

A Coming of Age: Drama at St John's College, Oxford in the Early Modern Period

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In charting the remarkable rise of St John's College, Oxford, from struggling, new-born foundation in 1555 to spectacular host of King Charles and Queen Henrietta in 1636, I demonstrate how the theatrical tradition developed by the community of St John's men negotiated and articulated their college's political and economic transformation. My research has uncovered the centrality of drama to college life and the fundamental significance of collegiate identity and tradition to the university men, showing that if we are to build a synoptic view of 'university drama' in early modern England, we must construct it from an understanding of 'college drama'.

Deep into the eighteenth century the culture of Latin writing and speaking at Oxford and Cambridge continued to shape all aspects of life in the academies, and yet it is the comparatively few plays written in English which have received the most attention, leading to a distorted view of the university drama. My approach is to restore the neglected Latin sources to their rightful place at the heart of the investigation and, by providing a combination of close textual analysis and translation, to forward their integration into the mainstream of English Renaissance theatre criticism.

Chapter 1 examines the intercollegiate networks which supported St John's College in the early days of its development as a centre for drama, highlighting Christ Church's role as an older, richer sibling to its up-and-coming rival. Chapter 2 analyses the communal function of the college drama, demonstrating that, although each performance was the creative work of individual writers and performers, it relied upon the investment of the college membership as a whole. In Chapter 3 I highlight the influence which changing practices in student recruitment had on the pedagogical and theatrical culture of the community over time, identifying the particular impact of the 'Mulcaster generation' on St John's at the turn of the seventeenth century. Chapter 4 connects drama, politics,

and religion to show how ambitious *alumni* such as Archbishop-Chancellor William Laud used the college stage to test and groom potential protégés; students proving themselves before peers, patrons, and sometimes even royalty, performed a rite of passage which enhanced their career prospects.

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NOTE ON THE TEXT

Manuscript sources: I have normalised i/j but not u/v. I have replaced ꝛ with s. I have silently expanded contractions and abbreviations. Lower and upper case status is retained as found in the mss.

Printed sources: My citations from printed books are given by signature and follow original editions held by Oxford libraries, principally those in the Bodleian Library and St John's College Library. Electronic surrogates have also been consulted via Early English Books Online <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>> and Internet Archive <<https://archive.org/>>

Classical and Neo-Latin texts: These are cited in the original, and translations are given in the footnotes. All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

Bibliographical references: I employ the Chicago Notes and Bibliography system. All references to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) are to the online version of this publication.

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INTRODUCTION

A twentieth-century president of St John's College, Oxford, William Costin (1957-63), composing the preface to his history of the institution, took the opportunity to muse on the broader question of 'what one means by "the College"'.¹ He asked: 'Is it just a collection of buildings and a succession of individuals or is there an identity which is passed down from generation to generation?'.² Rejecting the idea that politico-religious tradition provides a connecting thread running through time, he instead asserted the importance of getting to grips with the educational values of the institution as the steadfast marker of its identity: 'What I think one can see is an abiding love of learning, kept alive at all times, even in periods of relative stagnation.'³ My study shows the vital importance of the college stage in this enterprise, thereby contributing towards the understanding of the nature of institutional identity and its continuities of culture over time. I demonstrate how the individuals living in the community of St John's College, Oxford, in the early modern period expressed their relationships to and interests in collegiate fellowship through the medium of theatre, articulating themselves by writing and acting, sometimes in English but more often in the language of learning, Latin.

The term 'university' naturally evokes the concept of a strong, centralised body, but the early modern universities of Oxford and Cambridge evolved from a collegiate structure which always held central and local interests in tension. Once the English university as an institution had begun evolving to provide training for the middle classes aspiring to roles in the state and no longer just for clergy, the political strength of individual colleges was affected; to use James McConica's phrase, the sixteenth century saw 'the rise of the undergraduate college'.⁴ If we are, then, to build a synoptic view of 'university drama', we must construct it from an understanding of 'college drama'. In this thesis I reveal how, and in what ways, collegiate identities and traditions are important in shaping the theatres of the university men.

¹ W.C. Costin, *The History of St John's College, Oxford, 1598–1860* (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1958), v.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ James McConica, 'The rise of the undergraduate college' in James McConica (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), vol. 3: *The Collegiate University*.

We might usefully draw a conceptual parallel here with the development of scholarship on the topic of ‘the London stage’. Intuition guides us as to the meaning of this general term, but it has long been nuanced by theatre historians’ analysis of individual performing companies, the units of production which combine to make ‘the London stage’ or ‘the Shakespearean theatre’. In contrast to the critical tradition of popular drama, that of academic drama has not yet benefited from this shift, a fact which continues to hamper attempts to provide synoptic studies of the form.

It is now more than one hundred years since F.S. Boas published his remarkable study *University Drama in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), an achievement which has never been matched. But Boas quite artificially concluded his study with the death of Elizabeth, and comparable studies of the Jacobean and Caroline eras, despite the obvious continuity in dramatic terms between all three of these periods, do not exist. For instance, in the terms of this thesis, Boas’s cut-off point of 24 March 1603, the death of Elizabeth, means that the anonymous English comedy *A Twelfth Night Merriment* (1603) is the only play from St John’s College which Boas discusses. The comparative youth of St John’s as a mid-sixteenth-century foundation (1555), the financial difficulties which delayed recruitment of students (see Chapter 1), and the knock-on effect which this had on the development of an autonomous theatrical tradition (see Chapter 3), meant that it was not until the age of the Stuarts that St John’s drama really came into its own. This is one of the reasons why an in-depth study of this particular college can claim to broach fresh ground.

The essay collections of 2013, Philip Ford and Andrew Taylor (eds.), *The Early Modern Cultures of Neo-Latin Drama* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013) and Jan Bloemendal and Howard Norland (eds.), *Neo-Latin Drama and Theatre in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), marked a fresh starting point for surveying the range and richness of original Latin plays and revealed the extent to which neo-Latin theatrical culture was a European phenomenon of great significance. However, these publications also highlighted the fact that scholarship on continental neo-Latin authors has a longer and more consistent critical tradition in Europe, and that the study of English Neo-Latin lags behind. The huge advances made in the field of professional drama in early

modern England contrast with the relative lack of progress made in contemporary neo-Latin drama.

The seeming ease with which Boas worked his way through his sixteenth-century corpus, engaging with both English and Latin sources as a matter of course, is a hard act to follow, but follow we must; the evidence itself leads us in this direction. Christopher Marlow's *Performing Masculinity in English University Drama, 1598-1636* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), though a welcome contribution, is in some ways a backwards step, in that it attempts to persuade the reader that conclusions drawn from the comparatively small proportion of texts written in the English language can be taken to represent the whole of the university oeuvre. As the author himself admits in his introduction, this method altogether bypasses the pervasive and crucial influence of the culture of Latin writing and speaking at Oxford and Cambridge, which continued to shape all aspects of academic life, but especially pedagogy and theatre, until well into the eighteenth century. *Early Modern Academic Drama* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), a ground-breaking collection of essays edited by J. Walker and P.D. Streufert, bravely spanned a wide range of types of educational institution, demonstrating the success of allowing the multilingual evidence to speak for itself: English, Latin, and Greek texts all take their natural places in the narrative, quotations are given in the original language, and, in contrast to Boas' study, translations from Latin and Greek into English are always provided. I have followed this principle in my own work, with the aim of opening up the multilingual corpus of university drama to a wider readership and integrating it into the mainstream of English Renaissance drama criticism. Some key works which have never been edited or translated before, such as Matthew Gwinne's play for King James, *Vertumnus sive Annus recurrens*, are tackled in this thesis, offering detailed analyses which enable them to be incorporated into the critical scheme for the first time.

Single author studies have proved an awkward barrier to wider understanding, as the interest in William Gager has shown: Howard Norland's *Neoclassical Tragedy in Elizabethan England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009) analysed the universities' contribution to the tradition in two chapters: 'Neo-Latin tragedy at Cambridge' and 'Gager's neo-Latin tragedy at Oxford'. Gager's particular brand of Senecan tragedy at Christ Church, whilst engaging and

significant, provides a more convenient than accurate representation of Oxford tragedy during this era. In the 1990s, J.W. Binns' and Jozef Ijsewijn's surveys of early modern Latin literature had earmarked the Gagerian canon as an example of the kinds of treasures to be found by the neo-Latin explorer, though this approach was intended to demonstrate the range on offer in the field and the benefits of further exploration, not to restrict attention to the texts which they had decided to feature.⁵ Indeed, Christ Church's sponsorship of Gager's peak of productivity, in the 1580s and 90s, has made it the victim of its own success; few have heard of the later achievements of other dramatists from this college. Thomas Goffe, for example, made a splash with his Senecan tragedies at Christ Church a generation later, and Robert Burton, well-known as the author of *Anatomy of Melancholy*, is rarely recognised as a dramatist, though his comedy *Philosophaster* was the only other work he made efforts to publicise (he revised the play in 1615, nearly ten years after he had first composed it, and then he staged it at Christ Church on 16 February 1618).

The story of St John's drama is, in the early days of its development, also the story of Christ Church drama, and in Chapter 1, I show the evolution of the relationship between these two institutions as their mutual interest in collaboration comes under pressure from increasing intercollegiate rivalry. In the early modern period, as today, tensions between colleges heightened each's sense of identity, and drama played an important role in reinforcing how a college viewed itself and wished to present itself to others. (We also see 'definition through antithesis' at work in the stance which university men took on professional drama, discussed further below). Chapter 2 investigates the relationship between the participants in the drama and their college society, demonstrating that, although each performance was the creative work of individual writers, it was also the product of the community as a whole: a script was brought to fruition through the performance of an acting team, the financial support of members (past and present), and the participation of the spectators in the event.

Chapter 3 tackles the impact which changing practices in student recruitment had on the makeup of the community at St John's over time (particularly noticeable as we move from the final years of the sixteenth into the seventeenth century), and the resulting impact which this had on the

⁵ J.W. Binns, *Intellectual Culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean England: the Latin Writings of the Age* (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1990); Jozef Ijsewijn, *Companion to Neo-Latin Studies* (Louven: Louven University Press, 2nd ed., 1990-1998), 2 vols.

culture of writing, performing, and watching plays at the college. The pedagogical framework which underpins the academic drama more generally becomes, in the context of a collegiate atmosphere, a carefully nuanced self-reflexive tool which relies upon and celebrates the value of shared educational backgrounds. At St John's we find a highly-developed example of this trend in the form of its series of pastoral comedies which toy with the regenerative poetics of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. My investigations into the way in which a particular tradition evolved at this college has revealed the importance of the continuity of culture between the Oxford college and the grammar school which supplied it with scholars. My approach has been to trace university dramatists back to their school roots, and to show how, when writing and performing before audiences of fellow college men, a self-conscious sense of shared experience and background enabled authors to cultivate a portrayal of themselves as innovators participating in and building on the college tradition.

Not all of the plays written by university men were composed with the intention of their being performed; the works also had an independent value as written texts. In Chapter 4 I examine the practice of students dedicating fair copies of their Latin plays in manuscript to the President of St John's College, a phenomenon which spans more than three decades. I argue that the language deployed in the prologues to these plays shows students attempting to place themselves in a relationship with a strong patron, offering the textual gift as a pledge of loyalty on the understanding that he will give his favour in return. The staging of these plays, therefore, which is suggested by internal evidence, puts this written dedication into action, offering up to an older, more experienced scholar the tender fruits of a young hopeful. What advantages did these student-dramatists hope to gain? The second half of Chapter 4 reveals how patronage was a long-term game and that gaining an early platform for one's skills could have a significant impact on a young man's career. When we connect the striking trend at St John's College for the dramatization of pledges of allegiance with the religio-political network operating from the college at this time (run by Buckeridge, Laud, the Durham House group and their allies) we can see how plays performed by and witnessed by the members of that college could be tailored to fulfil a strategic political function.

The royal visits of 1605 and 1636 are important milestones in the history of St John's

drama and I have reflected this in the thesis' structure, which follows a broadly chronological scheme. As St John's College began to prosper, its theatrical exploits grew more ambitious and experimented with new forms, such as Gwinne's cross-fertilisation of pageantry and prophecy in his Latin *Tres Sibyllae*, welcoming King James to Oxford in 1605 (Chapter 1). The financial boundaries of college drama were also tested, notably in the over-ambitious season of revels during the winter vacation of 1607-8, which included five plays in Latin, three in English, princely processions, feasts, and plans for other entertainments which could not actually be realised (Chapter 2). This energetic period, fifty years on from its foundation, established the college as a centre for drama but also highlighted its subordinate status as the younger, poorer rival to Christ Church. Another thirty years on, thanks in large part to the economic and political machinations of one of its *alumni*, William Laud, St John's had moved up the ranking of the Oxford colleges to play a central role in hosting the king and queen during their visit in 1636 (Chapter 4). For the scholars who had their work performed, or who themselves performed before royalty on this occasion, this was a decisive moment wherein they could prove themselves. It was also a watershed moment for the college itself, which now had the clout to welcome a monarch across its threshold; the entertainments staged for King Charles and his courtiers in the college library and the college dining hall demonstrated that as an institution St John's had come of age.

CHAPTER ONE

1555-1605: Growing up with Christ Church

‘[D]evoting the profits of trade to the advancement of learning’: the establishment of St John’s College

On 1 May 1555, Queen Mary and King Philip granted the Letters Patent permitting Thomas White to found a college for the study of arts, philosophy, and theology in Oxford, on the site of a former Cistercian monastery, St Bernard’s, located on the east side of St Giles to the north of the city wall. This enabled White to issue his first Foundation deed later that same month, on May 29th 1555, formally introducing St John’s College as ‘quoddam collegium perpetuum eruditionis scientiarum sacre theologie, philosophie, et bonarum artium’.¹ Never before had a merchant or businessman founded a college at Oxford, a fact which Edmund Campion chose to highlight when he gave his funeral oration for White in 1567: ‘Qui homo? Mercator’.² The son of a clothier, White was apprenticed to a tradesman in London at the age of twelve (working for Hugh Acton, a prominent member of the Merchant Taylors’ Company) and did not himself enjoy the benefits of extensive schooling. His achievement in founding a centre for academic learning was, as Campion celebrates, enhanced by his membership of the merchant class; this status earned him a place amongst Richard Johnson’s *Nine Worthies of London* (1592), commemorating the lives of nine famous Londoners who had risen through society from the ranks of apprentices or ordinary citizens. His foundation of the Oxford college was part of an existing philanthropic culture that was on the rise, as discussed below, yet it was also a pioneering venture without precedent; as Wilson reverently puts it, ‘[White] must have been no common man, who shewed the first example of devoting the profits of trade to the advancement of learning.’³ The sixteenth century had seen the Worshipful Company of

¹ ‘a perpetual college of learning of the sciences of sacred theology, philosophy, and the worthy arts’. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. For the full text of this foundation deed, see Appendix 29 to W.H. Stevenson and H.E. Salter, *The Early History of St John’s College, Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1939), which corrects the text published by E.A. Bond in his *Statutes of the colleges of Oxford: With royal patents of foundation, injunctions of visitors, and catalogues of documents relating to the University, preserved in the Public Record Office* (Oxford, Oxford University Commissioners, 1853), vol. 3.

² ‘Who was this man? A merchant.’ Quoted in Stevenson and Salter, *Early History of St John’s College*, 410.

³ H.B. Wilson, *The History of Merchant-Taylors’ School, From its Foundation to the Present Time* (London: Marchant and Galabin, 1812-4), vol. 1, 3.

Merchant Taylors, reconstituted from the Fraternity of St John the Baptist through a charter granted by Henry VII in 1503, grow into the largest company in the City with a rapidly expanding membership. The increasing wealth of its merchant livery combined with increasing involvement in high-status civic activities and duties helped to alter the cultural status of commercial success and the individuals who had hitherto occupied an uneasy place in the social structure. During the first year of Mary's reign, 1553, White had been knighted and made Lord Mayor of London with a spectacularly lavish pageant through the streets of the capital, as Henry Machyn records in his diary.⁴ Commenting on the inscription appended to the Leicester guildhall portrait of White, where he is seen robed as the Lord Mayor of London, Tittler concludes: 'With the career of Sir Thomas White and others like him, the urban milieu came at last into respectability.'⁵

A survey of White's wide-ranging bequests reveals that he supported the clothing industry in no fewer than twenty-four provincial localities. White's charitable endowments, which provided journeyman clothiers with loans, were in Tittler's striking phrase, not only 'interest free, but prayer free as well'.⁶ Despite his personal commitment to the Roman Catholic faith, Thomas White was moderate and flexible in his approach to his philanthropic projects. He served Queen Mary conscientiously during her reign, helping to keep the citizens loyal to her during the rebellion led by Thomas Wyatt (whom White, in his capacity as Lord Mayor, personally arrested), and his establishment of St John's as a Roman Catholic foundation with her support was doubtless intended to contribute to the Counter-Reformation by providing a well-educated clergy.⁷ Yet two years into the life of the college, Elizabeth had come to the throne and White pragmatically accepted the new settlement, conforming, as did the majority of the fellowship, to the thirty-nine articles. A cryptocatholic element still persisted at St John's, and some college members openly defected to Rome (including Edmund Campion and his close friend Gregory Martin, who led the translation of

⁴ John Gough Nichols (ed.), *The Diary of Henry Machyn: Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London, from A.D. 1550 to A.D. 1563*, Camden Society 42 (London: J.B. Nichols and Son, 1848), 47-48.

⁵ Robert Tittler, 'Sir Thomas White of London: civic philanthropy and the making of the merchant-hero', in *Townpeople and Nation: English Urban Experiences, 1540-1640* (Stanford, Calif., 2001), 120. On the widespread representation of Thomas White in the visual arts, see Robert Tittler, 'Civic Portraiture and Political Culture in English Provincial Towns, c. 1560-1640' in *The Journal of British Studies*, 37 (1998), 306-329.

⁶ Tittler, 'Sir Thomas White of London', 117.

⁷ On White influenced by religious feeling see A.D. Briscoe, *A Marian Lord Mayor: Sir Thomas White* (Ipswich: East Anglian Magazine, 1982), 80-83.

the Catholic Douai-Rheims Bible), yet White's philanthropic project was one which transcended its Marian foundation and grew with the changing times. When the active Protestant reformer Richard Hilles founded the Merchant Taylors' School in 1561,⁸ in the parish of St Lawrence Pountney in the City of London, White embraced the opportunity to feed St John's with pupils from this new school, amending Statute 12 to require that twelve places on his foundation at St John's were to be given to pupils from the Merchant Taylors' School. In 1565, in his third will, the Founder increased his allocation to twenty scholarships for the school, and the following year, shortly before his death, he augmented this commitment with a final settlement of thirty-seven Merchant Taylors' Scholarships (potentially up to forty-three if Founder's kin could not fill their six places), which, out of the fifty places on the foundation, represented a very significant proportion of the fellowship.⁹ The Merchant Taylors' dominance of St John's would go on to affect the way in which the college developed into a centre for drama, as I will demonstrate below.

Hilles' foundation of the Merchant Taylors' School and White's designs to populate his Oxford college with Merchant Taylors' scholars contributed to a wider movement which saw several educational institutions established under the auspices of prominent members of the London guilds, including the Merchant Taylors' main rivals the Skinners: Andrew Judd, a good friend of White and prominent member of the Skinners had founded Tonbridge School in 1553. As Davies and Saunders have demonstrated, the Merchant Taylors took pride in leading the development of education and charitable projects throughout England, and these activities had formed a core part of what the Merchant Taylors' Company stood for since the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹⁰ Sir John Percyvale, the first member of the Merchant Taylors' Company to become Mayor of London in 1498 (elected on his fifth attempt to secure this high-ranking office), had founded a free grammar school near his birthplace at Macclesfield, Cheshire in 1502 (re-founded by King Edward VI in 1552 and rebranded under his own name), which sent some of its scholars on to Brasenose once the

⁸ On Hilles as the founder of the Merchant Taylors' School and his commitment to furthering the Protestant Reformation, see F.W.M. Draper, *Four Centuries of Merchant Taylors' School, 1561–1961* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 5-6.

⁹ On White's emendation of the statutes during these years, see Stevenson and Salter, *Early History of St John's College*, 121-2.

¹⁰ Matthew Davies and Ann Saunders, *The History of the Merchant Taylors' Company* (Leeds: Maney, 2004).

Oxford college came into existence in 1512.¹¹ In turn, White's foundation of St John's in 1555 inspired another Merchant Taylor, Sir William Harper, to intervene in securing the fortunes of the grammar school at Bedford, and the eagle from his coat of arms and crest remains the symbol for the school.¹² When the time came for the Merchant Taylors' School to have its first official inspection, on 21 August 1562, Sir William Harper, then Lord Mayor of London and recently knighted by Queen Elizabeth, took a role as one of the examiners (as did James Calfhill, Canon of Christ Church¹³).¹⁴ Harper's philanthropic interests strongly intersected with those of White, Hilles, and other prominent Merchant Taylors, who worked together to develop and promote one another's institutions.

As James McConica has shown, St John's drew an unusually high proportion of its students from urban or mercantile backgrounds.¹⁵ Moreover, White's creation of places on the foundation at St John's College for his 'Merchant Taylors' Scholars' conspicuously advertised the origins of his breed of Oxford men, and acknowledged the role that businessmen from the merchant classes were playing in academia through their benefactions. St John's College provides, therefore, an interesting case study for investigating contemporary beliefs in the value of a university education as the route to gentrification, useful to benefactor and student alike.¹⁶ The composition and performance of academic drama plays an important role here, in expressing that value and aspiring to demonstrate the success of both the individuals and the institution. In turn, the sense of shared identity uniting the sons of tradesmen and townsmen gives the collegiate body at St John's its particular community spirit, rooted in the culture of the capital and the majority of students' mutual experience of the

¹¹ Davies and Saunders, *History of the Merchant Taylors' Company*, 111.

¹² Draper, *Four Centuries of Merchant Taylors' School*, 3.

¹³ Calfhill was cousin to Tobie Matthew, President of St John's College and Dean of Christ Church. On their shared interest in theatre and Matthew's promotion of it at St John's, see below, pages 14-17.

¹⁴ Draper, *Four Centuries of Merchant Taylors' School*, 13.

¹⁵ James McConica, 'The Collegiate Society' in *The History of the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), vol. 3: *The Collegiate University*, 723. Also see James McConica, 'Scholars and Commoners in Renaissance Oxford' in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *The University in Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 166.

¹⁶ In 'The Collegiate Society', 723, McConica highlights the example of James Whitelocke, arguing that his composition of the chronicle *Liber famelicus of James Whitelocke* demonstrates the aspirations of a son of a townsman to join the gentry. Philip Parsons (whose play *Atalanta* will be discussed in depth during the course of this thesis) became tutor to James Whitelocke's son, Bulstrode, during his time at St John's. For James Whitelocke's involvement in theatre at school under the influence of Richard Mulcaster, his headmaster at the Merchant Taylors' School, see below, pages 21-2.

same grammar school: as Hegarty puts it, '[t]he fact that the College was made up to an unusual degree of Londoners, or of men who had received part at least of their pre-university education in the metropolis, cannot but have had an impact upon its collective character which was markedly less 'provincial' than those of many other institutions in Oxford.'¹⁷ As I will demonstrate, this had an important bearing on the kinds of theatrical ventures undertaken by scholars once they moved from school to university and on the development of an in-house style of comedy in particular.

Christ Church's poorer sibling: the young St John's College struggles to find its feet

However well-intentioned White was in his philanthropic vision for St John's, his fortunes were subject to the fluctuations of the marketplace, and for many years St John's went without the full endowment he had promised to invest.¹⁸ From 1562, White's business suffered particularly badly from the falling-off in the cloth trade, and this recession led to the college experiencing severe privation in the early years.¹⁹ Thus, during White's lifetime and for decades afterward, St John's had considerable difficulty sustaining students and could not achieve the quota of fifty students laid down in the Statutes by the founder. In 1572 there were still only sixteen graduates and five undergraduates, less than half the intended number of scholars, and it took until 1583 for the college to be filled.²⁰

The tract of land upon which St John's College was founded actually belonged to Christ Church. Founded in 1525 by Cardinal Wolsey as Cardinal College, it took control of the land once belonging to the Priory of St Frideswide, suppressed by Wolsey, and drew on other funds from the dissolution of Wallingford Priory, but having been re-founded as Christ Church by Henry VIII in 1546, it was once again enriched by the estates of its royal foundation. Henry VIII had granted it

¹⁷ Andrew Hegarty, *A Biographical Register of St. John's College, Oxford, 1555-1660* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press for Oxford Historical Society, 2011), xlvii.

¹⁸ See H.E. Salter and M.D. Lobel (eds.), *The Victoria History of the County of Oxford* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), vol. 3: *The University of Oxford: the buildings of the University, the colleges and halls*: 'between 1557 and 1567 the profits of his business had been less than formerly, and the endowment he had planned was far from being reached' (253).

¹⁹ See Costin on the initial poverty of St John's and the resulting shoestring lifestyle of its members, in *History of St John's College 1598-1860*, 2-8.

²⁰ *ibid.*, 2.

the land and buildings of St Bernard's College when he had had that institution dissolved, thus we find Sir Thomas White negotiating the creation of his Oxford college through a collaboration with its much richer sibling. The first historical document bringing St John's into existence in December 1554 is an agreement drawn up between White and the dean and chapter of Christ Church settling the terms and conditions for the foundation of St John's on Christ Church land.²¹ It is interesting to note that the governing body of Christ Church clarifies in this document that it is in support of White's project on an ideological level, not only a financial one,²² and that the older college was prepared to grant the leasing of the land 'for the better furtheraunce' of White's intentions, which it understood to be 'the preferment and mayntayning of vertewe and good lerning'.²³

The title of this 1554 document gives a telling indication of the balance of power between the two parties: 'An article of agreement *with certein Requests* by the deane and chappitre of Crist church in Oxford of king Henrye theights foundacion *made to* sir Thomas Whight of London knight.'²⁴ The agreement is weighted towards Christ Church's power to extract certain concessions from White in return for facilitating and authenticating his project, and demonstrates how Christ Church sought to exert a degree of control over the governance of St John's from the beginning. One of the conditions, for example, states that 'the saide sir Thomas will witesafe to make the saide deane and chappitre [of Christ Church] vissiters of his newe Colledge for the observing and Interpretacion of his statutes and good order with increase of vertew and learning there to be kept and observed for ever.'²⁵

Moreover, as part of the same settlement, it was agreed that the first President of St John's would be 'one of the cannons or students of Christes church', and that thereafter the position

²¹ Christ Church, or The Cathedral College of Christ, is both an academic college and the seat of the diocese of Oxford. As such, instead of the normal organization of contemporary Oxford and Cambridge colleges, it had the administrative structure of a cathedral, governed by a Dean, Sub-dean, and a chapter of Canons, a structure it still partially retains.

²² The actual rate of rent agreed was remarkably low, totalling twenty shillings per annum for the site and buildings of Bernard College ('practically as a gift', Salter and Lobel, *Victoria History of the County of Oxford*, vol. 3, 251).

²³ Quoted in Stevenson and Salter, *Early History of St John's College*, 374.

²⁴ *ibid.* (my italics).

²⁵ *ibid.* The role of 'Visitor' in an early modern Oxford college is a highly influential one, with the power to scrutinise and make executive decisions about the running of the college, usually in cases of insoluble internal dispute. At Christ Church and Oriel College, both royal foundations, the Visitor is the reigning monarch.

would always be given either to ‘one of his owne foundacion’ (i.e. one of the fellows of St John’s) ‘or one of the Cumpany of Cristes church, whose admyssion shalbe made into soche Romme by the dean and chappitre of Christ church from tyme to tyme perpetually’.²⁶ Thus, from the very beginning, the identity of St John’s was rooted in a relationship with an older, richer sibling, which retained a degree of control over its financial status, administration, and personnel. Accordingly, the first President of St John’s, in post from 1555 until 1559, was Alexander Belsyre, canon of Christ Church, and in the succeeding decades, the political relationship between the two colleges continued to develop under the influence of joint leadership.

1572: Tobie Matthew at the helm of Christ Church and St John’s

In 1572, a new chapter of St John’s history opened when Tobie Matthew the Elder became the college’s fifth president, holding the post for five years, from 17 July 1572 to 8 May 1577. In taking on the presidency, Matthew grappled with the poor state of St John’s finances whilst juggling responsibilities to two colleges at once, for at the same time he also had an active role governing Christ Church as one of the chapter of Canons.²⁷ As Sheils puts it:

His attempts to improve the fortunes of St John’s met with little success: he raised money in an attempt to found a library there but the plans came to nought, and the penury of the college undermined other developments. Matthew continued as a canon of Christ Church, and his work there led the college visitors in 1574 to complain that his cathedral duties prevented him from giving proper attention to St John’s.²⁸

Hampered though he was by the financial difficulties, Matthew’s strong leadership on religious matters during the 1570s brought fundamental changes to St John’s. ‘[A]n efficient and committed ecclesiastical careerist’, as Hegarty terms him, he had become chaplain to Queen Elizabeth in 1572, he enjoyed the patronage of the Earl of Leicester (who nominated him to the post of Vice Chancellor of the University in 1579), and he ended his career as Archbishop of York.²⁹ Driven by

²⁶ Quoted in Stevenson and Salter, *Early History of St John’s College*, 374.

²⁷ See footnote 21 on the governing structure of Christ Church.

²⁸ W.J. Sheils, ‘Matthew, Tobie (1544?–1628)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Abbreviated to *ODNB* hereafter.

²⁹ Hegarty, *Biographical Register of St. John’s College*, 100.

reformist zeal and intolerance of the old religion – to which his son nevertheless defected – his presidency produced a significant wave of resignations by fellows with Roman Catholic sympathies. The defections to Douai altered the religious make-up of the community, but it made room for new arrivals recruited to the college who were able to make their impact felt in various ways; incoming fellows, now sourced primarily from the Merchant Taylors' School, brought with them a pedagogical culture which championed the value of composing and performing for the academic stage.³⁰

Tobie Matthew himself was actively involved in the theatre scene at Christ Church, and brought this interest with him to St John's. He had succeeded James Calfhill, his cousin by marriage and a formative influence upon him,³¹ to the post of Canon of Christ Church in 1570, and both men had played a significant role in creating the programme of entertainments for Queen Elizabeth when she made her official visit to Oxford in 1566. Calfhill's production *Progne* (likely to have been an adaptation of the Ovidian play *Progne* [1558] by Gregorio Corraro) was staged before the queen, and Matthew both composed and acted in a drama entitled *Marcus Geminus* (though in the event the queen was ill and was not able attend the performance). Calfhill and Matthew's plays from the 1566 royal visit are now lost, but John Bereblock's account of the queen's visit preserves certain details of the productions. An *alumnus* of the recently-founded St John's College who had acted as scribe and illustrator of the official College Statutes in 1562, Bereblock had been invited to deliver a welcoming oration at Christ Church for the queen's entrance. His valuable eyewitness account of the royal visit describes the moral lessons expressed in Matthew's play, where honesty and justice triumph over slander, bribery and corruption.³² Commenting on the didactic flavour of the *Marcus Geminus*, as reported by Bereblock, Keenan notes that Matthew was also an active player in the disputations staged before Elizabeth, which added to his understanding and experience of the potential moral value and political power of rhetoric when wielded in a particular context:

³⁰ I am grateful to Katherine Parsons (PhD student, La Sierra University, California) for her contributions to our email discussions on the topic of Tobie Matthew's presidency and the resulting changes in culture during the 1570s at St John's.

³¹ W.J. Sheils, 'Matthew, Tobie (1544?-1628)', *ODNB*.

³² See J.R. Elliott, A.F. Johnston, A.H. Nelson, and D. Wyatt (eds.) *Records of Early English Drama: Oxford* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), vol. 2, 979. (Abbreviated to *REED: Oxford* hereafter).

Matthew was clearly attuned to the possibility of using the royal entertainments to offer counsel as he was also one of the participants in the Tuesday afternoon disputations in moral philosophy where the first question was of immediate political relevance: ‘A prince must be proclaimed by succession, not by election.’ The debate raised the issue of parliament’s possible role in choosing the monarch at a time when politicians were, again, preparing to petition the Queen to settle the succession through parliament.³³

Prior to Matthew’s term as president, theatre productions at St John’s College appear to have been very thin on the ground or at least went unrecorded - there is no evidence of any dramatic activity for the first ten years of the college’s history. The first record comes from the college annual accounts for 1568-9, where expenses such as candles and costumes for ‘ye plaies in Christmas’ are documented.³⁴ Martin Wiggins has proposed dating the *Astyages* and *Cyrus, Rex Persarum* (which, as he notes, may have been one and the same play) to Christmas 1567-8, though we are lacking the evidence to confirm this.³⁵ The early years of St John’s remain completely silent, and this contrasts with signs of activity at other Oxford colleges in the mid sixteenth century: Exeter College, for example, staged plays in 1547-8 and 1550-1, New College in 1552-3, Trinity in 1556-7 and 1559, and at Magdalen a theatre had been set up in the 1550s, ‘probably a set of demountable scaffolds erected in its hall exactly in the manner of contemporary Cambridge colleges’.³⁶ At Christ Church, drama enthusiasts such as James Calphill and Tobie Matthew were supported in their interest by the traditions of their college, where a cycle of play-making was even enshrined in the college statutes. In 1554-5 the dean and chapter of Christ Church had issued a decree clarifying the number of plays to be staged each year and how much funding the college was willing to grant towards the cost, demonstrating that the theatrical culture was already very

³³ Siobhan Keenan, ‘Spectator and Spectacle: Royal Entertainments at the Universities in the 1560s’, in Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring, and Sarah Knight (eds.), *The Progresses, Pageants, and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 98-9.

³⁴ *REED: Oxford*, vol. 1, 151.

³⁵ I am grateful to Dr Wiggins for his insights with regard to these early years; on the *Astyages* and *Cyrus, Rex Persarum*, see entries 458 and 459 respectively in Martin Wiggins (ed.) with Catherine Richardson, *British Drama, 1533-1642: A Catalogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), vol. 2: 1567-1589, 17-18.

³⁶ *REED: Oxford*, vol. 2, 603. The return of John Foxe and John Bale from exile on the Continent bolstered Magdalen’s theatrical credentials in the 1560s; see Dan Blank, ‘Performing Exile: John Foxe’s *Christus Triumphans* at Magdalen College, Oxford’ in Sarah Knight and Elizabeth Sandis (eds.), *Latin Drama in Early Modern Europe*, Special issue of *Renaissance Studies* (volume 30.4, forthcoming 2016).

much a settled part of college life at Christ Church by the time St John's was founded.³⁷ White included no stipulation either against or in favour of college plays when he drew up the Statutes for St John's, but we may note that he made it a focus of his time as Lord Mayor of London to legislate against entertainments such as interludes, enshrining these rules in several sumptuary regulations together with a proclamation in May 1554.³⁸ He may have categorised plays written for the academic stage differently, as many others did,³⁹ but he certainly made no particular provision for funding a regular series of plays in the manner of Christ Church.

By the time Tobie Matthew resigned as President of St John's in 1577, in order to devote himself full-time to running Christ Church, where he had been appointed Dean the year before, an in-house culture of drama at St John's College was flourishing. For in the winter of 1577, we have evidence of not just one production being staged at the college but a season of revels, led by John Case, who famously took the role of Christmas Prince, presiding over the festive entertainments. Though we do not have details of what plays were performed during the 1577 season, we have evidence of the individual personalities driving forward these developments which is just as significant for the history of the college drama. Such was John Case's influence that, thirty years later, during the winter vacation of 1607, a new generation of St John's students sought to emulate him, directly evoking his activities as their exemplum when they resurrected the tradition of the Christmas Prince.⁴⁰ The combined energies and interests of personalities such as Tobie Matthew and John Case did much to cement the place of drama in college life, and soon the members of William Gager's literary circle based at Christ Church, which included Alberico Gentili and Matthew Gwinne from St John's, were expanding ambitions for the academic stage.⁴¹ Tobie Matthew had used his influence as Vice-Chancellor of the University in 1579 to become benefactor and friend to Alberico Gentili, an Italian protestant seeking refuge from the Inquisition; he had him appointed Tutor for Law at St John's College and supported him in becoming the first person to hold a salaried Readership in Civil Law at the college. Gentili would later be promoted to Regius

³⁷ REED: *Oxford*, vol. 1, 96.

³⁸ Alexandra Shepard, 'White, Sir Thomas (1495?-1567)', *ODNB*.

³⁹ See below, pages 31-2, on the distinction made by Gager and others between academic theatre performed at university by amateurs and commercial plays staged by professionals.

⁴⁰ The revels of 1607-8 form the principle focus of Chapter 2.

⁴¹ Gager's literary circle, the intercollegiate collaborations between St John's and Christ Church, and Gager and Gwinne's support for John Case, are discussed further below.

Professor of Civil Law, in which role he presided over the disputations held before King James on his visit to Oxford in 1605.⁴² At the height of the controversy with John Rainolds, who vigorously campaigned against all plays performed at university, Gentili dedicated a treatise to Matthew which pointedly defended poetry and acting; he praised Matthew for his patronage, and sent a copy of the treatise to Rainolds.⁴³

1572: the first election of Merchant Taylors' Scholars

As outlined above, in response to the foundation of the Merchant Taylors' School in 1561, Thomas White modified the Statutes of St John's College to cement a permanent relationship between the two institutions, committing a large proportion of his college fellowships (up to four fifths of the provision on the foundation by 1566) to boys from this one grammar school.⁴⁴ The college's academic and cultural life would go on to be shaped by this decision, and yet the actual impact of such a major shift in admissions policy would not appear for some time. For several years, the college made delays in accepting boys from the Merchant Taylors' School, claiming financial duress, and relations between St John's and the Merchant Taylors' Company grew strained as a result. Thus, despite White's establishment of the principle of their right to scholarships at the college soon after the school was founded, it was not until several years after his death that the actual election of the first Merchant Taylors' Scholars to St John's took place, in 1572.

On the tenth anniversary of the school, 24 September 1571, the Merchant Taylors' Company found its voice, protesting directly to the President and fellows of St John's that their Founder's wishes were not being carried out and that the St John's delegation must attend them in London the following June to fulfil their obligation: 'wee do thererfore frindlie require you, and in behaulf of your saide worthe Ffounder's owne meaininge, earnestlie desire you that it woulde please you friendlie and charitably to putte your saide order in execution the next St. Barnabie's daie, in suche forme as your saide worthe Ffounder hathe appoynted'.⁴⁵ The letter was greeted with silence from St John's, and another six months passed with no reply. Eventually the college was taken to task by the Visitor, Sir William Cordell, who acted as an important intermediary between the institutions. Cordell was an old friend of Richard Hilles, the founder of the school,

⁴² Hegarty, *Biographical Register of St. John's College*, 519.

⁴³ I discuss Gentili's treatise and his dedication of it to Tobie Matthew in more depth on pages 39-42.

⁴⁴ See above, page 9.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Wilson, *History of Merchant-Taylors' School*, vol.1, 36.

and, since he also had the advantage of inside knowledge of St John's affairs, he was able to establish the apparent cause of the problem, that St John's could not afford the cost of sending its President and two senior fellows to London for the election. After diplomatic interventions by Cordell, the Company agreed to give £4 towards the college's travel expenses; thus eventually St John's were persuaded to come in 1572 to attend a two-day process which saw pupils being examined on the first day and elected to scholarships on the second.

The President of St John's at that time was Tobie Matthew's predecessor, John Robinson, and the senior fellows in attendance were Henry Russell and John Case; together these three constituted the college delegation required by White's statutes to ratify the election. Other examiners included the Dean of St Paul's Alexander Nowell (formerly headmaster of Westminster School), who began proceedings by testing the boys of the top form on their Horace, requiring each to demonstrate a detailed understanding of the sense and construction of the Roman poet's composition, 'obmyttinge nothinge which might seme neadfull for the tryall of their lerninge in the Latyn tongue'.⁴⁶ After similar trials in Greek, using passages from Homer, and Hebrew, working through selected psalms, they proceeded on to the form below, the Fifth form, testing them on sections taken from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*. Finally, after lunch, there was a short oration and delivery of verses in the chapel, so that candidates might have the opportunity to demonstrate their talents in another key area crucial for success at Oxford: rhetorical skill. Yet academic potential was not the only qualification, for other considerations of background and personal credentials were also taken into account: after the examination of pupils had taken place, four candidates were shortlisted according to the following criteria: 'beinge meteste as well for learninge, personage, poverty, and years'.⁴⁷ From these four, two were selected, John Rickermonde and William Lee, and these became the first Merchant Taylor Fellows of St John's.

After the success of pushing through an election in 1572, further progress was not forthcoming. In 1573, St John's wrote a letter to the Merchant Taylors' Company complaining of their financial difficulties, explaining that they were struggling to feed and house the scholars they

⁴⁶ Quoted in Wilson, *History of Merchant-Taylors' School*, vol. 1, 39.

⁴⁷ Quoted *ibid.*, 40.

already had.⁴⁸ As Stevenson notes, the year 1571-72 had been ‘the time when the College felt the pinch of poverty more than ever before or since’,⁴⁹ and although an upturn in fortunes was beginning to occur during the course of 1573 (as a result of the financial rearrangements made possible by the death of the Foundress⁵⁰), the living conditions for the fellows remained somewhat precarious until the 1580s. The Founder’s approach to the fixing of stipends and allowances had led to increased hardship, as inflation grew whilst incomes stayed the same,⁵¹ and it was not until the presidency of Francis Willis (1577–1590) that St John’s entered more prosperous times and was able to support its full statutory quota of fifty fellows.⁵² In 1573, therefore, the college’s reluctance to recruit more scholars was understandable, and it was necessary for Cordell to intervene to smooth things over. By negotiating an increase in the travel funds awarded by the Merchant Taylors’ Company, raising the grant from £4 to £6, St John’s attendance for an election in 1574 was secured. Four boys were therefore selected that year, and this 1574 cohort included the young Matthew Gwinne, whose contribution to college drama during his years at Oxford, and after he had graduated, would be considerable.

St John’s College stocked with ‘hopeful plants’ from the Merchant Taylors’ School: the Mulcaster generation

Richard Mulcaster, the first Head Master of the Merchant Taylors’ School, brought with him first-hand experience of Eton, Cambridge, and Oxford, where he himself had been educated. His working relations with the Merchant Taylors’ Company, who governed the school, were often strained, but his achievements during his quarter of a century as headmaster (1561-86) were undoubtedly impressive: as Motter puts it, ‘the worshipful masters of the Company had not counted on this brilliant and classically trained youth of thirty to provide the new school with a colourful

⁴⁸ See Draper, *Four Centuries of Merchant Taylors' School*, 17.

⁴⁹ Stevenson and Salter, *Early History of St John's College*, 185.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 186 and 193.

⁵¹ Costin, *History of St John's College 1598–1860*, 11.

⁵² I discuss this change in fortunes in Chapter 3, pages 134ff.

regime of twenty-five years of excitement.⁵³ His years in office spawned a generation of high achievers, who made their impact felt across a range of professions, from the poet Edmund Spenser to the bishop Lancelot Andrewes, the latter presiding over the translation of the King James Bible (the Authorized Version).

Once elections were underway and the flow of Merchant Taylors' pupils into St John's had properly begun, Mulcaster's nurslings progressed through their university years with flying colours and provided the college with some of its most conspicuously successful *alumni*: two became bishops (John Buckeridge of Rochester and Rowland Searchfield of Bristol), another became the Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford (John Perrin), and two distinguished themselves as royal physicians (William Paddy and Matthew Gwinne). Many of Mulcaster's former students went on to be knighted, such as the aforementioned William Paddy, and James Whitelocke, whose career will be discussed in more detail below. In Anthony Wood's summary of Mulcaster's record at the Merchant Taylors' School, the resulting impact upon the Oxford college is memorably expressed: 'In which place exercising his gifts in a most admirable way of instruction till 1586, in all which time it happily prospered under his vigilancy, St. John's College, Oxford, was supplied with such hopeful plants, that it soon after flourished and became a fruitful nursery.'⁵⁴ Wood's use of the horticultural metaphor here neatly captures the extent of the long-term impact of Mulcaster's educational programme, both upon the students as individuals and upon the college they entered, bringing with them a pedagogical culture which, once rooted in St John's, continued to grow and develop over succeeding decades.⁵⁵

After twenty years of teaching at the Merchant Taylors' School, Mulcaster published his *Positions Concerning the Training Up of Children* (1581). Chapter 10 of this work is entitled 'Of lowd speaking. How necessarie, and how proper an exercise it is for a scholler', where Mulcaster offers detailed advice on 'The exercise of the voice which in Latin they name *vociferatio*'.⁵⁶ His

⁵³ T.H. Vail Motter, *The School Drama in England* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), 105.

⁵⁴ Philip Bliss (ed.), Anthony Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses: An exact history of all the writers and bishops who have had their education in the University of Oxford. To which are added the Fasti, or Annals of the said University* (London: for F. C. & J. Rivington et alii, 3rd edition, 1815), vol. 2, 94.

⁵⁵ For a full and sensitive treatment of this metaphor as used in early modern humanist pedagogy, see Rebecca W. Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), Chapter 3: Cultivating the Mind, 73-116.

⁵⁶ William Barker (ed.), Richard Mulcaster. *Positions Concerning the Training Up of Children* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 65-8.

recommendations for training the voice and strengthening it through, for example, warm-up exercises, demonstrate his belief in the importance of giving scholars practical training in public speaking. That such a training was well-calculated to enable his students to flourish in their professional lives is illustrated by the success of Sir James Whitelocke, who began as the youngest of four sons of a London merchant, experienced considerable financial hardship in his early years, but after school and university energetically accumulated wealth and good standing through his work in the law courts and parliament, arenas in which skills as a public speaker were absolutely essential. Bruce summarises his impressive career trajectory as follows: ‘Rising from the middle ranks, he became a lawyer of eminence, connected himself with several families of importance, took a leading part in constitutional proceedings in parliament, sat with credit on the judicial bench, and was author of several valuable professional and antiquarian papers.’⁵⁷ Amongst such papers is the autobiographical chronicle *Liber Famelicus* in which Whitelocke celebrates his rise to prominence, his current place in society and that of his ever-expanding family; its editor, Bruce, notes, ‘[e]very child born to him brings before us some new persons as godfathers and godmothers, whose social position and status are duly chronicled.’⁵⁸ Accordingly, McConica cites Whitelocke as his example of a son of a townsman with aspirations to join the gentry,⁵⁹ a project in which he was notably successful.

The achievement of his aspirations was built on the education he had received at the Merchant Taylors’ School under Mulcaster and then at St John’s College, Oxford, tutored by scholars such as Rowland Searchfield for humanities and Alberico Gentili for civil law. In his *Liber Famelicus* he proudly recalled attaining his BCL degree with his tutor at his side: ‘I was presented bachelor of law, together with the Mr. Thomas May, by Albericus Gentilis, regius professor in law, in Midsummer 1594.’⁶⁰ More often quoted is what Whitelocke has to say about his school days at the Merchant Taylors’, a narrative which evidences Mulcaster’s active promotion

⁵⁷ John Bruce (ed.), *Liber Famelicus of Sir James Whitelocke*, Camden Society Publications 70 (London: Camden Society, 1858), i.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, vi-vii.

⁵⁹ See footnote 16.

⁶⁰ John Bruce (ed.), *Liber Famelicus of Sir James Whitelocke*, 14.

of musical and theatrical talents among his pupils in addition to language skills:

I was brought up at school under mr. Mulcaster, in the famous school of the Marchantaylors in London, wher I continued untill I was well instructed in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin tongs. His care was also to encreas my skill in musique, in whiche I was brought up by dayly exercise in it, as in singing and playing upon instruments, and yearly he presented sum playes to the court, in whiche his scholers wear only actors, and I on among them, and by that meanes taughte them good behaviour and audacitye.⁶¹

Mulcaster's interest in writing and directing plays inspired a series of exciting, high-profile exploits which his students had a direct share in: he took productions on tour outside of the school, casting his pupils in the acting roles, and they performed in the great hall of the Merchant Taylors' Company, and at the royal court of Queen Elizabeth.⁶²

Theatrical productions were not a formal part of the curriculum at the school - they did not feature in the Statutes, for example – but, as a result of Mulcaster's personal interests and enthusiasm, an experience became available to students which they would not otherwise have had. The situation at Westminster School provides an interesting point of comparison here, for, as a royal foundation, taken into Henry VIII's possession after the monastery had been dissolved in 1540, the school was re-founded by Queen Elizabeth in 1560 with a new set of statutes proscribing annual plays as a fixed element of the calendar at Christmas:

De Comoediis et Ludis in Natali Domini Exhibendis.

Quo juvenus majori cum fructu tempus Natalis Christi terat, et tum actioni tum pronunciationi decenti melius se assuescat: statuimus, ut singulis annis intra 12^m post festum Natalis Christi dies, vel postea arbitrio decani, ludimagister et praeceptor, simul Latine unam, magister choristarum Anglice alteram comoediam aut tragoediam a discipulis et choristis suis in aula privatim vel publice agendam, curent. Quod si non praestiterint singuli,

⁶¹ John Bruce (ed.), *Liber Famelicus of Sir James Whitelocke*, 12.

⁶² See Vail Motter, *School Drama in England*, Appendices IX and X(A), for an overview of performances known to have involve Merchant Taylors' School pupils as actors.

quorum negligentia omittuntur decem solidis mulctentur.⁶³

The warning of the financial forfeit if the plays failed to take place is an indication of the importance with which these activities were viewed. The phrase ‘tum actioni tum pronunciationi decenti melius se assuescat’ explains the motivation behind the statute: the school pupils must be given opportunities to practise employing bodily gesture or movement (*actio*) and rhetorical eloquence (*pronunciatio*), recognisable then as now as the fourth branch of classical rhetoric.⁶⁴ These are important skills for the students to learn and develop if they are to demonstrate potential for a distinguished career in the professions; in addition, the qualifying adjective ‘decenti’, meaning ‘suitable’ or ‘appropriate’, signals the wider benefit of being able to deport oneself well, to show judgement, good taste, and manners in society. Thus it was that, after the introduction of the 1560 statutes, the productions at the school were secured as an annual fixture, patronised by Queen Elizabeth, who attended on several occasions.⁶⁵

The fact that the queen also patronised performances at court given by Mulcaster’s boys from the Merchant Taylors’ School is to the schoolteacher’s personal credit, given that, unlike Westminster, his school had no formal association with the monarch as a royal foundation (whereas the scholarship boys at Westminster had the title of ‘the Queen’s Scholars’). Mulcaster continued to demonstrate his talents in the public arena, writing poems and speeches for other kinds of royal entertainments, for example, Elizabeth’s royal entry in 1559, her visit to Kenilworth in 1575, and James’ triumphal entry in 1604.⁶⁶ His particular aptitude and interests were key in affording theatre an important place in the life of the Merchant Taylors’ School; the absence of official statutes proscribing plays did not hold back the school from developing this as a cultural tradition. Similarly, before Westminster received its new statutes in 1560, the activities of headmasters in

⁶³ Quoted in A.F. Leach (ed.), *Educational Charters and Documents, 598 to 1909* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 518. ‘As to Comedies and Plays to be shown at Christmas. That the youth may spend Christmas-tide with better result, and better become accustomed to proper action and pronounciation, we decree, that every year, within 12 days after Christmas day, or afterwards with the leave of the Dean, the Master and Usher together shall cause their pupils and the choristers to act, in private or public, a Latin comedy or tragedy in Hall, and the Choristers’ Master an English one. And if they do not each do their part, the defaulter shall be fined 10 shillings.’ (trans. Leach).

⁶⁴ On *actio* and *pronunciatio*, see further Chapter 3, pages 130 and 164.

⁶⁵ On Queen Elizabeth’s attendance of the Westminster School Latin play in the 1560s and the custom of presenting her with a copy of the text on these occasions, see Chapter 3, page 174 footnote 111.

⁶⁶ See below, pages 66-7, where I argue that Mulcaster may have been an inspirational figure for Matthew Gwinne when he decided to produce a royal pageant at St John’s College in 1605.

previous decades, such as Alexander Nowell and Nicholas Udall,⁶⁷ had already laid much of the groundwork; highlighting the significance of Nowell's leadership in the 1540s, Edlin concludes that '[i]t was therefore as a confirmation of existing practice, rather than as an innovation, that the Elizabethan statutes made explicit provision, *de comoediis et ludis in natali Domini exhibendis*, for an annual play, to be performed by the Queen's Scholars in Latin.'⁶⁸ When Nowell became headmaster of Westminster (1543-55), he resurrected the tradition of the Westminster Latin Play, which had existed in one form or another since medieval times. In his manner of adapting Senecan tragedies and Terentian comedies for performance by his pupils, Nowell demonstrates contemporary anxieties about the classical drama as a problematic moral exemplum and acknowledges the power which school drama might potentially have as a didactic influence shaping the minds and values of young participants.⁶⁹

The tradition of the Latin play at Westminster School fed Christ Church with theatrically-minded scholars, such as Richard Edes (or Eedes) (bap. 1554–d. 1604), William Gager (1555–1622), Leonard Hutten (1557?-1632), and Thomas Goffe (1591–1629). These men made the same journey from their school to their Oxford college, a phenomenon which added a particular social and cultural dimension to the community at Christ Church; I will discuss this phenomenon in detail in Chapter 3, where I investigate the shared journey and identity of the Merchant Taylors' Scholars who fed the community of St John's College. Here I argue that we can think in terms of a 'Mulcaster generation' of scholars, who brought with them to university a taste for theatrical writing and experience of converting scripts into action. This phenomenon, as I have indicated, could only come into its own once financial stability had been established at St John's, allowing for the flow of scholars from the school into the college and for the provision of college funding for theatrical exploits. The heyday of St John's drama was, therefore, yet to come.

⁶⁷ It is not clear whether Mulcaster's school days at Eton actually overlapped with Udall's headmastership there; Motter's assertion that Mulcaster was 'a product of Nicholas Udall's Eton days' is over-hasty and not supported by any evidence (Vail Motter, *School Drama in England*, 105). However, if proof could be found, the implications for tracing influence and connections between the men and the schools at which they worked would be most interesting. On Udall's textbook *Floures for Latine Spekynges*, see page 156.

⁶⁸ Tom Edlin, 'The Latin Play, 1560-2010: A Brief History of a Great Westminster Tradition' (London: Westminster School, 2010), 3, printed on the occasion of the production of Terence's *Phormio* at the school in 2010.

⁶⁹ On the history of Westminster School purging Terentian plays of their 'corrupting elements', see P.G.McC. Brown, "'The Eunuch' castrated: Bowdlerization in the text of the Westminster Latin Play' in *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 15 (2008), 16-28.

The 1582 plays: an intercollegiate ‘festival’ of drama

William Gager and Matthew Gwinne were elected to Oxford scholarships in the same year, 1574: Gager was a Queen’s Scholar at Westminster who took up a place at Christ Church, following what was by now a traditional pattern, whilst Gwinne was awarded a place to study at St John’s College during the early years when the successful election of Merchant Taylors’ Scholars from the school had just begun. After both men had completed the arts course, graduating BA (Gager on 4 December 1577, Gwinne on 14 May 1578) and then MA (Gager on 5 June 1580, Gwinne on 4 May 1582), Gager pursued the law line working towards the decrees of BCL and DCL, whilst Gwinne continued his focus on the arts (giving public lectures in music for a time in the role of Regent Master before becoming Dean of Arts at St John’s) until he had the opportunity to study medicine, and he was medical Fellow at the college by 1586.⁷⁰

In February 1582, we find these two men connected with a prominent cluster of plays which took place in tandem with one another at their two colleges: a comedy and two tragedies at St John’s and three tragedies and a comedy at Christ Church. Boas’ identification of two of the Christ Church tragedies (as William Gager’s *Meleager* and Richard Edes’ *Caesar Interfectus*)⁷¹ has now been augmented by Finnis and Martin’s argument that the University Sermon delivered by Laurence Humphrey, President of Magdalen and Regius Professor of Sacred Theology, on 28 February 1582, enables us to identify the remaining plays.⁷² Humphrey selects examples from the plays to illustrate his view of the power and uncontrolled fervour of love, and it is these examples which give us insights into the identity of the plays: a production at St John’s of *Alexander and Bagoas*, two Plautine comedies, an *Oedipus*, a play featuring Antony and Cleopatra, and another about the love of Philarchus for Phaedra. (Martin Wiggins has recently suggested that this is not the Phaedra of the Hippolytus legend, but the protagonist of Gager’s lost comedy *Rivales*⁷³). Humphrey reports that the *fabulae* (also referred to as ‘theatricis spectaculis’) have been staged ‘over a number

⁷⁰ Hegarty, *Biographical Register of St. John's College*, 62.

⁷¹ Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age*, 160-3.

⁷² J. Finnis and P.H. Martin, ‘An Oxford Play Festival in February 1582’ in *Notes & Queries* 50 (2003), 391-94. Finnis and Martin also draw attention to the likelihood that there was some input from Magdalen College, since the 1582 accounts for Magdalen record expenditure on musicians ‘at the time of the show’: ‘Musicis tempore spectaculi et pro vigilate 13s 4d’. For further evidence of Magdalen’s involvement, see footnote 75 below.

⁷³ See entry 724 on Gager’s *Rivales*, in Wiggins (ed.), *British Drama, 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, vol. 2: 1567-1589, 297-99.

of days and evenings, ‘aliquot dies & noctes’, and commends their performance as worthy of praise, ‘quidem laudabiliter’. Finnis and Martin argue that the evidence of Humphrey’s sermon ‘suggests that the last two weeks of February 1582 saw a co-ordinated festival of drama’,⁷⁴ though they do not offer specific analysis to underpin this conclusion. Humphrey does not, unlike Bereblock in 1566, make direct remarks praising the intercollegiate collaboration displayed in the plays, but several details are perhaps suggestive. Publishing his 1582 sermon that same year, Humphrey identifies his original listeners as a general university audience, ‘Apud Academicos Oxonienses’, confirming that he was addressing a congregation of members from the university as a whole. Referring to the recent theatrical productions, he uses the phrase ‘in illis vestris fabulis’ (‘those plays of yours’), inviting members from the various colleges represented in the audience to feel a sense of ownership of or identification with these plays, though they were in fact the product of specific colleges, St John’s and Christ Church (and also probably Magdalen⁷⁵).

The production of *Meleager* alluded to by Humphrey takes on special significance when we consider that it was the first ever performance of a play by William Gager; as the author himself put it later in his dedication to the Earl of Essex, this play was his first-born, ‘cum primogenitus meus esset Meleager’. It is also at this time that we first encounter Matthew Gwinne of St John’s in the records of college drama (detailed below). Clearly the involvement of both these men in the February 1582 plays is significant; both would go on to raise the profile of drama at their own colleges and take steps to defend the reputation of the academic stage at large. The February 1582 plays may represent an integrated, intercollegiate project instigated by Gager and Gwinne together, or it may be the occasion which introduced them to one another and sparked their friendship.

The records of St John’s supply details of the practicalities of staging the plays at the college: the college annual accounts or ‘Computus Annuus’ state that a comedy and two tragedies were performed at St John’s on 18, 19, and 20 February 1582, and that the total cost came to over

⁷⁴ Finnis and Martin, ‘An Oxford Play Festival in February 1582’, 392.

⁷⁵ See footnote 72 above. In addition to the evidence of the Magdalen accounts, we also have a sidenote printed in the margin of Humphrey’s sermon which informs readers that the speaker’s references to examples of characters demonstrating passionate love come from productions in the following three Oxford colleges: ‘Fabulae in col: D. Ioannis, Christi, M. Magd.’ (quoted in Finnis and Martin, ‘An Oxford Play Festival in February 1582’, 392).

forty-six pounds. Compared to the twenty shillings spent by ‘the Bachilers’ of St John’s on ‘an interlude’ the previous spring,⁷⁶ this constitutes a conspicuous level of expenditure on theatricals, without any obvious motivating factors such as a visiting dignitary. Support from within the college would have been necessary to persuade it to invest in such activities during these years when money was not in the least plentiful, and it seems likely that Matthew Gwinne was an important factor in St John’s becoming involved in theatre at this time. The entry in the St John’s College Register ratifying expenditure on ‘two tragedies & a comœdy played in the Colledge publickly the xvijth xixth, & xxth of february 1581’ is signed by Gwinne in his capacity as one of the Seniors of the College at that time,⁷⁷ and the use of the word ‘publickly’ here confirms that the audience for these plays did not solely consist of St John’s members, but was open to members of other colleges such as Christ Church as well. The entry in the accounts begins with the emphatic formulaic tricolon confirming the ratification by the College authorities, ‘graunted concluded and agreed by the President & x seniors’, and concludes ‘In wittnesse wherof we the President & felowes have subscribed our names the xxvijth of february 1581’. Matthew Gwinne’s signature alongside that of the current President of St John’s, Francis Willis (1577 to 1590), and his successor to the presidency Ralph Hutchinson (1590 to 1606 – he was President during the 1605 royal visit) serves as a material reminder of Gwinne’s active involvement in college affairs at this time, as a trusted figure not without authority. As I will demonstrate, Gwinne’s outspoken views promoting the value of the academic stage would play an important role in developing St John’s as a centre for drama in the years to come.

In contrast to the detailed accounts for St John’s, we do not have evidence for the exact dates of the Christ Church performance, but it is very likely that they were staged in the final week of February, after the St John’s plays (which took place on 18th, 19th, and 20th), given the marginal note to the first two lines of Humphrey’s sermon, which refers to the plays as ‘Comediae & Traged. Oxon. In fine Febr.’ (‘at the end of February’). Why should Christ Church and St John’s choose to co-ordinate this cluster of productions scheduled within days of each other? One important circumstantial factor was the growing momentum of anti-theatrical criticism at this time, which

⁷⁶ Quoted in *REED: Oxford*, vol. 1, 174.

⁷⁷ SJC Arch: Admin.I.A.1 fol. 209v, quoted in *REED: Oxford*, vol. 1, 176.

encouraged those with interests in drama and those opposed to take an active stance by showing with which faction they sided. This gave interested parties at the two colleges especial impetus to unite their productions and make a show of mutual support, since a joint ‘festival’ (to use Finnis and Martin’s term) would make a bolder statement in promoting the academic stage at Oxford. J.R. Elliott, however, contends that the influence of opponents of play-acting is ‘sometimes exaggerated’,⁷⁸ and perhaps this is true. It would clearly be wrong to assume that the February 1582 plays at Christ Church and St John’s were staged solely as a principled show of defiance, and not for anyone’s enjoyment or interest, but equally we cannot ignore the atmosphere of anti-theatrical tensions during this period, since the clustering of eight plays in ten days is highly conspicuous.

Dramatic arguments for and against: Taking a stance in the 1580s and 90s

Shortly after the February plays, in July of 1582, the Convocation of the University appointed Matthew Gwinne to a Lecturership in Music as a means of affording him financial aid, and on 15 October he delivered the inaugural Latin lecture required of the role. Entitling his speech *In Laudem Musices Oratio*, Gwinne took the opportunity of having a captive university audience to make an explicit counter-attack against a recent work by Stephen Gosson, *The School of Abuse* (1579), written soon after leaving Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where Gosson had been an undergraduate. In this work, Gosson had attacked music, poetry, and plays, and in his response Gwinne turns his criticisms back upon the critic, insinuating that the evils he describes in the life of others are a sign of Gosson’s own degenerate mind:

plures unus in unicum libellum abusus inferserit, quam omnes omnium
ordinum homines in universa vita admiserint, aut cogitarint, aut somniarint
quidem? Sed ut boni non nisi bene de omnibus, sic mali non nisi male de
singulis existimare solent; nec enim, qui ita vivit ut ille, aliter ac ille loqui
potest.

(Gwinne, *In Laudem Musices Oratio*, section v)⁷⁹

⁷⁸ J.R. Elliott, ‘Drama’ in Nicholas Tyacke (ed.) *The History of the University of Oxford*: vol. 4, *The Seventeenth-Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 642.

⁷⁹ ‘Shall this one man have crammed more abuses into a single pamphlet than all men of all orders have committed, imagined, or even dreamed of in all their life? But just as good men tend to think only of the

After this passionate outburst, Gwinne quickly steers back to the subject in hand ('Sed redeamus ad musicam'), but his rebuttal of Gosson stands out as one of the more memorable moments of the speech.

Why did Gwinne feel the need to use his inaugural address to hit back at Gosson? It is likely that he did so because Gosson's criticism was not a one-off but part of a growing debate in which the value of theatre was being questioned. In the early decades of the sixteenth century the staging of plays had been championed as a pedagogical tool for improving pronunciation and presentation skills and there had been little concerted effort to abolish such activities. However, as the century wore on, opposition had become more outspoken and embittered, partly in response to the rising importance and legitimacy of the professional companies during the 1570s, who were now being patronised by royalty and increasingly enjoying the permanence of an institutional footing by performing in new, purpose-built venues.⁸⁰ As we move into the 1580s, the intensification of the pamphlet wars saw the success of works such as Stubbes' fierce and impassioned *Anatomy of Abuses* which, first published in 1583, went through two editions that year and was in its fifth by 1585. George Whetstone makes explicit reference to the growing intensity of the debate around the time of the Christ Church and St John's plays, commenting in his *A Touchstone for the Time* (1584) that: 'The godly Divines, in public sermons, and others in printed books, have (of late) very sharply inveighed against Stage-plays (unproperly called, Tragedies, Comedies, and Morals), as the springs of many vices, and the stumbling-blocks of godliness and virtue.'⁸¹

Opposition to the staging of plays came from a wide range of quarters and did not follow uniformly predictable patterns: for example, despite the fact that many objectors grounded their arguments in the precepts of religion, objectors and supporters of theatre were not divided along

good of everyone, so bad men tend to think ill of each person. And so nor could this man, living as he did, speak otherwise.'

⁸⁰ See W. Ringler, 'The First Phase of the Elizabethan Attack on the Stage, 1558-1579' in *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 5 (1941), 391-418. In his diachronic study, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), J.A. Barish cites the introduction of theatre-building in the 1570s and royal patronage of the professional companies as key factors in the anti-theatrical campaign moving 'into high gear, beginning to take on the rancorous and envenomed character that increasingly stamps it until it reaches a climax with the dissolution of the stage in 1642.' (83).

⁸¹ Quoted in E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), vol. 4, 227.

neat religious lines. A blanket generalisation about anti-theatricalism as a ‘Puritan’ outlook does not reflect the facts, for objectors represented a full range of denominations: Stephen Gosson, for example, who penned *The School of Abuse* to which Gwinne responded, was a student at Corpus Christi, Oxford, the same college as the leader of the anti-theatrical faction, John Rainolds, but he did not share Rainolds’ religious perspective. William Ringler reminds us that Gosson ‘was actually a vigorous opponent of Puritanism’ and that amongst the Anglican community there were those who were ‘just as much disturbed over the evils of playgoing and just as outspoken in their opinions as the most rabid Puritans.’⁸²

Equally, even the strongest objectors could attack certain elements of theatrical culture and leave others unquestioned. For example, some of the theatre’s harshest critics made a point of differentiating between the public stage and productions performed in private venues or educational institutions: John Northbrooke, in his *A Treatise wherein Dicing, Dauncing, Vaine Plaies or Enterludes with other idle passtimes ... are reprovved* (London, 1579), specifically exempted school productions from his attack, considering them beneficial for the pupils involved. The Earl of Leicester, in his role as Chancellor of Oxford University, provided important leadership on this issue in the July 1584 statutes, when he took steps to forbid the performance of plays by professional theatre companies but added the following significant qualification protecting the academic stage:

As I ... thinke the Prohibition of common Stage Players verie requisite, so would I not have it meant thereby that the Tragedies, Comodies, and shews of Exercises of Learning in that kind used to be set forth by Universitye men should be forbidden, but accepting them as commendable and great funderances of Learning do wish them in any wise to be continued at set times and increased, and the youth of the Universitye by good meanes to be encouraged in the decent and frequent setting fourth of them.⁸³

⁸² W. Ringler, *Stephen Gosson: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942), 80. Margot Heinemann contextualises Ringler’s point, encouraging a more nuanced understanding of the Puritan movement and warning against blanket conflation with all anti-theatrical elements; see Chapter 2 of *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama Under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁸³ Quoted in Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age*, 192.

The university dramatists themselves announced that they drew a clear distinction between their productions and the outputs of the popular stage. William Gager addresses his audience directly in the epilogue to his adaptation of Seneca's *Hippolytus* (performed at Christ Church in February 1592) to remind it that the cast of university men it has just seen on stage are a world away from the professional actors of the London theatres:

non histrionam didicimus, Roscii
nescimus artem. ludii nos nec sumus,
nec esse cupimus.

(Gager, Epilogue to *Hippolytus*, 369-71)⁸⁴

Later that same year (1592), Gager reworked these lines into the Epilogue which he contributed to Hutton's *Bellum Grammaticale*, performed before the queen during her visit to Oxford in September. (These verses may have become catch phrases amongst later generations of Christ Church dramatists, as Robert Burton appropriated them in his *Philosophaster*, acted in Christ Church hall in 1618). When challenged by John Rainolds in the aftermath of the February 1592 plays at Christ Church, we find that Gager's defence once again draws strength from making a distinction between what university men do when they perform on stage and what the professionals do:

[W]e differ from them altogether in the manner bothe of setting owte Playes, and of acting them. Thay did it with excessyve charge; we thriftely, warely, and allmost beggerly; [...] we may seeme, compared with them eyther for skill or diligence, rather *recitare*, which you doe not dislike, than *agere*.⁸⁵

Here Gager is responding to a letter from John Rainolds of Corpus Christi, rebutting each of his criticisms in a detailed and attentive manner.⁸⁶ The way in which he represents his productions at

⁸⁴ 'We are not schooled in acting, we do not know Roscius' art. We are not professional actors, nor do we want to be.'

⁸⁵ D.F. Sutton (ed.), *William Gager: The Complete Works* (New York: Garland, 1994), vol. 4, 263.

⁸⁶ The details of this famous exchange between Gager and Rainolds do not need repeating, though the actual production at Christ Church which sparked the correspondence, Seneca's *Hippolytus*, has only recently become the focus of analysis: see Elizabeth Sandis, 'Palimpsestuous Phaedra: William Gager's additions to Seneca's tragedy for his 1592 production at Christ Church, Oxford' in T.F. Earle and C. Fouto (eds.), *The Reinvention of Theatre in Sixteenth-Century Europe: Traditions, Texts and Performance* (Oxford: Legenda, 2015), 141-59.

Christ Church, acted ‘thriftely, warely, and allmost beggerly’, is not modesty but a strategic attempt to separate the realms of academia from the grubby, excessive world of commercial theatre. Gager shows that his defence is clearly rooted in a conception of university drama as an extension of the oratorical traditions of university education, as *recitatio* and *declamatio*.

In response to Rainolds’ accusation that the character of Momus was a deliberate caricature of himself, and that for the purpose Gager had used material taken from Rainolds’ published work against the theatre, Gager retorted that he had never read the work, and that if he had, he would ‘have taken it as spoken agaynst *Histriones*, and not agaynst Schollares’; he went on to clarify this point by rejecting the idea that there was any parallel to be drawn between his group of university actors and a professional cast: ‘I denye that we are to be termed *Scenici*, or *Histriones*’.⁸⁷ Gager might wish to avoid appearing as a reactionary and claim not to have read Rainolds’ work, but his adaptation of Seneca’s *Hippolytus* clearly demonstrates sensitivity to the issues which had been hotly debated over the previous decade and dramatises the meddling interventions of the anti-theatrical camp. After a conventional epilogue signalling the end of the play, Gager adds a surprise twist to the finale, where the figure of Momus is seen suddenly mounting the stage. Based on a classical prototype found in Hesiod and Lucian, Gager’s Momus lives up to his traditional role as the personification of carping criticism, bombarding the audience with ninety-six lines of vivid criticism, uttering, finally, the conclusion that the only thing which pleases him is that nothing can: ‘Hoc placuit unum, quid nihil Momo placet’ (486). Momus’ emphatic language leaves no room for doubting his attitude towards the stage: he brands it ‘Scurrilitatis ludus ac lasciviae, / Ioci officina turpis ac petulans schola’ (419-20).⁸⁸ However, the play does not end on this note, but sees the tide turned fully the other way, with an even longer speech (comprising one hundred and twenty-five lines, four and a half times the length of the original epilogue) which presents the audience with a comprehensive rebuttal of Momus’ criticisms. This speech, entitled the *Epilogus Responsivus*, gives the author the last word on the reception of his production. Clearly Gager had in mind a need to anticipate and pre-empt criticism of his work and found a way to strike back in advance. Hindsight

⁸⁷ Quoted in Karl Young, ‘William Gager’s Defence of the Academic Stage’, in *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters*, 18 (1916), 605, 613.

⁸⁸ ‘It is a game of mockery and insolence, a factory of disgraceful jokes and a saucy school’.

would prove him right in anticipating that criticism, but he would find to his cost that he might not have the last word after all, and that Momus would come back to bite him in the form of John Rainolds.

In engaging with criticism of the theatre head-on by first staking out the arguments of the critic and then disposing of them, Gager is doubtless responding to traditional elements of his rhetorical education; however, in the details of his approach, we can perceive the influence of another pro-theatre figure of the 1580s, his friend John Case. A St John's man, Case had been an active member of the drama scene from his earliest years as a student and the memory of his leadership as Christmas Prince in 1577 had become a college legend.⁸⁹ His moral treatise *Speculum moralium quaestionum* (1585) was the first book to be printed by Joseph Barnes when the new press was established at Oxford, an important development for which was sponsored by the Chancellor of the University, the Earl of Leicester.⁹⁰ It was also, as we have seen, Leicester who had voiced unequivocal support for the academic stage in the July 1584 statutes, and when Case came to publish his *Speculum moralium quaestionum* a few months later, he used the opportunity to signal that Leicester's interest was about more than just the practical advantages of having a local printing press. Giving his reasons for dedicating the treatise to him, Case emphasises Leicester's encouraging words to him in private while he was working on the book, '(cum hîc aderas) mihi privatim in hoc genere studiorum laboranti suavissimis verbis' (*Speculum moralium quaestionum*, ¶.2.), implying that he was a supporter of the content of Case's work and not simply the press on which it was printed. Indeed, Case chooses his words carefully to subtly suggest that his patron shares in the authorship of the work by being what he calls the 'author' of the press: 'Praelum hoc novum (cuius author existis) hunc novum de moribus libellum pressit.'⁹¹ When Case published his commentary on Aristotle's *Politics* a few years later, entitled *Sphaera civitatis*, he decided to make a series of outspoken arguments in favour of academic theatre, devoting several sections of the

⁸⁹ See above, page 16, and below, Chapter 2, pages 87-9.

⁹⁰ Jason Peacey, "'Printers to the University' 1584-1658' in Gadd, I.A., Eliot, S., Louis, W., and Robbins, K. (eds.), *The History of Oxford University Press* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013-), vol 1, 51-77 (51-2).

⁹¹ 'This new press, of which you are author, has printed this new little book about morals.' (*Speculum moralium quaestionum*, ¶.2.)

treatise to addressing issues of the function and respectability of the stage.⁹² The *Sphaera civitatis*, I will argue, furnished Gager with material he found useful for his own work; he had contributed prefatory verses to the volume when it was published in 1588, and when he staged his adaptation of Seneca's *Hippolytus* at Christ Church in 1592, his decision to add the Epilogue-Momus-Responsive Epilogue indicated his alignment with Case and his appreciation of his work.

Case begins his discussion by asking whether plays and dances ought to be permitted in the commonwealth ('Vtrum ludi, chorique; permittendi sint in ciuitate?', V.viii⁹³), then puts forward a series of reasons as to why they should: plays are worth defending because they provide 'honest recreation' (*honesta recreatio*) and what he calls 'the splendour of companionship' (*splendor comitatis*). Moreover, they have important reflective, didactic, and practical elements: 'in his mores hominum depictos discere, praecleara inuenta doctorum obseruare, temporum antiquorum caniciem cernere, vocem, vultum, gestumque; splendidè componere, varios affectus et passiones mouere, famam acquirere et comparare possumus.'⁹⁴ He goes on to elaborate a list of potential objections (*oppositio*) to theatre as a worthwhile and acceptable activity, followed by a defence in answer to those objections (*responsio*). The way in which Case structures his address of the issues, and his choice of the content for arguments for and against is striking, prefiguring as it does Gager's elaboration of Momus' complaints in the *Hippolytus* and the *Epilogus Responsivus* which follows. Not only do Case and Gager propose many of the same arguments against plays (that, for instance, they corrupt morals and that they waste money and time) and present intersecting refutations of these arguments, but verbal echoes of Case's work can be found in Gager's formulation of key points. For example, in his defence of men dressing as women to play female characters (V.viii, *responsio*), Case declares 'dico non indecorum esse, non impium vt viri faeminarum personas in

⁹² James McConica's discussion of the *Sphaera civitatis* offers a useful contextualisation of Case's philosophical treatise in the wider scheme of Elizabethan theology, politics, and pedagogy: 'Humanism and Aristotle in Tudor Oxford', *The English Historical Review*, 94 (1979), 291-317, especially 310-14. The main study of John Case's work remains Charles B. Schmitt, *John Case and Aristotelianism in Renaissance England* (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983).

⁹³ John Case, *Sphaera civitatis* (Oxford, 1588), 474.

⁹⁴ 'in them we are able to study the ways of men as they are portrayed, to regard the brilliant inventions of scholars, to see the venerable white hair of ancient times, to compose our voice, face, and gesture in noble manner, to inspire various affects and experiences, and attain and secure renown.'

scenico theatro fingant: non enim in veste sed in mente sceleris contagio inest.’⁹⁵ Gager echoes Case when he comes to his own defence of cross-dressing on stage, with the sentence ‘Non ergo vestis fœminea, iuueni est scelus, / Sed praua mens’.⁹⁶ Such parallels suggest that Case was leading the way in formulating such arguments and the method of their presentation, and that once again the personalities of Christ Church and St John’s are in a supportive relationship to one another in relation to drama, with influence flowing not one-way, outward from Christ Church to St John’s, but in both directions. In the finale to his *Hippolytus*, Gager draws strength from Case’s work to bolster his defence of the theatre and shows originality in dramatising part of the anti-theatrical debate on stage through the intervention of Momus and the refutation of Momus which follows.

Regardless of the Christ Church company’s intentions, the result was indeed an outburst by Rainolds, at first contained within private correspondence, but which then broke out into the public sphere of print. This had the effect of not only inflaming tensions between existing pro- and anti-theatrical factions but also encouraging those with strong views to come out and show themselves in support of either side. Gentili and Gwinne did just that in support of Gager, and I will discuss Gentili’s publications and Gwinne’s preface to his Latin play *Nero* further below. Rainolds’ accusations against the Gagerian productions had the unintended consequence of consolidating Gager’s position as key spokesman for the pro-theatrical faction, and then, after he had retired from Oxford, of bringing forward others inspired by his leadership to continue where he had left off.

When the members of St John’s embarked upon mounting a grand series of plays during the winter vacation of 1607-8, one of the college’s most substantial theatrical projects to date, there was comedy to be had from the idea that St John’s was coming under the immoral influence of the commercial playhouses, and even becoming one itself. In Act V Scene iii of *Ira Fortunae*, we see Momus appear once again to criticise the university men for their theatrical exploits; he insinuates that, under the (mis)guidance of their Christmas Prince, Thomas Tucker, the college community have been led astray and that St John’s ‘will become a house belonging to actors and be called “The

⁹⁵ John Case, *Sphaera civitatis* (Oxford, 1588), 476-7. ‘I say that it is not unseemly, not sinful, that men should play the roles of women on the theatrical stage. For the infection of wickedness is not in the clothes, but in the mind’.

⁹⁶ William Gager, *Ulysses Redux* (Oxford, 1592), sig. F5v. (See below, pages 38-9, on Gager’s decision to publish the *Hippolytus* epilogues as an appendix to his *Ulysses Redux*). ‘Therefore it is not woman’s clothes that is a source of wickedness for a young man, but a perverted mind’.

Fortune” (7016-7).⁹⁷ Momus’ attempt to tarnish the college students’ production of Christmas entertainments by claiming that they are becoming no different from a professional company of actors is here a comical insult as part of the entertainment, but it draws some of its *vis comica* from the previous decades of anti-theatrical criticism at Oxford and the history of the debates in which their forebears vociferously participated. The choice of ‘The Fortune’ as the new name for St John’s is a good joke, both a nod to the goddess Fortuna who has been underpinning the Christmas Prince’s right to rule at the college (as dramatised in *Ara Fortunae* at the start of the season of revels) and a contemporary reference to one of the leading playhouses in London at that time, the Fortune Theatre founded in 1600 in the parish of St Giles-without-Cripplegate and used by the Admiral’s Men.

An intercollegiate network of support: the role of print

Promoting the academic stage at Oxford in the 1580s and ’90s was more than a matter of staging plays, it also involved gathering a circle of friends and acquaintances whose support could be demonstrated through the medium of print. The use of dedicatory poems specifically composed to preface another’s works at the time of publication became an important tool for advocating not just the particular work being published, whether it be a sheaf of poems, a full-length play, or a work of prose, but a wider signal of support for the activities of that individual. We might even go so far as to call it a political statement of allegiance, or, at the very least, a demonstration of loyalty and shared values.

J.W. Binns argues persuasively that membership of literary circles manifested itself in this custom of gratulatory epigrams. The phenomenon of prefatory poems offers a network of social webs linking writer to writer and book to book: ‘these verses help to identify the literary *milieu* from which the work arose, and in which it found its home. Their study can consequently provide evidence for the existence of the literary and intellectual circles of the age. Such evidence becomes all the stronger if time after time one finds the same group of people writing dedicatory poems to

⁹⁷ See Chapter 2 for a detailed analysis of the 1607-8 revels. I discuss the nature of the manuscript which preserves these entertainments at pages 114ff. Also see Chapter 2 footnote 44 for details of Boas’ edition, from which my citations are taken.

each other's works.'⁹⁸ Such is the case with the Christ Church-St John's circle that emerged in the 1580s, drawing together such figures as William Gager, Tobie Matthew the Elder, and Richard Edes from Christ Church, and John Case, Alberico Gentili, Matthew Gwinne, and Richard Latewar from St John's College. These men of letters showed their support for one another's literary activities and their membership of an intercollegiate literary circle through frequent contributions of prefatory verses. Commending the author's work to potential readers would help to sell copies, but, more significantly, it anchored the work in a network of solidarity, which stretched beyond the author's individual college community.

Gager was one of the first of the group to begin composing verses for others in the circle, dedicating compositions to Tobie Matthew the Elder in the 1570s and early 80s.⁹⁹ We also find several early verses dedicated to Richard Edes in Gager's autograph commonplace book, British Library Add. MS 22583 (fols. 47, 52, 56, 74). Gager, Latewar, and Gwinne all contributed verses to an anthology commemorating the death of Philip Sidney, the *Exequiae D. Philippi Sidnaei* (1587) which was edited by Gager, and this volume had a rival at Oxford, the New College-led *Peplus illustrissimi viri D. Philippi Sidnaei supremis honoribus dicatus*, edited by John Luid. Gager may have consciously given friends from his circle the opportunity to ally themselves with the great writer through printing their epigrams at the start of his work. This is a strategy which seems to have worked, for Gwinne is most well-known for his co-editing of Sidney's *New Arcadia* with Fulke Greville shortly after, printed under the title *The Countesse of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1590). The works of the philosopher John Case were liberally adorned with gratulatory verses signed by the usual suspects: William Gager contributed a prefatory poem to Case's *Sphaera civitatis* (1588), as mentioned above, and so too did Richard Latewar and Matthew Gwinne. When Gager came to print his plays, therefore, he was able to mobilise a considerable amount of support from this circle, anchoring in print the weight of the group's combined voice as a permanent testimony outliving the short moment of the staged productions themselves. Gager's *Ulysses Redux* (1592), a tragicomic retelling of the second half of the *Odyssey*, was printed at Oxford only a few months after its

⁹⁸ Binns, *Intellectual Culture*, 167.

⁹⁹ British Library Add. MS 10943, fols. 51, 68–71, 74–76v.

performance, by Joseph Barnes. Prefacing the play we find poems by Alberico Gentili, Richard Edes, Matthew Gwinne, and Richard Latewar. Again, prefacing Gager's *Meleager* (printed in 1593, also by Barnes) were commendatory verses penned by Alberico Gentili, Richard Edes, and one who signs himself 'I.C.', who, as J.W. Binns suggests, is most likely to be identified as Gager's friend the St John's philosopher John Case.¹⁰⁰

To take an example of one of these gratulatory epigrams, here is Latewar's contribution for *Ulysses Redux*, comprising a single couplet: 'Græcus cæcus erat, nunc est oculatus Homerus, / Lumina cui Latii clara dedere modo.'¹⁰¹ In this couplet Latewar pays tribute to Gager as one of the cultured 'Latii' (Latin-speaking people), the learned inheritors of Greek wisdom and culture who are able to regenerate the eloquence of the ancient world through the elegance of their Latin compositions. Latewar is here commending Gager's work as from one Latin playwright to another, himself the author of a tragedy in Latin entitled *Philotas*, performed at St John's some time between 1588 and 1596 (now lost).¹⁰² According to the custom of Oxford academic penmen, Latewar signs his poem with reference to his collegiate identity: 'Richardus Late-warr Ioannensis', Richard Latewar of St John's. His couplet is positioned below the verses written by his college friend Matthew Gwinne, who also signs with the epithet *Ioannensis*.

When it came to publishing his adaptation of Seneca's *Hippolytus*, Gager gave the work the title *Panniculus Hippolyto Senecae Tragoediae Assutus* [Little Patch Sewn on to Seneca's *Hippolytus*]. He separated the additional material he had penned himself and had this printed in two stages: the new scenes which he had added to Seneca's original were printed as an appendix to the volume containing his *Meleager* (E8r-F5v), whilst his prologue and three epilogues written for the production were appended to *Ulysses Redux* (F2v-F6v). This separation is an intriguing choice; does it represent a strategy to push the material into the public domain but at a low-key level? The

¹⁰⁰ Binns, *Intellectual Culture*, 127.

¹⁰¹ William Gager, *Ulysses Redux* (Oxford, 1592), π.vii. 'The Greek was blind, now Homer, is given eyes, whose work the Latins have lately brought into the clear light of day.'

¹⁰² Samuel Daniel (whose production of *Arcadia Reformed* at Christ Church in 1605 is discussed below, pages 78ff.), refers to 'my deare friend Dr Lateware' in the *Apology* to his *Tragedy of Philotas* and recalled a meeting years beforehand when, having mentioned his plans to compose the *Philotas*, Latewar had stated that he 'himself had written the same argument and caused it to be presented in St. John's College, Oxon., where, as I afterwards heard, it was worthily and with great applause performed.' (Quoted in *REED: Oxford*, vol. 1, 208).

fact of splitting the Gagerian sections from the Senecan is perhaps not so surprising, given the title of the *Panniculus* (Little Patch), which signals that Gager did not intend his additions to blend in completely seamlessly but might be recognisable as an extra layer. However, the relegation of the material to the back of these two volumes does seem covert; Sutton argues that Gager anticipated the material would be deemed inflammatory and sought a subtle way to introduce it: ‘One might even suspect that he printed this old play [*Meleager*, first performed 1582, revived 1585] as an excuse for putting these documents on the public record.’¹⁰³ Given the tension over the reception of Gager’s work, the versified messages of support from Gentili, Gwinne & co. which preface the *Ulysses Redux* and the *Meleager* take on a greater significance as a symbolic defence of all the material contained within each published volume, not just the play announced on the title page.

Gentili and Gwinne take up the baton from Gager

When, on May 30 1593, Rainolds sent Gager another letter criticising his theatrical pursuits, this time a document of considerable length (totalling some fifty thousand words¹⁰⁴), Gager did not reply. Instead, his friend Alberico Gentili took up his pen in answer to Rainolds and posted him a copy of the Latin treatise he had just published on Joseph Barnes’ press: *Commentatio ad L[egem] III C[odicis] de prof[essoribus] et med[icis]* (‘Commentary on the third law of the (Justinian) Code on Teachers and Doctors’). As J.W. Binns has pointed out, this rather ‘unalluring’ title, whilst not appearing out of place amongst Gentili’s other scholarly works on legal matters, concealed the true nature of its content, a defence of poetry and acting.¹⁰⁵ In choosing such a title for his work Gentili is grounding his views in the authoritative framework of a scholarly commentary on a legal text, thereby asserting the legitimacy of his academic opinion on the question of poetry and acting from a legal standpoint. In sending a copy of the treatise to Rainolds, along with his letter, he demonstrates that he, the Regius Professor of Civil Law, is an academic authority on those issues which Rainolds, a theologian, could not justifiably claim to have the last word. He deliberately charges the debate

¹⁰³ Introduction to D.F. Sutton, *William Gager, Meleager (1582). A hypertext critical edition* (12 November 2005): <<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/gager/plays/meleager/intro.html>> (accessed January 2012).

¹⁰⁴ According to J.W. Binns’ calculation, in ‘Women or Transvestites on the Elizabethan Stage?: An Oxford Controversy’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 5 (1974), 95-120 (99).

¹⁰⁵ J.W. Binns, ‘Alberico Gentili in Defense of Poetry and Acting’ in *Studies in the Renaissance*, 19 (1972), 225. My quotations from Gentili’s treatise are taken from the edition published by Binns in this article.

with the tension of inter-faculty rivalry, for the treatise includes the following lines: ‘Nam qui histrioniam omnem sublatam esse volunt, hi auctoritate theologorum magis moventur. Ego vero ut theologorum auctoritate in re religionis valde moveor, ita in re morali, aut politica non valde.’¹⁰⁶ This provocation enveigled Rainolds in a new and heated exchange of letters.

Gentili decided to dedicate his *Commentatio ad L[egem] III C[odicis] de prof[essoribus] et med[icis]* to Tobie Matthew the Elder, who had been instrumental in settling him into the post of Tutor for Law at St John's College when he arrived in Oxford as a refugee.¹⁰⁷ However, Gentili makes it clear that the choice of dedicatee is not only a sign of his gratitude to Matthew for his early patronage of his career, but is motivated by the fact that Matthew is a weighty authority on the issues raised in the treatise. Gentili ‘offer[s him] such commentaries as these’ (‘tales tibi defero commentationes’) because they are distinguished in argument (‘Sunt istae quidem argumento illustres’) and worthy of Matthew given his high political standing in church and state: ‘te dignae (te, qui in speculis, atque gubernaculo sedes ecclesiae, et reipublicae) de artibus, et studiis, quae exterminari de republica debent, aut in ea ferri possunt, vel probari, atque etiam praemiari consueverunt.’¹⁰⁸ Matthew, with his exalted position in government, is therefore well-qualified to make a moral judgement on the subject of Gentili’s commentary, ‘de artibus, et studiis’, and to choose in which direction church and state should move in supporting or condoning the arts; the range of options is given in a suggestive list which moves from punishment towards promotion: does Matthew think these activities should be banished (‘exterminari’), tolerated (‘ferri’), or rewarded (‘praemiari’)?

The other principal focus of the preface addresses the problem of Matthew’s absence from the university; his departure has left a vacuum in Oxford, particularly in the field of oratory: ‘Te viro omnium eloquentissimo nobis abducto mutam propemodum istam academiam factam videri, quae nulli tamen alii per Europam cedit ingeniis, et disciplinis, at quae tamen aliis academiis

¹⁰⁶ Gentili, *Commentatio ad L[egem] III C[odicis] de prof[essoribus] et med[icis]*, 247. ‘For those who wish all acting to be banned are more influenced by the authority of the theologians. And I indeed, as I am greatly influenced by the authority of the theologians in matters of religion, so am I not greatly influenced by them in matters of morals or politics.’ (trans. Binns).

¹⁰⁷ For Gentili’s career at Oxford and Matthew’s support, see above, pages 16-17.

¹⁰⁸ Gentili, *Commentatio ad L[egem] III C[odicis] de prof[essoribus] et med[icis]*, 229. ‘worthy of you (you who sit in the watchtower and at the helm of Church and State) dealing as they do with the arts and pursuits which ought to be driven out of the State, or which can be tolerated in it, or else have been wont to be approved and even rewarded.’ (trans. Binns).

omnibus in laude isthac oratoria per te unum maxime antecelluit. Sic res est, sic.’¹⁰⁹ In emphasising Oxford’s particular reputation for oratory and Matthew’s role in promoting it (‘per te unum’, ‘through you alone’), Gentili’s tone here is hyperbolic and adds a touch of humour – without Matthew, the Oxford academy is practically mute: ‘mutam propemodum’. The preface is dated 26 June 1593, and Matthew had vacated his post as Dean of Christ Church to take up the Deanery of Durham years before, in 1584, so why would Gentili feel the loss so keenly now?

I suggest that the tone of his preface is linked with Gager’s decision to retire from the scene after having provided a full decade of leadership for the academic stage through his productions and publishing activities. He had also been a general advocate for the promotion of oratory at Oxford in his role as Rhetor of Christ Church (a post which he held by 1583 at the latest, this being the date of the first reference to his appointment in the college accounts), lamenting in his speech *Eloquentiae Encomium* (1585) the relative poverty of oratorical skills in his era compared with the illustrious example of the ancients, and the fundamental significance of rhetorical training for one’s career: ‘For’, he asks his audience, ‘what skill can be more useful than eloquence?’ (‘quae igitur facultas eloquentia utilior esse potest?’, *Eloquentiae Encomium*.¹¹⁰) However, in February 1592, he announced that he was hanging up his lyre and setting aside his art:

hanc etiam dari
 Vnam labori postulat stipem ultimo,
 Qui sæpe fecit fabulas vobis dari.
 Sed hic habebit barbiton paries suum,
 Hic arma figit, hic equum soluit senem,
 Artemque cæstusque hic reponit ludicros.

(Gager, Epilogue to *Panniculus Hippolyto Senecae Tragoediae Assutus*)¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Gentili, *Commentatio ad L[egem] III C[odicis] de professoribus et medicis*, 229. ‘Now that you, the most eloquent man of all, are taken from us, the university, which yields in talent and learning to no other university in all Europe, but which indeed particularly excelled all other universities in glorious reputation for oratory through your efforts alone, seems to have been made almost dumb. That is the truth, it really is.’ (trans. Binns).

¹¹⁰ D.F. Sutton (ed.), *William Gager: The Complete Works*, vol. 4, 238.

¹¹¹ Epilogue to *Panniculus*, in *Ulysses Redux* (Oxford, 1592), sig.F3r. ‘This is the one thing he asks to be given as payment for his final labour, he who has often engineered plays to be performed for you. But here the wall shall have his lute, here he hangs his weapons up, here he unties his veteran horse, here he sets aside both his art and his sporting gloves.’ (The one thing he has requested is the audience’s pardon (*venia*) for their performance being of an amateur nature, not a professional one. His use of *stips* (‘small coin’, ‘fee’) is therefore a neat joke, that this pardon or indulgence is the only payment scholars require when they take to the stage).

In dedicating his treatise on poetry and acting to Tobie Matthew in 1593, therefore, Gentili is responding to recent developments in previous months. Prefacing his treatise with the address to Matthew stamps his arguments with the approval of this power figure, and reminds those opposed to their views what a bastion of the pro-theatrical faction Matthew once was at Oxford. He had been a leading figure in the staging of university plays for Queen Elizabeth a generation earlier, in 1566, and he sent his son on the same path after him: Tobie Matthew the Younger performed on stage in the role of Nais in Gager's adaptation of Seneca's *Hippolytus* in February 1592, the very occasion which sparked Rainolds' backlash.

Discussing Gager's announcement of his retirement from the theatre, Tucker Brooke comments on the vacuum left behind him at Christ Church:

His going seems to have left Christ Church barren of dramatic talent, for that college produced nothing memorable during the next generation; and the leadership passed easily to St. John's, which had in Dr. Matthew Gwynne a productive, if not very inspired, dramatist.¹¹²

Whether or not we view Gwinne's work as 'inspired', he was active in promoting the academic stage and had valuable recent experience, having been appointed to the organising committee arranging entertainments for the queen's visit to Oxford in September 1592. The monarch's visit was disclosed to the Vice Chancellor at very short notice, the plague having necessitated a quick removal from London, and the Convocation of the University responded quickly in selecting a committee 'to oversee and provide for the plays in Christ-Church': the Christ Church Dean and Sub-dean, various Canons and Students of Christ Church (which included Gager), the Vice-Chancellor of the University and the two Proctors of the University (which included Gwinne).¹¹³ Gager did not write anything new for the occasion, having already announced his retirement: his play *Rivales*, which had already been performed at Oxford at least twice (in 1583 and February 1592, but possibly also in February 1582¹¹⁴), was wheeled out again, and he added an epilogue for Leonard Hutten's production of *Bellum Grammaticale*. The venue for productions was restricted

¹¹² C.F. Tucker Brooke, 'The Life and Times of William Gager (1555-1622)' in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 95 (1951), 401-431 (426).

¹¹³ Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age*, 252.

¹¹⁴ See above, page 25 and footnote 73, on Wiggins' argument that Gager's *Rivales* was amongst the February 1582 plays referred to in Lawrence Humphrey's sermon.

to Christ Church on this occasion, so Gwinne did not have an opportunity to highlight the up-and-coming talents of St John's, but he acquitted himself well in his performance in a disputation before the queen, 'wherein his wittie handlinge of the matter, and discreete behavior, seemed much to please hir majestie'.¹¹⁵

It is with Gager's departure that Gwinne's contribution to the promotion of drama at Oxford really comes into its own. The preface to his Latin tragedy *Nero* shows Gwinne mounting a spirited defence of drama against its detractors, criticising them for their ignorance of the theatre and their lurid imaginings; in so doing, Gwinne echoes an argument he had made twenty years before in his *In Laudem Musices Oratio*, the lecture in which he refuted Gosson's *School of Abuse*:

Plus indecori, inhumani, illiciti, (quod vnquam senserim) vident qui absunt,
 imaginantur qui obtrectant, memorant qui maledicunt, quam qui interfui,
 vidi, audiui, cogitavi, vel (vigilans si somniaret) somniaui.

(Gwinne, preface to *Nero*, ¶3r).¹¹⁶

We do not know exactly when the *Nero* or its preface were composed, but there are several clues. The fact that Gwinne references Henry Savile's *The Ende of Nero and Beginning of Galba* (1591) several times in his side-notes gives us a convincing *terminus post quem* (and it also raises questions about Gwinne's motives in dramatising the reign of a tyrant, given Savile's connections with the Essex plot.)¹¹⁷ There is also another reason for thinking that *Nero* was written post-1592: Gwinne's pointed attack on absent critics, who presume to judge a play which they did not

¹¹⁵ John Ward, *Lives of the Professors of Gresham College* (London: Printed by John Moore in Bartholomew lane for the author, 1740), 260.

¹¹⁶ Matthew Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia noua* (London, 1603). 'They, who abstain from the theater, perceive more of indecorum, inhumanity, and the illicit (as has always been my experience), imagining these things they rail against, remembering these things they curse, than I, a theatergoer, have ever seen, heard, thought, or (if a wide awake man can be said to be a dreamer) dreamt of.' (trans. D.F. Sutton: *Matthew Gwinne, Nero (1603). A hypertext critical edition* (27 November 1997): <<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/Nero/>> (accessed November 2011)).

¹¹⁷ Since the political themes of Gwinne's play have been recently well analysed, I do not treat them in detail here, except to point out that Gwinne re-dedicated his *Nero* once the reins of power were in the hands of King James, demonstrating the strategic use of academic drama at the time of the accession (see below, footnote 122 and page 51) and that his play was sufficiently interesting to be reprinted in 1638 and 1639 (by Milo Flesher in London) amidst the tensions of King Charles' Personal Rule (1629 to 1640, otherwise known as the Eleven Years' Tyranny). On the political content of Gwinne's *Nero*, see Emma Buckley, 'Matthew Gwinne's *Nero* (1603): Seneca, Academic Drama, and the Politics of Polity', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 40 (2013), 16-33, and 'Drama in the Margins - Academic Text and Political Context in Matthew Gwinne's *Nero: Nova Tragædia* (1603) and Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* (1603/5)' in Sarah Knight and Elizabeth Sandis (eds.), *Latin Drama in Early Modern Europe*.

themselves attend. This is bound to remind us of John Rainolds, who did not watch Gager's production of Seneca's *Hippolytus* but railed against it in correspondence with its author. In particular, Gwinne's use of the phrase 'absentes Momos'¹¹⁸ in the dedicatory epistle to *Nero* seems calculated to recall the specific circumstances of Rainolds's diatribe, namely that he suspected Gager was caricaturing him when he had Momus enter the stage at the end of the Christ Church production in February 1592.

It is interesting that we find copies of Gwinne's *Nero* bound together with some of the most prominent anti-theatrical works from previous decades, suggesting that Gwinne was considered one of the key advocates of drama during this period and that his writing made an important contribution to the debate. For example, in St John's HB4/4.a.6.15(1), an early seventeenth-century volume donated to the College by the book collector Nathaniel Crynes (1685-1745), we find a copy of Gwinne's *Nero* (1603) and his other play *Vertumnus* (1607) bound together with John Northbrooke's *A Treatise wherein Dicing, Dauncing, Vaine Plaies or Enterludes with other idle pastimes ... are reprovved* (1579) and John Rainolds's *Th'Overthrow of Stage-Playes, by the Way of Controversie betwixt D. Gager and D. Rainoldes* (1629).¹¹⁹ The history of the publication of Rainolds' *Th'Overthrow of Stage-Playes* is worthy of further comment here, since the work was first printed in 1599 in Holland by the Protestant printing house of Richard Schilders in Middelburg. This 1629 edition in the St John's HB4/4.a.6.15(1) volume is the first edition to be published in Oxford, which perhaps suggests that – in contrast to Gager, who was turning out his plays on Joseph Barnes' press in the 1590s – Rainolds was lacking the support to get his work into print through this means.

When we consider Gwinne's publication of the *Nero* in 1603, the absence of verses penned by Gager or any others of the old circle leaves rather a noticeable gap, given the numerous contributions which Gwinne had made to his friends' works over previous decades. However, it may simply be that the intercollegiate network of support, so active at Christ Church and St John's in the 1580s and '90s, had grown obsolete and disbanded by the turn of the century and that Gwinne had outlasted the rest of them. He had certainly outlived some of them: Richard Latewar

¹¹⁸ *Nero*, ¶3v.

¹¹⁹ My thanks to Ben Higgins for sharing the results of his investigations into volumes containing Gwinne's works.

died in 1601, and Richard Edes in 1604. Gager, approaching the age of forty, had announced his retirement from the Oxford dramatic scene in 1592, long before any of Gwinne's plays were published, and perhaps the two men simply lost touch. They had both moved away from Oxford and were busy with their new careers: Gwinne had moved to London to establish his medical practice and Gager had moved to Ely to pursue a career in the church. Gager restricted the very few poems he contributed in his later years to the commemoration of deaths and marriages; we find Gwinne, by contrast, penning another of his prefatory verses for John Case, when his *Lapis philosophicus* was published at Oxford in 1599 on Joseph Barnes' press. Gwinne did not lose touch with Case, indeed there is interesting evidence of the two men working together to build up the library holdings at St John's College in the last years of Case's life. As J.F. Fuggles has noted, a letter from Sir Thomas Tresham to Case in 1598, which promises to make donations of books to the college library, mentions Matthew Gwinne as a go-between, and the scale of Tresham's gift leads Fuggles to conclude that credit should be given to the men who arranged for this major contribution: 'It had been John Case and Matthew Gwynne who by their endeavours had helped so notably to enrich the library'.¹²⁰ Case's memorial, located on the south wall of the chapel in St John's College, bears an inscription which may well have been penned by Gwinne, since his role in erecting the monument is therein highlighted: 'UXOR ELIZABETHA, BARTHOLOM. WARNER GENER, MATTHAEUS GWYNNE CURATOR, DOCTORES MED. PIAE MEMORIAE POSUERE.'¹²¹

Case died in 1600 and was therefore not able to return the favour of Gwinne's many prefatory verses for *his* works when Gwinne's *Nero* was published in 1603. John Sansbury, who had matriculated aged seventeen in July 1593, twenty years after Gwinne, and therefore represents a new generation of literati at St John's, stands out as the sole contributor of verses in praise of Gwinne's *Nero*, alongside Gwinne's own preface dedicating his work to Lord Chancellor

¹²⁰ J.F. Fuggles, 'A History of the Library of St John's College, Oxford, from the Foundation of the College to 1660' (Oxford, B.Litt. thesis, 1975), 58 and quotation from page 114.

¹²¹ Quoted in Reginald H. Adams (ed.), *Memorial Inscriptions in St John's College, Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1996), 24. 'His wife, Elizabeth, and son-in-law Bartholomew Warner and as a trustee Matthew Gwynne, both Doctors of Medicine, set up this memorial to his affectionate memory.' (trans. Adams).

Thomas Egerton (and Egerton's son and son-in-law).¹²² However, what the corpus of paratexts may lack in bulk it makes up for in enthusiasm, championing Gwinne's work and setting it above some of his most famous contemporaries. Sandbury's poem styles Gwinne as the very reincarnation of Seneca, 'Ex ore Gwinni pristinum seruat decus' ('[Seneca] preserves, through the mouth of Gwinne, his former glory'), and offers a mock apology to three of the major players in neo-Latin drama, Beza (1519–1605), Buchanan (1506–82), and Gager (1555–1622), judging Gwinne's talent superior to theirs, 'Gagere, Buchanane, nec Beza, inuide' (Gager, Buchanan, Beza, do not be jealous').¹²³ On Gwinne's treatment of Senecanism J.W. Binns concurs with Sansbury, concluding: 'In his *Nero*, Gwinne succeeds not only in reproducing the traditional elements of Senecan tragedy, but in surpassing them.'¹²⁴ Certainly the play exemplifies the cause-and-effect patterning of Senecan cycles of revenge, and, as Sutton puts it, 'contains enough ghosts to populate a small graveyard'.¹²⁵ *Nero* is rigorously structured to build up the following rhythm: each of the first four acts dramatizes a conspiracy leading up to a murder, and the ghost of that victim then appears to introduce the next act. The chorus, consisting of Nemesis and the Furies, also contributes to the effect of the pattern: Nemesis delivers the prologue and epilogue framing the play and supplies the chorus at the end of Act IV, whilst Tisiphone, Allecto, and Megaera each take a chorus at the end of the first three acts. All four of them come together to deliver the final chorus at the end of Act V, and, as Binns puts it, 'This gives the impression that the events of the play are being stage-managed by the Furies.'¹²⁶

It would, however, have been a stage-manager's nightmare, with a script of over five thousand lines and a cast of more than eighty characters. This is a play of colossal proportions, and it was never performed, though in the *Nero*'s preface Gwinne states that he did offer it to St John's.

¹²² In February 1597, through the support of Lord Chancellor Egerton, Gwinne had been nominated by the Convocation of the University to the post of the first Professor of Physic at Gresham College, London, a significant advancement in his medical career. See page 51 for Gwinne's decision, after the death of Elizabeth, to replace the dedication to Egerton with a new epistle dedicated to King James. However, he left the epilogue as it was, with its exultation of Elizabeth ('ELISA regnat', line 5124).

¹²³ *Nero*, A1r.

¹²⁴ J.W. Binns, 'Seneca and Neo-Latin Tragedy in England' in C.D.N. Costa (ed.), *Seneca* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 215–24 (224).

¹²⁵ D.F. Sutton, Introduction to *Matthew Gwinne, Nero*.

¹²⁶ Binns, 'Seneca and Neo-Latin Tragedy in England', 221.

This was not a wholehearted request for a production of the play, he explains, but a gesture of gratitude and loyalty to the members of his College for old times' sake:

Nec dico quod non oblata: nec enim debui, qui multum, qui me debeo Collegio in primis Ioannensi, tum eius Praesidi dignissimo, dein Sociis doctissimis, *Paddæo* demum nostro beneficentissimo Conuictori, quod apud illos exaratum, certe non debui non offerre: etsi sic (fateor) obtulerim, vt quam acceptam, melius repudiatam tulerim.

(Gwinne, *Nero*, ¶4r)¹²⁷

It is here, in this section of the preface, that Gwinne refers to some of the circumstances in which the play was written, citing the community of the members of St John's as the environment in which it was composed: 'apud illos exaratum'. As Binns suggests,¹²⁸ this indicates *Nero* was written whilst Gwinne was still in permanent residence at the College, giving us a likely *terminus ante quem* of 1595, the year in which he was granted leave to travel abroad in the role of physician to Sir Henry Unton, the queen's ambassador to the French court. It is not clear from what evidence Hegarty proposes the composition date of 'c.1602-3',¹²⁹ but from the preface, which was written from his home in London, it seems that the year of publication, 1603, saw Gwinne reflecting nostalgically on his career at Oxford and the college community which had nurtured his achievements, the 'Sociis doctissimis' of St John's.

It is first and foremost, 'in primis', to the College that he feels he owes his debt, and, taking stock of his advancement over the decades, he singles out one particular supporter who had been, and continued to be, an important factor in this success: his long-standing friend William Paddy, 'Paddæo demum nostro beneficentissimo Convictori'. A prominent member of the St John's community, Paddy had gained a formidable reputation as a doctor of medicine and was much in demand in court circles: he was personal physician to James I for his entire reign and four times

¹²⁷ 'I do not aver that it was not offered. For I should not have failed to, being especially indebted to St. John's College and to its august Master, to its most learned Fellows, and finally to my particular friend Paddy, who has shown me especial kindness; since it was scribbled in the midst of their company, certainly I should not have failed to offer it. But, I must confess, since it was offered in this spirit, I took its repudiation in better part.' (trans. D.F. Sutton: *Matthew Gwinne, Nero (1603). A hypertext critical edition*).

¹²⁸ Binns, 'Seneca and Neo-Latin Tragedy in England', 233, n.20.

¹²⁹ Hegarty, *Biographical Register of St. John's College*, 63.

president of the College of Physicians. Paddy's influential connections helped Gwinne's own medical practice in London to flourish and engage clients from amongst the highest level of society: early in 1605 Gwinne succeeded his patron to the prestigious position of Physician to the Tower, an appointment which certainly relied to some extent on his Paddy's influence.

If Gwinne had been contemplating bowing out from the drama scene with the publication of *Nero* in 1603, now in his mid-forties (just as, by now, Gager had done), the events of 1605 would force him to reconsider. The king's visit to Oxford in August of that year precipitated a resurgence of demand for his talents and he was directly summoned back to St John's to play a vital role in writing, producing, and supervising the entertainments for the monarch and his court. It is on this occasion that Gwinne's individual contribution is most conspicuously celebrated and that St John's gets its first major attention, although, as I will demonstrate, its long-standing tradition of intercollegiate collaboration with Christ Church was not forgotten.

Oxford scholars respond to the Stuart accession

The death of Queen Elizabeth and the transition to King James' reign ushered in a wave of publications, welcoming the monarch to England. The perceived political and cultural need for literature responding specifically to the accession of James generated opportunities for authors - both as individuals and as contributors to larger, institutional works - to make statements of loyalty to the new regime, to solicit the monarch's support for certain values or approaches, and to gain recognition as men of merit whose talents were now placed in the service of the new monarch. The University of Oxford busied itself with turning out official collections of poems penned by its members, printed by Joseph Barnes on his university-licensed press: the *Oxoniensis Academiae funebre officium in memoriam Elisabethae Reginae* mourned the death of Elizabeth, and a second anthology of verses celebrated James' succession, *Academiae Oxoniensis pietas erga serenissimum et potentissimum Iacobum Angliae Scotiae Franciae & Hiberniae Regem, fidei defensorem, beatissimae Elisabethae nuper Reginae legitimè & auspaticissimè succedentem*.

Independently of these official documents, one member of the University, a certain 'R.R', took it upon himself to publish his own separate welcome to the king, once again on the university-

licensed press, but as a stand-alone voice. Clothing the political moment in poetic dress, the scholar entitles his piece *Post Nubila Sudum* ('Fine Weather after Clouds') (1603), introducing James as a metaphorical ray of sunshine. This lengthy Latin poem, which has yet to receive any critical attention, is split into two halves, offering first a mourning lament for Elizabeth (A1-C1v) then a welcoming panegyric for King James (C2r-E1v). The author signs himself 'R.R.' at the end of the dedication, which is addressed to 'OPTIMO ATQ(UE) ORNATISSIMO / Equiti Henrico Bromleio', the MP Sir Henry Bromley. Bromley had been implicated in the Essex rebellion in 1601, branded a dangerous tyrannicide-sympathiser by the Elizabethan regime, and imprisoned in the Tower for over a year before being released. On the death of the queen, he made a special effort to get close to the new King when the succession was announced, and was one of the first to go north to greet him. The entrance of James to the English court was thus also a fresh start for Bromley; he regained favour, built up powerful connections, and was made a gentleman of the privy chamber.

This remarkable transformation is reflected in the dedication to the *Post Nubila Sudum*, which aims to please Bromley by focusing upon the theme of loyalty. R.R. opens his dedicatory epistle by naming the illustrious knight ('prælustris eques') his first choice of the patrons who can be trusted ('fidum ... patronum'), and he continues to extol Bromley's virtues of faith and steadfastness, with such lines as 'Pacta fide parili fœdera nemo colit.' (sig. A2v).¹³⁰ In choosing a pair of reinforcing cognates here (*foedus* and *fidēs*), the university author shows that he intends to make his point quite openly: flattering Henry Bromley by asserting him as a symbol of loyalty to the new King, he hopes his patron will keep faith with him in return, and facilitate a warm reception for his poem. With this point in mind, we can see how the choice of Bromley as the dedicatee, now enjoying a new lease of life through his change in circumstances, dovetails with the overall thrust of the *Post Nubila Sudum*, celebrating the transition to James' reign as the advent of sunshine after stormy weather.

The authorship of the poem is uncertain; I would like to suggest a possible identification of 'R.R.' with the clergyman and academic Ralph Ravens, Doctor of Divinity at St John's College, who was, in 1603, in his nineteenth year as the Lecturer in Rhetoric there. He had been Matthew

¹³⁰ 'No one preserves contracted bonds with like loyalty.'

Gwinne's contemporary at the Merchant Taylors' School, and followed him to St John's, matriculating in 1575. In parallel with Gwinne, he progressed through the same high-ranking offices (serving as Vice-President of the College in 1587-8 and again in 1594-5, and as Bursar in 1588-9); however, unlike Gwinne, his university years had not been the precursor to lucrative court positions. Having failed in his bid to replace Mulcaster as Headmaster of Merchant Taylors' School after Mulcaster's retirement in 1586, he stayed put in the role of Lecturer in Rhetoric at St John's year on year right up to and including 1603. In August of that year he resigned his fellowship, but was still resident in Oxford and participating in scholarly circles there, for in 1604 we find him nominated as a member of the Second Oxford Company of Translators, assigned to work on the Gospels, Acts, and the Book of Revelation for the Authorized Version of the Bible, a project over which a fellow member of the 'Mulcaster generation' (as I have termed it¹³¹), Lancelot Andrewes, was presiding.

The dedicatee of *Post Nubila Sudum*, Henry Bromley, was also a contemporary of Ravens and Gwinne at Oxford, matriculating at Hart Hall in 1576, before he moved to London in 1579 to study at the Inner Temple. The publication of the poem, whether by Ralph Ravens or another university scholar, signals a writer looking to capitalise on the introduction of the Stuart regime as a fresh start and a new opportunity for advancement. (The supposed anonymity of the signature 'R.R.' could be read as a strategy for positioning the dedicatee, Sir Bromley, in the role of intercessor on the author's behalf, making him the one who reveals his identity to the king.¹³²) The *Post Nubila Sudum* acts as a sample of the author's talents in fluent and graceful Latinity (essential for any secretarial post, for example) and also advertises his virtues such as loyalty, highly desirable to potential employers in the royal court. It therefore furnishes a useful example of independent, individually-motivated responses to the accession, nuancing our understanding of the trend for early Jacobean panegyric issuing from the university, which is usually confined to works in the official collections such as the *Oxoniensis Academiae funebre officium* and *Academiae Oxoniensis pietas erga serenissimum et potentissimum Iacobum* mentioned above.

¹³¹ See above, pages 19-24.

¹³² For this and other strategies of anonymity, see Marcy L. North, 'Anonymity in Early Modern Manuscript Culture: Finding a Purposeful Convention in a Ubiquitous Condition' in J.W. Starnes and B.H. Traister (eds.), *Anonymity in Early Modern England: "What's In A Name?"* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 13-42, especially 34-6.

Other Oxford scholars took a short cut by re-dedicating their existing works to the monarch: Matthew Gwinne, on hearing of the news of the queen's death, made the opportunistic decision to replace the preface dedicating his play *Nero* (1603) to the Egertons with a new epistle addressing King James.¹³³ This Latin preface has found its way into some studies of Jacobean panegyric, but others of Gwinne's works, which constitute far more substantial and more significant reactions to the accession, have not been brought into the mainstream discourse. For example, whilst the *Nero* dedication has an entry in The Stuart Successions Project database,¹³⁴ confirming its place in the corpus of relevant evidence, his Latin pageant for James' royal entry into Oxford, *Tres Sibyllae* (The Three Sibyls), has been overlooked. Kevin Sharpe's 2010 study entitled 'Staging Stuart Dynasty' eloquently demonstrates the importance of pageantry to England's engagement with James' accession, yet his treatment of Oxford's contribution to this phenomenon offers no analysis or even a mention of Gwinne's pageant *Tres Sibyllae*.¹³⁵ This is surprising given Sharpe's frequent references to J.B. Nichols' *The Progresses, Processions and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First* (4 vols, 1828), where the text and performance details of the *Tres Sibyllae* can easily be found (vol. 1, 543-5).¹³⁶ The discussion which follows aims to situate this piece in its proper place as an important example of an Oxford college's political engagement with the accession.

St John's College welcomes King James to Oxford

The triumphal entry of the new monarch into his London was delayed by plague until 15 March 1604, whilst Oxford waited for its moment to come until August 1605 when James made his first official visit and the city and university were able to give him his ceremonial welcome. The majority of the dramatic entertainments for this important occasion were commissioned centrally by the university in the first instance, but it fell to selected colleges to implement the programme of

¹³³ The new dedication is dated 'Cal. Iul. 1603' and can be found in copies such as British Library 636.d.4/1 (where it is appended to the end of the volume).

¹³⁴ <<http://humanities-research.exeter.ac.uk/stuarts/public/pub/view/id/51>> (accessed June 2015).

¹³⁵ 'Staging Stuart Dynasty', in Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603-1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 89-123.

¹³⁶ *Tres Sibyllae* and the royal entry into Oxford are also absent from other recent studies such as Gabriel Heaton's *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments: from George Gascoigne to Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

theatrical productions and co-ordinate matters between them. In the ‘decrees and orders sett downe by ye delegates concerninge his Maiesties entertaynmente’ on 18 July 1605, the college marked out as providers of specific entertainments were given explicit instructions to work together:

Concerninge ye stage and playes.

It is concluded three playes to be made in Lattin. viz. ij comedies and a tragedie. And christchurch hath vndertaken ye performance of one comedie¹³⁷ and Magdalen Colledge new Colledge and St Iohns haue vndertaken ye performance of one other comedie¹³⁸ and on tragedie¹³⁹ havinge authoritie to make choyce of Actors and pen men to helpe penn them, out of the whole vniversitie; and that the heades of the aforesaid three houses. videlicet. Magdalen Colledge New Colledge and St Iohns shall choyse delegates out of the aforsaid [h] three houses vnto them whoe shall ioyntly order all matters concerninge ye aforesaid playes.¹⁴⁰

Here each college is granted complete autonomy to select its personnel in the way it chooses (‘havinge authoritie to make choyce of Actors and pen men to helpe penn them’), yet the addition of the phrase ‘out of the whole vniversitie’ makes the point of recommending that collegiate distinctions be overlooked in the recruitment of talent, encouraging the sharing of human resources across the university as a whole. Indeed, the question as to who should have responsibility for supervising the productions is skilfully and diplomatically dealt with in the decree: each college providing entertainments for the royal audience is to be represented on a committee which will ‘ioyntly’ make decisions, and it is left up to the heads of those colleges to make their preferred choice of a delegate to represent them. When President Ralph Hutchinson came to choose a representative for St John’s College, Matthew Gwinne’s long-standing connections with Christ Church, dating back to his membership of Gager’s circle and his co-supervision of the 1592 plays

¹³⁷ Christ Church’s production of *Alba* (performed Tuesday 27 August), co-authored by Burton (as argued by R.L. Nochimson, in ‘Robert Burton’s Authorship of *Alba*: a Lost Letter Recovered’ in *Review of English Studies*, New Series, 21 (1970), 325-31). Also see Sarah Knight, ‘“Et spes et ratio studiorum in Caesare tantum”: Robert Burton and patronage’, in Philip Ford and Andrew Taylor (eds.), *The Early Modern Cultures of Neo-Latin Drama, Supplementa Humanistica Lovaniensia XXXII* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013), 175-88.

¹³⁸ St John’s production of *Vertumnus sive Annus recurrens* by Matthew Gwinne (performed Thursday 29). I discuss this play in detail below.

¹³⁹ Magdalen’s production at Christ Church of *Ajax Flagellifer*, anon. (performed Wednesday 28); see Sarah Knight, ‘“Goodlie anticke apparrell”?: Sophocles’ *Ajax* at Early Modern Oxford and Cambridge’ in *Shakespeare Studies*, 37 (2009), 25-42.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in *REED: Oxford*, vol.1, 283-4.

for Queen Elizabeth at Christ Church, would have seemed especially felicitous, in addition to his obvious personal commitment to theatre, recently reiterated in his publication of *Nero* (1603).

The construction of the intercollegiate committee for the 1605 entertainments doubtless helped to balance group and individual interests as far as possible. However, the venue was problematic in this respect: given that theatrical productions were usually staged in and by individual Oxford colleges on their own terms, and were rarely produced under the auspices of the university as a whole, the provision of a suitable university-owned venue as a neutral space for the colleges was a difficulty. Christ Church, the royal foundation which had played host to these grand occasions before, had the upper hand in all proceedings, and all three Latin plays commissioned in the decree (later augmented by a fourth, in English¹⁴¹) were to be performed in its dining hall, regardless of which college was actually providing the show. Christ Church's dominance over proceedings therefore made the intercollegiate committee all the more necessary, as careful negotiations would be required to ensure that the other colleges' productions converging on Christ Church were accommodated as far as possible to everyone's satisfaction. Indeed, Gwinne's savvy negotiation as St John's representative secured a special concession whereby the king was directly addressed and made a participant in an outdoor spectacle presented to him outside the front of St John's College. This event, now known as *Tres Sibyllae* and published in 1607,¹⁴² achieved an exceptional, eye-catching status all of its own, quite distinct from the centrally-commissioned raft of plays anchored to the official venue of Christ Church. Clearly this was a dramatic flourish intended to draw James' attention to St John's, and it worked; not only did it please the king, but it also secured the college a special mention in accounts of the royal visit, as I will demonstrate. New College, by contrast, gains no mention at all in any of these narratives.

Conceived of as a roadside spectacle, *Tres Sibyllae* celebrated the moment of King James' entry into the city of Oxford, which took place at about midday on Tuesday 27 August 1605. Approaching from the north, he progressed on horseback along St Giles', a route which took him past the front gates of St John's College, where he was suddenly greeted by a tableau of three

¹⁴¹ This was Samuel Daniel's *Arcadia Reformed*, performed on Friday 30 August (the final day of the royal visit), for the queen and prince while the king was absent on a tour of the Bodleian Library. See further pages 78ff. below.

¹⁴² On Gwinne's decision to publish this piece together with his *Vertumnus* in the same volume, see below, page 74.

figures in costume who addressed him directly with speeches, ‘the conceipt wherof the Kinge did very much applaude’.¹⁴³ James found himself being greeted by the sibyls in Latin with a prophecy of everlasting rule: ‘Imperium sine fine tuae, Rex Inclyte, stirpis’ (2).¹⁴⁴ These words are spoken by the lead actor of the three (denoted ‘I.’ in Gwinne’s printed text¹⁴⁵) and the use of the word ‘stirpis’ here (‘race, offspring, stock’) is used to anchor James firmly in his origins, through his identity as a member of the House of Stuart. The sibyl goes on to suggest that this venerable lineage connects him yet further back to the father of that dynasty, Banquo, Thane of Lochabria: James can count himself amongst the immortal descendants of that great founder, ‘nepotibus immortalibus’ (5), who together form a line of kings each inheriting and passing on an empire that knows no bounds. Holinshed uses the phrase ‘by long order of continual descent’¹⁴⁶ to emphasise the momentum of dynastic succession in his version of the prophecy given to Banquo, whilst Gwinne chooses a phrase highly-charged with literary and mythological power: ‘Imperium sine fine’. This evocative quotation of Virgil’s *Aeneid* places the royal house of the Stuarts of Scotland in parallel with the great ancestral line of Aeneas and his Trojan exiles, upon whom Jupiter confers a sovereignty without end: *imperium sine fine* (*Aeneid*: I. 279).¹⁴⁷ Gwinne’s operation in the Latin mode gives him access to a raft of literary allusions which flatter James both as a powerful king and as a scholar.¹⁴⁸

Moreover, the link with Rome is not offered here simply as a colourful parallel, but an acknowledgement of the tradition of Britons as the inheritors of Rome, a popular refrain in Elizabethan court culture which was revived under the Stuarts.¹⁴⁹ I note that, when William Camden came to publish his 1607 edition of the *Britannia*, a work which placed so much emphasis on Roman culture interwoven in the history of the British Isles, he dedicated the work to King James. This was the final edition of the *Britannia* to be printed in Latin, and Geoffrey Eatough

¹⁴³ Anthony Nixon, *Oxfords Triumph* (London, 1605), sig. B1r.

¹⁴⁴ ‘reign without end for your stock, o famed King’.

¹⁴⁵ I am following the printed text of *Tres Sibyllae* as it was published by Gwinne (London, 1607).

¹⁴⁶ Holinshed *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587), II.170. Text accessed online via the Holinshed Project at: <<http://www.cems.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/extracts2.shtml>> (accessed November 2011).

¹⁴⁷ All quotations from Virgil’s *Aeneid* follow the edition of R.A.B. Mynors, *P. Vergili Maronis Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

¹⁴⁸ On Oxford playing up to James’ aspirations to be the scholar-king, see below, page 60.

¹⁴⁹ See J. Kerrigan, ‘The Romans in Britain, 1603-1614’ in G. Burgess, R. Wymer, and J. Lawrence (eds.) *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences* (Basingstoke, 2006), 113-139. Also relevant is the play *Fuimus Troes* (1633) by Jasper Fisher, which is discussed by L. Hopkins in ‘We Were the Trojans: British National Identities in 1633’, in *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 16 (2002), 36-51.

demonstrates the importance of Camden's use of the Roman language to his construction of British identity.¹⁵⁰ The notion of *translatio imperii*, the translation of empire away from Rome to new centres of power, had a long pedigree stretching back to the Middle Ages, when the Roman empire was 'translated' first to the Franks under Charlemagne, and then to the German kings as the Holy Roman Empire. Intensified by the rivalry of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European politics, the concept of Roman *imperium* and its legacy held more ideological power than ever: as Isabel Rivers puts it, 'Spain, France and England all saw themselves as heirs to Rome'.¹⁵¹ Indeed, Jupiter's conferral of sovereignty upon the Romans, as King of the Gods and the master of each man's destiny, struck a chord with James' own belief in the divine right of kings and the legitimacy of the royal line to which he belonged. In his speech to his first Parliament he emphasised that his position had been ordained by God, and when he came before his third Parliament on 21 March 1607, six months before his visit to Oxford, he chose to focus specifically on the motif of continual descent, boasting of 'the heritage of the succession of the Monarchy which hath been a kingdom to which I am in descent three hundred years before Christ'.¹⁵² Clearly Gwinne's dramatisation of the sibyls' prophecy in *Tres Sibyllae*, with its promotion of the Stuart genealogical pedigree and right to rule, was calculated to catch James' interest and engage with the particular preoccupations of his early years as King of England.

Gwinne's three sibyls begin by introducing themselves to James as reincarnations of the old sisters of legend, 'Fatidicas olim fama est cecinisse Sorores' (1), whose presence now before the king is a revival based on that ancient precedent, 'Tres eadem pariter canimus' (7).¹⁵³ This is a tradition with roots in the corpus of Classical literature, where feminine figures are imbued with prophetic powers and portrayed as the personifications of fate or destiny (the Moirai and Parcae of Greek and Roman mythology respectively) or as the temporary vessel or medium through which the words of a god are conveyed to mortals. The *locus classicus* for the latter type is the beginning of Book VI of Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which the priestess of Apollo, presiding over the god's oracle at

¹⁵⁰ See Geoffrey Eatough, 'William Camden's *insula romana*' in *Renaissanceforum* 8: 'Latin, Linguistic Identity, and Nationalism' (2012), 103-154.

¹⁵¹ Isabel Rivers, *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979), 59.

¹⁵² Quoted in H.N. Paul, *The Royal Play of Macbeth: When, Why, and How it Was Written by Shakespeare* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), 170.

¹⁵³ 'It is said that once upon a time prophetic sisters sang ... // Likewise, just the same, we three sing' (1, 7).

Cumae, reveals to Aeneas the wars and marriage awaiting him in Latium. Virgil describes the sibyl as a terrifying figure, ‘horrendaeque ... Sibyllae’ (*Aeneid* VI.10), into whom the prophet of Delos (i.e. the god himself) breathes his greatness of mind and spirit and through whom he reveals the future (‘magnam cui mentem animumque / Delius inspirat uates aperitque futura’, *Aeneid* VI.11-12). The union of the Trojans and Latins to which the Sibyl alludes (announcing that there will be a foreign bride waiting in Latium, ‘coniunx ... hospita’, VI.93) is to be achieved through the dynastic marriage of Aeneas, King of the Trojans, to the daughter of Latinus, King of the Latins. This offers an important precedent for what J.L. Malay, in her diachronic study of sibylline imagery, terms ‘a dynastic moment’,¹⁵⁴ the strategic introduction of a sibyl figure at the threshold of a new era, when the prophetic revelation is at its most effective. The beginning of James’ reign is just such a threshold moment, and both Gwinne capitalises upon the potential which the sibyl device offers for celebrating the Jacobean accession.

When Gwinne has his lead character, Sibyl I (who acts as choregic spokesperson for the group), make the explicit announcement that it is not the Sibyls’ role to tempt anyone or incite destruction ‘Nec serimus caedes, nec bella, nec anxia corda’ (21),¹⁵⁵ he is evoking the precedent of the sibyl episode in *Aeneid* VI to contrast the Cumean Sibyl’s famous prediction of terrible wars (‘bella, horrida bella’, *Aeneid* VI.86) for Aeneas and his Trojans entering Latium with the prosperity and peace which his prophetesses are proclaiming for King James’ reign. As Kevin Sharpe emphasises, one of the principal motifs of James’ representation during the early part of his reign was peace; he was celebrated as *rex pacificus*, not only because he successfully negotiated the Treaty of London with the Spanish, but because his accession spared the English people the prospect of their country being ravaged by wars of succession. Therefore, in the eyes of many, ‘[t]he Scottish king had saved England from bloodshed’,¹⁵⁶ a perspective which led to James being interpreted as a second Augustus offering the *pax Romana*.

¹⁵⁴ J.L. Malay, *Prophecy and Sibylline Imagery in the Renaissance: Shakespeare’s Sibyls* (London: Routledge, 2010), 114.

¹⁵⁵ ‘We are not sowing slaughters, nor wars, nor uneasy hearts’.

¹⁵⁶ Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars*, 14.

In focusing upon the Stuart descent from Banquo, Gwinne chooses an already well-trodden path strewn with the precedents set by the writers of previous generations, such as Hector Boece (1465–1536), John Leslie (1527–1596), and Raphael Holinshed (1529–1580). However, Gwinne is the first to *dramatise* in a live performance the scenario of the prophecy being pronounced, and to do so directly before the king's eyes. His use of literary tradition has a certain self-reflexive quality to it given the body of writing he is inheriting, for in adding his own work to the rich corpus of chronicles and histories he joins the tradition of charting the Stuart genealogy and makes himself part of the literary story. First, in 1526 Hector Boece's *Historia Gentis Scotorum* ('History of the Scottish People') had presented a celebration of seven consecutive Stuart kings passing the sceptre from father to son, augmenting his narrative with the introduction (indeed invention) of the mythical figure of Banquo, claimed as ancestor of the Stuarts. In his *De Origine, Moribus, et Rebus Gentis Scotorum* (1578), John Leslie, staunch defender of Mary Queen of Scots, demonstrated the Stuart right of succession with a vivid and elaborate illustration of a family tree, seen flourishing with a myriad of branches, flowers and shoots from a central trunk, which connects Banquo at the base of the tree with Queen Mary and her heir, James, at the top. Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1587) then updated the family tree with James VI's formal inheritance of the title of King of Scotland from his mother.

This apparently seamless continuity was part of the political fiction these writers sought to create; in reality the history of the early Scottish kings was a highly contentious issue, constructed and re-constructed in competing narratives such as those of Humphrey Lhuyd, Hector Boece, and George Buchanan.¹⁵⁷ Writing in 1605, Gwinne smooths over any unsightly bumps; the mythological wars between England and Scotland are not to be mentioned, nor the theories of an ancient whig constitution of Scotland propounded by Buchanan, King James' former tutor. Instead, Gwinne selects the literary line he wishes to join, and reworks Boece, Leslie, and Holinshed to tell the Banquo prophecy afresh according to the new developments of James' accession to the English throne. Now able to congratulate James on adding England, Ireland, and (nominally) France to

¹⁵⁷ For Buchanan's battle with Lhuyd, his reliance upon the early chapters of Boece's *Historia Gentis Scotorum* for his own work, but his insistence that the early kings were all elected, see H.R. Trevor-Roper, *The Invention of Scotland: Myth and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), especially 54- 63.

the Stuart dominion, he vividly dramatises this expansion of power by having the sibyls address the following lines to the King, heaping the titles upon him one after the other:

1. Teq(ue) salutamus: Salue, cui *Scotia* seruit.
2. *Anglia* cui, salue. 3. Cui seruit *Hibernia*, salue.
1. *Gallia* cui titulos, terras dant caetera, salue.
2. Quem, diuisa prius, colit vna *Britannia*, salue.
3. Summe Monarcha *Britannice, Hibernice, Gallice*, salue.

(*Tres Sibyllae*, 9-13)¹⁵⁸

Gwinne's address makes a simple celebration of a complex issue, for a united Britain was a project which King James had yet to achieve, and yet here he is given the credit of a *fait accompli*: 'Quem, diuisa prius, colit vna *Britannia*, salue.' (12). This is a recurring feature in the English literary response to James' accession, an exercise in which poetic fantasy could be used to fill in the gaps of political reality. Philip Schwyzer's study 'Archipelagic History' is illuminating here, as it offers a longer term perspective on the ways in which the geographical span of the Atlantic Archipelago (or 'British Isles') has been defined and redefined to suit an author's purposes.¹⁵⁹

Samuel Daniel, in his lengthy *A panegyricke congratulatorie*, celebrates the king's ambitions to unite the kingdom of Great Britain, 'this mighty worke of vnion' as he puts it (stanza 60, sig. B5r¹⁶⁰), and his work is often quoted as an example of the trend for using the Britannia motif strategically.¹⁶¹ Yet Daniel's identity as an Oxford man is often forgotten, and it is interesting to compare his approach in *A panegyricke congratulatorie* with that of Oxford scholars who remained a part of the university after their initial years of study. Daniel matriculated from

¹⁵⁸ '1. And we give you greetings: Welcome, you whom Scotland serves.

2. You whom England serves, welcome. 3. You whom Ireland serves, welcome.

1. You to whom France gives titles (the rest give lands), welcome.

2. You whom previously-divided now united Britain worships, welcome.

3. Greatest Monarch - British, Irish, French - welcome.'

¹⁵⁹ Philip Schwyzer, 'Archipelagic History' in Paulina Kewes, Ian W. Archer, and Felicity Heal (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 593-607. Schwyzer's focus on Holinshed and what he terms 'the cultural logic of the *Chronicles*' spatial coverage' (593) provides a useful background to the choices made by authors writing in the early years of the seventeenth century. Also see above, p.54-5 on Camden's major work of historical chorography, the *Britannia*.

¹⁶⁰ Samuel Daniel, *A panegyricke congratulatorie* (London, 1603).

¹⁶¹ Most recently by Richard A. McCabe, in 'The poetics of succession, 1587-1605: the Stuart claim' in Susan Doran and Paulina Kewes (eds.), *Doubtful and Dangerous: The Question of Succession in Late Elizabethan England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 200.

Magdalen Hall (much later absorbed into Hertford College) in 1581 and his brief years as an undergraduate (he did not complete a degree) coincided with the flourishing of William Gager and Matthew Gwinne's literary circle at Christ Church and St John's. By the mid-1580s he had already moved on from Oxford and left his university days behind him, and would go on to forge a career as a professional poet. His publishing debut with *Delia. Containing Certain Sonnets: With the Complaint of Rosamond* (1592), dedicated to his patron Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, firmly established his reputation, and his collected *Works* in 1601 consolidated his position as one of the leading poets of England. In contemporary academic drama he is dubbed 'Sweete hony dropping Daniell', in *The Return from Parnassus* at the turn of the century,¹⁶² a mellifluous reputation which saw him make a smooth transition from Elizabeth's court to that of James in 1603.

Daniel's autograph manuscript of *A panegyricke congratatorie* remains in the Royal collection in the British Library (British Library, Royal MS 18 A. LXXII) and John Pitcher argues that it was this particular manuscript which Daniel presented in person to the king and that it was written to be declaimed in the royal presence rather than simply handed over.¹⁶³ The occasion for this encounter was the king's stay at Burley-on-the-Hill in Rutland in April 1603, while he was travelling down from Edinburgh to London and being hosted by various members of the nobility en route. This was the home of Sir John Harrington, father of Daniel's patron Lucy, the Countess of Bedford (who probably invited Daniel to write and deliver a poem to the king while he was staying there), and the full title of the printed work celebrates the fact that he declaimed these congratulatory verses before the monarch: *A panegyrike congratatorie deliuered to the Kings most excellent Maiestie at Burleigh Harrington in Rutlandshire. By Samuel Daniel. Also certaine epistles, with a defence of ryme heretofore written, and now published by the author.*

Well connected and strongly embedded in court culture thanks to the support of his patrons, Daniel's choice of English comes naturally when he makes an address to the king as a

¹⁶² *The Return from Parnassus*, Act I Scene ii, line 235 (anon., c.1600). This play forms the second part of the Cambridge Parnassus trilogy. I follow J.B. Leishman's edition, *The Three Parnassus Plays (1598-1601)* (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1949).

¹⁶³ John Pitcher, 'Editing Daniel' in W. Speed Hill (ed.), *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts* (Binghamton), *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, vol. 107 (1993), 65.

court poet. Matthew Gwinne, on the other hand, is representing his college and his university when he composes *Tres Sibyllae*, and the use of Latin is central to the display of intellectual culture being put before the monarch. What Sarah Knight says of *Ajax Flagellifer*, the Latin play which Magdalen College performed for James at Christ Church on the same royal visit, could equally well be applied here: ‘One reason why the organizers included a classical play like *Ajax* in the entertainment program was to offer the *Regina Literata* or *Rex Platonicus* the gift of the university’s erudition, and thereby to pay the monarch the compliment of acknowledging his or hers.’¹⁶⁴ *Regina Literata* was the name which Abraham Hartwell gave to his account of the royal visit to Oxford in 1565, flattering Queen Elizabeth by styling her thus, and in 1607 Isaac Wake revived the tradition when he published his narrative of King James in Oxford in 1605, *Rex Platonicus*. James made a tour of the newly refurbished Bodleian Library on this visit, and was presented with a copy of the library catalogue, the fruits of Thomas James’ scholarly labours and Thomas Bodley’s funding.¹⁶⁵ It is Wake who reports the famous comment apparently made by James at this moment: ‘if I were not a King, I would be an University man.’¹⁶⁶

Whether or not Wake’s record is absolutely accurate, his inclusion of the anecdote demonstrates the university’s interest in promoting the idea that James wished to present himself as the scholar-king. Gwinne’s *Tres Sibyllae* is part of this tradition, as is the *Post Nubila Sudum*, which uses Latin as the tool to express praise for the king and his erudition. The author R.R. shows particular skill in mobilising the syntactical flexibility of the Latin language and its rhetorical effects when he celebrates the (imagined) union of the kingdom of Great Britain under James’ rule:

iubila fundit

Anglia, clamat iô Scotia, Camber ovat.

Nunc vnum spirat, sentit, sapit, invocat vnum

Insula, quæ dominis paruit vna tribus.

¹⁶⁴ Knight, “‘Goodlie anticke apparrell’?: Sophocles’ *Ajax* at Early Modern Oxford and Cambridge’, 32.

¹⁶⁵ For an excellent overview of the Bodleian project as a bastion of Protestantism against the corrupt influence of the Catholic textual tradition, see Paul Nelles, ‘The Uses of Orthodoxy and Jacobean Erudition: Thomas James and the Bodleian Library’ in *History of Universities* 22 (2007), 21-70.

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Knight, “‘Goodlie anticke apparrell’?: Sophocles’ *Ajax* at Early Modern Oxford and Cambridge’, 32.

(R.R., *Post Nubila Sudum*, sig. C4v)¹⁶⁷

Uniting the nations in sound as well as sense - note the sibilance of the tricolon ‘spirate, sentit, sapit’, the sandwiching effect of ‘vnum’, and the emphatic enjambment of ‘insula’ - R.R.’s poetics capture the sense of the island of Britain coming alive again, rediscovering itself as a single body, living and breathing as one. This makes an interesting comparison with Samuel Daniel’s more famous lines in *A panegyrike congratulatorie*:

No Scot, no English now, nor no debate:
 No Borders but the Ocean, and the Shore,
 No wall of *Adrian* serues to seperate
 Our mutuall loue, nor our obedience,
 Being subjects all to one imperiall Prince.

(Daniel, *A panegyrike congratulatorie*, sig. A3r, stanza 2)

Daniel’s return to Oxford in 1605 to provide a play for the king’s visit gives us another opportunity to compare his and Gwinne’s approaches, for both are charged with the task of creating a play to be performed in the hall at Christ Church but the results are very different: Daniel’s pastoral drama *Arcadia Reformed* was performed in English for Queen Anne and Prince Henry while the king was away on his tour of the Bodleian Library, whilst Gwinne penned the intense and scholarly Latin play *Vertumnus sive Annus recurrens* for an audience with the king. I compare these two productions and their reception in more detail at the start of Chapter 2, when I discuss the authors’ decision to publish these works (Daniel in 1606, Gwinne in 1607).

Daniel’s masque *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* (1604) also offers an important *comparandum* for *Tres Sibyllae*, since it is another instance of a sibylline figure employed in the context of ‘a dynastic moment’, to use J.L. Malay’s term.¹⁶⁸ Firmly embedded in the courtly setting, Daniel’s *The Vision* was performed in the hall at Hampton Court; it constitutes the first surviving masque to have been performed for James and the new community of courtiers he had brought with him to England. This is quite a different venue from Gwinne’s outdoor piece, performed in front

¹⁶⁷ ‘England pours out cries of joy, Scotland shouts in triumph, Wales rejoices. Now the island which once obeyed three different masters together breathes, feels, knows itself as one and calls itself one island.’

¹⁶⁸ See above, page 56.

of the buildings of St John's College (a setting which I discuss further below), and Daniel's adaptation of the sibyl figure also has its differences (not least the difference in linguistic register). Daniel dramatises the inaugural nature of the occasion meta-theatrically: Queen Anne and her ladies perform their stately entrance into the court as a vision of twelve goddesses, wearing gowns sourced from the wardrobe of the dead Elizabeth. Gazing upon the ladies as they walk towards her is 'a *Sybilla*', and she announces their approach in awestruck voice: 'Will the Divine Goddesses vouchsafe to visit this poore Temple? Shall I be blest to entertaine so great powers?' (sig. B3v)

The sibyl plays the role of intermediary figure here, standing between the figures of the masque and the audience: given a spyglass by Iris, the sibyl uses this to observe the goddesses as they approach and she gives a description of each, pointing out the main details and what they signify. This allegorical display celebrates the many virtues which the new court are bringing with them, a sense reinforced by the physical entrance of the 'goddesses' into the hall at Hampton Court. Interestingly though, Daniel's interpretation of the future success of the new court is part dependent upon continuing with the success of the old regime. He emphasises this idea in the dedicatory letter to the printed version of the masque, addressed to Lucy, Countess of Bedford:

I will deliuer the intent and scope of the project: Which was onely to present the figure of those blessings, with the wish of their encrease and countinuance, which this mightie Kingdome now enioyes by the benefite of his most gracious Maiestie; by whom we haue this glory of peace, with the accession of so great state and power. (sig. A3v).

The pointed use of the phrase 'encrease and countinuance' portrays James as a custodian building on his Elizabethan inheritance, rather than bluntly imposing an entirely unfamiliar culture on his new subjects. We also see this emphasis on continuity with the past in the use of Elizabeth's clothes as costumes for *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, a visual appropriation of the old queen's power symbolically validating the incoming regime. The queen's presence and continued importance is also hinted at in the choice of goddesses on parade: Diana and Astraea, figures

traditionally associated with Elizabeth, are conspicuously included.¹⁶⁹

Gwinne's strategy in *Tres Sibyllae* provides a contrast; in this work the symbols of Elizabeth's reign have no place. Instead, Gwinne is anxious to emphasise James' achievement in having secured the continuance of the Stuart line through his offspring, the marriage of James and Anne appearing all the more fruitful against the backdrop of Queen Elizabeth's childlessness (and, before her, her sister and father's struggles to provide heirs to the throne). James' eldest son Prince Henry, riding alongside the king as he enters the city of Oxford, is a visual symbol of James' legacy and England's hope for the future, a tableau which Gwinne extends through his pageant-like show performed in the street, conferring the title of 'heir' upon the prince through the mouth of the prophetic sibyl: 'Salve Henrice haeres, princeps pulcherrime salve' (15).¹⁷⁰ As Sharpe has pointed out,¹⁷¹ James IV, as the father of two sons and a daughter, had come to the English throne a symbol of fertile progeny, and indeed, by the time of the family's visit to Oxford, Queen Anne had already given birth once more, to a baby girl, Mary Stuart (who died two years later), making James a father of four, two boys and two girls. Gwinne takes care to include direct addresses to both sons in his *Tres Sibyllae*, portentously acknowledging the importance of Prince Charles, only five years old at the time, yet the crucial heir-in-reserve who reinforced the legitimate hold of James' Stuart line on the future of Britain.

When Gwinne's tableau of three sibylline figures addressed the king and his two male heirs ('the three lords of the realm'), they did so in turn, and the striking manner of their triplicate salutation made an impression on the University Orator Isaac Wake, who recorded it thus in his account: 'tribus Principibus suaves felicitatum triplicitates triplicatis carminum vicibus succinentes'.¹⁷² The repeated greeting has a ritualistic flavour (J.L. Malay notes the obvious

¹⁶⁹ As argued by Martin Butler, who perceives Daniel 'ameliorating the trauma which James's succession involved by displaying in symbolic gestures the continuities between his reign and his predecessor's': Martin Butler, 'The Invention of Britain and the Early Stuart Masque', in Malcolm Smuts (ed.), *The Stuart Court and Europe: Essays in Politics and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 72.

¹⁷⁰ 'Hail Henry, heir to the throne, hail fairest prince.'

¹⁷¹ Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars*, 16.

¹⁷² Isaac Wake, *Rex Platonicus* (Oxford, 1607), sig C2r. 'Together singing threefold blessings in a threefold turn of song for the three lords of the realm' (trans. REED: *Oxford*, vol. 2, 1020).

religious significance¹⁷³) and may have influenced Shakespeare in his construction of the famous scene in *Macbeth* where the three sisters chant their spell: ‘Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine, / And thrice again, to make up nine’ (*Macbeth*, I.iii.33-34).¹⁷⁴ Gwinne’s treatment of the imperial theme, addressing the king through the medium of his trio of sibylline figures, has interested various Shakespearean source-hunters in *Tres Sibyllae*, but their discussion of the piece has not moved beyond this point.¹⁷⁵ Gwinne’s piece may well have inspired Shakespeare to try his hand at something similar in *Macbeth* (which is generally agreed to have been written the following year¹⁷⁶), but it is important to note that Gwinne’s three sibyls have none of the sinister aspect for which Shakespeare’s figures are so well-known. The innocent, youthful quality of the student actors is a consistent feature of the accounts of the Oxford entertainment: Anthony Nixon calls them ‘three little Boyes’, Isaac Wake ‘adolescentes’, and a visitor from Cambridge remembers ‘three youghes in habitt and attire like Nimphes’.¹⁷⁷ Kiefer claims that Gwinne could not have avoided some association between his sibylline figures and the darker forces of magic and necromancy (‘When Matthew Gwinn created the greeting for King James, he must have known that witch-hunters linked the ancient sibyls with witchcraft’¹⁷⁸), and it is true that the king had personal interest in witchcraft (having written his own treatise on the subject, *Daemonologie*

¹⁷³ Malay, *Prophecy and Sibylline Imagery*, 113.

¹⁷⁴ All quotations from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* are taken from A.R. Braunmuller (ed.), *Macbeth*, New Cambridge Shakespeare series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 2nd ed.

¹⁷⁵ The connection between the two was mooted as early as 1828, by J.B. Nichols in his *Progresses, Processions and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First* (vol. 1, 543, n.3). It continues to receive brief mentions in modern editions of the *Macbeth* (such as the recent Royal Shakespeare Company edition, J. Bate and E. Rasmussen (eds.), *Macbeth* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2009), 6), but detailed analysis of *Tres Sibyllae* itself is thin on the ground. H.N. Paul still offers the most extensive treatment, in *The Royal Play of Macbeth*, 15-24 and 162-182, later paraphrased by Geoffrey Bullough in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), vol. 7. Evidence provided by Gwinne’s pageant has also been used to bolster biographical reconstructions of Shakespeare: for example, see Park Honan, *Shakespeare: a life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 318ff.

¹⁷⁶ Probable allusions to the Gunpowder Plot and its ensuing trials point to a date in late 1605–6. Geoffrey Bullough (*Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. 7, 427) suggests a date between May and August 1606, while Frank Kermodé (‘Macbeth’ in Gwynne Blakemore Evans (ed.), *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 1308) argues for sometime after spring 1606, noting apparent references to the ‘equivocation’ of Father Garnet in his trial for involvement in the Gunpowder Plot (a trial which took place in spring 1606).

¹⁷⁷ Nixon, *Oxfords Triumph* (London, 1605), sig. B1r; Wake, *Rex platonicus* (Oxford, 1607), sig. C1v; Cambridge visitor (probably Philip Stringer), quoted in *REED: Oxford*, vol. 1, 298. I discuss these accounts in more detail below in Chapter 2 (pages 71-4), in relation to the reception of another of Gwinne’s entertainments for the king, *Vertumnus*.

¹⁷⁸ F. Kiefer, *Shakespeare’s visual theatre: staging the personified characters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 127.

(1597), in which he advocated the hunting of witches and punishment for anyone who consulted them). However, the influence of Shakespeare's play is strong enough to exert an anachronistic force upon other works where it is out of place; Gwinne's presentation to the king is characterised by its celebratory content and context, and if he had wished to ironise or undercut the tone of the prophecy of perpetual rule for the Stuart dynasty piece, he could easily have done so.

Dramatising James' arrival at Oxford and the foundation of St John's: Gwinne's outdoor spectacle

Gwinne constructed the short piece *Tres Sibyllae* as an innovative addition to the programme of entertainments for the king – it was, in fact, produced by St John's College over and above the requirements stipulated in the University decree. Moreover, its very public mode of presentation in the open air renders it quite distinct from the main series of plays performed inside the dining hall of Christ Church, and we can see Gwinne taking full advantage of the physical setting to focus attention on St John's. For the accounts of the spectacle confirm that as the king made his way down St Giles' he was accosted at the moment that he reached the front of the college, where he then paused to hear the sibyls' addresses. An eyewitness from Cambridge recalls that '[the king] rode on vntill he came to St. Iohns Colledge, where, comminge against the gate, three youghes in habitt and attire like Nimphes confronted him';¹⁷⁹ Nixon describes James coming to a halt in front of the College: 'his Majestie passed along till hee came before Saint Iohns Colledge';¹⁸⁰ Wake describes the three youths coming out from the College to address the king, 'Collegio prodeunt'.¹⁸¹ There is an interesting precedent for this arrangement, namely the interception of Queen Elizabeth on her arrival at Kenilworth Castle, the Earl of Leicester's seat, in 1575. As she made way through the park toward her host's castle, she was approached by ten figures dressed in white silk, one of whom introduced herself as 'Sibylla' and prophesied a reign of peace for Elizabeth. During her stay at Kenilworth, an impressive series of entertainments were staged, but one of these, the Echo episode, was calculated to remind the queen of her earlier encounter and renew the sibylline discourse: 'What meant the woman first, / which met hir as she came? / Could

¹⁷⁹ Quoted in *REED: Oxford*, vol. 1, 298.

¹⁸⁰ Nixon, *Oxfords Triumph* (London, 1605), sig. B1r.

¹⁸¹ Wake, *Rex platonicus* (Oxford, 1607), sigs. C1v-C2r.

she devine of things to come, / as *Sibelles* use the same?'.¹⁸² Echo replies reassuringly 'The same', confirming that the prophetess who had accosted her in the grounds of the estate and foretold peace and prosperity for her reign indeed had the special powers of the ancient sibyl.

Gwinne's old headmaster Mulcaster was involved in the Kenilworth entertainments: the Latin poem written on a tablet over the castle gate was said to have been devised by him,¹⁸³ and David Bergeron discusses the evidence of Laneham's letter to Master Martin, in which it is mentioned that this Latin poem was read out by 'a boy dressed like a Poet'.¹⁸⁴ (It seems not unlikely that this could have been one of Mulcaster's pupils from his school, the Merchant Taylors'). Mulcaster was also involved with the major royal pageants of Elizabeth and James when each made their formal entry as monarch into London, in 1559 and 1604 respectively. He was paid forty shillings for composing the written record of Elizabeth's triumphal entry, a book which was then given to the queen, as the minutes of the Town Clerk of London records: 'the Chamberlyn shall geue vnto Rychard Mulcaster for his reward for making of the boke conteynynge and declaryng the historyes set furth in and by the Cyties pageauntes at the tyme of the Quenes highness commyng thurrough the Cytye to her coronacion xl s, which boke was geuyn vnto the Quenes grace.'¹⁸⁵ As William Barker suggests, '[t]he book was probably the original of a pamphlet entitled *The Quenes Maiesties Passage*, which appeared in the same year under the imprint of Richard Tottel.'¹⁸⁶ When Mulcaster contributed a speech to the triumphal entry of James I on 15 March 1604, Dekker records it in his *Magnificent Entertainment*, remarking that it was performed by one of the schoolmaster's pupils: 'a latine Oratio(n) was *Viua voce* deliuered to his grace, by

¹⁸² Quoted in Gina Bloom, *Voice in motion: staging gender, shaping sound in early modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 190.

¹⁸³ George Gascoigne printed the Latin verses 'devised by master Muncaster' in his *The Princely Pleasures at Kenilworth Castle* (1576), quoted in John W. Cunliffe (ed.), *The Complete Works of George Gascoigne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), vol. 2, 95.

¹⁸⁴ David Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, revised ed., 2003), 35.

¹⁸⁵ Quoted in Draper, *Four Centuries of Merchant Taylors' School*, 29-30.

¹⁸⁶ William Barker, 'Mulcaster, Richard (1531/2-1611)', *ODNB*. The full title of this pamphlet is *The Passage of Our Most Dread Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth through the City of London to Westminster the Day Before Her Coronation* (London, 1558). Also see Germaine Warkentin (ed.) *The Queen's Majesty's Passage and Related Documents* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2004).

one of maister Mulcasters Schollers'.¹⁸⁷ These high-profile contributions to royal entertainments may have inspired or guided Gwinne in his handling of the dramatic spectacle of the king's arrival into Oxford; their influence formed part of his inheritance as one of the 'Mulcaster generation', and which contributed to his decision to employ the effects of pageantry with an open-air performance in Latin by students from St John's.¹⁸⁸ Such a display thus becomes a way of demonstrating the pedagogical culture and achievement of the institution which has schooled them and in front of which they are performing.

Gwinne's visual introduction of the king to St John's was a small counterweight to Christ Church's dominance of the royal entertainments; through the medium of *Tres Sibyllae*, Gwinne sought to assert St John's presence in the proceedings, and he used the pageant form to tell the story of the college's foundation. This is an aspect of the piece which has not received any critical attention (perhaps because it has no bearing on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*) though it is the emphatic note on which the drama ends: Sibyl 1's final speech explains that she is inspired to be there by the very same spirit of divine will which guided Sir Thomas White, the college founder, in his dreams: 'agente calescimur illo / Numine, quo THOMAS WHITVS per somnia motus' (22-3).¹⁸⁹ Here Gwinne is alluding to the well-known story of White's prophetic vision, that he chose this site for the college because he had been inspired in his dreams by a divine portent:

'[H]e accepted as a divine warning a dream which bade him choose for a site the place where he should find three elm-trunks growing from a single root. At first he thought that a tree near the dissolved buildings of Gloucester College answered to this description, but afterwards was convinced that by St. Bernard's College better represented the fancy of his dream. So in St. Bernard's was founded St John's College.'¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Thomas Dekker, *The magnificent entertainment giuen to King Iames, Queene Anne his wife, and Henry Frederick the Prince, vpon the day of his Maiesties tryumphant passage (from the Tower) through his honourable citie (and chamber) of London* (London, 1604), sig. H1r.

¹⁸⁸ For my suggestion that Gwinne and his contemporaries together form a 'Mulcaster generation', see above, pages 19-24.

¹⁸⁹ 'We grow hot with that guiding force of divine will by which Thomas White was inspired in his dreams'.

¹⁹⁰ Martha Humphreys Maltby and Emma Siggins White, *Genesis of the White Family* (Kansas: Tiernan-Dart Printing Company, 1920), 130. Also see Stevenson and Salter, *Early History of St John's College*, 115-6 and 387-9.

Given that the sibyl's reference to White's dream follows from the celebration of James' illustrious lineage and the prophecy of everlasting rule, there is the strong implication that just as James' royal prerogative has its mythopoeic status supported by God's will, so too does St John's have its foundation narrative with the intervention of supernatural powers conferring authority upon the institution and blessing its location.

Having evoked the portentous background to White's founding of St John's College, the sibyl points to the college behind her and elaborates upon both White's act of foundation and the guiding patron, St John the Baptist, who watches over it:

Musis hæc tecta dicauit:

Musis? imo Deo, tutelarique IOANNI.

Ille Deo charum, & curam, prope prætereuntem

Ire salutatum, Christi Præcursor, ad Aedem

Christi pergentem, iussit.

(*Tres Sibyllae*, 24-8)¹⁹¹

The sibyls depict St John the Baptist as the commanding figure who has prompted them, 'iussit', to salute the king as he is passing by their college, 'prope prætereuntem'. The use of 'pergentem' here in line 28 is repeated in the next line, where the lead sibyl bids the king farewell: 'Perge, tuo aspectu sit læta Academia, perge' (29).¹⁹² The command 'Perge... perge' (lead on, lead on) has the prophetic ring of a pre-prepared journey, reflecting the fact that James' movement down St Giles' is akin to a royal progress, a carefully choreographed path for the monarch to follow as he makes his official entry in the city of Oxford. In this scheme, St John's functions as a temporary staging post on the outskirts of the city walls just beyond the North Gate. The monarch's destination is the college's richer, more illustrious sibling, the royal foundation of Christ Church ('ad Aedem / Christi pergentem'), which enjoyed a privileged position in the heart of the monarch; as A.H. Nelson puts it, 'Christ Church was treated, especially by James and Charles, as a virtual extension

¹⁹¹ 'He dedicated this house to the Muses. To the Muses? No, rather to God and to John who watches over us. He, the forerunner of Christ, commands that we go to greet he that is dear to God and protected by God as he passes close by on his way to Christ Church.'

¹⁹² 'onward, be a welcome sight for the University as you go. Onward!'

of the royal court.¹⁹³ Gwinne and his actors would inevitably follow suit two days later, when they left St John's for Christ Church to perform his full-length play, *Vertumnus*, in the great hall.

Rather than resent this domination, however, Gwinne uses it to his own advantage, bolstering the importance of St John's by emphasising its association with Christ Church. Capitalising on the fact that the guiding patron of his college, St John the Baptist, is viewed in the biblical tradition as the prophet and immediate forerunner of Jesus Christ, Gwinne constructs the conceit wherein he refers to the figure of St John not directly by name but in his role as 'Christi Præcursor' (forerunner of Christ), playing upon the temporal reality that *Tres Sibyllae* is the minor prelude to the main act happening later down the road at Christ Church. (This is also a comic topsy-turvy order of events, since Christ Church is certainly the older college). The royal party clearly enjoyed this little joke,¹⁹⁴ and it made quite an impression on the University Orator Isaac Wake, who recorded in his *Rex platonicus* that it was delivered with an air of mock-apology on the part of the St John's men's, for getting in there ahead of Christ Church (and perhaps stealing their thunder):

veniamque precantes, quòd alumni ædium Divi Iohannis (qui præcursor
Christi) alumnos Ædis Christi (quo tum Rex tendebat) præcursoriâ hâc
salutatione antevertissent, Principes ingeniosâ fictiunculâ delectatos
dimittunt;¹⁹⁵

St John's might wish for more than this brief moment of attention on the periphery of the main programme, and the college would have to wait another thirty years until the monarch would do more than simply pass by, 'prope prætereuntem' (26), but for now Gwinne's vignette had made a splash with its comforting message and memorable tableau. His success in utilising the physical

¹⁹³ A.H. Nelson, 'Emulating Royalty: Cambridge, Oxford, and the Inns of Court' in *Shakespeare Studies*, 37 (2009), 67-76 (68).

¹⁹⁴ Gwinne's own enjoyment of the *praecursor* vignette is demonstrated by the fact that we also find him inserting it into his dedicatory epistle to Prince Henry, printed as the preface to his play *Vertumnus*. Here, as in the *Tres Sibyllae* (with which it was printed in the same volume, see below), St John the Baptist is left unnamed and instead identified through his role as the *praecursor* to Christ: 'Oxonienſis Academia [...] Comœdiam ex Aede Chriſti vnâ, è Præcursoris Collegio exegit alteram', 'The Oxford Academy ſourced one comedy out of Chriſt Church, another out of the College of the Forerunner' (*Vertumnus*, London, 1607, sig. A2r-v).

¹⁹⁵ Wake, *Rex platonicus* (Oxford, 1607), sig. C2r. 'begging pardon because the students of the college of St John, who was the forerunner of Christ, had, with a forerunner's greeting, preceded the students of Christ Church where the king was then going, they left the princes, who were delighted with this little pretence.' (trans. REED: *Oxford*, vol. 2, 1020).

backdrop of the college to convey meaning is reminiscent of the London pageants, where the route through the city engages with (and draws its meaning from) the topography of the capital, chosen monuments being incorporated along the way. For example, in the case of the royal entry of 1604, James followed a route crammed with symbolic buildings and monuments as he processed westwards through London, from the Tower over to Westminster and the royal palaces. It is in the nature of royal pageants such as this that the monarch is the figure who brings the event alive – he himself becomes the spectacle (the king ‘did most graciously feed the eyes of beholders with his presence’ as Dekker puts it in relation to James’ royal entry into London.¹⁹⁶). Gwinne shows that he too knows how to use the monarch to create the spectacle, co-opting James as the central player in the action: ‘spectande tuis’ (8), a vivid use of the vocative which we might translate ‘you who are to be watched by your subjects’. Thus the king, though he has not set foot inside the college, has, as a result of Gwinne’s engineering of the pageant *Tres Sibyllae*, graced St John’s with the royal presence.

¹⁹⁶ Thomas Dekker, *The magnificent entertainment giuen to King Iames, Queene Anne his wife, and Henry Frederick the Prince, vpon the day of his Maiesties tryumphant passage (from the Tower) through his honourable citie (and chamber) of London* (London, 1604), sig. F2r.

CHAPTER TWO
1607-8: Promotions for St John's drama

Re-writing a wrong: Gwinne's decision to publish an edition of his play *Vertumnus*

Fifty years on from its foundation, St John's College was basking in the king's approbation of the *Tres Sibyllae*, performed before him as he entered the city. However, on the same royal visit Gwinne's other entertainment, a comedy entitled *Vertumnus sive Annus recurrens*, was not as well received. This full-length play performed in Christ Church dining hall, by a cast of St John's men, fulfilled the commitment stipulated in the University decree and was played to an eight-hundred strong audience of university members and court representatives.¹ The four accounts which document King James' visit to Oxford offer a mixed and inconclusive view on the reception of the play, though it seems clear overall that it was not the resounding success for which Gwinne had hoped. Anthony Nixon's commemoration pamphlet entitled *Oxfords Triumph*, published soon after the event in 1605, presents an upbeat assessment of James' reaction: 'This comedie was so richlie set foorth and beautified, with such curious and quaint conceipts and deuises, as that it made his Maiestie pronounce himselfe as muche delighted therewith, as with anie sight (of the like nature) at anie time heretofore presented vnto him.'² However, the fact that throughout his account Nixon strives to depict (with suspicious consistency) a view of the monarch best pleased with everything which the university could provide, renders his report of praise for *Vertumnus* as less of an achievement than it would have been otherwise.

Meanwhile, a letter dated 12 October 1605 from John Chamberlain (a well-connected socialite) to his close friend, Ralph Winwood (who was English ambassador to The Hague at the time) singles out Magdalen College's production of *Ajax Flagellifer* for particular criticism, remarking that 'the playes had not the like successe [as the disputations], specially magdalens tragedie of Aiax, which was very tedious and wearied all the companie'.³ However, perhaps his choice of emphasis was partly conditioned by the fact that the recipient of his letter, his good friend

¹ See John Orrell's calculations in 'The Theatre in Christ Church, Oxford, in 1605', *Shakespeare Survey* 35 (1982), 129-40 (135).

² Anthony Nixon, *Oxfords Triumph* (1605), sig. E1v.

³ Quoted in *REED: Oxford*, vol. 1, 332.

Ralph Winwood, happened to be an *alumnus* of Magdalen College, Oxford. Chamberlain himself had been a student at Trinity College, Cambridge before moving to the Inns of Court, and we also detect a note of bitterness from another Cambridge commentator on events, who recorded his perspective on events but cannot be identified with certainty (it may have been Philip Stringer). Having criticised Christ Church's efforts with the *Alba* ('it was a pastorall much like one which I have seene in Kinges Colledg in Cambridge, but acted farr worse') and Magdalen's production of *Ajax Flagellifer* ('yt was not acted soe well by many degrees as I have seene yt in Cambridge'),⁴ the author appears to set aside instincts for rivalry when it comes to the *Vertumnus*. He declares it 'verye well and learnedly penned by Doctor Guynn' and judges it 'acted much better then eyther of the other, and cheifly by St. Johns men'.⁵

It seems that Gwinne as an individual and the company of St John's actors as a group had distinguished themselves as being a cut above their compatriots from the other colleges. However, their production still had a disadvantageous reception by the overwearied King James, whose patience during the long round of official duties during the visit had apparently worn thin by the third night, on which the *Vertumnus* was performed. Having already reached a peak of fatigue with the production of *Ajax Flagellifer* the night before (the Cambridge author states that 'the kinge was verye weary before he came thither [i.e. to the hall at Christ Church], but much more wearied by that [i.e. the *Ajax*], and spake manye wordes of dislike'⁶), James then spent a full day presiding over the disputations in the cathedral, before dining and sitting down to watch the *Vertumnus*. His interest quickly waned: 'the kinge was soe overwearied at St Maryes that after a while he distasted it, and fell a sleepe, when he awaked, he would have bene gone ... yet he did tarrye till they had ended yt, which was after one of the clock.'⁷

The discrepancy between the Cambridge visitor's experience and that of the king seems significant and may, in part, be a result of the Privy Council's intervention in the seating arrangements in Christ Church hall, whereby the king's chair was moved further away from the stage in an effort to make him more visible to the other audience members. The Cambridge observer reports an inspection of the venue by members of the Privy Council five days before the

⁴ Quoted in *REED: Oxford*, vol. 1, 299.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*

king's arrival, during which the Lord Chamberlain, Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk, came head to head with the Vice Chancellor of the University over the positioning of his Majesty's seat in the auditorium, complaining that 'the King [was] soe placed that the Auditory could see but his Cheeke onlie.'⁸ Clearly it was of key importance to members of the court, if not Oxford officialdom, that the king's *being seen* to watch the plays be prioritised over the king's actual watching of the plays. Thus the spectacle of the monarch himself becomes part of the show for the spectators, as in the *Tres Sibyllae* discussed above, but in this case with a somewhat disappointing result for the king's reception of the plays, since the repositioning of James' seat in the hall was such 'that there were manye longe speeches delivered, which neyther the Kinge nor anye neere him could well heare or vnderstand'.⁹ However, we are reliant on the evidence of the Cambridge account for references to the squabble between the court and university authorities, and it is perhaps unwise to take this narrative at face value. It may offer an important perspective on the events, though I dispute the view held by R.L. Nochimson that, because the report comes from a man visiting from Cambridge, it is therefore 'more reliable than the others'¹⁰.

Last but not least came the contribution of Isaac Wake, *Rex platonicus*, a volume published in 1607 on Joseph Barnes' Oxford press. Wake was an *alumnus* of Christ Church and, having been appointed University Orator at Oxford the previous December, he delivered a speech in this capacity to the king during his Oxford visit. Wake judges Gwinne's play to be 'Digna quidem quae toto vertente anno duraret'¹¹ making a little joke based on the calendrical plot of the play (a pun on the root of the eponymous Vertumnus, 'vertēre'). Unfortunately, Wake's account cannot completely be depended upon for two reasons: firstly, he wrote it while in an official capacity for the university, and the account therefore has all the hallmarks of institutionalised panegyric, and secondly, it contains some fairly sizeable errors. For instance, Wake mistakenly identifies the titles of two of the plays: he refers to *Alba* as the *Vertumnus* (with a précis of the plot which reads as if it had simply been copied from Ovid's tale of Pomona and Vertumnus in Book XIV of the *Metamorphoses*), and then, whilst discussing the play actually entitled *Vertumnus*, he instead names

⁸ Quoted in *REED: Oxford*, vol. 1, 295.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Nochimson, 'Robert Burton's Authorship of *Alba*: a Lost Letter Recovered', 327.

¹¹ Wake, *Rex platonicus* (1607), sig. P1r. 'worthy indeed of lasting for the cycle of a whole year'.

it by its subtitle, *Annus Recurrens*: ‘a Iohannensibus representatur ANNVS RECURRENS’.¹² Wake does this despite being able to consult full details of the script and the *dramatis personae* of *Vertumnus* while he was composing his account, since Gwinne’s edition of the play had already been published, a fact which Wake himself celebrates, rejoicing that it is now available in print for all to see: ‘Sed quid ego ista? quum ipsa iam e prælo emergerit festiuissima Comœdia’.¹³

Therefore, we have a fifth source of information about the play and its reception, in the form of Gwinne’s own published version of his play, and, most significantly, the paratexts which accompany it. In addition to the two dedicatory epistles, which I discuss below, Gwinne had the text of the *Tres Sibyllae* printed in the same volume (at sigs. H3r-v), working with Nicholas Okes in London, who had never printed a play before Gwinne’s *Vertumnus*, but would later go on to produce early editions of professional playwrights’ works such as those of Shakespeare, Jonson, Webster, Middleton, Dekker, Heywood, Shirley, and Ford.¹⁴ The publisher of the *Vertumnus* was Edward Blount, who would go on to publish the First Folio of Shakespeare in 1623, but Gwinne’s tragedy *Nero* in 1603 was the first play he ever published. Gwinne’s interest in getting his theatrical writings into print is conspicuous, especially considering the general pattern which John R. Elliott has noted, that, in the early seventeenth-century, academics who wrote plays ‘tried to maintain their amateur profile by keeping their works unpublished’.¹⁵ Evidently Gwinne was not content for his works, once performed on such a grand occasion, to take their place in the private sphere alongside the rest of amateur drama. By creating his own printed record of the play, Gwinne tries to sculpt how he wishes the production to be remembered, as a triumph for both himself and the college which he represented.

On the title page, he proudly publicises the role which the St John’s men had played in the royal entertainments, ‘Coram Jacobo Rege, Henrico Principe, Proceribus. A Joannensibus in Scena recitatus’.¹⁶ As discussed above in Chapter 1, in relation to the Gagerian literary circle, when it

¹² Wake, *Rex platonicus* (1607), sig. O4v.

¹³ *ibid.*, sig. P1r. ‘But why do I say these things? When this most jolly comedy has itself already emerged from the press’.

¹⁴ Heywood’s *An Apology for Actors* was also printed by Nicholas Okes, in 1612: on this work, which echoes Gager’s own defence of acting, see pages 180-81.

¹⁵ John R. Elliott, ‘Plays, Players and Playwrights in Renaissance Oxford’ in John A. Alford (ed.), *From Page to Performance* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995), 179-94 (181).

¹⁶ ‘In front of King James, Prince Henry, and noblemen. Performed on stage by St John’s men’.

comes to the role of print in promoting a cause, the use of paratexts is an important strategy for influencing the reader's reception of a work. In the case of the *Vertumnus*, Gwinne primes our reactions to the main text of the play by prefacing it with a series of dedicatory addresses to and from the author. His double dedication of the work to two potential patrons, to Prince Henry in first place, then the king's favourite courtier Philip Herbert, engages these influential figures in a dialogue with Gwinne's work and nudges the reader toward a favourable assessment of his worth as a writer and scholar. In addition, Gwinne peppers the opening dedication to Prince Henry with references to his friendship with Sir William Paddy, who himself then enters the frame, sponsoring the quality of his protégé by prefacing Gwinne's play with commendatory verses. John Craig, who held the title of *Regius Medicus* ('Physician to the King') jointly with Paddy, follows suit, and a further poem is dedicated by John Sansbury, fellow of St John's, who had previously contributed verses in praise of Gwinne's *Nero* (1603). Sansbury had recently been appointed the first Library Keeper for St John's College's new library, on the nomination of William Paddy.

It is interesting, though perhaps not surprising, to find that two key supporters of Gwinne's work as a dramatist are such prominent leaders in the field of medicine. Paddy's poem centres on this very point, emphatically defending the value of Gwinne both as a doctor and a poet: 'Perge, poeta bonus, nec minor hinc Medicus' (12).¹⁷ Paddy uses correlative adjectives with adverbial 'tam' to emphasise his point: 'Quantus sis Medicus, testor, quin miror, vt idem / Tantus sis medicus, tamque poeta bonus' (13-14).¹⁸ For his part, Gwinne seizes on this theme and it dominates his first dedicatory epistle (addressed to Prince Henry). He anticipates that critics will raise objections that the writing of comedies does not befit his medical office, 'medicus num prostat comicus?',¹⁹ since he should be devoting himself to his medical practice and not to poetry, 'Ad praxin medicus, non ad poesin.' This leads Gwinne into a lengthy rebuttal of these potential criticisms, beginning with the argument that it was only right that he do his duty and serve the interests of the university community, which had officially required him to provide a comedy:

¹⁷ William Paddy, *Ad eruditissimum Collegam Doct. Guinne. In detractores poeseos*, line 12, in *Vertumnus* (London, 1607), sig. C1r. 'Go forth, fine poet, no less henceforth the physician.'

¹⁸ How great a physician you are, how can I not wonder at it, when being such a great physician you are also so fine a poet'.

¹⁹ *Vertumnus* (London, 1607), sig. A2r. 'Surely the doctor does not offer himself as a comedian?'

Sed quæ nostra defensio? Oxoniensis Academia, vt regem Serenissimum, Doctissimum, Sanctissimum [...] / orationibus, disputationibus, spectaculis ad triduum exciperet, Comœdiam ex Aede Christi vnam, è Præcursoris Collegio exegit alteram. In illa docti desudârunt'²⁰

Gwinne is, of course, to be counted amongst the learned scholars he mentions here, *docti*, those who have been singled out for the honour of presenting their work before the king and who have put great effort into (literally ‘sweated strongly over’) their compositions. His use of the tricolon ‘orationibus, disputationibus, spectaculis’ here is also a subtle reminder that it was not only the *Vertumnus* and the *Tres Sibyllae* that Gwinne contributed to the royal entertainments in 1605, he also participated in the disputations which were staged for the king in St Mary’s. These elaborate debates formed a key part of the king’s programme, spread over several days and lasting for several hours at a time. Gwinne was a tried and trusted contributor, having been selected to speak in the disputations before the Polish aristocrat Albertus Laski on his visit to Oxford in 1583 and again in 1592 before Queen Elizabeth.²¹

Continuing his dedication to Prince Henry, Gwinne has a dig at the members of the Theology Faculty, identifying this particular group of scholars (*Theologi*) as the potential critics against whom a *defensio* of his actions is required. Gwinne’s stance here seems all the more interesting when we bear in mind Hegarty’s comment on the academic composition of St John’s, a college which was ‘considerably less dominated by theologians than most other endowed houses in the University.’²² It is also reminiscent of the way in which Alberico Gentili used the publication of his *Commentatio ad L[egem] III C[odicis] de prof[essoribus] et med[icis]* on the subject of drama to engage in inter-faculty rivalry and to try to put Rainolds and the theologians in their place.²³ Gwinne challenges them to deny the importance of fulfilling the duty of service owed to one’s *alma mater* and academic community:

²⁰ *Augusto Hæredi Principi Henrico Frederico*, in *Vertumnus*, sig. A2r-v. ‘But what is my defence? The University of Oxford, to welcome our most serene, most learned, most hallowed king [...] with orations, disputations, and plays for a three day period, demanded that one comedy issue from Christ Church and the other from the College of Christ’s precursor [St John’s College]. In these undertakings the scholars have exerted themselves most diligently’.

²¹ On Gwinne’s success in the disputations before Elizabeth, see page 43.

²² Hegarty, *Biographical Register of St. John’s College*, xxii.

²³ Gentili’s work is discussed above, pages 39–42.

Censores hi si hîc fuissent, quid egissent? Nollent, si possent, Regi,
Principi, Proceribus, Academiae, Collegio, Sociis excipientibus &
exigentibus, quâ possent, inseruire?²⁴

Here Gwinne presents the act of dramatic composition as an expression of loyalty and the fulfilment of duty, ‘inseruire’. The list of those to whom service is owed is constructed in such a way that the interests of the court and the university are seen to be in harmony with one another, united in their support of the commissioning and production of university plays for a royal audience. How could Gwinne, therefore, not have agreed to their joint demands? The University of Oxford, an umbrella term for the complex jumble of college communities (with each college further divided into various cliques and factions), is here depicted as uniformly behind the plays, from the top level of government to one’s own colleagues in college, ‘Sociis’. Clearly Gwinne enjoys putting the emphasis on the demand for his work, with the flattering phrase ‘Sociis excipientibus & exigentibus’ conveying the image of the fellows of St John’s all clamouring for him to undertake the commission. The academic community of one’s college is an important source of encouragement for literary undertakings, as Gwinne had expressed in the preface to the *Nero* a few years before, when he paid tribute to the learned fellows of John’s, ‘Sociis doctissimis’, for providing him with the nourishing environment in which the play was composed, ‘apud illos exaratum’ (*Nero*, sig. ¶4r).

However, receiving encouragement to write an academic play and have it performed for a special event was one thing, but having the motivation to publish it afterwards was something else and not necessarily an obvious or traditional next step. The timing of other publications may have influenced Gwinne’s decision, such as the *Mvsa Hospitalis Ecclesiae Christi Oxon[iensis]. In adventum Fœlicissimum Serenissimum Jacobi Regis, Annæ Reginae, & Henrici Principis ad eandem Ecclesiam*, a collection of Christ Church poems issued in 1605 on Joseph Barnes’ Oxford press. These poems commemorated the king’s visit (which Christ Church had successfully hosted) and included verses written by the playwrights from that college, such as Robert Burton, Leonard

²⁴ *Vertumnus* (London, 1607), sig. A2v. ‘If these objectors had been in this position, what would they have wanted? Would they not want to, if they could, serve their king, their prince, lords, the university, their college, and its fellows welcoming [their contribution] and demanding it, in whatever way they could?’

Hutten, and Thomas Godwyn. This was followed, in 1606, by Samuel Daniel's publication of the play which he had been commissioned to write for the performance at Christ Church on the final day of the royal visit, *Arcadia Reformed*. However, when he came to print this piece, Daniel changed its title, so that it was now to be known as *The Queen's Arcadia*, paying homage to Queen Anne for having bestowed her favour upon it. In the preface he celebrates the queen's attendance at the performance, 'Whose happy presence did vouchsafe to blesse / So poore presentments, and to grace the same',²⁵ and subtitles the work 'A Pastorall Trage-comedie presented to her Maiestie and her Ladies, by the Vniuersitie of Oxford in Christs Church, in August last. 1605.'

This was, in fact, the first English-language pastoral drama written for the academic stage, tailored to please the queen and entertain her whilst the king was making his tour of the refurbished Bodleian Library. Daniel finds a way of making a compliment out of the fact that the play did not have the distinction of being in Latin, but was instead presented in English, 'in th'humblest ranke of words, / And in the lowest region of our speech'.²⁶ Portraying Oxford as something of a provincial backwater, populated by scholars hidden away in their colleges, 'men shut out, retyr'd, and sequestered / From publicke fashion', he excuses the lowly pastoral mode of the piece, explaining that academe little understands the sophistication of courtly ways, for the university men

dare not enterprize to show
In lowder stile the hidden mysteries,
And artes of Thrones, which none that are below
The Sphere of action, and the exercise
Of power, can truly shew.²⁷

If the Latin version of Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* performed at King's College, Cambridge (*Pastor Fidus*) were easier to date,²⁸ it would provide a useful *comparandum* for a consideration of pastoral plays performed in university contexts in English and Latin. Daniel's engagement with Guarini and Tasso and the development of the genre of Italianate pastoral tragicomedy in England have long

²⁵ Samuel Daniel, *The Queenes Arcadia* (London, 1606), sig. A2r.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ I owe a debt to Clare Smout for discussing her thoughts with me on the topic of Daniel's preface.

²⁸ *Pastor Fido* survives in two manuscripts: (1) Cambridge University Library MS Ff. 2.9. (2) Trinity College Cambridge MS R.3.37, fols. 35-87v, but neither furnish convincing evidence towards dating.

been the subject of discussion and analysis by twentieth-century scholars,²⁹ but Daniel's work has yet to be contextualised in the scheme of university men's writing and explored as an interesting contrast to examples of contemporary writing in Latin, such as Gwinne's *Vertumnus*, which could also be classed as a pastoral tragicomedy. Whilst it is not possible to do justice to this topic here, I pursue the following lines of enquiry: Gwinne's engagement with Daniel's success as a court-facing poet, his emulation of Daniel's publishing record, the overlapping circles which both men occupied, and Daniel's aspirations to have a copy of his *Works* kept on the shelves of the Bodleian Library.

For some time Daniel had been positioning his work at the upper end of learned vernacular writing, with statements such as the publication of his *Musophilus, or a Defence of all Learning* in 1599, dedicated to his friend and patron Fulke Greville. In 1605 he offered the Bodleian Library a copy of his *Works*, presenting his work in a specially adapted volume, in the hope that Thomas Bodley would accept it. In this unique copy, Bodleian Arch G. d. 47, he replaced the original verse dedication to Queen Elizabeth (sig. A2) with a ninety-line poem entitled 'S.D. TO HIS BOOKE, In the Dedicating thereof to the Librarie in Oxford, erected by Sir Thomas Bodley Knight.' This presentation poem, printed on two conjugate leaves (signed a and aii) and featuring handwritten corrections by Daniel, follows the title page to his handsome *Works Folio* (1601/2), and the opening to the poem makes it clear that while he is making celebration of Bodley's library as a treasure trove storing up the riches of knowledge, Daniel hopes the volume which he is sending to Bodley prefaced with this bespoke dedicatory poem, will become part of that library store:

Heere in this goodly Magazine of witte,
This Storehouse of the choicest furniture
The world doth yeelde, heere in this exquisite,
And most rare monument, that dooth immure
The glorious reliques of the best of men;

²⁹ Daniel's use of Italian models was broached by W.W. Greg, for example, in 1906, in *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama: A Literary Inquiry, With Special Reference to the Pre-Restoration Stage in England* (London: A.H. Bullen, 1906), who argued that his dependence was too great and hindered the originality of the piece. Elizabeth Story Donno re-engaged with Greg's analysis in her edition of *The Queen's Arcadia* in 1993, focusing once again on the topic of Daniel's choice of genre and his engagement with the Italianate tradition, demonstrating that this topic was still resonant and central to our understanding of the play: Elizabeth Story Donno, *Three Renaissance Pastorals: Tasso--Guarini--Daniel* (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1993), xxix-xxxii.

Thou part imperfect worke, voutsafed art
 A little roome, by him whose care hath beene
 To gather all whatever might impart
 Delight or Profite to Posteritie,
 Whose hospitable bountie heere receiues
 Vnder this roofe powers of Diuinitie,
 Inlodg'd in these transformed shape of leaues.³⁰

That Daniel's *Works* were indeed accepted into the Bodleian Library is worthy of remark; indeed, Pitcher deems that it 'really is quite staggering, since Sir Thomas Bodley's contempt for books in English, let alone English verse, made him unwilling to receive anything that was not written in a classical or foreign language.'³¹ To have his *Works* housed in the Bodleian was doubtless a source of pride for Daniel, who had officially left his university days behind him when he departed from Oxford without a degree in the 1580s and forged a successful career as a poet. That he had also achieved success of an academic standing was now doubly ratified in 1605, by the status symbol of the Bodleian's containing his *Works* and by the production of his play as a university entertainment for royalty performed in the dining hall at Christ Church.

Gwinne graciously commented on the success of Daniel's Oxford play when he came to publish his own: in the second letter of dedication prefacing his *Vertumnus*, which he addressed to the well-known figure at court Philip Herbert, he acknowledged that Queen Anne had greatly enjoyed *Arcadia Reformed*: 'Euterpe expectans deliniit Arcas'.³² Attempting to cement his own claim to courtly success, he makes an elaborate list of as many of the nobles as he can remember who were in the audience that night for his production on Thursday 29 August 1605, beginning with the king, whom he names 'Augustus' (sig. B3r), and proceeding through a long series of individualised descriptions of each nobleman who attended. His choice of dedicatee here is important: King James had just created Philip the first Earl of Montgomery, on 4 May 1605, and the following August the new earl had accompanied James to Oxford for the royal visit, where he was incorporated Master of Arts alongside other 'diuers of the Noble men' collecting their

³⁰ Samuel Daniel, Bodleian Arch G. d. 47, sig. a.

³¹ Pitcher, 'Editing Daniel', 69.

³² *Vertumnus* (London, 1607), sig. B3v. 'Arcadian Euterpe, lying in wait, charmed her'.

honorary degrees in a special ceremony laid on by the University at St Mary's.³³ As nephew to Sir Philip Sidney, brother to William Pembroke, and confidant to the king, Philip Herbert is an important court figure to select as the complement to Gwinne's choice of Prince Henry in the first dedication. Gwinne also adds in an apostrophe to Lord Chancellor Egerton, counting him amongst the 'amicos / Musarum illustres' ('the distinguished friends of the Muses'), and acknowledging him once again as benefactor, 'Debet Egertono' (sig. B4r).³⁴

There is considerable overlap between the web of patronage Gwinne is advertising here and the network through which Samuel Daniel had built his poetic career. Naming William Pembroke, the third Earl of Pembroke, as one of the noblemen who attended the *Vertumnus*, Gwinne casts the earl in the role of 'Maecenas... meus' (sig. B3v), signalling his debt to and alignment with this important figure. Pembroke later became Chancellor of the University of Oxford in 1616 (succeeded in the role by Laud in 1630), and by 1605 he was already an important literary patron, following in the footsteps of his mother, Mary Sidney. This was the circle in which Samuel Daniel had thrived, coming to live with the family at Wilton House, as tutor to the young William. Later, Philip Herbert and his older brother would become the 'incomparable pair of brethren' to whom the First Folio of Shakespeare's collected works would be dedicated in 1623. Gwinne's decision to address Egerton in this paratext to the *Vertumnus* is interesting: he mentions him despite the fact that Egerton did not actually attend the play. Gwinne does not shy away from admitting this; he shapes it into an opportunity to emphasise his benefactor's important status, explaining that the Lord Chancellor had to be absent as he was needed for important state business, 'negotia maxima Regni' (sig. B4r). Daniel's own relationship to Egerton is aptly demonstrated by the tone of a letter (c.1603) discovered amongst the papers of the Duke of Sutherland, in which the poet expresses to his patron anxious introspection and wearied disillusionment in relation to finishing off his *Civil Wars*; there is a frankness about his manner of writing which, as John Pitcher has pointed out, reveals much about his own personal state of mind at the time.³⁵ We may also note

³³ Nixon, *Oxfords Triumph* (London, 1605) sig. E3v. Nixon attempts to list as many of these nobles as he can, but admits that they 'came in so confusedly that as yet there is not a perfect register gathered of their names' (sig. E4r). The Earl of Montgomery is, however, on Nixon's list.

³⁴ See Chapter 1 footnote 122, on Gwinne's dedication of his *Nero* (1603) to Egerton, who had helped promote him in his medical career.

³⁵ John Pitcher, 'Samuel Daniel's Letter to Sir Thomas Egerton', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 47 (1984), 55-61.

Gwinne and Daniel's mutual friendship with Fulke Greville (with whom Gwinne had edited Sidney's *New Arcadia*), and also with John Florio. Daniel had married Florio's sister, whilst Gwinne was a longstanding contributor of prefatory verses to Florio's works, such as his *Worlde of Words* (the first Italian dictionary) in 1598. When Florio came to publish his translation of Montaigne in 1603, he addressed Gwinne in the preface as 'my onelie dearest and in love-sympathising friend, Maister Doctor Guinne', asserted that his scholarship ought to be more widely appreciated and made it clear that Gwinne's knowledge and skills had been invaluable to him:

pitty is it the World knowes not his worth better; for ... I [may] truely say of him. *Non so se miglior Oratore e Poeta, o Filosofo e Medico*. So Scholler-like did he undertake what Latine prose; Greeke, Latine, Italian or French Poesie should crosse my way (which as Bugge-beares affrighted my unacquaintance with them) to ridde them all afore mee, and for the most part drawne them from their dennes ... for, who but he could have quoted so divers Authors, and noted so severall places? So was hee to mee in this bundle of riddles an understanding Oedipus, in this perilous-crook't passage a monster-quelling Theseus or Hercules.³⁶

Gwinne and Daniel's membership of overlapping literary circles is materially expressed in British Library Add. MS 15214, which contains the autograph manuscript of Florio's *Giardino di recreatione*; Matthew Gwinne and Samuel Daniel have both prefaced their friend's work with their own set of verses.³⁷ This network of mutual support expressed through the culture of commendatory prefacing runs parallel to the phenomenon observed in relation to Gager, Gwinne, and Case, discussed in the previous chapter, a literary circle to which Daniel may have been connected through Gwinne who was his contemporary at Oxford.

Florio's depiction of Gwinne unravelling the riddles of scholarship like 'an understanding Oedipus' would have pleased his friend, for it is clear from the manner in which Gwinne annotated the printed text of his plays that he did not wish his academic credentials to go unnoticed. The pages of both the paratexts and the script of the *Vertumnus* itself are crammed with marginal quotations in a manner that suggests an anxiety to prove the erudition underpinning the author's play. Classical authors dominate, chiefly the Roman canon - Horace, Ovid, Terence,

³⁶ Quoted in Iain Wright, 'Gwinne, Matthew (1558–1627)', *ODNB*.

³⁷ See H. Sellers, 'Samuel Daniel: Additions to the Text', *MLR* 11 (1916), 28-32 (31).

Plautus, Martial and Cicero – but we also have a sprinkling of Greek authors and some contemporary names including Sir Philip Sidney and Julius Caesar Scaliger. Gwinne had employed the same method in publishing his Latin tragedy *Nero*, as Emma Buckley has noted.³⁸ This type of authorial self-fashioning through arrangement of the printed page is something which has long been associated with Ben Jonson in particular, not a university man, but an author who strove most assiduously to create a visual impression of his learning. For example, W. Todd Furniss says of his *Masque of Queens*, published soon after its performance in 1609 with a dedication to Prince Henry: ‘this masque is so massively annotated that its text matches the appearance of a full Renaissance commentary of a classical work: a few lines of poetry surrounded by line after line of fine type, Greek and Latin quotations, italics, and all the other paraphernalia of scholarship.’³⁹ Jonson’s authorial project rose to its highest peak in 1616 with the first edition of his collected works; as Joseph Loewenstein puts it, ‘the publication of Jonson's Folio *Workes* [...] marks a crucial moment in that history of the cultural marketplace, and in the history of the bibliographic ego’.⁴⁰ It would be interesting to compare how Samuel Daniel approached the presentation of his works, when he had them published in a collected volume over a decade earlier.

The parallel between Jonson and Gwinne’s strategies of printing sheds light on a larger topic for investigation, namely the intriguing similarities between the masque form in Jonson’s work at court and masque elements found in the academic drama. I will return to this briefly in the following two chapters, in my discussion of the techniques used by scholars when presenting college plays to their heads of houses, where the closed, indoor environment of a private entertainment meets, at the close of the presentation, the masque-like blurring of the boundary between audience and players. If we return to the comment which John R. Elliott made of early seventeenth-century university dramatists, that these writers ‘tried to maintain their amateur profile by keeping their works unpublished’,⁴¹ we can see how Gwinne does not fit this mould. His attempt

³⁸ Emma Buckley, ‘Drama in the Margins - Academic Text and Political Context in Matthew Gwinne’s *Nero: Nova Tragædia* (1603) and Ben Jonson’s *Sejanus* (1603/5)’ in Knight and Sandis (eds.), *Latin Drama in Early Modern Europe*.

³⁹ W. Todd Furniss, ‘The Annotation of Ben Jonson's *Masque of Qveenes*’, *Review of English Studies*, New Series 5 (1954), 344-360 (344).

⁴⁰ Joseph Loewenstein, ‘The Script in the Marketplace’, *Representations*, 12 (1985), 101-114 (110).

⁴¹ John R. Elliott, ‘Plays, Players and Playwrights in Renaissance Oxford’, 181.

to bring Latin academic drama out of the closed realm of the college halls and into the wider marketplace, publishing with Okes in London, rather than on Barnes' press at Oxford, signalled his ambitions to align his work with contemporaries such as Daniel and Jonson.

Gwinne's attempt to settle the mixed reception which his play *Vertumnus* had received in performance by providing a carefully constructed written record, including suitably supportive paratexts, had a value beyond raising the profile of his own personal reputation. It also promoted St John's drama as a phenomenon, advertising the significant role which the college had played in Oxford's royal entertainments. If we contrast the slim traces of other St John's plays around this time, about which we know nothing more than whatever remarks the college thought useful to make for keeping its accounts, the high-profile legacy of Gwinne's work is all the more obvious. *Computus Hebdomalis*, the weekly accounts, preserve the title of a play from 1604, 'A tragedy of Hippolitus' and note that it was 'acted publickly' (i.e. to members of other colleges, not just St John's);⁴² whether it bears a closer relation to Euripides' play or Seneca's version we do not know. In 1605 an entry is added for 'The tragœdy of Lucretia', which notes that the production was performed before 'dyuerse strangers' and received 'good commedacon'.⁴³

Inspiring a younger generation

Close on the heels of Gwinne's tactical statement in publishing the entertainments which St John's had provided for the king's visit, a new thirst for drama swept the college. The student body embarked upon an elaborate series of theatricals running for the full length of the Christmas season, from the end of November 1607 to the middle of February, with eight shows (five in Latin, three in English) in addition to other entertainments such as wassails and dancing. This venture, which was later documented in a remarkable manuscript (St John's College MS 52, which we can date to c.1611⁴⁴), demonstrated a certain amount of ambition and confidence, requiring

⁴² Quoted in REED: Oxford, vol. 1, 276.

⁴³ Quoted *ibid.*, 281.

⁴⁴ The date and authorship of this manuscript are discussed below, pages 113ff. SJC MS 52 has been edited by F.S. Boas, in *The Christmas Prince*, Malone Society Reprints (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922); since this modern edition provides the standard frame of reference in discussions of the material elsewhere, I cite from the text according to its line numbering (but expand the abbreviations). The facsimile of the manuscript edited by Earl Jeffrey Richards for the *Renaissance Latin Drama in England* series (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1982) also follows Boas' line numbering.

considerable financial investment to make it happen: the college therefore authorised something akin to a theatre tax in order to pay for it, raising a special levy upon all of its current members. However, this proved insufficient for the scale of the enterprise which the students had planned; therefore, it was to the *alumni* they now turned for support, targeting ‘able & willinge Gentlemenn which had binne sometimes Fellowes or Commoners of the Colledge’⁴⁵ with official letters which invited them to attend performances but also requested financial aid towards the productions. The Christmas revels was thus an undertaking which saw participation from the whole of the St John’s community, including those who had graduated and gone on to prosper in their careers, still playing a role as an important resource for the college to draw upon.

The goodwill shown by old members in making donations to the project had a greater significance for the college than purely financial gain. Contributions from important figures such as the King’s Physician Sir William Paddy (on whom, see Chapter 1) and John Perrin, who, as the Regius Professor of Greek, had given a welcoming address to the King on his arrival at Oxford, reinforced the legitimacy of the enterprise and the confidence of those who undertook it. Their investment in the revels signalled their support for the role of theatre in the cultural life of the college more generally. As argued above, the commitment to drama was something which Matthew Gwinne had personally nurtured at his *alma mater* over many years, both as a student and later as an old member, when he made his high profile return to the college in 1605. The memory of the king’s visit, and the role played by St John’s as a key provider of entertainments, was now, in 1607, enshrined in print, thanks to Gwinne’s publication of the *Vertumnus* and *Tres Sibyllae*, which proudly announced on the title page that the St John’s men had performed before royalty.

This tangible record of their theatrical achievements may have rendered college authorities more willing to permit further investment in dramatic activities by the students, but, just as importantly, it may also have been a useful source of encouragement to the younger members themselves to go ahead in asking for permission, emboldened by the recent illustrious precedent. It is significant that St John’s students who kept printed copies of Gwinne’s work also played key

⁴⁵ Boas (ed.), *The Christmas Prince*, lines 284-5.

roles in managing the 1607-8 revels: for example, amongst the personal belongings of John English, appointed Lord Chief Justice of the revels, we find the 1607 volume of Gwinne's *Vertumnus* and *Tres Sibyllae* and also a copy of his *Nero* (1603).⁴⁶ John Sansbury, discussed above as a protégé of Gwinne and contributor of verses to both his *Nero* and *Vertumnus*, has been quite convincingly established by Harbage as the author of the tragedy *Periander*, the final production of the 1607-8 revels.⁴⁷ A second manuscript of this play, in addition to the principal record contained in SJC MS 52, is extant: Folger Shakespeare Library MS J.a.1, fols. 134r-57v. The Folger *Periander* offers two significant pieces of evidence: the statement 'made bye Mr. John Sansburye' on its title page, and, written along the outer edge, the words 'Englishs Fairre copy', indicating ownership by the same John English who kept copies of Gwinne's plays.

Reviving the ghost of Christmas past

The first recorded instance of Christmas revels at Oxford, at Merton College in 1486,⁴⁸ reminds us that this had long been a feature of the calendar and was not an innovation ushered in with the humanistic curricular reforms of the Elizabethan Statutes, the *Nova Statuta* of 1564-5. However, revels on such a grand scale as the 1607-8 season, where a varied and costly sequence of entertainments extended over many weeks (even to the postponement of the formal commencement of Hilary Term by the College authorities, in order to accommodate further productions⁴⁹), were comparatively rare and not a tradition regularly upheld by any of the Oxford or Cambridge colleges.⁵⁰ It is to the Inns of Court in London that we may turn for *comparanda* of Christmas revels on a par with the full-scale 1607-8 season at St John's. For here we have the evidence of

⁴⁶ W.C. Costin, 'The Inventory of John English, B.C.L., Fellow of St. John's College' in *Oxoniensia*, 11-12 (1946-47), 102-31 (108). An inventory of English's belongings was taken at his death, in 1613, by two fellows of St John's, Richard Holbrooke and Richard Baylie.

⁴⁷ Alfred Harbage, 'The Authorship of *The Christmas Prince*' in *Modern Language Notes*, 50 (1953), 501-5.

⁴⁸ See H. E. Salter (ed.), *Registrum annalium Collegii Mertonensis, 1483-1521* (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1923), 94.

⁴⁹ Term was supposed to begin on Monday 11 January, but 'the hall was still pestered with the stage and scaffolds which were suffered to stand still in expectation of the Comedy [*Philomathes*] therefore it was agreed by the President and the officers that the terme should bee prorogued for 7 dayes longer in which time it was agreed the Comedy should be publickely acted on frieday the 15th day of Ianuary.' (4656-61). A second postponement was then granted in response to the repeat performance of *The Seven Dayes of The Weeke* (the success of which is discussed further below): 'the actors were much Commended, and the terme for their sakes prorogued one day longer' (5927-8).

⁵⁰ A.H. Nelson concurs, in 'Emulating Royalty: Cambridge, Oxford, and the Inns of Court', 72.

sizeable textual records such as the *Gesta Grayorum*, performed at Gray's Inn in 1594-5, and *Le Prince d'Amour alias Noctes Templariae*, performed at the Middle Temple in 1597-8. Such texts, though they present their own problems as sources of evidence (combining incomplete manuscript records with later printed versions, unpublished until 1688 and 1660 respectively), still preserve much of the flavour of events and the personalities who brought them into being. The account of *Le Prince d'Amour* composed by Benjamin Rudyerd, an *alumnus* of St John's College who left Oxford to become a student at the Middle Temple, offers a particularly colourful and not unbiased version of events, illuminating for its personal touches and penchant for internal politics.⁵¹

A unifying factor in the examples we have is the phenomenon of a Christmas Prince figure, appointed to preside over the revels and rule the Inn as if in charge of his very own kingdom. (With its transfer of power to the lower echelons of the institution as part of the festive cheer, this tradition can be seen as the reformation counterpart to the Boy Bishop, a regular feature of cathedral tradition in the middle ages.⁵²) Between the years 1561-2 and 1635-6, there are six known instances of such leaders given the reigns at the Inns of Court, adorned with titles such as the 'Prince of Purpoole' at Gray's Inn in 1587-8 (reused in 1594-5, as recorded in the *Gesta Grayorum*, and a third time in 1617-8), the 'Prince of Sophy' at the Inner Temple in 1561-2 (played by Robert Dudley), and Rudyerd's 'Prince of Love' at the Middle Temple in 1597-8 (a title resurrected nearly forty years later for the revels in 1635-6). At St John's, a pun on the surname of the Founder of the College, Sir Thomas White, inspired the creation of the name 'Prince of Alba Fortunata' as the title for their Christmas Lord. The role was given to Thomas Tucker, who, in 1607, was a Bachelor of Arts working towards his Master's degree.

This was not the first time St John's had been ruled by a Prince of the Christmas revels, though, regrettably, we lack sufficient material to be able to make much of a comparison with the events of 1607. What we do know is that Thomas Tucker and his men were anxious to root their actions in one particular precedent, that of 1577, and, although they give away nothing of the

⁵¹ Rudyerd and his account are discussed below, pages 115ff.

⁵² See Neil Mackenzie, *The Medieval Boy Bishop* (Leicester: Matador, 2012), for an up to date study of the boy bishop, a phenomenon which received its first historical treatment at the hands of a Christ Church man, John Gregory (whose work was published posthumously in 1649). Also see Sandra Billington, *Mock Kings in Medieval Society and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 30-3, on the influence of Norman customs on medieval English society, and the titles given to prince or king figures presiding over the winter festival.

details of this festive season (if any were known to them), the parallel is cultivated with a tenacious determination. Describing the reception of the installation of the Prince in the production entitled *Ara Fortunae* (discussed below), the narrator of SJC MS 52 reports that:

Some upon the sight of this Showe (for the better ennoblinge of his person, and drawinge his pedigree euen from the Godes because the Princes name was Tucker, and the last Prince before him was Dr Case) made this conceipt that Casus et Fortuna genuerunt Τυκερον⁵³ Principem Fortunatum, So that one <was> his Father, and the other his Mother; (859-64)

This ‘Dr Case’ was, in fact, Gwinne and Gager’s friend the philosopher John Case, who had taken the role of Christmas Prince thirty years previously, in 1577.⁵⁴ The admiration which Tucker and co. had for Case, who had died in the year 1600, led them to overlook (perhaps deliberately) the intervening instances during those thirty years, for, if the accounts of the college are to be believed, St John’s was not wholly bereft of revel leaders during these years. *Computus Hebdomalis* entries for the Christmas season of 1605-6, for example, state that, in addition to expenditure on musicians and the outlay ‘for virtue his playe’⁵⁵ (fol.19v), monies were ‘Set on for *our* Christmas-Lord’ to the tune of three pounds and sixteen pence (fol.18v), with a top-up of two shillings a couple of weeks later (fol.19r).

It may be that Tucker and his men chose to pass over this in silence because such instances did not represent an undertaking on the same kind of scale, and the reign of John Case 1577 set the standard to which they aspired. Drawing a direct line of descent from Case can also be interpreted more opportunistically as a strategic move, whereby association with the heyday of a previous generation could be used to confer greater legitimacy upon the present regime and emphasise Tucker and his team upholding a proud tradition for the college. Certainly, when it came to extracting money from college members, the Prince decided it was best to portray this as the renewal of a tradition, rather than a one-off tax, and so he declared that in drawing up this bill he was modelling himself and his choice of words directly on his illustrious predecessor’s:

⁵³ ‘Τυκερον’ offers a neat pun on the Greek Τύχη [Fortune] combined with the name of Tucker.

⁵⁴ On Case’s membership of Gager’s circle and his friendship with Gwinne in particular, see Chapter 1.

⁵⁵ This may be a reference to Owen Vertue, who took the role of ‘Clerke of ye Signet, and Chafer of Waxe’ during the 1607-8 revels and is suggested by Boas (*The Christmas Prince*, xi) as possible author of the *Saturnalia* performed on Christmas Day.

The cōpye of an auncient Act for taxes and subsidyes made in the raynge of our Prædecessor of famous memorye in this Parliament, held in aula regni the vith of Nouember 1577. and now for Our self newly ratified and published, anno regni j. Nouemb. 7. 1607. (216-20)

A community undertaking: sharing the financial burden

The bill follows this self-conscious evocation of the precedent provided by Case with an exhortation to college members to appreciate the importance of their own individual contributions as a means to fund the communal activities of the Republic in which they share. Appealing to their sense of loyalty to the community, he declares that all members ‘doe owe not onely themselues, but also their landes, liuinges, goodes, and whatsoeuer they call theirs, to the good of the Commonwealth and estate, under which they peaceably enjoy all’ (221-4). Each person was taxed according to his rank and means: at the top came the current President of St John’s, John Buckeridge, assessed at forty shillings, whilst William Laud, John Sansbury, and Rowland Juxon (who played the role of Chancellor in the Prince’s court) were all assessed at ten shillings, and more junior members such as Griffin Higgs (discussed further below) and Christopher Wren (whose work forms a central case study in Chapter 3) were only require to pay five shillings. In addition to extracting these compulsory payments from current members of the college and inviting voluntary contributions from St John’s *alumni* (as discussed above), the students also gained permission to draw upon the wider resources of the college estates in order to supplement their income:

the Prince tooke order with the Bowsers to send out warrantes to all the Tenantes & other frendes of the Colledge, that they should send in extraordinary prouision against euery Feast, which accordingly was perfourmed; Some sendinge money, some Wine, some Venison, some other prouision, euery one accordinge to his abilitye. (338-43)

This piecing together of resources, drawn from the various corners of the St John’s community, was both a practical measure and an aspirational attempt to conceive of the revels as a positive, collaborative venture supported by and for the college as a whole. It was, after all, the

season of generosity and festive cheer, and yet it seemed that no matter how much was asked for, it would never be enough. Again the senior members were tapped for cash, to the tune of five pounds, but it was not the end of the taxing spree: ‘This being not as yet sufficient there was a new subsidy levied by the Junior M^{rs}. and the rest of the Colledge to the *Summe of six poundes three shillings* whereuppon finding themselues againe before hand and resolving to saue nothing for a deere yeare they proceeded to new expences and new troubles.’ (4130-4). It was not hard to see where the money was going: the visual splendour was there for all to see, in the form of rich costumes (the gown for the actor playing Philomela alone cost three pounds), wigs, beards, and decorative accessories such as feathers, ribbons and jewels, in addition to the more practical expenditure on items such as stage scaffolds. The number of participants involved in the great procession on New Year’s Day for the Prince’s triumphs rendered the event a particularly costly spectacle, not least because of the many lackeys assigned to attend their masters, each requiring torches and the wax tapers to light them, at a total cost of five pounds and five shillings. (The knights, for example, processed ‘in rich apparell with hats and feathers, rapiers and daggers bootes and spurres, euerie one his Lackie attending one him with torch-lighte all two by two’, 3108-11).

The elaborate formulation of such a performance was doubtless frivolous pomp, a characteristic of the 1607-8 revels at large (what Tucker Brooke terms ‘the prodigious gorgeousness of the Christmas Prince revival at St. John’s’⁵⁶). Yet it had one virtue, in maximising participation in a communal event: the number of actors required for the procession ensured parts for many of the younger members, and those looking on and enjoying the visual spectacle became participants themselves as they joined the procession around the college. (With its pageant-like qualities, the event operates on a similar principle to Gwinne’s outdoor production of *Tres Sibyllae* in 1605, where spectators became part of the spectacle itself.) The procession ended with everyone entering the dining hall, to take their places for a performance of *Time’s Complaint*, which was delivered in English and unfortunately highlighted the amateurish inexperience of its youthful cast (blundering their way through the piece with wearisome overacting, mistimed cues, and attacks of stage fright). Yet the revelers were undeterred and a few days later they decided to stage a show

⁵⁶ Tucker Brooke, ‘The Life and Times of William Gager (1555-1622)’, 426.

with the specific aim of including everybody, so that even the shy and untalented could be encouraged to perform:

Now because there were diuers youths whose voyces or personages would not suffer them to act any thing in publicke, yet withall it was thought fitt that in so publicke a buisnes euery one should doe something, therefore a Mocke play was prouided called the 7 dayes of the weeke which was to bee performed by them which could do nothing in earnest, and that they should bee sure to spoyle nothing euery mans part was sorted for his parson, and it was resolued that the worse it was done, the better it would bee liked.

(4143-9)

This strategy for inclusivity paid dividends, for, without the pressure of any expectation upon them, whatever degree of success they met with came as a confidence-boosting surprise to the actors. Restricting the audience also proved a sensible move to increase morale amongst the shy and inexperienced (it was performed in the President's lodging 'before our selves onely or some few freinds', 4649), and the net result was a show which met with such good report that it was later repeated by special request before the Vice Chancellor and other dignitaries.

Members only: Partaking in the theatrical feast

Though there were significant moments of community spirit and genuine attempts were made to involve everyone in college productions, there were doubtless some who did not wish to join in and resented paying taxes so that others could dress up in feathers and jewels. Yet when it came to the Christmas Day dinner, when every college member came to take his place in the hall, this was an occasion when pomp and ceremony was served up to all and everyone shared in the feast. The presentation of the food before the diners was performed as a piece of theatre, starting with the traditional boar's head as the first course. A colourful procession attended the head as it was marched into the dining hall:

carried by *ye* tallest and lustiest of all *ye* Guard, before whom (as attendant's) wente first, one attired in a horseman's coate *with* a Boars-speare in his hande, next to him an other Hunts-mann in greene *with* a bloody fauchion drawne, next to him 2 Pages in tafatye Sarcenet each of *yem with* a

messe of mustard, next to whome came hee *yt* carried *ye* Boares-head crost
 with a greene silke Scarfe, by *which* hunge *ye* emptye Scabbard of *ye*
 faulchion *which* was carried before him. (1134-41)

Each man in the procession is playing a part in the story of the boar's death, decked out in hunting clothes and brandishing the symbolic weapons. As this visual spectacle makes its way through the hall, the leader carrying the head of the boar sings a carol celebrating their victory over the animal, enhancing the dramatic quality of his tableau by evoking the mighty beast of legend (told by Ovid in Book VIII of the *Metamorphoses*) who terrorised the population of Calydon and trampled their crops:

He liuinge spoyled
 Where good-menn toyled
Which made kinde Ceres sorrye. (1150-2)

This was a monstrous creature sent by Diana in revenge for lack of worship, and the famous boar hunt which ensues is a tale of epic proportions, featuring heroes from the *Iliad* such as Nestor (in his younger days before the outbreak of the Trojan War). Here the verses of the Christmas carol compare the leader of the procession of hunters to the hero Meleager, whose spear-throw struck the killing blow:

What mann could haue donne more,
 Then his head of to strike
 Meleager like
 And bringe it as I doe before.
 (1146-9)

This dramatic mode of presenting the boar's head to the diners creates the atmosphere of the heroes returning in triumph to share the spoils, and every member of the hall joins the leader in the victory song in a symbolic gesture of communal celebration: '*ye* three last verses of euerye Staffe beinge repeated after / him by *ye* whole companye.' (1142-3).

Roasted boar was a staple of medieval banquet culture, where the presentation of the head at Christmas had come to signify Jesus' triumph over the sin of the world. St John's was not the only Oxford college to adapt this tradition for their own use (at Queen's College the boar's

head is still presented in the dining hall each year), but this did not reduce its effectiveness as an identity-affirming ritual, since the particulars of each performance were specific to the institution and were experienced by the membership in the unique setting of their own college hall. Like members of a congregation, the St John's community took their places to receive the Christmas Day meal that was presented before them, served up in their own particular dramatic style, with the whole company joining together in song. It is interesting to compare this event at St John's with an instance of the boar's head being presented to diners at the Inner Temple in 1561, described by Gerard Legh in his *Accedens of Armory* (London: R. Tottel, 1576), and again by William Dugdale in his *Origines Juridiciales or Historical Memorials of the English laws* (London: F. & T. Warren, 1666). The boar's head is processed through the Inner Temple hall as a spectacle for the diners to look upon ('[a]t the first Course is served in a fair and large Bores-head, upon a Silver Platter, with Minstralsye.'⁵⁷), in a manner very similar to St John's, and yet the effect is to cement the membership of that particular community, the Inner Temple (and not to link it with any other groups who may share similar rituals). Those who take part in this communal meal are, as Paul Raffield argues, participating in a 'sacramental act of dining', where the boar's head paraded on its silver platter functions as a symbol of the banquet as a whole. The members are bound together through their experience of the ritual meal, but, more specifically, as members of the Inner temple, the food they share takes on a special significance because of their mutual identity as legal professionals: '[a]t the feast described by Legh, common law symbolically asserted its sovereignty and celebrated the Word made flesh – the law given corporeal substance.'⁵⁸ This is an interpretation suited to its context, a feast arranged to celebrate the values and interests of those in the legal profession. The emphasis at St John's, where the membership is multi-disciplinary, is upon bringing the scene to life in the dining hall, dramatising the triumph of the victor over the beast with the full complement of hunting clothes, spears, and so on. The leader of the ceremonial

⁵⁷ Dugdale, *Origines Juridiciales*, fol. 155.

⁵⁸ Paul Raffield, *Images and Cultures of Law in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 101.

procession adopts the persona of his heroic forebear and enters, ‘Meleager like’, to play his part, bringing in the spoils to share with his group.

The students of St John’s extended their Christmas Day feast with a dramatic interlude entitled *Saturnalia* performed after supper. This was a members-only experience once again (‘a private Showe’, 1168), which ‘was very well liked of our selves and the better First, because itt was the voluntary service of a younge youth, Nexte, because there were no straungers to trouble vs’ (1405-7). Like the production of *The Seven Dayes of the Weeke*, the absence of outsiders reduced the pressure on the younger, more inexperienced boys to try performing before their peers, and the resulting success was both an important morale booster and a community-reinforcing experience. The subject matter of the show directly reflected the religious occasion on which it was performed, ‘shewing the first cause of Christmas-Candles’ (1169-70), and closed with an epilogue rousing the audience to celebrate the birth of Christ by strengthening harmony and friendship within their community:

apud nos etiam nefas esse existimetur *concordiam atque mutuam amicitiam*
in hoc festo non amplecti in quo deus pacis et dilectionis Christus nobis
 datus est.⁵⁹

The epilogue emphasised correspondences between pagan and Christian festivals, pointing out that the season for celebrating the occasion of Saturnalia coincided more or less with Christmastide in the calendar (‘Hoc tempore apud ethnicos festa Saturno consecrarunt: hoc tempore apud nos aurea Christi sæcula celebrantur’, 1381-3). The phrases ‘hoc tempore’ (at this time) and ‘in hoc festo’ (on this feast day) are repeated so often in this epilogue that they become something of a refrain (no one is allowed to forget which day is being celebrated) and it is possible that this speech was delivered as a parody of the Christmas Day sermon.

Saturnalia demonstrates an adept handling of the traditions of Roman comedy, particularly in its successful emulation of witty banter between master and servant. These dialogues

⁵⁹ ‘amongst ourselves let it be reckoned a sin not to embrace at this feast the harmony of mutual friendship in which the god of peace and love Christ is given to us.’ (1393-5).

show an aptitude for Latin wordplay in, for example, the construction of slave-beating jokes in the style of Plautus or Terence:⁶⁰

Doulus: Oh quale vinum furcifer domino paras?
 Curius: Hoc Domine passum est, istud est mulsum optimum.
 Doulus: Caueto, demulcebo tibi, nebulo, caput
 Si tale mulsum rursus in festum pares.⁶¹

The main joke in operation here is the Saturnalian inversion of roles which has taken place; Curius the master has become subject to Doulus, his eponymous slave (Greek *δοῦλος*), so it is the *dominus* and not the *servus* who is about to get a beating. The inversion of power works particularly well when we consider the strictness with which social hierarchies were preserved in the seating plan of the dining hall: sizars, gentlemen, and members of the governing body all knew their place. This was a time of topsy turvy revels, however, and Tucker the Prince was in power; at the grand dinner on Christmas Day, he ascended to the high table and took the Vice President's chair. Yet he did not take Buckeridge's seat, for the President was himself present, and this serves as a reminder that no matter how much the student body were enjoying the made-up world of their own kingdom, the official pecking order of the college hierarchy was still in place. The world of the play, however, allows the fantasy to go that bit further, to imagine how hilarious it would be if, like poor Curius, the real master could be subject to a beating.

When put in the context of the experience which the university students had had at school, these jokes perhaps resonate more than might at first appear, since, unlike contemporary teaching methods, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pedagogy regularly included the use of corporal punishment. Indeed, in his treatise *Positions* (1581), Richard Mulcaster strongly advocates the rod as a tool to achieve discipline, arguing that it not only teaches the students obedience but conditions their relationships with their parents, servants, colleagues etc. for the future: the instinct to remain

⁶⁰ For an overview of slave-beating as a source of humour in Roman comedy, see Holt Parker, 'Crucially Funny or Tranio on the Couch: The *Servus Callidus* and Jokes about Torture', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 119 (1989), 233-246.

⁶¹ Doulus: What kind of wine are you giving your master, you villain?
 Curius: This is raisin wine, master, that is excellent wine that's been mulled.
 Doulus: Watch out, or I'll mulch your head, you rascal, if you mull it for the holiday in that way again.

‘dutiful toward all, with whom he hath to deal’.⁶² Given that many of the members of St John’s College were educated at the Merchant Taylors’ School under Mulcaster and his successors, and that the scholars brought their pedagogical culture with them to university,⁶³ we can be sure that the master-servant scenario being played with here in *Hercules, Curius, Doulus*, was not just familiar on account of its close relationship to Roman comedy. The audience also shared the understanding of the contemporary tutor-student relationship, where to be subject to (or at least threatened with) physical violence was a part of the learning experience; the comic value of the master being beaten by his inferior, was, therefore all the greater.

‘[F]or the more Solemnity’: The use of theatre to ratify hierarchical power

The role of Christmas Prince was an elected position, but it was a leadership role which did not appeal to everyone; the first-choice candidate, John Towse, declined the offer, and later became Lord High Chamberlain to second-choice candidate, Thomas Tucker. Having been elected to his princely status, Tucker addressed the voters in mock-senatorial tones (‘Electores conscripti’) in his acceptance speech, explaining that he had now assumed control over decision-making on behalf of everyone and must therefore think of the good of the whole republic and not any one individual: ‘sedulò impendam curam, ut Reipublicæ (si vobis minùs / possim singulis) toti satisfaciam’ (134-5).⁶⁴ He gave his audience reassurance that he would exercise strong leadership but not impose a tyrannical dictatorship (‘Tyrannidem non profiteor, imperium exercebo’, 143); this statement would later be heavily ironised on several occasions when he displayed a distinct aptitude for tyrannical behaviour.

The Christmas revels at St John’s demonstrate how, within the confines of an Oxford college,

⁶² Quoted in Bushnell in *Culture of Teaching*, 27. Bushnell’s sensitive analysis and contextualisation of the culture of corporal punishment during this period (see especially Chapter 2, ‘The Sovereign Master and the Scholar Prince’, 23-72) remains essential reading on this topic.

⁶³ As argued above in Chapter 1 and further discussed below in Chapter 3.

⁶⁴ ‘I shall make it my concern, sincerely, to satisfy our state as a whole, though I be the less able to satisfy each one of you individually’.

a small community could be transformed into a self-contained, mock kingdom using the power of theatre. Ceremony was key to the pretence of authority, and thus Tucker's acceptance speech assuming government of this new realm was not enough; it 'was counted sufficient for his priuate installmente, but withall it was thought necessary that some more publicke notice hereof should be giuen to the whole Uniuersitie, with more solemnitie, and better fashion' (160-3). Thus it was decided that his inauguration should be dramatised, and the short play *Ara Fortunae* was composed for the occasion. The performance did more, however, than reiterate in ceremonial form the conferral of power upon Tucker; it took stock of recent events and digested the past somewhat creatively, so that it became the material for an interesting theatrical narrative. The debate which had taken place in the college dining hall, questioning the legitimacy of the prince's right to rule and assessing the merits of different forms of government, now became the action of Act I Scene i, where a symbolic group of three characters entered and presented their various arguments for and against monarchic accession and election by popular vote. The election itself was not dramatized; instead, a tableau was created to show divine dispensation of power being conferred on the prince and his retinue, who arrived at the temple of the goddess Fortuna and received their offices directly from her. Likewise, the dethroning of the prince at the end of the season of revels was dramatised in *Ira Fortunae*, the counterpart to the *Ara Fortunae*. This show brought the narrative of the prince's reign full circle, staging his demise and 'death' with a mock funeral procession and tomb. I will return to the theatricalisation of mourning in the conclusion to the thesis, in my discussion of the 1640s play *Sors Cæsarea* which, as Martin Wiggins has argued, can be read as a dramatisation showing Laud's followers coming to terms with his death and laying him to rest with fitting tribute.

Thomas Tucker did not only play the role of the Christmas Prince; he also acted parts in some of the plays. For example, he took the role of Tereus, the tyrant king, in the tragedy of *Philomela* performed on 29 December. Tucker's performance as Tereus was handled with sophisticated forethought: a metatheatrical frame was constructed around the play, so that the moment of his taking to the stage was part of his act as the Christmas Prince. Appearing in the hall in his persona

as prince, he was then to show himself stepping into the world of Greco-Roman mythology to play the part of King Tereus:

Now, for that it was thought not to stand with the Prince's state, barely to be an actor with others, it was contrived that he should first enter like himself, with his train, and so take his chair as the Cheife spectator and then fortune his only patronesse, should appear and find faulte with his still looking on, and doing nothing himselfe, whereupon he and his men, for the more Solemnity, should take upon them to be Actors in the ensuing Tragedy.

(1465-72)

Thus his leadership of the college community extends to the act of leading the way onto the stage, followed by his fellow students, a scenario which generated a certain amount of humour once he got into the role of the tyrannical Tereus and began to murder his 'subjects'. The metatheatrical frame, which is entitled the *Inductio Fortunæ* (entrance of Fortune) in the manuscript account, SJC MS 52, carefully choreographs Tucker's movements so that this ironic set-up is obvious to all members of the audience at the beginning of the play. Having taken his seat as a member of the audience, he is called upon by Fortuna from the stage. Addressing him as 'your begowned majesty' (togata... majestas, 1490), the goddess demands that he draw lots to see which play is to be performed, choosing a page at random from the book which she is holding: 'Sortire nostrâ paginâ historiam tuam' (1498).⁶⁵ The stage directions for Fortuna's entrance also confirm that she is carrying a book, 'librum manu gestans', and indicate that the prince randomly selects a page, coming upon the tale of Tereus, 'Princeps sorte legit paginam et in Historiam Terei incidit'. The audience are left in no doubt as to what is happening, for Fortuna asks 'quid fit?' ('Which is it?') and Tucker (labelled Princeps in the script, showing that he is in character as the Christmas Prince at this moment) answers 'Terei nomen lego' (I read the name of Tereus). It is possible that the book of stories from which the choice is made is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and that the page is engineered to fall open at the tale of Tereus and Philomela in Book VI (reflecting the fact that Ovid's work provides a model for the St John's play, as discussed below).

⁶⁵ 'Cast your lot for a story according to my page'.

Fortuna's next instruction is interesting, for she orders that they divest themselves of their gowns: 'Exuite vestras, turba praegravior, togas.' (1501).⁶⁶ The use of the adjective *praegravis*, in combination with Fortuna's drawing attention to their wearing of academic gowns, emphasises that these men, being scholars, have a special dignity, not to be confused with the average crowd of actors (i.e. those of the professional stage). The stage directions confirm that the taking off of gowns at the start of the play is repeated in reverse at the end of it: Fortuna leads the actors who had been playing King Tereus and the other characters back across the stage ('Fortuna praecedente'), they take their seats amongst the audience once again ('in suis sedibus collocatis') and they are all wearing their gowns ('omnes / togati'). Academic dress is thus used as a costume, which confers the students' true identity back upon them once they leave the stage. That this is a scholarly piece of theatre designed to impress the audience, as well as entertain, is discussed in more depth below, in relation to the darkly comic way in which the theme of hospitality is treated. However, I would add a brief comment that the *Philomela* has much to offer as a scholarly dramatisation of the political themes of kingship and the dangers of tyranny, and that the metatheatrical device of framing the piece with the Christmas Prince of St John's and his retinue brings the mythological tale back to the college level in a clever and interesting way. The choice of Fortuna as a figure directing the action of the frame harks back to the *Ara Fortuna*, which saw Tucker formally installed as prince, and is also a scholarly allusion to the Roman model which provides the author with source material for the story of Philomela and Tereus: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* VI.422-674. The sixth book of the *Metamorphoses* opens with the tale of Pallas Athena and Arachne engaged in their weaving contest, followed by the story of Niobe, who famously declares that she is too great for the goddess Fortuna to hurt her: 'maior sum quam cui possit Fortuna nocere' (VI.195).⁶⁷ This arrogance sets the scene for her downfall, and as we move

⁶⁶ 'Put off your gowns, you who are quite the distinguished company.'

⁶⁷ All quotations from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are taken from the edition by R.J. Tarrant, *P. Ovidi Nasonis Metamorphoses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

into the story of Tereus' rape and the revenge inflicted upon him, the thematic parallel between the stories becomes clear. In recasting the episode into a full-length play (where two hundred and fifty lines become over fourteen hundred), the anonymous author of the *Philomela* has found a way to echo the interconnected structure of the *Metamorphoses* by presenting one tale within the frame of another, demonstrating that the cycle of entertainments performed at St John's is a sophisticated and self-referential series.

The tableau of Tucker playing the Christmas Prince playing King Tereus enables the author to explore the idea that wielding absolute power as a tyrant is a challenge which brings with it a certain set of behaviours and expectations. To be a tyrant successfully, as Tucker-Tereus explains to the actor playing Philomela, one has to know how to play the part properly:

expectas morj?
Nescit tyrannus esse, qui primo necem
Infligit.

(1931-2)⁶⁸

When Fortuna steps forward to deliver the epilogue, she ends the play on a foreboding note that signals to Tucker that he may have played the tyrant *too* well and must now give it up:

invitus tuos
Titulos reponis. At tyrannorum feros
Imitare mores exue, et muta tuam
Personam.⁶⁹

The choice of *imitare* here, with its theoretical application to literary emulation, emphasises that Tucker's outrages are simply part of the task of imitating the grisly behaviour of Ovid's Tereus, and that he should be able to set aside this aggressive and self-important behaviour easily enough, since it is just a stage mask (*persona*). Yet Fortuna's pointed use of *invitus* (unwilling) signals the

⁶⁸ 'Are you waiting to die? He who inflicts death straightaway does not know how to be a tyrant.'

⁶⁹ 'you set aside your titles unwillingly. But lay off imitating the wild behaviours of tyrants and change your mask.'

danger that, having been so submerged in his character, copying ‘the wild humours of tyrants’ (‘tyrannorum feros... / mores’), Tucker may find it difficult not to bring bad habits back with him off the stage and into everyday life (as John Palmer had done, after playing King Richard III in the trilogy at Cambridge.⁷⁰). In her final line, Fortuna looks ahead into the future and sounds a warning note to the Prince Tucker, announcing that she has turned her wheel of fortune to point at his downfall: *tuo tandem malo/ Nostram revolvi ... rotam.* (3005-6). With this foreboding final statement Fortuna ends the production of *Philomela* and looks ahead to the fall of the Christmas Prince in *Ira Fortuna*.

Rumblings in the Republic: the staging of a mock crisis?

That Tucker enjoyed playing the tyrant, and was successful, is suggested by the fact that he was cast – perhaps type-cast we might say – in the role of Periander, the tyrant of Corinth, in the final play of the St John’s Christmas revels. That it was he who took on this role is confirmed by the explicit statement that ‘the Prince, who having first plaied *Periander* afterwards himselfe also pronounced the *Epilogue*.’ (9222-3). While the students clearly had an interest in singling out plays to perform which would explore the values of leadership and provide scenarios dramatizing the use and abuse of power, they were also achieving first-hand experience of these issues in real time, subject to the leadership of Tucker and his team. For all the rhetoric of the *respublica*, its grand ideals, and the principle of suppressing individual interests to benefit the group (as Tucker expressed in his acceptance speech, quoted above), the community over which the Prince exerted his control (or, rather, claimed to) did not appear to be united in a state of utopian goodwill. When it came to the moment to announce which students would take certain roles in the government of the commonwealth, the declaration was made not in the spirit of upbeat hope for the future but, as it seems, amidst a fearful atmosphere of growing unrest. Thus the proclamation of officers on 21 December is expressed as necessary and urgent for the containment of anarchy:

⁷⁰ Thomas Legge’s *Richardus Tertius*, acted at St John’s College, Cambridge in 1579. John Astington discusses the rise and fall of Palmer’s career and the legend that he suffered from ‘continuing Richardism’ because ‘he never got over playing the tyrant’, in *Actors and Acting in Shakespeare’s Time: The Art of Stage Playing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 62-3 (63).

by *ye* contagious poyson, and spreadinge malice of some ill disposed persons, hath binne threatned, not onelye *ye* daunger of subuertinge peaceable & orderlye proceedinges, but *ye* allmost vtter annihilatinge of auncient & laudable customes, It hath binne thought conuenient, or rather absolutely necessarye for *ye* auoydinge of a most dangerous ensuinge Anarchie a more settled order of gouernment for the better safetie of all well meaninge Subiects, and curbinge of discontented, headstronge persons should bee established. (887-97)

It would seem that the objections aired in the debate over systems of government (later dramatised for the first scene of *Ara Fortuna*) had not subsided, and that some College members were less than thrilled to find themselves branded the ‘subjects’ of a student like Tucker. The rhetoric of the proclamation emphasises the pride of ‘manye turbulent spirites’ (900) as the root of the unrest and points out the importance of avoiding a state where everybody is a leader (‘whereby the Commonwealth might grow to bee a manye-headed monster’, 901-3). This is the elaborate preamble which is given as the justification for what follows, namely the announcement of the students who were to be accorded special titles in the republic. The aural performance of the proclamation was committed to writing and put on display in the dining hall for everyone to acknowledge and obey:

This Proclamation after it was read, was for a time hunge vp in *ye* Hall, *yt* euery mann might *ye* better vnderstande *ye* qualitie of his owne place, and they *yt* were of lower, or no place might learne what duety to perfourme to others. (881-5)

I think we would be justified in questioning how much unrest there really was, and whether the rhetoric of fear shown here was a comic over-reaction, intended to alienate the grumblers in the group who wouldn’t play along. Indeed, some of the titles awarded had a humorous touch and were purely nominal, such as the obsolete ‘Lord high Admirall, great Commaunder of all the narrow seas, floods, and passages’. Yet all these titles, nominal or not, gave a select band of students within the community the opportunity to lord themselves above their peers, and this may have caused a certain amount of resentment.

The ‘turbulent spirites’ (900) which the proclamation of 21 December attempted to suppress by empowering a committee of officers to have charge over and above them, were, many weeks later, no less of a concern. In fact, by the night of Candlemas the situation had apparently grown into a full- scale crisis, with the Prince summoning the entire company to the hall to announce that he knew of the uprising being planned against him:

[O]f late by the turbulent spirits of seditious minded *persons* hath bene buzed into the eares of many of our louing and leige subjectes, a fearfull and dangerous report of *our* sudden downfall, which according to their libelling speeches should att this nighte fall vpon vs. (5963-7)

The Prince’s response is, as we have grown to expect, a dramatic one; a vigil is to be held all through the night to protect him from the rebels. Demanding a show of loyalty and support, he requires each of his subjects to stay in attendance and contribute ‘to the setting and furnishing of a most strong garde, and Carefull watch as well for their security as the safety of *our* owne Royall *person*, & the whole Common wealth’ (5972-4). The permission of the College authorities had to be gained for this action (a reminder of who was really in charge), and the Prince could not force everyone to stay up all night. Therefore, he graciously permitted concessions to be made to those who considered themselves too old to play such games (the opt-out cost being two shillings and sixpence) or too infirm to undertake the task (at a cost of twelvepence per person).

There is something obviously tongue-in-cheek about the policy of a tax on sleep, and the pompous manner of presenting it as a concession (‘on *our* Princely bounty, wee giue licence’). The claim that the monies gathered from these penalties will be put ‘towards the furnishing of his Highnes with a tall and sufficient watchman’ (5981-2) is itself something of an absurdity, designed to justify further extraction of funds from an already well-taxed population. Did Tucker really believe he was in physical danger from a rebel crew? Or was the rebellion and the night-time vigil part of the theatrical dream world created to entertain the members of the mock kingdom at St John’s? The fact that the hours of that night were then spent in revels, with card-playing, dice, dancing, a masque, and a wassail, suggests, of course, the latter. Yet some of the resentment building up against those lording their power about the college may have been quite real.

This episode of the vigil performed on 2 February, in response to fears of a rebellion, evokes the dramatisation of just such a rebellion hatched against the Prince in the *Ara Fortuna* play. In Scene iv, four rebels plot to overthrow the Prince, criticising the goddess Fortuna for granting one man power over others: ‘Cur jam locat / In ciuitate libera imperij statum?’⁷¹ (536-7). They are punished for their sedition by the priestess of Fortune, who forces them to learn humility and contentment, instructing them in to their duty and the Prince’s right to rule:

Primum decet
Parere, ut imperare discatis bene.
Accipere lætè principem vulgi est opus,
Eligere et instituere Fortunæ datur. (540-3)⁷²

On Candlemas Night, the revellers find themselves all involved in the theatrical scenario. Summoned to the dining hall, they are asked to show which side they are on by role-playing the part of the Prince’s nightwatch defence team, against a suspected uprising which never takes place. Clearly the boundary between reality and fantasy has been blurred to some degree, as part of an all-consuming season of revels at the college, and Thomas Tucker is seen indulging in a bit of method-acting, living in character as the Prince on and off the stage, day and night.

The ironic banquet: entertaining guests at the *Philomela*

Some entertainments for the Christmas season were closed performances restricted to members only, as we have seen: *Hercules*, *Curius*, *Doulus*, for example, was termed ‘a private Showe’ (1168), open only to St John’s men, and therefore constituted a less pressured and more enjoyable production for the students to stage ‘because there were no straungers to trouble vs’ (1407). The tragedy of *Philomela*, however, served as a more public, outward-facing promotion of St John’s theatre to outsiders; it sought to do more than amuse the in-crowd and provide entertainment, it must also impress the invited guests. Telling the story of Princess Philomela’s rape by her

⁷¹ ‘Why is she now imposing supreme power on a free city?’

⁷² ‘First it behooves you to obey, so that you may learn to govern well. The task of commoners is to gladly accept their prince, and it is granted to Fortune to choose and install him.’

brother-in-law King Tereus, and the grisly revenge forced upon him by the two sisters, *Philomela* was originally intended to be performed on Innocents' Day, 28 December, as this would have neatly matched the play's content to its frame: the play 'would well haue fitted the day by reason of the murder of Innocent Itis' (1434-5). It had to be postponed until the following day, however, in order to allow the carpenters more time to perfect the stage set, and when it transpired that Tucker, who was playing the lead role of King Tereus, was not well ('the Prince himself who was to play Tereus had got such an exceeding Cold, that it was impossible for him to speake' (1442-4)), the performance was threatened with another delay. However, given this was not to be a closed performance but a public one, there was diplomatic awkwardness to consider, since postponing a second time might be of considerable inconvenience to their invited guests: 'Wherefore they consulted to defer the acting of it yet longer, but then considering that all the straungers were already invited, and all other things in readiness that was not thought so fitt.' (1445-7).

In the production of *Philomela*, the presence of 'the straungers' seated as guests in the audience becomes an important part of the play itself, a set-up which allows a dark vein of humour to be cultivated. Hospitality is one of the themes which arises naturally from the plot of the *Philomela* myth: Tereus' rape signifies the ultimate rejection of his duty as host, which was to welcome and protect his wife's sister when she arrived in their kingdom for a visit, and Tereus' brutal violations are revisited upon him when the carefully cooked body parts of his son Itys are served up to him at a banquet of revenge. This makes the king the object of a particularly ironic kind of hospitality. (Note Queen Procne's use of the adjective *inhospitalis* at the moment when she is about to kill their son, muttering with disgust that he is just like his father: 'Vt similis Patri. / Inhospitalis, durus, immitis, rudis.' (2785-6). 'How like his father! He does not know how to treat guests, he is hard-hearted, cruel, and unrefined.'). Moreover, the casting of Tucker in this role adds a twist which is quite unique: fortunately, Tucker recovered from his cold well enough to act the part, for as Christmas Prince, he was the host charged with welcoming the guests into St John's to watch the festive entertainment over which he was presiding. Tucker's identity as Oxford scholar, prince of the St John's College revels, and the tyrannical King Tereus, lends the tragedy an

enjoyable irony and black comedy, which culminates in the Act V as the cannibalistic banquet is planned, prepared, and then staged before the audience seated watching in the college dining hall.

Once Procne has decided that her means of revenge upon Tereus will be to serve him their son to eat at a banquet, preparations are begun to make the palace a festive setting for the event. This, of course, runs parallel to the decking out of the college hall as the venue for *Philomela*, staged as a festive entertainment for the audience at Christmas. In Act V Scene ii, King Tereus' chief advisor, Eugenius, reports that the party atmosphere and decorations are just right:

Vndique per aulam laeta procedit cohors,
 Æthera canoris gaudij complens notis
 Splendescit ignis, et virent lauro fores (2822-4)

[Everywhere a happy crowd makes its way through the halls, filling the air with harmonious notes of joy. The fire grows bright, and the doorways grow green with laurel]

According to contemporary custom, the hall at St John's would have been decorated with greenery during the Christmas season, right up until 1 February (the night before Candlemas), the traditional time for decorations to be taken down, as reflected in Robert Herrick's poem *Ceremony upon Candlemas Eve* (c.1601):

Down with the rosemary, and so
 Down with the bays and mistletoe;
 Down with the holly, ivy, all,
 Wherewith ye dress'd the Christmas Hall.

The choice of laurel for the reference to hall decorations in the St John's play has, I suggest, a double significance. Firstly, it is the symbol of academic achievement, as demonstrated by the way in which the Christmas Prince displays his wearing of a laurel crown (in addition to his scholar's gown), when he makes his grand public procession from the 'palace' to the college hall:

the Prince himselfe in a Schollars gowne and ciuill hood, with a coronett of laurel about his hat, attended on by fower footmen in sutable liueries with torches. (3131-33)

However, the reference to laurel in Eugeles' speech in *Philomela* is more than a general evocation of the academic symbol, it also cultivates a specific intertextual link with another revenge tragedy, Seneca's *Thyestes*, which tells the story of (but does not directly dramatise) Atreus hosting a feast for his brother and serving up parts of Thyestes' own sons for him to eat. When we review Eugeles' words in detail, we find that the author of the play has carefully recapitulated elements of the fury's speech delivered at the start of Seneca's *Thyestes*, in which she orders King Atreus' palace to be prepared for a special arrival:

Misce penates, odia caedes funera
 accerse et imple Tantalos totam domum.
 ornetur altum columen et lauro fores
 laetae uirescant, dignus aduentu tuo
 splendescat ignis - Thracium fiat nefas
 maiore numero. (Seneca, *Thyestes* 52-7)⁷³

[Stir up the household gods, invite hatred, slaughter, death, fill all the house with Tantalus. Let the lofty gables be decked and the happy doorways grow green with laurel. Let the fire grow bright in honour of your arrival – let it be the Thracian crime, but on a larger scale.]

The ghost of Tantalus, ancestor to the brothers, is evoked as the evil influence who will aid Atreus in his vengeful plans, pervading the palace at Mycenae (which Tantalus had once founded). The fire is to be stoked at the fury's orders, 'splendescat ignis' (*Thyestes*, 56), whilst, in the House of Tereus at St John's, the orders have already been carried out as the fire is now already lighting up the hall, 'Splendescit ignis' (*Philomela* 2824). The garlanding of the palace has also already been finished (we have but to look around us in the hall), echoing Seneca's phrasing 'lauro fores / laetae uirescant' (*Thyestes* 54-5) with a deliberate likeness, 'et virent lauro fores' (*Philomela* 2824); the Roman soundbite has, as we would expect from a competent Latinist, been gently adapted: it does not appear as an outright quotation. The art of reworking tags drawn from heavily studied authors such as Seneca, retaining the style of the classical model, was a technique instantly recognisable to the grammar-school trained community who made up the audience of the *Philomela*. I discuss the

⁷³ All quotations from Seneca's *Thyestes* are taken from the edition by Otto Zwierlein, *L. Annaei Senecae tragoediae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

educational background of the Jacobean university audience and the methods of cultivating particular authors' Latin style in detail in Chapter 3.

As Eugenius, the king's advisor, looks about him in the hall and notes that everything is ready, it is King Tereus to whom he is speaking, whom we also know as the Christmas Prince in charge of the entertainments at St John's. The irony of such a scenario is developed by the author, for in place of Atreus organising the feast for his brother, we now have Tereus helping to arrange his own tragic feast; he does not yet know that he himself will become the entertainment. For now, he is looking forward to the dinner and he is busy issuing instructions that everything must be done to make it a delightful and pleasurable evening's amusement:

æra cum plectris sonent,
 Lenisque suaues tibia effundat modos,
 Famulique mensas sumptibus decorent nouis,
 Noua ostra sternj, concipj ritus nouos,
 Magnifica nè quo pompa deficiat, volo. (2828-32)

[Let notes from stringed instruments linger on the air, and the slender flute
 give forth its sweet music, and the servants decorate the tables with novel
 luxuries. I want fresh purple to be spread, fresh ceremonies to be devised,
 lest anything be lacking from my grand parade.]

Tereus is under the illusion that the reason why his wife Procne is now interested in having a feast is a way for her to divert herself from the grief of losing Philomela, her sister. Having lied to his wife about Philomela's death, Tereus is unaware that she has now learned the truth and has commenced a grand revenge plan against him. The fact that he now lends a hand to ensure everything is ready for the feast has a darkly comic irony to it, and the author's attention to detail in constructing Tereus' speech ratchets up the dramatic tension with intertextual allusions to other tyrants who have met grisly punishment. Tereus' misplaced confidence is expressed in the choice of decorations which he requests: he would like 'new purple to be laid down' ('Noua ostra sterni'), an unavoidable echo of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, where the arrogance of ordering purple carpets to walk upon signals that the king has over-reached himself. The allusion is doubly apt, since it engineers another connection with the House of Tantalus, Atreus being Agamemnon's

father. There is a pleasurable tension here as we observe King Tereus (played by the Christmas Prince, Thomas Tucker) ordering yet more extravagant display ('Magnifica ... pompa'), and the self-conscious metatheatrical opening to the play with the *inductio Fortunae* signals that this is an intended part of our reception of the play. We are encouraged to enjoy the ironic parallel of the mythological world and the world of the college revels presided over by a student who enjoys experimenting with playing the prince, and playing the tyrant too. This colours our impression of the *Philomela* story and deepens the play's exploration of the nature of kingship, the temptations of pomp and ceremony, and the dangers of ambition.

The next scene, Act V Scene iii, reveals the perspective of the servants who are undertaking the real work of getting the hall ready for the feast. The stage direction makes it clear that, when the maid and steward enter with their helpers, they act out the motions of setting the table whilst they are speaking: *Ingrediuntur: Ancilla, et Anteambulo cum alijs famuljs vt mensam instruant. [Enter the maid and steward, together with other servants, to set the table.]* We may imagine the Steward gesturing about him looking around the dining hall as he declares that the pressure is on to get everything ready: there is a lot to be done because there are high expectations of the event, 'Grandis expectatio, / Et grandis apparatus est' (2837-8). The maid depicts Procne as the powerful director about to eclipse Tereus' control over the celebrations – the queen has been hurrying on the kitchen staff to get the dinner prepared in double-quick time: 'Regina cœnam acclerat, et properè iubet / Omnia pararj.' (*Philomela* 2835-6). The addition of this scene, with its window onto the world of backstage preparations, is an effective innovation by the St John's dramatist. It allows the audience to savour the dramatic build-up to the grisly feast in a way that is novel and finds no place in the author's Ovidian and Senecan sources. On one level, the audience is sitting under King Tereus' roof, living through the story as part of the theatrical construct, on another they are identified as the guests of this man in his guise as the guests of the Christmas Prince who welcomed them to the dining hall. As the servants discuss the feast therefore, and we look ahead to the famous cannibalistic banquet served to Tereus, we might wonder what exactly will be served up to us as guests, or what we have already eaten whilst enjoying St John's hospitality.

The steward, somewhat comically, suggests that in addition to the chairs set up for the king and queen, they should put out a third chair, just in case Itys comes to join his parents at the dinner table:

Cathedras duas

Hic statue, Princeps forsan Itys aderit, date
Tertium et in isto colloces aptè loco. (2841-43)

[Set up two chairs here. Perhaps Prince Itys will be present. Bring a third one
and put it neatly in this place.]

We await the arrival of Itys at the dinner table, though we know he will not be sitting down to eat. The entrance of the queen draws the servants' scene to a close. Left alone on stage, Procne delivers a blood-curdling speech, which ends on a self-reflective note as she exults in the plot she is about to bring to fruition: 'Accede Tereu jam nouæ expectant dapes' (2855) [Enter, Tereus. Now a novel feast awaits you]. Through Procne's words the author signals his hope that the audience appreciates the originality of his work, and that they will enjoy the performance of the banquet which is the denouement to his play. The phrase 'Accede Tereu' acts as a stage direction to Tucker, who now joins his fellow act on stage. King Tereus and Queen Procne now make a procession about the hall with great pomp and ceremony, holding hands and preceded by their servants, an arrangement which is detailed in the stage directions: *Ingrediuntur: primo famulj cum apparatu, deinde Tereus et Progne cum pompâ magnâ iunctjs manibus*. This *magna pompa* is the 'Magnifica ... pompa' which the Christmas Prince, playing Tereus, ordered in Act V Scene ii. After they have completed the grand parade down the hall, the banquet commences, and here the author of *Philomela* diverts from Ovid and Seneca in physically dramatising the meal on stage. In the *Metamorphoses*, Tereus' consuming of the feast is compressed into a very brief narrative description:

ipse sedens solio Tereus sublimis auito
uescitur inque suam sua uiscera congerit aluum. (*Met.* VI.650-1)

[Tereus himself, sitting on high on his ancestral throne, feeds himself and
amasses his own flesh in his belly.]

Seneca chooses not to present the actual eating of the flesh onstage; instead he employs the technique of sending in a messenger who reports the story of the meal to the chorus. Though the

messenger uses the present tense to give his description immediacy ('lancinat gnatos pater / artusque mandit ore funesto suos;' *Thyestes* 778-9⁷⁴), the vividness of the equivalent scene in the *Philomela* surely eclipses this successfully. Who could forget the tableau of the infamous feast of Tereus played out in front of them, staged, moreover, in the context of their own experience of hospitality?

The irony of the domestic scene is well-handled, as Procne does her wifely duty helping her husband to the food before him and waiting on him attentively. The details of the dialogue between the king and queen are carefully construed to allow a dark humour to flourish as we observe the gruesome scenario. For example, when Tereus is surprised that the knife in his hand refuses to co-operate and cut through the flesh on his plate, Procne hands him hers as it has proven to be good at cutting:

Tereus: Cur subito hebescit culter et vertit retro?

Prog: Cultro acriorem semper ego stomachum volo.

Tereus: Stupesco. solitum munus vt nolens suum

Præstare, ferrum frangitur. *Prog:* Nostrum accipe.

Penetrare novit intima hic culter meus. (2896-900)

[Tereus: Why does my knife suddenly grow blunt and spring back?

Procne: I always want your appetite to be shaper than your knife.

Tereus: I am shocked. As if it does not want to perform its usual function, the blade is broken.

Procne: Take mine. This knife of mine knows how to cut right to the heart.]

We infer that this is the knife which she used to stab her son while his aunt Philomela strangled him: *Cultro pectus defodit dum simul Philomela iugulum petit* (stage direction to Act V Scene i, 2803-5). Tereus now unwittingly takes part in a re-enactment of that death by his use of the same knife to cut up their son's flesh on his dinner plate.

Once the bloody head of Itys has been thrown at him, however, Tereus learns the truth. The stage direction, once again, is detailed, showing that the dramatist expected to capitalise on the visual spectacle of this moment: not only is the actor playing Philomela instructed to show Tereus

⁷⁴ 'The father tears his sons apart and chews his own limbs up with destructive teeth.'

the head, he is expected to throw it right into his face: *Apparet Philomela cum capite Ityos quod conijcit in faciem Terei.* (stage direction to Act V Scene iv, 2921-3). This is the point at which the St John's author allows himself a very free hand in creating his own denouement to the mythological story, for once the tyrant has come to recognise how his wife and sister-in-law have exacted their revenge upon him for Philomela's rape, he sets about exacting his own revenge in turn by murdering them both. These killings are, again, carried out in front of the audience, in contrast to the bloodless note on which Seneca's tragedy ends, with the brothers glowering at one another and Thyestes praying that Atreus will be punished:

TH. Vindices aderunt dei;
his puniendum uota te tradunt mea.

AT. Te puniendum liberis trado tuis.

(Seneca, *Thyestes*, 1110-1112)

[Thyestes: The gods of revenge shall come; my prayers hand you over to them for punishment.

Atreus: I hand you over to your children for punishment.]

Ovid had ended the story with the metamorphosis of Procne and Philomela into birds, who fly away as a swallow and a nightingale when Tereus comes after them with his sword; Tereus himself is then transformed into a hoopoe. In the seventeenth-century *Philomela* at St John's, however, the king slaughters the women and props their bodies up at the dining table so that they are sitting on the chairs beside him. Having thus become his grimly silent dinner companions, Procne and Philomela are invited to join their host in conversation; Tereus has now slipped into insanity and, undeterred by their lack of participation, merely fills in the gaps of silence with his own imagination:

Cathedram collocat

Erigit Sororem et aliâ cathedrâ collocat etiam Conjugem et utriusque manibus pocula imponit.

En apparatur prandium, placeat modo

Coniua fies hilaris hic sedem cape

Dea furialis. Surgit à terrâ Soror

Mensæque placida accumbit et Conjux vides

Vt vtraque iacent pocula. hoc primo tuis
 Sororibus propino; et hoc Stygio Patri
 Placet comedere.

Bis bibit.

Poculum plenum tibi

Proponit vxor.

Facit Conjugem bibere.

(Philomela, 2959-66)

[He set out a chair. He props up his sister, and in another chair also his wife, and he puts cups into the hands of each of them.

Behold, dinner is served, if you please. You will be a merry guest. Take your seat here, fury-like goddess. My sister rises up from the ground and reclines at the table, content. And you see my wife. How they are waving both their cups about. I drink to your health in the first instance, to you as sisters, and to the health of the Stygian Father let's drink it down.

He drinks twice.

My wife toasts you with a full cup.

He makes his wife drink.]

Having acted out this jaw-dropping spectacle, Tereus then kills himself, adding yet more corpses to the body count accrued during the course of the play. For the dramatist has woven a number of extra deaths into his narrative, which Ovid and Seneca's versions do not contain. Several new characters are introduced, as part of expanding Ovid's two hundred and fifty-line episode into a full-length play, some of whom are given full characterisation and add richness and depth to the action (such as the shepherd and his daughter, Faustina, whose status as paragon of maidenly virtue highlights the forceable removal of *virgo* status from the Princess Philomela). However, others such as Tereus' henchman Phalus, are added to the *dramatis personae* as dispensable, spare characters with whom the tyrant can do away without materially affecting the plot. (Phalus is murdered by Tereus early on in the play, despite conspicuous acts of loyalty to his master). The staging of extra killings, both murders and suicides, attests to the contemporary interest in using blood and gore as a thrilling theatrical spectacle. This is a phenomenon which has often been noted in relation to plays from the popular stage such as Shakespeare's *Titus*

Andronicus, and the growth of the genre of revenge tragedy as we move into the Jacobean era.⁷⁵ The university dramatists and actors may have striven to differentiate their productions from those of the public, fee-paying theatres, but, in practice, some elements of popular appeal were deliberately cultivated. This is clearly demonstrated by the production of *Philomela* at Oxford, where we can observe both the skilful composition of the speeches and the detailed stage directions which have been preserved in the manuscript record (SJC MS 52, which I discuss in the next section). Thus *Philomela* at St John's College functions as an important example of Jacobean revenge tragedy in the university setting, blending a well-developed handling of classical models with a darkly humorous treatment of the hospitality theme.

A written record: The creation of St John's College MS 52

It was not until some little time after the revels had taken place that the written account which survives in St John's College MS 52 was undertaken. The end product was a folio created with some notable effort, displaying various illustrations and neatly presented texts (nearing ten thousand lines, the work of several hands⁷⁶), handsomely bound in embossed and gilt brown calf leather. The account begins at fol. 28r and is headed 'A true and faithfull relation of the risinge and fall of THOMAS TVCKER Prince of Alba Fortunata, Lord St. Iohns &ct. With all the Occurrents which happened through-out his whole Domination'. The task of copying out the play texts was parcelled out to various scribes and the texts reassembled in the sequence we now find them. Interspersed between the plays texts is another source of information just as valuable, a commentary providing all manner of details from behind the scenes. These descriptive paratexts contextualise each of the productions in the larger picture of the season of revels, which ran from the end of November 1607 to the middle of February 1608: the narrator takes us through the various circumstances of each piece commenting on how an entertainment was received and how it

⁷⁵ See Richard T. Brucher, 'Fantasies of Violence: Hamlet and The Revenger's Tragedy', *Studies in English Literature* 21 (1981), 257-70; Hillary M. Nunn, *Staging Anatomies: Dissection and Spectacle in Early Stuart Tragedy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Susan Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005). An unpublished doctoral thesis has recently refreshed scholarship on the topic: Matthew McIntyre, 'Corporeal Violence in Early Modern Revenge Tragedies' (Georgia State University, 2012), viewed online at <http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_diss/86/> (accessed July 2015).

⁷⁶ The hands have been analysed by Boas, in *The Christmas Prince*, xxiv-xxvii.

led to the next. This has the effect of presenting a united perspective on the revels, which are told through the medium of a single voice using the third person plural pronoun ‘we’ and possessive adjective ‘our’. This is one of the indications that the account was intended to be of a semi-official quality, in that it was written on behalf of all the St John’s members who participated and aimed to represent the college’s theatrical endeavours as a community enterprise. The narrative ends, for example, with the claim that the season of revels was about institutional reputation as much as personal enjoyment: ‘Wee intended in these excercises [...] the Creditt and good name of our Colledge’ (9307-8).

The fact that some of the productions failed to please is not covered up but candidly reflected upon in the account, as discussed below; however, the blame is taken on by the group and not assigned to any one individual. We may contrast this with the personal abuse which is a constant feature of another account of Christmas revels, this time from a different institution, the Middle Temple, where an elaborate series of festive entertainments were staged in 1597-8. Benjamin Rudyerd (1572–1658), who had joined the Middle Temple in 1590, uses the opportunity of writing a record of events to make sustained attacks on particular individuals, notably John Davies, who is referred to as ‘Stradilax’ (mocked for the size of his bottom and wobbling gait). Philip Finkelpearl notes that the motivation for making John Davies a target for personal abuse was probably ‘resentment of his ambition and jealousy of his success’;⁷⁷ he had been called to the bar with unusual speed - having entered the Inns of Court in early 1589, by 1595 he had been made a barrister. By contrast, one of his peers Richard Martin, who was a driving force behind the 1597-8 Revels and played the leading role of the Prince d’Amour, entered the Temple in 1590 but was not called to the Bar until 1602. Rudyerd’s interest in making Davies a figure of fun in his account of the revels is in keeping with the particular culture of satirical writing at the Middle Temple at this time, as Anthony Arlidge has pointed out.⁷⁸ Indeed, the outpouring of epigram-writing amongst its members drew the interest of the leading professional poets of the day: Rudyerd himself

⁷⁷ Philip Finkelpearl, *John Marston of the Middle Temple: An Elizabethan Dramatist in His Social Setting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 54.

⁷⁸ Anthony Arlidge, *Shakespeare and the Prince of Love: The Feast of Misrule in the Middle Temple* (London: Giles de la Mare, 2000), 90-92.

won the admiration of Ben Jonson, who dedicated three of his own epigrams to him in 1616 (a consecutive series is addressed to him: CXXI, CXXII, and CXXIII).

Like Samuel Daniel, Benjamin Rudyerd's career was greatly supported by having William Herbert, third earl of Pembroke as his patron, though it was in parliamentary politics, not poetry, that Rudyerd made his name. He had come to the Middle Temple from St John's College, Oxford, and was a direct contemporary of James Whitelock, whose career is discussed in more detail above.⁷⁹ These two men had much in common throughout their lives, as they followed a parallel path: though they were educated at different schools (Rudyerd at Winchester, Whitelocke at the Merchant Taylors'), both matriculated at John's College, Oxford in 1588, both went on to study at the Middle Temple (Whitelocke having graduated BCL, Rudyerd having left Oxford without a degree), they were called to the bar in the same year, 1600, they were both knighted and became Members of Parliament. When Rudyerd entered the Middle Temple and became heavily involved in the revels, he was rejoining a group of students he already knew - contemporaries from his old school, Winchester. Finkelppearl's research into the careers of the Middle Templars who were involved in the 1597-8 revels highlights the shared backgrounds of a particular group who moved through the same institutions: from Winchester School to New College, Oxford, and thence to the Middle Temple.⁸⁰ These patterns would be a fruitful topic for further investigation as a *comparandum* to the transfer of pedagogical and theatrical culture from the Merchant Taylors' School to St John's College, Oxford (as argued in Chapter 1, and below, in Chapter 3).

Benjamin Rudyerd's account, with its vindictive tone and conspicuous resentment of certain individuals, is conditioned by his personal connections to the Winchester School group and the prominent role which they played in the revels at the Middle Temple. Finkelppearl points out, in relation to the Inns of Court, that 'Personal satire is endemic to intramural entertainment'⁸¹ – and yet St John's College, Oxford, sought to show that little of that culture existed between its walls. The narrator-editor of the Christmas revels recorded in SJC MS 52 does not focus on personal amities or rivalries between college members, so that whatever internal politics was going on behind the scenes in the college revels seems to have been muted. Moreover, the moment that a

⁷⁹ See above, pages 21-22, on the aspirations of Whitelock and the shape of his career.

⁸⁰ Finkelppearl, *John Marston of the Middle Temple*: see especially, Appendix A, page 261.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, 55.

production is suspected of having elements of personal satire, the narrator-editor goes to some lengths to address those suspicions and explain that they constitute a misinterpretation of what was presented. For example, when it was claimed that there might be some underhand lampooning in *Time's Complaint*, the suggestion is confidently dismissed: 'many thinges were mistaken and therefore could not but bee very distastefull. for it was thought that particuler men were aymed at and discipherde by the drunken-man and Iustice Bryar though it was fully knowne to our selves, that the author had no such purpose' (4007-10). Sometimes in advance of a production being staged, potential issues are anticipated and dealt with pre-emptively. In the tragedy *Periander*, for example, when 'it was thought that some *particulers* were aimed att in the Chorus, which must needes bee distastfull' (7253-5), it was agreed that the script should be modified to avoid any hint of offence being given: 'faithfull promise being made and taken that if any word were thought *personall*, it should be presently put out' (7259-61). Also worthy of note is the fact that the St John's College revels do not focus on sexualised humour and the kind of bawdy wit which, by contrast, dominates the Middle Temple revels twenty years earlier:

The sexual mores that pervade the Prince d'Amour's kingdom are nearly identical with those we find in Donne's libertine elegies and in some Jacobean private theatre comedy; it is a world of amoral women, cuckolds, aphrodisiacs, whores, and venereal disease, a world where the right true end of love is in the maximum number of female conquests.⁸²

In Chapter 3 I will return to this point when I discuss the tradition of Ovidian plays at St John's, for the scrupulously clean mode of humour on the college stage contrasts with the culture of other adaptations of Ovid during the period.

On the question of authorship, little progress has been made, other than to reject the assumption of the past, that the undergraduate Griffin Higgs, author of another work in the same volume, is also responsible for the account of the revels.⁸³ Higgs' versified biography of the college

⁸² *ibid.*, 56.

⁸³ When Boas came to prepare the introduction to his edition of the Christmas revels, he revised his original statement from 1910 that the account was 'written by Griffin Higgs, a member of the college' ('University Drama', in A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller (eds.), *Cambridge History of English and American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), vol. 6, 318), now admitting that 'there is no evidence for associating him with the editorship of any part of the account of them.' (*The Christmas Prince*, v).

founder, *Nativitas Vita Mors honoratissimi illustrissimiq(ue); viri Thomæ White*, would be worthy of study in its own right, though justice cannot be done to it here. It provides a useful point of reference for dating the volume, however, since Higgs makes a point of signing the title page to his *Life of White* as the holder of a B.A., which he received on 28 June 1610, and dedicates the work to Buckeridge, the President of St John's College, a post from which he resigned on 1 May 1611. Higgs left the college to take up a position at Merton as Probationer Fellow on 1 August of that year, and he may have completed his work on the Founder of St John's prior to leaving, as a parting gift to his *alma mater*. At any rate, the appearance of the *Life of White* at the start of the volume MS 52 (fols.1-25) gives us a useful *terminus post quem* for the addition of the Christmas revels to this volume directly following.

Taking stock and learning lessons

Thus it seems that at least two and a half years had elapsed between the staging of the entertainments and their enshrinement in the manuscript record, and we see this reflected in the tone of the commentary itself. The narrator looks back on both the successes and failures of the revels at St John's with a thoughtful air, gesturing towards the importance of lesson-learning. He is, for example, happy to admit the amateurish blunders which occurred during the show *Time's Complaint*, and to include the script of the production even though it received much criticism at the time:

a shew call'd times complaint, which wee should bee ashamed heere to insert,
if wee thought it would please no better in the reading then it did in hearing,
but (bee it as it will) wee intend the worse should bee known as well as the
best. (3044-7)

However, he is not afraid to add a more positive remark on the back of this: 'to speake the truth without boasting wee our selves thought not so ill of it as others nether will future times we hope judge it so vile as the present did.' This comment comes across as naively confident and hopeful for a kindly posterity rather than simply defensive of the production, and at several points in his account he draws attention to mistakes and accidents which seem to be included as much for the reader's amusement as anything else. For example, he notes (perhaps with some nostalgia) the

unfortunate moment which took place during the production of *Ara Fortuna*:

They gaue vs at ye ende 4 seuerall & generall plaudites; at ye 2 wherof ye Canopie *which* hunge ouer ye Altare of Fortune (as it had binne frighted *with ye* noise, or meante to signifie that 2 plaudites were as much as it deserued) suddenly fell downe; but it was cleanly supported by some of ye standers by till ye Company was voyded, yt none but our selues tooke notice of it. (852-8)

The suggestion that the reason part of the set fell down was because the audience's applause for the play was so loud is clearly meant to be taken in jest, and the tableau of the students doing their best to hold it up until everyone had gone also lends a touch of comedy. There is something rather endearing in the fact that mention is made of the collapsing set when there is no need to do so, for apparently no one noticed it at the time except those involved in the production. Yet now, thanks to the author, it is enshrined in the written record and will forever influence how the revels will be remembered.

It is not only the author of the manuscript commentary who is able to draw humour from failure; this is a quality which we see exhibited frequently in the plays themselves. The Latin comedy *Philomathes*, performed on 15 January, opens with Janus dragging Time on stage to harangue him for his hopeless play, the infamous production of *Time's Complaint* enacted on New Year's Day:

Janus: Iani calendis dona cum quisque optima
Offert amicis pessimas nugas agis?
An sic querelam instituis, ut populus magis
De te queratur? Tempus: Pace si liceat tua
Proferre nullas protuli nugas ego.
Nam verus est, et serius noster dolor.
Etiam querela justa, sed querulj malè
Egere partes. (4718-25)⁸⁴

⁸⁴ 'Janus: While each man offers fine gifts to his friends on the first of January, you perform worthless trifles? Or are you making your plaint so that the people will complain about you all the more? Time: If I may have your permission to speak, they were no trifles that I offered. For our regret is true and sincere. The complaint is legitimate, but those doing the complaining bungled their parts.'

The pun on the title of the play, *Time's Complaint*, is achieved through the use of Latin word play (note the polyptoton or repetition of *querela* in various forms), an enjoyable conceit using Latin wit to make a virtue of an English disaster.⁸⁵ Janus offers an amusingly disingenuous get-out clause in asking Time whether the audience's dissatisfaction with the production was in fact a successful implementation of the show's artistic principles ('An sic querelam instituis, ut populus magis / De te queratur?'), and the handling of the situation as a whole is well-managed. For the failure of *Time's Complaint* was a genuinely humiliating experience for St John's, which threatened to undermine its reputation as a leading centre for drama in Oxford, as shown by the strong reluctance of the college authorities to permit other shows to be aired in public:

the President and some of the Seniors in abundance of care were affray'd to put any thing againe to the publicke veiw of the Vniuersity because their last paines at the Complaint of Time had so ill thriuing. (4661-5)

The choice to use humour in the opening to the *Philomathes* to revive the situation is, therefore, a bold and clever strategy, displaying determination not only to improve on the last play but to use the new show to alter the audience's memory and attitude towards the previous one.

When it comes to learning from mistakes in the matter of finances, the author of the manuscript account is particularly keen that lessons be learnt. He includes the bill of expenses presented by the Treasurer as one of the texts in his report of the revels, and candidly explains the rationale behind doing so:

wherein it might appeare how costly the presedent revels had beene, which bill (for better direction and warning of others heere after how they medle with such sportes) was thought good heere to bee inserted. (4056-60)

At the same time, we see the problems of funding and self-indulgent expenditure dramatised in the actual plays, so that again the play texts and the reflective commentary reinforce the same impression. *Ira Fortunae*, the play which enacts the de-throning of Tucker at the end of his reign (discussed in tandem with *Ara Fortunae* further below), provides an interesting example, in the way that it draws on the financial troubles as a source of humour. Comic value is generated by

⁸⁵ On the meaning of English 'wit' and Latin *ingenium*, see Chapter 3, pages 152-3 and footnote 53.

criticism of the weakness of the Prince and his officers, with Momus drily advising Tucker to ‘[t]ake great pains that your expenditure is praised, for you haven’t any other merits.’ (Act V, Scene iii). I note a touch of the Gagerian strategy here in the pre-emptive use of a Momus figure, whose caustic tongue lends a distinctly comic edge to his criticism (we enjoy the bitterness of his remark) and undermines potential further complaints on the same subject by making fun of the grumblers.⁸⁶

In Act II Scene i of *Ira Fortunae*, we are invited to enjoy a joke at Rowland Juxon (cousin of William Juxon who later went on to become President of St John’s College, 1621–1633), in his role as Lord Chancellor in the Prince’s court. He comes on stage for some introspective soul-searching, motivated by doubts as to what he has actually achieved in his role: ‘O si liceret eloqui cur non licet? / Nullus subaudit, me mei tædet loci’ (6420-1).⁸⁷ In introducing his soliloquy with the pretence of not being overheard by anyone (‘Nullus subaudit’, 6421), the presence of the audience is neatly highlighted, poking fun at the blurring of boundaries between the fantasy world of the mock court, where Juxon has a genuine job to do, and the world of real life, where the drama exists simply as entertainment. He now contemplates the seal he holds in his hand (‘Istud sigillum’, 6422), the symbol of his office as Chancellor in charge of ratifying policy decisions, and calls its usefulness into question. It is, after all, the audience may be contemplating, just a prop he is holding, this mock Chancellor.

Istud sigillum, quod velut munus gero
 Quid splendidum egit? vetera formauit sacra?
 Edicta promulgauit in regni decus? (6422-24)⁸⁸

When he asks this question (‘vetera formauit sacra?’ 6423) it may well be intended not to do the tradition down, but instead to elicit a defensive response from the audience, many of whom appreciate the idea of building links with the past and resurrecting the grand Christmas Prince tradition for the College after a lapse of thirty years. The personification of the seal is a humorous touch which contains the hint of a wry apology from the Chancellor, when he contemplates that

⁸⁶ For Gager’s use of Momus, see Chapter 1, pages 32-5.

⁸⁷ ‘Oh would that I could speak! Why can’t I? Nobody’s overhearing. I’m tired of my position.’

⁸⁸ ‘This seal, which I bear as if it were my office, what brilliance has it achieved? Has it shaped old traditions? Has it published decrees for the splendour of our realm?’

the one thing this symbol of office has achieved is to facilitate the extortion of cash from College members and *alumni*: ‘Quodam artificio invasit externas domos / Vafreque nummum extorsit’ (6425-6).⁸⁹ Within the series of productions at St John’s, the staging of *Ira Fortuna* occupies a special place in the narrative of the Christmas Prince’s reign: it signals the beginning of the end. The performance of *Ira Fortuna* offers a timely opportunity for taking stock and reflecting on the revels as they begin drawing to a close, and this includes rueful acknowledgement that the cost of the revels had been considerable. The apology for having spent so much of other people’s money in order to fund these entertainments may be tongue-in-cheek, but it directly addresses the issue and does not try to ignore it. I note how frequently the issue of financial pressure is raised in this play, and others in this Christmas series at St John’s; the spending on revels and the attempts to fundraise had provoked tension, and evidently humour was seen as a way to diffuse some of that tension.

Abundè Satisfactum est: recognition for scholars who brave the stage

When it came to deciding how to finish off the season of revels, there was anxious debate over the suggestion that a new tragedy in English, the *Periander*, could be performed. The author, John Sansbury,⁹⁰ had the script ‘almost ready’ (7246) by the time *Ira Fortunae* had been staged, but four objections were raised against it. Lent was approaching and this was not considered a fit time for plays to be performed, and there were also fears that the Chorus might be considered ‘distastfull’ (7254-5). The remaining two excuses boiled down to a belief that the English language was not a suitable medium for the occasion and would not please:

Secondly, the stile for that itt was English, a language vnfitt for the Vniuersitie especially to end so much late sporte *withall*. [...] Lastly the ill lucke *which* wee had before *with* English made many very loth to have any thing done againe in that straine.

This last comment is a reference to *Time’s Complaint*. The failure of this production had had the effect of further hardening opinion against the use of English on the academic stage. Indeed, the narrator sounds a note of disbelief when he reports that *Periander* was a success, commenting that ‘it is almost incredible to thincke how well this Tragedy was performed of all parties, and how

⁸⁹ ‘By some clever ruse it has gone into other men’s houses and craftily made off with their money’.

⁹⁰ For John Sansbury as the author of the *Periander*, see above, page 86.

well liked of the whole' (9227-9).

The surprise comes despite the fact that their other production in English, *The Seven Dayes of the Weeke*, had been well-received, initially performed privately to the closed circle of College members, but then repeated on demand to an audience which included high-ranking officials of the university such as the Vice Chancellor. And yet, when we look closely at the comments made by the narrator on the reception of this second performance, we can see how his words are carefully chosen: 'all was most kindly accepted, and the nighte was spent in great mirth. For the straungenes of the matter and rarity of the fashion of their action pleased above [mentioned] expectation.' (5879-82). The emphasis here is on entertainment value, of which *The Seven Dayes of the Weeke* afforded much, and originality, on which it also scored highly. It might not be able to impress quite like a full-length play delivered in Latin, but the fact that expectations were of a lower kind was in their favour, since the audience were indulgent and in the mood to be entertained ('all was most kindly accepted'). In describing the quality of the acting, the use of the phrase 'pleased above expectation' reminds us that the cast included the weaker or less confident members of St John's company ('diuers youths whose voyces or personages would not suffer them to act any thing in publicke') and that *The Seven Dayes of the Weeke* had been created specifically to include these students, thereby giving them the opportunity to try their hand at acting and increase their confidence through experience.⁹¹

I note that, when it comes to analysing the reception of a play, the quality of acting is usually the main criterion by which a production is assessed, and often the first thing noted. For example, the Latin tragedy *Philomela* is summarised thus, 'The whole play was wel acted and wel liked', and the Latin comedy *Philomathes* receives the following review:

This play was very well acted, but especially the Chorus. the stage was never more free, the Audience neuer more quiet, and Contented, so that they went away many of them crying *Abundè Satisfactum est*, itt was so well liked and applauded of all that saw itt' (5867-70)

However rueful the narrator may be about the shortcomings of certain productions at St John's, he does not shy away from expressing pride in the College's achievements when a production wins

⁹¹ Discussed above, pages 90-1.

admiration. Here the shouts of ‘*Abundè Satisfactum est*’ set the seal on the audience’s approval of the performance, ratifying the actors’ success like a tutor’s mark on an essay. For it is a particular source of pride for the students to have won admiration for acting in Latin (the bias against ‘English, a language vnfitt for the Vniversitie’ being clearly felt). It demonstrated that they had mastered skills which were highly prized by the university – it put them on a par with the degree candidates who had to perform in Latin before their examiners.⁹² This is one of the fundamental arguments in favour of allowing academic drama a place in the culture of the universities, and the narrator gestures toward this in the final paragraph of his account of the revels, when he champions the virtues which lay behind their enterprise at St John’s:

Wee intended in these excercises, the practise and audacity of our youth the
Creditt and good name of our Colledge, the love and favor of the Vniu'sity.
(9307-9)

The phrase ‘the practise and audacity of our youth’ is reminiscent of Gager’s famous words, in his defence of academic drama: ‘honestly to *embolden our youth*; to try their voices, and confirm their memories’.⁹³ Fifty years on from its foundation, this season of revels at St John’s helped to build on the College’s reputation as a centre for drama, since, despite the troubles and tribulations of such an undertaking, there were many notable successes which demonstrated that the pedagogical value of the academic stage was still appreciated. Latin dominated these revels (of the eight major productions staged, only three were performed in English) and the delivery of speeches and dialogue on stage was as much about practising important rhetorical skills as it was about keeping busy over the vacation. I discuss the demonstration of pedagogical value on the college stage further in Chapters 3 and 4.

In assessing the success of the St John’s theatricals, it is to be remembered that these are amateurs writing and performing their own compositions. They write for and perform to an audience of university men, usually in Latin, and their successes and failures are assessed by their contemporaries according to the criteria of the academic stage and not the public stage. ‘We are not professional players, nor do we want to be’ claimed Gager in the epilogue to his adaptation of

⁹² The importance of Latin speaking skills in the assessment of degree candidates is discussed in Chapter 4.

⁹³ Quoted in Young, ‘William Gager’s Defence of the Academic Stage’, 614. Also see Chapter 3, pages 180-1, where I discuss Heywood’s echo of these words in his 1612 *An Apology for Actors*.

Seneca's *Hippolytus*, performed at Christ Church in 1592 ('ludii nos nec sumus, / nec esse cupimus', 370-1).⁹⁴ As we have seen in the case of the tragedy *Philomela* staged at St John's College in 1607, plays performed to university audiences could make use of certain features from the popular stage if they provided added appeal but did not detract from scholarly display, and it is an important characteristic of university drama more generally that, unless an entertainment was specifically commissioned to be performed before a royal or other top-ranking official, the input of paid professionals did not feature.

This is in stark contrast to the history of drama at the Inns of Court in London, where the wholesale importation of plays written and performed (in English) by professionals had become a matter of tradition since the late 1580s.⁹⁵ *The Misfortunes of Arthur* staged in 1588 is the last recorded production featuring the members of the Inns themselves as actors; it was penned collaboratively by several gentlemen of Gray's Inn, and was performed not for an audience of Inns men specifically but at Greenwich for Queen Elizabeth. Following this, in-house talent was given minimal outlet, trumped by professional productions which were bought in wholesale to be performed in their halls. Payments to the theatre companies come to form a predictable pattern in the account books: at the Inner Temple, for example, we find the formula 'Item paid for a Play on Candlemas Day' recurring in the early years of the seventeenth century, repeated each February in 1605, 1606, 1607, 1608 and 1609, at five pounds a time.⁹⁶ Members of the Inns continued to perform in masques, but these came to be penned by professionals also, so that during the seventeenth century nearly all Inns of Court masques were the work of paid playwrights, such as Chapman, Beaumont, Middleton, and Shirley. Most Inns of Court masques were performed twice, once in the hall of the sponsoring Inn (playing host to an external, professional company), a second time at court (whether Whitehall or Greenwich).

By comparison, then, the season of eight plays and other entertainments written and acted by college members at St John's during Christmas 1607-8 was a major and ambitious undertaking. As discussed above, the students were not able to fulfil all plans or handle all financial responsibilities with consummate skill, and the project tested the boundaries by revealing where the

⁹⁴ See Chapter 1, page 31.

⁹⁵ See Nelson, 'Emulating Royalty: Cambridge, Oxford, and the Inns of Court', 67-76.

⁹⁶ J.R. Elliott and A.H. Nelson (eds.), *Records of Early English Drama: Inns of Court* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), vol. 1, 138; 139; 141; 142; 144.

limits were, but they had at least the satisfaction of having produced all entertainments themselves without any need for professional input. The students of Gray's Inn, by contrast, suffered an embarrassing start to their revels in 1594, when the stage was swamped with a great crowd, chaos ensued, and the ambassador and retinue who had come from the Inner Temple all promptly quitted Gray's Inn 'discontented and displeased'.⁹⁷ The Grayans' frustration at the loss of the Inner Temple representatives from the audience was particularly acute since, as the narrator of the *Gesta Grayorum* explains, 'the Sports intended were especially for the gracing of the *Templarians*'. After this misadventure, the impetus to show off the best of their own work had disappeared along with their guests and they settled on importing a play by Shakespeare: 'it was thought good not to offer any thing of Account, saving Dancing and Revelling with Gentlewomen; and after such Sports, a Comedy of Errors (like to *Plautus* his *Menechmus*) was played by the Players.'⁹⁸

The friendly alliance between Gray's Inn and the Inner Temple was a long-standing tradition of which the 1594 revels made elaborate show. Indeed, declarations of friendship were dramatised as entertainments in themselves: having consecrated an altar to the Goddess of Amity at the side of the hall, a pageant of mythological heroes paraded past it, demonstrating examples of legendary friendships. Arm in arm went Theseus and Perithous, Achilles and Patroclus, and so on, culminating in the final pairing of the Inns personified: 'Graius' and 'Templarius' came forward to offer one another speeches of everlasting friendship. The narrator of the *Gesta Grayorum* notes that the participation by the Inner Temple students in the Gray's Inn revels on this occasion was built on fond memories from the 1560s, when '[the] State of *Graya* did grace *Templaria* with the Presence of an Ambassador about thirty Years since, upon like occasion.'⁹⁹ This reference suggests the rarity of such an elaborate Christmas revels, with all the trappings of an extended court and its diplomatic auxiliaries. We may compare the thirty-year hiatus between like revels at St John's (discussed above), where the students in 1607 looked back reverently to their predecessors from 1577 and viewed themselves as participating in an ancient tradition.

⁹⁷ W.W. Greg (ed.), *Gesta Grayorum*, 1688 (London: Malone Society, 1914), 22.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 21.

The relationships between individual Inns of Court provide interesting *comparanda* for those between the Oxford colleges. Whilst Gray's Inn and the Inner Temple enjoyed a particular friendship which they expressed through theatre, a highly competitive relationship had grown up between the Inner and Middle Temples. The Inns were often laid out in quadrangles, each with their own set of amenities secured within a walled enclosure, like the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, but the two distinct communities of the Inner and Middle Temples shared some awkward overlapping of territory, which no doubt contributed to their mutual resentment. When, on 13 August 1608, James I granted the two Temples a Royal Charter, it finally confirmed and validated the two societies' mutual occupation of the Temple site and its buildings in perpetuity (holdings which might otherwise have been claimed by the crown). Yet one of the conditions of the Charter, that the two Temples were together responsible for maintaining the twelfth-century church which they shared, revealed the tensions surrounding each community's sense of entitlement to privileges, such as their members being given precedence when communion was distributed on Sundays. To resolve this dispute it was agreed that the bread be administered to the members of the one inn first, the wine administered first to the other, and the pattern reversed the following Sunday to ensure equal consideration for the two societies which, though working and living side by side, considered themselves separate institutions.¹⁰⁰

The relationship between St John's College, Oxford, and Christ Church, Oxford, shares elements of friendship and rivalry, and it develops and changes over time. The younger college was, in some sense, built upon the establishment of its older, richer sibling, which provided both land and leadership in the early stages, followed by intercollegiate collaborations between Gwinne and Gager's literary circles in the 1580s and 90s. By the time of the 1605 royal visit, St John's was beginning to explore how it might best use its theatrical strengths to articulate and negotiate its position in the hierarchy of the university colleges; as an up-and-coming rival, it began to resent Christ Church's traditional domination of the the royal visits. By the time we reach the Christmas of 1607-8, when St John's is putting on its grand show and flexing its muscles as a centre for drama, the college is eyeing the festive entertainments at Christ Church with some wariness and a

¹⁰⁰ On the Royal Charter of 1608, see F.A. Inderwick (ed.), *A Calendar of the Inner Temple Records* (London: Published by order of the Masters of the Bench, 1898), vol. 2: 1603-60.

sense of mistrust. The narrator-editor of the St John's revels in SJC MS 52 recalls the defensive reaction to Christ Church's invitation for the Christmas Prince of St John's, Thomas Tucker, to attend their play entitled *Yuletide*, on 21 January:

On the Thursday following, the Prince was solemnly invited by the Canons of Cristchurch to a Comedy called *Yuletide*, where many thinges were either ill ment by them, or ill taken by vs but wee had very good reason to thincke the former, both for that the whole towne thoughte so, and the whole play was a medley of Christmas sportes, by *which* occasion Christmas Lords were much jested at, and our Prince was soe placed that many thinges were acted vpon him, but yet Mr Deane himselfe then Vice-chancellor. very kindly sent for the Prince and some others of *our* howse, and laboured to satisfie vs protesting that no such thing was mente, as was reported, wherevpon wee went away contented, and forbore the speaking of many things, *which* otherwise were afterwards intended, for aunswering of them in their owne kind. (5929-41)

The intervention of the Vice Chancellor prevents St John's from retaliating against the injury which they suspected, and the narrator-editor hints at there being precedents for such mistrust: 'many thinges were either ill ment by them, or ill taken by vs but wee had very good reason to thincke the former'. This may reflect the insecurity of St John's and its resentment at having long played the underdog. However, thirty years on, on the occasion of the next royal visit, the balance would shift significantly and St John's contribution to the entertainments for King Charles and Queen Henrietta (discussed in Chapter 4) would show how far it had risen up the pecking order. In individual terms, those St John's students who were involved in the 1607-8 revels in subordinate positions would soon begin to come into their own: Christopher Wren, for example, whose role in the 1607-8 revels was as second-in-command to the Treasurer, would arrive centre stage the following year as one of the Merchant Taylor Scholars commissioned to write a play for his college, the *Physiponomachia* (discussed in Chapter 3).

CHAPTER THREE

Generations of *noua corpora*: Feeding and growing a community traditionSelf-reflexive pedagogy in academic drama

We encounter pedagogical values enshrined in theatrical practices across a range of educational institutions. The connection between theatre and pedagogy is natural enough, although it is a complex and varied phenomenon which plays out differently in different contexts. Institutional drama crosses media boundaries and adapts to the occasion in hand: an ‘academic exercise’ on the page can become a three-dimensional performance on the stage, be revised back into script as a hand-written presentation copy, and find a new format once again if printed later down the line. Each of these outputs is shaped to fit its particular audience, anticipating the reactions of those watching, listening, or reading.¹ The dramatist’s handling of expectations and the use which he makes of particular cultural norms shared with his audiences (items of language, style, topical interests etc.) open a window onto that community. However, drama from academic institutions, such as schools, colleges, and universities, exhibits with particular candour the set of criteria by which the results are to be judged: often the dramatist can be observed playing up to an academic framework of assessment in a self-conscious manner. Thus the academic drama is a form which reveals much about the institution in which and for which it was produced; moreover, the very attempt to prove oneself through the act of theatrical writing and performing before one’s audience confirms the role of theatre and its status within that community.

The sixteenth century saw a major growth in the production of school drama across Europe, a phenomenon particularly associated with the work of the Jesuit order, whose many colleges promoted the tradition of Latin plays in the communities of Catholic states as a manifestation of their pedagogical aims.² This expansion was unique in scale and ambition, and

¹ The conscious ‘bookishness’ of acting which Tiffany Stern demonstrates in relation to the professional stage in ‘Watching as Reading: the Audience and Written Text in the Early Modern Playhouse’ in *How to do Things with Shakespeare*, ed. Laurie Maguire (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 136-59 (154), could well be applied to amateur acting at the universities, where the watching experience of theatre audiences was, I would argue, deliberately designed to recall the experience of looking at a playbook and where the act of viewing was at its heart ‘a bookish activity’ (153).

² William H. McCabe (ed. Louis J. Oldani), *An Introduction to the Jesuit Theater: A Posthumous Work* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1983), 19-31.

also engaged the wider community: '[i]n their schools, which aimed at influencing life outside, the drama soon came to be an important link between the college and the surrounding world.'³ Yet the use of the academic stage to further religio-political interests was not a Jesuit invention, and there is much interesting work yet to be done in comparing preceding developments in other communities such as the Lutheran schools in Germany, or the College of Guienne in Bordeaux in the 1540s, where George Buchanan extended his role as Professor of Latin to compose tragedies for his pupils (who included Montaigne), so that they might study them and perform them on stage.⁴ English school drama, too, was a growing phenomenon by this time, partly as a means for students to practise balancing bodily gesture with rhetorical eloquence before an audience (*actio et pronuntiatio*, the fourth and fifth branches of rhetoric), but also, on an equally practical level, as a means to advertise to parents the benefits of the curriculum being provided. In her discussion of Tudor grammar schools, Ursula Potter notes that 'School drama offered schools a public forum in which they could demonstrate their students' skills, entertain the public, and persuade the gentry and wealthier classes of their merits.'⁵ This last point about the economic advantages of recruitment is interesting, reminding us that the grammar schools were competing for pupils not only with one another - in metropolitan London at least - but also with the system of private tuition traditionally favoured by the aristocracy.⁶ Might we see a parallel here with the Oxford and Cambridge colleges' increasing reliance on fee-paying commoners, a situation in which the reputation of a college and its recruitment of well-heeled members might be affected by its dramatic performance? The study of university drama is in its infancy, whereas that of school drama in England is not, though each area of research can benefit from developments in the other. Interest in the formative influences of Shakespeare's grammar-school education, for instance, has for some considerable time been

³ McCabe (ed. Oldani), *Introduction to the Jesuit Theater*, 11.

⁴ It would be instructive to compare, for example, Buchanan's approach to theological debate in his plays *Jephthes* and *Baptistes*, composed in a French climate, with the development of Jesuit drama in neighbouring countries shortly afterwards, discussed by Nigel Griffin in *Some Aspects of Jesuit School Drama, 1550-1600, With Special Reference to Spain and Portugal* (Thesis (D.Phil.), University of Oxford: Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages and Literature, 1976), 2 vols.

⁵ Ursula Potter, 'The Spectre of the Shrew and the Lash of the Rod: Gendering Pedagogy in *The Disobedient Child*', in J. Walker and P.D. Streufert (eds.), *Early Modern Academic Drama* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), 65-86 (66).

⁶ See Ursula Potter, 'Performing Arts in the Tudor Classroom', in Lloyd Edward Kermode, Jason Scott-Warren, and Martine van Elk (eds.), *Tudor Drama Before Shakespeare, 1485-1590* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 143-65.

fuelling scholarship on the relationship between school drama and the professional stage.⁷

This tradition of scholarship provides a useful backdrop to our investigations into university drama and especially its pedagogical aims. For schoolmasters were commonly recruited from Oxford and Cambridge, school pupils consistently fed the university population, and it was not unheard of for plays written by university students to achieve popularity in the schools and be re-performed there. Leonard Hutten's *Bellum Grammaticale sive Nominum Discordia Civilis*, for example, has an interesting performance history. It comes to us from the Gagerian era at Christ Church, first staged in the dining hall on 18 December 1581 to entertain a college audience at Christmas, then revived at somewhat short notice for Queen Elizabeth's visit in September 1592. On the latter occasion, Gager composed two prologues, together with an epilogue in which he addresses the monarch emphasising (excusing) the amateur spirit in which the play was performed:

Non histrionis Roscii hic vel discitur,
Vel ars docetur. Nostra superavit modum
Inscitia, nisi quod non habet veniae modum
Clementia tua.⁸

As discussed in Chapter 1, in relation to Gager's similar sentiment in his *Panniculus*, being an amateur cast rather than a professional company was a source of pride, and the act of begging Elizabeth's pardon is to be taken as something of a mock apology. For the composition and delivery of a play based around the humour of grammatical pun-making, as the *Bellum Grammaticale* is, advertises the extent to which the students of Christ Church feel very much at home with Latin. Indeed, one of the characters who appears is William Lily himself, the ubiquitous figure of English classrooms, whose officially prescribed two-part Latin textbook *A Shorte Introduction of Grammar [Brevissima Institutio seu Ratio Grammatices cognoscende]* (1549) shaped every schoolboy's experience of learning. Lily presides over the play as arbiter in the power

⁷ Two seminal works which laid the groundwork here are Vail Motter's *School Drama in England* and T.W. Baldwin's *William Shakspeare's small Latine & lesse Greeke* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), 2 vols.

⁸ 'Here Roscius' art is not learned, nor is it taught. Our inexperience surpasses all bounds, except that there is no limit to your forgiveness.'

struggle between parts of speech, and his presence is a nostalgic reminder of that shared experience and the continuing importance of school education as the foundation for university learning.

In the *Heteroclitanomalomonia*, an anonymous manuscript play bearing the date 1613 (in Folger Shakespeare Library MS J.a.1), the scenario of the grammar war is again played for comical effect, with the character Lillie looming large as arbiter, though this time the Latin is restricted to aphoristic expressions quoted directly from Lily's *Grammar*, sprinkled throughout a predominantly English play. The *Heteroclitanomalomonia*'s 1613 adaptation of Hutten's work of the 1580s and '90s and their mutual precedents in Andreas Guarna's *Bellum Grammaticale* of 1511 and William Hayward's English translation of the same (published 1576 or earlier) demonstrate the durability of the tradition of the academic grammar play and its claim to exist as its own particular genre.⁹ Most interestingly, it is a genre which blurs the boundaries between plays written for school audiences and plays written for university college audiences, both groups issuing from the same academic stock and both potentially attracted to each other's theatrical expression of the learning experience. Thus it is that in the *Heteroclitanomalomonia* we have the intriguing combination of references to university life enshrined in the plot (the rebellion of nouns and verbs being construed as a battle of wills between the first-year students and those in the years above) and references to taking the play on tour to secondary schools. Early on in the play, the figure of Oratio declares 'Lillie lead on the way / We meane to aske the next schoole leave to play' (148-9), and later, when certain parts of speech are rebelling against the strictures of Priscian the grammarian, they consider whether they might free themselves and 'goe about to all the Country schooles' (465). Russell's remark that we are 'at a loss to explain these references'¹⁰ neglects the obvious meaning that some of these university grammar plays found welcome audiences amongst the schools.¹¹

We are indebted to Peter Seng's sensitive analysis of the effect of the *De Interiectione* section from Lily's *Grammar* on Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights for detailed insights into

⁹The tradition is discussed in more depth by Boas, in *University Drama in the Tudor Age*, 254-67, and by David Russell, in *Stuart academic drama: an edition of three university plays* (New York: Garland, 1987), 21-29.

¹⁰Russell, *Stuart Academic Drama*, 25.

¹¹Indeed Boas notes several instances of the play being revived in schools in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries: *University Drama in the Tudor Age*, 266.

the shared experience of digesting this text at school.¹² The pedagogical culture of being required to commit texts to memory and the comical appeal of the schoolmaster's serious lessons on the art of expressing emotions through formally-condoned interjections (such as 'Heu, hoi, hei, o, ah' for showing grief and 'Ha ha he' for laughter¹³) combined to produce a series of in-jokes making fun of institutionalised formulae for human emotional responses. Seng draws his examples from various plays by Shakespeare, and briefly touches on Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy*, but he highlights the importance of a play which precedes these other examples and may have been an inspiration for them, *Endymion* by Lily's grandson John Lyly, whose writing career began at Oxford and then evolved to focus on professional plays for boy companies. Noting the echoes of the *De Interiectione* section in each of his examples, Seng suggests that Shakespeare 'may have borrowed the idea of mocking this passage in the Grammar from the playwright Lyly'.¹⁴ Perhaps we will find further instances of this and similar phenomena amongst the plays of the university men - there seems more potential to investigate the feed-through of playwrights and their culture of learning from Oxford and Cambridge into the professional writing sphere.

It is important for the study of university drama that we also keep an eye on developments in school drama and consider the possibilities of mutual exchange of culture, traditions, and ideas. It is with this principle in mind that I return to the link between St John's and its major feeder school, the Merchant Taylors', which, as discussed in the first chapter, had its own reputation for theatrical talent, driven forward by the efforts of Richard Mulcaster during his headmastership (1561-96). It is not possible to provide a comprehensive survey of the school drama here, but here I draw attention the patterns of recruitment of scholars from the Merchant Taylors' School in London to the Oxford college of St John's, the development of theatrical tradition in the aftermath of 'the Mulcaster generation' (as I have termed it), the impact on St John's drama of this regular flow of people and culture from one institution to another.

¹² Peter J. Seng, 'Pandarus' Song and Lily's Grammar', *The Modern Language Journal*, 48 (1964), 212-215.

¹³ Vincent J. Flynn (ed.), *A Shorte Introduction of Grammar [Brevissima Institutio seu Ratio Grammatices cognoscende]* (London, 1567) reproduced in a facsimile edition (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1945), sigs. E1v-E2.

¹⁴ Seng, 'Pandarus' Song and Lily's Grammar', 213-4.

The changing shape of the college fellowship

As Chapter 1 has shown, the entrance of the Merchant Taylors' Scholars into the life of St John's was considerably delayed, the first trickle only beginning in 1572, a full decade after the Founder had introduced his recruitment plan. The College had put off electing new students from the school to college scholarships, claiming the financial necessity of their decision, but under the presidency of Francis Willis (1577–1590), St John's was eventually set on a firmer footing and reached a more secure level of prosperity. From 1583 onwards it had finally been able to support its full statutory quota of fifty fellows, and this growth came in tandem with maturation of its fellowship: as the fellows advanced to higher degrees, the body of scholars morphed naturally into a more mature community. This is reflected in the seating arrangements in the dining hall, where scholars could expect to 'move up' to the next level of status on proceeding to a new degree, progressing through a series of four tables: the servants' table, the Bachelors' and Scholars' table, the Masters' table, and the President's table (high table). As Stevenson notes, by the time Willis resigned in 1590, there were twenty-five at the masters' table, where there had once been only two, and at the high table sat five or more doctors or bachelors of divinity (the latter being a postgraduate degree of much higher status than the Bachelor of Arts).¹⁵ As the 1590s went on, the numbers occupying the higher tables steadily increased: ten members of the President's table in November 1590 rose to thirteen in September 1591, to fifteen in October 1593, to sixteen in March 1594, and to eighteen in Michaelmas of 1599. Looking back to the Michaelmas Term of 1578, the comparative youthfulness of the St John's fellowship is clear: only four members had reached the degree of M.A. by this time, and only three were physically present in college (one having gone abroad).¹⁶ As the numbers of students completing their Master's degrees rose, the occupants of Bachelors' table naturally diminished, to be gradually replenished with new incoming students who fed the college hierarchy from the bottom upwards.¹⁷

By the final years of the sixteenth century, therefore, we find that St John's has changed shape since its foundation, its form has filled out, and its members have the confidence of

¹⁵ Stevenson and Salter, *Early History of St John's College*, 208.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 214.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 283-4.

greater age and experience as well as financial security. The new library erected in 1596 and 1597 further indicated that this was a college on the rise, signalling that the institution was investing in the fabric of its future and anticipating heavier use of its facilities. In addition, the intake of scholarship students arriving from the grammar schools was taking on a much more uniform shape, as the Founder's plan for the Merchant Taylors' School to feed St John's College finally became a reality. The domination of St John's by the Merchant Taylors' boys had been enshrined in the statutes according to the following proportions: of the fifty scholarships provided for on the foundation, thirty-seven were to be given to Merchant Taylors' boys, six to founder's kin, and if there were insufficient candidates from amongst founder's kin, then the gap was to be filled by more Merchant Taylors' boys. The remaining scholars were to be drawn from the following schools: two from Reading School (where William Laud was educated), two from Coventry, two from Bristol, and one from Tunbridge Wells. This collectively made up the fifty-strong fellowship of St John's. By the late 1590s, what had been an uncertain trickle of Merchant Taylors' Scholars, was now a regular influx: four Merchant Taylors' scholars were successfully elected in 1597 and, the following year, another four arrived to swell the community.

The calibre of these new recruits, top-performing boys selected from a high-ranking London grammar school, constituted a valuable asset for the College. In fact, Stevenson goes so far as to say that the Merchant Taylors' boys' displacement of Founder's kin, who had hitherto populated St John's to a greater degree (given claims on free places by White in previous decades), helped to improve the college's academic standing.¹⁸ This judgement may not instinctively appeal to our sense of fairness, but it is a practical point, since the Founder's kin tended to arrive with comparatively less rigorous training. We find Penry Williams identifying the same phenomenon at New College, where, he claims, in addition to the difficulties over corrupt practices of selling places, '[a] second threat to the quality of the fellowship body emerged from the claims of Founder's Kin'.¹⁹ He explains that 'the Founder had imposed no limits upon the degree of consanguinity at either of his colleges, and in consequence the number of possible claimants was

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 290.

¹⁹ Penry Williams, 'Reformation to Reform, 1530–1850', in John Buxton and Penry Williams (eds.), *New College Oxford 1379–1979* (Oxford, 1979), 52.

very large'; the pressure to accept students claiming through birthright in place of academic merit alone 'helped to slacken the endeavours and lower the quality of New College men.'²⁰

The comparison with New College is also interesting for our consideration of the change in shape at St John's College. Whilst St John's had been slow-maturing from the time of its foundation in 1555 to the 1570s, before putting on a growth spurt during the last years of the sixteenth century, New College, founded in 1379, stayed a uniform size and shape right up until the 1850s. This was despite the changes going on in the university and other colleges around it: 'The college remained, until the nineteenth century, a society with a warden and seventy scholars, which had been considered large in 1379, but was now relatively small.'²¹ Moreover, New College had its rule of only recruiting scholars from Winchester College, adhering to the principle of Wykeham's fourteenth-century project to found two integrated institutions: he created his grammar school in Winchester specifically to feed his Oxford college with a reliable supply of 'competent Latinists'.²² Thus Winchester College and New College are essentially extensions of the same institution, a fact which is reflected in the architectural modelling of the one on the other.²³ By contrast, the relationship between St John's College, Oxford, and the Merchant Taylors' School, London, was often unsettled and precarious, and at times non-existent; the interdependence of the two institutions grew in fits and starts and for many decades the school and the college pursued their own interests with a single-minded disengagement from one another.

The history of elections, for example, demonstrates the lack of collaborative spirit which fostered a mutual mistrust between the two institutions and delayed the establishment of a regular feed-through of students from one to the other. As discussed in Chapter 1, the poverty which had initially held St John's back from being able to offer scholarships, so that the first successful election was not held until 1572, persisted as an excuse for the college's taking on more students in 1573 and many times afterward, leading each time to the Visitor William Cordell's having to step

²⁰ *ibid.*, 52-3. An in-depth study of the role of Founder's kin in several Oxford colleges is provided by G.D. Squibb in *Founders' Kin: Privilege and Pedigree* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

²¹ Penry Williams, 'Reformation to Reform, 1530-1850', 45.

²² *ibid.*, 7.

²³ See John Harvey, 'The Buildings of Winchester College' in Roger Custance (ed.), *Winchester College: Sixth-centenary Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 77-80. Harvey demonstrates the modelling of Winchester on New College's buildings, a physical expression of the shared philosophy and intimate relationship of the two institutions.

in to negotiate a compromise. In 1594, the examination of the boys took place on St Barnabas' Day, 11 June, as usual, but, as the contingent from St John's did not attend, a dispute arose once again and the college refused to ratify the election of the student John Jones to a scholarship. Jones' admission to the college was intended to fill the vacancy left by Thomas Poticary, whose resignation on 9 June had freed up one fellowship place; the college, however, did not officially accept the resignation until 24 June, and therefore claimed that it could not accept John Jones that year as he had been falsely elected to a fellowship that was not vacant.

This was the tense background to the election of the following year, when steps were taken to try to ensure a smoother partnership between the two institutions. A few weeks before the 1595 election day, the President of St John's, Ralph Hutchinson, went to London to hold discussions in person with the Merchant Taylors' Company. The Company was clear about its dissatisfaction and confident in the justice of its cause: Hutchinson left the meeting 'being advised and entreated by this house to have good regard to the performance of the good meaning of Sir Thomas White, and to thinck upon a course for the ending of this controversie'.²⁴ Once Hutchinson had left the meeting, the members of the Company debated amongst themselves and concluded that they must not be taken by the college's surprise tactics: 'this howse calling to remembrance the course heretofore houlden by the colledg when they themselves had written expresselie there was no place void, nor that they would come up to make an election, yet came they soddenlie up to London, and presented themselves at the schoole upon St. Barnabas day, being then on a Sunday, when there were no schollers there, therefore they were well warned to be vigilant and carefull'.²⁵ They therefore decided to go ahead with instructing the school that preparations get underway for the election day, to ensure that St John's could not catch them out by arriving unannounced, by which strategy they had avoided electing pupils to scholarships once before, in 1592.

On St Barnabas' Day, however, representatives from the college arrived as promised, and they included none other than Matthew Gwinne, who had once himself been amongst the hopeful candidates from the Merchant Taylors' School vying for a place at St John's. Elected to a scholarship on St Barnabas' Day 1574, it must have been a source of pride for Gwinne to return to

²⁴ Minutes of Court, 30 May 1595, quoted in Wilson, *History of Merchant-Taylors' School*, vol. 1, 117.

²⁵ *ibid.*

his old school in the capacity of examiner, and, moreover, to find himself working alongside Richard Mulcaster, his old headmaster, who had also returned to the school to size up the candidates. The final decision over which boys to send to Oxford actually lay in the hands of the Merchant Taylors' Company, and not St John's College,²⁶ a fact which contributed to the tension in their relationship, but on election day 1595, the one scholarship that was available that year was successfully offered to Benjamin Barnard without a quarrel. The pupil was chosen by the master and wardens of the Merchant Taylors' Company and his election to the scholarship was ratified by the consent of the President and fellows of St John's. The final years of the sixteenth century saw school and college finally settle down to a more amicable collaboration, whereby instead of trying to prevent new admissions, the college began to take active steps to make room for incomers, by encouraging retirements amongst their more elderly fellows. Edward Belfield is one such case, whose retirement in 1603 formed part of a scheme to release fellowship places and improve relations with the school.²⁷

As we head into the seventeenth century, then, the regular flow of Merchant Taylors' boys into the college is beginning to take effect, dominating St John's not only through sheer weight of numbers as they come to occupy the majority of fellowships, but also through the spread of their shared culture from school to university. The tradition of writing and staging plays formed a significant part of that culture, fostered at school by Mulcaster through his pedagogy and developed at university by enthusiasts such as Gwinne, whose *Vertumnus* and *Tres Sibyllae* brought St John's student actors into the limelight during the royal visit of 1605 and helped to establish the place of theatre in the life of the college. It is at the turn of the century that the college admitted the Merchant Taylors' scholars who would later go on to orchestrate grand theatricals at St John's in the winter vacation of 1607-8, a highly ambitious series of plays which showed audacity as well as lack of caution in spending.²⁸ Thomas Downer and Joseph Fletcher, for example, who both came to St John's from the Merchant Taylors' School in 1600, became the Lord High Treasurer and Lord

²⁶ See Stevenson and Salter, *Early History of St John's College*, 147.

²⁷ Costin, *History of St John's College 1598-1860*, 14.

²⁸ See previous chapter for full discussion of the 1607-8 season of theatricals.

High Admiral respectively for these revels, pushing forward the programme of entertainments as leading members of the Christmas Prince's Council. When they elected subordinates to help them carry out their duties, it was to their compatriots from school that they turned; Thomas Downer as Treasurer, for example, had John Williamson and Christopher Wren (future author of *Physiponomachia*) for his second-in-commands, students who were from the same year at the Merchant Taylors' and who were both elected to college scholarships on St Barnabas' Day 1605.

Some interesting patterns emerge when we compare the educational journeys of this generation of students. Downer and Fletcher, for example, follow each other along a conspicuously interconnected path: born in the same year, they both begin at the Merchant Taylors' School in 1594, are both elected to St John's scholarships on St Barnabus' day 1600, and both matriculate from the college in 1601, aged eighteen. Finally, they both proceed to the BA on the same day, 29 Nov 1604, and to the MA on the same day too, 6 June 1608. This pattern reminds us that groups of students might not only share an educational background in the general sense of having attended the same institutions, but might also experience whole educational journeys side by side, making the impact of the spread cultural traditions such as theatre across secondary and higher institutions all the greater, since it was deeply rooted in their personal networks, which they kept up after leaving school. Arriving at Oxford, first-year students at St John's were reunited with the boys from the years above at school, and, given the domination of the college fellowship by the Merchant Taylors' boys, it was not uncommon for older boys to be made tutors to pupils from their old school. Christopher Wren, for example, who was at the school until 1605, became tutor to Thomas Atkinson when he came up to Oxford in 1615; Atkinson went on to compose a Latin play at St John's, entitled *Homo*. John Lufton became tutor to Henry Bellamy after a significant overlap at school, the younger student arriving in 1611 and the elder leaving in 1614; Bellamy went on to author the Latin comedy *Iphis*, discussed in detail later in this chapter. As Costin points out, a college tutor had a range of responsibilities, 'more the guardian of his pupil's finances and general well-being than a teacher', a situation which deepened the bond between them and increased

the likelihood that the cultural tastes and values would be passed on from one to the other.²⁹

This continuity of culture, passed on from elder students to their younger counterparts, is vividly expressed in a document which I have uncovered in the Bodleian Library amongst the papers of Abraham Wright, a student who began at St John's in 1629 and who went on to compile the collection of university poetry entitled *Parnassus Biceps* which I discuss in Chapter 4 and the Conclusion. Bodleian MS Eng. misc. e. 82 contains a paper which offers a rare glimpse into the phenomenon of college initiation ceremonies, in which second-year undergraduates (who term themselves 'Poulderlings') draw up rules to which incoming first-years must adhere. The list of rules, which are styled as 'ye duties offices and negociations belonging to ye sacred order of a Poulderling' (fol. 35r), ends with the promise 'Lastly to sweare your successors to these and as many more as you shall see requisite' (fol. 35v), thus ensuring that the tradition at St John's will continue to be passed on from one year to the next.

The text has a playful, ritualistic edge to it, exemplified in the final gesture which those performing the oath must make to demonstrate their commitment: 'Sworne deliuered and sealed w(i)th a kisse on ye sacro-sanctitudinically slipper' (fol. 36r). Those newly arrived at the college are given a list of instructions as to good behaviour, beginning 'It. in ye dutyes of ye freshmen. viz. for ye due surrendring of their Primitiae yt is to say fresh-fruits for their Pythagoricall silence at table.' (fol. 35r). Abraham Wright evidently kept the paper out of nostalgic fervour for his early years at St John's, for his name is listed amongst the 'Inceptors in Seniority' who add their signatures to the document when it comes to their turn to uphold 'ye sacred order of a Poulderling'. The signatures in the document all date to the 1620s, during the era of Juxon's presidency at St John's, and the domination of the Merchant Taylors' boys is very noticeable, for, out of sixteen, only three are not *alumni* from the school (two being Founder's kin and one a Reading scholar). With each incoming year of freshmen, new names are added to the document, and amongst these signatures we encounter various examples of students who arrive from the Merchant Taylor's School (MTS), are

²⁹ Costin, *History of St John's College 1598–1860*, 4. The fact that college tutors were required to sign for their pupils on remittance of the Founder's allowance and other monies provides useful evidence for uncovering which pairs of members were in a tutor-student relationship.

reunited at St John's with boys from the years above at school, and are soon engaged in making their contribution to the cultural life of the college by composing plays, including: Joseph Crowther (who attended MTS 1616-25 and authored *Cephalus et Procris*), John Blencowe (who attended MTS 1621-27 and authored *Mercurius sive Literarum Lucta*), and George Wilde (who attended MTS 1619-1628 and authored *Eumorphus sive Cupido Adultus* and *Love's Hospital*). Abraham Wright himself attended the Merchant Taylors' School from 1626 to 1629, and when he was elected to a scholarship at St John's, he arrived to find George Wilde in position as a second-year Poulderling presiding over his induction as a freshman. The evidence of Bodleian MS Eng. misc. e. 82, with its list of signatures gathered over five years (1625-1629), has an attractively personal quality to it, vividly demonstrating the individual networks which transcended the boundary between school and university.³⁰

The Ovidian series at St John's College: introductory remarks

As a case study for self-reflexive pedagogy in academic drama, St John's offers us a particularly instructive example, in the form of an intriguing series of linked Latin playlets spanning several decades, all of which take an excerpt from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, expand the text, and dramatised it for a staged adaptation. This is a phenomenon which spans the presidencies of John Buckeridge (1606-11), William Laud (1611-21), and William Juxon (1621-33), and in each case the play contains a dedication to the current president of the college. The network of patronage and political opportunism which this tradition illuminates will be a major focus of Chapter 4. The extant collection dominates the College's dramatic output during the first third of the seventeenth century, and, whether or not this is a freak of preservation, the continuities in the group of texts across these decades seem too pronounced to be considered anomalies. What we have is an example of the kind of local culture which existed within the individual colleges, and close readings of these playlets (so-called because they tend to average at about 800 lines, less than half the length of a typical academic play), pieces which have never been collected together as the subject for detailed study

³⁰ It would also be interesting to consider the flow of culture in the other direction, through, for example, the entrance of college-trained scholars back into the Merchant Taylors' School system. See Chapter 4, pages 208-10, on the recruitment of St John's men as Merchant Taylors' headmasters, a trend encouraged by Laud during the 1630s.

before, reveal that, in the hands of St John's playwrights, what may once have been a simple school exercise in Latin language has, once transported to the university level, grown into something more substantial and sophisticated. I will initially focus my attention on readings of Christopher Wren's *Physiponomachia* (1609-11) and Philip Parsons' *Atalanta* (1611-21), but in the following chapter, the *Iphis* of Henry Bellamy (1621-33) and Joseph Crowther's *Cephalus et Procris* (1626-28) are scrutinised as further examples of the trend.

Visiting and revisiting the text of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for source material to adapt in new writing was an impulse which seventeenth-century students inherited from the reading habits and literary techniques of their forebears. The 1590s had seen a great wave of Ovidianism in English vernacular genres, which continued to resonate for decades, if not centuries, afterward,³¹ and though it swept through both poetry and drama, it is most associated with poetry, and one sub-genre of poem in particular: the *epyllion* or mini-epic. The erotic playfulness of Ovid's love poems gave rise to Elizabethan epyllia such as Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, which first came into print in 1593 and 1598 respectively, and which were instantaneous hits. Cheeky, polished, and ripe for titillation, these poems revelled in the act of reviving Ovid's clandestine use of allegory and myth to tease the reader's imagination. The role of the imagination is key to the reception and enjoyment of this sub-genre of Ovidian epyllia, where fantasy offers itself in place of frustration ('all is imaginary', as Shakespeare says of Venus' encounter with Adonis, line 597); the authors invite the reader to use his imagination to fill in the gaps. Highlighting the sensuality which characterises Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in particular, Agnès Lafont emphasises that an important part of understanding the appeal of this text and Shakespeare's adaptation of it lies in fact that it was designed to be interpreted privately in the reader's mind; to appreciate Ovid's power for Shakespeare, Marlowe, and their early modern readership, we are to 'approach the workings of the imaginary and address contemporary negotiations with the forbidden, which may include supplementing what cannot be shown on stage.'³² For the dramatists of St John's College, Oxford, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was considered ripe for stage re-enactment,

³¹ See S.A. Brown's diachronic study *The Metamorphosis of Ovid: from Chaucer to Ted Hughes* (London: Duckworth, 1999), which traces the continuation of 'the Ovidian line' (217).

³² Agnès Lafont, 'Interacting with Eros: Ovid and Shakespeare' in Agnès Lafont (ed.), *Shakespeare's Erotic Mythology and Ovidian Renaissance Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 1. In the same volume see François Laroque's study of the Ovidian inspiration behind Shakespeare's erotic fancy in *Venus and Adonis*, 61-75.

which required quite another approach altogether, and the end result, though sharing an interest in comedy, was entirely different. From their consideration of which episodes to adapt, to the atmosphere engendered by their choice of language and style, the St John's writers made of Ovid quite a changed creature, preparing their compositions for a college audience not a bedroom reader. The explosion of the text into three dimensions to occupy the stage space (a practice discussed in more detail later in this chapter), together with the nurturing of Ovid's Latin for academic display (my study of Philip Parsons' *Atalanta* provides an in-depth case study of this phenomenon), readied the plays for presentation before their dedicatee, the president of the college. The fashioning of neat presentation copies, such as Bodleian Library MS 30 (*Physiponomachia*), British Museum MS Harleian 6924 (*Atalanta*), Bodleian Library MS Lat. Misc. e.17 (*Iphis*), and St John's College MS 217 (which contains Joseph Crowther's untitled play on the subject of Cephalus and Procris³³), and the ritual of dedicating these scripts to the college head, asserts the expectation that these college plays would enjoy a longer legacy than a one-off performance could give. Yet the status of the written text is still rooted in its relationship with on-stage spectacle, each presentation copy advertising the required stage effects for performance and providing inclusion of detailed directions to actors; this is a manuscript record very much conscious of having been created in an active theatre environment.

The college plays are texts written for group encounters: the act of the president receiving the work as the representative of the whole college community, and the audio-visual enactment on stage by student actors in front of their college peers and tutors. The model of private readership is abandoned in favour of group dynamics which celebrate the institution to which author, actors, and audience all belong. Thus we have an environment where the plays are being shaped by the institution which supports their creation (as the *alma mater* of the writer and the provider of both actors and audience for the plays); here certain values are deemed suitable to be reflected on the stage while others are not. Therefore, despite the fact that Ovid had a keen interest in homosexuality, hermaphroditism, sexual violence, and incest, as Carter has clearly demonstrated in her study of Philomela, Lucrece, Ganymede, Hermaphroditus, Pygmalion, Myrrha and Adonis in

³³ The manuscript of Crowther's play was a chance discovery in 1914, when it was found amongst legal documents in a lawyer's office in London, see F.S. Boas, 'Recently Recovered Manuscripts at St John's College, Oxford', *The Modern Language Review*, 11 (1916), 298-301.

the *Metamorphoses*, these topics or characters are not represented on the college stage, or even hinted at. Ovid may even be said to specialise in sexual deviance (which Carter defines as ‘any sexual activity that is not marital procreative intercourse’³⁴), and yet, although erotic narratives are ostensibly a recurring theme of the St John’s plays, linked with the interest in ‘coming of age’ narratives more generally (as discussed in Chapter 4), the St John’s writers transform the *Metamorphoses* into stories into celebrations of normative, heterosexual marriage.

Though *Venus and Adonis* and *Hero and Leander* were widely read at Oxford, Cambridge, and the Inns of Court,³⁵ the decision by students to author works inspired by Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* during their time at university did not rest on their eagerness to imitate the professionals. Perhaps it is even the other way round, that those early on in their career writing for a living in the 1590s, such as Shakespeare and Marlowe, during a time when plague was keeping the playhouses closed, knew that the well-educated audience constituted an important market for their wares, and had identified the profitability of turning out fresh, doubly eroticised versions of a text that was already an established favourite.

How had Ovid’s poem come to particular prominence by this time, and where? In the classrooms of England’s grammar schools, founded by a cluster of influential pedagogues on the principles of humanism, encounters with Ovid were so far embedded in the curriculum that every schoolboy could expect to leave with an intimate knowledge of his works. In these institutions, daily repetitive practice of double-translation from Latin to English and back again dominated work. For such exercises, the text of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* was very frequently used as an *exemplum* for students to imitate. In his seminal study of grammar-school curricula, Baldwin remarks that, while the *Fasti*, *Heroides*, and *Tristia* are regularly prescribed on the syllabi, ‘[t]he *Metamorphoses* is almost universally required’.³⁶ Educational theorists such as Brinsley frequently recommended the *Metamorphoses* for use in the classroom because of its beneficial instruction in

³⁴ Sarah Carter, *Ovidian Myth and Sexual Deviance in Early Modern English Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 6.

³⁵ W. Keach, *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives: Irony and Pathos in the Ovidian Poetry of Shakespeare, Marlowe and Their Contemporaries* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1977), 120.

³⁶ Baldwin, *William Shakspeare's small Latine & lesse Greeke*, vol. 2, 418. Baldwin’s study demonstrates that the training Shakespeare received at his grammar school equipped him with the tools he needed to compete with the university men.

style, diction, and figures of speech; Erasmus recommended it as a treasure trove of mythology, which was also important for endowing one's eloquence with cultural knowledge.

Editions of Ovid's poem had long been produced specifically tailored to the needs of pupils attempting to master the Latin language; for example, Raffaele Regio's text with accompanying commentary (1518), became the most frequently printed Latin edition of the *Metamorphoses* in the sixteenth century and was still being recommended for use in the classroom by Brinsley in his popular manuals *Ludus Literarius: or, the Grammar Schoole* (1612) and *A Consolation for our Grammar Schooles* (1622). 'Reading Ovid in conjunction with Regio's commentary, students discovered in the *Metamorphoses* a dictionary of correct Latin usage, a repertory of examples of figurative diction', argues Ann Moss, a reminder that early modern commentaries on the classical texts had their own influence as an important mediating force between the Roman poet and the schoolboy reader, affecting the way that Ovid's poem was interpreted and remembered.³⁷

This was an influential educational experience which students at the universities shared with Shakespeare, who did not spend time studying at Oxford or Cambridge, and Marlowe, who did (as an undergraduate at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge). Indeed, it is *Scyllae's Metamorphosis* (1589), which Thomas Lodge composed while he was a student at Lincoln's Inn, which is considered the inaugural event which kickstarted the trend for Ovidian epyllia in the 1590s. Lodge had received his education at the Merchant Taylors' School followed by Trinity College, Oxford, and having moved on to the Inns of Court, as so many of his university contemporaries did, it was there that he reworked a section of text from Ovid *Metamorphoses* (XIII.898–XIV.74), retelling the story of Scylla and Glaucus in English verse. Thus it is to the universities, the Inns of Court, and to the schools that supplied them with scholars, that we must return if we are to appreciate Shakespeare's choice to write *Venus and Adonis* or Marlowe his *Hero and Leander*, a decision influenced by this predicted readership.

³⁷ Ann Moss, *Renaissance Truth and the Latin Language Turn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 243. Also see Karl Enekel and Hank Nellen (eds.), *Neo-Latin Commentaries and the Management of Knowledge in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period (1400-1700)* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013).

If the metamorphosis poem of Lodge and the metamorphosis plays at St John's College share a source text and also share the educational background of the Merchant Taylors' School and the University of Oxford, why did Lodge compose in English and the St John's men compose in Latin? The answer lies in each author's audience. Lodge, living in the open and varied society of London, was marketing his work as a commercial product, to be sold to anyone who could be persuaded to buy a copy from the bookseller Richard Jones, whose shop, the title page tells us, was situated 'neere Holburne bridge, at the signe of the Rose and Crowne'. He was therefore pitching his poem to attract as wide a readership as possible, pleasing his publisher by the number of copies sold as much as the status of individual readers. The student dramatists at St John's College, Oxford, by contrast, were specifically composing plays to please an insider membership, a limited group of individuals whose systems of value and assessment were well-known to the author, as they had been conditioned by the institution to which both author and audience belonged. This applies to both the written text, such as a presentation copy handed in to the dedicatee, the college president, for his approval, and to the staging of a play in front of the community of St John's scholars, where the play has the status of an official college event and the only outsiders present would be the invited guests of college members. This was a context in which Latin was the appropriate choice, not English, for Latin was the language of achievement and skill in the university arena, just as it was in the professional arenas where the college graduates were soon to be heading.³⁸

Yet while Lodge's current association with Lincoln's Inn is advertised on the title page to his work, institutional affiliation places no restriction on who has access to it. The intramural audience at St John's, by contrast, is a closed audience, operating according to its own rules and values. The dramatic products issuing from this microclimate are therefore more properly termed 'college drama' than 'university drama', where the writers consciously participate in perpetuating the particular traditions associated with their college and where self-reflexive qualities in the work proudly announce the dramatist's institutional affiliation.

³⁸ See above, Chapter 2, on the manuscript record of SJC MS 52, which reveals the contempt in which English was held at St John's and the consequent anxiety surrounding the staging of plays such as the tragedy of *Periander* in the English language.

Starting out with pastoral, starting out with Ovid: Traditional training-grounds for new poets

The pastoral comedies which the St John's students write for their college during the first third of the seventeenth century tend to be early pieces which self-consciously announce the untried talent of their authors.³⁹ The choice of the pastoral mode to signal a poet bringing out the 'first fruits' of his labours is a generic device which speaks to the classical framework of literary genres, working up from lowly pastoral to lofty epic.⁴⁰ The late sixteenth century had been an especially fertile age for Italian, English, and Latin pastoral, bequeathing a wide-ranging legacy in poetry and drama to the new generation of writers that followed: from Tasso's *Aminta* (1573) to Watson's *Amyntas* (1585) to Lyly's *Endymion* (1588), an output of great variety was united under the umbrella of the 'pastoral'. The *Metamorphoses*, while not a pastoral poem in the formal sense - naturally it is difficult to pin down a poem of change to any traditional generic boundaries - made an important contribution to the promotion of the pastoral by virtue of its influence on the work of later generations; the landscape and imagery of the Golden Age, ironised and unsettled in Ovid's world of transformations, offered early modern poets a compelling framework for fresh adaptations of bucolic traditions.

Indeed, the pastoral mode as filtered through Ovid gave birth to new sub-genres in the neo-Latin repertoire, such as the 'pastoral epyllion' or 'eclogue of metamorphosis',⁴¹ a sixteenth-century development on the continent which connects with the fashion for Ovidian narrative epyllia in England, within and without the universities. Other innovations in pastoral include Spenser's sculpting of the poet-editor figure and his use of the vernacular to emulate Virgil and Mantuan in *The Shepheardes Calendar* (1579), the work which announced the beginning of his poetic career. For young, well-educated men with poetic ambitions, such as Edmund Spenser, who was educated at the Merchant Taylors' School, then at Cambridge, a virtuoso reworking of pastoral tradition was the vehicle through which the poet could announce his debut and look ahead to greater works in the future, moving up the ladder of generic hierarchy.

³⁹ See Chapter 4, where I discuss the youth of the student playwrights and the idea of the college play as a 'coming of age' test.

⁴⁰ This is a system in which status is assigned to genre following the example of leading Roman poets such as Virgil and Ovid; I discuss the phenomenon further in Chapter 4, in relation to Patrick Cheney's studies of Spenser and Marlowe.

⁴¹ As shown by W.L. Grant, *Neo-Latin Literature and the Pastoral* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 248-57.

It is significant that translating *The Shepheardes Calender* from English into Latin seems to have become something of a trend at the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century universities, with Latin translations of Spenser's work made by Dove (c.1584, whilst an undergraduate at Christ Church, Oxford), Bathurst (1608-10, early on in his Cambridge University career), and an anonymous poet who may have been at either Oxford or Cambridge (c.1600).⁴² Indeed, Spenser's own engagement with neo-Latin texts has recently been highlighted by Piepho in an innovative study which complements Pugh's more conventional argument that Spenser's absorbed elements of Ovid's *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*.⁴³ A thorough investigation of Thomas Watson's *Amyntas* of 1585 would be a valuable next step here; as a Latin poem issuing from an English pen and contemporary with the much more famous innovations in pastoral by English poets, it is a neglected piece in an important jigsaw. Steeped in Ovid and fired by the passions of a young man of university learning, Watson's *Amyntas* shares much with and could be argued to be a key inspiration for several of the Elizabethan epyllia, including Lodge's *Scyllae's Metamorphosis*, thus influencing the development of the genre through Marlowe and Shakespeare.⁴⁴ The role of late sixteenth-century university men in cross-fertilising English and neo-Latin traditions of the pastoral provides an important backdrop to the work of the St John's College playwrights; we can interpret their interest in reconfiguring Ovid's work for the stage and creating fresh re-writings of the *Metamorphoses* in Latin as an important innovation rooted in an existing university-led tradition.

Also relevant is the early work of Milton in the 1620s, who, in his last years as a schoolboy at St Paul's and then an undergraduate at Cambridge, followed in the footsteps of his predecessors by composing the first fruits of his poetic output in the pastoral mode. Commenting upon his first poems, which he composed in Latin, Rand has emphasised the continuity of the tradition: 'In this early period, then, Milton, like the youthful Spenser, like the youthful Virgil, and

⁴² See L. Bradner, 'The Latin Translations of Spenser's "Shepheardes Calender"', *Modern Philology*, 33 (1935), 21-26.

⁴³ L. Piepho, 'Spenser and Neo-Latin Literature' in R.A. McCabe (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Edmund Spenser*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 573-85; S. Pugh, *Spenser and Ovid* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

⁴⁴ W.F. Staton, Jr. draws our attention to the poem in 'The Influence of Thomas Watson on Elizabethan Ovidian Poetry', in *Studies in the Renaissance*, 6 (1959), and more recently J. Roe has reiterated its potential importance in 'Ovid "renascent" in *Venus and Adonis* and *Hero and Leander*' in A.B. Taylor (ed.), *Shakespeare's Ovid: the Metamorphoses in the plays and poems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 34-7.

other youthful poets, too, finds the pastoral a natural medium for his genius.’⁴⁵ Here Rand’s argument highlights not only the importance of the pastoral to poets in their youth but the dovetailing of preference for pastoral with preference for Ovid. A more wide-ranging study of university juvenalia would draw together these threads, which have been kept separate by the tradition of author-specific studies.

Christopher Wren’s *Physiponomachia*: an allegory of methodology

Wren gives himself free rein to remould material from Ovid’s poem whilst paying homage to it through the imitation of stylistic features, characterisation, and ironic tone. One of Wren’s key innovations in his adaptation of the story of Achelous and Hercules from *Metamorphoses* IX is his method of encompassing Ovid’s tale within an allegorical frame, which gives the play a new personality, whilst retaining much that is familiar from its ancient source. Thus the play becomes a *physiponomachia*, that is, ‘a battle of wit and labour’, where the narrative of the wrestling match for Deianira’s hand is recast into an allegorical contest between the figures of Ponophilus (‘Work-lover’) and Anchinoeus (‘Ingenious’). These two characters provide an external frame, with a prologue and epilogue addressed directly to the audience, and they also infiltrate the play proper, donning new disguises to play the roles of Hercules and Achelous respectively. In the prologue, Ponophilus identifies himself and his counterpart as ‘labor’ and ‘ingenium’ and he informs the audience that he and Anchinoeus have decided to stage a contest, ‘certamen’, between them. Thus, when Anchinoeus declares ‘Nos induemus ergo personas nouas, / Sumemus alia nomina’ (*Phys.* 29-30),⁴⁶ the two figures metamorphose into the figures of Hercules and Achelous and enter the main narrative, transforming the mythological competition for Deianira into a contest between the two key ingredients of poetic composition: industry and native talent.

No exact date for the play is recorded, but as H-J. Weckermann points out in the introduction to his facsimile of the *Physiponomachia* manuscript, the date of Wren’s matriculation, 14 October 1608, in combination with the dedication of the play to President Buckeridge, who held

⁴⁵ E.K. Rand, ‘Milton in Rustication’, in *Studies in Philology*, 19 (1922), 109-35 (129).

⁴⁶ ‘We will put on new masks and assume other names’.

office until 1611, fixes the date of the play within a 1609-11 timeframe with tolerable certainty.⁴⁷ It is important to note that the medieval tradition for allegorical treatments of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where explicitly moral, and often intricately theological, analyses of Ovid were constructed (leading examples being Pierre Bersuire's *Ovidius Moralizatus* completed in 1340 together with the anonymous *Ovide moralisé* of the late thirteenth century), was a movement which persisted well into the early modern period was still very much alive and kicking at the time when Wren was writing. George Sandys' seventeenth-century interpretation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* combining translation and commentary, first published in 1621, presented the reader with the moral lessons that were to be drawn from the poem; the story of Narcissus in Book III, for example, 'instructs us, that wee should not flourish too soone, or be wise too timely, nor over-love, or admire our selves' and shows the dangers of men who 'sequester themselves from public converse and civil affairs'.⁴⁸

I would suggest that Wren's allegorical battle between two ingredients of poetry, though it grounds the play in an academic framework, has been constructed not with the intention of perpetuating long-established didactic trends, but as a way of enabling the student dramatist to bring his own persona into the frame. Wren's introduction of *ingenium* and *labor* as active participants in the drama, working in parallel with the protagonists Hercules and Achelous, could potentially have transformed the story of the battle for Deianira's hand in marriage into a didactic scenario reinforcing the precepts of the classroom through the promotion of a wholesome and productive work ethic, but Wren deliberately sets up this instructive dimension to the play only to overshadow it with colourful and comic use of metapoetic irony. This strategy renders the *Physiponomachia* a highly enjoyable entertainment for the college community and highlights to the audience his own hard work, talent and skill in giving birth to the play.

Through his choice of names for the protagonists and the title of the play, Wren signals his engagement with Greco-Roman authors and situates his play in the context of the theoretical debate over *ingenium* and *labor/ars*. This debate has its roots in the nature versus culture debate,

⁴⁷ H-J. Weckermann (ed.), *Christopher Wren / Physiponomachia; Philip Parsons / Atalanta; Thomas Atkinson / Homo*, in *Renaissance Latin Drama in England*, I.4 (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1981), 6. All quotations from Wren's *Physiponomachia* follow the text of Bodleian Library MS 30 and the line numbers given are those assigned to the 1981 facsimile of the manuscript by H-J. Weckermann. Hereafter in quotations *Physiponomachia* is abbreviated to *Phys*.

⁴⁸ George Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphosis englished, mythologiz'd, and represented in figures* (1632, Oxford: John Lichfield) 106.

which Plato expressed in relation to the teachability of virtue in the *Meno*. Wren does not Latinise his Greek title as Ovid does in the *Metamorphoses*, and his incorporation of the word φύσις therefore stands out, opening a dialogue with works such as the *Meno* and also Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, where Neoptolemus' inborn character, which may have inherited from his father, is contrasted with his upbringing. Wren's choice of 'Anchinoeus' as the name of the allegorical figure to match crafty Achelous in the inset narrative is well thought-through, as it evokes a range of precedents for archetypal figures who excel in the kind of verbal sophistication to which the model Oxford student aspires. (No doubt he further hopes that the audience will associate the character's rhetorical wit with the figure of the author who stands behind the creation). The Greek adjective ἀγγίνους-ουν is used, for example, to describe the ready wit of Antiphon in *Lives of the Ten Orators*, a man who put his skill to good use by being the first to publish treatises on rhetoric: 'πρῶτος δὲ καὶ ῥητορικὰς τέχνας ἐξήνεγκε, γενόμενος ἀγγίνους' (Pseudo-Plutarch, *Vitae decem oratorum* I: *Ἀντιφῶν*, 832E).⁴⁹ Again, in the *Odyssey*, at the critical moment when Homer's eponymous hero wakes to find himself on the shores of Ithaca and asks whether he is really back home, the goddess Athena answers his skeptical question and praises his cleverness: 'ἐπητής ἐσσι καὶ ἀγγίνοος καὶ ἐχέφρων' (Homer, *Odyssey* XIII.332)⁵⁰

Wren's grasp of Greek might have impressed even the nervously snobbish Ben Jonson, for his education at the Merchant Taylors' School incorporated rigorous training to an advanced level. He throws in Greek vocabulary with seemingly casual ease, though each word is selected with care in order to signal knowledge and understanding of literary precedents for the word. His choice to place 'scommata' in line 297, for example, transliterating the Greek word at the moment when King Oeneus attempts to play down the suitors' complaints, captures the double sense of the old man being scoffed at and the whole scenario in fact being but a joke, in the metatheatrical sense. 'σκώμματα' is regularly used in this way by Aristophanes in particular, in the parabasis of the *Clouds*, for instance, where the chorus leader promotes his play directly to the audience by claiming that he does not have recourse to concealing bad jokes with a slapstick routine just to get

⁴⁹ 'He was also the first to publish rules of the art of oratory, being of sharp intellect' (text and trans. Harold North Fowler (ed.), Plutarch's *Moralia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936), vol. 10: 771E-854D).

⁵⁰ 'you are polite, sharp-witted, and prudent'. (Greek quotation follows Thomas W. Allen (ed.), *Homeri Opera* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939).

the laughs in: ‘οὐδὲ πρεσβύτης ὁ λέγων τᾶπη τῇ βακτηρίᾳ / τύπτει τὸν παρόντ’, ἀφανίζων πονηρὰ σκώμματα’ (Aristophanes, *Clouds* 541-2).⁵¹ As Baldwin points out, the seasoned schoolmaster John Brinsley singled out the Merchant Taylors’ School for having scholars with a particular proficiency in Greek, and paid the school the compliment of citing their methods as an *exemplum* to follow in combination with his own precepts.⁵² Indeed, Brinsley used ‘Philoponus’ as the name for one of his schoolmaster characters in the dramatic dialogue *Ludus Literarius: or, the Grammar Schoole*. Brinsley’s manual was published a matter of months after Wren’s play was staged, and we might speculate as to why these two related character names occur within such a short space of time, when the mutual model on which they are both likely to depend dates to a much earlier period: Philip Stubbes’ *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583). Stubbes’ work presents us with a character named ‘Philoponus’ placed in dialogue with another man named ‘Spudeus’, with Spudeus asking the questions which enable Philoponus to give lengthy discourses in reply. Likewise, Brinsley pairs his ‘Philoponus’ with another schoolmaster, ‘Spoudeus’, where the shortcomings of the latter produces opportunities for the former to elaborate his successes. Wren’s version of the ‘work-lover’ character reverses the components of the name as ‘Ponophilus’, and the rivalry with a second figure, styled ‘Anchinoeus’ (‘Ingenuous’), is expanded into an interesting double drama: the rivalry between Ponophilus and Anchinoeus for the victory palm, which the audience will bestow at the end of the play, is set in parallel with the main plot of the piece, where Hercules and Achelous come head to head as the rivals for Deianira’s hand and wrestle for the prize on stage.

When Philoponus introduces himself and his counterpart to the audience as ‘ingenium et labor’ (prologue, line 2), the audience are invited to consider the rhetorical traditions which lie behind these terms and to interpret the play within this academic framework. ‘ingenium’ does not have a precise, one-word English equivalent, though it is often translated in English as ‘wit’;⁵³ it is clear from Wren’s use of here that he is using the term here to mean the creative talent which the

⁵¹ ‘nor does an old man, the one with the leading part, conceal bad jokes by hitting whoever is around with his stick’ (text and trans. Alan H. Sommerstein (ed.), *The Comedies of Aristophanes*, vol. 3: *Clouds* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 3rd corrected impression, 1991)).

⁵² See Baldwin, *William Shakspeare's small Latine & lesse Greeke*, vol. 2, 621.

⁵³ This debate has been recently refreshed by Rhodri Lewis in his Baconian study qualifying our use of the term ‘wit’ by pinpointing limits to *ingenium*’s traditionally elastic semantic field. See ‘Francis Bacon and Ingenuity’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 67 (2014), 113-163.

successful poet pairs with *labor*, that is, hard work, in order for his work to flourish. His presentation of the two paired as ingredients for composition demonstrates his direct engagement with the principle laid down by Horace in his *Ars Poetica*, that a poet's innate talent and technical skill should work together in a partnership where neither one nor the other is allowed to dominate:

natura fieret laudabile carmen an arte
 quaesitum est: ego nec studium sine divite vena
 nec rude quid prosit video ingenium; alterius sic
 altera poscit opem res et coniurat amice.

(Horace, *Ars Poetica* 408-11)⁵⁴

As A. Syson has shown in her discussion of Tacitus' *Dialogus de oratoribus*, the Latin counterpart to φύσις, *ingenium*, is firmly rooted in the language of birth and nature, closely associated with *nascor* and its derivatives. Indeed, she goes so far as to say: '*Ingenium* can also serve as a near synonym for *natura*'.⁵⁵ Therefore, Horace's use of *natura* and Wren's use of *ingenium* essentially function as expressions of the same phenomenon, and Horace goes on to use the latter term in the following sentence seemingly interchangeably. In the same way, *ars* and *studium* are placed in parallel, the one reinforcing the other, since skills are improved by zealous application. Horace's formulation of the partnership between the two parties, *ingenium-natura* and *studium-ars*, is reworked and enlivened by Wren in the form of a dialogue between their respective representatives, Anchinoeus and Philoponus. Taking his cue from Horace's 'alterius... / altera', where the relationship of reciprocal dependency is highlighted, Wren expresses the principle dramatically by having each character echo the other's words, emphasising that the other is worth nothing without that which they themselves are able to contribute:

Anch: At labor ineptus, si absit ingenium, stupet.

Ponoph: Ingenium inane, si labor desit, leue est.

⁵⁴ 'Whether a poem becomes praiseworthy by nature or by art is the question: I for one do not see what the benefit is of application without wealth of wit or of innate wit when untrained; so each demands the other's help and forms a friendly pact.' (H.W. Garrod and E.C. Wickham (eds.), *Q. Horati Flacci Opera* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947)).

⁵⁵ A. Syson, 'Born to Speak: *Ingenium* and *Natura* in Tacitus's *Dialogue on Orators*', in *Arethusa*, 42 (2009), 45-75 (47).

(*Phys.* 21-2)⁵⁶

This moment prefigures the dénouement in the epilogue, where the palm of victory will be given not to one solitary victor, as in the inset narrative it was given to Hercules-Philoponus representing *labor*, but to both parties. Anchinoeus suggest this outcome to the audience in the prologue, ‘Faveant utrique pariter’ (36), repeating it in the epilogue, ‘Utrique detur palma’ (585).⁵⁷ It is interesting to note the discrepancy between the end result of the wrestling match within the narrative proper (where Hercules is outright victor) and the outcome of the epilogue, where the palm is shared between both parties. The mythological current drags the result one way, whilst the allegorical frame imposed by Wren upon his Ovidian material drags the outcome back in the other direction and effectively rebalances the scenario. Ultimately, neither *ingenium* nor *labor* wins the contest, whilst Wren wins praise for having employed both in his composition.

Textual recycling and the pursuit of eloquence in Philip Parsons’ *Atalanta*

At grande nihil est, nisi quod egregium facit

Labor et periculum

(*Atalanta*, 369-70)⁵⁸

These words are spoken by the character Hippomenes as he goads himself to attempt the task of the running contest against Atalanta, in order to win her hand in marriage. This is a story which Ovid narrates in Book X of the *Metamorphoses*, or, more properly, which Ovid has Venus narrate to Adonis, an important framing structure which influences the content inside it.⁵⁹ The sentiment put into the mouth of Hippomenes here in Parsons’ theatrical adaptation of Ovid, that no achievement may be considered substantial without a considerable effort and an element of risk being involved, has the generalising force of a precept and seems to reflect Parsons’ authorial voice as much as that of the character from within the plot: Atalanta is Parsons’ *labor* as well as Hippomenes’. In his

⁵⁶ ‘Anchinoeus: But hard work is silly and senseless, if wit is not there.

Ponophilus: Empty wit matters little, if hard work is not there.’

⁵⁷ ‘let them favour both equally’ (36); ‘let the palm be given to both’ (585).

⁵⁸ My quotations from Parsons’ *Atalanta* follow the text and line numbering of W.E. Mahaney and W.K. Sherwin’s edition, *Two University Latin Plays: Philip Parsons’ Atalanta and Thomas Atkinson’s Homo* (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1973).

⁵⁹ I discuss this narrative framing structure further below, in relation to Venus’ institution of an annual ritual for her cult of Adonis.

adaptation of a story taken from the previous book, *Metamorphoses IX*, Christopher Wren had used the figure of Hercules and the concept of the ‘Herculean labour’ as a light-hearted allegory for his own efforts in writing the play; here Parsons faces the challenge, ‘Labor et periculum’, and hopes that his work will prove ‘egregium’, that is, that it will distinguish him and mark him out from the common herd (reflecting the etymology of the word, formed from *ex/grex*). Parsons dedicates his play to the current president of St John’s College, William Laud, just as Wren had dedicated his to John Buckeridge, and this allows us to narrow down his *Atalanta* to the bounds of Laud’s presidential decade, 1611 to 1621. Parsons graduated BA in 1614 and the few references to his play have, quite sensibly, dated it to before his graduation.⁶⁰

The opportunity to stage a play in front of one’s peers, tutors, and their guests (including any visiting dignitaries who happen to be in the audience) was a considerable one for a young student eager to prove himself, as will be more fully argued in Chapter 4 where I consider college plays as rites of passage. In the context of a student presenting a script to the head of his college (either in the form of a written text, or live aural performance, or both) one of the key criteria by which the work would be judged was Parsons’ demonstration that his facility in the Latin language enabled him to cultivate an elegant turn of phrase. Elegance of style was the culmination of years of intense language study, where texts selected as models, such as the *Metamorphoses*, were subjected to highly detailed examination and rigorous imitation. As part of his grammar-school training, Parsons would have been instructed in the method of keeping a commonplace book, a volume in which the trainee Latin-speaker would compile a lexicon of exemplary words and phrases. The practice of extracting such elements from recommended authors, noting them down under themed headings, or *loci communes*, and learning them off by heart for later use was a painstaking and laborious effort, but an essential preliminary to composition, not just for the schoolboy but also the undergraduate.⁶¹ For it gave the scholar an invaluable storehouse of

⁶⁰ Alfred Harbage in *The Annals of English Drama 975-1700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2nd ed. revised by S. Schoenbaum, 1964) definitively lists *Atalanta* as having been acted in 1612, whilst *REED: Oxford* posits 1611-13. H-J. Weckermann, editing the facsimile of *Atalanta* for the *Renaissance Latin Drama in England* series (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1981), comments with reference to 1612, ‘in the absence of any demonstrable evidence this date must remain a perhaps plausible but by no means incontrovertible assumption’ (10-11).

⁶¹ The instructions given to undergraduates on the practicalities of keeping a commonplace by Richard Holdsworth, tutor at St John’s College, Cambridge, from 1613 until he became the head of Emmanuel College in 1637, have been edited from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, MS 1.2.27.(1) by H.F. Fletcher in

expressions with which to vary his speech and ensure correctness of diction - a ‘treasure-trove’, as Quintilian refers to it in his *Institutio Oratoria*, a term which gives us our modern word ‘thesaurus’. In the same chapter of this treatise on rhetoric (*Inst. Or.* X.i.3), Quintilian highlights the benefit of extensive reading for building up one’s stock of words, a process of accumulation which Wren colourfully references in his *Physiponomachia*, when Anchinoeus addresses the hard-working Ponophilus as the enduring bookworm who is never satisfied with his learning and just keeps on reading and reading, ‘dure librorum helluo: / Nunquam sciendo et plurima legendo satur’ (*Phys.* 585-6). Such extensive book-learning with attention to detail acclimatised students to the lexis and style of admired authors, so that their own attempts at composing in Latin might be, as Brinsley advised in 1612, ‘couched full of good matter, written in a pure stile’.⁶²

Nicholas Udall’s *Floures for Latine Spekyng* Selected and Gathered oute of Terence (1533), given the revised title *Flowers or eloquent phrases of the Latine speach* in the editions printed after 1575, was published as an aid (one might even say a shortcut) to such endeavours shortly before Udall became Headmaster of Eton. The title he gives to his work exemplifies the metaphor which was in common use at that time, where the practice of mining literary texts to build up one’s verbal store was known as ‘gathering the flowers’.⁶³ Indeed, when John Leland came to write a poem in praise of *Floures for Latine Spekyng*, he elaborated upon Udall’s title by depicting the author *in the act* of choosing flowers from Terence’s garden: ‘Illius ex horto flores selegit amoenos / Odallus, cupidae sedulus instar apis’ (Leland, *Epigrammata* CLXXIV.4-5).⁶⁴ Leland, the foremost bibliographer of early Protestantism, had studied at St. Paul’s School under

The Intellectual Development of John Milton (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), Appendix II: ‘Holdsworth’s ‘Directions for a Student in the Universitie’’, vol. 2, 623-64. Holdsworth recommends ‘a portable size in Octavo’ into which ‘all the remarkable things which you meet with in your Hystorians, Oratours, and Poets’ can be collected (651). Another Cambridge tutor, James Duport, fellow of Trinity College, who had been educated at Westminster School and whose grandfather Richard Cox had been Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, (1546–53), advises on writing materials and makes vivid use of the apian metaphor: ‘In the reading of Authors observe the most remarkable passages, and note them with a black-lead pen, and reserve them after ward to your Common- place book [...] suck the hony out of the flower, and passe by the weedes.’ (Cambridge University Library MS Add. 6986, page 14), quoted in C. D. Preston and P. H. Oswald, ‘James Duport’s Rules for his Tutorial Pupils: A Comparison of Two Surviving Manuscripts’, in *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 14 (2011), 317-62 (352-3).

⁶² E.T. Campagnac (ed.), *Ludus literarius: or, The grammar schoole / by John Brinsley* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1917), 172. All subsequent quotations from Brinsley follow this edition.

⁶³ Our modern preference for the term ‘anthology’, developed from the Greek (ἀνθολογία), makes the medieval equivalent of creating *florilegia* (Latin *flos/legere*) seem less familiar.

⁶⁴ D.F. Sutton, *John Leland, Epigrammata (printed 1589). A hypertext critical edition* (revised ed., 28 April 2011): <<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/lelandpoems/>> (accessed May 2012). ‘As busy as an eager bee, Udall has made his choice of delightful flowers from that man’s garden.’

the tutelage of William Lily (discussed above as the author of Lily's Latin grammar), and here his choice of imagery consciously echoes the principles of his grammar-school education: drawing upon Seneca's apian metaphor in *Epistulae morales* LXXXIV, a key text for Renaissance literary theory, Leland depicts Udall as 'cupidae sedulus instar apis', industriously collecting choice treasures like the eager bee. Seneca's depiction of the bees as the creatures who rove and gather the right flowers for making honey, 'quae vagantur et flores ad mel faciendum idoneos carpunt', is directly followed by a description of the insects arranging, 'disponunt', and distributing, 'digerunt', what they have gathered; thus the writer shapes his raw material into a composition, setting each element in its new place.⁶⁵ Through his allusion to Seneca, Leland pointedly contextualises Udall's work in the scheme of literary *imitatio*, advertising the fact that this busy bee of an author has toiled much on the reader's behalf and the student using his handbook has the advantage of a ready-made stock of flowers with which to make his own honey. Parsons may well have used aids such as Udall's at some stage in his school career, but it is clear from his keen attention to detail in reworking verses from the *Metamorphoses* that he laboured over Ovid's text first-hand and gathered his own set of flowers. For, as Seneca advises, it is not just any flowers but 'flores... idoneos' that a writer requires; each composition demands a particular stock of words appropriate to the task.⁶⁶

A closer look at Parsons' *Atalanta* reveals this process at work in the context of seventeenth-century college drama. Parsons has set about constructing his play from the building blocks of Ovidian vocabulary: disengaging individual words from their metrical sequence and original juxtapositions, Parsons collects his fragments and brings them back to the drawing board for recomposition.⁶⁷ Tweaking the order, and sometimes varying the syntax, he ensures that each element finds a new place, just as the bees arrange their pollen in the honeycomb cells. The *Atalanta* is composed of iambic senarii, and the transposition of words stripped from Ovid's

⁶⁵ Seneca, *Epistulae morales* LXXXIV.3 (L.D. Reynolds (ed.), *L. Annaei Senecae Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), vol. 1).

⁶⁶ See G.W. Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance' in *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 33 (1980), 1-32. Pigman's instructive survey of the multifarious analogies, images, and metaphors employed in the discourse of literary imitation divides the methodologies into three general categories: transformative, dissimulative, and eristic. The transformative category includes filial metaphors in addition to the apian ones discussed here, and simian metaphors for failed transformation.

⁶⁷ See Bushnell's insightful overview of the culture of 'Harvesting Books' in *Culture of Teaching*, 117-43, especially 129-135.

hexameters varies the flow of the verses. In addition, the narrative context for the renovated lines is always subtly different from their Ovidian setting, since Parsons' dramatisation of the poem involves the creation of several new characters and scenarios and he varies the circumstance of each scene with individual touches. For example, Hippomenes' direct address to the suitors at *Met.* X.581-2, 'nondum mihi praemia nota, / quae peteretis, erant',⁶⁸ which he shouts out publicly at the first race just as they are beginning to run, becomes a quiet, reflective moment in the *Atalanta*, where Hippomenes confides in his servant Davus that he feels differently now that he has actually met the princess: 'Mihi nota nondum praemia fuerunt satis' (*Atalanta* 357).⁶⁹ Parsons has kept closely to the syntax as well as the lexis of his model here, subtly revising the order of the words and making a modification of tense from the imperfect to the perfect. The change of tense reduces the note of anguished regret and redirects Hippomenes' thoughts more positively towards improving the situation's current deficiencies; up until now Atalanta's beautiful form has not been well enough known to him – ergo, he must rectify the matter and get to know her better.

In his selection of material, Parsons often sources and reorganises phrases or sentences on a thematic basis, ensuring that his words are entirely appropriate for their context. For example, in Act IV Scene i, Parsons has the shepherds Corydon and Menalcas, together with their children, evaluate the race which has just taken place between Atalanta and the two luckless suitors, Amphialus and Narcissus. This is one of several races in the narrative, and Parsons here incorporates material taken from two different races in *Metamorphoses* Book X, that between Atalanta and *unnamed* suitors, and the finale between Hippomenes and Atalanta. In the former race, Hippomenes is a spectator and his reaction is reported by Venus; she tells the story to Adonis, describing how he judged Atalanta's speed in running to be as quick as a Scythian arrow: 'quae quamquam Scythica non setius ire sagitta / Aonio uisa est iuueni' (*Met.* X.588-9). In the latter race, the competitors Hippomenes and Atalanta both set off at a tremendous pace, and Venus describes their feet barely touching the ground: 'summam celeri pede libat harenam' (*Met.* X.653). She develops the image with gusto, varying the textures of the running surface so that we imagine the racers moving from *terra firma* to the tops of the waves and over the heads of a field of corn:

⁶⁸ 'Until now I was not aware of the reward which you are pursuing.'

⁶⁹ 'Too little, until now, had I known of the reward.'

‘posse putes illos sicco freta radere passu / et segetis canae stantes percurrere aristas’ (*Met.* X.654-5). This colourful assault course takes Parsons’ fancy, as does the simile of the arrow, and he weaves the two passages together to form a whole:

Scythica sagitta celerius visa est mihi
 Volare princeps; vix quidem tetigit solum;
 Transire maria crederes sicco pede,
 Stantesque, si percurreret, aristas levi
 Vix premeret onere. (*Atalanta* 404-8)⁷⁰

Here the focus is solely upon Atalanta, with no Hippomenes to steal the attention. In this race, Atalanta’s competitors are the luckless suitors, who remain so far behind her that the shepherds mention them almost as an afterthought once they have discussed Atalanta’s captivating performance.⁷¹ In this passage we can see how Parsons repositions Ovid’s words and condenses the material to present two instances of Atalanta’s flight as one. ‘non setius’ becomes simply ‘celerius’, whilst ‘summam celeri pede libat harenam’ becomes the rather more prosaic ‘vix quidem tetigit solum’. He is then free to use ‘pede’ (*Atalanta* 406), in place of Ovid’s ‘passu’ (*Met.* X.654), reintroducing it from the previous line (653). Much of the syntax remains in parallel, so that Parsons’ variations of lexicon can be slotted into place in quite a straightforward manner, such as ‘Volare’ for ‘ire’, ‘crederes’ for ‘putes’, and ‘maria’ for ‘freta’. We may recall Brinsley’s instruction to the student, in his manual published the same year as the *Atalanta* was most likely composed (1612): ‘to imitate and expresse Ovid or Virgil, as you shall hardly discern, unlesse you know the places, whether the verses be the Authours or the scholler's’.⁷² Parsons is choosing words from his store which slide smoothly into place rather than raise their heads above the parapet; he aims at harmonious decorum with his model, demonstrating that he can retain the quality of Ovid’s Latin in his own compositions. (The creativity lies in the technique of disposition, rather than in asserting a lexical personality). Whilst this method may seem restrictive according to modern ideas

⁷⁰ ‘The princess seemed to me to fly more swiftly than a Scythian arrow; indeed she scarcely touched the ground. You might believe she could cross seas with dry feet and, if she should walk through fields of corn, she would barely disturb it with her light weight.’

⁷¹ Unlike Ovid’s suitors, however, the youths are named in Parsons’ plays and have several instances of dialogue. In the *Metamorphoses* they form a numberless mass, referred to only as ‘uiros’ (the men) (X.561), ‘turbam... procorum’ (the crowd of suitors) (X.568, repeated at 574), ‘iuuenum’ (the young men) (X.577, 583), and ‘uicti’ (the losers) (X.599).

⁷² Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius*, xvi.

of creative freedom and originality, in context Parsons' work is very interesting as an example of a classroom exercise transported out of school and into university, where the student's change in age and scale of ambition meets a change in audience. There is valuable work to be done in establishing how school drama feeds into college drama and university drama, and the series of Ovidian playlets written by Merchant Taylors' School pupils once they had become students at St John's College, Oxford demonstrates potential for this topic to illuminate connections between theatre and pedagogy across institutions of secondary and higher education.

Sometimes we may wonder whether Parsons is not making a little metapoetic joke about the technique of *variatio* when he selects his synonyms. For example, he reformulates Ovid's verse at *Met.* X.602, 'quid facilem titulum superando quaeris inertes?',⁷³ so that Hippomenes now has the line: 'sed quid hic famam petis / Vincendo inertes?' (*Atalanta* 451-2).⁷⁴ The replacement of 'superando' with 'Vincendo' echoes the famous moment of Atalanta looking at Hippomenes and hesitating whether to choose to be overcome or be the victor: 'aspicit et dubitat, superari an vincere malit (*Met.* X.610). This is particularly suggestive in the context of a university student in a competitive relationship with his peers and also with his literary model, using the challenge of composing his play as a platform to prove his level of skill. It may be no coincidence that Wren and Parsons have both selected contest-based stories from the *Metamorphoses*, a wrestling match from Book IX and a running race from Book X, giving themselves opportunities to play with concepts of rivalry and competition both within the plot and outside it, exploring meta-poetic humour which invites us to congratulate the author as the true victor. In Chapter 4, I return to the *Atalanta* to scrutinise Parsons' style of self-presentation as author, as part of an investigation into the St John's students' use of the theatrical medium to express hopes and fears for their prospects in relation to careers and patronage.

It is significant that whilst Parsons is required to play it safe in terms of lexicon, demonstrating seamless handling of Ovidian language to the smallest detail, he often takes an enterprising risk in repositioning material where it will have an impact upon the audience's impression of character and/or their interpretation of the plot, and this shows the beginnings of a

⁷³ 'Why do you aim for an easy title in overcoming slowcoaches?'

⁷⁴ 'But why do you look for fame here by playing the victor over slow coaches?'

more confident maturity in handling a literary model. For example, in Act IV Scene iii, where Hippomenes and Atalanta converse for the first time, Parsons interposes a sentence culled from Ovid's version of Atalanta's soliloquy: 'utinam desistere uelles, / aut, quoniam es demens, utinam uelocior esses!' (*Met.* X.629-30), reformulated as 'Utinam minus amans, vel magis velox fores' (*Atalanta* 502).⁷⁵ Again, we see the student carefully tweaking Ovid's words so that his own sentence resembles, but does not copy Ovid's formulation outright.⁷⁶ However, sometimes his introduction of a bolder phrase, such as 'Utinam minus amans' (the wish that Hippomenes loved her less) for Ovid's 'utinam desistere uelles' (the wish that Hippomenes had less of a desire to race her), signals Parsons intensifying the emotional drama of the scene. Moreover, Parsons has recontextualised the line from the private sphere of Atalanta's soliloquy, an angst-ridden debate in which she questions her new-found sympathy for the youth, to a section of dialogue between the two, so that Atalanta speaks the line in the presence of Hippomenes himself. The line is clearly not spoken as an aside, since Hippomenes answers her directly (and there is no stage direction to suggest otherwise). The force of feeling expressed (exemplified by the use of 'utinam', which echoes the precedents of other tragic women exasperated by their fate⁷⁷) adds to the dramatic tension as we watch Atalanta drop her guard in front of Hippomenes. Thus, through his subtle repositioning of Ovid's verses, Parsons heightens the romantic intrigue of this first encounter between the young people.

Surveying Parsons' method of textual recycling in the *Atalanta*, we find that some of the most interesting and effective instances occur when the author selects his material from distant sections of the *Metamorphoses*, recalling or prefiguring events which are thematically related to his story but unconnected in narrative terms. For example, in Act II Scene ii of the play, when Atalanta

⁷⁵ 'Would that you wished to give up, or, since you are this mad, would that you be swifter [in the race than me]!' (*Metamorphoses*); 'Would that you were less in love with me, or that you would be more swift [in the race than me]?' (*Atalanta*).

⁷⁶ The exception which proves the rule is Parsons' quotation of the oracle, which he borrows verbatim from Ovid: *Atalanta* 30-2 = *Met.* X.564-6. As a deliberately conspicuous diversion from his usual transformative method, this instance is worthy of further discussion separately: see below, pages 167 and 190-1.

⁷⁷ Most famously Catullus' Ariadne, when she cries to Jupiter the regret that Theseus had ever arrived on her shores: 'utinam ne tempore primo / Cnosia Cecropiae tetigissent litora puppes', 'Would that the Athenian ships had not touched the Cnossian shores in the first place' (*Carmina*, LXIV.171-2; C.J. Fordyce (ed.), *Catullus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961). Catullus, in turn, is drawing upon Ennius' *Medea* (see Cicero, *Pro Caelio* XVIII) and the famous opening to Euripides' *Medea*, which begins with Medea's nurse's regret that Jason's ship had ever reached the shores of Colchis. Hippomenes takes his place as an adventurer whose arrival disturbs the peace with romance.

informs her father of her intention to dedicate herself to the celibate life, Schoeneus' speech in response to this revelation is forged from material Parsons has excavated from *Metamorphoses* Book I. As we hear King Schoeneus remind Atalanta of her duties to her family ('et debes mihi / Natos, nepotes, principem huic debes throno', *Atalanta* 117-8), we are simultaneously hearing the words of Peneus, the father of Daphne: 'debes mihi, nata, nepotes' (*Met.* I.482). The thematic parallel with the dilemma of Daphne, caught between her needs as an individual and her filial duty, reinforces the poignancy of Atalanta's plight. Parsons adds touches of his own to vary the matter and develop the relevant aspects as appropriate to his context. Thus the father and daughter relationship is widened to incorporate the perspective of the royal dynasty; Schoeneus adds that Atalanta's duty is to the realm as well as to her family, since she must produce a princely heir to the kingdom: 'principem huic debes throno', (*Atalanta* 118).⁷⁸ Parsons replaces Ovid's vocative 'nata' with the masculine accusative plural 'natos', so that Schoeneus' emphasis upon the expected children is now expressed in terms of the cycle of the generations, 'Natos, nepotes'. Sons are also grandsons, and Parsons here highlights the crucial cycle of the generations which keep the dynasty rolling on. This image of continuity and regeneration complements Parsons' use of the term *cursus* as a cyclic metaphor, as demonstrated further below. The introduction of material from the Daphne episode at such a crisis, when Atalanta is in the midst of trying to make decisions which will alter the course of her life, reinforces the dramatic appeal of the moment. It also sets the play's key theme of chastity versus marriage in the context of a larger framework of related stories in the *Metamorphoses*, encouraging the audience to look backwards and forwards through the narrative, making connections. Ovid's rejection of linear teleology in the *Metamorphoses*, embracing instead a complex structure of narrators relating stories within stories, enables the series of interconnected narrative threads to continue their meandering journey through the poem. This flexibility and interconnectedness of the source material is valuable for the St John's dramatists, interested in developing innovations off the beaten track and embedding their work in a sense of continuity of

⁷⁸ Cf. Spenser's politicisation of female sexuality in Book III of the *Faerie Queene*, where the monarch's release from sexual fear is presented as in the kingdom's best interests. Virginity, on the other hand, puts an end to dynasty.

tradition.⁷⁹ Parsons does not intend his *Atalanta* to be interpreted as a self-contained story, and his engagement with the minutiae of Ovid's *verba* is not only a way of ensuring linguistic decorum, but also a strategy for building thematic connections and continuities. Through meticulous handling of the small details he moulds the bigger picture, gently shaping it in his own way; thus his innovations are rooted in tradition and his regeneration of Ovidian language retains significant continuity with its original. His tutors expect his play to cultivate as far as possible 'the puritie and perfection of the Latine tongue',⁸⁰ but also to leave room for demonstration of Parsons' own creative imagination.

From page to stage: Fleshing out the *noua corpora*

Mutatur aer, savius quiddam locus
 Hic ipse solito spirat, aut fallunt mei
 Sensus: et ipse mutor; aut certe locus
 Mutatur iste; utrumque mutatum reor.

(*Atalanta*, 289-2)⁸¹

Awakening from sleep in Act III Scene iii, Hippomenes finds himself in a bewildering situation. The atmosphere, his surroundings, and indeed his very self seem to have undergone some kind of change. Whilst the character may be unable to put his finger on what it may be that is different, the audience, by contrast, are fully in the know, having witnessed Cupid enter the stage and wound Hippomenes while he is sleeping. Indeed, behind the transformative power of love,⁸² the audience glimpses the more fundamental change at work: the transportation of Hippomenes from the world of Ovid's text to the college stage. Here in Parsons' play he finds himself looking about him and

⁷⁹ See below, Chapter 3, pages 183-9, where I discuss the poetics of regeneration in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the use to which this is put by the St John's dramatists in cultivating their college tradition.

⁸⁰ Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius*, xviii.

⁸¹ 'The air has changed, the very place smells sweeter than usual, or my senses play false. And I myself am changed, or at any rate this place is changed; both, I think, have been changed.'

⁸² I note the intriguing affinities with Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c.1595), in which Cupid's bolt is said to have transformed a flower which in turn becomes the catalyst for the action: 'It fell upon a little western flower— / Before, milk-white; now, purple with love's wound: / And maidens call it "love-in-idleness".' (II.i.166-8, Peter Holland (ed.), Shakespeare / *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)). Just as Cupid carries out Venus' plan to make Hippomenes fall in love, so Puck collects the flower for Oberon to use against Titania. The juice from the changed flower carries a metamorphosing power of its own, which, when unleashed upon the characters, alters emotions and motivations to shape the plot of the play.

sensing the change in his surroundings: the place has changed and he has changed with it. As a flesh-and-blood man, he is able to breathe the air that is sweet around him, an experience which he, as the tangible and physical manifestation of Hippomenes standing in the performance space, shares with the audience in front of him. Parsons' emphasis on the senses in this speech and the polyptoton of 'Mutatur ... / mutor ... / Mutatur ... mutatum' signposts the theatrical mutation at work in the *Atalanta*: no longer is our focus on the page, we are now looking at the stage to hear, see, and even smell the actors who perform their speeches. Ovid's literary figures are given new embodiment in physical form, an exciting new interpretation of the motto which opens the *Metamorphoses*: 'In noua fert animus mutatas dicere formas / corpora' (*Met.* I.1-2, my emphasis).⁸³

Thus the adaptation of Ovid's poem for theatrical performance is a metamorphosis all of its own; the text is given life by the dramatist who creates the script and shapes it to be received in a college context, and again by the vocal expression (*pronunciatio*) and bodily movement (*actio*) of the young men who take to the stage and perform it.⁸⁴ Props, set, costumes, physical gesture, tone of voice – in a staged production there are many tools which can be used to convey meaning and these open up opportunities for the seventeenth-century author to change the way the audience will view tales which once belonged to Ovid. Wren and Parsons have both included meticulous stage directions in their scripts, which not only detail exits and entrances, but indicate which characters should enter first in the group, for example at *Phys.* 236, 'intran Achelous et Hercules praeunte Philarcho' (Enter Achelous and Hercules, with Philarchus going before them), and when sounds effects and props should be used, for example, the moment of sounding the trumpet in *Atalanta* Act V Scene v and, in the same scene, Venus' use of the golden apples to distract the princess.

The careful inclusion of detailed instructions which we find in the manuscripts of St John's College plays supports the findings of Palfrey and Stern in their study of Harvard MS Thr. 10.1, which concludes that university members have noticeably different requirements from their

⁸³ 'The spirit brings me to tell of shapes changed into new bodies'.

⁸⁴ There is a possibility that Ovid himself envisioned his work being read out loud, either before private circles of friends, in public contexts, or both. Kenneth Quinn avidly stresses the importance of *recitatio* in Augustan culture for the dissemination of an author's works, in 'The Poet and his Audience in the Augustan Age', in H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1982), 75-180; for a more nuanced discussion, see M. Lowrie, *Writing, Performance, and Authority in Augustan Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. 13-17 and 83ff.

professional counterparts when taking to the stage. Comparison of the four actors' parts preserved in Harvard MS Thr. 10.1 (which come from four different early seventeenth-century plays performed at Christ Church, Oxford) with what has survived of professional scripts from the commercial stage, reveals that the level of instruction given to the amateur players at university through the medium of cued scripts is much greater: full stage directions are regularly provided, cues are significantly longer, and strategies to prevent mistakes are embedded in the text such as instructions to prevent premature speaking or 'over-speaking'.⁸⁵ Carnegie's analysis of the handwriting reveals Thomas Goffe as the scribe of two of the four parts in Harvard MS Thr. 10.1, and he argues that there is significant cross-over between Goffe in the role of author, of scribe, and also of actor of these pieces.⁸⁶

The manuscripts which survive from St John's College plays of the same period do not represent working scripts used by the actors, nor are they work-in-progress drafts of the authors; instead, the pristine layout and inclusion of the formal dedication in each case indicates their function as presentation copies, to be given to the President of the College, either before the performance, during it (see below on symbolic presentations being made to the president during the Wren's *Physiponomachia*), or afterwards as a record of the performance. Here, then, the inclusion of details such as exits and entrances and timing of sound effects is intriguing: were these details simply retained because they were directly copied from working scripts which contained them? Or were the movements of the students on the stage considered so integral to the production that the document record must retain them? There is also a possibility of the presentation's having a dual function, as a prompt book during the performance and the official college record of the production after the event. The one document might reflect, therefore, the simultaneous value of college drama written and performed, continually embedded in a process of page to stage and back to page again.⁸⁷ The topic deserves more consideration than can be given here; we need to consider a wider range of the documents surviving from the college theatres of the universities and tackle the

⁸⁵ Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 24-29 (26).

⁸⁶ David Carnegie, 'The Identification of the Hand of Thomas Goffe, Academic Dramatist and Actor', *The Library*, 26 (1971), 161-5.

⁸⁷ See above, page 129, on the variety of outputs that can be generated from a single play, and footnote 1 on the 'bookishness' which can pervade live performances as well as two-dimensional texts.

challenges of situating their value and function alongside the more well-known body of evidence for professional theatre-making in England.

In the St John's plays based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the process of putting the text of the poem through a transformation into theatrical spectacle is a source of entertainment, and the college dramatists continue to return to it each time a new play is prepared. In the *Physiponomachia*, for example, Wren enjoys cultivating the metatheatrical irony which flows directly from the attempt to expand literary ideas of the imagination into stage embodiment. When, for example, Achelous interrupts the action and leaves the stage, mid-wrestle with Hercules, only to return a moment later sporting a pair of horns on his head, the metamorphosis of the river god into a bull has been effected, much to the outrage and confusion of the other characters whose shocked reaction generates amusement for an audience in the know: 'Where did he get that monstrous head?' asks King Oeneus (*illud vnde monstrosum caput? Phys. 413*). We know exactly where he got it from: both from the text of Ovid's poem, and also from the store-cupboard of props behind the stage.

Now that he is armed with horns as a further weapon to counter Hercules' legendary strength, Achelous is triumphant in his return to the stage, declaring that there is a need for skill and wit ('*arte et ingenio est opus*', *Phys. 410*) to counter-balance brute force, alluding to the Horatian principle which informs the play's metapoetic allegory. When we consider the visual scenario at hand, observing the stage where the actors bring physical life to the story with voice and action, we remember that in seeing the actor playing Achelous, we are seeing the same man who played Anchinoeus at the beginning of the play: this character, the personification of *ingenium*, took on the form of the shaping-shifting river god when he left the allegorical frame and stepped into the play proper. King Oeneus is horrified at the use of 'tricks' ('*dolis*', *Phys. 418*) but Achelous is nonchalant in defending his stratagem, claiming that Oeneus' surprise is in itself surprising: '*Miraris, Oeneu, diis licet semper nouas / Induere formas*' (*Phys. 414-5*, my emphasis).⁸⁸ Wren has neatly tailored this line so that it parodies Ovid's opening to the *Metamorphoses*, drawing our attention to the self-consciousness of his script at the same time as we enjoy the self-

⁸⁸ 'Does it surprise you, Oeneus, that gods are always allowed to put on new forms?'

consciousness of his stagecraft. He has, in effect, achieved the double transformation of Ovid from page to page and page to stage.

Each of the Ovidian plays issuing from St John's has its own examples of this trend, where the challenges of handling the *Metamorphoses* are made into virtues by being morphed into self-referential comedy. Henry Bellamy's composition, discussed further below, raises the humour of embodiment to a new and bold level: his choice of gender-bending material, taken from *Metamorphoses* IX, hints at the topic of lesbianism before presenting the audience with an on-stage sex-change, so that the play results in the marriage of a heterosexual, not a homosexual, couple. In Parsons' *Atalanta*, Ovid's poem actually becomes a physical object on stage, carried on as a prop by the eponymous princess. This visual appearance of the source text at the start of the play, in Act I Scene ii, is the only instance where the words of Ovid's work are left unchanged (*Met.* X.564-6 = *Atalanta* 30-2), a moment of great irony neatly constructed by Parsons, who embeds this direct quotation from the ancient world in the context of Atalanta's frustrated attempts to interpret the oracle of Apollo. She carries the words of *Metamorphoses* Book X with her, inscribed on a scroll, but does not know their meaning.⁸⁹ To every member of the audience, to whom Ovid's words represent the world of the familiar, Atalanta's ignorance is as comical as it is poignant, for she is a teenager at a cross-roads in her life, unable to decide whether destiny wills her to marry or stay as she is. Ovid's verses, scribbled, studied and misunderstood by the floundering maiden, offer a symbolic reminder of the daunting textual encounter that was once an everyday classroom experience for those in the audience as boys, but now handled with confidence by university scholars. Discovering ways to embody Ovid's text on the stage was evidently a challenge which greatly appealed to the students of St John's. Each student who adapted the *Metamorphoses* for the stage self-consciously referenced the theatricalisation process for comedy value and, in doing so, found his own way of contributing to the college's 'house style'.

⁸⁹ I discuss the way in which Parsons presents this direct quotation in greater detail at the beginning of the next chapter.

Plenty on show: Christopher Wren's cornucopia

Wren's use of the *cornucopia* provides an interesting case study, since it functions as both onstage prop and metaphorical symbol of abundance – the *copia verborum* of Wren, in fact. As demonstrated above, Wren's use of allegory in the *Physiponomachia* enhances the play with a notable self-reflexivity, drawing attention to the author and the activity of composition. In this enterprise, the audience members are more than passive recipients of the entertainment provided; they are required to play an active role as the witnesses to Wren's artistry ('testes', *Phys.* 9). Inviting them to speculate upon his achievements and exercise fair judgement in assessing his play, 'Spectetis æqui, iudicetis candidi' (35),⁹⁰ Wren uses this set-up to make self-conscious jokes about the display of talent and skills before his judges. Thus, when Hercules tears off one of Achelous' horns and the defeated river-god promises him a *cornucopia* should he return it, he fashions his character's words to have a pleasingly ironic double meaning: 'Omni reffectum copia cornu dabo' (429).⁹¹ Achelous is unaware of the full significance of what he is saying, especially in his use of *copia*, which sends the audience a signal that the author crafting the script wishes them to note his eloquence and fluency in Latin.

The concept of *copia* or 'abundance of eloquence' is a term which Renaissance literary theorists inherited from Classical pedagogic treatises such as Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*. Quintilian emphasised the importance of the student acquiring verbal 'wealth' or 'capital', 'ei velut opes sint quaedam parandae, quibus uti ubicumque desideratum erit possit' (*Inst. Or.* X.i.5), and he clarified his use of this metaphor by adding 'Eae constant copia rerum ac verborum' (X.i.6).⁹² This latter phrase was made ubiquitous in the early modern period by Erasmus' quotation of it in the title of his publication *De duplici copia rerum ac verborum commentarii duo* (1512), a work which brought the study of Quintilian into classrooms right across Europe. As used by Erasmus, the term *copia* encompasses the meaning of several English words: variation, abundance, richness, and eloquence. It was argued that by cultivating and building up *copia verborum* a student could

⁹⁰ 'May you look on with an open mind, may you judge honestly'.

⁹¹ 'I shall give you a horn of plenty restocked with everything'.

⁹² 'some capital, as it were, should be made in readiness, on which he can draw whenever it is required'. 'This means a stock of ideas and of words.' (Quotations from the Latin text follow Donald A. Russell (ed.), Quintilian, *The orator's education* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001)).

develop facility of expression and fluency. Parsons' method of textual recycling, described above, is partly based upon this principle, relying as it does on his store-house of poetical phrase, his 'opes' as Quintilian puts it.⁹³ Brinsley, writing shortly after Wren, instructs the readers of his manual, 'to furnish with copie of Poeticall phrase, out of Ovid, Virgil, and other the best Poets',⁹⁴ and here in the *Physiponomachia* we see Wren challenging the principle of *copia* whilst simultaneously demonstrating his own mastery of it.

Having suffered the ignominy of having one of his horns ripped away by Hercules, Achelous retrieves it from his rival by promising that he will return with the horn once it has been 'refurnished with everything' ('Omni reffectum'). This phrase, with its pointed use of *reficio* (*re/facio*), captures the sense of Wren renewing and replenishing Ovid's story by restocking it with his own *copia*. When Achelous returns to the stage, in Scene X, he is carrying not just a horn but a horn of plenty, since it has now been filled with fruit and flowers, and he discourses on the power of this object as a source of instant abundance, able to produce whatever you want as soon as you want it: 'quicquid optari potest / Subito virescit' (*Phys.* 529-30). As he describes the riches of the *cornucopia*'s bounty, the very description itself becomes fulsome and abundant to echo its subject: 'Liberi donum patris; / Cereale fruges munus; Autumni dapes; / Et sertæ Floræ', ending with the lyrical sentence 'sic mouet gustum sapor / Odorque nares; et color visum iuvat' (*Phys.* 532-3).⁹⁵

This tactical deployment of language advertises to the audience that Wren is offering them a feast for the senses - sight, touch, smell, and taste (and, of course, our ears do not miss out either). Adapting Ovid's phrase 'odore flore' from its equivalent narrative moment in the *Metamorphoses* (IX.87), Wren chooses to juxtapose 'odor' (scent) and 'nares' (noses) in a manner which may purposefully allude to the effusive speech of that most verbose of pedants, Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost*, (c.1596) where he recommends Ovid for his elegancy, facility, and golden cadence:

Ovidius Naso was the man; and why indeed 'Naso', but
for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the

⁹³ As Terence Cave points out, *copia* originates from *co/ops*, and therefore Quintilian's use of *opes* in this context reflects the etymological as well as the thematic link between the two (*The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 3).

⁹⁴ Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius*, xvi.

⁹⁵ 'the gift of Father Bacchus, Ceres' gift of crops, the feasts of Autumn, and the garlands of Flora'; 'thus the flavour excites our tastebuds, the scent our noses, and colour delights us when we look up it'.

jerks of invention?

(Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV.ii.123-5)⁹⁶

Shakespeare's own debt to Ovid has been well-documented⁹⁷ and would have been appreciated by Wren's audience as part of the joke, the dramatist asserting his presence in the play as the wordsmith who, like Shakespeare, and Ovid before him, is the man responsible for crafting the elegant speech of his characters ('the odoriferous flowers of fancy') and amusing the audience with his wit ('the jerks of invention').

When we look deeper into Ovid's invention of the Achelous-Hercules episode in *Metamorphoses* IX, noting his parody of epic, and of *Aeneid* XII in particular, this informs our understanding of Wren's reinvention of his source in turn. Karl Galinsky has demonstrated how Virgil's narrative of Turnus and Aeneas battling over Lavinia provided Ovid with a paradigm for Hercules and Achelous wrestling for Deianira; he draws our attention to Ovid's adaptation of the simile in which Aeneas and Turnus are compared to two contending bulls (*Aeneid* XII .716-24), arguing that Ovid's metamorphosis of Achelous into a bull is intended as a comic parody of Virgil's composition. When, therefore, one of Achelous' horns is broken off and morphed into a horn of plenty, Galinsky reads this as a comic travesty of Virgil's simile: '[t]he transformation of this horn into a cornucopia merely completes the trivialization of the event.'⁹⁸

Wren's theatricalisation of Ovid's verses, reworked and expanded into a short play of 585 lines, depends upon the fact that his model is already a hotbed of irony and intertextuality, wrestling with its forebears to alter their works into new forms (*mutatae formae*). His arena is the college stage, where he can transform text on the page into live performance and convert his audience's knowledge of classical texts into both entertainment and academic display. Ovid's penchant for irony and genre-bending poetics draws attention to the figure of the poet in the work, a metapoetic approach which is attractive to Wren and the other student dramatists after him,

⁹⁶ H.R. Woudhuysen (ed.), *Shakespeare / Love's Labour's Lost* (Walton-on-Thames: Nelson, 1998).

⁹⁷ Not least by Baldwin in *William Shakspeare's small Latine & lesse Greeke*, by Keach in *Elizabethan erotic narratives*, and by J. Bate in *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). Two twenty-first-century essay collections provide a range of fruitful studies in this area: A.B. Taylor (ed.), *Shakespeare's Ovid: The Metamorphoses in the Plays and Poems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and C. Martindale and A.B. Taylor (eds.), *Shakespeare and the Classics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Colin Burrow's recent chapter on Ovid in his *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) testifies to the enduring interest in this topic.

⁹⁸ Karl Galinsky, 'Hercules Ovidianus (*Metamorphoses* IX.1-272)', in *Wiener Studien* 85 (1972), 97.

facilitating their assertion of talent and skill in front of their peers. When Achelous returns to the stage in the final scene of the *Physiponomachia*, holding the horn of plenty in front of him, the audience is presented with the joke that the physicalisation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* on stage has been accomplished by Wren through this symbolic prop, which is to be interpreted as a verbal feast as well as a visual one. As Colin Burrow says of Shakespeare's method in *The Winter's Tale* (c.1611), so we might equally say of Wren in the *Physiponomachia*, together with other dramatists in the St John's tradition: 'He transforms Ovid's literary self-consciousness into theatrical self-consciousness'.⁹⁹

The arrival of the cornucopia is the moment chosen by King Oeneus to announce the start of the wedding celebrations for Hercules and Deianira: 'tandem nouis / Celebremus ipsum conuenit feriis diem.' (*Phys.* 512-3).¹⁰⁰ The King calls on the gods to furnish the banquet with plenty: 'Secundet epulas copia, et pateros mero / Bacchus coronet, ornet et mensas Ceres' (*Phys.* 534-5).¹⁰¹ The use of *copia* here as a free-standing word, without adjective or 'cornu' to qualify it, focuses our attention upon the word as a technical term taken from rhetorical discourse. At the same time, the fact that the noun is given active control of its verb suggests a personification, *Copia*, in line with Ovid's formulation of Achelous' boast, that the bounteous goddess Plenty grows rich with his horn: 'divesque meo Bona Copia cornu est' (*Metamorphoses* IX.88).¹⁰² I note that Golding renders Ovid's 'Bona Copia' into English in his influential translation of 1567 as 'the Tresory of plenteousnesse',¹⁰³ an idea which in Wren's hands, transported into the world of college theatre, has been extended into a physical presentation of the well-stocked eloquence, the *cornucopia*, which he offers his scholarly audience.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Colin Burrow, 'Re-embodiment Ovid: Renaissance afterlives', in Philip Hardie (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to Ovid* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002), 310.

¹⁰⁰ 'finally let us celebrate with novel festivals that the very day has come.'

¹⁰¹ 'Let plenty favour our banquets and Bacchus crown our dishes with undiluted wine, and let Ceres stock our tables.'

¹⁰² In his edition of the play, D.F. Sutton chooses to capitalise the word 'Copia', emphasising it as a personification, in *Christopher Wren, Sr., Physiponomachia (ca. 1610). A hypertext critical edition* (9 July 2001): <<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/wren/>> (accessed November 2010). The letter 'c' is written in lower case in the manuscript itself.

¹⁰³ Golding, IX.103, in W.H.D. Rouse (ed.), *Shakespeare's Ovid, being Arthur Golding's translation of the Metamorphoses* (London, 1904).

¹⁰⁴ We may compare Wren's presentation of the verbal feast with *Love's Labour's Lost* again here, where Shakespeare shows the same interest in portraying scholarly learning and the consumption of words as nourishment; see, for example, Nathaniel's explanation to Holofernes that Dull has never been to school:

Yet Wren's transformation of the *cornucopia* motif into a self-reflexive pun on *copia* does not end there. In the epilogue, the allegorical frame is brought to fruition when Philoponus, the personification of industry, expresses the outcome of the play as a synthesis of mythology and academic allegory: 'Est Deianiram nactus Alcides suam; / Scientiamque iam suam labor obtinet' (*Phys.* 580-1): just as Hercules has obtained his Deianira, so too does hard work gain its reward. In this case, the reward is *scientia*, knowledge or learning, the goal of every student and tutor in the audience. Anchinoeus criticises Philoponus as an insensitive bookworm ('dure librorum helluo', *Phys.* 560), a glutton who stores up endless amounts of learning and does not share it, pleasing only himself. Philoponus' response is to walk over to the audience, carrying the *cornucopia* in his arms, and declare that he is dedicating this object to his true father ('Vere parenti', *Phys.* 593). Who might this 'true father' of Philoponus be? Wren draws out the intrigue of the moment with some banter exchanged between Philoponus and Anchinoeus, and then we hear Philoponus reiterate his intention to dedicate the horn as follows:

Cornu dicauit, victor Alcides, suo
 Meoque victor, hoc, ego cornu patri:
 Sumat tua manus hoc sacrificium Ioui.
 (*Phys.* 598-600)¹⁰⁵

Philoponus reminds us that this very same horn (i.e. the same prop) was actually dedicated by Hercules to his father, Jupiter, in the main narrative, drawing comic irony from the fact that the same actor who played Philoponus then took on the role of Hercules: the abstraction of *labor* became the mythological hero famous for the stories of his labours.

Here in the epilogue Philoponus renews the act of dedicating the horn, but performs it in a different space, moving from the stage into the arena of the audience, where he singles out a member of the audience and asks him to accept the gift of the *cornucopia* into his hand ('Sumat tua manus'). Who are we to identify as the recipient here? Surely Sutton is right in suggesting that this is Buckeridge, the President of St John's College, to whom the play is dedicated.¹⁰⁶ This

¹⁰⁴ 'Sir, he hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book. / He hath not eat paper, as it were; he hath not drunk ink' (*Love's Labour's Lost*, IV.ii.24-5).

¹⁰⁵ 'Victorious Hercules dedicated the horn to his father, and I, in my victory, dedicate this horn to mine: let your hand accept this sacrifice to Jove.'

¹⁰⁶ D.F. Sutton, Introduction to *Wren, Sr.*, *Physiponomachia*.

presentation of the *cornucopia* in the epilogue would therefore function as a formal renewal of that dedication at the beginning, though it now brings with it the important nuances gained during the course of the play. For the *cornucopia*, as we have seen, represents the abundance of eloquence and the author's wit in putting his hard-won *copia verborum* to use. Just as the bull's horn of Achelous was metamorphosed into a horn of plenty, so that horn of plenty has now become the symbol of all that the play can offer. As the visual emblem of the text of the *Physiponomachia*, it is presented to the President in his role as head of the college in order to signify the poet offering up the fruits of his labours to the academic community. The likelihood that the play was performed in the dining hall of the college gives the concept of the verbal feast of *copia* a particularly pertinent irony.¹⁰⁷

That it was a particular tradition at St John's to identify the president of the college as the 'Jupiter' of his establishment is reflected in the college's 1602 production of *A Twelfth Night Merriment* (anon.), in which the college porter addresses the president as 'magne sacerdos' (mighty priest) at the end of the performance. He then draws a parallel between the porter's responsibility to police the gates to St John's and the president's responsibility to police the morals of that community: 'I am heere the jaylor, the Janus, the janitor; you are the judge, the justice, the Jupiter, to this miserable companye'.¹⁰⁸ Wren's presentation of the cornucopia to President Buckeridge in the audience involves a physical transgression of the notional boundary between the world of the play and the world of college life. Yet, because Wren's play is so far embedded in the culture of scholarly endeavour and provides overt self-reflexive commentary on the pedagogical experience of university men, the barrier between actors and audience is not as great as it might be. We might compare this phenomenon with the practice of masques and other court entertainments, where the finale sometimes involved the presentation of a symbolic gift to the host or patron presiding over

¹⁰⁷ As argued by David Greenwood in 'The Staging of Neo-Latin Plays in Sixteenth Century England', *Educational Theatre Journal*, 16 (1964), 311-323: 'The majority of performances of these plays almost certainly took place in the college dining halls.' (311). A.H. Nelson concurs in his discussion of the college stages at Cambridge: *Early Cambridge theatres: college, university, and town stages, 1464-1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5.

¹⁰⁸ Margaret Lee (ed.), *Narcissus: a Twelfth Night merriment / played by youths of the parish at the College of S. John the Baptist in Oxford, A.D. 1602; now first edited from a Bodleian MS* (London: D. Nutt, 1893), 33. Perhaps Wren was also influenced by Ovid's other version of the *cornucopia* story, which appears in the *Fasti* in the entry for the Kalends of May (V.111ff.). Here Ovid follows the tradition that the horn came from a goat and that her owner, the nymph Amalthea, transformed it into a *cornucopia* and presented it to Jove: 'sustulit hoc nympe cinxitque recentibus herbis, / et plenum pomis ad Iovis ora tulit' (*Fasti* V.123-4; all *Fasti* quotations follow E.H. Alton, D.E.W. Wormell, and E. Courtney (eds.), *P. Ovidi Nasonis Fastorum libri sex* (Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1997)). 'The nymph picked it up, wrapped it in fresh herbs, and carried it, full of fruit, to the lips of Jove'.

the entertainment, and where the watching audience often became physically integrated in the revels.¹⁰⁹

In the case of *Atalanta* by Wren's contemporary, Philip Parsons, the prologue suggests that a similar physical presentation may have been made at the beginning of the play, this time to Buckeridge's successor, President Laud.¹¹⁰ Parsons draws attention to the President holding in his hands 'the Muse, my token of loyalty' ('En manibus Musam, pignora nostra, tuis', Prologue, line 15), where his muse stands for the play itself. Is this purely metaphorical, in that *Atalanta*'s fate lies in Laud's hands as chief judge? Or is this also a reference to the act of presenting the play to him as dedicatee, when a neat presentation copy of Wren's work was handed over? This is the format in which the play survives today: British Museum MS Harleian 6924, whilst not particularly ornate, is certainly neat and prepared with care. It closely resembles the manuscript containing Wren's *Physiponomachia*, Bodleian Library MS 30 (quarto size; vellum; brown ink; writing area set out in red), though it is not possible to compare the bindings since the *Atalanta* MS was rebound in the nineteenth century when it became part of the Harleian collection. Further investigation is needed, but from the evidence of these manuscripts, together with the internal evidence of the plays, it seems likely that there was a tradition at St John's of writing up the plays as presentation copies to be given to the President either at or after the performance.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ See Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965) on the metatheatricality of the masque form: 'It attempted from the beginning to breach the barrier between spectators and actors, so that in effect the viewer became part of the spectacle. The end toward which the masque moved was to destroy any sense of theater and to include the whole court in the mimesis – in a sense, what the spectator watched he ultimately became.' (6-7). On the collapsing of theatrical boundaries also see H. Cooper, 'Location and meaning in masque, morality and royal entertainment' in David Lindley (ed.) *The Court Masque* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 135-48: 'it is crucial to the masque that there should be no sharp imaginative division between the audience and the acting area. The masquers come down to dance with members of the audience, and they can do so partly because they belong to the same social world as the spectators' (136).

¹¹⁰ The culture of ritual dedication to the president of the college is discussed further in Chapter 4 with reference to other plays in the St John's series.

¹¹¹ We may compare the tradition of the Westminster School Latin play, which included the custom of presenting Queen Elizabeth with a manuscript copy of the Latin text on the occasions when she attended the event. John D. Carleton argues that the motivation behind this was more to do with strategies of etiquette than practicality: 'Queen Elizabeth I [...] was an accomplished scholar, and the copy of the *Miles Gloriosus* with which she was presented in 1564 must have been intended rather as a compliment than as an actual aid in following the Latin.' (John D. Carleton, *Westminster School: A History* (London: R. Hart-Davis, revised ed., 1965), 151). At the school's production of *Sapientia Solomonis* the following year the phenomenon is repeated and undertaken with not a little care: 'Copies of the play seem to have been written out in manuscript and presented to the Queen and the principal visitors [...] two shillings more was spent on binding the Queen's copy in vellum and decorating it with the Royal Arms and with silk ribbon strings.' (Carleton, *Westminster School: A History*, 148).

Finding the man in Henry Bellamy's *Iphis*

Like Christopher Wren, Henry Bellamy chooses a story from Book IX of the *Metamorphoses* for adaptation into a college play. However, unlike Wren, it is not staging the shape-changing antics of a river-god which presents Bellamy with his challenge, but the stagecraft of a comedy of gender confusion and gender-change using an all-male cast. The practise of cross-dressing was one of the controversial elements which had long fuelled objections to university drama, most famously in the case of John Rainolds' opposition to William Gager's staging of plays at Christ Church.¹¹² Rainolds was afraid, for example, that the vision of young men in female garb would inspire sexual feelings amongst the spectators: 'what sparkles of lust to that vice the putting of wemens attire on men may kindle in vncleane affections, as *Nero* shewed in *Sporus*, *Heliogabalus* in him selfe'.¹¹³ The play *Iphis* at St John's is thus particularly interesting, because Bellamy's choice of story forces him to grapple with issues of a sensitive nature. He does not follow Ovid in giving Iphis an extended soliloquy in which she can discourse on the vexations and self-loathing she feels as a result of her love for the girl Ianthe (*Metamorphoses* IX.726-63); as Sutton has already noted, in Bellamy's version, 'Iphis' psychological reaction to her lesbianism is merely to remark on her uniqueness and to predict that the gods have some strange fate in store for her.'¹¹⁴

Bellamy does, however, use the tool of transvestism to effect dramatic impact, handling cross-dressing surprises with an imaginative sense of irony and humour. For example, having introduced Nisus into the story as an alternative, male suitor for Ianthe (a rival to the girl Iphis), he engineers the moment of Nisus' attempted kiss; when Nisus leans forward to meet the face of the person he thinks is the girl Ianthe, he is in fact about to kiss Iphis, who at that moment is pretending to be Ianthe. There is a further complication here, which Bellamy inherits from the mythological tradition: Iphis had been brought up to wear boy's clothes ever since she was born, in order to prevent her father carrying out his promise to kill his child if she turned out to be a girl. The fact that Nisus therefore encounters Iphis in male dress, even though she is pretending to be the girl

¹¹² J.W. Binns' study of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century attitudes to cross-dressing and the Gager-Rainolds debate concerning the university stage remains invaluable: 'Women or Transvestites on the Elizabethan Stage?: An Oxford Controversy', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 5 (1974), 95-120.

¹¹³ John Rainolds, *Th' Overthrow of Stage-Playes, By the way of controversie betwixt D. Gager and D. Rainoldes* (Middelburg: R. Schilders, 1599), 10.

¹¹⁴ D.F. Sutton, Introduction to *Henry Bellamy, Iphis (ca. 1625). A hypertext critical edition* (revised ed., 31 May 2011): <<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/iphis/>> (accessed November 2011).

Ianthe, makes this a delightfully awkward encounter, and Nisus' puzzled question about the boys' clothes has to be hastily excused away by the mother Telethusa (who is acting as Iphis' accomplice in the intrigue). Interestingly, Nisus is not initially put off by this complication of the boys' clothes and responds 'Suavium liceat dare / Tibi, nympha.' (831-2).¹¹⁵ ¹¹⁶ As Sutton has pointed out, Iphis' attempt to woo Nisus may owe something to Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, capitalising on the homoerotic intrigue of women dressed in boys' clothes.¹¹⁷ Cross-dressing confusion is certainly an important source of comedy in this play, but it is worth noting that any hints and suggestions of the erotic are never allowed to become more than a brief flirtation with a comical trope. The moment Nisus realises that he is about to kiss Iphis, he is disgusted and jumps away.

We may contrast this approach with the more salacious comedy performed by the students of Trinity College, Cambridge on 12 March 1616 before King James at his hunting lodge in Royston. *Susenbrotus* (or *Fortunia*) is a satire strongly rooted in the traditions of Roman comedy, but the predictable qualities of a plot based on the pursuit of a girl of marriageable age are overturned at an early stage in the play by the revelation that Fortunia, the girl with whom everyone is in love, is in fact no girl at all. When Fortunia (in fact, Marius) is reunited with his father at the end of the play, he is now free to enjoy male bonding with his friend, the *adulescens* Mercanario. Here, then, the homoeroticism of cross-dressing, not confined to a single moment of suggestive comedy, as in the *Iphis*, continually dominates the stage in the form of the desirable transvestite boy to whom every male character in the play feels an attraction. Moreover, the *Iphis* steers clear of the explicit sexual metaphors which are a notable feature of *Susenbrotus*, where grammatical terms, for example, are used as a mode of sexual communication.¹¹⁸

Despite the obvious potential for Bellamy to use Ovid's predilection for the erotic to titillate his audience, and despite the success of the precedents of Shakespeare and Marlowe in

¹¹⁵ All quotations from Bellamy's *Iphis* follow the text of Bodleian Library MS Lat. Misc. e.17, and the line numbers given are those assigned to the facsimile of the manuscript by Bernfried Nugel, in Henry Bellamy / *Iphis*; Joseph Crowther / *Cephalus et Procris*, in *Renaissance Latin Drama in England*, I.10 (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1982).

¹¹⁶ 'Nymph, let me give you a kiss.'

¹¹⁷ D.F. Sutton, Introduction to Bellamy, *Iphis*.

¹¹⁸ See Connie McQuillen, *A Comedy Called Susenbrotus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1997), 24-5.

doing just that, the dramatic adaptations of the *Metamorphoses* at St John's investigate masculinity and masculine identity from quite a different perspective. Bellamy explores the idea of 'what makes a man a man' from the viewpoint of the scholars who make up the cast and the audience for his play. The college community's appreciation of academic modes of humour and the closed nature of the audience allows Bellamy certain liberties in making fun of the idea that men have to be physically strong, fast, or fans of wrestling, to be men. The cross-dressed protagonist, whose femininity is a source of disappointment to those who judge him-her against the stereotypes of masculine strength, is a sympathetic and complex figure, and the ambiguities of gender produce humorous surprises which poke fun at the more one-dimensional characters' assumptions. When, in Act III Scene iv, we have our first glimpse of Iphis since s/he was a baby, we are confronted with a teenager who does not fit in, but whose awkwardness is created by the mismatched expectations of those around her/him and the attempts to bring him/her into line with what is deemed normal manly behaviour. Now that Iphis is of marriageable age, her qualities and talents of mind and body have surfaced, and her exasperated tutor finds himself dealing with a rather special pupil whom he simply does not know how to teach. When Iphis asks the *magister*, 'Quid nobis times?' (528) ('Why do you fear for me?'), he answers, 'Quod nil virile, nil sapis validum.' (530) ('Because you have a taste for nothing manly, nothing strong'). He goes on to complain that 'it ought to be cliffs and sea you conquer in your course' ('rupes, fretum / Superare cursu te decet.', 531-2), and here we may detect a nod to the metaphorical use of the term *cursus* as 'course of studies' which we also see employed by Parsons in his *Atalanta*, as discussed in Chapter 4.

In reply, Iphis puts across a different point of view with an appealing sense of teenage rebellion, reminding the *magister* that even Achilles liked to play the lute, and that the goddess Minerva may have the title of 'bellatrix' (535), but she still does her needlework. The father's criticism of the tutor in the next scene opens the way for some humorous exploration of Iphis' school history; feeling compelled to defend his teaching record, the tutor recounts numerous occasions on which he tried to build up his pupil's range of physical skills. The scenarios he describes, where he has clearly mismatched Iphis' range of abilities and interests with a string of outdoor adventures, has a distinctly comical edge when we consider that Bellamy is presenting this to an audience of academic-minded tutors and their supposedly bookworm undergraduates; like

Iphis, they would not be the most obvious enthusiasts for rock climbing, water sports, or wrestling either. I disagree with Sutton when he claims that ‘nothing in the play is calculated to be funny or to elicit laughter from the audience’;¹¹⁹ the Iphis seems perfectly calculated to entertain a scholarly audience with imaginative comic situations which would appeal to them particularly. For example, when we hear the *magister* describe taking Iphis on a visit to the gladiatorial ring, where they encountered an arena that was red with human blood, (‘hominum rubram / Cruore arenam.’, 577-8), he complains that Iphis rebelled and took off the armour which had been put on her-him: ‘Aptata membris arma deposuit’ (579); this line references the sentiment often expressed in academic writing, that a university man wears his toga (i.e. his gown) instead of arms. The Ciceronian tag ‘cedant arma togae’ (let arms give way to the toga)¹²⁰ is regularly found interwoven into academic plays of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, from Forsett’s *Pedantius* of 1581 (printed 1631) to Wilde’s *Eumorphus* of 1635, expressing the status of the peaceful scholar who, devoted to higher things, stands aloof from the workaday battles of kings and townspeople.¹²¹ The tutor’s fears prove groundless in Bellamy’s play, for his pupil Iphis is no failure, but wins both the sympathy of the audience and the love of the girl Ianthe without ever having proved a love of the outdoors or of so-called ‘manly’ pursuits. By the time s/he goes through the physical change to become a man, an event which occurs just before the end of the play, s/he has been loved by Ianthe for some considerable time (by Act IV Scene vi, Ianthe is already referring to their mutual love of one another as ‘priscos ... / amores’, ‘our old love’, 882-3), so that it is not the sex-change itself which makes it possible for Iphis to be lovable. In the happy ending to this comedy, it is Iphis and not the other suitor who gets the girl, for all of Nisus’ blustering confidence and his other ‘manly’ qualities. Telethusa comments on Nisus’ warlike behaviour in Act IV Scene v, remarking that he is like a brave stallion who stomps about scattering his enemy (*Iphis*, 853-4); here, as elsewhere in the play, the admiration for ‘manliness’ is undercut (by the fact that Nisus is a horse here). Bellamy’s creation of the character Nisus is an innovation which provides a foil for Iphis’ behavior and

¹¹⁹ D.F. Sutton, Introduction to Bellamy, *Iphis*.

¹²⁰ Cicero, *De Officiis* Book I.xxii.77 (taken from his own poem *Consulatus Suus*).

¹²¹ Pedantius does a delightfully incompetent job of teaching his pupil Parillus in Act V Scene ii of Forsett’s play, attempting to draw out lessons from the Ciceronian text he has chosen whilst being comically oblivious to the fun which Parillus is having at his expense. In Wilde’s *Eumorphus sive Cupido Adultus*, the tag is appropriated by the absurd *miles gloriosus* character Polymachaeroplacides, when he accepts defeat at the end of the play. A detailed study of Wilde’s work is given in Chapter 4.

character traits, for Nisus' attempts to act as the more suitable suitor, his relative lack of sympathy from the audience, and Ianthe's obvious preference for Iphis, throws the normative pattern of 'boy meets girl' and 'boy gets girl' into delightful confusion.

The resolution of this comic chaos is that, in fact, girl gets girl, and yet this is not how the story ends. Iphis has won her bride, but her transformation into a man takes place just before the wedding, just in time to secure a heterosexual union in place of a lesbian one. Becoming a man is, on the one hand, a miraculous metamorphosis which forms part of the fantasy appeal of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but in the context of the college play performed by students, it is also representative of the rite of passage which Iphis experiences: when it comes to the moment of getting married, it is time to become a man and become a husband. The physical change of Iphis into a man at the end of the play takes place on the stage and brings the whole engendered construct crashing down, when the male actor playing the character of Iphis removes his womanly wig and shows the man he really is. This key moment is constructed with considerable skill by Bellamy, who makes a virtue of the challenge of physicalising on stage the metamorphosis found in Ovid's poem. Act V Scene iv is the moment when Iphis morphs into a man, and whilst the friendly influence of the goddess Isis provides the auspices for the change, as in Ovid's poem, the main focus falls on the actor taking control of his body to reveal himself beneath his feminine accoutrements. As he lets go of the wig, crying out that his long hair is dropping from his head and slipping to the floor, he emphasises that it is with his own hands that he effects the sex-change and becomes a man:

Iphis: Et tota mutor. Ecquis invitas manus
Abolere formam frontis ignavam iubet?
Valeatis ergo pristini vultus tricae:
Rugas viriles, hispidam frontem cape

(Bellamy, *Iphis*, 1113-6)¹²²

This play is full of interest for scholars investigating the treatment of gender in English Renaissance drama, and yet it has been overlooked, even in the recent book-length study by

¹²² 'And now I am wholly changed. Someone bids my unwilling hands to rid my face of its idle beauty? So farewell, trifles of my former appearance, receive manly furrows, a rugged brow.'

Christopher Marlow, with its promising title ‘Performing Masculinity in English University Drama’.¹²³ The phenomenon of cross-dressing on the university stage may sometimes have involved playing with the comedy of homoeroticism and its potential to titillate, as scholars have pointed out in relation to the professional boys’ companies. Yet there is something more interestingly self-referential about the approach taken in the plays at St John’s, which concerns itself with expressing transformations from youth into maturity, pointing to the role of drama as a rite of passage for those who perform it. Bellamy emphasises this when he constructs his dedication of the play to President Juxon around the idea of shaking off womanly fears to become a man:

Fæmineum metum cum sexu suo noster Iphis deposuit,
et hoc novæ sibi assumpsit audaciæ, quod tibi (ornatissime
musarum mysta) se audeat offerre.

(Bellamy, *Iphis*, dedication, 5-7)¹²⁴

In summoning the courage to present his work to President Juxon in writing and/or to an audience of fellow scholars when it is performed, Bellamy is opening himself up to the judgement of the academic community. The college stage is a platform on which students can prove themselves, as authors and/or actors, and we may draw a parallel between Bellamy use of ‘audaciæ’ here in the prologue to *Iphis* and the ‘audacity’ which James Whitelocke remembered learning from Mulcaster at the Merchant Taylors’ School, when the headmaster had him act in plays before the court.¹²⁵ Clearly the culture of school drama feeds through into the culture of college drama, as part of the pedagogical framework wherein students were required to take the opportunity to improve their rhetorical skills. Gager’s defence of university drama at Oxford, writing in 1592 in response to Rainolds’ criticism, had argued that plays were a way to ‘embolden’ young scholars and ‘try what mettle is in every one’, and, with reference to Cambridge, Thomas Heywood expressed the same notion, describing a culture wherein performance in plays was

¹²³ Christopher Marlow, *Performing Masculinity in English University Drama, 1598-1636* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013). Marlow’s study sets out to demonstrate the ‘range of versions of maleness performed by university students’ (16), and while it offers examples of playwrights dramatising themes of male friendship and rivalry, the physical representation of gender on the university stage is neglected, as is any play not written in English, giving a curiously misrepresentative picture of drama at the universities.

¹²⁴ ‘My Iphis has set aside his womanly fear along with his sex, and has adopted enough new boldness that he dares to offer himself to you, most reverend priest of the Muses’.

¹²⁵ See the quotation from Whitelocke on page 22.

deemed ‘necessary for the emboldening of their Iunior schollers, to arme them with audacity, against they come to bee employed in any publicke exercise.’¹²⁶ It is significant that Heywood chooses here to emphasise that the act of taking to the stage is a particularly symbolic threshold for the younger, newer members to cross: ‘It teacheth audacity to the bashfull Grammarian, beeing newly admitted into the priuate Colledge, and after matriculated and entred as a member of the Vniversity’.¹²⁷ The role of the college play as a rite of passage is clearly an important phenomenon, connected with the idea of proving oneself and gaining the respect of the other members of the community, and I will return to this topic in the following chapter, where I present the argument that there is an influential relationship between the act of writing or performing in college plays and the distribution of patronage and employment opportunities.

Inspiring the college tradition: Gwinne had set the scene for his younger followers

Matthew Gwinne’s play *Vertumnus sive Annus recurrens* dramatised the four phases of human life in tandem with the four seasons of nature, and was praised by Isaac Wake (not an unbiased judge) as ‘worthy indeed of lasting for the cycle of a whole year’.¹²⁸ As argued at the start of Chapter 2, Gwinne’s approach to writing this play in 1605, which was created for presentation in Christ Church dining hall before the King, contrasted heavily with Samuel Daniel’s approach in his *Arcadia Reformed*, performed for the Queen the following day in the same venue. Though formulated as a comedy with jokes and a happy ending, *Vertumnus* was intended to do more than amuse: it flexed academic muscle and prioritised the forceful weight of instructive allegory over court fashion. Like William Strode’s *The Floating Island* in 1636, this strongly allegorical approach contributed to the failure of the play as a live entertainment, but the legacy of Gwinne’s play was greater than its one performance: it lived on in the memory of the college community of St John’s, proud that their students had acted before the monarch, and it also lived on in published form, with younger students at St John’s keeping printed copies of the work.¹²⁹ Did Gwinne’s

¹²⁶ On Gager’s words in his letter to John Rainolds, see page 124; Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London, 1612), sig. C3v.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

¹²⁸ ‘Digna quidem quæ toto vertente anno duraret’ (*Rex platonicus*, sig. P1r).

¹²⁹ On the failure of Strode’s play, see Chapter 4. See Chapter 2, pages 85-6 for the example of John English, who kept copies of Gwinne’s plays. English, as Lord Chief Justice of the Christmas revels of 1607-8,

choice of subject, the growing up of youth into man, together with his overtly conscious rewriting of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, influence the development of theatrical tradition at St John's along these lines?

The *Vertumnus* draws on the framework of the Hippocratic and Galenic pathology of the four humours for its *dramatis personae*, presenting the characters of Eutrapelus (the Sanguine), Picrocholus (the Choleric), Phantasticus (the Melancholy), and Gastrimargus (the Phlegmatic). Each of these four humour characters is associated with one of the four seasons, spring, summer, autumn, and winter, and they take it in turns to introduce an act of the play with a speech on the subject of their season (this comprises Acts II to V of the play, since the first act functions as a prologue). This structure of the acts underpins and augments the teleological progression of the main narrative thread, which charts the development of man (represented by Microcosmus the protagonist) through life in four stages: child, young man, adult, old man.

As a play of humours, *Vertumnus* engages with the recent trends brought centre stage by Ben Jonson's comedies of the late 1590s and early 1600s, but, more importantly, with other university plays which are close contemporaries, such as Thomas Tomkis' *Lingua, or, The combat of the tongue, and the five senses for superiority* from Trinity College, Cambridge, first published in 1607. Sarah Knight's discussion of this play together with the Cambridge Parnassus trilogy illuminates the importance of humours psychology to academic drama at this time, with university playwrights exploring such themes as 'the damaging side-effects of an overactive mind' and 'the scholar's gradual moral decay and the ultimate prostitution of his learning'.¹³⁰ Yet Gwinne's play offers a very different *comparandum* in the *Vertumnus*, a poetic vision of a more positive journey of academic growth, charting the passage of the young man's learning, a scholar-student accompanied by his tutor (who is named Aesopus), as he moves into manhood and old age. When the young scholar falls in love with the nymph Euphrosyne, Gwinne conducts an intertextual conversation with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book XIV to morph the Roman poet's work into a more self-conscious exploration of coming of age themes. *Vertumnus*' attempts to woo Pomona

represents an important figure in the history of drama at St John's, and we are justified in supposing that Gwinne's active promotion of theatre in the college helped inspire English to do likewise.

¹³⁰ Sarah Knight, 'Fantastical Distempers: The Psychopathology of Early Modern Scholars', in Walker and Streufert (eds.), *Early Modern Academic Drama*, 139; 144.

through a series of shape-shifting tricks is now transmuted into the idea of the young student experimenting with different personae and career paths in order to ‘find himself’ as well as win his girl: the disguises begin with the Ovidian shepherd, fisherman, and harvest-reaper disguises and move on to disguises such as merchant and priest. It seems likely, I would suggest, that in the series of plays that followed, St John’s students drew on the example of Gwinne’s work in their own dramatisations of Ovid.

Writing as a mature professional, prospering in London as physician to clients who included many members of the court, Gwinne was fully-fledged career man. Did Gwinne’s play represent a more complex, more demanding expression of a poetic ‘growing up’? He is at a different stage of life from the students writing after him, and their playlets, averaging at about 800 lines each, appear to represent scaled-down versions of his grander work. One topos, that of the cornucopia, may suffice as an example, illustrating the potential for investigating Gwinne’s play as an inspirational precedent for later generations of St John’s students.¹³¹ In Act 4 Scene 1, Phantasticus (the third of the humours to appear), ends his introductory soliloquy with a description of a cornucopia full of pears, apples, and grapes, before remarking ‘sed en / Autumni imago viua Microcosmus venit.’¹³² Microcosmus now arrives on the stage, set to enter the ‘autumn phase’ of his life; the burgeoning fertility of the cornucopia is evoked by Phantasticus to express the young man’s crossing of the threshold into maturity.

The poetics of regeneration and annual cycle

When Gwinne dramatised the four phases of human life matched to the four seasons in his *Vertumnus*, he chose to give the play the alternative title *Annus recurrens* (‘Year Returning’). As the protagonist Microcosmus makes his way through Acts II to V, progressing towards maturity and old age, he is following the natural cycle of the seasons (Ver – Spring; Aestas – Summer; Autumnus – Autumn; Hyems - Winter). Yet the story does not end with his death in the winter; it ends by looking ahead to a new age. As the play draws to a close, Gwinne celebrates the arrival of

¹³¹ Gwinne’s *Vertumnus* is an important, complex play deserving a more detailed discussion than can be given here. Plans are afoot to publish an edition with a translation, which will make the play available in English for the first time.

¹³² ‘But look, here comes Microcosmus, the living representation of Autumn.’

King James as *rex pacificus*, instituting a court and kingdom which has brought peace, and which should continue flowing with peace into the future ('*Domus illa, pacem quae dedit, pace affluat.*' *Vertumnus sive Annus recurrens*, H2v). Construing his play as a calendar, 'Fasti', Gwinne offers it to the King to confer perpetual blessing upon his days of celebration ('*Tua festa Fasti semper aeternum mei: / Semper beata*', H2v). The topos of the yearly cycle of nature's calendar, *annus recurrens*, has now morphed into a political conceit in the epilogue: the end is no end but another beginning as the cycle of regeneration repeats itself, for James has, through his wife and heirs, an immortal line of descendants who keep him and his dynasty forever alive ('*Vxore, prole Regia aeternum tuos*').

Writing soon after Gwinne, we find the student Philip Parsons appropriating the topos of *annus recurrens* in his epilogue to the *Atalanta* (c.1612):

Epilogus.
 Haec *olim* Adoni pulchra narravit Venus,
 Puero ut placeret; egit haec *hodie* Venus
 Ficta; tamen ut placeret; et vobis (viri)
 Placere vates studuit, haud credens fore
 Aut indecorum aut dissonum, hoc *ipso die*
 Cursus peragere; Nam quid *hoc tempus monet*,
 Nisi iam peractum cursum et inceptum novum?
Praeteritus annus in prociis victis gemit;
 Quia iam *quasi periere* transacti dies
 Triumphat at victore in Hippomene novus.
 Foeliciter peregit is cursum suum,
 Et ope secundi numinis votum attigit;
 Foeliciterque currat hic annus, precor;
 Possitis ut vos singuli votis frui.
 Quod restat unum; si placet, voto suo
 Fruitur poeta; nec alium applausum petit.

(*Atalanta*, 709-24, my emphasis)¹³³

¹³³ 'Beautiful Venus once narrated these things to Adonis, to please the boy. Today Venus has brought about the fashioning of these tales, to please still; and the poet has laboured to please you, men, in the belief that it would be honourable and appropriate to complete the course on this very day. For what does this time advise, if not that one course has been finished and a new one begun? The year which has gone by is in mourning for the conquered suitors – since already, as if having died, the days have passed away - but a new one is celebrating the triumph of Hippomenes the victor. Happily he completed his course and, with the aid of a favourable divinity, arrived at his goal. And may this year run happily, I pray, so that each of you can attain what you wish for. One thing is left: if he pleases, the poet attains his wish; he seeks no other applause.'

Parsons takes the key plotline from the play, of competitive suitors running in the race to secure Atalanta as their bride, and transforms it into an allegory of the year running its course, playing upon two different meanings of the term *cursus*: ‘Nam quid hoc tempus monet, / Nisi iam peractum cursum et inceptum novum?’. This question makes several puns at once: it echoes the cyclic rhythm of the mythology which underpins the play, as Atalanta and her suitors run and rerun the races every time their story is told, yet it is also a comic reference to the here and now of the audience’s world, where the end of the calendar year marks the start of a new one. Parsons’ use of the phrase ‘novo... sub anno’ in the prologue to the play makes it clear that the play is part of festive celebrations for the New Year, and here in the epilogue he echoes Gwinne in matching his choice of narrative tale from the *Metamorphoses* to the festive context in which the play is performed.

He begins the epilogue by reminding us of the larger poetic structure in which his tale is embedded, for in Book X of the *Metamorphoses*, the tale of Atalanta is a story within a story, encircled by the narrative of Venus and Adonis. The goddess is the speaker and Adonis is her listening audience, as Parsons emphasises: ‘Haec olim Adoni pulchra narravit Venus’. He shows that he has brought Ovid’s structure of narrator and audience to life again by staging the tale to a live audience in the present moment: ‘haec olim’ (this story once upon a time) has become ‘haec hodie’ (this story today). Just as Venus told the story in order to please her young man, ‘Puero ut placeret’, so Parsons has striven to please his audience of men in the college: ‘vobis (viri) / Placere vates studuit’.

The association with Venus and Adonis is intended, I would suggest, to enhance Parsons’ celebration of the start of the new year, evoking Venus’ position as creator, *genetrix*, and Adonis’ role as a symbol of rebirth. The young man’s death is followed by his blossoming into an anemone, as Venus sprinkles droplets of nectar upon a pool of his blood, declaring that it will be changed into a flower: ‘cruor in florem mutabitur’ (*Metamorphoses* X.728). This act of creation is envisaged not as a one-off metamorphosis, but a yearly cycle of death and rebirth, as Venus decides to establish the commemoration of Adonis as an annual event: ‘repetitaque mortis imago / annua plangoris

peraget *simulamina* nostri' (X.726-7, my emphasis).¹³⁴ Parsons' evocation of Adonis, therefore, provides a graceful echo of the rebirth of the calendar year at the end of its cycle, enriching his New Year message with a stylish poetic flourish. He also signals through the figure of Adonis the creative power which he, as poet-dramatist, has wielded in bringing Ovid back to life, for, more than any other character, Adonis exemplifies the poetic principle of 'forms changed into new bodies' expressed in the proem to the *Metamorphoses*. Thus for Spenser, creating his Garden of Adonis in the *Faerie Queene* (III.vi.29-51), he is 'the Father of all formes':

All be he subject to mortalitie,
 Yet is eterne in mutabilitie,
 And by succession made perpetuall,
 Transformed oft, and chaunged diverslie'

(*Faerie Queene*, III.vi.47).

Parsons uses the remainder of his epilogue to the *Atalanta* as an opportunity to experiment with Ovidian poetics of regeneration in relation to the *annus recurrens*. He draws an intrepid parallel between the deaths of the suitors who failed in the footrace and the 'perishing' of each day that goes past, 'quasi periere transacti dies'. In this construction, the past year, 'Praeteritus annus', is presented in the manner of a personification, who presides over an era of mourning for the lost suitors, 'in procis victis gemit', just as Venus mourned her Adonis.¹³⁵ Yet the new day comes and has its triumph at Hippomenes' victory: 'dies / Triumphat at victore in Hippomene novus'. The protagonist's triumph is used as a convenient jumping-off point to wish the audience like success, playing upon the double meaning of *cursus*: just as Hippomenes has become victor and achieved all he desired through the running of the footrace, so may the course of the year also 'run happily' for the spectators ('Foeliciterque currat hic annus, precor;'). As I will discuss in Chapter 4, Parsons' celebration of Hippomenes successfully completing his course, 'Foeliciter peregit is

¹³⁴ 'and each passing year the memory of his death shall give imitations of my grief.'

¹³⁵ Cf. Ovid's similar use of *annus* controlling an active verb, envisaging the year running along its course: 'quo minus emeritis exiret cursibus annus' *Fasti* III.43. '[this amount of time remained] before the year could complete its course and run out'.

cursum suum', and his hope that the audience will do likewise, sounds a self-conscious note in relation to his own course of studies and those of his fellow students.¹³⁶

This hint opens up the question as to which 'new year' Parsons' play is celebrating: the beginning of the academic year in October, the start of January, or the official start to the year on 25 March? Lady Day, the start to the fiscal year, seems less likely, whilst New Year's Day on 1 January was traditionally celebrated with the giving of gifts, known as *strenae*, which could include poems. Parsons' interest in Adonis suggests the transition from winter to spring, and entries in the college accounts reveal that a New Year's show in January was a regular occurrence at St John's. Of the many instances it suffices to give a few examples: in 1617/18, six shillings and eightpence were put towards 'furnishing the Newe Yeares Day Shewe', an entry in the accounts which is directly followed by a reference to 5 January for ten shillings 'towards the Masque on Tweluth Night', showing that 1 January is the New Year's Day that is meant.¹³⁷ Again in 1618/19, we find a college payment for 'worke done on New Yeares day for the Shewe'.¹³⁸ The choice of phrase varies from time to time in the account books, as does the orthography, but the phrase 'the Show on New Year's Day' appears less frequently than the formulation 'the New Year's Day Show', demonstrating that once a year on 1 January it was expected that an entertainment would be staged and that it was tradition to refer to it 'the New Year's Day show'. It also seems significant that references of this kind appear to die out at the end of the 1620s, to be replaced by a new formulation: 'the Founder's show'. The extant references to this phenomenon in the accounts point to an annual recurrence of the event; records of payments made towards 'the Founder's show' survive for the following years: 1629/30; 1630/31; 1631/2; 1633/4; 1637/8; 1638/9; 1639/40.¹³⁹ Did the idea for an annual play celebrating Thomas White's foundation of St John's College take the place of what had previously been known as 'the New Year's Day Show'? The fact that 'the Founder's play' is a phenomenon rooted specifically in the 1630s suggests a link with Laud and the college's growth in pride and reputation during that era (which I discuss in more depth in the following chapter). There is further work to be done on this interesting topic, examining Oxford

¹³⁶ His use of 'peregit' here may well be a deliberate evocation of Venus' use of 'peraget' when she institutes the annual commemoration of Adonis: 'repetitaque mortis imago / annua plangoris peraget simulamina nostri' (*Met.* X.726-7).

¹³⁷ Quoted in *Oxford: REED*, vol. 1, 425.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, 433.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, 484; 489; 497; 511; 567; 570; 573.

and Cambridge colleges' rituals of commemorations and anniversaries, and especially the traditions of celebrating foundation cults through poetry and drama.

The internal evidence of the St John's plays is highly suggestive: Christopher Wren, for example, exhibits a particular interest in the concept of yearly commemoration in the *Physiponomachia*, when he has King Oeneus institute an annual feast day for his kingdom. The day of Deianira's wedding to Hercules, the day on which he is now speaking, 'hodiernam diem' (*Phys.* 450), will henceforth continue to be celebrated year on year as a time of festival for Aetolia: 'Festam quotannis, iubeo, in Aetolia coli' (*Phys.* 451). In Joseph Crowther's *Cephalus et Procris*, at the close of the final scene (Act V Scene iv), Cephalus decrees that the same day each year will be a day of extra-special celebration:

Lux ista quoties annuo cursu redit
Ut nuptialis melior habeatur volo
Dedit illa tantum, reddit hæc Procrin mihi.

(Crowther, *Cephalus et Procris*, 1226-8)^{140 141}

Taken together with the epilogue to Parsons' *Atalanta*, these examples highlight the fact that plays produced on the college stage often functioned as annual reenactments or anniversaries of a ritual or festivity. At St John's College, there is the added correlation between these anniversary plays and the choice of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as a main model, pointing to the poetics of regeneration shaping college culture and traditions. The principle of student dramatists creating 'nova corpora' by adapting episodes from Ovid's poem neatly dovetails with the festive occasion of 'the New Year's Show', and in the case of the *Atalanta* the connection is clearly expressed by the author. It seems likely that further investigation of the Ovidian series at St John's would be likely to furnish more examples of plays commissioned for an annual college entertainment. John Blencowe's play *Mercurius sive Literarum Lucta* (*Mercury or The Contest of Letters*) ends with the grateful speech of Mercury, god of letters, thanking Thomas White for giving him a permanent home at St John's:

¹⁴⁰ All quotations from Crowther's *Cephalus et Procris* follow the text of St John's College Library MS 217, and the line numbers given are those assigned to the facsimile of the manuscript by Bernfried Nugel, in Henry Bellamy / *Iphis*; Joseph Crowther / *Cephalus et Procris*, in *Renaissance Latin Drama in England*, I.10 (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1982).

¹⁴¹ 'Every time this day returns in the yearly course, I want it held greater than even our wedding day. That day only gave me Procris, but today has given her back.'

hæ cœli vicem
 Ædes obibunt: Sic erit; caelum vale
 Meliora Whitus regna Mercurio dedit.

(Blencowe, *Mercurius sive Literarum Lucta*, 1146-8)^{142 143}

This play is most likely the product of the early 1630s, as Blencowe began at St John's in 1627 and proceeded BCL in 1633. It seems, therefore, a likely candidate to be identified as one of the Founder's Shows which were staged during that era. Did increased pride in the rising fortunes of St John's in the 1630s lead to greater interest in celebrating the foundation of the college? If so, the strong tradition of staging Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in this particular community suggests that the annual theatrical event was construed to some degree as a renewal, or re-foundation even, of college culture.

¹⁴² All quotations from Blencowe's *Mercurius sive Literarum Lucta* follow the text of St John's College Library MS 218, and the line numbers given are those assigned to the facsimile of the manuscript by H.J. Vienken, in *John Blencowe / Mercurius sive literarum lucta; George Wilde / Eumorphus sive Cupido adultus*, in *Renaissance Latin Drama in England*, I.3 (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1981).

¹⁴³ 'This hall shall serve in place of heaven: so it shall be. Farewell to heaven, White has given Mercury a better kingdom.'

CHAPTER FOUR

Staging achievement: Dramatic rites of passage at St John's College

Coming of age narratives

When we compare the stories chosen by the St John's students as the subjects for their compositions, we find significant thematic parallels emerging. From amongst the stories related in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Christopher Wren, Philip Parsons, and Henry Bellamy have each selected tales that allow them to focus on the struggle of an individual to prove himself and the moment when a character experiences the transformation from adolescence into maturity. The 'coming of age' themes we find in Wren's *Physiponomachia*, Parsons' *Atalanta*, and Bellamy's *Iphis* benefit from a natural sympathy with the poetics of the *Metamorphoses*, as each young character finds him or herself undergoing a process of change and must come to terms with being on the threshold of a new stage of life by the end of the play. Each dramatist finds his own way to best exploit his source, selecting episodes from Ovid's narrative which allow him to work up fleeting moments or small details of description into dialogues and soliloquies. The discourse of teenage angst, passion, and confusion in the Ovidian series at St John's no doubt reflects the students' own concerns and preoccupations, and it provides a source of humour as well as an engaging topic to explore.¹⁴⁴

Our first glimpse of *Atalanta*, in Act I Scene ii of Parsons' play, presents us with a maiden in the throes of a dilemma, anxiously trying to decide which life path to take and fearful of heading in the wrong direction. Having consulted Apollo as to whether she ought to marry, she finds herself beholden to enact, but unable to truly understand, the pronouncements of his oracle. Taking the phrases one by one, she attempts to reason her way through the apparently obscure and contradictory utterances in order to discover which path the god intends for her. These words of the god are, in fact, Ovid's words, taken directly from his narrative in the *Metamorphoses* (*Met.* X.564-6 = *Atalanta* 30-2), and this represents the unique occasion on which Parsons makes a borrowing

¹⁴⁴ Also see above, Chapter 3, page 163 and footnote 82, on the transformative experience of falling in love: In Act III Scene iii of the *Atalanta*, we see Cupid on stage actively wounding the sleeping Hippomenes, who, on awakening, struggles to come to terms with the confusing feeling that he has somehow undergone a change.

without any modification. It is a pointed use of Ovid's text which announces the literary model as if it were one of the characters in the play, allowed to speak with its own voice. Parsons does not blend the quotation into his composition, rather he has Atalanta read out Ovid's words from a scroll, as the stage direction demonstrates: 'Atalanta sola cum oraculo / in charta scripto'. Indeed, the way in which the text is laid out in the manuscript copy of the *Atalanta* reinforces the differentiation, with Ovid's verses indented on the page and given a more formal aspect through the horizontal compression of the letter forms, rendered straight-backed in contrast to the italicised slant of the passages of Parsons' own composition. The differentiated layout sets up expectations of academic engagement: Parsons is making a game of the tradition of scholarly exegesis on ancient texts, and he has Atalanta provide her own commentary on Ovid as she goes along, scrutinising each phrase and asking a series of questions to try to get to the bottom of its meaning, ('quid sibi hae voces volunt?'(33), 'quid me proximo admonuit loco?' (39) she asks).

However, Atalanta is no experienced scholar and, criticising herself for poring over the text so long ('Sedenim quid haeres anime?'), she puts an end to her musings by concluding that Apollo must have meant for her to reject marriage and pursue a life of chastity. Parsons' dramatisation of her thought process represents a significant expansion of Ovid's version of the tale, which merely stipulates 'territa sorte dei' (Met. X.567). In the *Atalanta* we gain insights into the tensions of the dilemma and form a more complete understanding of what motivates her. Thus while she does decide to avoid marriage, 'Spernenda tibi coniugia' (55), thinking this is what Apollo commands ('Hoc mandat; huic parere mandato decet', 57), she is not without a natural inclination towards the *carpe diem* philosophy of living life to the full and being part of society: 'cuncta mors aufert scio: / Sed nos amicis vita; nos nobis dedit.' (49-50). This remark, seemingly trivial at first, keeps recurring throughout the play in different guises, running against the current of Atalanta's firm decision. For example, while Atalanta is running about the woods and training to become a huntress nymph, she finds herself being warned off this vocation by her companions, who advise that this is not the path in life she was meant to follow. Doris and Sylvania may have been very happy in theory to let her join their gang at the end of Act I Scene iii, but they soon undermine her attempts to integrate, recommending 'Potius benigno provocas vultu tibi / Venerem' (*Atalanta* 222-3). It is Doris who says these words – somewhat surprising for a nymph of Diana –

and her counterpart Sylvania chips in with a speech which could just as well have been spoken by the goddess of Love herself:

Non sic benefica, ut sperneres castos thoros,
 Natura, non sic mollis edocuit parens;
 Amore quae coacta te in lucem tulit;
 Animum relaxa vividum, annorum memor
 Venerem parentem finge, naturam ducem.

(*Atalanta*, 229-33)

Here we find Sylvania expounding upon the view that love, marriage, and sex are all crucial to the natural order of things, a life cycle through which Atalanta herself was created. It is not surprising to find a woodland nymph in tune with Natura, but her emphasis upon the marriage-bed as ‘castos thoros’ and the impulse of love resulting in childbirth, ‘Amore... coacta’, seems a rather odd topic of conversation for a nymph of Diana. Sylvania is apparently suggesting that married life and procreation are proper and pure, just as pure, we infer, as the absolute chastity of Sylvania’s own virgin lifestyle. Her emphasis upon ‘Venerem parentem’ (233) in parallel with Natura, the ‘mollis ... parens’ (230), promotes the Lucretian view of ‘alma Venus’ (*De Rerum Natura*, I.1-2), the *genetrix* of all the creative forces in the world.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, the nymph’s choice of words evoke the ‘magna parens, Natura’ of the opening line to the Seneca’s famous choral ode in the *Phaedra* (959ff.), where Mother Nature’s consummate control over the universe and the cycle of the seasons brings order in the face of fortune’s whimsy. Who is really in control? It is not, of course, for the nymph to choose her own words, but her creator Parsons, and we find the author playing games with the narrative frame of the Atalanta story he has inherited from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. It is Venus who takes the role of narrator in Book X, and in Parsons’ play we feel her exerting her influence upon the narrative, just as Venus *genetrix* exerts her influence upon the

¹⁴⁵ We may compare Shakespeare’s portrayal of Venus in his narrative epyllion, where the goddess advises the young Adonis to give in to the natural cycle of life and engage in sexual intercourse with her: ‘Upon the earth’s increase why shouldst thou feed, / Unless the earth with thy increase be fed? / By law of nature thou art bound to breed, / That thine may live when thou thyself art dead;’ (Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, 169-74, Katherine Duncan-Jones and H.R. Woudhuysen (eds.), *Shakespeare’s Poems: Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Lucrece and The Shorter Poems* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007)).

world.¹⁴⁶ Atalanta may have chosen a life without marriage but her fate soon catches up with her, just as the oracle said it would: ‘fuge coniugis usum. / nec tamen effugies’ (*Met.* X.565-6). The words of the oracle are, in fact, Venus’ words, forming part of the story which she narrates to Adonis. Thus Parsons’ dramatisation of Atalanta reading from the scroll in Act I Scene ii makes a joke of the fact that the character is following a script, a combination of that of Parsons and that of Ovid’s Venus in the *Metamorphoses*. The character is powerless to divert from either, her fate dictated by the dramatist who is following the direction of his literary model, which, in turn, is responding to the narrative pull of the mythological cycle. Throughout the angst-ridden soliloquies in which she tries to figure out which career she should choose, we instinctively know that the decision has already been made for her; Atalanta will undergo the transformation from maiden to wife and that’s that.¹⁴⁷ In fact, her coming of age is just around the corner.

Atalanta’s age is a subject of frequent discussion in Parsons’ play. Sylvania advises her to remember it, ‘annorum memor’ (232), Hippomenes enquires about it, ‘An virgo nondum adulta?’ (192), and Menalcas emphasises it vividly: ‘Satis annis viget / Viro satis matura.’ (192-3). Menalcas’ *modus dicendi* is significant here, expressing the fact Atalanta has reached an important point in the life cycle where, like flowers coming into bloom or fruit ripening, she is ready for a husband.¹⁴⁸ Having disposed of various suitors and kept the prospect of marriage at bay for some time, her fate plays catch-up and she suddenly finds herself being marched off to the wedding. Atalanta resents becoming Hippomenes’ ‘spolia’ (*Atalanta* 695) and refuses to concede gracefully, grieving that she is not the winner (‘Quod victor sim non doleo’, 702). Parsons is not insensitive to the psychological confusion of this moment, and he has her father make sympathetic noises acknowledging the bewildering suddenness of transformation she is expected to make: ‘Utcunque,

¹⁴⁶ This influence builds up to the dénouement in Act V Scene v, when she appears in person on the stage to direct events even as they are happening, she orchestrating Hippomenes’ victory in the footrace through her manipulation of Atalanta. In his epilogue Parsons focuses upon the goddess’ impact upon the play, declaring that it was Venus who brought about the play we are watching: ‘egit haec hodie Venus / Ficta’ (*Atalanta* 710-11).

¹⁴⁷ The unwillingness of the bride does not necessarily subvert the festive spirit of the comedy. We may compare Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, where the Queen of the Amazons has been forcefully conquered by Theseus before the play opens, though this fact will not undermine the happy occasion of the wedding day: ‘Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword, / And won thy love doing thee injuries. / But I will wed thee in another key - / With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling.’ (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, I.i.16-19).

¹⁴⁸ We may compare the *unripe* Adonis in Shakespeare’s narrative, where the youth fights off Venus’ advances, declaring ‘Who plucks the bud before one leaf put forth?’ (*Venus and Adonis*, 416).

chara Nata, nollem aegre feras / Te subito factam coniugem, Hippomenem virum' (696-7). There is a sense in which the words of the prophecy referring to her loss of identity ('teque ipsa uiua carebis', *Met.* X.566) express the process of subsuming the individual into the larger unit of the married couple, where Atalanta no longer exists as herself but becomes one half of something else, the wife in 'man and wife'. It is a confusing and alarming prospect treated sensitively by Parsons, who presents not unsympathetically the story of Atalanta, teetering uncertainly on the edge of the threshold of marriage.

Meanwhile, for Hippomenes, there is no question that the wedding cannot come soon enough, and it is his injection 'Et amor impatiens morae' (*Atalanta* 708) which concludes Parsons' play on a comic note of lustful eagerness. Here Parsons is alluding to the next part of the story, in which Hippomenes' neglect of Venus (forgetting to pay her due thanks for her help) leads to the goddess casting an 'intempestiua cupido' upon him (*Met.* X.689), so that he and Atalanta defile a shrine of Cybele with lust and are punished by being turned into lions. This is the other loss of identity to which the oracle refers in the phrase 'teque ipsa uiua carebis' (*Met.* X.566), but which Parsons' play just stops short of telling, for, as he puts it wittily in the prologue, 'Tantum leones nolumus, monstra effera'. Instead, he chooses to focus upon the metamorphosis of the coming of age, where passion and lust are a normal part of a young man's yearning and lead, as they should, to marriage. Every clergyman in his Sunday sermon would approve. For the untamed 'intempestiua cupido' is the literal opposite of the timely desire which unites man and wife in a fruitful union, and Golding translates the scenario accordingly: 'There through my might Hippomenes was toucht and stirred so, / That needes he would to Venerie though out of season go.' (Golding, X.808-9). It was, in fact, the most common interpretation of Ovid's tale that uncontrolled lust makes beasts of men, just as the famous mythographer Natalis Comes concluded in his account of the story, commenting that anyone who pursues desire regardless and without respect for what is sacred 'is sure to lose the shape of his immortal soul and assume the degraded shape of a horrible beast.'¹⁴⁹ Parsons reflects this interpretation in his use of the phrase, 'monstra effera' in the prologue.

¹⁴⁹ trans. J. Mulryan and S. Brown, *Natalis Conti's Mythologiae* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), vol. 2, 625.

Mirroring the rhythms of the natural world, the carefully controlled structures of social convention ensure that everything has its proper place and due time. This affords the potential for some notable frustration amongst those waiting for their time to arrive, not least those in their mid to late teens who are in somewhat of a limbo between puberty and adulthood. Eager to experience sexual intimacies and become initiated into the adult world, adolescents' frustrations provide an important source of humour which Wren and Parsons bring to the fore in their plays. For example, in the *Physiponomachia*, whilst King Oeneus emphasises that the time for Deianira has come ('Tua res agenda, nuptiis tempus tuis / Vt consulamus vrget', *Phys.* 186-7, my emphasis), Deianira's sister Gorge is left waiting for her moment to arrive. The tableau of the young lady eager for her first intimate encounter is handled by Wren with considerable wit and his introduction of Gorge into the narrative represents an important innovation. Gorge is mentioned by name in Ovid's *Heroides*, evoked by the guilt-stricken Deianira on bidding farewell to her family ('germanaque Gorge', *Heroides* ix.165), and she also appears in the *Fabulae* of Ovid's contemporary, Hyginus (*Fabulae* clxxiv.7), but in neither case is she developed as a character. In *Metamorphoses* Book VIII we find her mourning the death of her brother Meleager, an episode in which she and Deianira are singled out by name as the two sisters whom Diana does *not* turn into guinea-fowl (a detail which Ovid takes from Nicander). However, whilst Deianira returns to play a prominent role in the following book, we hear nothing more of Gorge, and this gives Wren a golden opportunity to embellish the tradition with his own creation.¹⁵⁰ His technique here exemplifies the methodology of the St John's tradition at large, where each student dramatist selects an episode from the *Metamorphoses* and works up the small details into a full-blown drama. Here Wren's introduction of Gorge enables him to expand upon the theme of adolescence in the play and exploit it as a comic topos.

In Scene viii Gorge pours out her emotions in a soliloquy, in which she challenges her father's decision that her marriage must come later. Mimicking his words from the previous scene ('Quot nunc sororis, tot tuum posthac proci / Quærent amorem', *Phys.* 360-1 = *Phys.* 454-5), she adds frustratedly 'cur precor (posthac?)' (455) and emphasises that she *is* of age and ripe for

¹⁵⁰ Just as Ovid's unnamed suitors for Atalanta would give Philip Parsons the opportunity to introduce new characters Amphialus and Narcissus into the narrative: see Chapter 3, page 158 and footnote 71.

marriage: ‘satis / Aetate in ista, nubilis videor mihi’ (455-6). Her thoughts immediately turn in the direction of the physical attributes which recommend her as a nubile young lady, and she catalogues them as follows:

est facies satis
 Venusta; proprio non carent tinctu genæ;
 Nec prominentes palpebræ.
 (*Physiponomachia* 458-60)

This speech is rendered the more amusing by the fact that the actor playing Gorge is an adolescent boy, and so the catalogue of her enticing allurements is an ironic spectacle which pokes fun at the male actor’s own dreams of getting his hands on such a girl.¹⁵¹ The manner of Gorge’s exit ends the scene on a note of poignant sympathy as the maiden mourns the discrepancy between her sister’s impending wedding night and her own empty bed: ‘Dum coniugales pergit ad thalamos soror; / Ego sola tristis, ad meum redeo torum’ (*Phys.* 466-7). This tableau of the lonely girl who wants a man is calculated to appeal to the youthful sensibilities of Wren’s fellow students. It is worth noting, however, that this scene is the only occasion on which Wren makes direct reference to the erotic. As discussed in Chapter 3, the St John’s dramatists are relatively restrained in such matters and do not tend to cultivate risqué humour or titillating language for its own sake.

Instead, they concentrate upon the humour of the characters’ confusion and their innocent lack of experience in such matters. For example, Gorge’s knitted brow in Scene vii prompts the attentiveness of her father, who invites her to explain what is troubling her. Her response is to express the fact that what frustrates her the most is that she does not *know* what is troubling her:

nil magis miseram premit,
 Turbatque, quam quod, ego mea ignorem mala:
 Nescio quid intus pectus exagitet meum.
 Curisque laceret.

(*Phys.* 351-4)

¹⁵¹ The practice of cross-dressing was one of a number of reasons given by opponents to university drama, considered a dangerous liability for impressionable young students. See Chapter 1 on Rainolds’ opposition to the plays of William Gager and Chapter 3 on his fears surrounding transvestism in particular.

The repetition of 'ignorem' and 'Nescio', in combination with her rather melodramatic turn of phrase ('Curisque lacerat', for example), conveys the image of a young girl tortured by feelings she does not understand. Her sense of desperation, expressed with such earnest strength of emotion, is both poignant and amusing, and it seems to amuse her mother-in-law too, who whispers to her husband with an air of the worldly-wise: 'Crede mihi, coniux, malum / Quod adeo misere filiam torquet tuam / Amor est.' (338-40). We may imagine Oeneus giving a knowing look here as he answers, 'Amorque mutuus tollet.' The rather patronising tone of voice which the adults adopt in this scene prompts Gorge's teenage outburst in the next, longing frustratedly for the time when *her* moment will come. When we remember that it is Wren who has given Gorge a voice (the characterisation of Gorge is all his own innovation), we can see how the author has actively created opportunities in the play as a means to explore this theme of the coming of age.

Precocious or half-baked talent?: The coming of age test

When Joseph Crowther came to add his play to the Ovidian series, he offered up an adaptation of Cephalus and Procris, the husband and wife whose story is told in *Metamorphoses* VII. As usual, a neat copy was made (which survives as St. John's College MS. 217) and was dedicated to the current President of St John's College, William Juxon (who held the post from 1621-33). However, at the time of writing Juxon does not just hold the title of President, but is also addressed by Crowther as 'the right worthy Vice Chancellor of Oxford's motherly Academy' ('Almæque Academiæ Oxoniensis / Procancellario dignissimo'). This enables us to date the piece to within Juxon's term of office as Vice Chancellor of the University, that is between 22 July 1626 to 24 July 1628, which then reveals the tender age of Crowther. For he could only have been seventeen or eighteen when he composed *Cephalus et Procris*, having matriculated on 20 Oct 1626, aged sixteen. He received his BA degree on 30 April 1629, nine months after Juxon ended his term as Vice Chancellor, so it seems clear that this is a piece of undergraduate work, written by a teenager.

Crowther wears the badge of youth with wary anxiety, drawing attention to it in his dedication with a vehemence that perhaps also reflects a little pride. In emphasising that he is still in the early stages of his academic career, 'meam / Academicam infantiam' (dedication, lines 11-

12), he is not only excusing himself but celebrating his precocious achievement: the speechless phase of *infantia*, ‘infancy’ (adjective *infans –fantis*, from the verb *in/fari*, ‘not speaking’), is in fact for him no such thing, it is actually the moment when he is bravely giving himself a voice, through the speeches he has written. Having been asked to undertake such a task, Crowther expresses some dismay at the commission. Addressing the President as his reverend patron, ‘Colendissimi Patroni’ (dedication, line 8), he charges Juxon with having platformed him somewhat prematurely, ‘Praematuram hanc occasionem’ (dedication, line 6). Anxious not to underperform, he views the opportunity as a double-edged sword – were some deficiency in the author to be discovered, the very reputation it sets out to make would be put at risk: ‘aliquid in me / ipso defectus patefacere’, (dedication, lines 12-13). Thus Crowther is bold enough to claim that Juxon’s commission is not so much an honour as something oppressive, a burden that has been imposed on him: ‘impositum mihi esse non tam honorem quam supplicium’ (dedication, lines 13-14).

Yet, undeterred, he rises to the challenge and actually uses his fears as a source of colourful humour. Whereas Wren offered Buckeridge a feast overflowing in his horn of plenty, Crowther just gives Juxon a ‘lean dinner’ (*‘ieiunas dapes’*), and turns what could have been a conventional apology for a ‘half-baked’ play into a fully-fledged and memorable tirade. Developing the metaphor of the verbal feast as far as it will go, he protests that he is playing the part of the cook who has barely set the ingredients in his store cupboard before he is asked to bring out the meal, ‘qui vix ad recondendum paratus est, nedum ad promendum’. Not content with making one complaint about the shortness of time allowed him to complete the exercise (he has already lamented *‘temporis angustiam’* at line 12), he claims he has had barely more time to cook the food than to get it set on the table (*‘brevius fere apparandi tempus quam apponendi’*, lines 20-1). Here the distinction drawn between the act of composing a dish from its ingredients, ‘apparandi’, and the act of setting it out for the diners to feed upon, ‘apponendi’, may suggest that both composition and performance of a piece were required by Juxon. Henry Bellamy’s dedication to Juxon points to the same conclusion, since he chooses to describe the written presentation copy of the play *Iphis* as ‘that which you have already deigned to listen to (*‘quem non dedignatus fuisti audire’*, dedication line 8).

Henry Bellamy and Joseph Crowther provide illuminating examples of the pattern discussed in Chapter 3. Both attended the Merchant Taylors' School, Crowther a few years below Bellamy. Bellamy did well at school, rose to become Head Monitor, and was elected to a Merchant Taylors' Scholarship at St John's College in 1621. He matriculated on 9 November 1621, aged seventeen. Crowther similarly did well at school, was also made Head Monitor, and was likewise singled out for a scholarship to St John's on election day in the summer term of 1625. Thus he formally began his university career on 20 Oct 1626, matriculating aged sixteen. Like Wren and Parsons before them, these Merchant Taylor Scholars of the 1620s were expected to uphold the traditions and standards of their predecessors, and the *modus probandi* was through the exercise of the Ovidian playlet. We gain an insight into the process of the commissioning of such pieces from Bellamy's dedication of the *Iphis* to President Juxon, for the author makes the point of inviting his patron to look upon, 'inspicere', a play which he has already listened to:

Accipias benigno fronte,
et quem non dedignatus fuisti audire, inspicere quæso ali-
quantulum digneris.

(*Iphis* dedication, line 7-9)¹⁵²

We may infer from this there has already been an aural performance of the piece (as Sutton puts it in the introduction to his online edition, 'the most likely interpretation of *audire* is "attend as a member of the audience"'), and, furthermore, that the author has provided a neat copy of the script, to be handed in to the President for his closer examination. The use of 'quem' here rather than 'quod' is significant, for it continues the nice meta-theatrical joke which dominates Bellamy's dedication, namely that the play 'Iphis' is only brave enough to approach the President to ask for his attention now that 'Iphis' has become a man:

Fæmineum metum cum sexu suo noster Iphis deposuit,
et hoc novae sibi assumpsit audaciæ, quod tibi (ornatissime
musarum mysta) se audeat offerre.

(*Iphis* dedication, line 7-9)¹⁵³

¹⁵² 'May you receive him with a countenance well-disposed, and may you, I pray, deign to look upon for a little while what you have already thought it worthy to hear'.

¹⁵³ Translated above, page 180 footnote 124.

This evidently refers to the ending of the play where, as we have seen, the male actor playing the character Iphis removes his wig and other accoutrements to reveal his true masculine qualities. Thus the ‘metamorphosis’ of Iphis’ gender change from woman to man is effected on stage and we enjoy the joke that in fact ‘Iphis’ was a man all along. Indeed, as Bellamy now emphasises in his written dedication, only a real man would be brave enough to face President Juxon to be tested (here the author and his play are the interchangeable subjects of Juxon’s examination), for he is ‘ornatissime / musarum mysta’, ‘most reverend priest of the muses’, who stands at the helm of St John’s College conducting its ceremonies and guiding his young flock through their training.

Is Bellamy yet a man? Will he pass the coming of age test? That is the question, and the young student knows that now the script of *Iphis* has been submitted to Juxon to inspect at his leisure (‘inspicere’), he will be able to dwell on the finer details of the text and notice any deficiencies it may contain. Bellamy accordingly turns to pre-emptive apologies, confessing that the play, his ‘offspring’ (‘proles’), is rough and unpolished, ‘Rudis’ (9), just like its father, ‘patri suo non dissimilis’, who was born of common stock, ‘de plebe natus ille’ (10). Surely this is not simply a reference to the character Lygdus, the father of Iphis, in the play. More likely, it is intended as a nod to Bellamy’s own social status, for, like Wren and Parsons, and other authors of college plays (such as Crowther, Blencowe, and Wilde), he matriculated as *plebeii filius* rather than *generosi filius*, and he goes on to elaborate the point, remarking that his registered rank is not more important than his being of good reputation, ‘cuius census / nobilitate non sit maior’ (10-11). As the son of a Merchant Taylor, Robert Bellamy, the young scholar cannot hope to compete in social rank, but the opportunity to have his work performed by and in front of his peers and then submitted to the President as a special commission places him in an arena where academic distinction, and not social rank, provides the most relevant criterion for praise and commendation. Commissions such as this allow someone like Bellamy to cement his good reputation and assert their academic rank within the college community.

Like many others, Bellamy was following the typical path of a university man set for a church living, moving through the degrees of BA, MA, and BD, to become one of the well-educated clergyman Thomas White the Founder had intended to produce. He was ordained deacon

by 23 May 1630, priest by 18 September of the same year, and held livings such as the position of vicar of the parish of St Giles' in Oxford from 1635 until his death. Degrees were certainly not the only thing required for appointment to such a church living; supportive patrons who could, if they wished, engineer the preferment of one favoured candidate over another, were essential. One's time at university was therefore as much about cultivating a network of such patrons willing to support one's progress as it was about obtaining degree qualifications, and we should interpret the creation of the *Iphis* play within such a context of patronage and preferment.

The next sentence, which constitutes the final parting shot of this dedication, focuses on the importance of President Juxon's role as patron: 'Eruere de tenebris penes / te est, dum ideò facis foeliciorem, quòd tibi placet.' (11-12), 'It is within your power to lift out from the shadows – when you are pleased, you make the future brighter'. The absence of a direct object in the first clause gives us room to grasp the double meaning of Juxon's raising either Bellamy or his play into the light, or rather both (one via the other), whilst the use of 'foeliciorem' in the second clause, the masculine of the comparative, pins down the author as the one who profits, raised up and made the more successful by Juxon's good favour. The metaphor of bringing someone out from the shadows expresses simply and effectively how the young student feels he has been singled out, brought into the spotlight by Juxon's attentions.

Equally, Crowther may complain about the difficulty of the challenge imposed upon him by his patron, 'impositum mihi' (see above), but he knows full well that being tested is an advantageous chance to shine. Thus it is that Crowther has his protagonist, Cephalus, make such a show of announcing this principle in a soliloquy in Act I Scene iv, in a speech that offers a conspicuously zealous repetition of *probare*:

Eccho *Probasse pœnitent nullos*¹⁵⁴ sonat.
 Sed quid probarem scilicet? notam fidem?
 [...]
 Ratum est. probabo. ut aurum uti verum levi
 Probatione niteat, igneque prodeat
 Fulgens metallum nobile, et si non minus

¹⁵⁴ This phrase constitutes a quote from the previous scene, where it is spoken by Aurora to Cephalus (see footnote 156 below).

Dubitanda, saltem notior sit castitas.
 Stat rem probare; falsa suspicio, tua
 Obstruere constat ora dum de te geret
 Examinata grandius spoliū Fides.

(*Cephalus et Procris*, lines 184-5 & 193-99)¹⁵⁵

That Cephalus should undertake to make trial of his wife's fidelity is a key turn of plot in Crowther's play, as it is in Ovid, so we would expect something to be made of this moment. However, with the jingle so noisily embedded in a soliloquy addressed to the audience (no other characters are present), the point comes across as more of a rhetorical mantra than a plot mechanism. Not only does the jingle dominate, but the pointed insertion of Echo at the beginning of the speech directs us to a meta-poetic interpretation, since we are reminded that Cephalus' words are an echo (a direct quotation, in fact) from Crowther's previous scene,¹⁵⁶ which in turn is an echo of Crowther's main poetic model, the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid's 'resonabilis Echo' (*Metamorphoses* III.358) functions as more than just a character, she is a by-word for the poetics of allusion.¹⁵⁷ Yet Crowther's use of his model has the requisite detachment, for the equivalent speech in Ovid's poem (*Metamorphoses* VII.714-722, where Cephalus tells his listener, Phocus, son of Aeacus, how he decided to test his wife) contains nothing of the enthusiastic repetition of *probare* that is such a marked feature of Crowther's work. It is as if he has resigned himself to the philosophy that 'the unexamined work is not worth writing' and has decided to emphasise the mantra with gusto.

We might also note with amusement how Crowther's engagement with Ovid stops short of following him down the tragic route of killing off Procris; in Crowther's play, Cephalus does not accidentally slay his wife, and the play ends happily with everyone reconciled and alive. Yet the memory of the impending tragedy lives on, for Crowther uses some clever word-play simultaneously to evoke and dismiss Ovid's version. When the goddess Diana presents Procris

¹⁵⁵ 'Echo repeats [the goddess Aurora] that "None regret to have put it to the test". But *what* indeed am I to test? Her well-known loyalty? [...] I have decided, I will test [her]. Just as gold shines at even a surface test, and shows itself a noble metal when it gleams in the fire, even if her chastity is not to be doubted any the less [by being tested] it will at least be the more well-known. I have decided to test [her]. Spurious doubt, it is agreed, your mouth will be shut so long as loyalty, having been examined, carries off from you the higher prize.' (*Exit*)

¹⁵⁶ Act I Scene iii.176: the goddess Aurora leaves the stage declaring 'Probasse nullos pœnitet' ('None regret to have put it to the test').

¹⁵⁷ See, for example, J. Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: a Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

with two gifts in Act V Scene ii, a hunting hound and a javelin, we are on the familiar ground of Ovid's tale, and instinctively recognise that one of these gifts is the fateful weapon which Procris will give to Cephalus, only to be speared by it later when, hunting in the woods, her husband mistakes her for a deer. It is not only a seventeenth-century audience who would find some comedy in such a scenario, and Ovid's commitment to tragedy in the *Metamorphoses* VII is generally patchy at best. Thus the mode of Cephalus' speech as he tells Phocus, son of Aeacus, of the disastrous javelin, is too replete with jokes and jingles to hit a truly tragic note, especially with the hero's expression of disbelief that a spear could make him cry:

Hoc me, nate dea, (quis possit credere?) telum
 flere facit facietque diu, si uiuere nobis
 fata diu dederint;

(Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VII.690-2)

The enthusiastic alliteration here makes these particularly memorable lines, and suddenly Crowther's indulgent repetition of *probare* might seem almost subtle. Once Crowther has dramatised Diana's presentation of the spear to Procris, in the second scene of Act V, it would appear that both wife and play will soon be at an end. Yet it is not the fate of Crowther's Procris to die, it is her role to be tested and survive intact. The author doubtless hopes his play will share a similar fate, and it is at this moment that he, through the mouthpiece of his character, invites the audience to assess how good his work has been (with that now familiar verb): 'hodiernus iocus / Quanta ista, Procri, munera probabit tibi.' (1127-8).¹⁵⁸ It seems likely that the dedicatee of the play, President Juxon, would have appreciated Crowther's neat handling of intertextual irony here, for the cheerfulness of Diana's remark is to the trained ear a doom-laden announcement of Procris' impending death, but Crowther is independent of his source material and is ready with a surprise ending. Other comic innovations by Crowther include the introduction of several new characters, who bring their own hilarity with them, such as the bogus merchant Phorus, and Procris' maid Damalis (whose witty banter with Cephalus gives way to slapstick humour when she empties a chamber pot over his head). The phrase 'hodiernus iocus' ('today's sport') may easily be taken to

¹⁵⁸ 'Today's sport will prove to you, Procris, how great these gifts are.'

refer to the here and now of Crowther's presentation, which he hopes has been an entertaining success. If he has not proved himself in this exercise, at the very least he has averted a tragedy.

Symbolic signals: Performing dedication as a ritual act

As argued in Chapter 3, the series of Ovidian plays produced at St John's championed a poetics of regeneration, whereby the witty and transformative power of the *Metamorphoses* was required to be harnessed by scholars and adapted to entertain an internal, college audience. The evidence of the plays points towards conscious use of the ceremonial, ritual function of drama as a tool for celebrating college identity and tradition, in what may have been an annual event to bring in the New Year. When we study the language of the students' dedications, the activity of offering up work to the President of the era has a ritual quality, which aims at formalising the relationship between the tutor and student as patron and his protégé by emphasising the latter's dependency. As we have seen, Juxon is the 'most reverend priest of the muses', who can lift Henry Bellamy out from the shadows, 'Eruere de tenebris', if he chooses, whilst Philip Parsons gives his *Atalanta* to President Laud as a pledge of his faith and loyalty, 'pignora nostra', placing the fate of his play (and of himself) in Laud's hands, 'manibus... tuis' (prologue, line 15). In addition to the metaphorical sentiment, this may also be a physical gesture referring to a neat presentation copy of the script being handed in to Laud, for which we have a precedent in Wren's dedication of the *Physiponomachia* to the President of the previous era, John Buckeridge. Here Wren's comic treatment of the literary concept of *copia* carefully builds to the moment when the play, conceived of as the *cornucopia* (see Chapter 3 on the symbolic *cornucopia*, or horn of plenty, as Wren's overflowing verbal 'feast') is offered up as a sacrifice in the finale. The person to whom the play is sacrificed is the 'Jupiter' of St John's College, President Buckeridge, who is asked to accept the sacrificial offering into his own hand: 'Sumat tua manus hoc sacrificium Ioui'.¹⁵⁹ The choice of language reveals that these students conceived of the act of the dedication to the President as a gesture of supplication, mobilising the ceremonial function of drama to petition the head of their college for his official blessing upon their work.

¹⁵⁹ 'Let your hand receive this sacrifice to Jove'.

In accepting what was offered, the head of house ratified the achievement, and each of the Merchant Taylor Scholars who successfully negotiated this rite of passage could feel justly proud of having upheld the tradition, now initiated into the ranks of forebears who had been put through a similar test. With much to gain or lose as an individual, the responsibility of participating in this kind of college tradition naturally prompted students' fears of underperforming, but in going through with the act of dedicating their work to the President, they showed they were willing to take the challenge on the chin. Philip Parsons, too, is announcing his own success in the epilogue to his *Atalanta* when he declares that the hero of the play, Hippomenes, 'happily completed his course and, with a divine nod in his favour, attained his prayer' ('Foeliciter peregit is cursum suum, / et ope secundi numinis votum attigit;'), epilogue to *Atalanta*, lines 719-20). Here the use of *atingere* neatly conveys the literal sense of the victorious Hippomenes 'touching' the finishing line in parallel with the author reaching an educational milestone. The term *numen* combines two senses, the president's godlike authority within the hierarchy of the college and the official nod of Laud's consent with which the student's achievement of the required standard is ratified.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Parsons shows a keen interest in exploring and emphasising the metaphorical applications of his key dramatic plotline (*Atalanta*'s running of the footraces against her suitors). For example, now that the final race has been run and Hippomenes has run it successfully ('peregit is cursum suum', 719), the plot has also run its course and the play has reached its end. Parsons employs the term *cursus* together with its cognates as flexible tools in the endeavour: now that the annual cycle has run its course, his epilogue welcomes in the new year on behalf of his audience, who have their own course to run, that is, their academic course of studies, and he hopes it may 'run happily' for each of them: 'Foeliciterque currat hic annus, precor; / Possitis ut vos singuli votis frui.' (*Atalanta*, 722-3).¹⁶⁰ As R.E. Latham shows, the word *cursus* had been used to mean 'a course of lectures' in England for centuries,¹⁶¹ and Parsons' playful use of it here in the *Atlanta* exploits the familiar academic application of the term, suggesting the parallel between the success of Hippomenes completing his course and the success of Parsons

¹⁶⁰ 'and may this year run happily, I pray, so that you may each attain your wishes'

¹⁶¹ R.E. Latham gives a start date of c.1340, in *Revised Medieval Latin Word-list From British and Irish Sources* (London: Published for the British Academy by the Oxford University Press, 1965), 127. The term *curriculum* (also formed from *curro*) came to be used for the programme or course of studies, following its sibling *currus* into mainstream usage by the 1630s (the Oxford English Dictionary records its first use in 1633; R.E. Latham concurs, 126).

completing his own. Whether this event coincides with Parsons' actual completion of his Bachelor of Arts degree it is not possible to verify, given the difficulty of ascertaining an exact date for this play, but we would be missing an absolutely key point about this work (and others of its kind at St John's) if we failed to recognise that dramatising the achievement of academic goals in the *Atalanta* is one of the main motivations for composing the play.

We should also be aware of the tradition of using the term *cursus* to express the shape or path of a career viewed from a long-term perspective, where the accomplishment of each individual goal is interpreted as forming part of an ongoing journey. We may think of, for example, its political usage during the Roman republic, where the direction of progress followed a series of rungs on the ladder of office, known as the *cursus honorum*. That this is also highly relevant to a poetic career has been demonstrated by the work of Patrick Cheney, who explicates the 'Ovidian' *cursus* (a career model which moves from amatory poetry to tragedy to epic) in competition with the 'Virgilian' *cursus* (which offers a trajectory of pastoral leading to georgic, and then to epic). Cheney's studies of Spenser (1993) and Marlowe (1997) highlight the Elizabethan poets' use of these ancient precedents as a means of expressing not only a poetic vision but a political one too, and we may interpret Parsons' engagement with the term *cursus* against this backdrop.¹⁶²

For the message here in the *Atalanta* has less to do with signalling his contemplation of a full-blown literary career and more to do with claiming a long-term strategic alignment with Laud and his camp, with a view to career prospects for the future. Thus when he states in his epilogue that the hero of the play completed his course and attained his prayer with the help of a divine nod in his favour, ('Foeliciter peregit is cursum suum, / et ope secundi numinis votum attigit;'), it is not so much Venus from the plot we identify as the friendly divinity smiling on his work, but President Laud from the dedication, the patron who could, and indeed did, have a significant impact upon Parsons' reputation and preferment in the job market. After he had graduated BA and MA, he then qualified as a Doctor of Medicine, awarded his DM degree at Padua on 22 April 1627 and

¹⁶² Patrick Cheney, *Spenser's Famous Flight: A Renaissance Idea of a Literary Career* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993) and *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). Further works have applied the argument to a range of authors across time, deepening our engagement with the phenomenon of the *cursus* as a literary career model: see Patrick Cheney (ed.), *European Literary Careers: The Author From Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002) and P. Hardie and H. Moore (eds.), *Classical Literary Careers and Their Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

incorporated at Oxford on 20 June 1628, and he became physician to Laud's half-brother William Robinson, Prebendary of Westminster. However, it was in pursuing a career in academic administration that he enjoyed prominent and lasting success: on the nomination of Laud he became Principal of Hart Hall (now subsumed into Hertford College) in 1633 and he remained the head of the college until his death in republican Oxford in 1653. Parsons' pledge of loyalty to Laud, 'pignora nostra', when he dedicated his *Atalanta*, was a symbolic gesture of hope for the future, from an undergraduate student to the president of his college, and now, twenty years later, Laud had now moved on to even greater things and was, as Chancellor of the University, able to propel loyal favourites such as Parsons into high, strategic positions in the University administration.

Careful management of homegrown support: Strategic patronage rooted in the St John's community

When Peter Heylyn, Laud's faithful biographer after the Restoration, looked back upon the spectacle of the royal party (King Charles, Queen Henrietta, the future Charles II and his brother) arriving in Oxford for their official visit in 1636, he noted with satisfaction that St John's was neatly positioned for a strategic stop-off along the route: 'their Majesties were first received with an eloquent Speech as he passed by the house, being directly in his way betwixt Woodstock and Christ-Church', and he added triumphantly, 'not without great honour to the Colledge, that the Lord Archbishop, the Lord Treasurer, the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, and one of the Proctors, should be at that time of the same foundation.'¹⁶³ That foundation was, of course, St John's College, founded by Thomas White, and the fact that these high-ranking figures all shared time as members of the same college community was not a coincidence.

The Lord Archbishop was William Laud, who had become the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, whilst the Lord High Treasurer of England was his protégé William Juxon, whom Laud had been busy manoeuvring through the ranks in a series of strategic promotions. In fact, so closely aligned were the two men's careers from the time of Juxon's arrival at St John's, that Trevor-Roper ventured to simplify Juxon's *cursus* as follows: 'William Juxon, who came to the college in 1602

¹⁶³ Peter Heylyn, *Cyprianus Anglicus or the history of the life and death ... of William Laud* (London, 1668), 318.

and, for the rest of Laud's life, may be regarded as his understudy.¹⁶⁴ Whilst this may not do justice to Juxon in his own right, it is true that he filled Laud's shoes at key moments when Laud had left an important office vacant, such as Juxon's immediate succession to the presidency of St John's in 1621 on Laud's departure and Juxon's consecration as Bishop of London in 1633, when Laud left this post to become Archbishop of Canterbury. Laud himself was inclined to emphasise his own hand in Juxon's progress, especially when it came to bringing Juxon closer to the King. By the time he had finished his stint as Vice Chancellor of the University in 1628 (the *terminus ante quem* for Crowther's dedication of his *Cephalus et Procris*), Juxon had become Chaplain-in-Ordinary to the King, in addition to his ongoing duties as the President of St John's. The next move placed him as physically close to the King as he could be, when he was sworn in on July 10th 1632 as the royal confessor (or 'Clerk of the King's Closet' as it was known), a position of confidential intimacy wherein he occupied the clerk's privy closet that was placed between the presence chamber and the privy chamber.¹⁶⁵ Taking the credit for this, Laud claimed: 'at my suit sworn clerk of his majesty's closet. That I might have one that I might trust near his Majesty if I grow weak or infirm.' Juxon was a safe pair of hands for Laud, and now also for the King, who was sufficiently impressed with his first-hand experience of Juxon's qualities to entrust him with the job of Lord High Treasurer of England in March 1636. When the King arrived in Oxford a few months later, therefore, he was greeted by Juxon in his new role.

Heylyn's list of high-achieving St John's men in top positions by 1636 continues with the Chancellor of the University, which, once again, was William Laud (he held the post until 1641). The Vice-Chancellor who was nominated by the Chancellor, was Richard Baylie, the current President of St John's, who had just celebrated ten years of marriage to Laud's niece (the marriage took place on 3 April 1626). We will meet President Baylie again in the conclusion to the thesis, as the dedicatee of another playlet in the Ovidian series at St John's, *Sors Caesarea sive suspiria et lacrymae*. Identifying the Proctor, the final member of Heylyn's list, is fairly straightforward, for there was a St John's man in the role of Proctor for the year 1635-6, John Edwardes, who had

¹⁶⁴ H.R. Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud, 1573-1645* (London: Macmillan, 2nd ed., 1965), 39.

¹⁶⁵ It is interesting to note that Christopher Wren's brother Matthew Wren was selected as the next Clerk of the King's Closet to fill Juxon's shoes. Matthew Wren had been the King's chaplain since 1622. See below on the Wren brothers being part of the Laud and Andrewes nexus.

recently completed a stint as Headmaster of the Merchant Taylors' School. He had been appointed to the role by the Merchant Taylors' Company on the recommendation of Laud, who intended that Edwardes would provide a strategic bridge between the two institutions, the Oxford college and its feeder school. In a letter dated December 24th 1632, he recapitulates the plan to Juxon, who was then president of the college:

I have of late been so happy (by God's blessing) as to be a means to settle the schoolmastership of the Merchant Taylors School upon Mr. John Edwardes, a deserving member of that College where you govern. This is a thing which I have for many years together heartily desired, and am glad to see it effected so well. I hope Mr. Edwards his carriage will be so discreet and give such contentment to that Company that whensoever he shall think fit to leave the school, they may be willing to choose another St. John's man in succession, which as it will be a great benefit to the College, so I hope it will be a good means of unity between them and the Company.¹⁶⁶

Edwards was a known quantity to both sides, to the School as an Old Boy, and to the college as a current Fellow, for he continued to hold his college fellowship concurrently with the headmastership, and this was an important part of the plan. Laud's interest in Edwards is rooted in his identity as a St John's man, being, as he puts it, 'a deserving member of that College', and although in practice Edwards' dual obligations to both institutions rendered him a less active headmaster than he might have been, his simultaneous occupation of both roles had a powerful symbolism, announcing the increased intervention of St John's in the affairs and governance of the Merchant Taylors' School. Laud makes it clear in this letter that the appointment of a St John's man to the headmastership of the Merchant Taylors' School has been an aim of his for some time, 'a thing which I have for many years together heartily desired'. Moreover, he has his eye on securing, through the appointment of Edwards, a longer-term feed-through of personnel from St John's, for, as he points out, after Edwards, the Merchant Taylors' Company might be persuaded to 'choose another St. John's man in succession', and this would be 'a great benefit to the College'.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ W. Scott and J. Bliss (eds.), *The Works of William Laud* (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1847-60), vol. 7, 45-6. Hereafter referred to as *Laud, Works*.

¹⁶⁷ Laud's interference continued: Edwards' successor to the headship of the school, William Staple, was another protégé of Laud, selected by the Company on the Archbishop's recommendation: 'the court taking notice of the especieall recomendacon and request of the Right Honorable and most Reverend Father in God,

Again and again it is to St John's men that Laud turns when he wants to entrust a job to someone, many years after he had ceased being a fellow or its President. Membership of a closed academic community such as this fostered a deep-rooted, long-term sense of loyalty, not least because of the association between the place and the time of life spent there, as a young man developing his ideals, aspirations, and sense of identity during the formative undergraduate years. When, in 1630, Laud decided to fund a grand building project at St John's (discussed further below), rather than anywhere else, he expressed the decision in terms of the sentimental value of the place to him personally: 'To build at S. John's in Oxford, where I was bred up, for the good and safety of that college.'¹⁶⁸ St John's forms a fundamental part of his own history, as the site where he did much of his growing up as a young student, and now that he is able to bring back the riches of a statesman, he re-invests in the place which nourished him and helped forge his identity. Thus his *alma mater* is in some measure as an extension of himself: in promoting 'the good and safety of that college', he is safeguarding the reputation of himself as one of her sons. Fellowship between the 'sons' of the college was a deep and long-lasting bond, and this is reflected in the way in which entrance into the membership was handled. Initiation ceremonies such as 'The Sacred Order of a Poulderling', evidenced by the manuscript record in Bodleian MS Eng. misc. 82 (see Chapter 3 on 'The Freshmans Orders'), saw second years preside annually over a college-based ritual in the 1620s, in which new recruits from the first years were required to perform an oath of allegiance to the second years and to the principles of behaviour they had set out. As discussed in Chapter 3, this rite of passage into the college membership paralleled the university matriculation, but in many ways constituted the more important ceremony, because the college was the students' home and the centre of their daily lives. The college hall and college chapel, for example, saw the daily gathering of the whole community of St John's, where, though hierarchy was strictly preserved in the seating structures, members of different ages and levels of status shared experience and observed each other in the communal space. We see this expressed in Laud's justification for his recommendation of Griffin Higgs to Princess Elizabeth: 'I may with the more freedom and assurance give him this

the Lord Archbishop of Canterburyhis grace'. (Minutes of Court October 31 1634, quoted in Wilson, *History of Merchant-Taylors' School*, vol. 1, 239).

¹⁶⁸Laud, *Works*, vol. 3, 253.

testimony, because for some years he was bred in the same College with me, where I could not but see his civility and studiousness.’¹⁶⁹ For Laud, on the lookout for suitable candidates for his patronage, recruiting from his own college was natural and practical, and, viewed from the students’ point of view, it was in college, through the daily round of meal times, chapel services, lectures, debates and other activities, that potential protégés had the most effective and most regular opportunities to come to his attention.

Thus it was that Edwards had secured his patron’s trust in him, through his membership of St John’s, where Edwards had proved, in Laud’s words, ‘a deserving member of that College’. The protégé-patron relationship relied on both parties’ usefulness to one another, and the second half of Laud’s letter to Juxon reveals how much Edwards’ usefulness is to do with his trustworthiness as his academic skills. Laud singles out Edwards for a confidential task which will involve him transcribing some important papers:

I shall have occasion to make use of divers men, and among them of Mr. Edwards, for the transcribing of some scholarlike papers, which in the evening, and other times of freedom from his school, he may help to despatch for me, being such as I am not willing to trust in every man’s hands.¹⁷⁰

He explains to Juxon that he needs the help of someone because he is very busy preparing to go to Scotland with the king, and appeals to the college statutes which allow him, in his capacity of Bishop, to employ him in his service for up to six months:

I know by your local statutes you may give leave to any Fellow, for half a year’s absence, if he be employed by any Bishop, as now for a time Mr. Edwardes must be by me. These are therefore to desire you to propose and grant this power of absence to him, which I know will turn to his and your College benefit.¹⁷¹

It is not clear what benefit there would actually be to the college from Laud borrowing Edwards for this period, except the honour of a St John’s man being singled out by the Bishop to work in his

¹⁶⁹ See below, pages 222-3.

¹⁷⁰ Laud, *Works*, vol. 7, 46.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*

service. At any rate, the mode of Laud's request reflects his determination to have his chosen man, and to ensure that President Juxon agrees to release him.

His preference for Edwards and the trust he placed in him stemmed back over a decade, to the days of their mutual membership of St John's, when Laud was President and Edwards was an undergraduate in his care. A footnote has been added to Laud's letter to Juxon reporting that 'Among the 'MSS. of the late Dr. Bliss, is a Comedy by Edwards, entitled 'Saturnalia,' apparently prepared for publication, with a Dedication to Laud, as President of St. John's.'¹⁷² The author of this note is the editor of Laud's *Works*, James Bliss (1808-1894), and his reference to the papers of 'the late Dr. Bliss' is surely to Philip Bliss (1787-1857), the antiquary who edited Wood's *Athenæ Oxonienses*. I have hopes of locating this lost play, which might furnish another example of the practice of a young scholar advertising that he pledges his work, and hence himself, to the service of the President. Hegarty reminds us that this *Saturnalia*, surely a comedy, is not to be confused with the play of the same name performed at St John's during the Christmas revels of 1607-8, it comes to us instead from the later years of Laud's presidency.¹⁷³ Edwardes was a pupil of the Merchant Taylors' School for five years, was elected in 1617 to take up one of the Merchant Taylors' scholarships at St John's, and matriculated on 24 April 1618, aged seventeen. He proceeded BA on 30 April 1621, and Laud moved on from the office of president to a bishopric that same year, confirming that if Edwards' authorship of this piece *Saturnalia* is correct, it represents an early work from Edwards' undergraduate years, when he, like other St John's men before and after him, followed the symbolic ritual of dedicating his work to the head of the college to signal his loyalty and offer up his skills in the service of his president.

Group dynamics and inherited patronage: Drama, dedication, and the Church

The careful management of protégés, sourced from within the college community, was a long-term strategy which did not begin with Laud's arrival at St John's. For Laud had been a protégé himself while an undergraduate, taken under the wing of John Buckeridge, who became his tutor in

¹⁷² Laud, *Works*, vol. 7, 45-6.

¹⁷³ Hegarty, *Biographical Register of St. John's College*, 48.

college, and from whom he inherited the presidency of St John's in 1611. Buckeridge, as Laud's biographers emphasise, had been instrumental in advancing his career, not least by bringing him to the attention of Bishop Neile and engineering a position for him as the Bishop's chaplain in 1608.¹⁷⁴ Buckeridge and Neile were both committed to promoting the doctrines of the Arminian wing of the Church of England, though, in aligning himself with this pair of patrons, Laud was taking on a political stance as much as a religious one. As Trevor-Roper puts it, Bishop Neile 'had sound practical instincts' and 'knew well which side his bread was buttered on',¹⁷⁵ and his protégé Laud learned from him and his own first-hand experiences, such as the Airay incident of October 1606 (when William Paddy, another stalwart of the St John's community, had stepped in to save him from disgrace by soliciting the University Chancellor's support on his behalf) how important it was to have and to keep powerful friends. The advantage of identifying oneself as a member of the Arminian wing of the Church is persuasively argued by Charles Carlton, who proposes that 'Arminianism should perhaps be viewed, not as a coherent theology, but as a political faction of like-minded men determined to use it to shape their careers as much as their nation's religion.'¹⁷⁶ Buckeridge would not regret bringing Laud into the group, for Laud took up the Arminians' cause and promoted their interests with fierce energy across his lifetime. When his own power increased and he had become one of the leading lights of the state, Laud was able to return the favour for his original patron: it was his influence with the King which secured Buckeridge's translation to the bishopric of Ely in 1628.¹⁷⁷

The importance of this group to the political and religious fortunes of England in the run up to the Civil War has been well documented in scholarship, which emphasises the continuity of power passed down from one member of the group to another. Trevor-Roper encapsulates the trend thus: 'Buckeridge, Laud, and Juxon formed a group which spread high-church doctrines first in St.

¹⁷⁴ Costin, *History of St John's College 1598–1860*, 27, and Charles Carlton, *Archbishop William Laud* (London: Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1987), 14.

¹⁷⁵ Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, 39.

¹⁷⁶ Carlton, *Archbishop William Laud*, 13. The Arminian faction later became known as the 'Durham House group', so-called because of their custom of congregating at the London home of Neile, who was Bishop of Durham between 1617 and 1628. See Andrew Foster, 'Durham House group (act. 1617–1630)', *ODNB*.

¹⁷⁷ Costin, *History of St John's College 1598–1860*, 27.

John's, then in Oxford, and ultimately throughout England : and when Buckeridge became President of St. John's in 1605, the college was to be under the successive rule of these three for the next thirty years.¹⁷⁸ Laud stepped into his former tutor's shoes to become the next president, when Buckeridge was promoted to the bishopric of Rochester (succeeding Bishop Neile). In taking over the presidency, Laud continued the tradition of commissioning and receiving plays dedicated to his person. Those who addressed him in supplication (we have already noted the ceremonial language used in these dedications, Philip Parsons' *Atalanta*, for example) were participating in the ritual process of offering up themselves and their work to Laud, as students before them had done to Buckeridge. It is significant for our understanding of St John's drama during this era that Laud was looking to his Oxford college as a key source of potential protégés whom he might use to strengthen the membership of his group, just as Buckeridge, his college tutor, had recruited him during their time at St John's. When we survey the decades during which the trend for connected series of Ovidian adaptations were produced by St John's students, the overlap with the presidencies of John Buckeridge (1606-11), William Laud (1611-21), and William Juxon (1621-33) is suggestive. These plays, I would argue, should be interpreted as forming part of the process of selecting and manoeuvring young students into position as protégés, readying them for strategic deployment in the future. For, as we saw in the case of John Edwards, trustworthiness as well as the scholarly skillset were required in a successful protégé, and the composition exercise went some way to testing both. The characterisation of the patron in these dedications, as the sacred judge whose godlike nod would confer success or failure on the fortunes of his young suppliant, was more than simply a dramatic conceit or an exaggerated show of respect, it was a reflection of the very real strategic power wielded by patrons such as Buckeridge and Laud, who were able, if they chose, to launch the careers of their chosen candidates and continue to prefer them throughout their lifetime. These are the same men who are commissioning and receiving playlets, dedicated to them in ritually suggestive language by talented scholars growing up in their college, their favourite hunting ground for new recruits.

¹⁷⁸ Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, 39.

Here we have the opportunity to investigate possible references in the plays to the Arminian faction's promotion of high church practices. As this question sizes up to be a significant research topic in its own right, I shall offer one potential candidate as a starting point: Philip Parsons' presentation of Hippomenes as *cultor fidelis* (the faithful worshipper) in Act V Scene i of *Atalanta*, the play which he dedicated to President Laud.

The scene opens with Hippomenes approaching the altar of Venus, addressing the altar as the marble embodiment of the deity, 'marmor Deae / Sacrum' ('the sacred marble of the goddess') and expressing admiration at the use of incense: 'En thura sacris nostra iam fumant focus' (579), 'Behold, our incense smokes on the sacred hearth'. At this point Parsons had added a stage direction instructing the actor playing Hippomenes to kneel down before the altar, 'Genua flectit', reinforcing the gesture by having Hippomenes describe his action in words: as he bends down he says 'advolvor tuas / Supplex ad aras' (587-8), ('I prostrate myself as a suppliant at your altar'). The speech which he now delivers whilst in this humble position may be aimed at garnering Laud's attention:

te penes tota est sita
 Coepti laboris palma. cultorem tuum
 Serva fidelem (Diva); sic victor nova
 Tibi templa condam; tibi feram cultus novos:
 Et ara stabit thure perpetuo calens.

(Parsons, *Atalanta*, 588-92)¹⁷⁹

The pun on palm of the hand as well palm of victory ('palma') highlights Parsons' hope that his own *labor*, the task of writing the play for the president, will earn him the spoils of Laud's favour. As discussed above, in his epilogue to this play, Parsons invites us to interpret Hippomenes' fate in parallel with that of the author, through his use of the *cursus* metaphor; here at the start of the fifth act we have a foreshadowing of that moment where the hero will be declared victorious: Hippomenes (and Parsons too) 'happily completed his course and attained his prayer with the help of a divine nod in his favour' ('Foeliciter peregit is cursum suum, / et ope secundi numinis votum

¹⁷⁹ 'In your power lies all of the victory for the labour I have undertaken. Goddess, preserve your faithful worshipper. And so, if I am victorious, I shall build a new temple in your honour, to you I shall bring new adornments. And the altar will stand warm with perpetual incense.'

attigit;’ epilogue to *Atalanta*, lines 719-20). Parsons’ use of the phrase ‘te penes’ (588), to express Laud’s influence over whether he succeeds or fails, is the same formula used by Bellamy when he dedicates his *Iphis* to President Juxon: ‘Eruere de tenebris penes / te est’ (11-12) (‘It is within your power to lift [me] out from the shadows’). Through the figure of Hippomenes, his protagonist and hero, who is about to compete in the decisive footrace, Parsons presents himself as a young and eager competitor looking to achieve success in his future career. He offers himself to Laud as a faithful follower, ‘fidelem’, if Laud will foster Parsons as his protégé and groom him for victory. If successful, the play will have functioned as a rite of passage for Parsons, welcoming him into membership of the group.

In promising to ‘build new temples’ in honour of his patron, Parsons’ use of the poetic metaphor of ‘building’ literary compositions is something of a commonplace, and ‘cultus’ (‘ornaments’) may therefore be taken as representing the literary ornaments which decorate these works. However, its cognate ‘cultorem’, used in the context of Hippomenes prostrating himself as ‘worshipper’ before the altar, brings the sacred liturgical meaning, and not the metapoetic, to the fore. This encourages a literal interpretation of the promise to show devotion to the deity by bringing out ornaments (tangible objects, not poetic conceits), commencing building renovations, and burning incense. Attention to the material aesthetics of worship was one of the key tenets of the Arminians’ brand of church reform in defining itself against Calvinist Protestantism, and Laud was committed to implementing this style of reform from the earliest days of his priesthood.¹⁸⁰

At what point in Laud’s presidential decade of 1611-21 was the *Atalanta* play dedicated to Laud? As discussed above, there is a general consensus on a date before 1614, the year when Parsons graduated B.A.,¹⁸¹ and the play presents itself as a youthful offering to the head of house in the tradition of the Ovidian series at St John’s. This suggests the earlier years of Laud’s presidency, and by this time his religious preferences were not only known but were already causing a stir.

¹⁸⁰ He was ordained in 1601 by Bishop Young, the same bishop who tutored Lancelot Andrewes, another stalwart of the high church reformist set. (Together Laud and Buckeridge were the joint editors of *Ninety-six Sermons of Lancelot Andrewes*, a collection commissioned by the King and printed in 1629). The choice of Bishop Young was also rooted in Young’s proximity to Laud’s patron, Buckeridge, for Young was bishop of Rochester, where Buckeridge was a prebendary at the time. For Laud’s promotion of the material aesthetics of worship, see Parry’s analysis of the campaign to refurbish English churches according to these values, in Graham Parry, *The Arts of the Anglican Counter-Reformation: Glory, Laud and Honour* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006).

¹⁸¹ See above, page 155 and footnote 60.

Parsons has the pagan cover in his play, which protects signs of his Laudianism from being too outspoken, but, given the rise of the members of the Durham House group at this time, it is fascinating to view suggestive plays such as this through the religio-political lens.¹⁸²

For Laud was quick to impose his own views wherever he was given the power to do so. When he became Dean of Gloucester in 1616, he straightaway came up against the Bishop of Gloucester, Miles Smith, who ‘was outraged when the new dean signalled [sic] his arrival by having the communion-table removed from its place in the body of the church and fixed altarwise in the chancel, and by ordering those who entered the church to bow to it.’¹⁸³ Laud’s reaction to the outrage was to inform the Bishop of Gloucester that he was acting on the King’s instructions in instituting his reforms, and, in a move which demonstrated the ongoing role of Laud’s patron, he wrote to Bishop Neile to reassure himself of support from that quarter. (Neile did not disappoint, and the following month Laud found himself travelling north with the King, in his role as chaplain to the Bishop, to Scotland on a mission of national importance). Bearing in mind Laud’s uncompromising attitude towards the positioning of the communion-table, we might therefore wonder at the suggestive exclamation which Parsons puts into the mouth of Hippomenes at line 595-6: ‘*Revulsa mensa sedibus crepuit suis; / Horresco quid portentat.*’ (‘The altar, ripped away from its seat, made a groan; I shudder to think what it means.’). The choice of using *mensa* here (in place of *ara*, which he uses elsewhere) may be significant, since the fundamental and most common meaning of *mensa* is simply ‘a table’, hinting at one of the crucial battle grounds fought over by the factions in the Church of England. As Trevor-Roper puts it, ‘[to] the Puritan the communion-table was only a table, and the communion a commemorative meal [...] To the high churchman, however, the table was an altar, the communion a magic function: the sacraments were the body and blood of Christ, transmuted by the divine power delegated to the priest’.¹⁸⁴

Parsons’ staging of Act V Scene i, with its emphasis upon Hippomenes prostrating himself at the altar (a movement which is not only given in the stage direction but also described by Hippomenes in words as he completes the action), may be a deliberate nod to Laud and his

¹⁸² On the Durham House group, see above, page 213 and footnote 176.

¹⁸³ Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, 45.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*

supporters' belief in the importance of bodily gestures in worship.¹⁸⁵ The Bishop of Gloucester did not share Laud's enthusiasm for bowing to the altar, as we have seen, and was shocked that he had made it a rule in their church. The use of incense was also a sticking point, forming part of Laud's belief in 'the beauty of holiness', a phrase which he took from the Book of Psalms.¹⁸⁶ We have already noted Hippomenes' exclamation of pleasure on finding that incense is smoking at the altar ('Behold, our incense smokes on the sacred hearth', 579), and Parsons has him return to the thought, promising to make sure that the altar will stand burning 'with perpetual incense', 'thure perpetuo' (592). Is this significant? The context of the play makes it so, for this is a play written specifically for Laud's attention, by a member of his own college with a personal interest in currying Laud's favour. The internal college politics attached to the piece differentiate it from, for example, mentions of incense occurring in commercial plays of the London stage. David Robertson's discussion of olfaction in Shakespeare's *King Lear* provides an illuminating example: the statement made by Lear to his daughter, 'Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia, / The gods themselves throw incense' (5.iii.22-3), is not, Robertson concludes, politically charged, arguing that 'Before Lancelot Andrewes and then William Laud attempted to reintroduce the use of incense in Anglican worship, writers could refer to incense neutrally, without being read as taking part in controversy over the liturgy, church government, or anything else.'¹⁸⁷ But perhaps this is not the case for Oxford college drama, and especially not for Parsons, writing as a member of St John's under the regime of Laud's presidency.

¹⁸⁵ Peter Smart, an outspoken critic of Laudianism, mocked these bodily rites, addressing one of the leading supporters of the movement, the Bishop of Durham John Cosin, and ridiculing his gestures: 'your frequent and profound duckings and prostrations before your most sumptuous Altar'. Quoted in Achsah Guibbory, "'A rationall of old Rites": Sir Thomas Browne's "Urn Buriall" and the Conflict over Ceremony' in *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 21 (1991), 229-241 (233).

¹⁸⁶ The phrase is taken from Psalm 96.9: 'O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.' (King James Version). Thus it was that those whom Laud helped into leadership positions introduced these kinds of changes in their own spheres of influence, such as Oxford and Cambridge colleges. See Chapter 4 'College Chapels at Oxford and Cambridge' in Parry, *Arts of the Anglican Counter-Reformation*, 59-86. Carlton notes how Laud helped John Cosin in his election to become Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge, and how, as Master, Cosin then had every chapel stall decorated with a cross and made the conspicuous purchase of a very expensive silver incense holder for the college, costing fourteen pounds, nineteen shillings and sixpence (*Archbishop William Laud*, 139).

¹⁸⁷ David Robertson, 'Olfaction in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tragedy of King Lear*' in Nely Keinänen and Maria Saleniu (eds.) *Authority of Expression in Early Modern England* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 59.

There is more than one answer to the question of interpretation here. On the one hand, Parsons' choice of phrase is surely intended to signal the author's engagement with Ovid by evoking the programmatic concept from the prologue to the *Metamorphoses*, 'perpetuum ... carmen' (*Met.* I.4), 'the continual poem' which forever evolves to outlive and immortalise its maker. On the other hand, Parsons' dramatization of worship is conspicuously vivid, and the description of the altar 'hot with perpetual incense' ('thure perpetuo calens'), spreading its everlasting perfume, is an attempt to excite our senses. Overall, Act V Scene I, I would argue, suggests an author with a keen interest to evoke all the detail of the aesthetic experience of worship as practised in Laud's preferred manner. It is important to note this and to contextualise it in relation to Parsons' dedication of the play to Laud in the prologue, where he offers his work to him as 'pignora nostra', 'our pledge of faith'. That the bond of trust between the two men was of a lasting and profitable quality is demonstrated by Laud's continuing support for Parsons' career, exemplified in Laud's nomination of Parsons to the headship of an Oxford college in 1633.¹⁸⁸ There is certainly greater scope for investigating the plays of St John's College in tandem with the devotional prose of the Laudian Movement.

We might spare a thought here for James Shirley, to whom Laud acted as more of an 'anti-patron' during the early days of his attempted ecclesiastical career. Shirley attended the Merchant Taylors' from 1608 until 1612, and would have known Parsons there, as one of his contemporaries at the school.¹⁸⁹ Wood states that, after his 'Grammar-learning' at the Merchant Taylors', he was 'transplanted thence to S. Johns Coll. but in what condition he lived there, whether in that of a Servitour, Batler, or Commoner, I cannot yet find.'¹⁹⁰ It is not possible to say with any certainty whether Shirley ever became a member of St John's, for no complete list of commoners is preserved, and it may be wishful thinking on Costin's part when he makes the following unqualified statement in his history of the college: 'The poet and dramatist James Shirley came to

¹⁸⁸ see above, page 207.

¹⁸⁹ Parsons attended the Merchant Taylors' School from 1607 to 1610, directing overlapping with Shirley's time there. Thomas Atkinson arrived at the school in the same year as Shirley, and Henry Bellamy, a couple of years their junior, joined them in 1611.

¹⁹⁰ Philip Bliss (ed.), Anthony Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. 2, 260.

St John's from Merchant Taylors' as a commoner in 1612.¹⁹¹ Wood tells the story that Laud, who was president of the college at the time, had ruled him out as a potential recruit to the priesthood, on account of the fact that he had a large mole on his face; he judged that this rendered the young man 'an unfit person to take the sacred function' and told him repeatedly that he would 'never have his consent' to take holy orders.¹⁹² Instead of Oxford, we find Shirley matriculating from Cambridge in 1615, as a student at St Catherine's College, from where he proceeded BA in 1617. Despite Laud's attempt to derail him, he was ordained, in 1619, at the age of twenty-four.¹⁹³ However, his career, in the end, was to be focused on his written work (the writing of Latin grammar books as well as plays and masques) and his teaching (he was Master of Edward VI Grammar School in St Albans c.1621-5, and afterwards in London) instead of the Church.

The dedication of a play such as *Atalanta* by a young student to President Laud could signal, as we have seen, the early stages of a protégé-patron relationship which often remained active and productive for many years to come. However, this one-to-one relationship was a small unit feeding into a larger network, where one might have several patrons connected with one another, and where the protégé of one patron might become a useful tool for another. Laud had himself experienced how the patronage of one man, Buckeridge, usefully led to the patronage of other influential figures connected with him (such as Neile, Andrewes, and King Charles). Similarly, we may observe how Christopher Wren's alignment with President Buckeridge (symbolised, I would argue, in his dedication of the cornucopia to him in the *Physiponomachia*), led him to an alignment with Laud which worked to their mutual profit: Wren voted for Laud as St John's President after Buckeridge had left the post, and Laud engineered Wren's preferment to the lucrative court position of Chaplain-in-Ordinary to the King. Carlton suggests that we view the competition between the two candidates for the presidency, William Laud and John Rawlinson, as 'a preview of the struggle between Arminians and Calvinists that emerged on the national stage half a generation later', and reminds us that '[t]hree of Laud's supporters, Christopher Wren,

¹⁹¹ Costin, *History of St John's College 1598–1860*, 60.

¹⁹² Philip Bliss (ed.), Anthony Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. 2, 260.

¹⁹³ Hegarty, *Biographical Register of St. John's College*, 427-8.

William Juxon and Thomas Tucker, went on to become prominent Arminians.’¹⁹⁴ Wren became Chaplain-in-Ordinary to King Charles on 15 July 1628, on Laud’s recommendation, just as Juxon had the year before. Laud himself had become Chaplain-in-Ordinary to the King on 3rd Nov 1611, eight weeks after the King had brushed aside the irregularities of the college election and named him the President of St John’s. It has been argued that the attainment of the post of Chaplain-in-Ordinary was *the* key promotion at the jointure of Church and court, signalling not only current success but yet greater promise in the future: Kenneth Fincham demonstrates the very serious strategic importance of a royal chaplaincy as the route to higher preferment in the Church, highlighting the fact that ‘[a]lmost all of the Caroline episcopate was recruited from the more select band of chaplains in ordinary’.¹⁹⁵ In many ways, Laud’s success in nurturing the graduate clergymen of St John’s in their careers was exactly what the college had been established for: Thomas White had founded St John’s with the intention that it would serve primarily as an institution for the education of the clergy, turning out well-educated members of the priesthood who would thus, he believed, be better equipped to serve and strengthen the Church. (Originally, as a Marian foundation, the college was intended to produce Roman Catholic priests to support the Counter-Reformation; White adjusted to the reign of Elizabeth with flexible practicality, and Laud’s promotion of high church practices, which many argued were popishly orientated, would presumably have been acceptable to White).

Another of the St John’s men recruited by Laud and preferred by him to the post of Chaplain-in-Ordinary was Griffin Higgs, who promoted the cult of the College Founder through his authorship of the versified biography, *Nativitas Vita Mors honoratissimi illustrissimiq(ue); viri Thomæ White*.¹⁹⁶ Laud used his influence to have him made Chaplain-in-Ordinary to the King in 1639, after he had served for twelve years in the Hague as chaplain to the King’s sister, Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia. Remarkable on these promotions, Hutton (1898) interprets the case of Higgs as ‘another instance of the close association between Charles I. and the sons of S. John’s. Of those who had been undergraduates or fellows of the college during Laud’s Oxford residence it

¹⁹⁴ Carlton, *Archbishop William Laud*, 18.

¹⁹⁵ Kenneth Fincham, ‘William Laud and the Exercise of Caroline Ecclesiastical Patronage’, in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51 (2000), 69-93 (71).

¹⁹⁶ For Griffin Higgs and his *Life of White* in SJC MS 52, see Chapter 2.

would be interesting to see how many were afterwards attached to the Court and promoted by the Archbishop.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, Laud was especially canny about cross-fertilising his two key spheres of influence, university administration and the Church, so that control over one area could strengthen control over the other. As Fincham points out, this became his signature strategy during one decade in particular: ‘Appointees to deaneries in the 1630s included four heads of house at Oxford who actively backed the Laudian reforms of the university during the 1630s. Between 1631 and 1639 President Frewen of Magdalen, President Baylie of St John’s, Provost Potter of Queen’s and President Jackson of Corpus received, respectively, the deaneries of Gloucester, Salisbury, Worcester and Peterborough.’¹⁹⁸ However, it was possible to be too good at such a strategy, and Laud’s increase in control also increased his enemies’ determination to bring him down from power. His repeated use of influence over King Charles’ appointments, in particular, gave his opponents a source of ammunition at his trial. He stood accused of conspiring to restrict promotions only to those who were his own intimates and the members of the Arminian camp; in his defence, he produced a list of a dozen clergyman whom he claimed as exceptions, a list which included Griffin Higgs.¹⁹⁹ As a staunch supporter of Laud (Higgs had a habit of sending him regular gifts²⁰⁰), and a loyal member of the community of St John’s, Higgs was not exactly the neutral, nonpartisan ‘exception’ which Laud was claiming. He was, in fact, part of the network of protégés which Laud had sourced from college, as he says so in his own words in a letter to Elizabeth Stuart, dated August 27 1631:

LETTER CCXXXIII.

TO THE QUEEN OF BOHEMIA.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HIGHNESS,

I HAVE been honoured with letters from your Majesty in behalf of Dr. Higgs, whom, together with his worth and sufficiency, I have known for these many years ; and I ever found him very honest and learned. I may with the more freedom and assurance give him this testimony, because for some

¹⁹⁷ William Holden Hutton, *S. John Baptist College* (London: F.E. Robinson, 1898), 124.

¹⁹⁸ Fincham, ‘William Laud and the Exercise of Caroline Ecclesiastical Patronage’, 79.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 87-9.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*, footnote 88 to page 89.

years he was bred in the same College with me, where I could not but see his civility and studiousness.²⁰¹

Skills for life: an education in eloquence

Such power hath your soft Rhetorick, such awe
Your nod, and even your silence is a law;
While others are not heard through their own noyse
And by their speaking much have lost their voyce.

(from the poem 'The Temper. UPON D^r. JUXON *Bishop of LONDON.*' composed by Abraham Wright²⁰²)

That patronage could, and often did, extend across a whole lifetime, is aptly demonstrated in the case of William Juxon and Abraham Wright. Their loyalty to one another remained a fixed point, even during the turbulence of the Civil War years, and, by the time of Juxon's death in 1663, their friendship had lasted for three and a half decades. Juxon and Wright may have been the product of different generations, but they shared a specific educational background which shaped their way of thinking and the values which they prized. As I will demonstrate, *alumni* like Wright continued to draw a self-righteous strength from the memories of this shared background, when a new culture began to sweep away the old traditions during the Interregnum.

It was during his presidency that Juxon first encountered Wright, on a visit to his old school, the Merchant Taylors', where the precocious young schoolboy impressed him with his rhetorical skills.²⁰³ Found to be 'a good orator, especially in proper and due pronunciation', Wright was elected to a Merchant Taylors' Scholarship and matriculated from St John's on 13 November 1629 at the age of eighteen.²⁰⁴ As discussed in Chapter 3, when sizing up younger generations of scholars for possible recruitment to St John's, the Old Boys were on the lookout for pupils who

²⁰¹ Laud, *Works*, vol. 7, 41.

²⁰² Abraham Wright (ed.), *Parnassus Biceps or Severall Choice Pieces of Poetry, Composed by the Best Wits that were in both the Universities before their Dissolution* (London, 1656), 2.

²⁰³ Quoted in Wilson, *History of Merchant-Taylors' School*, vol. 2, 685-6.

²⁰⁴ Philip Bliss (ed.), Anthony Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. 4, 275; Hegarty, *Biographical Register of St. John's College*, 173.

exhibited a flair for those same rhetorical tasks which had marked them out during their own time at school. Juxon himself had been through the process of being singled out as one of the top-performing boys of his year at the Merchant Taylors' and required to perform a Latin oration before the visitors on election day, on 11 June 1597. Although he was not victorious in his first attempt, Juxon won his scholarship to St John's the following year, 11 June 1598,²⁰⁵ and, as detailed above, moved through promotions in college to president, thence to the role of bishop, and finally to archbishop, in a successful imitation of the career pattern (*cursus*) of his patron, William Laud.

When it was Juxon's protégé Abraham Wright's turn to make the journey from school to university, he did not disappoint, but continued to develop the skills which had impressed Juxon on their first meeting. By the time King Charles made his visit to the college a few years later in 1636, Wright had built such a reputation within the community of fellows there that he was the man entrusted with delivering the speech welcoming king and queen to the college's new library, the centrepiece to Laud's grand building project at St John's. The oration, composed in verse, can be found in Bodleian MS Malone 21, ff.52v-3, and was later given the title 'A Copy of Verses spoke to King CHARLES by way of entertainment when he was pleas'd to grace S. John's Colledge with his visit. 1636' by Wright when he had it published during the Interregnum, as part of a nostalgic compilation entitled *Parnassus Biceps or Severall Choice Pieces of Poetry, Composed by the Best Wits that were in both the Universities before their Dissolution* (1656).²⁰⁶ In his address to the royal guests, Wright celebrates the spectacle which St John's is about to reveal as they step inside the room, a glorious banquet prepared for them, served in very special surroundings – that is, in the library itself:

And what place fitter for so Royall guests
Then this, where every book presents a feast.
Here's Virgils well-drest Venison, here's the
wine Made Horace sing so sweetly; here you
dine With the rich Cleopatra's warelike love;
Nay you may feast and frolick here with Jove.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Quoted in Wilson, *History of Merchant-Taylors' School*, vol. 1, 126-130.

²⁰⁶ This interesting retrospective anthology is also discussed in the thesis Conclusion.

²⁰⁷ Abraham Wright (ed.), *Parnassus Biceps*, 121.

As he points into the space they are about to enter, he uses the method of breaking up the rhyming couplets' predictable beat to throw weight upon his demonstrative gestures: 'here's the wine / Made Horace sing so sweetly; here you dine / With the rich [etc...]'.

Laud recorded how the dining tables had been arranged in the library space, positioning the King, Queen, and Prince Charles width-ways at the upper end, with places set for Prince Rupert and other leading lords and ladies on a long table running the length of the library.²⁰⁸ The venue allows Wright to play with the metaphor of poetry as food, where the ingredients of composition, the 'store cupboard' as it were, of knowledge, is contained in the repository of the library, 'where every book presents a feast'. According to this metaphor, the elegant style of the Roman poets provide recipes which Wright and his contemporary English scholars aspired to replicate in their own creations, imitating the success of Virgil, who is able to serve up his poetry admirably 'well-drest'.²⁰⁹

Standing at the threshold to the new library, Wright's performance of the welcome speech is calculated to hold the attention of the King and the royal party just as they are on the cusp of moving into the next space. Thus the oration functions partly as a thought-provoking delay celebrating the fact of the entrance, Wright's words helping to unlock and linger upon the significance of the moment. Laud recorded this very moment in his diary, the proud host watching the royals cross the threshold into the new building which he was responsible for: 'dinner being ready, they passed from the old into the new library, built by myself'.^{210 211} With the library as yet unfurnished, I would argue that we can view the royal entrance as an opening ceremony, which

²⁰⁸ Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, part 1, 152.

²⁰⁹ cf. Christopher Wren's use of the cornucopia as a verbal feast, Chapter 3, pages 168-74, and Joseph Crowther's insecurities about offering Juxon a lean meal ('ieiunas dapes'), Chapter 4, page 198. Also see page 260 on *Sors Caesarea* presented as a rather humble supper, 'ad humiliores ... dapes'.

²¹⁰ Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, part 1, 152. Laud bore the full costing of the building work, which came to £5,087 (Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, 285). That this new library really was a major step forward in provisioning the college with better facilities is evidenced by Fuggles, 'A History of the Library of St John's College, Oxford, from the Foundation of the College to 1660', 131ff. Fuggles' detailed study of the books donated to the college library during Laud's presidency reveals the continued importance of Buckeridge's contribution, in supplementing Laud's donations through his own generosity and that of their mutual friends. Reflecting on the connections between Laud and Buckeridge as a pair working together to build up the library holdings, Fuggles asks 'Were not they the successors of Case and Gwynne?' (116). See Chapter 1 for John Case and Matthew Gwinne.

²¹¹ It is interesting to note that, after the exceptionally productive period of gathering books (1595-1612), in which John Case and Matthew Gwinne were instrumental (see above, page 45), in 1612 a purge was arranged to rid the college holdings of any volumes identified as duplicates or surplus to requirements. This being the first year of Laud's presidency, Fuggles interprets the move as 'symptomatic of the order which Laud imposed immediately on one aspect of college life, as he did on others, and as he was later to do on the religious and political life of the country as a whole' (57).

ratified Laud's benefaction of this substantial gift to his college. Wright demonstrates skill and wit in composing an oration which uses word and gesture to dramatize the dual nature of this celebration on Tuesday 30 August 1636: the visit of the royals and the opening of the new library. Wright's use of the feast metaphor advertises at one and the same time the sumptuousness of the hospitality awarded the visitors by their host and the generosity of Laud's benefaction to the college, which, in providing the academic community with their new study space, had now opened a new chapter in the history of St John's as a place of learning and education.²¹²

Earning a recommendation: oral performance gives proof of employability

That this new chapter was to be expressed and ritualised by the recitation of Wright's verses was part of a longer tradition of threshold performance, a custom which officialised and celebrated the monarch's translation into the realm of the host. As we saw in Chapter 1, the staging of Queen Elizabeth's crossing sometimes took the form of an oracular event marking the boundary, where a sibylline priestess would greet the queen as she came into, for example, Dudley's estate at Kenilworth. In the context of a university visit, the sense of competition with the other colleges increased the pressure for such threshold performances to be pleasing and memorable to the monarch. Thomas Atkinson, who was posted outside the front of St John's on the day of the King's arrival into Oxford, Monday 28 August, succeeded in pleasing Charles, and hence Laud, who recorded that the royal party 'passed along by St. John's, where Mr. Tho. Atkinson made another speech unto them very brief, and very much approved of by his majesty afterwards to me. Within Christ Church gate, Mr. William Strode the university orator entertained them with another speech, which was well approved.'²¹³ Laud's description unwittingly highlights the fact that Atkinson's

²¹² The extravagance of the food on this occasion was vividly memorialised by Edmund Gayton in his *Epulae Oxonienses. Or a jocular relation of a banquet: presented to the best of Kings, by the best of prelates, in the year 1636, in the mathematick library at St. John Baptists Colledge*, published in Oxford c.1661 by William Hall. Written in verse and set to music, Gayton's song brings out the humour of Laud ('the best of prelates' and 'that High Priest') serving up to the King and Queen a complete marzipan rendition of the academic community at Oxford. *Epulae Oxonienses* presents the witty spectacle of the court bashfully nibbling or gobbling their way through 'all our Gown-men', edible models of students and proctors alike - even the Vice Chancellor.

²¹³ Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, part 1, 149. Laud's approval of William Strode, university orator and Christ Church member, will be discussed in a following section.

oration is simply ‘another speech’, succeeding one by the Vice Chancellor and preceding yet another in the series shortly afterwards, by Strode at the entrance-way to Christ Church. Thus the St John’s man was tasked with the challenge of distinguishing himself against those others orators and representing both his own and his college’s skills, signposting from outside the walls the education in literary and rhetorical skills and values on offer within. Yet no longer was St John’s to remain merely a staging post en route to Christ Church, for the following day the royal party would return to St John’s to be welcomed inside its walls and introduced to the new library to the accompaniment of Abraham Wright’s oration. In addition to individual successes, this development represented a major turning-point in the history of the college, discussed in more detail in the next section.

That Atkinson succeeded in rising to the challenge of distinguishing himself in the face of competing orations is affirmed by Laud’s awarding of him the *summa cum laude*: whilst Strode was judged to have been ‘well approved’, Laud allows Atkinson a marginal victory in reporting him to have been ‘very much approved of’ by the King.²¹⁴ Gaining approval from such an audience for a display of one’s oratorical skills was about more than making sure the visitors were suitably entertained; it was a crucial opportunity to give necessary proof of the practical skills required for the professions which university graduates had in their sights, such as the Church, where effective preachers could win the attention and respect of their flock and provide strong leadership in both pastoral care and politics. At St John’s, there is a clear understanding that Laudian protégés were required to prove themselves through oratorical performance, in order to gain recommendations for promotion (loyalty not being sufficient in itself), and in the case of Abraham Wright, the student could follow the conspicuously successful example of William Haywood, his college tutor.²¹⁵ Haywood was himself a protégé of Laud, whose preferment of him to the position of Chaplain-in-

²¹⁴ Thomas Atkinson arrived at St John’s in 1615, and, as Hegarty points out (*Biographical Register of St. John’s College*, 5), the initials given for receipt of his stipend suggest that Christopher Wren was his tutor. He authored the Latin playlet *Homo* during Laud’s presidency of the college (which we may therefore date between c.1617 and 17 November 1621), in which he dramatized Epimetheus’s struggle with Prometheus for the loyalty of man. Dedicating his play to the president like other hopefuls before him, Atkinson participated in the college tradition of affirming patronage through the rituals of the dramatic form. It is perhaps significant that, when Atkinson submitted himself for ordination to become deacon, the bishop officiating at the ceremony and conducting Atkinson through his rite of passage was Laud, and the bishop recorded the event in his diary: Laud, *Works*, vol. 3, 157 (entry for 12 February 1625).

²¹⁵ Hegarty, *Biographical Register of St. John’s College*, 70.

Ordinary to King Charles on 2 June 1636 first required public proof that the candidate had the requisite oratorical skills: 'I preferred him not to his Majesty till he had preached divers times in court with great approbation'.²¹⁶ For Wright, preparing for the king's upcoming visit that August, Haywood's promotion provided a pertinent and recent demonstration of the practical advantages of displaying his rhetorical talents to best effect. These were the talents which had initially gained him a place at Oxford and which, with the support of President Juxon and his tutor Haywood he had been nurturing at St John's ever since. Expressing his respect for Haywood's example, shortly after the king's visit, in 1637, Wright had an anthology of Latin epigrams printed at Oxford, entitled *Delitiae delitiarum* (or *Ultimate Entertainment*), and had it dedicated to Haywood as his most honoured tutor ('Tutori suo colendissimo').

The day of the royal visit was an occasion when Abraham Wright was required to prove himself twice before Laud and the king. Having given his welcoming speech, he again took to the stage later that afternoon as one of the actors in a play called *Love's Hospital*, which was presented to the visitors in the college dining hall. Just as his oration had done, his speeches as an actor demonstrated his fine elocution and his confidence in performing before two potential sets of employers, the university's administration and the royal court. The author of the play, George Wilde, also performed as an actor, whose life and work is discussed in detail further below. Wood reports that Wright 'was one of the principal persons that acted in the comedy', and that '[t]he chief actor was the author Mr. George Wilde, and the others, who were all of that house, were John Goad, Humphry Brook (now one of the coll. of physicians) Edmond Gayton, John Hyfield, &c.'. ²¹⁷ This self-sufficiency of talent, the fact that all the actors could be sourced from within St John's itself, was a source of great pride for Laud, as he recorded in his entry on the royal visit in his history of his chancellorship: 'the college was at that time so well furnished, as that they did not

²¹⁶ Laud, *Works*, vol. 4, 295-6. Laud's statement here is to be read in the context of the seventeenth day of his trial, where he is defending himself against the accusation that he 'had preferred none to bishoprics, deaneries, prebends, and benefices, but men popishly affected, or otherwise unworthy.' He is, therefore, obviously interested in emphasising the merit of the individual rather than his own personal partiality, but, in explaining why Haywood was worthy of the promotion, Laud confirms the criteria by which, according to the values and standards of the day, Haywood proved himself, that is, through oral performance publicly before the court.

²¹⁷ Philip Bliss (ed.), Anthony Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. 4, 275.

borrow any one actor from any college in town.’²¹⁸ St John’s students had acted in plays before a royal audience before, notably in Gwinne’s *Vertumnus* in 1605 (as discussed in Chapter 2), but this was the first time that a play had been performed on site at St John’s for anyone of such rank.

Looking back to 1605 and the plays staged at Christ Church, we can see the same mode of appraisal being applied to the student Thomas Godwyn, whose appearance on stage as an actor before the king satisfies his father, the Bishop of Llandaff, that the young man has given proof of his ability. In a letter to Sir Thomas Lake (dated 3 November 1605, shortly after the royal visit), he gives the following professional recommendation as a result of his son’s recent stage performance:

ther is one Thomas Godwyn a Commoner of Christchurch in Oxford a very towardly youth that in diuers exercises as namely in a Commedy before his maiestie in Oxford hath giuen profe of his likelyhoode to be comme a learned man and a profitable member of the Common wealth: we haue thought it not amisse to recommede hym vnto your good fauour.²¹⁹

The example which the bishop gives is of Godwyn acting in a comedy performed before King James on his visit to Oxford in 1605, most likely Christ Church’s production of *Alba* produced on Tuesday 27 August, co-authored by Robert Burton.²²⁰ The theatrical stage is viewed as the arena in which Godwyn can prove his potential by giving an advance preview of how he will look when his time comes to leave university and begin professional life: ‘profe of his likelyhoode to be comme a learned man and a profitable member of the Common wealth’. For Abraham Wright, his skills as an orator made him much in demand as a priest. Wood relates how his ordination took place on 22 Dec 1639 in Christ Church cathedral, ‘at which time he preached the sermon, which was afterwards printed with 4 more: And it being then well approved, and thereupon he accounted an elegant preacher, was the reason why he did frequently appear in S. Mary’s pulpit in Oxon, before the city of London at S. Paul’s, and before king Charles I. when he resided in Oxon, in the time of the grand rebellion.’²²¹ We can, I would argue, view both the play and the oration which Wright performed on

²¹⁸ Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, part 1, 153.

²¹⁹ Quoted in *REED: Oxford*, vol. 1, 329.

²²⁰ See Chapter 1, page 52 and footnote 137, and Chapter 2, page 72.

²²¹ Philip Bliss (ed.), Anthony Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. 4, 275.

August 30 1636 as a rite of passage, in the sense that, in proving himself before king, court, and university, the scholar showed that he was a fully-fledged orator ready to be employed.²²²

St John's College and Christ Church: a younger rival comes of age

By the time the royals had completed their visit to St John's on 30 August 1636, Laud felt deeply satisfied with the outcome of such an important event for himself and his college:

I thank God I had that happiness, that all things were in very good order, and that no man went out at the gates, courtier or other, but content; which was a happiness beyond expectation.²²³

He might well be content, for the college's growth in status and success had now been ratified by royal presence and royal approval. The cost of entertaining the King, Queen, princes, and their courtiers with food and theatre had come to well over two and a half thousand pounds, which, as Howard Colvin notes, amounted 'to nearly half the cost of building the quadrangle.'²²⁴ Laud had enjoyed showing the royals round his new buildings, which advertised their commitment to royal authority; two life-size bronze statues of King Charles and Queen Henrietta, fashioned in bronze by the artist Hubert Le Sueur at a cost of £400, dominated the space and presided over it, facing one another from opposite sides of the quadrangle. Smaller details, too, had a message to convey. I note, for example, the arrangement of decoration around the shield of Laud's coat of arms in the

²²² Wood also tells us that Wright had written a play himself, '*A comical Entertainment called The Reformation*, presented before the university at S. John's coll. Written while he was an under-graduate' (*Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. 4, 277), but unfortunately the play is not extant. What has survived, however, is a unique document, a commonplace book (BL Add MS 22608), in which Wright compiled quotations from contemporary histories and plays together with some of his thoughts on them. Twenty-eight plays are represented in this compilation, the work of professional dramatists (including Beaumont and Fletcher, Davenant, Jonson, Shakespeare, Shirley, and Webster), and Wright's choice of material and his commentary upon these extracts furnishes an interesting topic for further investigation, as *comparanda* for the kinds of university plays being written by student amateurs in the same period. Wright's commentaries upon scripture are more incisive, but this manuscript is a rare source of contemporary criticism, as Kirsch emphasises, deeming it 'the most extensive and specific, and perhaps also the most valuable, dramatic criticism between Jonson and Dryden.' (Arthur C. Kirsch, 'A Caroline Commentary on the Drama', *Modern Philology*, 66 (1969), 256-261 (261)). Wright evidently passed on his interest in the theatre to his son James, who authored a history of the English stage entitled *Historia Histrionica* (London, 1699). On Wright's use of the commonplace book BL Add MS 22608 as a rhetorical guide adapted to instruct his son in imitation, see Peter Beal (ed.), *Parnassus Biceps or Severall Choice Pieces of Poetry by ABRAHAM WRIGHT 1656: together with pages from British Library Additional MS 22608* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), xiv.

²²³ Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, part 1, 152.

²²⁴ Howard Colvin, *The Canterbury Quadrangle: St. John's College, Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 13.

western frontispiece: whilst his archbishop's mitre crowns the top of the shield, on either side are two burgeoning *cornucopiae*, filled with fruit and flowers encased in horns which curve downwards, tapering into scroll-like ribbons at the bottom.²²⁵ I would argue that this functions as a visual representation of the academic value and future potential of Laud's project at St John's: his benefaction is intended to nourish generations of scholars to come and produce an outpouring of fruitfulness.

This was a new era of prosperity and grandeur at St John's which Buckeridge did not live to see. He had died on 23 May 1631, shortly before the first stone had been laid for the new library, on July 26. The same year Amy Leech passed away, the eighty-six-year-old niece of Sir Thomas White and the last person to have had a direct connection with the earliest days of the foundation.²²⁶ The end of one era was, however, the beginning of a new one for St John's, and such was the impact of Laud's building programme at this time, that future historians of St John's would style him the 'second founder' alongside Thomas White.²²⁷ Indeed, such was the connection Laud drew between the buildings and himself, that later, once his life began to unravel as the Civil War gathered pace, his anxieties of a crumbling political empire were reflected in dreams of the roof and walls of St John's beginning to crack and fall down:²²⁸

Wednesday night, I dreamed the Parliament was removed to Oxford ; the Church undone ; some old courtiers came in to see me, and jeered: I went to St. John's, and there I found the roof off from some parts of the College, and the walls cleft, and ready to fall down. God be merciful.

²²⁵ An image of this tableau is available in Colvin's *The Canterbury Quadrangle*, plate 38, though Colvin does not discuss the significance of it. He does, however, identify the personifications of the Virtues and Liberal Arts depicted in sculpture in the quadrangle, an important part of Laud's iconographic scheme (which I cannot explore in further detail here).

²²⁶ It was she who had given, in April 1602, the curious collection of embroideries known as 'the Founder's vestments' to Ralph Hutchinson, then President of the College, who, in his written receipt of the gift, had thanked the donor named as 'Mrs. Amy Leech, wydowe, our good founder's sister's daughter' (quoted in Stevenson and Salter, *Early History of St John's College*, Appendix 27, 472). Also see M. Jourdain, 'Embroideries in the Possession of St John's College Oxford', *Connoisseur* 44 (1916), 27-31.

²²⁷ William Holden Hutton, *William Laud* (London: Methuen, 1895), 110.

²²⁸ In an illuminating article, Reid Barbour analyses the language used by Laud in a range of diary entries where dreams are recorded, and highlights the anxiety expressed by 'the uncontrollable nature' of many of them, which 'sets them in direct contrast to the liturgies and ceremonies that he can regulate in their every particle.': Reid Barbour, 'Liturgy and Dreams in Seventeenth-Century England' in *Modern Philology*, 88 (1991), 227-242 (227).

(diary entry for 2 November 1642)²²⁹

The changing fortunes of St John's, in terms of both financial and political clout, are reflected in the college's track record of failure and success in hosting important guests. The more youthful St John's College of 1583, which had only just begun to be able to fill its quota of fellows, had failed to entice the Polish ambassador, Albertus Laski, to enter the college on his way up St Giles', leaving Oxford after a sojourn at Christ Church (during which Gager's plays had been staged for him). Holinshed notes how he paused at the very threshold of St John's, but declined their offer of hospitality:

At afternoone the fourth & last daie, he went towards Woodstocke manour, and without the north gate by the waie he was inuited vnto a banquet at saint Iohns college, where the gates & outward wals ouercouered with thousands of verses, & other emblematicall poetries then offered him, argued their hartie goodwils: but his hasting to his iournies end caused him not to tarrie the delicat banquet; yet onelie staieng the deliuerie of a sweet oration and his owne quicke wittie replie therevnto, he departed immediatelie, accompanied for a mile or two with the most of those reuerend doctors and heads of houses all on horsebacke, where the orator againe gaue him an orators farewell.²³⁰

This was no doubt a rather sorry incident for St John's and a blow to their morale, for they had displayed their academic offerings on paper and in person and received a politely uninterested rebuff. Evidently Laski had not been sufficiently impressed by the verbal feast covering the walls or the oration performed at the doorway to step inside and taste the banquet which they had prepared in readiness, in case their entreaties were successful.

In 1636, Christ Church was scheduled as the ultimate destination and grand host of the King and Queen, just as it had been in 1566 and 1592 for Queen Elizabeth and in 1605 for King James. Therefore, at the moment of Atkinson's speech at the entrance to St John's on Monday 29 August 1636, Laud's college may have seemed to still be in the same position to the last time the monarch visited Oxford, in 1605, when it played second fiddle to its richer, larger sibling down the

²²⁹ Laud, *Works*, vol. 3, 246.

²³⁰ Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587), vol. 6, 1355. Text accessed online via the Holinshed Project at: <<http://www.cems.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/extracts2.shtml>> (accessed August 2015).

road. The short presentation made by Atkinson mirrored that of Matthew Gwinne's actors performing the brief pageant *Tres Sibyllae* outside the front of the college in 1605, catching a brief moment in the limelight as King James passed by on his way to Christ Church. James' son and heir, Prince Charles, was with him at the time, then just five years old, and *Laud*, too, was also a witness to Gwinne's threshold pageant, being, in 1605, a senior fellow of the college and one of the university proctors. Thus it was that by 1636 a monarch had never before stepped foot inside the college. Indeed, the expense of hosting him on that occasion was something which the St John's of 1605 would never have been able to contemplate.

However, much had changed since 1605; St John's had grown significantly in wealth and confidence. Backed by an *alumnus* who had risen to high office in university, church, and state, the college was itself raised up by Laud's success, through his substantial financial benefactions and pervasive influence, which brought the court and university leaders across the threshold into St John's and gave its members strategic opportunities to showcase their talents to these potential employers. The royal visit of 1636 marked and formalised the growth of the college and Laud's own part in it. He had raised up his *alma mater* just as it had raised him, and he was using his influence to propel college-bred protégés into strategic offices.

Therefore I argue that the college's change in circumstances from 1605 to 1636 is reflected in its new position in the programme of the royal visit. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, by the time of the Christmas revels of 1607-8, St John's had begun to regard itself as an up-and-coming sibling to Christ Church in all things theatrical, but now, in 1636, it was a fully-fledged rival and could command serious and lucrative royal attention for its entertainments. Thus it was that when Wright gave his oration to the king on Tuesday 30 August 1636, it was a dramatic moment which ceremonialised the monarch's passage into the new library for the first time, and St John's could be said to have 'come of age'.

The balance of power: university and college systems of qualification

Laud's building programme at St John's coincides with another great edifice of his chancellorship (1629-41): the Laudian Code, a newly revised version of the statutes for the university. This project

concluded with Convocation's formal acceptance of the *Codex authenticus* of statutes on 22 June 1636, a document which boasted both Laud's seals as Chancellor of the University and Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Great Seal of England from the King.²³¹ One of the innovations of the Code was the statute by which Laud introduced public oral examinations for university degrees (Stat. Tit. ix. Sectio II):

Sectio II.

DE EXAMINANDIS GRADUUM CANDIDATIS PER MAGISTROS
NECESSARIO REGENTES.

§. 1. *De Examinandis iis qui Gradus in Artibus capessunt, aut in
Iurisprudentia, priusquam in Artibus inceperint.*

Quo exploratior sit Congregationi Regentium eruditio ac in bonis
Literis progressus singulorum, qui Gradus in Artibus capessunt, aut in
Iurisprudentia, priusquam in Artibus inceperint : Statutum est, quod
unusquisque, antequam ad supplicandum pro Gratia admittatur, Magistrorum
Regentium Examen subeat. [...]

Neque vero in Philosophicis solis, (intra quos fines stetit angusta
superioris Sæculi eruditio,) verum etiam in Philologicis instituat Examen.
Ac præcipue Examinatoribus explorandum incumbit, qua quisque polleat
facultate animi sui sensa lingua Latina explicandi. Neque enim ad Artium
Baccalaureatum, nisi qui congrue et prompte, nedum ad Magistralem Gradum
(eive supparem), nisi qui commode et apte, in rebus quotidiani usus, animi sui
sensa lingua Latina explicare valeat, admitti quenquam volumus.^{232 233}

²³¹ Andrew Hegarty elucidates Laud's strategic control over the project in *The History of Oxford University Press*, vol. 1, 164-7. For a photograph of the *Codex authenticus*, displaying cancellarial and royal authority side by side with its two impressive seals, see Plate 11.

²³² Quotations from the university statutes are taken from this edition: John Griffiths (ed.), *Statutes of the University of Oxford codified in the year 1636 under the authority of Archbishop Laud, Chancellor of the University* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888).

²³³ 'SECTION 2. OF THE EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATES FOR DEGREES BY THE MASTERS NECESSARILY REGENT. CHAPTER 1. Of the Examination of those who take Degrees in Arts, or in Law, before they become Inceptors in Arts. In order that the learning and progress in polite letters of all persons taking degrees in arts may be more fully ascertained by the Congregation of Regents, and also of those who take degrees in law, before they become inceptors in arts, it is enacted that every person, before his admission to supplicate for a grace, shall undergo an examination by the regent masters. [...] The examination is not to be on philosophical subjects merely, to which limits the narrow learning of the last age was confined, but

There is much of interest in the Laudian statutes, and much that might be said about this particular excerpt, but I shall confine myself to highlighting certain points. Firstly, note the choice of criterion by which a candidate's level of learning (*eruditio*) and progress (*progressus*) is to be judged: the crucial skill under examination is the ability to express oneself in Latin. This criterion is specified to the examiners as their chief concern ('præcipue Examinatoribus explorandum'), and the description of the skill is repeated twice ('qua quisque polleat facultate animi sui sensa lingua Latina explicandi ... animi sui sensa lingua Latina explicare valeat'). Those being examined for the BA must demonstrate that they can express themselves in Latin with consistency and readiness ('congrue et prompte'), and the MA candidates must do the same but with added accuracy and finesse ('commode et apte').

The statute takes a strong position on the kinds of learning which are currently valued in 1630s Oxford, condemning 'the narrow learning of the last age' ('angusta superioris Sæculi eruditio'), restricted as it was (at least so Laud claims) to mere 'philosophy', and attempting to rectify the situation by asserting the central role of philology ('in Philologicis'). As Mordechai Feingold puts it, 'the Laudian statutes themselves made clear that the ultimate purpose of both the BA and MA courses was to ensure, above all, the acquisition of a mastery of language and literature.'²³⁴ But we may add to this that it is not knowledge of language and literature that is being tested in these new oral examinations, but the *performance* of that knowledge in public, as if on stage. Might we draw a parallel, therefore, between candidates performing in Latin before their university examiners and scholars performing in Latin on a college stage? Do they, in some ways, fulfil the same function? That is certainly what the apologists for the drama insisted. Further below I will posit the example of George Wilde's Latin comedy *Eumorphus sive Cupido Adultus* ('Eumorphus or Cupid Grown-Up') as a test case to help answer this question.

also on matters of philology ; and a principal object of inquiry with the examiners will be, what facility the several persons have of expressing their thoughts in Latin ; for it is our will that no persons shall be admitted to the bachelorship of arts but those who can with consistency and readiness, and still less to the master's degree, or any on a footing with it, but those who can with suitableness and aptitude, express their thoughts in Latin on matters of daily occurrence.' (trans. G.R.M. Ward, in James Heywood and G.R.M. Ward (eds.), *Oxford University Statutes* (London: William Pickering, 1845-51), vol. 1, 85-87).

²³⁴ Mordechai Feingold, 'The Humanities' in Tyacke (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 4, 215.

Given the influence of Laud on his own college's drama (discussed earlier in this chapter), and on the university drama (especially in 1636, discussed below), it would also be fruitful to investigate how his interventions in theatre relate to and inform his prescriptions for university ceremonies and his promotion of the culture of Latin speaking. Further study of Laud's role would illuminate the enticing connections between college drama, university drama, and ceremonial performances of various kinds. We might consider how plays, orations, and other kinds of performance functioned as rites of passage in certain contexts, such as the Act. The public appearance of candidates at the Act, the annual graduation ceremony, was complemented, and to some extent satirised, by the performance of a playful opponent, the so-called *terrae filius*, whom Feingold has aptly termed 'the academic version of the lord of misrule'.²³⁵ Interestingly, though the input of a *terrae filius* figure had been a part of proceedings for some years, the role was only enshrined as a formal feature of the Act by the Laudian statutes: he was to be nominated by the Senior Proctor for the Act and was tasked with challenging the incepting bachelor of arts or master of arts in a lighter vein. Laud's codification of the *terrae filius* in the 1630s did not anticipate the embarrassments to which the authorities would be subjected in later years, for by the 1660s the tradition had developed and gained satirical momentum of the most biting kind and it sometimes resulted in the expulsion of the *terrae filius* from the university.²³⁶ The staging of the Act is of great interest for its overlapping function as both an official university ceremony and a series of entertainments offered to a wider community, for the event also sometimes included plays and afforded a spectacle of more general interest to members of the public who frequently came to watch.²³⁷

That Laud believed it was necessary to introduce a university-wide requirement for all students of all colleges to pass centralised examinations in public before receiving their degrees reveals something about the balance of power between the university and the colleges at this time.

²³⁵ *ibid.*, 304.

²³⁶ See Kristine Haugen, 'Imagined Universities: Public Insult and the *Terrae Filius* in Early Modern Oxford', *History of Universities* 16 (2000), 1-31; Felicity Henderson, 'Putting the Dons in Their Place: A Restoration Oxford *Terrae Filius* Speech', in *History of Universities* 16 (2000), 32-64. Also see L.A. Holford-Strevens' archival investigation into records of speeches which date to the second half of the century: 'Some Seventeenth-Century *Terrae filii*: Evidence in the *Bodleian*', *Bodleian Library Record*, 11 (1984), 260-263. ²³⁷ Haugen, 'Imagined Universities: Public Insult and the *Terrae filius* in Early Modern Oxford', 2.

For the university's status as the authority for setting standards and conferring degrees was to some extent undermined by the various traditions which existed in the colleges. The college was the centre of a student's daily life, and membership of the university body meant first having membership of a college community. As James McConica has pointed out, Queen Elizabeth's attempts to ensure all university members took the oath of supremacy had the effect of increasing the colleges' role as the gatekeepers of their communities, charged with administrating matriculation and approval of candidates petitioning for grace to receive their degrees.²³⁸ 'With the growth of collegiate authority over the undergraduate population ... it meant that the colleges not only effectively controlled admission to the university but the awarding of degrees as well.'²³⁹ With this in mind, we might wonder if there is a competitive edge to Laud's stipulation in statute Stat. Tit. ix. Sectio II that the public oral examination now introduced by the university must be satisfactorily completed *before* a student may supplicate to for the college grace ('antequam ad supplicandum pro Gratia admittatur'). Laud knew well the power of the college's right to confer grace at its own discretion, for in the wake of his election to the presidency of St John's College, this power had been used to punish those who had not supported him. William Holden Hutton has edited documents relating to the election in 1611 (contained in Bodleian MS. Tanner 338) which offer evidence that the problems experienced by some particular students wishing to petition for grace were the consequence of deliberate political machinations, namely 'punishment by delay of their degrees of the most prominent rioters.'²⁴⁰

The history of individual college communities (encompassing personalities, politics, and traditions) supplements decisively what we know of the university's role in conferring official degrees titles. A student's sense of achievement might be ratified much more effectively by his college than by the university as a corporation, and this is illuminating for our understanding of what it meant to have succeeded in one's university studies. Was the official degree title the main badge of honour? Or were there other, more significant methods of winning recognition which might be considered more valuable and useful than the title itself? It is surely important that

²³⁸ McConica, 'The rise of the undergraduate college', 50.

²³⁹ *ibid.*, 65.

²⁴⁰ William Holden Hutton, *S. John Baptist College*, 121.

relatively few students came to Oxford or Cambridge in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and left with a degree conferred upon them; indeed, G.W. Bill in his survey of Christ Church students notes that a conspicuous proportion left shortly before (frequently only a term or so before) the moment when they would have fulfilled the statutory residence required to obtain their university degree.²⁴¹ There were various reasons why students might end their studies early, financial pressures for example, but Bill's study of the college history and the noticeable discrepancies between college and university records leads him to conclude that 'degrees were recognized in the college for which the university gave no authority.'²⁴² This argument is especially convincing when we consider that Christ Church's traditional system for students petitioning for the college grace in order to receive their degree required them to give a rhetorical performance: '[t]he petition took the form of an oration which was recited in the presence of the Dean and Chapter. [...] The oration was an opportunity for the orator to demonstrate his accomplishments.'²⁴³ Far from an administrative matter, therefore, the student's sense of achievement came from successfully performing before his head of house. Did St John's College have its own tradition comparable to that of Christ Church?

The idea of a 'degree play' at St John's College: George Wilde's *Eumorphus sive Cupido Adultus* (1635)

George Wilde (1610-1665) was schooled at the Merchant Taylors' from the age of nine, rose through the ranks to Head Monitor there, and was elected to a Merchant Taylors' scholarship at St John's College, Oxford. He matriculated on 13 November 1629, aged 19, read law, and then entered the priesthood. His success as an author of sermons and as an orator (an important aspect of his ecclesiastical duties), combined with Laud's interest in supporting him as his protégé, enabled Wilde to rise high in his profession, as will be discussed further below. But Laud was also a patron of his theatrical writing, and chose Wilde as the man to compose a play for King Charles' visit in 1636. The result was the English comedy *Love's Hospital*, which pleased the royal party when it was performed at St John's, as part of Laud's grand scheme. It demonstrated Wilde's adaptability

²⁴¹ G.W. Bill, *Education at Christ Church, Oxford, 1660-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 151-2.

²⁴² *ibid.*, 141.

²⁴³ *ibid.*

as a dramatist, for the year before he had proved himself according to quite a different set of expectations, those of college rather than court, with his Latin comedy *Eumorphus sive Cupido Adultus* ('Eumorphus or Cupid Grown-Up').

This play has been preserved in a single manuscript, British Museum Add. MS. 14047, together with the text of *Love's Hospital* (which is explored below alongside the other royal plays of 1636). The title page to the *Eumorphus* states that it was staged on 5 February 1634/5 and was performed by St John's men ('Acta a Ioannensibus', fol. 60r); Wilde was very likely to have been a member of the cast, just as he was for *Love's Hospital* the following year. The writer is named as 'Authore Georgio Wilde / eiusdem Coll. Soc. et L.L. Bacc.' ('author George Wilde, Fellow and Bachelor of Law of the same College'), and it seems significant that this performance was arranged to take place two days before the degree of Bachelor of Civil Law (BCL) was conferred upon him. The editor of the play, H.J. Vienken, supports the view that the *Eumorphus sive Cupido Adultus* could have had a quasi-qualificatory function, remarking that it was 'written probably for the Bachelors' Commencement'.²⁴⁴ While it is not strictly true that a production such as this was required in an official sense for the student to proceed BCL, the acquisition of letters after a name was not the only way for a scholar to feel that his achievement had been recognised. The performance of a scholarly Latin work by his peers before his tutors displayed his achievement conspicuously as an event in itself. Indeed, as the play's alternative title suggests (*Cupido Adultus*, 'Cupid Grown-Up'), the play was in some sense offered by Wilde as a dramatisation of his own coming of age, marking his transition from studenthood to the professional world of work.

The concept of a 'degree play' was first mooted by J.R. Elliott in 1988, who put forward the instance of Edward Watson, of no stated college or hall, in 1512, and that of Martin Lluellyn of Christ Church in 1640 as examples of the phenomenon.²⁴⁵ In his article, Elliott argued that it was likely there were more such instances to be identified (and pointed to St John's College, Oxford, as a possible source, following an insightful suggestion by G. E. Bentley). But he did not proceed further with his investigations, choosing instead to recapitulate the same material in two later

²⁴⁴ H.J. Vienken, *Eumorphus sive Cupido adultus: A Latin Academic Comedy of the Seventeenth Century / Edited from British Museum Add. MS. 14047* (München: W. Fink, 1973), 53. I follow the text of this edition in all quotations, and the line-numbering system as found there, which differs from that in his facsimile edition of 1981 in the *Renaissance Latin Drama in England* series (Hildesheim: G. Olms).

²⁴⁵ John R. Elliott Jr., 'Degree Plays', *Oxoniensia* 53 (1988), 341-42.

articles.²⁴⁶ This seems a fruitful topic to explore further and I have highlighted the existence of individual college traditions and the powerful role which the college authorities, in parallel (if not in competition) with the university authorities, played in conferring degrees upon student members. Membership of the college was central to a scholar's sense of identity and we have seen the extent to which, in the case of St John's but no doubt in the case of other colleges too, years spent building one's reputation amongst the fellows of the college community could be translated into valuable opportunities later on, since networks of friendship and patronage, if managed well, could extend well past studenthood and into one's professional career.

Wilde's professional success, when he rose through the ranks of the Church to become a bishop, was not dependent upon his having been awarded the BCL degree by the university (for as G.W. Bill reminds us 'the possession of a degree, if not a matter of indifference was of small practical value. A degree, for example, was not the essential prerequisite of ordination for those entering the Church.'²⁴⁷). What was of more practical strategic value, in that it distinguished certain students over others and gave them lucrative advantages in the job market, was the possession of an influential patron such as Laud. He typically favoured his fellow St John's men, and the year after Wilde had proved himself as a dramatist with his *Eumorphus sive Cupido Adultus*, Laud gave him the major commission of the royal play for Charles' visit. Wilde's successful completion of this task led to more serious preferment, for it was in the same year that his *Love's Hospital* was staged before the king that Wilde became chaplain to Laud, which constituted no small promotion, given that his patron was now Archbishop of Canterbury. Laud also presented him with various livings, such as the rectorship of Biddenham in Kent and the vicarage in St. Giles, Reading.

Wilde was a committed royalist, and he returned to Oxford during the Civil War to become the king's preacher once Charles was stationed there. Abraham Wright, who had been a regular preacher at St Mary's, Oxford, and at St Paul's, London during the 1640s, followed suit. I note that the careers and personal allegiances of Wright and Wilde intersect to a considerable extent, as does their shared history as members of the St John's community serving Laud's interests in

²⁴⁶ John R. Elliott Jr., 'Plays, Players and Playwrights in Renaissance Oxford'; John R. Elliott Jr., 'Early Staging in Oxford', in John D. Cox and David Kastan (eds.), *A New History of Early English Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 68-76.

²⁴⁷ Bill, *Education at Christ Church, Oxford*, 152.

the 1630s. The pattern of performance and reward is interesting: both men played a prominent role in the grand entertainments of 1636, both became the king's preachers at Oxford, and their oratorical skills proved an important asset on the royalist side in the religio-political struggle of the time. When we consider the importance of the college drama in this bigger picture, we can see how the new prosperity and status enjoyed by St John's, rooted in Laud's wealth and influence, had changed the balance of power and made the college stage a serious platform for professional advancement. More than ever before, this was an arena in which proving one's skills as a writer and/or actor could have significant long-term implications for one's career.

The fact that Wilde's sermon at St Mary's in 1642 was printed by Leonard Lichfield, Printer to the University, demonstrates how his performance at the pulpit became part of the propaganda machine of the royalist faction headquartered at Oxford during the Civil War. The title of the work emphasises the importance of the audience of this sermon and the legitimacy of their government: *A sermon preached upon Sunday the third of March in St Maries Oxford before the great assembly of the Members, of the Honourable House of Commons there assembled* (with the word 'COMMONS' emboldened in upper case letters, enlarged nearly to the size of the main heading, 'SERMON'). In his dedication (addressed to Sir William Boteler, who was Colonel of a regiment of horse), Wilde showed that he knew his skills as an orator could make a contribution, however small, to his side's winning the war, restoring to England its true government: 'Offering up a Stone, how Rough and Vnpolish'd soever, to the Building of this Temple'.²⁴⁸ He portrays himself as fighting for the king with his words, just as others fight with weapons: 'Sir, This is That which I plead for in the Pulpit, though, I confesse, with more Zeale, then Learning; and this is That which you Fight for in the Field, with no lesse Courage then Loyalty'.²⁴⁹

Like others on the royalist side, Wilde was forcibly removed from his fellowship in 1648 by the Parliamentary Visitors of the University, but, having kept up his support of faithful Royalists during the Republic by preaching in private houses, at the Restoration he was made the Bishop of Londonderry (January 1661). When he died a few years later, on 29 December 1665, his successor to the bishopric, Robert Mossom, delivered the funeral sermon for him, in which he celebrated

²⁴⁸ sig. A2v.

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*

Wilde's long service to the cause, naming him 'a Blessed Assertor of Loyalty'.²⁵⁰

The royal plays at Oxford in 1636: A story of three dramatists and two colleges

When King Charles and Queen Henrietta Maria, together with their nephews the Princes Rupert and Charles, arrived in Oxford on Monday 29 August 1636, they saw William Strode's *The Floating Island* performed at Christ Church that evening. The following day the royal party assembled for a double dose of Oxford drama, first at St John's College, where they watched George Wilde's *Love's Hospital*, and then, later in the evening, at Christ Church for the production of William Cartwright's *The Royal Slave*. The theme of law and order dominated the plays of the Christ Church men: Strode's play dramatized a country lapsing into anarchy in the absence of its fair and just ruler, the aptly-named King Prudentius, whose reinstatement swiftly returned everything to its proper order by the end of the play, whilst Cartwright's *The Royal Slave* presented the virtuous exemplar of Cratandar, who used his scholarly wisdom to benefit a kingdom temporarily given into his care. Both plays invited the audience to reflect upon issues of good governance and to recognise that here amongst the university men were the talented, well-educated leaders of the future, ready to serve and guide the commonwealth. However, each of the two Christ Church dramatists handled this theme differently, and Cartwright's success (in contrast to the limp reception of Strode's play) was matched by the court's enjoyment of Wilde's play at St John's.

Unlike Wilde and Cartwright, this was William Strode's first foray into play-making; he had been selected to author one of the entertainments for the royal party based on his superior reputation as a poet and an orator. A Westminster scholar who came up to Christ Church in 1617, Strode was a precocious poet and by 1619 had already been invited to contribute Latin verses to the university's collection *Annae Funebria Sacra* (published in 1619). In 1629 he was appointed Public Orator to the University, a role which brought him into regular contact with Oxford's Chancellor, an office which was held by Laud himself from 1630 until 1641. It was in his capacity as Public Orator to the University that Strode was brought before King Charles in 1635 and 1636; it was his

²⁵⁰ Robert Mossom, *A narrative panegyric of the life, sickness, and death, of George, By Divine Providence, Lord Bishop of Derry in Ireland as it was delivered at his funerals in the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity (commonly called Christ Church) in Dublin on Friday the 12th of January, Anno Domini 1665/6 / by R. Mossom, D.D. and Dean of the said Cathedral Church* (London, 1666), sig. A2v.

task to welcome the monarch with a speech on his arrival, first on the outskirts of Oxford at Woodstock (1635) and then within the bounds of the city itself, at Christ Church (1636). Margaret Forey argues for a direct causal link between Strode's oratorical performance at Woodstock in 1635, in which he addressed Charles in terms of a god ('Christo proxime homo-deus'), and the King's decision soon afterwards to annexe the next available Christ Church canonry to whomever happened to be in the post of Orator.²⁵¹ Accordingly it was Strode to whom this significant promotion was granted when the next canonry became vacant, in 1638; this was an advantageous set-up in several respects, as the office of Christ Church canon offered 'prestige, income, and a house in the Cathedral cloisters, but also the possibility of marriage'.²⁵² Archbishop-Chancellor Laud's influential position in relation to the king strengthened Strode's access to royal patronage, and his support for the young orator was connected with another central figure in Strode's life, Richard Corbett, who had been Chaplain-in-Ordinary to King James and Dean of Christ Church. Strode had become chaplain to Corbett in 1628, the year Corbett rose to become bishop, and Christopher Burlinson has highlighted the evidence of manuscript compositions circulated between these three men and the network of patronage which this reveals.²⁵³

Such was Laud's interest in Strode that he seems to have overestimated his protégé's abilities, giving him opportunities to display before the king talents which he did not have; his attempt to write a play was a notable failure. This is revealing for our understanding of what makes a successful play, as opposed to a successful speech or sermon. Though he had a proven track record both as a public orator and a poet, this did not make him a success as a dramatist, a task which required additional skills and sensibilities. As Forey puts it, 'Strode had no instinctive feeling for drama.'²⁵⁴ He also seems to have misunderstood his audience. Laud himself admitted that *The Floating Island* was not pitched quite right for the royal party, though he commended it for being a good piece of writing: it 'was very well penned, but yet did not take the Court so

²⁵¹ Margaret Forey, 'William Strode's *The Floating Island*: Play and Political Propaganda', *The Seventeenth Century*, 27 (2012), 129-56 (131).

²⁵² *ibid.*

²⁵³ Christopher Burlinson, 'Richard Corbett and William Strode: Chaplaincy and verse in early seventeenth-century Oxford' in Hugh Adlington, Tom Lockwood, and Gillian Wright (eds.), *Chaplains in Early Modern England: Patronage, Literature and Religion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 141-58.

²⁵⁴ Forey, 'William Strode's *The Floating Island*: Play and Political Propaganda', 131.

well.²⁵⁵ This seems, then, to have been a case of something being better on the page than on the stage, a view which was shared by others who attended the production: A.J. Taylor has edited the valuable evidence of George Garrard, chaplain to the Earl of Northumberland, who reflected on Strode's play that it was 'Fitter for schollers then a Court'.²⁵⁶

By contrast, his fellow Christ Church dramatist Cartwright had a more instinctive flair for the dramatic. He also appraised the challenge to amuse and impress the royal audience with greater accuracy and astuteness than Strode, remarking in one of his epilogues to *The Royal Slave* 'There's difference twixt a Colledge and a Court; / The one expecteth Science, the other sport.'²⁵⁷ Cartwright showed a deeper understanding of how to balance elements of moral didacticism with entertainment value, including several songs and dances by the composer Henry Lawes (Ian Spink asserts 'there can be no doubt that the success of Cartwright's *The Royal Slave* owed much to the music.'²⁵⁸) The visual qualities of Cartwright's production, with their exotic Persian costumes, caught the eye of Queen Henrietta, who requested a second performance of the play (Laud noted in particular that 'the strangeness of the Persian habits gave great content'²⁵⁹).

The Royal Slave was re-staged for her at Hampton Court on 12 January 1637, with professional players, the King's men, taking over the roles in place of the original cast, for the queen informed Laud that she wished to 'see whether they could do it as well as it was done in the university.'²⁶⁰ Laud reported contentedly that 'by all men's confession, the players came short of the university actors.'²⁶¹ We may have only his word for this triumph by the scholars, and Laud cannot be considered to be an unbiased judge. However, what is certain is that Cartwright had found a way to adapt his learning and his writing experience at university such that it might gain wider appeal and please a court audience. His comedy *The Ordinary* had been performed by 1635, but before a closed audience of university men, and as his editor Gwynne Blakemore Evans puts it,

²⁵⁵ Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, part 1, 149.

²⁵⁶ A.J. Taylor, 'The royal visit to Oxford in 1636', *Oxoniensia*, 1936, 151-8 (156).

²⁵⁷ William Cartwright, *The royall slaue: A tragi-comedy. Presented to the King and Queene by the students of Christ-Church in Oxford. August 30. 1636. Presented since to both their Majesties at Hampton-Court by the Kings Servants.* (Oxford, 1639), sig. H4v. This epilogue was written for a repeat performance of the play not long after the royals had departed, this time solely for a university audience. Strode's *Floating Island* was also repeated at Christ Church for this occasion.

²⁵⁸ Ian Spink, *Henry Lawes: Cavalier Songwriter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 66.

²⁵⁹ Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, part 1, 153.

²⁶⁰ *ibid.*

²⁶¹ Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, part 1, 153-4.

The Royal Slave ‘was the first to receive more than academic recognition.’²⁶² Having thus succeeded in attracting court interest in his work, he went to London to supervise the production at Hampton Court and was awarded the sum of forty pounds as an honorarium, at least twice the average don’s annual salary.

George Wilde also proved he had the right skills when he was challenged to produce a play for the royal party. Laud was pleased with the outcome: ‘The plot was very good, and the action. It was merry, and without offence, and so gave a great deal of content.’²⁶³ Laud’s words are revealing as to why Wilde’s play succeeded where Strode’s of the previous day had failed. *Love’s Hospital* paid more attention to carefully-devised intrigues, twists and turns of plot which retained the audience’s interest, and, in contrast to the relentlessly didactic spirit of *The Floating Island*, it did not lecture the court on good governance. What lessons the audience might draw from Wilde’s play were more subtly conveyed, for, as I will show, the production was admirably effective as a vehicle for reflecting on serious matters and promoting Laud’s political interests.

On the face of it, the main plotline is basic and relies upon the audience’s amusement as the suitors for the hand of the maiden Facetia struggle with the various physical disabilities with which they have been burdened. In the first scene of the play (I.i), Facetia bemoans the situation in which her father has placed her, surrounding her with the following choice of men for her to marry: ‘A lame vserer / Another lowde of tongue but deafe in ears / Another dumbe.’(87-9)²⁶⁴ He who is ‘lowde of tongue but deafe in ears’ is Surdato the general, a character who provides a particularly useful case study for comparing Wilde’s approaches to drama for two different audiences, court and college. In both *Love’s Hospital* and his Latin play of the previous year, *Eumorphus sive Cupido Adultus*, Wilde has created characters of the braggart soldier type and woven them into the main plot, but the *modus operandi* of the comedy surrounding Polymachaeroplacides in the *Eumorphus* is distinct in that it relies heavily upon knowledge of classical models and fluency in Latin in order to unravel the jokes and word-puns.

²⁶² Gwynne Blakemore Evans (ed.), *The Plays and Poems of William Cartwright* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1951), 13.

²⁶³ Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, part 1, 153.

²⁶⁴ I am following the text and line numbering of J.L. Funston’s edition, *A critical edition of Love’s Hospital by George Wilde* (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1973).

Surdato and his companion Macilento (who plays the role of parasite) are introduced into *Love's Hospital* in the final scene of Act I, with Surdato's promise that his minion 'shalt be allowed two drachms / Of flesh more A weeke' (398-9) in return for helping Surdato win the object of his desire, the maiden Facetia. With Surdato's deafness, various problems in communication arise, and Wilde sustains the comedy of Macilento outwitting him, in a manner that might not pass the test of political correctness in a modern setting. The able-bodied but poor Macilento (forced into his dependent, servile status) enjoys insulting his master without being heard by him, declaring, for instance that Facetia 'bad me tell your honour you were / A doteinge Ass' (409-10), to which the oblivious Surdato replies 'Oh she thanckes me with all her harte does she' (411). The soldier continues to assume that the maiden is attracted to him and his over-confident conduct amuses the audience who, by contrast, have the use of their ears and know what is going on. Surdato's lack of perception reaches its denouement in Act V when he is busily congratulating himself on having been chosen by Facetia as her husband: 'I knew I was the man, see how she has / dispatchd the rest that I alone might have her' (Act V Scene v, lines 1725-6). In reality, at that moment the only reason he is the only suitor left standing with the girl is because he alone has not heard her speech sending her suitors away, so that they may vie to complete a particular mission she has set in order to win her hand ('He that shall first performe this Taske / Takes me to wife', 1716-7). Surdato, who never even enters the competition and is therefore not in with any chance of the marriage, eventually comes to realise something is amiss: 'What taske?' he asks (line 1892).

In addition to the general merriment caused by this handling of the braggart soldier type, Wilde achieves something more significant. He develops Surdato into what we might term an 'anti-host' figure, who never provides. The frustrated, poverty-stricken Macilento is constantly denied food, and though his grumbles are the parasite's habitual complaint, his hunger begins to be expressed with some genuine desperation: 'Some breade and meate for the Lords sake / I dye else' (452-3). This pointedly contrasts with the audience's contented situation: not only have they just been treated to a splendid feast before the start of the play, when the king and queen had sat down to a special banquet spread out in the new library,²⁶⁵ Laud had chosen to provide yet another dinner for his guests which was laid out during the play itself. He recounted giving the instructions for

²⁶⁵ See above, pages 224-6.

this interval in his *Works*: ‘In the middle of the Play, I ordered a short Banquet for the King, the Queen, and the Lords.’²⁶⁶ He draws attention to himself and his conscientious generosity as host; he is the provider who thinks of his guests’ needs and takes care to anticipate any means by which their enjoyment of the entertainment offered them at St John’s might be enhanced. His description of events emphasises his directorial role in creating the right atmosphere in the dining hall, the venue for *Love’s Hospital*: ‘I caused the windows of the hall to be shut, the candles lighted, and all things made ready for the play to begin.’²⁶⁷ Laud’s keen attention to detail is noteworthy; he seems to have understood the importance of making sure the audience were in physical comfort to watch the play, as this would affect their enjoyment of it. Thus he attends to the quality of the air they will breathe: the hall was ‘kept as fresh and cool, that there was not any one person when the king and queen came into it.’²⁶⁸

As one of the actors as well as the author of the play (as discussed above), George Wilde had a dual responsibility to ensure the audience was entertained. He and Laud’s interests were in alignment; both knew the personal gain to be had from the success of the event at St John’s (see above on the career paths of the two men). The quality of Wilde’s acting performance on this occasion is unknown, but the text of his play shows him creating opportunities to bring hospitality to the minds of the audience as a theme which would highlight the opulent generosity of their host Archbishop Laud and the abundance of feasting which they had enjoyed at his college (feasting taken in both a literal and a metaphorical sense, as discussed below). Wilde shows a talent for cultivating the comic potential of this theme when he stages the figure of the hopeless host Surdato, who earns himself much criticism from the rampantly hungry Macilento, declaring that if Facetia is ever to marry Surdato:

She muste learne to feed, and live vpon grass
 For there is noe flesh in your house: your whole yeare
 Is made vp of Lents, Emberweeks, and Hollyday-Eves. (417-20)

²⁶⁶ Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, part 1, 153. It is not clear whether the banquet would have been served during a self-contained interval, completely cleared before the play resumed, or whether some overlap (entirely appropriate to the context of the dining hall venue) would have occurred.

²⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 152.

²⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 153.

This vision of the household observing continual fasting, on a vegetarian diet without meat, does more than simply amuse the audience with the idea of Facetia as the future Mrs Surdato munching grass at meal times; the act of drawing amusement from the extremes of fasting throws the audience's current experience of feasting into high relief.

Macilento's situation deteriorates to the point where, in Act IV Scene v, on seeing a pair of constables arriving, he asks to be arrested so that he can partake of 'feedeings there / In the prison' (1326-7). He is aghast when they leave without taking anyone prisoner, and when Surdato declares his belief that they were not constables at all but in fact servants come from the Venetian ambassadors to bring him an invitation to dinner, Macilento replies: 'Worse and worse we are like to feed all this day on / These immaginations' (1362-3). The fantasies of Surdato's world, which combines the disability of deafness with a certain amount of wilful self-deception, contrasts with Macilento's grip on the harsh truths of reality, that there is no dinner to be had. Fortunately for Macilento, all ends happily, for at the end of the play his obstruction of Surdato's pursuit of Facetia is rewarded by the father, Lepidus, who grants him leave to dine with his household: 'You Macilento for your good service shall / Live in commons here' (1911-12). Spoken in the context of a college dining hall, this line has an obvious reference to the community of scholars at St John's, who took their 'commons' (i.e. communal meals) in that very space; we may imagine the actor who speaks Lepidus' line gesturing to the place he is standing in when he says 'in commons here'.

The character of Lepidus deserves a special mention here, for he seems calculated to evoke the figure of Laud. Described as 'A merry humorouse old Lord' in the *dramatis personae* (British Museum Add. MS. 14047, fol.7v), Lepidus is the antidote to Surdato, the generous provider who invites everyone to a feast in the final scene. It is his lines which end the play on its festive note of merry feasting, addressing the audience in the manner of an epilogue as follows:

come frindes this happy close more joyes my harte
 Then all our forespent mirth: wee'le still hold vp.
 If wine and cheare can do'te our former Sceane
 of jollyty: and thes our new joynd lovers
 shall be attendants to vnite your joyes
 As are theyre hearts: and I your hoast will be
 the chorus mirth true Geniuss to you all.

And stile my howse the LOVERS HOSPITALL.

By means of this speech the author Wilde has constructed another, and this time decisive, bridge between the world of the play and the real, physical space in which it is performed. Lepidus' identification of himself as 'I your hoast' here at the end of the play inspires thoughts of Laud the host presiding over this entertainment; likewise 'my howse' evokes his college, St John's. Indeed, with the barriers between play and real life compromised, the play is itself revealed as an act of hospitality, wherein Laud has wined and dined his guests, feeding them on banquets of both food and words (or 'wine and cheare'). The metaphor of learning as feasting had been central to Abraham Wright's oration a few hours earlier, marking the moment when the king and queen stepped across the threshold into Laud's new college library, 'where every book presents a feast' (quoted above).²⁶⁹ Now their presence in the dining hall, partaking in the experience of a communal entertainment, gives Wilde the opportunity to emphasise that these honoured guests have been participating with their college hosts as one unified group, by sharing in the act of laughter at the comedy played before them. The character Lepidus' repetitive speech invites the audience to focus on the pleasures which this production has brought them ('joyes', 'mirth', and 'jollyty') and to take that happy memory away with them from St John's.

A prologue for *Love's Hospital* does not feature in the British Library manuscript of the play, but Callum Seddon has recently identified just such a prologue in Bodleian MS Rawl.poet.172. It is spoken by Cupid, addressing the King and Queen, and ends as follows:

Sit Royall Soules

And see what *your* blind Cupid, can *present*:

I've found in Naples a decrepit sorte

Of men, on whom I'le exercise my shafts :

The Blind, Lame, Deafe, & Dumb, shall feel the power.

Of Love & Scorne: This learned seat of Muses

Affords mee Antique Actors, who shall put on

These Mimick garbes: To please you & the King

²⁶⁹ Wright's oration is discussed above, pages 224-6. Edmund Gayton recorded in his *Epulae Oxonienses. Or a jocular relation of a banquet* that the food served in the library on that occasion actually included edible representations of university men modelled in marzipan (see footnote 212).

Wee will be hang'd, transform'd to any thing. (fol. 27r)²⁷⁰

Cupid emphasises to the royal party the intellectual credentials of the performance venue in which they are now seated: St John's College is 'This learned seat of Muses', where 'Antique Actors', that is scholars well-versed in the classical traditions of rhetoric and poetry, are to be found. As mentioned above, Laud made it known that he was proud of the fact that St John's had no need to borrow actors from any other college as it had its own excellent supply of well-trained talent. Now Cupid draws on that supply for the performance of *Love's Hospital*, a play in which these learned men will endeavour 'To please' their royal audience through their being 'transform'd' on stage.

There was another transformation at work in *Love's Hospital*, which saw elements of the Latin college play tradition (exemplified by Wilde's comedy at St John's the previous year, *Eumorphus sive Cupido Adultus*) adapted in the hope of pleasing a courtly audience. In contrast to the offering of plays in Latin to King James in 1605, all three plays offered to King Charles in 1636 were performed in English, and in *Love's Hospital* we have an excellent opportunity to observe Wilde responding to the challenge of reformulating *vis comica* to suit a different audience and a different language. Surdato is a re-invention of his *miles gloriosus* Polymachaeroplacides in the *Eumorphus*, who had functioned as an emblem of Wilde's classical learning in the play. Polymachaeroplacides appears in four scenes in the *Eumorphus*: Act II Scene i, Act II Scene iv, Act V Scene i, and the final scene of the play, Act V Scene vi, and he struts his way through a series of blunders as an over-confident warrior and hopeless lover. As a foil to the protagonist, Polymachaeroplacides is particularly effective, since Wilde is able to set the tradition of the *miles gloriosus*' bombastic claims against the grain of narrative development, highlighting the play's real hero, Eumorphus, via contrast, a man who really can seduce all others but wishes himself rid of such a power. The dramatic tableau of Eumorphus cutting open his face to pour poison into it, his subsequent regret on discovering that the girl Charissa now shuns him in his ugliness, and his final decision at the end of the play to commit to a life of celibacy – these key points of narrative development structure the *Eumorphus* around the theme of superficial love and the distraction of physical charms. Polymachaeroplacides, in his lust, vanity, and insatiable greed for attention, can

²⁷⁰ I am indebted to Callum Seddon for alerting me both to this prologue and to the epilogue for *Love's Hospital* contained in Bodleian MS Rawl. poet. 172, documents previously unrecorded and now identified by him. I take my quotations from his transcription. The epilogue is discussed below at page 253.

be said to personify all that Eumorphus rejects. The deeper sensitivities of Wilde's questioning of superficial value judgements and physical appearances are not to be found in *Love's Hospital* with its joyful celebration of disability comedy.

Polymachaeroplacides is caught up in a network of inter-textual Latin references which, unlike his creator, he is not sufficiently well-versed to negotiate. It is a great source of ironic humour in the depiction of this *miles gloriosus* (which we do not find in his English-language counterpart) that, while his character is forged from a patchwork of literary allusions, he himself is unable to master his models. This recipe for ridicule is established in Polymachaeroplacides' very first line in the play as he asks his sidekick: 'Cui me assimulas, Sclopo?' (I.ii.44).²⁷¹ Since the verb *adsumulo* can mean both 'make like, imitate' and 'counterfeit, use a disguise', the soldier is asking him to guess the disguise he has adopted with an added suggestion as to whom Polymachaeroplacides should choose as a role-model to imitate. Sclopo, whose characterisation is rooted in the parasite type (he is the direct equivalent of Macilento), knows his part; he must flatter the *miles* and secure his livelihood. Therefore, on seeing the soldier's affectation of a war wound (the eye-patch draped over a fully-working eye), he attempts a grand comparison with one of the literal 'giants' of mythology in order to play up to the soldier's sense of self-importance. Whom does Polymachaeroplacides look like? 'Polyphemo', Sclopo answers. Both the choice and the method of choice are amusing here, and Wilde lingers on the moment by having Sclopo run through an amusing checklist to make sure that Polymachaeroplacides really is like Polyphemus the Cyclops: they both have one head, one nose, and, the crucial criterion, one eye, 'monophthalmus'.

The unflattering portrayals of this figure in classical texts are not restricted to the savage monster type of Homer's *Odyssey*; other traditions view the Cyclops as comic, placing him in the role of a love-sick schoolboy who checks his hair and his other winning features in the water's reflection (Theocritus, *Idylls* VI; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XIII.840-53). His disastrous record with the girls is, however, famously consistent, and the comparison between him and the *miles* hints that Polymachaeroplacides may have more in common with Polyphemus than being one-eyed. Moreover, Sclopo may not be aware of the loaded meaning in his use of 'similius', but

²⁷¹ 'To whom do you liken me, Sclopo?'

audience members would likely recall the Petrarchan precept of *similitudo non identitas* and appreciate the joke of the ignoramus making an attempt to fashion his literary models in the proper way. The *doctus spectator* would also recognise Wilde's skilful reworking of a line from Plautus' *Amphitryo*: 'neque lact' lactis magis est simile quam ille ego similest mei' (*Amphitryo*, 601)²⁷² has, in Wilde's hands, now become 'haud pomo similis pomum, quam Polyphemo / tu.' (*Eumorphus*, II.i.66-7).²⁷³ The identity crisis which Sosias experiences, as the victim of Mercury's games in Plautus' play, adds an ironic parallel to Wilde's portrayal of Polymachaeroplacides' insecurities and the character's struggle to shape his own persona.

For a college audience, the intricacies of this verbal game provided the kind of comedy required for success in that context, playing up to the framework of academic values by which Wilde knew his work would be judged. In proving to this audience his credentials as a scholar, it was his mastery of original self-expression in the Latin tongue which was the prized skill, as the Laudian statute (Stat. Tit. ix. Sectio II) would ratify six months later, requiring demonstration of it as essential for all degree candidates (*facultas animi sui sensa lingua Latina explicandi*).²⁷⁴ However, when commissioned to write in English for a court audience, we see Wilde adopt a different approach and bring his work closer to the traditions of the popular stage. His next incarnation of the *miles gloriosus*, in the character of Surdato, draws more strongly upon the braggart type we see in Shakespeare's Falstaff, from *Henry IV* Parts I & II and *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and Parolles in *All's Well That Ends Well*. The popularity of Falstaff remains a matter of legend, but Shakespeare's approach to the *miles gloriosus* in *All's Well That Ends Well* also demonstrated how one might go about successfully pleasing a royal audience, and King Charles in particular. Parolles had made a big impression on the king, who wrote 'Monsieur Parolles' beside the play's title in his personal copy of the Second Folio, indicating that from his point of view, as Alexander Leggatt puts it, 'Parolles is the character who matters most'.²⁷⁵ Wilde's approach to

²⁷² 'One drop of milk is no more like another drop than that me is like this me' (W.M. Lindsay (ed.), *T. Macci Plauti Comoediae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), vol. 1).

²⁷³ 'an apple is not more like an apple than you are like Polyphemus'.

²⁷⁴ The *Codex authenticus* of the statutes was formally accepted by Convocation on 22 June 1636, and the new system of assessing degree candidates came into operation from Michaelmas term 1638: see Kenneth Fincham, 'Oxford and the Early Stuart Polity' in Tyacke (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 4, 202-3.

²⁷⁵ Alexander Leggatt, 'Introduction', in Russell Fraser (ed.), *Shakespeare / All's Well That Ends Well* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, updated ed. 2003), 11.

creating scenes for a braggart figure in *Love's Hospital* may have borne in mind the king's personal enjoyment of this character type.

Replacing academic modes of humour expressed through the Latin discourse with other comic strategies for his English play, Wilde helps to build his own reputation as a versatile and skilful dramatist. His employment of the hospitality theme, as discussed above, with its evocation of Laud as the generous host, forms part of the strategic use of the 1636 production at St John's to secure royal favour for the college and its members (including old members). Welcoming the king and courtiers into the library and the dining hall upgraded those spaces to a new status, and Wilde's role as comic writer was crucial in creating for the royal party an association between the physical space of the hall (the very heart of the college), Laud's generosity, and their pleasure in watching an entertainment which was, in Laud's words 'merry, and without offence, and so gave a great deal of content.' (quoted above). The epilogue to *Love's Hospital* draws King Charles and Queen Henrietta's attention firmly to the place of performance and expresses the symbolic renewal of the foundation of the college which they can now see before them:

Best Majesties lest that *your* eyes should loose
 Themselves in various objects; here wee shew you
 Where you are; This Fabrick is the modell
 Of our new Structure, which is onely lesse
 Then its great Founder.

(fol. 27v)

The epilogue is given the heading 'Cupid presents St Johns / new-building in the scene' in the manuscript (Bodleian MS Rawl.poet.172), clearly indicating the note on which the production ended: a gesture to the physical symbol of the old buildings around them, once bequeathed to St John's by its first founder, Thomas White, now expanded in a new phase of prosperity under Laud's guidance and riches. The reference to 'our new Structure' is the Canterbury Quadrangle containing the Laudian library which the king and queen had inaugurated with their presence earlier that day.

Once the king had left the college and returned to his lodgings in Christ Church, Laud felt sure that the visit to St John's had left a favourable impression upon all who had participated in the

event: ‘no man went out at the gates, courtier or other, but content’ (as quoted above). Though, as Chancellor of the University, he had a responsibility for the royal visit as a whole, he had a particular interest in showing off St John’s and gaining royal approval for his work there, stemming from his membership of the college as a former student and president. The king himself acknowledged that Laud’s sense of self and personal pride was rooted in St John’s when arrangements were made for his nephews Charles and Rupert to become honorary masters of art during their visit to Oxford: ‘the two princes’ names were by his majesty’s leave entered in St John’s college to do that house honour for my sake.’²⁷⁶ After the royal party had left the city, Laud celebrated the university’s success in hosting the event by returning to St John’s to have dinner in the library there, the building which he had lately founded and, as he notes with pleasure, ‘the same room where the king dined the day before’.²⁷⁷ At this feast he gathered together all the heads of colleges and halls to mark the moment of triumph, using hospitality once again to ratify the success of his achievements and those of his protégés: ‘I sat with them at table, we were merry, and very glad that all things had so passed to the great satisfaction of the king, and the honour of that place.’²⁷⁸ Philip Parsons, author of the *Atalanta*, had been helped into the office of the Principal of Hart Hall in 1633 by Laud;²⁷⁹ as one of the heads of houses he would thus have been present at this symbolic meal, celebrating his benefactor’s triumphal moment with him amidst the evocative surroundings of Laud’s new library.

²⁷⁶ Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, part 1, 150.

²⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 154.

²⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 155.

²⁷⁹ See above, page 207.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has established the importance of the collegiate framework for the interpretation of ‘university drama’. It has also demonstrated that a wide range of activities can be viewed as theatrical performance once we uncover the contexts of politics and patronage which lie behind the drama. The expression of institutional identity through theatre, which I have demonstrated through the case study of St John’s College, Oxford, and its relationship to other educational institutions, has laid the foundations for a new approach to the academic drama. Collegiate tradition is a serious force to be reckoned with, and understanding its role in shaping the body of evidence we have inherited will enable us to write a new literary history of what has been a much neglected area of English Renaissance drama.

This is not a static body of evidence but a growing and evolving one: texts are freshly identified and lost plays come to light, so that the corpus is continually evolving. Indeed, the study of lost plays has just now been recognised as a field in its own right.¹ Martin Wiggins’ recent discovery among Bodleian manuscripts of the Latin play *Sors Caesarea siue suspiria et lacrymae* from St John’s College, Oxford, is a particularly exciting find, which demonstrates that the combination of editing new material and setting university plays in the context of collegiate tradition is a strategy which will keep providing new insights and keep regenerating this area of literary and theatre studies in the years to come.

As I have argued, the history of drama at St John’s provides us with crucial insights into the development of this institution during the first eighty years of its history, as it rises from poverty-stricken foundation in 1555 to extravagant royal host in 1636. However, this story of rags to riches is but the first instalment of a larger narrative; it is not a teleological narrative of continuing or inevitable prosperity for the college or for its individual members. Its most ambitious and high-flying member to date, William Laud, had no sooner risen to the peak of his power when he was stripped of his chancellorship and archbishopric, and his network of royalist supporters found itself threatened by an increasingly effective enemy as the country headed into civil war. Imprisoned in

¹ See David McInnis and Matthew Steggle (eds.), *Lost Plays in Shakespeare's England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

the Tower of London on 1 March 1641, Laud was granted a royal pardon in April 1643 (to no avail), put through a trial which ended without a verdict, and finally executed on 10 January 1645 after an Act of Attainder condemned him by special decree. Laud's body was buried next to the place of his beheading, in the church of All Hallows-by-the-Tower; his personal wishes for a resting place in his Oxford college ('I desire to be buried in the Chapel of S. John Baptist College, in Oxford, under the Altar or communion table there'²) were not observed. The burial by the Tower by the Parliamentarians signified the end of Laud's control over his own fate, and sixteen years would elapse before his loyal followers amongst the St John's men could exhume his remains and bring them to the college chapel for the funeral both he and they desired.

There is evidence to suggest that the response of college members to the upheavals of the Civil War and Interregnum (those who survived the parliamentary purges) was to embrace tradition and hold onto it as a fixed point amidst changing times. Abraham Wright, for example, expressed his continuing loyalty to the memory of his contemporaries from the 1630s with his 1656 publication of a collection of poems which claimed to transcend the politics of the day and establish the permanence of Laud and King Charles' legacy. *Parnassus Biceps or Severall Choice Pieces of Poetry, Composed by the Best Wits that were in both the Universities before their Dissolution* (1656) is a nostalgic anthology which offers the reader a vision of the continuity of power after death, as symbolised in, for example, the buildings erected by Laud which had been graced by the king's presence and still retained his image in the form of his statue. The poem 'Upon the new Quadrangle of St. Johns Colledge in Oxford, built by the most Reverend Father in God the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury' contains the defiant lines:

That so what strange events soere may fall
Through peace or war antimonarchical:
Though these three Kingdoms should becom one flame
And that consume us with our King and his name;
Yet here our gracious Charles whenever lent
To his much honourd Marble, and there spent
To a dust's atome, being then scarce a thing,

²Quoted in William Holden Hutton, *S. John Baptist College*, 154.

May still reign on, and long survive a King.³

The poem appears two-thirds of the way through the volume *Parnassus Biceps* and directly follows the verse oration which Wright performed before Charles on 30 August 1636, as he was about to enter Laud's new library at St John's.

Richard Baylie's presidency, during which the 1636 royal visit took place, furnishes us with a striking example of the revival of college tradition during the challenging times of the 1640s. Dedicated to him in his capacity as president, the *Sors Caesarea siue suspiria et lacrymae*, bound in the first volume of Bodleian, MS Tanner 306 (fols. 149r-162r), has been convincingly dated to the Civil War years by Martin Wiggins.⁴ A key player in the construction of a Laudian dynasty at St John's, Baylie had married into his patron's family in 1626 (taking as his wife Elizabeth Robinson, the daughter of Laud's half brother), had taken over the presidency from Juxon, and was later succeeded by his own son-in-law, Peter Mews. Moreover, it was to Baylie as executor that the task of carrying out the wishes of Laud's will was entrusted, and we can imagine his frustration at being powerless to order the burial of Laud's body in the college chapel as he had requested. The play *Sors Caesarea* appears to offer an outlet for some of that frustration, dedicated to Baylie and perhaps commissioned by him as a tribute to Laud; hence there is the potential to translate the title of the play through the lens of contemporary events - 'Fate of a Royalist', for example, or, as Sutton has it, 'The Royalist Misfortune'.

Wiggins has suggested that through the character of Polydorus (the loss of whom forms the principal focus of the play) we can see the figure of Laud, mourned and missed by his friends and followers. In support of his argument I note the way in which puns on *laus* (gen. *laudis*), 'praise', as an evocation of Laud's surname, have been distributed as a pattern, strategically concentrated at the beginning of the play as the time to establish the connection between Laud and Polydorus. Three times within the first two hundred lines we have the pointed coupling of the name Polydorus with

³ Abraham Wright, *Parnassus Biceps*, 124.

⁴ Introduction to D.F. Sutton and Martin Wiggins (eds.), *The Performance Piece Sors Caesarea (1646?)*. A *hypertext critical edition* (31 March 2015): <<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/sors/>> (accessed February 2015). I am grateful to Dr Wiggins for inviting me to a preliminary reading of the *Sors Caesaria* material at the Shakespeare Institute in October 2013, and to Prof. Sutton for sending me the hyperlink to the online edition in advance of it going live. In line numbering I follow the Wiggins and Sutton edition; all quotations are taken from the manuscript directly.

laus: Terpsichore commands the other Muses to exalt the illustrious Polydorus with their praises, ‘tollite laudibus / insignem Polydorum’ (98-9, fol.151v); Calliope considers who should take on responsibility for Polydorus’ eulogy: ‘at quis Polydorum evehet ad deos? ... / cui tot credam laudes?’ (184-5, fol.153r);⁵ and Melpomene appeals to the inspiration of the Castalian fountain to exalt with praises the work of Polydorus and the price he paid for that work: ‘tollite Polydori operam et impensam laudibus.’ (198, fol. 153v). To this we may add the fact that wordplay on laus and his surname had been a feature of Laud’s Oxford life since the early days of his career. During his first university office, as Proctor in 1603-4, Wood recalls how jokes were made about his short stature, and that as part of the jest the traditional phrase *cum laude*, used in the awarding of honours in university degrees and exercises, was downgraded with the adjective *parvus-a-um* (small):

In the year 1603 were proctors of the University of Oxon Mr. Christopher Dale of Merton Coll. and Mr. William Laud of St. John’s: the former was a very severe man in his office and thereby got hatred of many: the other was a very little person in body but civill and moderat. Wherupon Dale when he made a speech in Convocation at the giving up of his office was not onlie hissed and hooted at by the undergraduats there but in his way home, and thereupon ’twas said by a Merton Coll. man that ‘he was proctor *cum parva Laude*.’ Mr. Alexander Fisher of Merton College used often to tell this story.⁶

The identification of Polydorus as Laud is a compelling argument, not least because it would demonstrate how, in certain circumstances, the college stage might take on a special ceremonial function, enabling the community of St John’s to come together and go through the motions of grieving for their lost leader, despite the lack of a body to bury on site. Much of the play is taken up with trying to find Polydorus, to locate him as a missing person and as a missing body. Indeed, once his death has been confirmed, Jupiter summons the other gods to a council at which they debate the matter of Polydorus’ body (*de sacro Polydori corpore*, 569, fol.160v). This suggests the anxiety and sadness felt by the college at this time, headed up by President Baylie as

⁵ ‘But who will convey Polydorus to the gods? To whom should I entrust all those praises?’

⁶ Andrew Clark (ed.), *The life and times of Anthony Wood, antiquary, of Oxford, 1632-1695, described by himself. Collected from his diaries and other papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press for Oxford Historical Society, 1892), vol. 2: 1664-1681, 234.

the ‘Jupiter’ of St John’s.⁷ Indeed, the introduction of the epic *concilium deorum* device here seems designed to convey the gravitas of a particularly sombre governing body meeting.

The performance of grief in the context of a play can take various forms and the author’s handling of the mourning for Polydorus in *Sors Caesarea* includes interludes of singing by the Muses, such as Terpsichore’s dirge at 225ff. which begins ‘Ite o Terpsicores chori, valete’ (fol.154r).⁸ Emphasis is placed on the idea of grieving as a communal action in which everyone is encouraged to feel a sense of participation as Melpomene advises, ‘haud tibi nouerca casus lugenda est soli, / ac eodem dum premimur iugo, levamur omnes.’ (174-5, fol.153r).⁹ Calliope answers her by exhorting everyone to join her in pouring forth lamentations for the funeral and works of praise: ‘mecum funebres luctus / spargite et encomia’ (186-7, fol.153v). The use of the term *encomium* here reflects the idea of the play performing the function of a funeral service, at which speeches are made before an audience to commemorate the deceased. In such a scenario, it is not only those performing before an audience but those watching and listening to the orators who experience a sense of participation in the memorial service. The anxiety expressed by Calliope’s question (quoted above) as to who should create Polydorus’ eulogy reveals the sense of pressure put upon an author to take responsibility for such a task. It is not currently known who authored the *Sors Caesarea*; indeed, it may have been the work of several people, each coming forward to add their contribution, just as the Muses in the play perform their songs and poems in turn.

The portrayal of the mourners focuses on one particular literary model, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, in a manner that is both familiar and telling. Melpomene chooses the sisters of Phaethon as the golden standard against which she and her fellow mourners are to judge their own show of lamentation: they are to shed tears for Polydorus until they match the grief of Phaethon’s sisters and are enfolded in bark and turned into poplar trees: ‘usque dum mærori sororum Phaetontis pares / cortice velamur, in nigras conversæ populos.’ (664-5, fol.162v). This pointed reference to *Metamorphoses* Book II, to the story of the Heliades’ mourning for the death of their brother Phaethon leading to their metamorphosis into poplar trees, combines two kinds of transformation:

⁷ See above, pages 172-4 and 204, on precedents for the portrayal of the college president as Jupiter.

⁸ ‘Go, Terpsichore’s dances, farewell.’

⁹ ‘This baleful misfortune is not to be mourned by you alone. Rather, since we are all weighed down by the same yoke, we all need to be relieved of it.’ (trans. Sutton).

verbal and conceptual. Ovid's phrase describing the bark covering the lips of one of the Heliades at the final moment of her losing human shape, 'cortex in uerba nouissima uenit.' (Ovid, *Met.* II.363) is reworked into a new composition, in a meta-poetic expression of turning Ovid's words into new forms. This is the same technique of textual recycling identified and analysed in Chapter 3 in relation to the work of other St John's dramatists working in the college's Ovidian tradition, such as Philip Parsons.¹⁰ The use of 'pares' here indicates the desire to equal the standard of Ovid's work in this original composition.

At a little under 700 lines, *Sors Caesarea* matches the average length of the other playlets in the St John's Ovidian series. It is neatly written in Bodleian MS Tanner 306/1 in the manner of a presentation copy, and bears the traditional dedication to the president of St John's College. However, there are many other significant points which highlight how this type of play is functioning. The prologue presents the dedicatee with a bargain, that if accepts this play offered him, the author will consider himself bound to Baylie in return for his kindness: 'promitto me optimâ tuâ humanitate devinctum'. The play is thus offered as a pledge of loyalty, and it forms part of the exchange between patron and protégé which I noted as a feature of St John's College drama in Chapter 4. Just as Joseph Crowther felt the need to be modest in offering President Juxon a lean meal, 'ieiunas dapes', so the author of *Sors Caesarea* apologises that he is presenting a rather humble supper, 'ad humiliores ... dapes', before President Baylie.

This metaphor for watching a play as feasting on a meal prepared by the playwright is developed towards the end of the play, when a messenger arrives inviting the Muses and the Dryads to a birthday banquet, 'ad natalitias dapes' (602, fol.161v). Clio encourages the Dryads to go to the party and instructs them to prepare their praises for Polydorus: 'Laudesque parate' (614, fol.161v). This represents a poignant development of the tradition at St John's, for we may recall the closing scenario of plays such as Wren's *Physiponomachia* and Parsons' *Atalanta*, where the call to celebration was for a wedding; now the community assembles for a funeral. The stage direction signals the instigation of the funeral procession: they are to lift up the body from the ground and set it in their shoulders ('corpus a humo elevant humerisque imponunt'). The demise of the Christmas

¹⁰ See pages 154-63 on Philip Parsons' method of textual recycling in his *Atalanta*.

Prince in 1608 had been dramatised with a funeral procession,¹¹ when Thomas Tucker was forced to give up his reign and return to studenthood at the end of the winter vacation. *Sors Caesarea* adds to our understanding of the way in which the college stage could be used to commemorate the passing of an historical figure, an old member honoured by the fellows of his college community through the performance of mourning in a theatrical spectacle.

Many other such plays remain to be investigated and set in the context of their collegiate tradition, in Cambridge as much as in Oxford. In this thesis I have shown that the writing and performance of ‘college drama’ encompasses a wide range of theatrical activities permeating many different areas of college life. Most importantly, I have identified the culture of college drama as an expression of members’ rites of passage, such as the performance of freshmen oaths of initiation (‘ye sacred order of a Poulderling’ administered to first years by second years), the introduction of the New Year welcomed with self-reflexive celebrations which draw on Ovid’s poetics of regeneration, and the transition from undergraduate to graduate status expressed through the performance of a ‘degree play’. These are the rites of passage experienced by individual members as they arrive, grow older, and move on; but the college itself never dies, it remains a fixed point, celebrated with its own renewal each time ‘the Founder’s show’ is performed or a new building is inaugurated. Thus the college too is a player in the drama, used not just as a physical venue but as a symbol of the tradition of a community which outlasts the individual lives of its members. The recourse to traditions, especially during times of violent upheaval, reflects the longevity of an institution in the face of human mortality.

¹¹ See Chapter 2, page 97.

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