and was found guilty.³⁵ If, having appeared, he was found not guilty, he could claim any damages incurred because of the process. However, if he was found guilty, the punishment for a member of the Estates who broke the ban on the public carrying of a handgun was a fine that stood at one-hundred *kop grošen*.³⁶ The fine was payable not to the authorities but to the person who had seen and reported the accused. In the event that the accused, being found guilty, was unable to pay such a heavy fine, it was commuted to a six-month gaol sentence.³⁷

As was the case in various other instances of peasant criminality, when peasants broke the ban on the public bearing of handguns they themselves were not necessarily held as responsible.³⁸ A peasant, not being a member of one of the Estates, was primarily the responsibility of the lord whose subject he was, as was also the case for a servant of a lord. If subject or servant (as the case may be) had been acting with his lord's consent, the lord was, therefore, liable for the fine;³⁹ in this case, though, the fine was set at a much lower level than

³⁰ ZR, Art. 17, p. 290. One may see parallels here with the Common Law 'Hue and Cry'.

³¹ ZR, Art. 18, pp. 290–91.

³² ZR, Art. 21, p. 291.

³³ ZR, Art. 3, p. 288; Art. 6, p. 288.

³⁴ ZR, Art. 4, p. 288.

³⁵ ZR, Art. 3, p. 288.

³⁶ *Kop grošen* is, literally, threescore *grošen*, as Spufford explains: 'The groschen both of Bohemia and neighbouring Meissen were frequently reckoned in schocks of 60 groschen.' Peter Spufford, *Handbook of Medieval Exchange*, (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1986), p. 273. The fine was therefore six thousand *grošen*. We should put these amounts into context. In the period 1521–1525 a horse or a calf could be purchased in Bohemia for one hundred *grošen*. See Josef Janáček, *České dějiny: 1526–1547*, 2 vols (Prague: Academia, 1968–1984), I (1968), Appendix 3, p. 257.

³⁷ ZR, Art. 11, p. 289.

³⁸ ZR, Art. 7, pp. 288–89; Malý, *Trestní právo*, p. 110. Peasants in Hungary were treated more severely: they were punished for the crime of carrying a musket by having their right hand cut off. 1514:60 [4], *MTvT/CJH*, p. 732.

³⁹ ZR, Art. 9, p. 289.

that for a member of the Estates: ten *kop grošen*.⁴⁰ However, if the accused had been acting without the consent of his lord, the accused was obliged either to pay the fine or be handed over to the person who had accused him.⁴¹ To make sure that lords co-operated in the prosecution of their servants in matters regarding handguns, they were subject to a heavy penalty of fifty *kop grošen* if they remained entirely inactive, that is if they neither paid any fine for which they were liable nor handed the servant over.⁴² Thus, where the accused had acted with his lord's consent it was clearly cheaper for the lord to co-operate either by paying the initial fine or by handing over the accused, than to be obstinate and run the risk of having to pay the larger amount.

This article has so far only dealt with defendants accused of carrying handguns. As far as those who actually used handguns were concerned, they could expect a different penalty. As has already been observed, Article 20 of the 1524 Ordinance provided that '*Zabí-li kto koho z ručnice, morděř jest* [if someone kills someone from a handgun, he is a murderer]', while Article 19 provided that '*Kdo vystřelí z ručnice k komu, má hrdlo ztratiti* [he who shoots at someone from a handgun shall lose his life]'.⁴³ Such heavy sentences are mirrored elsewhere in Europe. For example, in Venice the Council declared in 1533 that the use of a firearm against another was punishable by death and the confiscation of the guilty party's property.⁴⁴ The seriousness with which incidents involving handguns were viewed is further highlighted by the fact that not even officials escaped prosecution, as is illustrated by the case of one Jiřík Táborský who was prosecuted for firing a handgun in public despite being the *podrychtář* (vice-bailiff) of the New Town of Prague.⁴⁵

3. Handguns: banned or controlled?

We have so far seen that in sixteenth-century Bohemia the handgun had an overwhelmingly negative reputation; it was seen as a cruel, unmanly weapon that could not be considered Christian. Against this, it did have the virtue of being effective, as was evidenced by its use as not only a murder weapon but also, more benignly, a hunting weapon. The heavy punishments and harsh rhetoric of the law suggests that the gun was a genuine problem because of its efficacy, its ability to injure and kill. This was in stark contrast to how firearms were seen by

⁴⁰ ZR, Art. 14, p. 290.

⁴¹ ZR, Art. 8, p. 289. Similar provisions applied if the lord declared the accused to be a foreigner: in this case, the foreigner concerned had to swear to his lord that he would hand himself over to the person who had reported the felony. ZR, Art. 10, p. 289.

⁴² ZR, Art. 15, p. 290.

⁴³ ZR, Art. 19 & Art. 20, p. 291.

⁴⁴ Ruff, *Violence*, p. 51.

⁴⁵ Malý, *Trestní právo*, p. 109 and the transcription of the case notes [SÚA XV F9, fol. 68 (1559)] in n. 158.

some military leaders of the period. Handguns were considered to possess an unacceptably slow rate of fire, while their accuracy was also questionable. Moreover, even if an infantryman managed to hit the enemy, good quality armour was strong enough to lessen the blow, thus reducing the severity of the injury. It is not surprising, therefore, that some commanders were reluctant to rely on handguns. Indeed, Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy preferred to deploy archers instead of gunners in the 1470s, despite his firm belief in the importance of missile weapons.⁴⁶ In late sixteenth-century England, Sir John Smythe similarly saw longbows as more effective than firearms.⁴⁷ However, the military role of firearms had been acknowledged in Bohemia with their use in the Hussite armies of Jan Žižka during the early fifteenth century.⁴⁸ Indeed, as one historian has said: ‘the earliest European conflict in which firearms played a very significant or even decisive role was the [...] war that engulfed Bohemia after 1419’.⁴⁹

While nobles may have wished to restrict the use of the handgun in the sport of hunting to their own class and military leaders dismissed it as too unreliable to be seriously considered as a regular weapon in warfare, society as a whole did recognise it as dangerous. However, this is not to say that people could not own one: certain people were expressly required to do so by Article 22, which provides that ‘*ručnice všelijaké každý pán a rytířský člověk i města mohou míti na zámcích, tvrzech i v městech, v městečkách i ve všech v domích svých pro obranu* [every lord and knight also the burghers may have all manner of handguns in castles, strongholds and in towns, small towns and in all houses for their defence]’.⁵⁰ In the event that a *pokřik* was raised, people armed with handguns were expected to pursue the malefactor, though they needed proof of permission by way of a sealed letter from either their lord or, in towns, from an official. Moreover, once the offender had been apprehended, the weapons had to be placed back into

⁴⁶ Gervase Phillips, ‘“Of Nimble Service”: Technology, Equestrianism and the Cavalry Arm of Early Modern European Armies’, *War and Society*, 20, (2002), pp. 5–6; Geoffrey Parker, ‘The Gunpowder Revolution 1300-1500’ in *The Cambridge History of Warfare*, ed. by Geoffrey Parker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 105.

⁴⁷ For the sake of balance, it should be noted that the opposite was argued by Captain Humfrey Barwick. See Kenneth Chase, *Firearms: A Global History to 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 73-4.

⁴⁸ See note 22 above on the *píšťala*.

⁴⁹ Bert S. Hall, *Weapons and Warfare in Renaissance Europe: Gunpowder, Technology and Tactics* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 107, and in general pp. 107–14. Also of interest is *The Technological Illustrations of the So-Called “Anonymous of the Hussite Wars”*, ed. and trans. by Bert S. Hall (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1979).

⁵⁰ ZR, Art. 22, p. 291. After the Hussite wars, the Moravian town of Znojmo had upwards of fifty firearms in its store. See Hoffmann, *České město ve středověku*, p. 162. Town houses certainly had arms stores. The *Old Czech Annals* state that Jan of Roudnice was arrested for breaching the peace after breaking into the house of a widow and stealing some weapons during a brawl between Czechs and Hungarians, possibly over women, when King Vladislav was on a rare visit to Prague from Hungary in 1509. See Joel Daniel Seltzer, ‘Framing Faith, Forging a Nation: Czech Vernacular Historiography and the Bohemian Reformation, 1430–1530’ (unpublished PhD thesis, Yale University, 2005), pp. 3–5.

storage immediately. The handgun was seen as a tool ‘*pro obranu* [for defence]’, to be used ‘*honiti nepřátel zemských i [...] zhůbcí* [to chase enemies of the land and [...] malefactors]’.⁵¹

4. Conclusions

From being regarded by nobles as a potential threat to their enjoyment of hunting, the handgun came to be seen in Bohemia as a social menace. In the first place, the use and abuse of handguns positioned them as a danger together with the crossbow, though this view would evidently alter after the 1500 Code was published. Moreover, at this stage it was seen as a problem in only one area, that of hunting. Yet, in the years after 1500, the law on handguns continued to be amended and the vocabulary used to describe the weapon itself became explicitly negative: not just the occasional deer but also people were being killed by handguns. This seems to have produced two reactions. First, the Bohemian law-makers, in line with those of other European states, introduced a series of enactments which sought to restrict the use of handguns and in which the heavy sanctions imposed reflect the perceived gravity of the crime. Secondly, they saw that a ‘cruel’ and ‘evil’ weapon could be used as a tool in the fight against crime in the kingdom: a role in which it was more useful, one suspects, than it was given credit for being in the battlefield by some military experts, though perhaps not Jan Žižka. Thus the law allowed handguns to be kept in the event that a criminal needed to be pursued and apprehended, though only members of the Three Estates were trusted to keep them. Indeed, the notion of the general populace keeping such dangerous and unholy weapons must have been understandably unattractive to the ruling elite.

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⁵¹ ZR, Art. 22, p. 291.

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The Bad Behaviour of Friars and Women in the Medieval Catalan *fabliaux* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*¹

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The anti-fraternal tradition in medieval English literature and in Chaucer's works in particular, has been widely studied by scholars over the last fifty years or so.² Nonetheless, it is a subject that is still worth pursuing from a comparative perspective, considering Chaucer's writings on friars, monks and priests (especially in the 'General Prologue', the 'Miller's Tale', both the 'Wife of Bath's Tale' and its 'Prologue', and the 'Shipman's Tale') in relation to works belonging to other European literatures. This provides a fascinating literary experience which may reveal new Romance analogues of Chaucer or else offer some keys for reading and interpreting medieval anti-clerical satire.

In various medieval Catalan narrative works we find examples of genuine bad behaviour exhibited by priests and especially by friars from mendicant orders (mainly Franciscans and Dominicans). As protagonists of these funny and smutty stories they perpetrate various financial and sexual deceptions, and appear as malicious mischief-makers. Together with these characters, women appear sometimes as deceived victims, sometimes as lustful liars trying to conceal their adulterous affairs from their husbands.

The *Disputa de l'ase* [The Argument of the Ass] by Anselm Turmeda (which includes anti-fraternal stories influenced by Boccaccio's *Decameron*), the *Llibre de fra Bernat* [Book of Friar Bernard] by Francesc de la Via (which contains stories similar in style to those of the *fabliaux* tradition), and the anonymous *Col·loqui de dames* [Symposium of Women] (which is notably misogynist in tone) are all fifteenth-century texts which contain grotesque scenes. Through studying these we can consider some interesting aspects of humour in medieval literature. However, it is also important to bear in mind the true significance of these literary works: in all these examples of transgressive behaviour, there is no indication that the perpetrators of such extremely bad deeds will suffer any kind of punishment in the future; by negating the consequences of such deeds, these literary texts satirise the norms of moral behaviour.

¹ This article was first presented as a paper at the *Bad Behaviour Colloquium* (Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies at the University of Kent at Canterbury, December 2009).

² The classic works of Arnold Williams (1953), James A. S. McPeck (1951), John Fleming (1966), Jill Mann (1973) and Penn Szittyá (1986) are still useful in this connection. More recently, the studies of Patricia Anne Odber de Baubeta (1992) and Daron Burrows (2005) offer interesting possibilities for comparative studies about anti-clerical satire and the stereotype of the medieval friar. See the bibliography.

This article will examine these works in order to consider how bad behaviour is shown in representative examples of the Romance narrative of the Late Middle Ages. It will also relate some of the themes and characters to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* with the aim of establishing points of contact between the two narrative traditions and revealing new possibilities for comparative research in sexual and comic culture in medieval literature.

1. *'Les malvades obres i fets dels religiosos'* in Turmeda's satire: the confession of Friar Juliot

Anselm Turmeda, the renegade of medieval Catalan literature, was the author of a very pious and widely read work, the *Llibre dels bons amonestaments* [Book of Good Advice].³ However, he also wrote the *Disputa de l'ase* (1418), into which he inserted brief stories which are framed in terms of the most humorously ironic anti-clerical satire. In this *disputatio* the character Turmeda debates with a wise and loquacious ass in the court of animals about the superiority of men over beasts. The ass – Turmeda's literary *alter ego* – refutes all of Turmeda's arguments; when Turmeda defends the superiority of mankind because it organises itself into social classes, reflected in the hierarchy of religious and monastic orders, the ass enjoys contradicting this argument by narrating six tales which tell of the evil deeds of friars, priests, bishops, popes and, especially, mendicant orders such as Franciscans and Dominicans.⁴

The first anti-fraternal tale in the *Disputa de l'ase* is dedicated to the sin of lust, and tells of the wicked ruse of Friar Juliot, a Dominican, to fool a young married woman. Madonna Tecla goes to Juliot to make her confession, following the advice of her unworldly husband (who thinks Friar Juliot is a very virtuous confessor, because of his good reputation in Tarragona, where the story takes place). Madonna Tecla is a very beautiful but not particularly bright woman. Friar Juliot does not want to lose the possibility of taking advantage of this situation, so he devises an unusual mode of confession. The lustful friar asks Tecla how many times she has made love with her husband. The woman obviously does not know and Friar Juliot says to her:⁵

Quelle chrestienne estes-vous, qui ne tenez compte des fois que vostre mary le vous a fait, combien que par droict en ayez à donner le disme au confesseur à qui vous vous confessez?
(Turmeda 1984: 95).

³ Turmeda was born in Mallorca and became a Franciscan friar, before converting to Islam. He subsequently lived in Tunis, where he worked as a customs officer.

⁴ Although the main source of the *Disputa* is an Arabic apologue included in an encyclopedia edited by the association of Arabian philosophers known as the Brothers of Purity, Turmeda's work differs from the apologue in having a satirical tone which is influenced by other European sources.

⁵ Turmeda's work is preserved in a French translation first edited in Lyon in March, 1544. Armand Llinarès is the author of the critical edition of the French version of the *Disputa* from which the quotations in this article are drawn.

[What kind of Christian are you not to have taken account of the times when your husband did it to you, when by law you have to give the tithe to the priest who confesses you?]

This tithe on coitus also appears in Poggio Bracciolini's *Facietiarum Liber* [Book of Witty Sayings] and in *nouvelle* thirty-two of *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (A Hundred Novel Tales). However, in Turmeda's version, the combination of a lustful confessor and a foolish woman results in an obscene episode in which Friar Juliot enjoys Madonna Tecla eighteen times on the floor of the monastery on the basis of his right of tithe. (According to Friar Juliot's impromptu calculations, he is entitled to the tenth part of 180 coituses between the woman and her husband). Friar Juliot will remain unpunished for this example of bad behaviour, in contrast to the stories of the *Facietiarum Liber* and *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. Moreover, Madonna Tecla appears even more stupid and unwittingly sacrilegious when she says:

[...] et je vous prometz en verité que d'icy en avant je y prendray bien garde et conteray combien de foys mon mary le me fera, et les marqueray avec mes patinostres, afin que je ne les oublye, et chacune foys qu'il me le fera, je y feray un noud. (Turmeda 1984: 95).

[...] and I truly promise that I will take good care and carefully count the number of times my husband does it to me, and I will mark them with my rosary so as not to forget, and every time I'll tie a knot.]

The rest of Turmeda's tales are similarly anti-fraternal and cover all the vices which are conventionally assigned to mendicant orders: pride, avarice, gluttony, lechery, envy and even laziness, hypocrisy and simony. However, the funniest and most polished tale is that of Friar Juliot, who reminds us of Friar Alberto, the protagonist of the second novella of the Fourth Day in Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Friar Alberto hears the confession of a foolish married woman named Madonna Lisetta and convinces her he is the angel Gabriel; thereafter she willingly becomes the object of his sexual desires.

2. *Col·loqui de dames*: a fierce anti-clerical satire from unfeminine women

The *Col·loqui de dames* was written circa 1485, in very expressive Catalan poetry.⁶ In the work, an old man relates how a Married Lady, a Widow, and a Devout Woman talk together about sexual subjects in a manner unsuitable for the place and occasion in which they find themselves, which is the cathedral of Valencia on Good Friday.⁷ As in the *Introduzione alla prima giornata* (Introduction to the First Day) of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, these women '*lasciato satre il dire*

⁶ The *Col·loqui de dames* has been preserved in manuscript 151 of the University of Barcelona Library, under the title *Jardinet de orats* (The Little Garden of Fools), a strange and unusual song book. This song book was copied by Narcis Gual, a notary of Barcelona in 1486. Therefore the *Colloqui* (as an integral text of the *Jardinet*) is presumed to have been written at some point in 1485.

⁷ The church as meeting place is not a novelty since during the greater part of the Middle Ages it was one of the few meeting spaces permitted to women (Martínez 2003: 120). Nor is the day on which the women's discussion takes place any surprise: Petrarch fell in love with Laura on a Good Friday, while Ausias March also fell in love at this time in his poem LXVI (March 2000: 218, mentioned by Martínez 2003: 120).

dei paternostri, seco della qualità del tempo molte e varie cose cominciarono a ragionare [stopped saying the Paternoster and began to talk about the weather and a lot of other matters]’.

The main features of this anonymous text include the use of social reality as raw material, burlesque and sexual themes, a high level of obscenity, a fierce anti-fraternal and anti-clerical satire, and a highly provocative and metaphoric use of language (employing set phrases about sexual organs).⁸

While we cannot take the *Col·loqui* as a ‘mirror-text’ because it is not a faithful reflection of the social context in fifteenth-century Valencia, it is a good example of a satirical, or even burlesque, representation of some attitudes and situations relating to the bad behaviour of priests, including friars, as well as to female sexuality as understood from a male perspective in the Middle Ages, all addressed in a humorous manner.

For that reason, we find in this work that characters are reduced to mere stereotypes. The Devout Woman is drawn as an authentic *vetula*,⁹ an old procuress, a lustful witch; the Lady is married to an old and impotent man and has no qualms in talking proudly about her adultery with knights and friars; the Widow is a gossip busybody and deceitful woman who has been made pregnant by priests. Adultery, procurement, abortion, even sexual affairs with clerics are debated in this work from a point of view that is grotesque and satirical, even seemingly untypical of a woman.¹⁰ Therefore we can say, following Pitarch and Gimeno (1982: 18), that this discussion between women takes sexuality as its main topic.

The theme of marriage with an old man without sexual capabilities appears first in the indignant words of the Married Lady:¹¹

Mes trista visch, ab companyia
que no·m contenta!
[...]
Fér me sembla ab home vell
qui no té forsa:
com deu navegar a l’orsa,
lavors sossega,

⁸ It is said that on the day that the scholar Manuel Milà i Fontanals dared to read it, he afterwards went to confess to a priest.

⁹ In fact, the old woman was the really sexually experienced woman in the Middle Ages, because she was both conscious of her own erotic desire and had the necessary knowledge to satisfy it. As Martínez (2003: 121) remarks, the old woman also may be a rebuttal to the Petrarchists. Bailbé (1964: 118) said: ‘*On comprend que la vieille femme, par sa laideur, par ses vices, par le contraste qu’elle forme avec la jeune beauté, si brillamment exaltée chez les Pétrarquistes, ait retenu particulièrement l’attention de la poésie satirique du XVIe et du début du XVIIe siècle*’.

¹⁰ See Pitarch and Gimeno (1982) and Martínez (2003: 116).

¹¹ According to Lluçia Martín’s transcription (2006): http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/02587285480292995209079/p0000001.htm#I_0_. [accessed 2 June 2010] Pitarch and Gimeno’s edition (1982) is still useful in order to appreciate the metaphorical and linguistic value of this text.

[...]
Bé fonch leig peccat e vici
sembrar vellesa
en lo camp de gentilesa
e joventut! (Col·loqui 2006: 154–177)

[I am sad, living in company which does not please me. [...] It pains me to be with an old man, who has lost his power; he ought to be like a ship under full sail not one that lies becalmed. [...] What a wicked thing it is to sow old age in the field where grace and youth flourish.]

After these words, the Married Lady immediately implies her adultery. In the following lines, she comments on the death of a lover of hers who had been equipped with a good *matràs*, a word that literally means a tool comprising either a wooden stick with a metal head or, simply, a wooden mallet used in farming work; this is one of the many uses of violent imagery as a metaphor for the male sexual organ which the work contains:

ara és mort hu que m'o feya,
y com bé, trista!
No·m lexava una rista
en tot lo mas:
tal tenia lo matràs
per spadar [...] (Col·loqui 2006: 545–50)

[Alas, now he is dead, the one who did it to me, and so well! He left my farm without a single stalk: such a tool he had for threshing [...]]

In the *Col·loqui*, we can see that the author takes delight in anti-clerical sentiments because he attributes sexual activity to almost all kinds of ecclesiastics. He even makes a friar collude with some doctors in the illegal practice of suppressing the Married Lady's menstrual flow, which is very useful to the woman in her adulterous relationships, as she declares:¹²

...que cade mes era deserta
de ma salut!
A mi venie hun frare hagut
ab altres metges,
e bevien-me los fetges
e quant he;
mes quant haguí tirat lo fre,
jamés lo viu (Col·loqui 2006: 655–62)

[...] each month, my health failed me. An astute friar came with some doctors and they drained the very last drop from my innards; when I got rid of this curb, I never saw it again.]

Next, the Widow affirms without any hint of shame:

No ha molt que he parit
d'un capellà,
e ja so prenys d'un scolà (Col·loqui 2006: 692–94)

[Not long ago, I gave birth to a child fathered by a priest and already I'm pregnant again, this time by a sacristan.]

¹² About contraception, marriage and love relationships in the Christian Western world see Flandrin (1981: 109).

In an earlier passage, the Devout Woman talks about the gluttony and lust of canons and bishops (*Col·loqui* 2006: 296-307). She even claims that the deacon of the parish has been chasing her for three years. He has tried to buy sexual favours from this pious woman and, as she tells, he apparently has a ‘*bon feix* [good bundle]’, a good ‘*punyal de Vich* [dagger from the city of Vic]’; and she says, using clear sexual metaphors, he would hit ‘*a cada tret* [every shot]’ right in her navel; 308-325).¹³ She also talks about the priest’s two daughters (*Col·loqui* 2006:352-373): the older one ‘shows her arse to the stars and the sun’ while the younger one ‘*[d]e vergonya no·n té micha [...] tan chasta vida/ té ab ella / lo qui entra·n la capella/ de Sant Hyeronim* [she has not an ounce of shame [...] she has a life as chaste as his who goes with her into Saint Jerome’s chapel]’ (*Col·loqui* 2006: 364–71).

Later, the Married Lady describes her parish priest who:

be li escombra les arenes
hun ypocrit e falsari
robador:
de sanctadat dóna color,
y, confessant,
los engonals los va cercant
com hun furó. (*Col·loqui* 2006: 409–17)

[is having it away with one of the women in the parish, an hypocrite and a false thief; he assumes an air of sanctity but during confession, he’s like a ferret, groping your privates.]

In addition, the Devout Woman seems to have a recipe for some form of contraceptive or abortifacient, when she says:

E yo, senyora, tinch scrit
ab què s’afollen
les que may consebre volen (*Col·loqui* 2006: 232–34)

[And I, lady, have got written down the means whereby women who have no wish to fall pregnant ever again get rid of it.]

Later on, she asserts defiantly:

Mirau-me amb ull, que·l gran diable
ab mi·s confessa (*Col·loqui* 2006: 244–45)

[Pay attention to me, to whom the devil himself confesses]

Elsewhere, this ‘pious’ woman declares very clearly her views on sexual pleasure and her own erotic desires:

y per ço tot hom impotent
és desamable;
y volríem hun diable
que·ns ho fes. (*Col·loqui* 2006: 525–28)

¹³ For the navel as a erotic zone in the Middle Ages, see Jacquart and Thomasset (1989: 7).

[*And because of this, we cease to love any man who becomes impotent and would rather a devil to do it to us.*]

3. *Llibre de fra Bernat: sexual behaviour between friars and nuns*

In the *Llibre de fra Bernat*, written in the second half of the fifteenth century, the main character is a perverse and lustful friar. Friar Bernat has an evident predilection for married women and even inhabitants of the convent, amongst whom he seeks fruitlessly for the favours of a young and beautiful nun. When he witnesses both a canon and a knight receiving, in exchange for money and clothes, courtesies and witticisms from the nun, who then demands a gift from him, the friar becomes very angry with her. The narrator irreverently gives us the friar's reaction:

Ladoncs mès mans a la braga,
mostrà-li son rava. (Llibre 1997: 1526–27)

[*Then he put his hands in his drawers and showed his 'radish' to her.*]

The shameless nun is not embarrassed by this example of exhibitionism,¹⁴ and the narrator describes in detail the 'gift' that the well-hung friar gives her. As in the case of the Married Woman's lover, it is a good *matràs*:

La monja's mostrà fort brava
a fra Bernat,
quan viu son matràs ben format
e stech drets,
car n'ach un gran palm e tres dets,
ab gran squena,
sí que'l clarejava la vena [...] (Llibre 1997: 1528–34)

[*Friar Bernat found the nun was very game when she saw his well-formed 'mallet', his upright 'cudgel', for it was a good hand's span and three fingers in length with skin so taut the veins beneath showed through.*]

At this moment, Bernat, frantic with lust, jests: '*Han tal bech vostres gallines?* [Do any of your hens have a beak like this one?]. So, as Francesc de la Via as narrator continues, the friar:

... li offer de bon grat
lo dit present,
que stech arborat fermament,
pus dur que ferra... (Llibre 1997: 1538–43)

[*gladly offered to her the 'gift' already mentioned, the 'cudgel' that was firmly erect, harder than iron.*]

¹⁴ In the *Sermó del bisbetó* [The Sermon of the Little Bishop], we read about the promiscuous habits of some nuns: '*van més per vila cavalcant / ab los fadrins* [they go riding with the lads through the village as well]' (Pacheco 1997: 190).

4 **From Friar Huberd to Friar Juliot and Friar Bernat and from the Wife of Bath to the women of the *Col.loqui de dames*: the common threads that link Chaucer to fifteenth-century Catalan *fabliaux***

Obviously, Chaucer's sources and analogues are different from the sources of these Catalan *fabliaux* of the fifteenth century but they share a number of ideas and stereotypes which may be suitable for a comparative study.¹⁵ These ideas are related to the anti-fraternal tradition and to portrayals of female sexuality and present conventional *topoi* and well-known commonplaces. Comparing fragments like the ones quoted above with lines from the *Canterbury Tales*, especially the portraits of the Monk, the Friar, the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner in the General Prologue brings interesting results. The estates satire¹⁶ in Chaucer's portraits of various characters surfaces in the lines describing their gluttony, lechery, avarice and moral corruption: the Monk ('a lord ful fat and in good point [a fine, plump man]' *Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, 2005: 200); the Friar ('he hadde maad ful many a mariage / of yonge women at his owene cost [he had arranged many marriages for young women at his own expense]' *Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, 2005: 212-13); the Wife of Bath ('gattothed was she [her teeth were set wide apart]' *Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, 2005: 468) and the Pardoner ('he moste preche and wel affile his tonge/ to winne silver, as he ful wel koude [he had to preach, softening his speech in order to earn money, as he knew full well how to do]' *Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, 2005: 712-13).¹⁷ In this sense, what Friar Huberd has in common with Friar Juliot and Friar Bernat and the similarities between the Wife of Bath and the three women of the *Col.loqui de dames* may provide a point of departure for a comparative study of satire and misogamy in medieval English and Catalan literature and offer new possibilities for discovering literary connections in medieval Europe.¹⁸

The theme of marriage and love affairs with old men in the 'Miller's Tale' connects it to the discussion of sexual matters in the *Col.loqui de dames*.

Jalous he was, and heeld hire narwe in cage,
For she was wylde and yong, and he was old
And demed himself been lik a cokewold.
He knew not Catoun – for his wit was rude –
That bad man sholde wedde his similitude.
Men sholde wedden after hire estaat,
For youthe and elde is often at debaat (*Canterbury Tales*, Miller's Tale, 2005: 3224-30).

¹⁵ See Correale and Hamel (2002-2005) *Sources and Analogues of The Canterbury Tales*.

¹⁶ See Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire. The Literature of Social Classes and the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973)

¹⁷ All the quotations from the *Canterbury Tales* are from Jill Mann's edition (2005).

¹⁸ See the article of Hodges (2000) about Friar Huberd, the character of the *Canterbury Tales*.

[Jealous he was, and held her close confined
 For she was young and wild, and he was old
 And feared he would become a cuckold.
 He had not read his Cato, for he was not learned,
 And did not know he should have married someone of his own kind.
 Men should marry according to their age and rank,
 For youth and age often disagree.]

The *senectutis molestiae* [inconveniences of old age] and the sexual *impotentia* of old men is discussed in a range of works, from Juvenal to the Romance poetry of the Late Middle Ages, passing through literary, scholastic and medical works such as Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (On the Properties of Things), Bernard de Gordon's *Lilium Medicinae* [The Lily of Medicine] and Boncompagno da Signa's *De malo senectutis et senii* [On the Evils of Old Age and Decline]. It is an important theme in the 'Merchant's Tale' and in some Catalan works of the fifteenth century, such as the poems, *Lo procès de les olives* [Processing the Olives] and *Lo somni de Joan Joan* [The Dream of Johan-Johan]. The Wife of Bath in her 'Prologue' seems to be an expert in the matter of marriage to an old man. She introduces herself in a way similar to that of the Married Lady of the *Col·loqui*, while her knowledge of sexuality is similar to that of the Widow and the Devout Woman (suggesting that both Chaucer and the anonymous author of the *Col·loqui de dames* employ similar misogynist themes). Moreover, the Wife of Bath expresses her opinion of the human sexual condition (lines 27-28) in the same words as Friar Bernat uses in de la Via's work, both of them parodying *Genesis* I, 28: 'God bad us for to wexe and multiplie'. Sexual relations between women and friars as well as with priests appear in the 'Wife of Bath's Tale' (lines 865–81), the 'Pardoner's Prologue' (lines 370–71) and the 'Shipman's Tale', too, where the combination of a handsome and impudent monk ('a fair man and a bold' *Canterbury Tales*, Shipman's Tale, 2005: 25) and a beautiful woman (not so innocent as Turmeda's Madonna Tecla but finally deceived) also presents bad behaviour and adulterous affairs, mixed with financial business in this case.

All these moral and social transgressions receive a final indirect punishment in the 'Parson's Tale', which stands as a form of redemption at the end of the *Canterbury Tales*. In the section dedicated to lechery, we can find an implicit condemnation of all sins related to the sexual bad behaviour previously exhibited by the characters: 'Soothly, the vengeance of avowtrye is awarded to the peines of helle, but if so be that it be destourbed by penitence [Truly, adultery deserves the punishment of hell unless this can be avoided by penitence]' (*Canterbury Tales*, Parson's Tale, 2005: 890). The Catalan works, in general, offer neither rebuke nor any convincing explanation concerning the shameless audacity of either lustful, gluttonous and

avaricious friars or lascivious, adulterous women.¹⁹ These works were written in the fifteenth century, some decades after Chaucer's tales, and the use of anti-clerical and anti-fraternal satire was more automatic and mechanical by then. However, the main literary aim seems to be similar: to amuse while rendering ambiguous the final moral message of the works. Therefore the authors use the literary device known as *prodesse et delectare* [to instruct and amuse], as a way of legitimising their smutty stories before a medieval reader who does not necessarily share their sense of humour (in this case, an ecclesiastical or female reader).²⁰

In all these stories, female sexuality is related to adultery with clerics and therefore antifeminism is mixed with anti-clerical satire. Chaucer is more analytic, meticulous, explicit, presenting more extensive portraits in which the features of every character are depicted. His *modus operandi* is closer to a novelist's narrative art. On the other hand, the Catalan narrations are synthetic, with attention focused on action over description. We do not find any lengthy portraits of characters, only general satirical features which depict the characters as obvious stereotypes (if a friar is handsome, he will also be lustful; if a woman is beautiful she will also be foolish). This narrative practice is poor in the description of characters (based on stereotypes) but it is rich in something that Chaucer is seemingly not interested in: brevity. The Catalan *fabliau* or short narrative form is close to a good short story-writer's literary *modus operandi* in this sense.²¹

5. Conclusion

The comparison of these Catalan narratives with the work of Chaucer results in a confirmation of shared themes and similar characters but, broadly speaking, different literary ways or *modus operandi*. It can be thought as a fruitful comparative practice which crosses literary boundaries, showing that the bad behaviour of friars and women was a common topic in medieval European literature generally, from an anti-fraternal as well as anti-feminine perspective, demonstrating the continuity of the anti-fraternal tradition in the comic culture of the Late Middle Ages.²²

¹⁹ In only one of these Catalan narrations can we find an actual punishment, but it is a physical punishment: in the *Llibre de fra Bernat* the protagonist is brutally beaten by nuns at the end of the story.

²⁰ The medieval anti-clerical, and specifically anti-fraternal satire is based on literary subjects which, according to Szittyá (1986), are ideas and charges against the friars that appeared previously in the writings of William of St. Amour, FitzRalph and their followers and originally came from biblical attacks against the Pharisees.

²¹ Turmeda is perhaps closest to Chaucer in his literary art because of his use of irony.

²² This article is part of the research project 'La cultura literaria medieval y moderna en la tradición manuscrita e impresa IV' (FFI2009-14206), financed by the Ministry of Science and Innovation (MICINN) of Spain.

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