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*'Bring furth the pagants': Essays in Early English Drama
presented to Alexandra F. Johnston (review)*

Pamela M. King

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had similar problems with all of them. Further, I tested the CD on four computers (three different computers running Windows XP Pro as well as one Mac iBook running OS X); curiously, the one computer that ran the program with the fewest errors was my Windows notebook, which happens to have the slowest processor (1.10 GHz) of the four test machines. Four computers, of course, is an insignificant sample, and correlation does not prove causation, but it could be indicative, and so I was led to wonder whether fast hardware causes “synchronization” problems, and whether the user’s best chance for error-free performance is to install the program on an older computer with a relatively slow processor speed.

Such frustrations aside, this is an impressive tool, and it is an interesting experiment in a new kind of editorial practice. Dr. Robinson has asserted the “manifest superiority” of digital editions (see, for instance, his “Current Issues in Making Digital Editions of Medieval Texts—or, Do Electronic Scholarly Editions Have a Future?” *Digital Medievalist* 1.1 [Spring 2005]); <<http://www.digitalmedievalist.org/journal/1.1/robinson/>>, but one must ask “superior for what purposes?” For some purposes, clearly, an edition such as this is essential, and it opens up new ways of studying Chaucer’s text. As a basis upon which to do a study of the Nun’s Priest’s Tale that involves comparison of versions and the study of variants, this CD-ROM edition will be invaluable. Further, the description of the manuscripts by Professor Mosser, which appears here as well as on other SDE Chaucer disks, is a major work of scholarship that should take its place beside the catalogues of *Canterbury Tales* manuscripts by Manly and Rickert, by M. C. Seymour, and by other Chaucer bibliographers. On the other hand, the critical edition in its traditional printed form still, I think, has its uses—for general scholarly study, for instance, or for teaching, or for reading for pleasure—and the digital edition is not yet, as Dr. Robinson seems to suggest, “manifestly superior” for every conceivable purpose.

As a tool for the study of variants and versions of a single tale, however, this is excellent, taking the Chaucer Society’s “six text” parallel edition to a whole new level, a “fifty text” edition with software tools. Similarly, the “search” facility makes this something of an interactive concordancing system, which is clearly useful. More generally, this is an experiment in how new tools can create new types of editions, and as such will be of interest not only to Chaucerians but to editors and textual critics more generally. And if such an electronic edition encourages literary scholars to pay more attention to textual variants and the editing process, then it has done a great service to scholarship, and in the hands of a true textual critic it has the potential to be much more than that.

STEPHEN R. REIMER

University of Alberta

‘BRING FURTH THE PAGANTS’: ESSAYS IN EARLY ENGLISH DRAMA PRESENTED TO ALEXANDRA F. JOHNSTON. Edited by David N. Klausner and Karen Sawyer Marsalek. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2007. Pp. vi + 330; 12 illustrations. \$60.

The Corpus Christi cycle in England does not exist, except in York, and the inn-yard was not the performance location of choice for any known troupe of travelling medieval or early modern players. This volume, presented to the founder of the Records of Early English Drama (hereinafter REED) project, Alexandra F. Johnston, offers multifarious commentary on the shifted landscape of early English drama, much of it occasioned by that project. It is thus locally diverting for the specialist in the field, but also required reading as a whole for the non-specialist

who has not followed the cumulative implications of the REED project closely. Like many *Festschriften*, the volume has some unevenness in the scope, scale, and ambition of individual contributions. Like the REED volumes too, the whole, as a demonstration of new orders of evidence for the study of early drama, is greater than the parts.

Essays in Part One: the Records, begin by modeling the type of scholarship made possible by REED. Barbara D. Palmer (pp. 9–40) discusses the status of companies touring the sixteenth-century countryside. Despite risking intimidating those who do not like to turn the book on its side to scrutinize tabulated data, this opening essay also crisply demonstrates the paradigm-shifting potential in the REED endeavor. Palmer's pantry-stewards may have been bean-counters; records editors are plainly more than that. In the second essay, Peter Meredith (pp. 40–57) turns his attention to records in the York House Books for the reign of Mary Tudor. He too begins with the detail, invoking single instances of fun and disorder in the historical record, from which larger conclusions might be drawn, but with characteristic caution he directs the reader instead to acknowledge the inscrutability in the end of the "human point of view."

REED has recently sprouted an off-shoot for the electronic age, the Patrons and Performers web site, which coincides with the project's move into household records. Sally-Beth MacLean's essay (pp. 58–76), "The South West Entertains," works with recent findings in this area to reveal the apparent eccentricity of Devon's arrangements for private entertainments, and, more generally, the limited usefulness of dividing town from county in the analysis of Early Modern society. Alan Somerset's essay which follows (pp. 76–90) is chiefly a lesson in how to use the web site. The patrons he uses as test cases allow him to illustrate how gentry accustomed to visiting London brought commensurately sophisticated tastes in entertainment home with them. The essay more widely charts the difficulties in using and interpreting household, as opposed to civic, records, but Somerset plays his own cards very close to his vest with only five footnotes, the last proprietorially to "my forthcoming REED volume for Staffordshire/Warwickshire."

With so many medievalists choosing to write on later periods, it is refreshing to encounter Caroline M. Barron's study (pp. 91–104) of "Pageantry on London Bridge in the Early Fifteenth Century." This short discursive piece by the premier historian of medieval London tantalizes with the richness of the detail evidently available for only one site within the capital. It also acts as a counter to Somerset's retentiveness by providing the reader directly with the text of the song written to welcome Henry VI in 1432, and an account of the pageants on London Bridge of the same year, translated from a Letter Book in the London Metropolitan Archives.

Thus far the book has responded to REED methodology; the final two essays in this section seek to move the understanding of records, and their study, elsewhere. Meg Twycross (pp. 105–31) writes of dwarves standing on the shoulders of REED giants, but the view from her position, thus characterized, is of new horizons. Twycross relishes the physically problematic and palimpsest nature of the *Ordo paginarum*, the earliest surviving list of York Corpus Christi pageants, as a test-case in digital manuscript archaeology. The essay moves the discussion into reception theory by considering how the computer screen offers new but valid ways of looking at a manuscript page. The human eye has different ways of responding to visual media, of looking, useful for seeing more of what is there to be seen. In this case the results are convincing, as not only is the REED editors' problematic guild of "Hartshorners" corrected to the abbreviated "Hatters and Horners," but

the identification of the two hands in the document, A and B is completely revised. The essay demonstrates what can be achieved by a kind of reading that gets as close as possible to the process of writing, literally uncovering not only the ductus of the scribe, but his moments of hesitation, of self-correction, of organizational problem, doctrinal difficulty, and syntactic preference.

Margaret Rogerson's essay (pp. 132–61), which closes the section, focuses in marked contrast on modern revivals of the York cycle. She chooses to look not at theatrical reconstructions or reinterpretations, but at how creative writers have responded to ideas of the York Play. After the forensics of Twycross's article, the demand that the scholarly community attend to these sometimes wildly fanciful—and/or irritatingly old-fashioned—readings as worthy of study because they “influence popular receptions of the mystery plays,” is a real challenge to the most liberal-minded expert, but one the author convincingly argues should be embraced.

Part Two: Medieval Plays takes the focus from records of performance to play texts themselves. Here approaches proliferate. Garrett Epp (pp. 165–80) re-evaluates the so-called Mary prologue in the Towneley pageant of Thomas of India, constructing an explanation for its interpolation in a way that is interestingly gender-nuanced. And David Klausner (pp. 181–96) takes on the much re-interpreted *Wisdom*, shrewdly distancing himself from contested theories of the play's provenance, to suggest that structurally and rhetorically it is made up of discrete and replaceable modules designed to fit a variety of playing circumstances and audiences.

Where many contributors have chosen to pay tribute to Alexandra Johnston and her work, Chester Scoville (pp. 197–211) goes one step further by using his essay as a vehicle to sum up the state of early drama scholarship. He muses that “standing on this shifting ground is a heady experience, not least because one can never tell what will blow up next.” Once on a polemical roll he is a little hard on the earliest scholars in the field, such as Thomas Sharp who was arguably REED's early nineteenth-century precursor, and is positively rude about Hardin Craig. In the end the essay is stronger, and more fun, as a piece of rhetoric on the field than it is as a thorough-going analysis of its chosen subject, *The Conversion of St Paul*. Possibly that play does invite recuperation as a rare survivor from the new-found genre of English saints' plays, but one is left wondering whether the clever work of Biblical synthesis attributed to its author here is not derived from some ready theological source. More judicious is the following essay by David Mills (pp. 212–29) who, by using the detail of newly discovered sources from Chester, offers a view of Protestant attitudes to religious plays in general, and to old religious plays in particular, uncovering subtle textual responses to evolving theology and related political opinion in sixteenth-century Chester.

K. Janet Ritch's essay (pp. 230–68), “The Role of the Presenter in Medieval Drama,” is both the longest in the volume and the most critically ambitious. The argument is almost overwhelmed by the desire for inclusivity, both of instances of presenter figures in England and France, and of existing scholarship on the subject. Ritch does a thorough job in exposing the varied nature of the material and cautioning implicitly against too-quick assumptions based on single exemplars. Her major achievement is the demolition of the Brechtian analogy, and with it the disposal of the unhelpful polarity between the realistic and the presentational which has dogged medieval drama criticism too long.

Part Three: Renaissance Plays signals that the last two essays will deal not only with the Tudor period—much treated already—but also with its canonical authors.

Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* is the subject of the first essay. Karen Sawyer Marsalek (pp. 271–91) writes a poised and close reading of the resurrection scene in this play against a context of plays of Christ's Resurrection from before and after the Reformation, which is just right for this volume. Deceptively narrow in compass, the essay vitally demonstrates how new readings of so-called "medieval" drama can enrich Shakespeare scholarship. The author also resists engagement with the wider debate about Shakespeare's own confessional status that has attracted much recent discussion, seeing the scene's resurrection metadrama purely in terms of theatrical device.

The book's concluding slot is aptly reserved for David Bevington (pp. 293–310), whose *From Mankind to Marlowe* remains one of the classics of medieval to early modern cross-over scholarship. Bevington rethinks the relative merits of the A and B texts of Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*, concluding that, while A is the more metaphysically consistent, B is a knowingly crowd-pleasing revision directed at audiences on whom the subtleties of Calvinist theology were lost. In constructing this argument, Bevington refers to "the great medieval biblical plays," specifically the Harrowing of Hell and Doomsday, as analogues to and precursors of the B-text ending. To have taken his chosen exemplars from the Towneley manuscript, whose status, date, and provenance are all now hotly contested, might seem perverse. Bevington, however, chooses to swim against the running tide of opinion by stating in a footnote, "I nonetheless remain convinced that a single and distinctive genius is to be found in the works among the Towneley Plays customarily associated with the name of the Wakefield Master." This whole book has offered comment on the shifted landscape of medieval drama away from Corpus Christi cycles and morality plays to the more varied and disparate one uncovered by the records archaeologists. But after so much demolition of old certainties, rightly undertaken as the incontrovertible evidence of REED mounts up, perhaps it is also timely to revisit with David Bevington some of our surviving scripts with renewed confidence in critical intuition. The book concludes with a bibliography of Alexandra Johnston's publications (pp. 311–18), and, usefully for a collection like this, has a full index.

PAMELA M. KING

University of Bristol

CHESHIRE (INCLUDING CHESTER). RECORDS OF EARLY ENGLISH DRAMA, 19. 2 vols. Edited by Elizabeth Baldwin, Lawrence M. Clopper, and David Mills. Pp. ccxxv + 1231. Toronto and London: Toronto University Press and The British Library, 2007. \$400.

This is the latest set of volumes from the Records of Early English Drama project, which seeks to edit and present "all records before 1642 of dramatic, musical, and ceremonial activity" in England (p. cxci), and, in its sister project RED (Records of Early Drama), in Wales and Scotland. The Cheshire edition "incorporates an updated and revised edition" of Clopper's 1979 REED: *Chester*. In these latest volumes, activity regarded as dramatic "ranges from visiting professional players to the Chester Whitsun play to plays performed by the scholars and the townsmen in Congleton to isolated incidents involving mimicry." Music and musicians "cover the entire social range" outside of ecclesiastical music. The selection criteria for "ceremonial activity has been limited to secular events." Visits by royalty or nobility are included only if they "were accompanied by mimetic ceremony,