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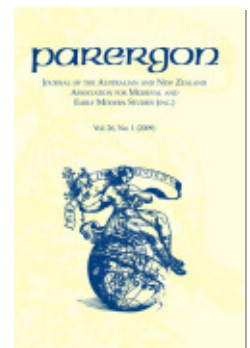
'Bring furth the pagants': Essays in Early English Drama
Presented to Alexandra F. Johnston (review)

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Klausner, David N. and Karen Sawyer **Marselek**, eds., *'Bring furth the pagants': Essays in Early English Drama Presented to Alexandra F. Johnston* (Studies in Early English Drama 9), Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2007; hardback; pp. 355; R.R.P. US\$60.00; ISBN 9780802091079.

This *Festschrift* builds on research findings generated since the early 1970s by the distinguished team of mainly Canadian and British scholars who have produced the Records of Early English Drama (REED) Series. A history of REED can be gleaned from the tributes and wider recollections contained in the essays, and from David Klausner's biography of Professor Sandy Johnston who, with University of Sydney lecturer Dr Margaret Rogerson, co-edited the first REED volume in 1979. The collection casts light on medieval and Renaissance cultural history, and specifically on the evolution in England of drama and other performance arts. In a manner helpful to both beginners and experts, the essays uncover the line that currently divides answered from unanswered questions. I found the book to be, like its subject matter, hugely entertaining.

The first and longest section, 'The Records', maintains the regional bases of REED research. Meg Twycross and Peter Meredith analyse data selected from the large civic archive of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century York. Barbara D. Palmer traces cross-country and local travels of jugglers, conjurors, fiddlers and players. Sally-Beth Maclean elucidates performance venues and patronage by prominent families and town authorities in southwest England, and Alan Somerset extends the study of patrons to other shires and to Coventry and London by reference to the REED *Patrons and Performances Website* (<http://link.library.utoronto.ca/reed>). Caroline M. Barron describes production methods in fifteenth-century London Bridge pageants. Finally, Rogerson shifts the focus to modern records, in order to show how revivals of the York mystery plays since 1951, with associated poems, fiction and drama, have shaped popular perceptions of the genre.

Much of Part One is taken up with a detailed recounting of facts, some of which are intrinsically engaging. Examples are Meredith's narrative of a young man's late-night drinking escapade, painfully punished under statutes that reinforced loyalty to Queen Mary (pp. 41-2, 45-6); and Barron's descriptions of pageant constructions: 'Certainly on almost every occasion there was a giant standing on top of the Stonegate. In 1415, he was particularly large, and held a great axe in one hand' (p. 95).

Other material assembled from the records is less striking, and resists the writers' efforts to ascertain the deeper attitudes of the people involved. However, the cumulative effect is to vivify the authentic conditions under which the performing arts flourished. The contributors are careful not to press arguments beyond their evidential base. Their inconclusiveness nevertheless has the advantage of maintaining excitement about discoveries still to come, and some essays do report significant findings. An example is Twycross' revised attribution of the main hands in the York *Ordo Paginarum*, which is 'arguably the most important surviving document in the history of medieval theatre, other than the scripts themselves' (p. 105).

In Part Two, 'Medieval Plays', Klausner's analysis of 'modular' structure in the moral entertainment, *Wisdom*, and Chester Scoville's partial rehabilitation of *The Conversion of Saint Paul* position their arguments in relation both to recent studies and to records of the time. David Mills' discussion of theology in the Chester plays, and K. Janet Rich's examination of presenters (i.e. prologues, preachers and expositors), likewise draw on contemporary records, specifically the revisions to the Biblical drama texts undertaken by Protestant reformers. In a study likely to be a turning point in the field, Rich derives additional insights from detailed comparisons with presenters in French Biblical plays. In opposition to the Brechtian alienation theory dominant in earlier commentary, she concludes that presenters furthered the wider purpose of medieval dramaturgy, which was to foster community.

Essays in Part Three, by co-editor Karen Sawyer Marsalek and by David Bevington of the University of Chicago, base elucidations of well-known Renaissance plays on medieval Biblical drama. Marsalek applies the theology, characterization and dramatic techniques of Resurrection plays to the staged revival of Hermione's statue in *The Winter's Tale*. Bevington contrasts hell in the Towneley *Harrowing of Hell* and *Last Judgment* with the non-literal, Calvinist hell of the *Dr Faustus* A-Text, and goes on to demonstrate the B-Text's reversion to a theatrical physical hell.

Bevington has actively studied and edited early English drama since the 1960s. In forming the finale to this state-of-the-art collection, his essay, 'One Hell of an Ending', validates the traditional research practices that scholars associated with REED have maintained for half a century. Undeterred by the '80s theory tsunami, they have persisted in bringing to light and assessing documentary evidence that has transformed the field. For example, they have shown that single productions of Biblical plays were more common than

performances of cycles; they have corrected the entrenched identification of the Towneley Marian compilation with a 'Wakefield cycle'; they have downgraded the significance of drama for Corpus Christi Day; and they have dismissed inn yards as venues for performing plays. Readers concerned with cultural history can no doubt look forward to further seismic shifts in understanding, as analysis of the records continues to unfold.

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Krafl, Pavel, ed., *Sacri canones servandi sunt: Ius canonicum et status ecclesiae saeculis XIII-XV* (Opera Instituti historici Pragae, Series C, Miscellanea 19), Prague, Historický Ústav CR, 2008; pp. xl, 686; R.R.P. unknown; ISBN 9788072861217.

The power to punish with imprisonment or worse is an accepted element of legal command. The idea that people live under a single national legal code enforced by the government of the particular state that alone has authority in its territory to fine or imprison, goes almost unquestioned in Western society today. A little thought may suggest that the military have legal codes, powers and enforcement rights that differ from ordinary civilian laws but the assumption is that they are ultimately also under government authority. While churches may still today hold courts, hear and settle cases with ecclesiastical punishments such as excommunication, they have no effective ability to compel obedience.

This is a major difference from the situation in the Middle Ages and Early Modern period when there were ecclesiastical prisons and other means of enforcing Church law on individuals. The common Christian life and creed that resulted, stressed by the clergy, who used pastoral penitentials, shaped social life at the time.

Communist governments in central Europe discouraged the study of this ecclesiastical authority but recent changes have opened the way for a reconsideration of the role of Canon law in Czech, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. Krafl in his foreword uses the phrase 'emancipation as an independent academic discipline' for the position of the recent scholars who have studied the relationship of these countries with Rome, and the means whereby general Canon law was brought to them.