# Performing the Arthurian Legend in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean England *c.* 1575-1610

Felicity Brown

Jesus College

University of Oxford




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# CONTENTS

*Abstract* 3

*List of Illustrations* 4

*Conventions* 5

*Acknowledgements* 6

**Introduction** 7

**1. Progress: The Entertainments at Kenilworth** 24
- Desire Frustrated 28
- From Giants to Dwarves 43
- Farce and Fellowship 52
- 'I wil sheaw yoo a part heer' 60

**2. Pageant: The Society of Prince Arthur's Show** 62
- Exemplary Archery 70
- Virtuous Amity 82
- Fields of Pageantry 90
- 'They mightily amplified the said Round Table' 98

**3. Play: The Misfortunes of Arthur** 101
- Bookish Innsmen 106
- Cultural Conquest 118
- A British Oedipus 125
- 'How sutes a Tragedie for such a time?' 132

**4. Tournament: The Pendragon Knight Tilt Shows** 135
- Ruins and Relics 142
- Arthur at Sea 153
- Risks and Rewards 167
- 'Antiquities (which this nice age accounteth Anticks)' 171

**5. Masque: Prince Henry's Barriers** 174
- Classical Texts and Close Readers 182
- Raised by Art 195
- Restorative Reading 203
- 'No gyants, dwarfes, or monsters here, but men' 2111

**Conclusion** 213

*Bibliography* 220

## ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a critical analysis of various forms of Arthurian "play" performed across a spectrum of dramatic and quasi-dramatic entertainments between 1575 and 1610, and of the texts that record and reimagine them. By looking at the historical convergence of aesthetic forms, textual artifacts, social practices, and the human actors involved, this thesis emphasises the variety of groups and individuals engaged with the legend and the different uses to which it was put. Rather than a period characterised either by the absence or atrophy of the legend, attending to the transmission of performed Arthuriana transforms our conception of the genres, people, and institutions that we consider part of Arthurian literary history, and provides us with a fuller view of the range and valence of cultural reference in play during the period.

This thesis finds no single version of the Arthurian legend and no one Arthur. Rather, by scrutinizing progress entertainments, archery pageants, Inns of Court plays, tournament shows, and court masques, it reveals how performance cultures in this period shaped and were shaped by the Arthurian legend. Allegory and satire dislocate Arthurian figures from the compendious narratives of earlier centuries and reimagine them through classical mythology. The traditional associations of Arthur's Round Table fellowship with individual aristocratic and amorous exploits are repurposed to perform corporate, civic virtue. Translation and imitation are deployed in pseudo-classical tragedy to reimagine Arthur's fall as a cultural conquest. Tournament shows parallel the dangers and wonders of privateering with those of romance and so expand the bounds of chivalry. And Ben Jonson adapts the legend's Elizabethan associations for a new reign. These experimental entertainments evidence an ongoing creative investment in King Arthur, and provide a new narrative about the negotiation of political and poetic authority in early modern England.

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Richard Robinson, *The Ancient Order* (London: John Wolfe, 1583), Bodl. Douce R 129, sig. B1r. Bodleian Library.
2. Richard Robinson, *The Ancient Order* (London: John Wolfe, 1583), Lambeth Palace Library, ZZ1582. 16. 02, sig. B1v. Lambeth Palace Library.
3. Richard Robinson, *The Ancient Order* (London: John Wolfe, 1583), Bodl. Douce R 129, sig. F1r. Bodleian Library.
4. Thomas Hughes et al, *Certain Devises and Shewes presented to her majestie by the Gentlemen of Grayes Inne* (London: Robert Robinson, 1587), title page. The British Library.
5. George Clifford, Third Earl of Cumberland, 1558-1605, by Nicholas Hilliard, Caird Collection. Royal Museums Greenwich.
6. MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 1r. Cumbria County Council.
7. *La Vita di Merlino con le sue Profetie* (Venice, 1539), title page. Bodl. Douce MM 268. Bodleian Library.
8. Inigo Jones, Merlin, pen and ink on paper, undated, Devonshire Collections. Chatsworth House Trust.
9. Inigo Jones, The Fallen House of Chivalry, pen and ink on paper, undated, Devonshire Collections. Chatsworth House Trust.
10. Inigo Jones, St George's Portico, pen and ink on paper, undated, Devonshire Collections. Chatsworth House Trust.

# CONVENTIONS

Quotations represent sources except in three respects: the long 's' is not preserved; italic and roman type have been reversed in quotations which in the originals are set principally in italic; the use of 'i' and 'j' has been modernised.

## ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| Add. | Additional |
| BL | British Library, London |
| Bodl. | Bodleian Library, Oxford |
| Folger | Folger Library, Washington D. C. |
| Huntington | The Huntington Library, San Marino, California |
| STC | The English Short Title Catalogue |

All other abbreviations are indicated via footnotes in the main text.

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Without Jake Arthur, Beth Sharrock, or my parents, none of this would have been possible; no acknowledgement can adequately convey what I owe them.

# INTRODUCTION

This is a study of late Elizabethan and early Jacobean Arthuriana. It reconsiders the significance of the Arthurian legend in early modern England by focusing on its appearance in social and ceremonial modes of performance. It argues that, as well as being politically charged, these Arthurian entertainments were poetically engaged and experimental. If we ignore these neglected, quasi-dramatic forms in which King Arthur and his legend were innovatively dramatized and classicised, we risk misunderstanding a transitional chapter in Arthurian literary history. By concentrating on performances between 1575 and 1610, this thesis presents an original account of the legend as a site of political, social, and artistic play. In the progress entertainments, archery pageants, inns of court plays, tilt shows, and the barriers-masque examined here, various individuals and communities requiring new narratives about their relationships with one another, with the past (both real and imagined), and with present forms of power remade the legend.[1]

The standard history of Arthurian literature—taken here to mean anything relating to the storyworld of King Arthur, his associates, their activities, or features distinct to the world they inhabit—is one in which both early modern Arthuriana and performance cultures are rarely prioritised.[2] That history is of a written canon that developed, rapidly and self-consciously, from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *De gestis Britonum* (*c.* 1136). In providing a biography for the previously shadowy Celtic hero, Arthur, Geoffrey created a legendary imperial past for Britain. Wace's French translation of Geoffrey then led to two distinct but intertwined traditions: of a pseudo-historical

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[1] See Philip Schwyzer, 'King Arthur and the Tudor Dynasty', in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Medievalism*, ed. Joanne Parker and Corinna Wagner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 23-33.

[2] On the idea of the 'storyworld' in scholarly criticism, see T. P. Wiseman, *The Myths of Rome* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004), and Lesley Coote, *Robin Hood: The Origins of a Medieval Outlaw* (London: Reaktion Books, 2020).

King Arthur, celebrated in La3amon's *Brut* (*c.* 1190–1215) and subsequent English chronicles and verse; and the Arthur celebrated in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes (*c.* 1160–1191) and his successors, which gave rise to the extended romance tradition of the Round Table. With Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*, published by William Caxton in 1485, the two traditions were brought together.[3] A hiatus allegedly followed in which Arthur, typically characterised in this period as a legitimising poster-boy for a parvenu dynasty or the hobbyhorse of antiquarian quacks, is rejected by serious poets who either obscure him with allegory or abandon him as epic matter. Arthur and his legend are then revived by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and others, in the nineteenth century. Durable though this history has been it is only part of the story, one that rests on a limited view of the scope and nature of imaginative interest in the Arthurian legend in early modern England.

The fact that humanism, Protestantism, and satire transformed the cultural status of the Arthurian legend, and indeed romance more widely, in this period has long been recognised.[4] The role of performance in this transformation has not. The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s earliest entry record in which 'performance' means the action of presenting a play, piece of music, or ritual is from 1611.[5] Before this, in sixteenth-century England, the word 'performance' referred to: the doing of an action; the quality of its execution; the carrying out of a command; or a set of trimmings.[6] My use of 'performance' encompasses each of these meanings as I chart how the more

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[3] Arthurian material first shifted into prose in France early in the thirteenth century with the composition of the 'Vulgate cycle'. The first English translation was the verse *Of Arthour and of Merlin* and verse remained the medium for romance in England until the mid-fifteenth century. Helen Cooper suggests that the greatest influence of the French Arthurian prose romances in England was structural rather than material, see *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 33-34.

[4] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 39.

[5] See 'performance, n.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/14783, accessed 11 April 2022.

[6] The example given for the trimming is 'a performance of fox poutes', see 'performance, n.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/14783, accessed 11 April 2022.

dramatic sense of the word emerges from the dynamic, collective enterprises originally described. Performances of the Arthurian legend took various forms in sixteenth century England, including many not traditionally understood as drama. Some formed part of larger events, such as an extended series of amusements or an annual sporting competition, while others were stand-alone occasions. Some took place in fixed venues while others moved through the gardens of a castle or the streets of a city. Some starred notable performers, some were performed for notable individuals, and some did both. While these performances all had dramatic qualities and effects (deploying combinations of set, costume, props and dialogue) they largely lacked the dramatic unity, explorations of interiority, and the presentation and resolution of conflict that came to characterise plays written for and performed at the commercial theatre. Rather, they performed meanings of 'play' beyond its narrowest definition as a theatrical performance, taking the form of exercises, sports, and festivities.[7] In so doing, these entertainments expanded the generic possibilities of the legend and destabilised its significance, bringing the legend itself into 'play', in the sense of moving rapidly and changing quickly.[8] These changes were not always deliberate or

[7] See 'play, n.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2022, www.oed.com/Entry/145474, accessed 2 January 2023; in the twenty-first century, biologists typically define play as intrinsically rewarding behaviour, often in unusual patterns or forms or combinations, that occurs in a protected context in which players are insulated from the consequences of their behaviour, see Patrick Bateson and Paul Martin, *Play, Playfulness, Creativity and Innovation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 8. For further discussion of the indefinability of play see Michael Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 204; Jeffrey Irving Israel, "The Capability of Play," University of Chicago Divinity School Religion and Culture Web Forum, Jan. 2009, 21-22, http://divinity.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/imce/pdfs/webforum/012009/WF%20J%20Israil%20January%202009.pdf; and Brian Upton, *The Aesthetic of Play* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 9-21.

[8] See Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man, in a Series of Letters*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 107 and Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 1997), 417. For further discussion of the indefinability of play see Joe Moshenska, *Iconoclasm as Child's Play* (Redwood City CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 1-16.

long lasting, nor was their progress linear, but in order to understand the development of Arthurian literature, as well as that of early modern drama, they demand attention.

Arthurian romance has always been a playful form. Foregrounding the fantastic, including clownish characters, and treating conventional themes and motifs comically, the Arthurian romances of medieval Europe abound with different forms of play.[9] As Donald L. Hoffman demonstrates, 'from the festive to the furtive, from farce to delicate comedy of manners', even the undeniably tragic structure of Malory's *Morte Darthur* is characterised throughout by playfulness.[10] Arthurian romances have, moreover, frequently been appropriated for play in sporting competition and courtly show.[11] While diverse pan-European agents beyond the traditions of textual reception, including minstrels, players, jousters, and illustrators, participated in creating and distributing the legend that would be adopted and adapted by the writers of Elizabethan England, surviving evidence for the role of performance in this process before the sixteenth century is severely limited.[12] Where the few extant instances of Arthurian play in Henry VII's England celebrated the new regime's dynastic security, and those associated with Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary I responded to vacillating religious and dynastic disruption, it was Elizabeth I's long reign that incubated playful reflections in Arthuriana on what it meant to be human in a post-Reformation world, English in an age of imperial expansion, and subjects under an childless

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[9] See *Arthurian Literature XIX: Comedy in Arthurian Literature*, ed. Keith Bushby and Roger Dalrymple (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003).

[10] Donald L. Hoffman, 'Malory and the English Comic Tradition', in *Arthurian Literature XIX*, 118.

[11] Julian Munby, Richard Barer, and Richard Brown, *Edward II's Round Table at Windsor: The House of the Round Table and the Windsor Festival of 1344* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007).

[12] Cooper notes that insular romances tended to be more compatible with orthodox Christian morality, indicating emotion by action or statement rather than by soliloquy: 'They tend, in fact, to show many of the qualities often described as being associated with the rise of the bourgeois novel: a parallel that may be connected with their choice of the English language, and therefore with their downward social penetration from the French-reading aristocracy to the gentry and to townsmen', *The English Romance in Time*, p. 30.

queen.[13] While the Queen occupied a significant position in both the sixteenth century's foremost Arthurian poetic production, Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (pub. 1590, 1596), and in many of its Arthurian entertainments, the heterogenous and highly self-conscious literary culture of her reign also saw the legend extensively adapted, performed, and consumed by common people in new and various forms.[14] By reimagining relations between body, language, and political practise, Arthurian performances in Elizabethan England resist enacting stasis and official ideology.[15]

I am interested throughout in how Arthurian performances reflect collective as well as the individual identities associated with the legend. Across the following chapters I consider a variety of authors, actors, and audience members who composed or described these entertainments, as well as the networks forged by them. Some of the authors considered here were professional writers, others were not, and several remain anonymous. Taken together, their work does not form a coherent group. They played in different forms and genres for different patrons, sponsors, audiences, and occasions, and their efforts have survived in different types of text. But each of these creative agents was part of, or collaborated with, larger corporate identities, such as livery companies or Inns of Court communities. Several of the performances examined here are survived

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[13] The dynastic and religious upheavals of earlier reigns did not, however, prevent all Arthurian outputs: John Bouchier, Lord Berners, translated *Arthur of Lytell Britain* (pub. London 1555, republished 1582) from the French *Artus de la Petite Bretagne* (*c.*1525) and evidence for Arthurian-inflected tournament entertainments hosted by Henry VIII and later Phillip II survives, see Kenneth J. Oberempt, "'Arthur of Lytell Brytayne": Its Date of Composition and French Source', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 77 (1976), 241-252; on Arthurian tournaments in Spain see Teofilo F. Ruiz, 'Kings and Knight at Play in Late Medieval and Early Modern Spain', in *A King Travels: Festive Traditions in Late Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 210-245.

[14] Even on occasions when the in-person audience for a performance was relatively small, its reach could be extended by publication(s). Neil Rhodes stresses the double sense of commonality in this period as something shared and something base in *Common: The Development of Literary Culture in Sixteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[15] 'popular, adj. and n.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/147908, accessed 22 January 2023; see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

by selective printed scripts assembled retrospectively by a single individual (originally only one contributor among many) who shepherded the performance into print. Others emerge in scattered, fragmented forms from performance cultures that included a variety of distinct and intersecting festive traditions and habits, such as those of the City of London or the royal court. Arthurian performance, then, is examined here as a site at which intellectual communities are formed (as well as performed) and as occasions for intellectual experiment and exchange.

Even in their most conventional forms, performances are difficult to preserve. Inevitably, then, much has been lost. Stephen Gosson tantalisingly names 'the Rounde table' as one of the texts 'throughly ransack to [f]urnish the Playe houses in London.'[16] The surviving titles of lost plays such as *Chinon of England* (1596), *Trystam of Lyons* (1599), *Vortiger* (1596), *Uther Pendragon* (1597), and *The Lyfe and Death of Arthur, King of England* (1598) comprise an absent presence, suggesting the popularity of Arthurian romance and chronicle as a subject for commercial drama. Paul Whitfield White has used the fragmentary evidence from the diary of the theatrical entrepreneur and impresario, Philip Henslowe, to suggest that the latter three plays may have formed a chronicle sequence, or even a trilogy, staged by the Lord Admiral's players and intended to rival Shakespeare's second 'Henriad'.[17] While the piecemeal survival of evidence is limiting, the Arthurian entertainments that can be partially reconstructed nevertheless offer a nexus at which

[16] Stephen Gosson, *Plays confuted in five actions proving that they are not to be suffered in a Christian common weale* (London: Thomas Gosson, 1582), sig. D5v.

[17] Paul Whitefield White, 'The Admiral's Men, Shakespeare, and the Lost Arthurian Plays of Elizabethan England', *Arthuriana*, 24 (2014), 33-47. Scholars estimate that less than a fifth of the works written for performance between 1567 and 1642 have been lost, and those are just plays for the commercial theatre, see Misha Teramura, 'Lost/ found', in *Shakespeare / Text: Contemporary Readings in Textual Studies, Editing and Performance*, ed. Claire M. L. Bourne (London: Bloomsbury, The Arden Shakespeare, 2021), p. 361; should recent work by Daniel Sawyer and others be applied to early modern texts, this number might be even higher, see Sawyer et al., 'Forgotten books: the application of unseen species models to the survival of culture', *American Association for the Advancement of Science*, 357 (2022), 665-769.

to study the diverse individuals and institutions that produced them, as well as the transformations wrought in this period on Arthur and his legend.

The examples of Arthurian shows examined in this thesis attest to the legend's place in a vibrant Elizabethan performance culture; a culture constantly in the process of defining and destabilising both political and poetic authority.[18] What exactly, my thesis asks, was the role of the Arthurian legend in that culture? And how did the particularities of these forms of play shape, and come to be shaped by, King Arthur?

**Critical Context**

The dichotomy of the medieval and medievalism is widely accepted in Arthurian scholarship. In this binary, texts produced before the end of the fifteenth century are authentically medieval while the appearance of characteristics associated with them in later works comes under the imitative umbrella of medieval*ism*.[19] However ill defined, the break between the two is always early modern and it is rarely the subject of sustained inquiry.[20] I investigate this as part of a longer continuum in

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[18] Geoffrey Ashe, *The Arthurian Handbook*, ed. Norris J. Lacey, Geoffrey Ashe, and Debra N. Mancoff, 2nd edn (New York and London: Garland, 1997), p. 151.

[19] The notion of a middle time began to circulate in explicit form in various Latin phrases from about the middle of the fifteenth century: *media tempestas*, *media aetas* and, belatedly, *medium aevum* in 1604, from which the term 'medieval' would eventually be derived, see 'middle age, n. and adj', *OED Online*, Oxford University Press. December 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/118142, accessed 1 January 2023, and 'medieval, adj. and n.' *OED Online*, March 2022, Oxford University Press, December 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/115638, accessed 1 January 2023; the *OED* dates the term 'medievalism' to the mid nineteenth century, see 'medievalism, n.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/115639, accessed 27 December 2022.

[20] This is suggested by the scope and structure of Arthurian critical collections and handbooks, see *The Arthurian Handbook*, ed. Norris J. Lacy and Geoffrey Ashe, 2nd edn. (London: Garland, 1997); *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. W. R. J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001); *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); *The Handbook of Arthurian Romance: King Arthur's Court in Medieval European* Literature, ed. Leah Tether and Johnny McFadyen (Berlin: Walter de Grutyer, 2017).

which the identities explored by the Arthurian legend and the means by which this is achieved are in transition. Rather than trying to isolate the medieval from the modern or, indeed, the pseudo-classical, I am interested in their interaction. I position my research in relation to critical work on early modern romance reading, Spenserian scholarship, and an earlier study of King Arthur in performance to argue for a less consistent and more creative Arthur than has previously been identified.

As an emblem of royal power, King Arthur has been widely acknowledged as 'an important prop of the Tudor myth, the object of which was to justify and consolidate the ascendancy of the royal dynasty'.[21] Scholars have long traced Arthur's usefulness to the different contexts of the Welsh Henry Tudor, the Henrician Reformation, Elizabethan expansion in the New World, and James's unification project. Arthur's political utility, however, has led to the dismissal of Arthurian adaptations in the period as propaganda: 'tedious', 'one-dimensional and relentlessly lowbrow'.[22] The 'Slow Decline' of Arthurian literature across the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries is well attested by scholarship that insists on the sparsity of early modern interest in the Arthurian legend, its poor quality, or both.[23] In the first half of the twentieth century, emphasis

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[21] Elisabeth Michelsson, *Appropriating King Arthur: The Arthurian Legend in English Drama and Entertainments 1485-1625* (Uppsala: Akademitryck AB, 1999), p. 16; see also Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 52-97; David Starkey, 'King Henry and King Arthur', in *Arthurian Literature XVI*, ed. James P. Carley and Felicity Riddy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998), pp. 171-196.

[22] See Schwyzer, 'King Arthur and the Tudor Dynasty'; E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 1: 138; Tracey Hill, *Pageantry and Power: a cultural history of the early modern Lord Mayor's Show, 1585-1639* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 4.

[23] In this narrative, Malory debilitated his sixteenth-century successors so 'six separate editions of *Le Morte Darthur* by 1634' coincided with 'no innovative treatment of Arthur and his world in the same period', see Rob Gossedge and Stephen Knight, 'The Arthur of the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 103-119 (p. 103); Spenser's hero 'is scarcely the same Arthur', according to R.W. Barber, *Arthur of Albion* (London: Barrie and Rockliff with Pall Mall Press, 1961), p. 137; Johan Huizinga, though dismissive of the realities of medieval chivalry, saw in its ideal the roots of the Renaissance: the knight's quest for individual honour and enduring renown morphed into early modern humanist desire for fame, see *The*

was primarily placed on recovering the influence of Renaissance Arthurianism on major poets. Subsequently, cultural historians have presented a more reciprocal view, one in which Arthurian literature participates in various early modern social and political processes.[24] Early modern Arthuriana is understood as more functional than imaginative. While many scholars now agree that in the sixteenth century Arthur loomed large as a figure of national and imperial significance, it is still accepted that 'no century found itself with so little to say about him'.[25] This thesis challenges that assumption by investigating not just what it is that sixteenth-century individuals and groups had to say about Arthur and his legend, but how they play at and with them.

The different types of performance examined in this thesis combine a humanist desire to reproduce classical forms alongside 'an omnivorous capacity to contain and refract other, less "pure" vernacular traditions and routines'.[26] This was, of course, not exclusive to adaptations of Arthurian romance. Depictions of kingship, chivalry, and knighthood in this period have many

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*Waning of the Middle Ages: a study of the forms of life, thought and art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVthe centuries* (London: E. Arnold, 1924); see also C. B. Millican, *Spenser and the Table Round: A Study in the Contemporaneous Background for Spenser's Use of the Arthurian Legend* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1932); Arthur Ferguson, *The Indian Summer of English Chivalry: Studies in the Decline and Transformation of Chivalric Idealism* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1960); James Merriman, *The Flower of Kings: A Study of the Arthurian Legend in England Between 1485-1835* (Kansas, University Press of Kansas: 1973); Christopher Dean, *Arthur of England: English Attitudes to King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). Merriman, *The Flower of Kings*, p. 31; Margaret J. C. Reid*, The Arthurian Legend: Comparison of Treatment in Modern and Medieval Literature: A Study in the Literary Value of Myth and Legend* (Edinburgh: Oliver Boyd, 1938); on the language of chivalry see Michael Nerlich, *Ideology of Adventure: Studies in Modern Consciousness, 110-1750*, trans. Ruth Crowley, 2 vols (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); on politically powerful invocations of chivalric convention see Richard McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1989).

[24] See Gordon Kipling, *The Triumph of Honour: The Burgundian Origins of the Elizabethan Renaissance* (Leiden: Leiden University Press for the Sir Thomas Browne Institute, 1977); Arthur B. Ferguson, *The Chivalric Tradition in Renaissance England* (Washington D. C.: Folger Shakespeare Library and Associated University Press, 1986).

[25] Schwyzer, 'King Arthur and the Tudor Dynasty', p. 23.

[26] Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker, 'Introduction: "When Lyberte Ruled": Tudor Drama 1485-1603', *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 14.

sources. The effect of Italian romances, such as Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, amongst others, and of Burgundian influences, on tournament culture and elsewhere, cannot be overstated.[27] Greek and Spanish romances, moreover, were popular with both readers and theatre goers, for whom they provided exemplary and satirical models. While the Arthurian tradition is the focus of this thesis, it is not a phenomenon that can be sequestered. Rather, it was in dialogue with these European traditions. They, like the Arthurian legend's own pan-European evolution, consistently inflected the circulation of the Arthurian legend within and beyond literary and literate circles in England throughout the period examined.[28]

Recent work on early modern readers, meanwhile, has reconsidered the relationship between sixteenth-century dismissals of chivalric romance and humanism's promotion of classical texts. Where romance has previously been understood as occupying the antithetical space to Erasmian reading practices (consuming rather than being consumed by their readers), Alex Davis demonstrates that sixteenth-century questions about both the morality and modernity of chivalric romance were not necessarily impartial acts of literary criticism.[29] Rather, humanist pedagogues caricatured an unenlightened feudal aristocracy to create demand for the professional services they

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[27] See Colin Burrow, *Epic Romance: Homer to Milton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Jason Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington and the Book asGgift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Susan Brigden, 'Epic Romance: How the Duchess of Richmon Read her Ariosto', *The Review of English Studies*, 69 (2018), 632-660; and Peter Mack, 'Renaissance Epics: Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser', in *Reading Old Books: Writing with Traditions* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019), pp. 97-135.

[28] See Steve Mentz, *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England: the Rise of Prose Fiction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), and Moore, *Amadis in English*.

[29] Erasmus had advocated strategies of reading that, by fragmenting and digesting the texts of other authors, were supposed to give the reader mastery over his books, see Desiderius Eramus, *On the Copia of Words and Ideas*, trans. Donald B. King and H. David Rix (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1963); Alex Davis in *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003); see also Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); Margaret Schlauch, *Antecedents of the English Novel, 1400-1600* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963); R. W. Maslen, *Elizabethan Fictions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). This issue is also addressed by Paul Rovang in *Refashioning 'Knights and Ladies Gentle Deeds': The Intertexutality of Spenser's Faerie Queene and Malory's Morte Darthur* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995).

sought to provide.[30] Notorious attacks on the 'open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye' of Arthurian romance testify, not to their decline, but to their popularity with readers across the social spectrum.[31] As Helen Moore's work on *Amadis de Gaule* suggests, moreover, 'removed' reading further ensured the dissemination of romances, via encounters with secondary texts intricately invested in them.[32] Arthurian performances were both a product of and participant in this process.

In *Appropriating King Arthur* (1999), the only full-length account of early modern Arthurian performances in England, Elisabeth Michelsson traces the continued use of the legend from the beginning of Henry VII's reign to the end of that of James VI and I. By illustrating Arthur's presence and emphasising his role as a figure of 'political propaganda', she contests unflattering assessments of the early modern period as Arthurian literature's 'Dark Age'.[33] Michelsson does this by making a case for a 'continuous royal identification and association' with King Arthur from 1485 to 1625, within and between 'the royal house' and, occasionally, individuals beyond 'the royal sphere'.[34] Where the appropriation of King Arthur that she traces invokes a series of absolute requisitions, my interest in the subversive openness of Arthurian play allows for an appraisal of some of the same works as more dialogic, temporary, and ambiguous engagements with the legend. Each of my chapters is indebted to Michelsson's work, though I narrow her chronological scope and only investigate Arthuriana (rather than the revival of chivalry more generally). Building on her arguments for the monarchical praise, political advice, and elite entertainment offered by performances of the legend in the period, I also introduce fresh evidence and new emphases, and so contest many of her findings. Where *Appropriating King Arthur* suggests an extended consensus

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[30] Alan Stewart, *Close Readers* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. xxxiv.

[31] Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (London: John Daye, 1570), sig. I3r.

[32] Helen Moore, *Amadis in English: A Study in the Reading of Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 16.

[33] Elisabeth Michelsson, *Appropriating King Arthur: The Arthurian Legend in English Drama and Entertainments 1485-1625* (Uppsala: Akademitryck AB, 1999), 1.

[34] Michelsson, *Appropriating King Arthur*, p. 13.

about Arthur's meaning, my thesis reveals various Arthurs produced by the competition, confusion, inconsistency, and collaboration. Rather than nostalgia for an idealised past, I argue that the Arthurian legend in performance invokes and exploits personal and poetic uncertainties, as well as the possibilities of the present. For Michelsson, the performance of the Arthurian legend is firstly and foremostly a political act; this thesis makes the case for it as a creative one.

Because this is a thesis about the performance of Arthuriana, it is not primarily about Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. That said, each of the entertainments examined here is in dialogue with Spenser's work in some way, and I draw throughout on scholarship that has established links between the use made of the Arthurian legend in *The Faerie Queene* and the pressing political, religious, and cultural concern that was the (ir)recoverability of the past in early modern England.[35] As Andrew King notes, Spenser's Arthur is indeterminable, like 'the Arthurian historical traditions which Spenser can hardly exclude from his work, particularly considering Arthur's function in the work as a political symbol.'[36] Arthur's complex political significance—as the personification of idealised chivalry, Christian virtue, imperial ambition, and English exceptionalism—underpins my investigation. However, I follow Sydney Anglo's recantation in his Preface to the 1997 edition of *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy*, first published in 1969 (and, arguably, Spenser's practise in *The Faerie Queene*), in identifying the primary purpose of Elizabethan appropriations of the Arthurian legend as playful rather than propagandistic.[37] With an emphasis on the different aspects

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[35] See Richard A. McCabe, 'Prince Arthur's 'Vertuous and Gentle Discipline', in *Noble and Joyous Histories: English Romances, 1375-1650*, ed. Eilean Ní Chuilleanáin and J. D. Pheifer (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1993), pp. 221-43; Andrew King, *The Faerie Queene and Middle English Romance: The Matter of Just Memory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); Bart van Es, *Spenser's Forms of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[36] King, *The Faerie Queene and Middle English Romance*, pp. 174-175.

[37] As Anglo notes: 'underlying this book is a belief that such shows may, in various ways, be regarded as "political": first, in their specific relationship to contemporary affairs; second, as a mode of expressing ideals and third, as a means of communication and influence. Of these assumptions, the first two are incontrovertible; but the third is open to assumption […] It is evident that the Tudors, like all Renaissance princes, enjoyed the prestige gained by a display of magnificence: but I am no longer convinced by a facile, and indeed anachronistic, use of the word "propaganda" with its implications both of systemic governmental

of their play, I apply questions about the intricacies of context, genre, and form (so frequently asked of Spenser's over-determined Arthur) to lesser known and under theorised performances and the texts that preserve them. In so doing, I demonstrate how the portrayal of the legend in literature, from Spenser's epic poem to mass-market pot boilers such as Richard Johnson's *Tom a Lincoln* (pub. 1599, 1607), emerge from and feed back into ways of playing in which new dramatic and socio-political forms were pioneered.

**Methodology**

Performance is inherently more unstable than the forms traditionally associated with the Arthurian legend, such as romance, epic poetry, and, later, the novel. Even in a scripted play, elements of an initial composition are realised and reconfigured before ceasing to exist in the 'fleshiness' of a live enactment.[38] The subsequent transfer of certain elements of that performance from stage to page in unscripted examples of performance further amplifies the disruption and the according interpretative possibilities. Each entertainment examined here not only originally existed in multiple different forms, but no longer exists in one of its central manifestations. As a result, each example of performed Arthuriana must be (partially and, inevitably, incompletely) reconstructed before it can be analysed. The surviving textual records, moreover, do not—and were not necessarily meant to—record the occasion as it was first experienced or provide a source for future re-plays. Instead, they materialize a particular perception of one medium in another. The extant records are both distinct from the 'creative business of playing' *and* attuned to its performativity.[39]

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control and of consistent theory.' See the preface to a new edition of his own earlier work, first published in 1969, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy*, rev. edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. xi.

[38] See Claire M. L. Bourne, *Typographies of Performance in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[39] W. B. Worthen, *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 3-4; see Evelyn B. Tribble, *Cognition in the Globe: Attention and Memory in Shakespeare's Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 151 and Richard Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship in Early Modern Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Instead of attempting to resolve this paradox, I examine the possibilities it offers and the inconsistencies it presents to ephemeral forms of show and text, and to the meanings of the Arthurian storyworld.

The approach I take to the Arthurian legend in early modern shows diverges from that of earlier scholars by bringing their reception, in person and print, to the fore in their reconstruction and analysis. Many of the forms of play adopted by Elizabethan Arthuriana were innovative, experimental, and short-lived. As such, normative ways of representing them had not yet been or never were established. Unlike, for example, the early modern playbook, none of the forms focused on here coalesced into a recognisable print genre. If they did enter the written record, they did so in a scattered, fragmentary, and generically inconsistent fashion. The extant evidence for Arthurian performances in early modern England is inconsistent and even, occasionally, contradictory. The accounts of an author and of an audience member offer varying versions of the same events at the Kenilworth entertainments. No script, if one ever existed, survives for performances of the Society of Prince Arthur's show; the primary sources I examine are annotated copies of a printed pamphlet, so part of my purpose is to ascertain whether it acts as a programme, souvenir, advertisement, or a combination of all three. Evidence for the Pendragon Knight tilt shows, meanwhile, include printed works in different genres by the author, George Peele (1556–1596), and the herald, William Segar (c. 1554–1633), as well as manuscript separates preserved in a work dedicated to celebrating the maritime achievements of George Clifford, third Earl of Cumberland (1558–1605). A dynamic methodology is thus necessitated by the evidence. The excavation of how these performances were created and played, as well as preserved, and disseminated, reveals the ways in which their formal instability becomes part of Arthur's meaning. This thesis is as interested in the unsuccessful and one-off elements of these entertainments as the aspects that went on to influence genres of imaginative writing still prevalent today. It attends to the ways in which a collection of hitherto neglected or misunderstood performance texts have been written, printed, compiled, collected, annotated; as well as misunderstood and ignored.

Early modern performances beyond those confined to the commercial theatre, though not sufficiently integrated into Arthurian literary criticism, have become staples of the scholarly canon of early modern studies. As David Bergeron and others have demonstrated, pageantry in the sixteenth century engaged with a political system in which various sites of power coexisted. Performances encoded criticisms of the monarch they ostensibly celebrated.[40] As the recent collection *Civic Performance: Pageantry and Entertainments in Early Modern London* (2020) advocates, various methodologies are required to explore this effectively. Like Gabriel Heaton's *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments* (2010), this thesis considers collaborations between commissioning host(s) and hired writer(s), the material contexts of performance, and the varied interpretations imposed by publishers and readers. Unlike Heaton, however, my study does not place the monarch at the 'heart' of all the entertainments it examines.[41] Instead, I emphasise the fragmentation and diversity of responses and lived interactions inherent to these forms. Since Arthurian entertainments have primarily been considered in relation to aristocratic and, above all, royal figures, I deploy the approach modelled by Tracey Hill in *Pageantry and Power* (2010), foregrounding the contributions of people whose supposed 'coarseness' has previously obscured the creative significance of their roles in entertainments.[42] Several of the forms taken by Arthuriana in this period, such as royal progress entertainments or Accession Day tournaments, seem unlikely occasions for diverse participation; however, the ability to surprise, as well as evidencing a methodology at work, seems to be characteristic of the legend's versatility in play. Examining the role of professional communities in Arthurian performances alongside those of more familiar, elite individuals, and considering the kinds of interaction taking place between them, allows the

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[40] See David Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642* (London: Edward Arnold, 1971).

[41] See Gabriel Heaton, *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments: From George Gascoigne to Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[42] Hill, *Pageantry and Power*, p. 15; see *Civic Performance: Pageantry and Entertainments in Early Modern London*, ed. J. Caitlin Finlayson and Amrita Sen (London: Routledge, 2020), and Ceri Sullivan, 'London's early modern creative industrialists', *Studies in Philology*, 103 (2006), 313-328 (p. 314).

assumption of Arthur's exclusive associations to be revised and the full extent of their innovations to be appreciated.

The structure of my thesis is broadly chronological. Without imposing any kind of teleology, this allows innovations in the presentation of Arthurian material to be traced sequentially. My first chapter focuses on the entertainments hosted by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, for Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth Castle in the summer of 1575. In it, I analyse how the dynamic political allegory created by the Lady of the Lake's performance also operates as a literary one, integrating the British romance into classical mythology. Setting George Gascoigne's Ovidian presentation of the entertainments beside Robert Langham's epistolary account of the same events—which he depicts as a series of failed attempts at metamorphoses—I ask what happens to the Arthurian legend when it is wrested from the elevated realms of monarch, earl, and poet, and deployed playfully. The festive spirit of the non-elite fellowship celebrated and satirised by Langham's *Letter* lays the groundwork for my second chapter on the annual show of the Society of Prince Arthur's Archers. Using Richard Robinson's pamphlet, *The Ancient Order, Societie, and Unitie Laudable of Prince Arthure and his Knightly Armory of the Round Table* (1583), and the evidence left by its readers, I probe the ways in which classical, biblical, and historical precedents are deployed to reimagine the traditional associations of Arthur's Round Table fellowship. As a result of Society members' roleplay, the individual aristocratic, martial, and amorous exploits traditionally associated with Arthur's knight are transformed into virtues fitting for a civic, corporate fraternity. I then turn to the unusual construction of the sixteenth century's only extant Arthurian play, *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1588). By scrutinising the use of speeches translated from works by Seneca and Lucan and the influence of earlier Inns of Court drama, I examine how the presentation of the end of Arthur's reign as a tragedy celebrates the intellectual and cultural innovations of its lawyer-authors.

In my fourth chapter I explore how claims made in earlier performances—about the Arthurian legend's relationship to classical literature and its literary and political potential—play

out in the quasi-military shows of Elizabethan Accession Day Tournaments. I ask how, despite the rank of their primary performer, the Pendragon Knight tilt shows (1591, 1593) perform a marginalised maritime community and what effect this has on the bounds of the chivalry epitomised by the occasion. Moreover, I use their playful tone to reassess a form traditionally associated with earnest performances of panegyric and petition. In my last chapter, I examine Ben Jonson's reflections on these entertainments in his attempt to redefine the Arthurian legend for a new reign, first in the performance of *Prince Henry's Barriers* (1610) and then in print (1616). I investigate the ways in which his Arthurian sources, Homeric inflection of the legend, and positioning of entertainments in his first folio emphasise the dependence of political power on poetic production. My conclusion retraces the literary-historical arc of Arthur's representation pursued in each chapter. It also reflects on the possible implications and future applications of my approach to the relationship between social and ceremonial performances and their texts. In so doing, this thesis seeks not only to enrich critical accounts of how authority and identity were played out in early modern England, but also our understanding of what and who (re)makes Arthurian literature.

# 1

# PROGRESS:
# THE ENTERTAINMENTS AT KENILWORTH

The entertainments at Kenilworth are the best-known example of the Arthurian legend in early modern performance culture. Nineteen days of performances and festivity were hosted by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, for Elizabeth I in July 1575. This comprised the longest visit the Queen ever made on a summer progress, an annual opportunity to perform her royal authority in a continuing ceremonial dialogue with her subjects and hosts.[1] The exceptional scale and splendour of the occasion brought classical mythology together with British legend over an extended sequence of shows, creating what Jim Ellis has described as a 'new imperial mythology for England'.[2] Hybridity was a defining feature of this mythology. It not only shaped the variety of forms taken by the entertainments—of dumb shows, water pageants, and masques, to name only a few—but their meaning. The Arthurian legend emerges from its interactions in this composite context as a shifting mediator between Englishness and classical culture.

Scholarship to date has primarily been concerned with the entertainments at Kenilworth as evidence of Leicester's matrimonial and martial ambitions. In particular emphasis has fallen on

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[1] Mary Hill Cole, *The Portable Queen: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Ceremony* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).

[2] Jim Ellis, 'Kenilworth, King Arthur, and the Memory of Empire', *English Literary Renaissance*, 43 (2013), 3-29 (p. 4); for Joseph Loewenstein there are three strands of courtly devices over the course of the Queen's stay: "'the deliverie of the Lady of the Lake," under the general supervision of Willian Hunnis, Master of the Chapel; the "quest of Zabeta," entirely the work of Gascoigne; and a curious little drama in which a Savage Man sees and becomes enamoured of the royal guest', see Joseph Loewenstein, *Responsive Readings: Versions of Echo in Pastoral, Epic, and the Jonsonian Masque* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 62.

their presentation of the vulnerability of virginity and celebration of chivalric action.[3] While Leicester probably did not expect Elizabeth to accept a marriage proposal in 1575 after years of rejection, proffering it—or appearing to—during her visit enabled him to advertise their unique relationship as well as his wealth, power, and inventiveness, both to those present and to later readers of printed accounts. He may also have wanted 'a degree of closure: if the Queen would only confirm that their marriage was impossible, then he would be free to offer his hand or to pursue a military, rather than a predominantly courtly, role in the Queen's service.'[4] Leicester had been a keen advocate of an interventionist foreign policy on behalf of the protestants in the Netherlands who were in revolt against the rule of Philip II of Spain. In 1575 he was urging the Queen to take the provinces of Holland and Zeeland under her protection and to raise an army under his command to help them fight.[5] In light of this context, the critical consensus is that Elizabeth actively censored both overtly matrimonially themed performances at Kenilworth and those that too explicitly attempted to persuade her to intervene more forcefully in the protestant cause abroad, further complicating the presentation of the Arthurian legend in the entertainments.[6] While it seems likely that the Arthurian inflection of events was Leicester's idea, or that it was at least sanctioned by him, this chapter's focus is on the performative and poetic effects of this choice, rather than the personal and political motivations for it.

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[3] See Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 56-96; Phillipa Berry, *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen* (London: Routledge, 1989); and Cora Fox, *Ovid and the Politics of Emotion in Elizabethan England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 27-58. Elizabeth Goldring notes that the Arthurian claims of the entertainments enabled Leicester to rewrite his recent family history, as the son of the disgraced Duke of Northumberland executed for treason in 1553, see 'Gascoigne and Kenilworth: The Production, reception, and Afterlife of *The Princely Pleasures*', *English Literary Renaissance*, 44 (2014), 363-387.

[4] Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 133.

[5] Jim Ellis makes a case for the importance of the political situations in Scotland and Ireland, see 'Kenilworth, King Arthur, and the Memory of Empire'.

[6] See Frye, *Elizabeth I*; Berry, *Of Chastity and Power*, and Goldring, 'Gascoigne and Kenilworth'.

The two substantial extant records of the entertainments offer different, and sometimes conflicting, accounts of events. While brief references to the entertainments may be found amongst the Spanish dispatches of 1575, and in a 'Note' from a manuscript collection of 'Merry Passages and Jests', only three accounts of the entertainments were printed.[7] One of these texts was the now-lost pamphlet, *The Pastime of the Progresse*.[8] George Gascoigne's *The Princely pleasures, at the Courte at Kenelwoorth* was printed in London by Richard Jones on or shortly after March 26, 1576, and later appeared in a second edition in 1587 printed by Abel Jeffes. It offers a retrospective version of events, in the style of a European festival-book, assembled by an individual involved in both their composition and performance.[9] In contrast, Robert Langham's *A Letter: Wherein, part of the entertainment unto the Queen's Majesty, at Kenilworth Castle, in Warwickshire, in this summer's progress, 1575, is signified*, is a digressive, eighty-seven page black-letter octavo (characterised by its semi-phonetic orthography) that offers the perspective of a spectator.[10] The existence of both texts allows us to see the Kenilworth entertainments, or at least parts of them, from both an author and an audience member's point of view'.[11] Those views, however, do not always provide a clear picture of events. As Janette Dillon has stressed, since at least two records exist, one does not merely supplement but rather contests and exposes the other, revealing the potential gap between the performance and its records. Both Gascoigne's and Langham's accounts are early examples of

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[7] Antonio de Guaras to Zayas, 18 July 1575, *Calendar of State Pateps, Spanish, Elizabeth*, 2:515; BL., Harl. MS 6395, fol. 36.

[8] Referred to in the printer's preface to George Gascoigne's *The Princely pleasures, at the Courte at Kenelwoorth. That is to saye. The Copies of all such Verses, Proses, or Poeticall inuentions, and other deuices of pleasure, as were there deuised, and presented by sundry Gentlemen, before the QVENES MAJESTIE: In the yeare 1575* (London: Abel Jeffes, 1587).

[9] It is likely that the Earl of Leicester was involved in some capacity, see Goldring, 'Gascoigne and Kenilworth'.

[10] Robert Langham, *A Letter: Wherein, part of the entertainment unto the Queen's Majesty, at Kenilworth Castle, in Warwickshire, in this summer's progress, 1575, is signified: from a friend officer attendant in court, unto his friend a citizen, and merchant of London* (London: 1575) does not bear a printer's name, though it survives in two editions in seventeen copies and a fragment.

[11] Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 39.

printed texts that endeavour to reproduce fundamentally transient events.[12] The creativity this fostered informs their presentation of the Arthurian legend as both ephemeral and heterogeneous.

It has been widely accepted that the entertainments have an 'Arthurian theme', though many of the performances draw heavily on classical mythology.[13] According to Elisabeth Michelsson, at Kenilworth:

> the royal guest was reminded of the Arthurian associations of the castle and confronted with the Arthurian pretensions of Leicester, who was represented as Arthur's heir [and] who employed a number of artists including poets and players, singers and dancers to weave in allusions to the castle's Arthurian past.[14]

Certainly, during the reigns of Edward I and then Edward III, Roger Mortimer and his grandson had hosted Round Tables—Arthurian tournaments, banquets and semi-dramatic events—at Kenilworth.[15] Mortimer is explicitly cited in the entertainments by the Lady of the Lake (who performed twice for Elizabeth), while the giant trumpeters who lined the battlements on her arrival were subsequently glossed as having the stature of the 'great men' who served King Arthur, an allusion that elides Arthur's legendary contemporaries with the castle's occupants, past and present. According to the evidence, however, that is the entirety of the Arthurian content experienced by Elizabeth. While the presence of a minstrel who never got to perform his Arthurian ballad for the Queen raises the possibility of other abandoned Arthurian shows, the Arthurian 'theme' of the

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[12] Both are cited throughout from *John Nichol's The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth I: A New Edition of the Early Modern Sources*, ed. Elizabeth Goldring, Faith Eales, Elizabeth Clarke, and Jayne Elisabeth Archer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), unless a particular copy is being referred to.

[13] Elisabeth Michelsson, *Appropriating King Arthur: The Arthurian Legend in English Drama and Entertainments 1485-1625* (Edsbruck: Akademitryck AB, 1999), p. 72.

[14] Ibid.

[15] These are discussed in more detail in chapter 4; see also Roger Sherman Loomis, 'Edward I, Arthurian Enthusiast', *Speculum* 28 (1953), 114-127 (p. 120).

entertainments has been overstated. It is then perhaps more fruitful to ask how these Arthurian elements operate within the more dominant strands of classical imagery performed, than to address them in splendid isolation.

To establish how a distinctly sixteenth century mode of reimagining the Arthurian legend begins at Kenilworth, this chapter emphasises the play between allusions to classical and medieval texts.[16] By examining the presentation of the Lady of the Lake, the ballad of King Ryens's challenge, and the presentation of Captain Cox, it makes two key contentions. First, that the allegorical instability of the Arthurian legend in the entertainments is the product of its integration with the permeable principles of classical mythology, particularly those of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and that that instability becomes part of its significance. Then, turning to the playful prose of Robert Langham, it demonstrates how the depiction of idealised chivalric performances as a series of failed metamorphoses foregrounds the entertainments' non-elite participants, which shapes subsequent generic innovations. The entertainments' dynamic and dialogic form precipitates the reimagining of the Arthurian legend in allegory and pastiche, both modes that heavily depend on interpretive interaction with an additional or external referent for efficacy. Thus, I argue, a conceptually contingent phase of Arthurian innovation is inaugurated at Kenilworth, one in which attention is focused not on the exemplary or ideal, but on the fragmentary, the frustrating and, ultimately, the farcical.

## DESIRE FRUSTRATED

According to George Gascoigne's *Princely pleasures*, two performances by the Lady of the Lake comprise the central Arthurian content of the entertainments.[17] The inclusion of the Lady was

[16] This was a popular feature of the romance epics of Italian authors educated in the humanist tradition but absent in the *Entertainments*' primary Arthurian source, Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*, see Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. James W. Spisak (Berkley: University of California Press, 1983).

[17] Despite the claims to comprehensive inclusion made in both the *Princelye pleasures* and the preface added by Abele Jeffes, Gascoigne's account of the entertainments at Kenilworth selectively prioritises his own role.

probably informed, at least in part, by Leicester's eagerness to facilitate the first English water-pageant (a form of entertainment already popular on the Continent) on his vast artificial addition to Kenilworth's 'mere'.[18] The Lady appears in mythological company that accentuates her personation of a vulnerable female subject and an impermanent political entity. This instability is thematised in the *Princely pleasures*, which positions the Arthurian aspects of the entertainments within a broader interrogation of multiplying mythologies and transformative longings.

The verses with which the Lady welcomed the Queen, and probably those performed at her second appearance, were 'deuised and penned by M. Ferrers, sometime Lord of misrule in the Court.'[19] George Ferrers—a lawyer, courtier, and MP—had been appointed by Leicester's father, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, to preside over the Christmas festivities of 1551-2 as Lord of Misrule at Greenwich.[20] This was a role he then repeatedly reprised. These Christmas shows, which eclipsed the efforts of his predecessors, included chivalric elements, such as a procession of knights and jousts, though evidence for any Arthurian inflection does not survive.[21] George Puttenham described Ferrers as the 'principall' poet of the reign of Edward VI, with 'much more skil, & magnificence in his meeter' than his contemporaries.[22] C. S. Lewis would be less generous, describing him as 'no poet' but acknowledging his 'curious interest as a

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[18] From a detailed survey made at the end of Henry VIII's reign, quoted in John H. Harvey, 'Side-Lights on Kenilworth Castle', *The Archaeological Journal*, 101:1 (1944), 91-107 (p.92).

[19] Gascoigne, *Princely pleasures*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 295.

[20] See H. R Woudhuysen, 'Ferrers, George (c. 1510-1579)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004, https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1093/ref:odnb/9360, accessed 11 January 2021; Ferrers's connection to the Dudleys can be traced at least as far back as the 1547 Scottish campaign in which he, with William Patten, served under John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, see Patten's *The Expedicion into Scotlande of the most woorthely fortunate prince Edward, Duke of Soomerset* (London: Richard Grafton, 1548).

[21] See Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 304-313 and *The Loseley Manuscripts and Other Tare Documents from the Reign of Henry VIII to that of James I*, ed. Alfred John Kempe (London: 1836), pp.30-35.

[22] George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), pp. 60-63.

metrist'.[23] The pentameter sestains spoken by the Lady are distinct in her welcome for their final hexameter line:

> I am the Lady of this pleasant Lake,
> Who since the time of great king *Arthures* reigne
> That here with royal Court aboade did make,
> Haue led a lowring life in restles paine.
> Til now that this your third arriuall here
> Doth cause me come board, and boldly thus appeare.[24]

The form is almost Spenserian.[25] The Lady's verse form thus enacts what both the figures to greet the Queen before her spell out—'passe foorth in peace', 'pass on with joy and blisse'—an invitation to progress, further into the Castle.

The Lady of the Lake first appears amidst a sequence of figures from classical mythology welcoming Elizabeth to the castle. She performs after a show by Hercules the Porter and before the presentation of gifts from a selection of classical gods, narrated in Latin hexameters.[26] Many of the mythological figures to appear in this sequence were best known in Elizabethan England as a result of the popularity of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in grammar schools; these performances at Kenilworth followed a spate of Ovidian translations.[27] Arthur Golding's *The fyrst fower bookes of P.*

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[23] C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 241.

[24] Gascoigne, *Princely pleasures*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 293.

[25] It is possible that this suggests pre-publication knowledge of *The Faerie Queene*.

[26] Ibid., pp. 287-332 (p. 294).

[27] Reading and imitating Ovid had been central to the humanist education of English grammar schools throughout the century, but the impact of this on English culture began to be realised in Elizabeth's reign, see Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) and *Ovid and Masculinity in English Renaissance Literature*, ed. John S. Garrinson and Goran Stanivukovic (Montreal & Kingston: McGuill-Queens University Press, 2020); see also Goldring, 'The Production, Reception, and Afterlife of *The Princely Pleasures*', p.

*Ovidius Nasos worke intitled Metamorphosis, translated into Englishe*, (first published in 1567 and followed by a complete translation of all fifteen books of Ovid's poem), had been dedicated to the Earl of Leicester.[28] Others included T. H.'s *Fable of Ovid Treating of Narcissus* (1560) and Thomas Peend's *Pleasant Fable of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* (1565).[29] As in medieval translations of previous centuries, Ovid's pagan, erotic, and subversive poetry was allegorized and moralized in ways that enabled it to retain currency and to escape suppression in an age when both education and art were dominated by the precepts of Christianity.[30] When the Lady first appears at Kenilworth, she is 'attended with two Nimphes […] being so conueyed, that it seemed shee had gone vpon the water'.[31] Her second show begins with Tryton and ends with a song by Proteus. By introducing the Lady after a Sibyl and Hercules, and before the offerings of Jupiter, Ceres, Neptune, and Mars, amongst others, the entertainments invited their audience to interpret her in a similarly allegorical mode.

In seven stanzas, recorded in the *Princely pleasures*, the Lady outlines her absence from the royal court since King Arthur's reign. She also offers a summary of the castle's history: 'The Earle sir Moundords force gaue me no hart […] nor Roger Mortimer ruffe'.[32] Both Lady and castle

364; Syrithe Pugh, 'Ovidian Reflections in Gascoigne's *Steel Glass*', in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature: 1485-1603*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 571-586 (p. 571).

[28] George Turberville's translation of the *Heroides*, *The heroycall epistles of … Publius Ouidius Naso, in English* (London: Henrie Denham, 1567), Thomas Underdowne's of *Ouid his Inuectiue Against Ibis* (London: Thomas East & Henry Middleton, 1569), and Thomas Churchyard's translation of *The Three First Books of Ouids de Tristibus* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1572) followed.

[29] T. H.'s *Fable of Ovid Treating of Narcissus* (London: J Tisdale for Thomas Hackett, 1560); Thomas Peend contributed the *Pleasant Fable of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* (London: Thomas Colwell, 1565); even the centre of Leicester's new Elizabethan garden at Kenilworth featured a fountain depicting scenes and figures from *Metamorphoses*, see Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, pp. 233-287 (pp. 277-278).

[30] See Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, p. 25.

[31] Gascoigne, *Princely pleasures*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 293.

[32] Ibid., p. 294; in 1279, Mortimer held an Arthurian themed tournament at Kenilworth and Warwick. Subsequent Round Tables were held to celebrate victories in Wales and Scotland. A later Roger Mortimer, the

connect the present with the distant, legendary past of 'great king Arthures reigne'.[33] As well as enhancing the 'happy hope' of the present moment, the Lady's return is aligned with Kenilworth Castle's lavish renovation for the Queen's 'third arriuall here'.[34] The intervening period of history is depicted as one of uncertainty for both the Lady and Castle. The emphasis is repeatedly on past difficulties, 'I therewhile,/ did hide my head [while] swarming Saxons first who scourgde this land […] For straight by Danes and Normans all this Ile/ was sore distrest, and conquered at last'. The Lady's newly displayed 'state' is aligned not just with the castle's fate but the nation's.[35]

Throughout the entertainments, Kenilworth is portrayed as a mythologised microcosm of England. The defensive position of the Arthurian giants on the battlements in the welcome shows seem to echo the placement of giants at the defensive outwork of London Bridge for ceremonial royal entries into the city of London.[36] The Lady of the Lake's floating island, moreover, can be understood as a smaller version of Kenilworth floating on its lake, which, in turn, is a smaller version of the "island" of England.[37] The English landscape, however, is explicitly classicised by the entertainments. A Sibyl is 'placed in an arbor in the parke neere the high way', Echo dwells in the 'wildernesse' of the Castle's forest, and Triton and Proteus guard the 'great large standyng water called the Mere conteynyng in lenght halfe a myell'.[38] Gascoigne's script for his *Masque of*

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fourth Earl of March and sixth Earl of Ulster, served as Lord Lieutenant in Ireland from 1395 until his death in 1398. He prepared an elaborate genealogy showing the Mortimers' direct line of descent from Arthur, see Ellis, 'Kenilworth, King Arthur, and the Memory of Empire', p. 20.

33 Gascoigne, *Princely pleasures*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 293.

34 Elizabeth had visited Kenilworth Castle in the summers of 1566, 1568, and 1572, so 1575 was actually her fourth visit; with his designer William Spicer, Leicester had created a castle that looked like an ancient medieval fortress but incorporated the latest architectural fashions, Gascoigne, *Princely pleasures*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 293.

35 Gascoigne, *Princely pleasures*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 294.

36 Ellis, 'Kenilworth, King Arthur, and the Memory of Empire', p.19.

37 Ibid., p. 22.

38 Originally created in the twelfth century by either Geoffrey de Clinton or his son, see *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 290; Harvey, 'Side-Lights on Kenilworth Castle', p. 92; by damming two streams Geoffrey de Clinton or his son created the 'Mere', or 'Great Pool' which was 1.2 km long and in places 152 meters wide and defended the

*Zabeta* justifies the elision of classical subject and English setting when Diana, the Roman goddess of chastity, recognizes the grounds of Kenilworth:

> But what? Ah las? Oh whyther wander wee?
> What chase hath led vs thus into this coast?
> By sundrie signes, I nowe perceiue we be
> In *Brutus* land whereof he made such boast,
> Which *Albion* in odlen days dyd hyght,
> And *Brittaine* next by *Brute* his noble name:
> The *Engistes* lande as Chronicles do write.
> Now *England* short, a land of worthy fame.[39]

Brutus is the descendent of Aeneas and progenitor of the line of kings that would produce Arthur. Classical mythology is linked to British legend, thereby establishing England's 'worthy fame'.

While the Lady is allegorised in her welcome to the Queen as both Kenilworth Castle specifically, and the nation more generally, her second performance complicates her geo-political signification. Eight days after the Queen's arrival, when Elizabeth was returning to the castle after a hunt, she passed over a bridge where she was intercepted by Triton 'in likenesse of a Mermaide'.[40] This began, Gascoigne explains, 'the deliuerie of the Lady of the Lake', a water pageant he attributes to 'master *Hunnes*, some by master *Ferrers*, and some by master *Goldingham*'. Sir Bruse sans Pitie, the Queen was told, had besieged the Lady 'in reuenge of his cosen Merlyne the Prophet' whom the Lady enclosed in a rock. Protected by the waves of a sympathetic Neptune, the Lady

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castle on its south and west and supplied a moat to the north and east. See https://www.ourwarwickshire.org.uk and https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/kenilworth-castle/history-and-stories/, accessed 12 July 2021.

[39] Gascoigne, *Princely pleasures*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 311.

[40] Ibid., p. 304.

had been 'enforced to liue always in that Poole, and was therby called the Ladie of the Lake.'[41] The presence of Elizabeth's 'soueraínge maidens might' dispels the threat and, after the Lady's recital of thanks, Proteus sings a song to celebrate her release.[42]

The threat of the rapacious Sir Bruse that prevents the Lady from keeping her promise to attend upon the Queen at Kenilworth is presented as a sexual one:[43]

> By parting hence that yreful knight,
> Syr Bruse had hyr in chase:
> And sought by force, her virgins state,
> full fowlie to deface.[44]

The Kenilworth Lady's fear has precedent in some versions of the Merlin story. For example, in the post-Vulgate *Suite*, Niviène is obsessively preoccupied with maintaining her virginity. But this manifestation of her fear also draws on an Ovidian precedent in which nymphs are repeatedly subject to unwanted sexual advances. In the classical tradition, nymphs personified parts of nature as beautiful maidens and so are typically tied to a specific places or landforms. They recur

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[41] Ibid., p. 304.

[42] Ibid., p. 306.

[43] *Morte Darthur* features two Lady of the Lake characters. The first, who is not identified as the Lady of the Lake in the *Morte*'s sources, ensures Arthur's receipt of Excalibur, before pursuing a blood feud that results in her decapitation. The second, Nynyve, brings about both Merlin's removal, by resisting his sexual advances and trapping him in a cave, and the happy ending of Sir Pelleas' love story, by punishing the faithless Ettard and marrying him herself. She also repeatedly intervenes to protect Arthur, Lancelot, and even Guenever from harm, and is one of the four queens who take Arthur away on a ship after his last battle, see Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. James W. Spisak (Berkely University of California Press: 1983).

[44] Gascoigne, *Princely Pleasures*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 305; in *Morte Darthur*, Sir Bruse chases four women: one is saved by the efforts of Gawayne and Tristram; one is rescued by Dynadan; another, Dame Brangwayne, is saved by Syr Launcelot; and, finally, another woman is rescued by Palomydes but later killed by Bruse, see Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 82.

throughout the entertainments in, for example, Gascoigne's Echo or Langham's description of the Ovidian Naiads. The Queen is explicitly thanked by the Lady on behalf of 'Nymphs and sisters all', linking them through the shared vulnerability of their virginity.[45] This theme of virginity's limitations would have been further developed by Gascoigne's *Masque of Zabeta*, in which one of Diana's nymphs (named for Elizabeth) is persuaded by Juno and Isis of the merits of marriage over celibacy. The Lady's presentation reinforces the parallels not just of classical mythology and English legend, but between herself and the Queen, performing her personal and political vulnerability.

The exposure of the Lady's 'virgin *state*' [my emphasis] extends beyond parallels with Elizabeth. Details of Sir Bruse's 'bragging bands' and the Lady's 'foes' who needed to 'playnely see:/ Thy presence dread: and feared of all wyghts./ Which made him yeeld', draw attention to the context of her captivity.[46] Explained as playing out a wider conflict—between Mars and Neptune, and Juno and Diana—the Lady's oppression by a 'tyrant' frustrates those 'loitering […] consumed in endless care,/ to fend her from her foes', unable to intervene. Perhaps most suggestively, the pageant should have (but did not end up) following a 'gallant shewe' depicting a skirmish on the water at night, involving a 'captaine with twentie or thyrtie shotte', who would have triumphed against the Lady's oppressor and then invited the Queen down to join him on the lake in a boat.[47] The beleaguered Lady can be understood as a figure for the Netherlands, Sir Bruse her Spanish aggressor, and the pageant itself as an articulation of Leicester's advocacy of English intervention it the Dutch revolt.[48] The dynamic allegory of the Lady performed at Kenilworth, representing

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[45] Gascoigne, *Princely pleasures*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 306.

[46] Ibid. p. 306.

[47] Ibid., p. 308.

[48] It is also possible that her position alluded to the conquest of Ireland, which was once again reaching a crisis point in 1575. It had become apparent by the summer of 1575 that the Earl of Essex's plans for colonisation had come to nothing (reaching their disastrous conclusion with the Rathlin Island massacre at the end of July). While at Kenilworth the Privy Council was considering Sir Henry Sidney's proposal for bringing Ireland under control and with it his reappointment, see Ellis, 'Kenilworth, King Arthur, and the Memory of Empire', p. 13-

first the castle, Queen, England and then the Netherlands, 'enuyroned […] with waues', draws out the proximity and so the pathos of the Dutch predicament. Part of the allegory's purpose lies in its plurality. Spenser would echo this in his depiction of Lady Belge, her offspring, and her request for aid from Mercilla against the tyrant Geryoneao in *The Faerie Queene*.[49] In a seventeenth century sammelband, moreover, an account of the entertainments, William Shakespeare's Ovidian epyllion, *Venus and Adonis*, the 'merry morall Fable' of *The Country Mouse and The City Mouse*, and Thomas Stukeley's *Newe newes containing a shorte rehersall of the late entertprise of certain fugytiue rebelles … Tr. out of Dutch* (1579) would all be bound together.[50]

More so than any one of her significations, the Lady of the Lake embodies the layering of and movement between meanings. The interpretive perambulations required by the entertainments, both for spectators and then readers of the *Princely pleasures*, is noted in Jeffes' preface, which introduces its content as a 'progresse' on which 'all studious and well disposed young Gentlemen and others, were desirous to be partakers'.[51] The progress, he suggests, undertaken by Elizabeth was not just a physical but a 'Moral and gallant' one, in which others can participate by reading and interpreting the text. The entertainments repeatedly remind us to address them in this light: 'Reason, one of the heauenly Ushers, tolde me that it was to congratulate for the coming of your most excellent Majestie into this Countrey […] I might have perceiued no les by sundry manifest tokens here on earth'.[52] Unlike earlier editions of Ovid's work with

14. While Gascoigne's Savage Man might conceivably be understood as a representation of the Irish "wildman" (and a reader of Bodl. Ashmole 705 notes that the King Ryence who demands Arthur's beard was 'also King of Ireland'), the Netherlands remains the most plausible interpretation; Gascoigne's own *Spoyle of Antwerpe* (London: Richard Jones, 1576) depicts its eponymous city as a dishevelled lady.

[49] See Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, 2nd ed (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 578-593.

[50] Robert Laneham, *A letter [signed R.L.] whearin, part of the entertainment vntoo the queenz majesty, at Killingwoorth castle, in warwik sheer, in this soomerz progress. 1575, iz signified* (London, 1575), Bodl. Arch. G f.3 (3).

[51] Abel Jeffes, 'The Printer To The Reader', in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 289.

[52] Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 324.

apparatus designed to support fixed moral interpretation, however, allegory in the entertainments is more fluid. Like the 'goodly Pool of rare beauty', the Lady's significance is both reflective and dynamic.[53]

In Gascoigne's Echo-dialogue, the first in English, a version of the greenman of romance converses with Echo, the nymph whose story was popularised (and associated with Narcissus) by Ovid.[54] She responds to the Savage Man in repetitions that both answer and obscure his last utterance. When he suggests that 'No men so bigge haue bene' as the giants who lined the castle battlements, Echo answers 'Haue bene' and their Arthurian identity is uncovered.[55] While Echo revises the meaning of the Savage Man's words, his words revise the meanings of earlier entertainments. What had been presented as tributes from a pantheon of classical deities after the Lady of the Lake's first performance is revised:

*Savage Man.* Gifts? what? sent from the Gods?
as presents from aboue?
Or pleasures of provision,
as tokens of true love?

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[53] Ibid., p. 241.

[54] In continental echo-lyrics of the early part of the century, Echo frequently converts the lover's despair to hope. Nearly as frequently, though, she takes such common suffixes as Italian *-mento*, or *-mente*, or French *–ment* 'as pretexts for discrediting that hope, thus forcing a Keatsian attenuation of crisis, a being in uncertainties', Loewenstein, *Responsive Readings*, p. 75.

[55] Gascoigne may have performed the roles of both the Savage Man and Echo, as when Philisides sings higher when he is impersonating Echo in the Second Eclogue of the *Old Arcadia*, Sir Philip Sidney had been at Kenilworth for the *Entertainments*, see Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney, Courtier Poet* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991), p. 98 and Henry Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 272; Gillian Austen notes that it could have been an additional actor, possibly one of the Earl of Leicester's Men, see *George Gascoigne* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), p. 122, see also Muriel C. Bradbrook who identifies Langham as 'John Laneham, one of the leading members of Leicester's Men, the most distinguished troop of players in the country', 'Drama as Offering: The Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth', *Rice Institute Pamphlet*, 46.4 (1959-60), 57-70 (p. 66).

*Eccho.* True loue.[56]

The symbols of a thriving nation (sustenance and arms amongst others) are no longer gifts from the Gods. Rather, they have become Leicester's gift. As in Gascoigne's contemporaneous *The Steel Glass with The Complaint of Philomene* (1575), the first original work to make prominent use of Ovid for political ends in print, the allegories of *Princely pleasures* proliferate rather than providing answers. Like Sylvanus, the reader is 'thorowly tickled with a restlesse desire' to interpret them, the challenges presented are what keep the 'gallant' show moving.[57]

The Queen, in liberating the Lady of the Lake, is also cast as a classical deity. It is not the Lady's powers or even those of Neptune, Triton or Proteus, but Elizabeth's presence that enables the wind to retreat at the end of the water pageant:

> into your Caues,
> and silent there remaine:
> You waters wilde suppresse your waues,
> and keepe you calme and plaine [.] [58]

In Gascoigne's next performance, he would relay how Constancy had been turned into an Oak by 'Zabeta', Inconstancy a Poplar, Vainglory an Ash, Contention a briar, and Ambition an Ivy. It is now Elizabeth, not Leicester (who has been turned into a holly bush by this stage) who possesses the metamorphic power of Ovid's immortals.[59] But this power is equivocal. The Lady, after all, has

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[56] Gascoigne, *Princely pleasures*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 301.

[57] Ibid., p. 325.

[58] Ibid., p. 306.

[59] Lisa S. Starks briefly addresses Kenilworth in *Ovid and Adaptation in Early Modern English Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), but the most extensive consideration is made by Cora Fox, who focuses on

been forced to abide such 'sharpe assaults' because the Queen did not 'voide the place from fear', while the fate of Zabeta's faithful followers is described as 'a strange and cruell metamorphosis'. The power of the classical deities remains associated with their Ovidian caprice. The absence of King Arthur, moreover, so clearly evoked by the Lady's plight, is never filled. As in *The Faerie Queene* fifteen years later, Elizabeth is displaced in the entertainments from a potentially Arthurian role to an ambiguous mythic one.

Is it Leicester, then, who is cast as an allegorical Arthur?[60] Certainly, when the Earl finally secured the commission he sought for the United Provinces in 1586, he was depicted as a second Arthur. The citizens of the Hague welcomed him:

> Mighty Arthur, ruling Britain, drove out those who persecuted the people, with an eternal honour which does not fade, and protected the orthodox of his time, for which he is remembered as a glorious prince: we hope you will be a second Arthur.[61]

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the Queen's body in 'Elizabeth I's Metamorphic Body and the Politics of Ovidian Desire', in *Ovid and the Politics of Emotion in Elizabethan England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 27-58; these powers were reiterated in the ceremonies at Kenilworth in which Elizabeth transformed her subjects: knighting loyal men and curing the King's evil 'of the peynfull and daungerous diseaz, called ye kinds evill, for that only Kings & Queens of this realm, without other medsin (save only by handling a prayer) only doo cure it', see Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 263.

[60] Scholars have understood Leicester's appropriation of Arthurian iconography as a means of obscuring his questionable ancestry and elevating him to a status that would make him a fit match for the Queen, see Michelsson, *Appropriating King Arthur*, pp. 67-83; Lesley Mickel, 'Royal Self-Assertion and the Revision of Chivalry: *The Entertainment at Kenilworth (1575), and The King's Entertainment at Welbeck* (1633)', *The Modern Language Review*, 109 (2014), 953-976.

[61] Quoted in R. C. Strong and J. A. van Dorsten, *Leicester's Triumph* (Leiden: Sir Thomas Browne Institute-Leiden University Press, 1964), p. 48.

Above the entrance of the court gate 'placed aloft upon a scaffold, as if it had bin in a cloud, Arthur of Britaine', whom, John Stow reiterates, 'they compared to the Earle.'[62] While this vision of the Earl in the Netherlands as a triumphant Arthur would be short lived, his earlier attempted appropriation of the legendary king at Kenilworth was even less successful. Allegory proved, as ever, a potentially dangerous medium, susceptible to 'jealous opinions and misconstructions'.[63]

In Gascoigne's (re)interpretation of the significance of the Arthurian giants who lined the walls of Kenilworth, he emphasised that the castle has been kept 'for *Arthurs* heyres by right'. While this might have referred to the Queen, in whose gift the castle ultimately was, in his performance of the Savage Man, Gascoigne suggests otherwise:[64]

> *Savage Man* Was it not he? who (but of late)
> this building here did lay?
> *Eccho* Dudley[65]

The Savage Man's performance is the only performance that suggests Leicester might be associated with Arthur's legendary magnificence as host. Had Leicester performed the role of heroic Captain in the abandoned night skirmish against Sir Bruse, he would have further appropriated Arthur's martial prowess. Whether it was at the Queen's intervention in cancelling that show or simply part of the fortunes of live performance, Leicester does not emerge from either the entertainments or

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[62] John Stow, *Annales or A Generall Chronicle of England. Begun by John Stow. Continued and augmented with matters forraigne and domestique, ancient and modern, vnto the end of this present yeere, 1631. By Edmvnd Howes* (London: Richardi Meighen, 1632), p. 714.

[63] Spenser, 'Letter to Raleigh', in *Spenser: The Faerie Queene*, pp. 714-719 (p. 714).

[64] To make him worthy of a royal bride (Mary, Queen of Scots) the Queen had granted Leicester the lordships of Kenilworth, Denbigh, and Chirk on 9 June 1563, and ennobled him as Earl of Leicester and baron of Denbigh on 29 September 1564, see Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, p. 127.

[65] Gascoigne, *Princely pleasures*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 301.

the *Princely pleasures*, as King Arthur's heir.[66] Instead, Arthur remains an absent presence, associated with the peace and justice of a long-lost past, akin to Ovid's golden age. The abiding image of the Earl is as a lover, 'With wailing words and mourning notes,/ your [Elizabeth's] partyng to lament', not a warrior king.[67] The Echo-dialogue, moreover, might have been humorous in performance. From the rhyme of 'did lay' and 'Dudley' to the Earl's later Holly Bush conceit for the Queen's departure, these entertainments could be read as examples of ingenuity and indeed absurdity, primarily intended to entertain rather than impart serious political or personal messages.

At the centre of the *Princely pleasures*' playful and often ambiguous flattery of both sovereign and patron lies the poet's quest for recognition. The culmination of the Lady of the Lake's pageant is given to the 'Consort of Musicke […] in behalfe of all the Nimphs and gods of the sea'.[68] Its penultimate line praises Elizabeth's 'noble name' but the final line is about the 'song' itself.[69] Gascoigne, meanwhile, appears first as the Savage Man, clad in Ivy; then, had his masque been performed, as Audax clad in moss; and finally as Sylvanus, the Savage Man's son, who appears to have been dressed as a laurel bush: his 'due desert'.[70] Gascoigne's shrubbery sequence—a play on

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[66] So too might the Queen's alleged response to the Lady of the Lake, by suggesting that the Earl's presumption was immediately apparent: 'we had thought indeed the Lake had been oours, and doo you call it yourz now?', Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 245; a pair of portraits were also commissioned by Leicester for Kenilworth, in which Elizabeth and the Earl appeared side by side. He is in red, a colour associated with both love and royalty, and she wearing the jewel-encrusted doublet that Leicester had given her as a New Year's gift. The portraits were, however, concealed behind separate curtains, see Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, p. 132-3.

[67] Gascoigne, *Princely pleasures*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 329; at no point in the entertainments is the Earl imagined as Lancelot, for obvious reasons.

[68] Gascoigne, *Princely pleasures*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 307.

[69] Ibid., p. 308.

[70] Gillian Austen reads these personae as extensions of the reformed prodigal persona he had adopted in *The Posies of George Gascoigne Esquire* earlier that year and positions his woodland characters within a longer chronology of his work, beginning with the woodman of the *The Noble Arte of Venerie* (London: Henry Bynnerman for Christopher Barker, 1575) and extending to 'Hermetes the Heremyte' at Woodstock later in 1575, see Austen, *George Gascoigne*, p. 20.

the pseudonym he was given during his time in the United Provinces, the 'Green Knight'—enacts a move, facilitated by the transformative power of his poetry, from the forested margins of courtly life to the sylvan glade of preferment at its core.[71] This is also apparent in the Lady of the Lake's desire to go 'to Court to make resort […] in earnest and in sport'.[72] The power of metamorphoses in the entertainments is also imagined by and for its poet(s). Although even the poet's control is unstable in the burgeoning but not always benevolent mutability of the entertainments: 'The which sudden change I plainly perceyued to be, for that they vnderstood aboue, that your Majestie would shourtly (and too speedily) depart out of this Countrey, wherein the heauens haue happely placed you, and the whole earth desireth earnestly to keepe you.'[73] In the *Princely pleasures*, however, Gascoigne's inability to control either his poetry or his fate, '*(as I haue heard credibly reported) vpon a very great sudden*', is subsumed into the narrative of his innovative *sprezzatura.*[74]

Despite the cultural capital of both the classics and King Arthur in Elizabethan England, the *Princely pleasures* does not so much affirm as disperse and destabilise the authorities it depicts. Occasioned and circumscribed by the conjunction of the 'flourishing estate of [Elizabeth's] royall person' with 'this Castle and […] These woods, these waues, these fouls, these fishes', it is perhaps inevitable that impermanence is thematised: 'comfort comes when you approach,/ and when you part it ends.'[75] The myths and legends featured all perform the unifying theme of the entertainments (and the very last character introduced by them): Deepe Desire. In this context,

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[71] On Gascoigne's time in the United Provinces see G. W. Pigman III, 'George Gascoigne (1534/5?–1577), in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2012/10.1093/ref:odnb/10421, accessed 19 April 2020; Katherine Wilson has established how Gascoigne's prose fiction plays with the authors' own marginal status in relation to the revival of vernacular literature, see *Fictions of Authorship in Late Elizabethan Narrative: Euphues in Arcadia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[72] Gascoigne, *Princely pleasures*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 295.

[73] Ibid., p. 324.

[74] Ibid., p. 304.

[75] Ibid., p. 324.

the emphasis on the passing of the 'time of great king Arthures reigne/ That here with royal Court aboade did make', rather than on means or moments of its revival, is not surprising.[76] It is one of many performances of unfulfilled longing. The entertainments, as presented by the *Princely pleasures*, thus establish a centrifugal, hybrid iteration of Arthurian adaptation in which the exemplary remains elusive and desires multiply. The *Princely pleasures* does not rewrite the entertainments so radically that what is sought is attained—be that the Queen, professional preferment, or a lost, legendary past.[77] Instead, satisfaction is offered in the form of the poet's ingenuity as he transforms absence into presence, multiplicity into opportunity, and unattainability into the exhilaration of the chase.

## FROM GIANTS TO DWARVES

Robert Langham's *Letter* offers an alternative response to the question raised by the entertainments' about the identity of King Arthur's 'heyres by right'.[78] Where Gascoigne's *Princely pleasures* is interested in the complex interplay of dramatic fiction and political reality, in the *Letter* it is Langham's keen sense of their distinction that is worthy of note.[79] Providing a comparative and counterpoint, the *Letter* not only documents the shows performed, but describes the Castle and grounds, records details of Langham's work as clerk and keeper of 'the Counsill chamber door', and includes his digressions on classical and contemporary authors.[80] The question of

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[76] Ibid., p. 293.

[77] Although a number of incidents provided by Langham (discussed below) are, tellingly, not included.

[78] Ibid., p. 300.

[79] A further example of this is provided by Langham's account of the bear baiting, 'A queast of Bearz', as legal battle, see Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, pp. 251-252.

[80] Elizabeth Goldring, '"A mercer ye wot az we be": The authorship of the Kenilworth Letter reconsidered', *English Literary Renaissance*, 38 (2008), 245-269, (p. 246); seventeen copies and a fragment of another survive. These copies remain in two editions (STC 15190.5 and STC 15191). None of them bears a printer's name, a colophon or a date and place of publication, see *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 239; Langham describes himself as a 'merchant adventurer' and 'Clark of the Counsill chamber door, and also Keeper of the same', *A Letter,* in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 420, 429.

whether the *Letter*'s narrator is earnestly wide-eyed with wonder or a self-aware satirist glancing sidelong at the reader (an effect enhanced for the modern reader by Langham's semi-phonetic use of 'oo'), has long perplexed scholars.[81] The *Letter* has even been understood as an elaborate hoax perpetrated at the expense of an unwitting Langham by the minor poet and court official William Patten.[82] Yet the ironic elements of the text that provoked two distinct attributions to Patten have not yet been addressed in light of Langham's reinstatement as the *Letter*'s most likely author. Accordingly, I argue that in recounting the entertainments as a series of failed attempts at transformation, Langham wrests the Arthurian legend from the elevated realms of monarch, earl and poet, reimagining Camelot as a subject of *un*princely pleasure.

Perhaps the most significant addition that Langham makes to Gascoigne's account of the Lady of the Lake's welcome is his inclusion of the Queen's response. Having summarised the content of the Lady's 'wel penned meter and matter', Langham notes:[83]

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[81] It appears to be a coincidence (as opposed to parody) that Leicester referred to himself by the nickname the queen had given him, her 'eyes', signing off $\bar{O}\bar{O}$ or addressing her as 'My m$\bar{o}\bar{o}$st gracious lady', see 4 September 1575, SP 12/105, fol. 88, cited in Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.134.

[82] On the authorship dispute see William A. Jackson, *The Carl H. Pforzheimer Library: English Literature, 1475-1700*, 2 (New York: The Morill Press, 1940), p. 600; Muriel Bradbrook, 'Drama as Offering: The Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth'; David Scott, 'William Patten and the Authorship of "Robert Laneham's Letter" (1575)', *English Literary Renaissance*, 7 (1977), 297-306; Brian O'Kill, 'The Printed Works of William Patten (c. 1510-1600)', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 7 (1977), 28-45; Robert Langham, *Robert Langham: A Letter*, ed. J. P. Kuin (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1983); J. P. Kuin, 'Robert Langham and his "Letter"', *Notes and Queries*, 25 (1978), 426-427, and 'The Purloined *Letter*: Evidence and Probability Regarding Robert Langham's Authorship', *The Library*, 7 (1985), 115-125; see also Goldring, 'The Authorship of the Kenilworth Letter Reconsidered', *English Literary Renaissance*, 38 (2008), 245-269; Janette Dillon, 'Pageants and Propaganda: Robert Langham's *Letter* and George Gascoigne's *Princely Pleasures at Kenilworth*', in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature: 1485-1603*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 623-636.

[83] Langham, *A Letter,* in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 245.

> It pleased her hignes too thank this lady and too ad withall, we had though indeed the Lake had been oours, and doo you call it yourz noow? Well we wyll herein common more with yoo hereafter.[84]

He offers no comment on the tone or reception of this retort. The exchange, however, like his account of the Savage Man almost knocking the Queen off her horse with a branch, grounds the elaborate fictions of the entertainments in the contingent realities of performance. The *Letter* also details that the Arthurian trumpeters:

> fyue foot long, formed taperwyze, and straight from the vpper part vntuu the neather eend: whear the diameter waz a 16. inchez ouer and yet so tempred by art, that being very eazy too the blast, they cast foorth no greater noyz nor a more vnpleazaunt sound for time and tune.[85]

He goes on to detail how the song in the Lady's water pageant was 'by a skilful artist into hiz parts so sweetly sorted: each part in hiz instrument and so clean and sharply touched' that cast 'soound from the Dolphins belly within'.[86] Where Gascoigne prioritises poetic mythologies, Langham foregrounds methods of production. He is as eager to celebrate their ingenuity as to expose errors in their execution.

While Langham's text supplements Gascoigne's account of the Lady's welcome and the pageant depicting her release, there is another Arthurian entertainment that is only recorded in the *Letter*: the ballad of the minstrel of Islington. This section of the *Letter* begins with a description of the minstrel's clothing as he mingles with a group of unidentified spectators, amongst whom Langham 'chaunsed too be'.[87] The minstrel's detailed description of the Islington crest he wears

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[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid., p. 262.

[87] Ibid., p. 264.

on a chain at his neck is then relayed, as is an insulting alternative interpretation offered by a member of the crowd. Placated with food and drink, the minstrel then performs the '*Primus passus*' of a ballad in which a messenger arrives at Camelot and demands King Arthur's beard for King Ryens's mantle.[88] At its conclusion, Langham notes that the minstrel never did get to perform for the Queen, but 'had it cum to the sheaw, I think the fello woold haue handled it well inoough.' Positioned in the centre of Langham's text, the ballad is the last entertainment he describes; no version of Sylanus' 'tedious tale' of farewell is given.[89] It thus marks a significant structural fulcrum in the *Letter*; the author moves from describing the entertainments, to reflecting (with reference to the pantheon of classical deities) on the significance of the number seven and describing the new Italianate garden.[90] The centrality of this peripheral and ultimately abandoned performance is characteristic of the *Letter*, which consistently shifts emphasis from the royal and aristocratic members of the audience to the entertainments' less elite participants.

The context of the ballad in Langham's *Letter* casts it as comedic rather than epic or romantic episode.[91] Where, in *Morte Darthur*, Ryens's request of Arthur's beard for his coat contributes to the pattern of incidents portraying tribute, tyranny, and the unending cycle of blood feuds, in the *Letter* it is embedded after a playful description of the minstrel's own sartorial

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[88] Ibid., p. 269.

[89] Ibid., p. 326.

[90] The last event in *Princely pleasures*, Gascoigne's farewell to Elizabeth, complete with Leicester's lamenting holly bush, is not mentioned.

[91] This penultimate chapter of the Malory's first book follows Arthur's receipt of Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake (which may explain the positioning of the ballad within Langham's sequence and possibly within the entertainments as they were originally conceived). Having received the sword, Merlin asks Arthur whether he prefers his sword or scabbard and Arthur makes the wrong choice. Ryens's (Rience in *Morte Darthur*) beard-coat challenge follows and the book ends with Arthur, having been warned by Merlin that a child born on May-day will destroy him, sending all children born then to their death in a ship (which only Mordred survives). This darker context of the beard-coat challenge is not as clear in the ballad, though it is perhaps implied by the confusion of barbarism and civility in Arthur and his court's reaction, see Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. James W. Spisak (Berkely University of California Press, 1983).

ensemble.[92] As part of a correspondence between mercers, who were predominantly exporters of woollen materials and importers of luxury fabrics (such as silk and linen), the detail given is perhaps not surprising. Elizabeth Goldring has noted how 'the lengthy and meticulous descriptions of clothing—with particular emphasis on the fabrics from which they are made [include] a striking number of the technical terms', many of which constitute the earliest such usages recorded.[93] But these details amount to more than merely expressions of professional expertise or enthusiasm. The reader is given an itemised account of the minstrel's ruff, 'side gooun of kendall green', 'gyrdl', the 'lappet of his napkin, edged with blu lace', and the red ribbon around his neck.[94] His gown, meanwhile, has:

> side sleeuez dooun too midleg, slyt from the shooulder too the hand and lined with white cotton. His dooblet sleeuez of blak woorsted, vpon them a payr of poynets of tawny chamlet laced a long the wreast with blu threeden points, a wealt toward the hand of fustian anapes: a payr of red neatherstoks: a payr of pumps on hiz feet.[95]

The anatomisation of the minstrel's outfit parodies the conventional blason, reducing his clothes to the sum of their parts. The more the observer attends, the less flattering the details become. As the cross cut on his shoes 'at the toze for cornz' and the 'peawter, for syluer' of his chain suggest, his genteel costume is not, on closer inspection, convincing.[96] By introducing the ballad with a description of his minstrel's attire, Langham echoes the arrival at Camelot of a minstrel at the beginning of the beard-coat episode in the *Prose Merlin*:

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[92] See Laura Clark, 'Fashionable Beards and Beards in Fashion: Beard Coats in Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*', *Parergon*, 31 (2014), 95-109.

[93] Goldring, 'The authorship of the Kenilworth Letter reconsidered', p. 263.

[94] Langham, *A Letter,* in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 265.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

> clothed in samite, and girte with a bawdrike of silke harnysshed with golde and preciouse stones, that all the paley's flamed of the light, and the heir of his hede was yellower and crispe with a crowne of gold ether-on as he hadde ben a kynge, and his hosen of fin scarlet, and his shone if white cordewan orfaied, and bokeled with fin golde; and hadde an harpe a-bowte his nekke of siluer richely wrought, and the stringes were-of fin golde wire, and the harpe was sette with preciouse stones.[97]

That minstrel performs for Arthur, his performance evokes wonder, and once King Ryens's message has been delivered, he is revealed to be Merlin.[98] Langham evokes this foil to accentuate the shortcomings of the minstrel of Islington. Before the Arthurian ballad begins, his 'ruffs fayr starched, fleeced and glistering like a payr of nu shooz' suggest that clothing can only do so much.[99]

Appearances are even more deceptive in the minstrel of Islington's ballad.[100] As in the *Prose Merlin* and 'the first book and 26. Chapter' of Malory's *Morte Darthur*—in which Ryens's messenger forms part of a sequence of identities that are obscured by disguises—the *Letter*'s ballad uses appearances to complicate the distinction between barbarism and Arthur's supposedly civilized

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[97] Anon, *Merlin or The Early History of King Arthur: A Prose Romance*, ed. Henry B. Wheatley (London: Trubner & Co., 1865), p. 615.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 265.

[100] According to Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and Other Pieces of our Earlier Poets, (Chiefly of the LYRIC kind)* (London: J. G. Fleifcher, 1791), the ballad has been taken 'from three different copies' one of which is a 'MS. Copy inserted in a copy of "Morte Darthur, 1632" in the Bodleian Library'. No edition of *Morte Darthur* was published in 1632, though William Stansby brought out an edition for Jacob Bloom in 1634. Percy also states that the ballad 'was sung before Queen Elizabeth at the grand entertainment at Kenilworth Castel in 1575' (sig. B2$^{r}$) which goes against the evidence of the *Letter*. No copy of *More Darthur* currently in the Bodleian Library contains a manuscript copy of this ballad, though a copy of *The most auncient and famous history of the renowned Prince Arthur, king of Britain* (London: W. Stansby for I. Bloome, 1634) does include additional manuscript material, including a song about the consumption of Arthur's Court. It begins: 'And though knights errant, as some think,/ Of old did neither eat nor drink' and ends with the whole Round Table enjoying breakfast, see Bodl. Douce A 279.

court. Where King Ryens's 'robe of state, a rich scarlet mantel,/ With a leauen kings beards borderd about' represents his monstrous perversion of chivalric practice, at Camelot appearances initially seem to reflect order and status. The Queen is 'cumly', the ladies are 'apparaild in purpl and pall' and the 'herauds in hukes'.[101] This illusion of civility dissolves, however, on the delivery of Ryens's message and the court descends into an animalistic frenzy:

> The king fumed, the queen shriked, ladiz wear agast,
> Princes puft, Barns blustrd, Lords began too lour,
> Knights stampt, Squiers startld az steed in a stoour
> Yeemen and Pagez yeal oout in the hall[102]

Their overreaction is further emphasised by transformation of the messenger. The non-descript individual of *Morte Darthur* and the 'knight' of the *Prose Merlin*, is now 'a douty dwarf'.[103] The 'curtize' that saves the day, moreover, comes from an unlikely source. It is not the King who restores order but a character who, across medieval romance, is depicted as a bully, a boor or a clown, never as a hero: 'syr Kay the Seneshall'.[104] The ballad reinforces the carnivalesque quality

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[101] Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 268.

[102] Ibid., p. 269.

[103] Alex Davis notes that the dwarf is 'peart' and the minstrel himself over 'bold', offering a parallel of an overreaching visitor at court afflicted by delusions of grandeur, see *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), p. 93.

[104] The link established by Langham's *Letter* between courtesy and the beard-coat would be adopted by Spenser, although, where Langham reimagines the Arthurian entertainments at Kenilworth as a series of unconvincing or failed metamorphoses, the power of Spenser's Blatant Beast makes the threat of transformation real. Langham's *Letter* is clearly recalled in: Crudor's condition for loving Briana (that she provide 'a mantle […] With beards of Knights and locks of Ladies lynd'); the efforts of the 'seneschall', Maleffort; the role of the dwarf; and Calidor's generosity to the Squire, see *The Faerie Queene*, pp. 603-689 (p. 605).

of the *Letter*, blurring the ideal with the obscene and recasting a functionary as the story's chivalric centre.

Parallels between Kenilworth and Camelot, implicit in the presence of the ballad, are developed by the minstrel's account of 'the auncient armez of Islington'.[105] In this extended set piece, the minstrel, 'well schoold, and coold his lesson parfit without book too aunswer at full', describes the arms of Islington that he wears at his neck. The 'furmety for porage [and] flawnz' (a kind of custard) is reimagined in the language of heraldry and romance: 'a feeld argent, az the feeld and ground in deed whearin the Milkwiuez of this worthy tooun […] on a Fess Tenny thee platez […] three milk tankerds, az the proper vessel whearin the substauns, and matter of theyr trade it too and fro transported.'[106] While the minstrel then 'seemed to gape after a prayz for hiz *Beau parler*: and bicauz he had renderd hiz lesson so well', the meaning of escutcheon itself is reinterpreted by 'a good fello of the cumpany'.[107] According to this anonymous speaker, 'the poore minstrel mistakez the matter'. Instead, he offers a bathetically short interpretation in which his heraldic charge is revealed to be merely a mare with 'galld bak, and thearfore styll coouerd with a panel, fysking with her tayl for flyez'.[108] It is only 'with sak and suger' that the minstrel is 'sweetened […] again, and after becam az mery az a py'.[109] Comic deflation followed by appeasing sustenance is another addition that the ballad makes to its sources. There is no precedent in sources of this story for Sir Kay's provision of 'wyne and wastl'. As well as paralleling the minstrel with Ryens's dwarf

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[105] On August 17, 1565, a license was granted, on the payment of 40s., 'to alienate the Rectory of Islington, Co. Middlesex to Roger Martyn, "mercer", Alderman of London, and Humphrey Martin, his son and heir apparent', *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Elizabeth I* (London, 1960), 3: 300.

[106] The description of hornspoonz leads to an extended bawdy joke which provokes an allusion to the Naides' transformation of Achelous's broken horn into a cornucopia in *Metamorphoses*, taken from 'Ouid. Met. Li. 9.', Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 266.

[107] Ibid., p. 267.

[108] Ibid., p. 268.

[109] Ibid.

and deflating the romance of Camelot, the context given to the ballad's performance seems to extend the target of Langham's humour to include the 'Coourt riall' at Kenilworth.

This emphasis on consumption, in both the ballad and its frame, forms part of the *Letter*'s wider preoccupation with the provision of plenty at Kenilworth. Even before the final conceit of the Queen's welcome, the gifts of the seven gods, Langham's chorographic description of Kenilworth stresses its potential for lavish provision. The 'store of all kinde' from the 'goodly Pool' is detailed, 'freshwaterfish, delicat, great and fat, and also of wyldfooul byside', and the Chase is 'wast, wide, large, and full of red Deer and oother stately gamez for hunting'.[110] The feast that follows is 'most delicioooouz and (if I may so term it) an Ambrosiall Banket' and the 'deintyness, shapez and the cost' of the 'varietee and number of the disshez (that wear a three hundred)' confound the writer.[111] As in the minstrel's ballad however, an alternative perspective on this 'Largess Largess' is offered. The banquet was 'disorderly wasted and coorsly consumed, more courtly me thought then curteously'.[112] Instead of transforming Kenilworth into a romance *locus-amoenus*, as Gascoigne does, Langham's *Letter* exposes the deceptive and often comic nature of such attempts.

Langham's *Letter* portrays the entertainments as a series of aspirational and failed attempts at gentility. Just as the poetic illusion of the Lady of the Lake (and perhaps the ambitions of the 'Lord' for whom she speaks) is shattered by the Queen's acerbic response to her offer of the lake and the lodge, so the aspiring minstrel exposes the ideal of Camelot as an illusion. He never even gets to perform for the Queen. Langham's text, in which affectation is *not* transformation, thus offers the first account of the Arthurian legend which foregrounds non-aristocratic characters and concerns. In satirising failed attempts at chivalric imitation by individuals like the minstrel, Langham offered Elizabethan England an account of the Arthurian legend as a burlesque series of

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[110] Ibid., p. 241.

[111] Ibid., p. 260.

[112] Ibid.

unfortunate events. The ordinary (and often absurd) Englishmen who participated in and witnessed these entertainments call into question what it means for the Earl, who oversaw the conception of the entertainments, or the Queen for whom they were performed, to be 'heyres […] by right' of this King Arthur, as well as who else might stake a claim and what that might mean.[113]

## FARCE AND FELLOWSHIP

In Langham's *Letter*, the non-elite participants in the entertainments at Kenilworth confuse chivalric fiction and contemporary fact. The contributions of local men, dismissed by Gascoigne in the *Princely pleasures* with a single sentence describing them as too 'plain' to merit inclusion, are recounted at length by Langham.[114] These events included a game adapted from a chivalric training exercise, 'the running at quintain', and a mock marriage, 'the brideale'. According to Langham, these entertainments 'woold haue mooued sum man too a right merry mood, though had it be toold him hiz wife lay a dying'.[115] It is, however, the third of these events, the Hock Tuesday play (*The Conquest of the Danes*), which the *Letter* reimagines with an Arthurian inflection. In his account of the show, Langham portrays one of the 'good harted men of Couentree', Captain Cox, as a quixotic figure who (re)enacts elements of his romance reading.[116] This elision of romance and reality proves to be a source of both the author's amusement and his admiration.

A desire to integrate the Hock Tuesday play with the other entertainments commissioned by Leicester may account, at least in part, for Langham's references to Arthurian romance in his account of this episode. According to Langham:

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[113] Ibid., p. 300.

[114] Ibid., p. 309.

[115] Ibid., p. 256.

[116] Ibid.

> certeyn good harted men of Couentree, my Lordes Nieghboorz thear: whoo vnderstanding among them the thing that coold not be hidden from ony: how careful and studioous hiz honor waz, that by all pleazaunt recreasions her highness might best fynde her self wellcom, and he made gladsum and mery (the grooundwoork indeed and fooundacion of hiz Lordships myrth and gladnes of vs all) made petition that the moought renu noow their old storiall sheaw.[117]

Beneath Langham's compliments to the men of Coventry, to Leicester and the Queen, lies the suggestion that the impetus behind this performance came from 'my Lordes Neighboorz' and not from Leicester himself. A clash of scheduling is certainly apparent in the *Letter*'s account of Elizabeth's divided attention and her request that the performance be repeated:

> For her hignes beholding in the chamber delectabl dauncing indeed: and herewith the great throng and vnruliness of the people, waz cauz that […] but a little of the Couentree plea her hignes also saw: cammaunded thearfore on the Tuisday following too haue it full oout: az accordingly it waz presented, whearat her Majesty alight well.[118]

Having cited 'Arthurz book' when describing the Lady of the Lake's welcome to the Queen and the ballad of the Islington minstrel, Langham makes reference to it again in his description of *The Conquest of the Danes*, unifying these potentially disruptive interludes within the scheduled events and his own narrative.

Langham introduces the performance with a flourish: 'But aware, keep bak, make room noow, heer they cum. And first captin Cox' who, we are told, has 'Arthurz book' at 'hiz fingars

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid., p. 259.

ends'.[119] The Captain is almost certainly the Robert Coxe (or Cocke) who had been appointed as the Chief Mason at Kenilworth in 1552 and is mentioned in correspondence concerning Leicester's building works at the Castle in 1568 and 1571.[120] Cox leads the men of Coventry onto the field to perform their Hock-Tuesday play, *The Conquest of the Danes*, as part of a campaign to restore their right to do so annually, a right which had been put down in 1561 by the reformation. They were successful in this endeavour as, not long after their performance at Kenilworth, the City Annals record that 'This year the Pageants or Hox Tuesday that had been laid down 8 years were played again'.[121] Langham recounts the 'argument' of the show as:

> the Danez whilom heer in a trooubloous season wear for quietnes born withal and suffeard in peas, that anon by ooutrage and importable insolency, abusing both *Elthered* the king then and all estatez euery wear bysyde: at the greuoous complaint and coounsell of Huna the kings chieftain in warz, on Saint Brices night. […] wear all dispatcht and the ream rid.[122]

This legend of a victory over the Danes, led by local women, had come to be part of Coventry's Hocktide festival. The men, on the Monday after Easter, and then the women on the Tuesday, would bind and exhort money from one another. The show itself appears to have consisted of men playing the Danish mercenaries on horseback in mock combat with English forces who appeared on foot carrying alder poles. The English women, presumably played by other men, would then arrive, take the Danes captive and carry the day.[123] Reminiscent of other rough-and-

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[119] According to Nichols: 'In the latter year, he was working on the cast of an 'alloblaster chimeny for the newe greate chamber', see Longleat, Dudley Papers II, fol. 9r.

[120] See *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 257.

[121] *Record of Early English Drama: Coventry*, ed. Reginal W. Ingram (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), p. 276.

[122] Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 256.

[123] See Benjamin Griffin, *Playing the Past: Approaches to English Historical Drama, 1385-1600* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), p. 53.

tumble English folk combat plays, the 'rymez' spoken may have been orally transmitted and formed a fluid text less fundamental to the entertainment than the action itself.[124] But it is in Langham's account that the performance becomes a manifestation of the texts that Cox has in his library. The 'tonsword' Cox wields usually 'hangs at his tablz eend: great ouersight hath he in matters of story'.[125]

As part of his account of this show, Langham lists the contents of Cox's library, naming sixty-two specific titles. Many of them are romances and the first on the list is Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Cox himself is described as 'hardy as Gawyn'.[126] Where, in the French tradition, Lancelot emerges as the foremost of Arthur's knights, in the insular tradition that distinction is Gawain's. Of all of Arthur's knights, it is Gawain who most frequently personifies 'the embodiment of English concepts of manliness, moderation and good sense, renowned as Arthur's loyal lieutenant in dynastic struggles'.[127] Langham's comparison of Cox to Gawain thus evokes not only his great loyalty, courtesy, and strength, but a particularly English iteration of them. However, Gawain does appear as a comic character in several popular romances, so the reader is also being encouraged to laugh at Cox's pretensions to chivalry, 'clean trust and garterd abooue the knee, all fresh in a velluet cap (master Golldingham lent it him)', as well as celebrating the gusto with which the mason appropriates a chivalric role.[128]

Cox and his romance-heavy library are presented by the *Letter* as reflections of its author. Having admired Cox's vast collection, the reader is encouraged to 'maruell perchauns to see me

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[124] Sally-Beth Maclean, 'Hocktide: A Reassessment of a Popular Pre-Reformation Festival', in *Festive Drama: Papers from the Sixth Triennial Colloquium of the International Society for the Study of Medieval Theatre Lancaster, 13-19 July, 1989*, ed. Meg Twycross (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), pp. 233-241 (p. 237).

[125] Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 257.

[126] Ibid.

[127] W. R. J. Barron, 'Introduction', in *The Arthur of the English*, ed. W. R. J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), p. xvi.

[128] Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 259.

[Langham] so boookish'.[129] He, like Cox, 'looks 'on one book, noow on an oother. Storyez I delight in, the more auncient and rare, the more lykesum vontoo me'.[130] The first book listed in Cox's collection is the one which Langham repeatedly demonstrates his detailed knowledge of, 'king Arthurz book'.[131] Langham's ability, moreover, to recall and record all the other texts and ballads that Cox owns, 'Huon of Burdeaus, The four suns of Aymon, Beauys of Hampton, The squyre of lo degree, The knight of curteyzy, and the Lady Faguell, Frederick of Gene […]', amongst many others, suggest, at the very least, that Cox's tastes reflect his own.[132] According to F. J. Furnivall, the 'extraordinary omission' of a romance as popular as *Guy of Warwick* from the library of a Warwickshire romance enthusiast, 'lends colour to the supposition that the list is as much one of Laneham's own books'.[133] Whether or not the library is Cox's, Langham's, or a fictional mixture of the two, the list of the titles in Cox's library appears to parody more conventional contemporary lists of romance.[134] Like those 'preacherz: men very comendabl for their behaviour and learning […] but sumwhat too sour in preaching awey theyr pastime' who supressed the performance of Hock-Tuesday play, catalogues of romances are commonly found in the second half of the

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[129] Ibid., p. 286.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid., p. 245, 257, 268.

[132] Ibid., p. 257.

[133] Robert Laneham, *Captain Cox, his Ballads and Books*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall (London: Taylor & Co, 1871), p. xiv.; this emphasis is reflected in an eighteenth-century volume in the Bodl., Gough. Warw. 3, in which a copy of the 1784 edition of the letter is bound with 'The neglected ruins of a statue of GUY EARL OF WARWICK', as well as: an account of the *Warwick Races, 1786*; *A Calendar or Prisoners in the Local Goal*, *Proposals, for Publishing a large Map of WARWICSHIRE*; *OBJECTIONS of The LANDS OWNERS in the County of Warwick*; *Extracts from the Black Book of Warwick*; *A Brief Description OF THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH AND CHOIR of St. MARY, IN THE Borough of Warwick*; and *The Renowned HISTORY (Or the LIFE and DEATH) OF Guy Earl of Warwick, Containing his Noble EXPLOITS and VICTORIEs.*

[134] Parallels between Langham and Cox are also made clear in their shared professional pride, as mason and mercer, respectively, and in drinking, see Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 258; a reader of one copy of the *Letter* noted on the title page that 'Hock Tuesday by Coventry men p.32' and had then drawn a vertical line down the left hand margin of Cox's romances, from 'Arthurz book' to 'The castl of Ladeyx', BL C. 12 e. 1, 34.

sixteenth century on lists of what *not* to read.[135] The latest list before Langham's is identified by Furnivall as Edward Dering's *A briefe & necessary instruction* (1572). Rather than celebrating the contents of a library, *A briefe & necessary instruction* offers a negative example of the 'spiritual enchauntmentes' of the faithful who ought instead to 'set vp Shrines to the word of God'.[136] Both lists follow a similar structure, focusing on romances, then songs, and finally subjects from 'antiquitiee'.[137] Of the thirteen romances listed by Dering, nine appear in Langham's account of Cox's collection. Whether or not Langham's *Letter* parodies Dering's particular list, his enumeration of Cox's books, echoing a Malorian style rollcall of knights, mimics and mocks this familiar trope.

Langham's ironic approach would be adopted by Ben Jonson in *The Masque of Owls at Kenelworth. Presented by the Ghost of Captaine Coxe mounted in his Hoby-horse* (1624). Langham's description of Cox as 'A valiaunt captain of great proowes az fiers az a fox assaulting a gooz' is reimagined in a performance for Prince Charles as an 'old *Kenelworth* Fox' who echoes aspects of both Jonson's own character, Volpone, and King James's policy, on which he delivers an opaque monitory lesson within a mock encomium on government.[138] Like Langham's, Jonson's Cox is a comic figure with a 'goodly library,/ By which he was discerned/ to be one of the learned', riding a little hobby-horse so as not to be overlooked.[139] He is also now identified as a veteran of Henry

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135 Katherine Wilson notes that in his prose fiction, Gascoigne's self-presentation as a prodigal allows him both to repent at a later date and to compile a long list of the books he should never have written in the first place, *Fictions of Authorship*, p. 14.

136 John Payne Collier, *A bibliographical and critical account of the rarest books in the English language: alphabetically arranged, which during the last fifty years have come under the observation of J. Payne Collier* (London: J. Lilly, 1865), p. 327.

137 Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 258.

138 Jonson's reference to Cox as a fox may also be an allusion to the limits of King James's claim that he would inhibit 'lion-like' (plain) speaking and 'fox-like' guile, see David Colclough, *Freedom of Speech in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 170.

139 Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Owls*, in *The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*, 7, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 779-786 (p. 782).

VIII's wars.[140] The ghost of Captain Cox is not presented by Jonson as Arthurian but rather as one who usurps a role previously held by King Arthur, as a representative of a merry old England. The Ovidian theme of the entertainments, however, is made explicit: 'Now, I am not so stupid', Cox's ghost announces, 'To thinke, you thinke me a *Cupid*; Or a *Mercurie*', nevertheless he has found 'a very Nest of Owles'.[141] While 'some say' they were once bankrupt men, the real possibility of metamorphosis is not located either in the past or in the present of performance by Jonson (the owls remain conspicuously silent and owlish). Rather, this lies in the potential of Prince Charles's future reign to rehabilitate owls who 'were men,/ And they may be so agen'.[142]

Ultimately, Captain Cox is not transformed either by his performance in the entertainments at Kenilworth or by Langham's prose into Gawain. Instead, he appears as an early experiment in quixotism, the owner of a vast library of romances (and the town's chosen official examiner of ale) gleefully 'floorishing with hiz tonwoord' in mock battle.[143] More akin to Gascoigne's *A discourse of the Adventures passed by Master F. J.* (1573) than his *Princely pleasures*, Langham does not seek to romanticise the Hock-Tuesday play or its performers, but 'too cum oout of oour poeticaliteez'.[144] And the form of Langham's *Letter* helps shapes its anti-poetical effects. As early as 1518, news had been printed in letter forms that claimed their accounts came

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[140] Jonson, *The Masque of Owls*, p. 782.

[141] Ibid., p. 783; according to Ovid, Aschalaphus is metamorphosed into the 'the loathesome bird … sorrow's harbinger' as punishment for telling on Proserpine for breaking Hell's rule on fasting. Feared as destinys mournfil prophet, the owl is also figured in the period as a heresy-monger'. Jonson's engagement with the traditional figure of owlish monitory complaint probably refers to Michael Drayton's dirge against abuses in Church and State during Elizabeth I's reign, *The Owle* (London: E. A. for E. White and N. Ling, 1604), see Jean Lambert, 'Expounding the Owl: Ben Jonson's The Masque of Owls', *The Ben Jonson Journal*, 15 (2008), 19-53.

[142] Jonson, *The Masque of Owls*, p. 783.

[143] Lorna Hutson traces the ways in which the space of trial for male *virtus* is relocating, with a humanist impetus, 'from battlefield to text […] appearing in print before other men's eyes became the new place in which men displayed the cerebral equivalent of chivalric prowess', see *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 99.

[144] Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 274.

from a reputed source, located at the heart of the action. Langham heightens the irony of his satire by drawing on this early association of the letter. Claiming to report 'az frankly, az freednly, and az fully az I can' from Leicester's 'incomparable cheering, and entereynment' of the Queen at Kenilworth, he casts the mason 'who can talk az mooch without book, az ony Inhollder betwixt Brainford and Bagshot, what degree so euer he be', rather than the Earl or Queen, as his (mock-)hero.[145]

The letter was also, of course, a familiar feature of romance. A genre notorious for spanning vast geographies and encompassing large casts of characters, letters are deployed in romance to propel plot, expose motivation, and to draw attention to multiple, material layers of composition. Increasingly, in the sixteenth century, romance letters also became sites at which changing models of ideal comportment might be reflected. In Margaret Tyler's translation of Diego Ortúñez de Calahorra's *Espejo de Príncipes y Caballeros* (1555), The *Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood* (1578), for example, a single sentence in which Rosicleer worries that his letter to Princess Olivia is not well written becomes a page-long passage in which he does battle with rhetoric.[146] This 'increasing devotion to the representation of masculine social agency as "civil" rather than martial […] celebrating victories of mental readiness rather than physical courage' not only explains the significance of Cox's library to his mock-heroic performance on the mock-battlefield, but renders Langham's parody more self-conscious.[147]

As in the first letter-writing manual in English, William Fulwood's *The enimie of idleness* (1568), Langham's *Letter* is clearly addressed to a prominent merchant and fellow mercer,

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145 Ibid., pp. 240, 258.

146 'No paresciéndo que iva bien notada ni escripta' [it did not appear to him to be well or neatly written], Diego Ortúñez de Calahorra, *Espejo de Príncipes y Caballeros*, 2 (Zaragoza: Esteban de Nájera, 1555), p. 72; see Margaret Tyler, *Mirror of Knighthood*, ed. Joyce Boro (London: MHRA, 2014), p. 161; see also Jake Arthur, '"The Stuffe Not Ours": The Work of Derivation in Early Modern Englishwomen's Writing' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2022), pp. 100-101.

147 Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter*, p. 97.

beginning with the author's 'harty commendacionz' to him.[148] As in later, more canonical epistolary fiction, the relationship of the correspondents, however oblique, is inevitably fundamental to the form. *Letter* begins and ends with his 'good freend, Humfrey Martin Mercer'.[149] In his digression on duality, moreover, his emphasis falls on 'freendly biniteez'; having enumerated a variety of pairs, from 'too shoolderz' to 'body and soll', Langham reaches the conclusion, 'So ar we of friendly Tooz, from top too to.'[150] In concluding his *Letter*, Langham quotes not from *Metamorphoses* but Ovid's *Tristia*: '*Illud amicitiæ sanctum et venerabile nomen*' [That holy and venerable name of friendship].[151] He then ends his *Letter* with the plea that the writer be commended, 'I beseek yoo: vnto my good freends, almost most them yoor neighboours', several of whom are then individually named and praised.[152] Ultimately, the predominant absent presence of Langham's *Letter* is not King Arthur, but Humfrey Martin. The energetic description, experimentation, and parody of the *Letter* celebrates a fellowship, not of noble knights, but of a more middling sort of Englishmen who share the writer's 'joys' of 'Sak' and 'stoory'.[153]

## 'I WIL SHEAW YOO A PART HEER'

Gascoigne and his collaborators dislocated the Arthurian legend from the compendious narratives of earlier centuries by excerpting and interlacing select figures with classical mythology (in a manner distinct from the well-established hybrid tradition of the Nine Worthies). The nature of the progress performances in which these aspects of the legend were deployed set them in motion.

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[148] Addressed to 'Master Anthony Ratcliffe, Master of the worshipfull Companie of the Merchant Tailors of London', it had gone through ten editions by 1621, William Fulwood, *The enimie of idlenesse* (London: Leonard Maylard, 1568), sig. A2r; Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 239.

[149] Ibid., p. 239.

[150] Ibid., p. 280.

[151] Ovid, *Tristia. Ex Ponto,* I.8, cited in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 282.

[152] Langham, *A Letter*, in *Progresses… Elizabeth I*, p. 286.

[153] Ibid., p. 286.

In performance, the Queen progressed through the entertainments, receiving and also responding to them in ways that redefined their effect, as well as procuring improvisations and even censoring proceedings. Elizabeth is an absent presence in the *Princely pleasures* and the Arthurian allegories of the entertainments resist fixed signification in print. The Savage Man transforms the meaning of the Arthurian giants days after their show; the Lady of the Lake's symbolism shifts with each appearance. Rather than deploying the legend to evoke courtly festivity or to celebrate chivalric prowess, the Arthurian legend provides narrative fragments of frustrated longing. The thwarted desires that seem to have characterised the entertainments in performance are then portrayed as poetic challenges in Gascoigne's rendering of them in print; the elusive subject leads the poet on to ever greater feats of creativity.

Langham's *Letter*, meanwhile, reimagines Arthurian legend in prose, not as romance, but as something closer to epistolary fiction or memoir. The ambiguous and varied tone of the *Letter* enables the minstrel of Islington's failed attempts at chivalry to be satirised when similar efforts by Captain Cox are seemingly celebrated by the author. What is clear are the ways in which Langham plays with literary forms in order entertain his reader. Moreover, whether by design or necessity, Langham prioritises the interests of non-elite individuals in chivalric conventions throughout. Those interests were further popularised and performed in London by the annual summer show of the Society of Prince Arthur's Archers, whose "Prince Arthur", a 'Master [Thomas] smith Custumer', was one of the 'good old freend[s]' to whom Langham sent his regards at the end of his *Letter*.[154]

[154] Ibid., p. 286.

# 2

# PAGEANT:
# THE SOCIETY OF PRINCE ARTHUR'S SHOW

In Shakespeare's *2 Henry IV* (1597), Justice Shallow nostalgically recalls a performance 'at Mile End Green […] I was then Sir Dagonet in Arthur's show'.[1] His anachronistic reference is to the Society of Prince Arthur, an archery fraternity that hosted pageants in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.[2] In these spectacles, aspects of the Arthurian legend were used to perform an urban merchant community, rather than a fellowship of knights.[3] Prominent citizens would adopt aliases drawn from Arthurian legend and process through the capital, before competing in archery tournaments and feasting in the fields of north London. Where non-elite groups had been side-lined by the Arthurian entertainments at Kenilworth, only coming to the fore in subsequent printed accounts, the Society's shows placed an urban civic community at their centre. By tracing how King Arthur and his knights were recast as archers, and how the Society performed

[1] William Shakespeare, *The Second Part of King Henry IV*, ed. Giorgio Melchiori (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3.2.228-9; on the use made by Shakespeare of civic pageantry, see Randall Martin, 'Elizabethan Civic Pageantry in Henry VI', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 60 (1990/1), 244-264. An early version of some of the work presented in this chapter was published as 'A Chivalric Show of Civic Virtue: The Society of Prince Arthur's Archers', *The Review of English Studies*, 73 (2022), 43-58.

[2] Other fraternities included the Duke of Shoreditch's Men, discussed below, and the Black Train, which was led by the 'Black Prince of Portugal' about whom almost no evidence survives, although Robert Langham describes himself as '*El prencipe negro*' after asking to be remembered to the Society's Prince Arthur, Thomas Smythe, *A Letter: Wherein, part of the entertainment unto the Queen's Majesty, at Kenilworth Castle, in Warwickshire, in this summer's progress, 1575, is signified* (1575), in *John Nichol's The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth I: A New Edition of the Early Modern Sources*, ed. Elizabeth Goldring, Faith Eales, Elizabeth Clarke, and Jayne Elisabeth Archer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 233-287 (p. 287).

[3] On urban citizenry see Phil Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth: Citizens and Freeman in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

collaborative elements of the Round Table, this chapter uncovers the innovations of 'Arthur's show' and its impact on subsequent presentations of the Arthurian legend.

The Society of Prince Arthur was one of several large companies of longbow archers active in London in the sixteenth century. Recognised by Royal Patent in 1542, the Society seems to have lapsed under Mary I and then been revived under Elizabeth I in 1578, before ultimately disappearing from view in the reign of King James VI and I.[4] The apparent revival of the Society's show in Elizabeth's reign is probably linked to the changes made to England's militia from 1573. Elizabeth and her Privy Council instituted new regulations that required the formation of trained bands and the establishment of training grounds for them once they realised that the muster system could no longer meet their military needs. Training was required to take place at least twice a month, possibly on Sundays or holidays, and was overseen by local captains or justices who would offer prizes to the best shot with harquebus and bow.[5] Unlike the Midsummer Watch, however, the Society's show does not seem to have had a clear military purpose, or serve to mark a legal limit, like the beating of the bounds. Nor was it associated with a religious festival, like the mystery plays; with seasonal change, like May Day celebrations; or a change in government, like the Lord

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[4] Richard Robinson, *A Learned and True Assertion of the Original Life, Actes, and Death of the Most Noble, Valiant and Renowned Prince Arthure, King of Great Brittaine* (London: John Wolfe, 1582), sig. B1r; King Arthur was believed to have died in 543 AD, so the Society may have been established a millennium later, see H. Soar, 'Prince Arthur's Knights: Some Notes on a Sixteenth Century Society of Archers', *Journal of The Society of Archer-Antiquaries*, 31 (1988), 31-39.

[5] David R. Lawrence, *The Complete Soldier: military books and military culture in early Stuart England, 1603-1645* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 33; see also Mark Charles Fissel, *English Warfare, 1511-1642* (London: Routledge, 2001); Lindsay Boynton, *The Elizabethan Militia, 1558-1638* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971); and David Eltis, *The Military Revolution in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1995). While the Society of Prince Arthur appears to have been particularly devoted to the longbow, evidence from the pageants of other archery fraternities include members carrying calivers and harquebuses, see W. H., 'A Remembrance of the Worthy Show and Shooting by the Duke of Shoreditch, and his Associates in the Worshipful Citizens of London, upon Tuesday the 17th of September, 1583', in William Wood, *Bowman's Glory; or, Archery Revived* (1682), pp. 33-67, also reproduced in T. Roberts, *English Bowman, or Tracts on Archery* (London, 1801), pp. 253-275.

Mayors show. Yet, it combined aspects of all these traditions. Archery shows incorporated elements that went beyond demonstrating military readiness and loyalty to Crown; they were festive events. For the Society of Prince Arthur that involved performing aspects of the Arthurian legend in ways that combined humanist values with those of a rising merchant class.

The Society, like all bow shooting groups, had some association with the livery companies. It seems to have been particularly associated with the Merchant Taylors and the cloth trade more generally, while the Duke of Shoreditch's Men seem to have been members of the Goldsmiths.[6] The precise nature of these associations, however, is unclear. The Society seems to have existed in parallel with the livery companies to which its members belonged, as a social organisation that provided an inter-livery company network, complete with ceremonial identities and hierarchies. Extant evidence suggests that in the early 1580s the Society comprised between fifty and 300 members drawn from London's mercantile and civic elite. These included 'sundry principal Commoners': the mayors, sheriffs, aldermen and livery company masters amongst them.[7] Since the Society's annual pageant may also have featured an estimated 'thirty hundred archers', participation must have extended widely beyond the Society's membership.[8] Every senior member of the Society had an Arthurian alias and a form of heraldic identifier (banner, badge, shield), and set pieces (such as tableaux, dumbshows or mock battles) took place at fixed points along their parade route. Ceremonies of charitable giving, and rituals of memorialization may also have featured.[9] Once the Society's procession reached the fields north of London, elements familiar from medieval Round Table tournaments and Flemish archery guild festivals, such as feasting and

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[6] While this is clear in W. H.'s, 'A Remembrance', there is no evidence of this in the Goldsmith's archive, but then the Goldsmith's Company Court Book for the years 1579-1592 is missing from the Goldsmith's Hall Library.

[7] W. H., 'A Remembrance', sig. S2v.

[8] Ibid., sig. T1v.

[9] Richard Robinson, *The Ancient Order, Societie, and Unitie Laudable of Prince Arthure and his knightly armory of the Round Table With a threefold assertion friendly in fauour and furtherance of English archery at this day. Translated and collected by R.R.* (London: John Wolfe, 1583), sigs. B1r–12r; W. H., 'A Remembrance', sig. T2v, sig. S4r, sigs. S1r-T2v.

prize-giving, accompanied their shooting at marks.[10] The processional form taken by the different elements of the Society's show prioritised the visual over aural elements such as dialogue, enabling it to reach a very wide audience. As the pro-archery propagandist and ambassador Richard Morison put it, 'Unto the commen people thynges sooner enter by the eies, then by the ears: remembryng more better that they see then that they here.'[11] While the Society and its members may not all have shared either his agenda or his attitude, their elaborate spectacle was performed so that it could be experienced and remembered not just by its participants but by countless spectators as well. The audience reached by such pageantry was substantial, including 'thousands of spectators who never entered the Globe Theatre'.[12]

Charles Millican documented the existence of the Society in the 1930s. The interest he claimed for it was a possible influence on Edmund Spenser, who studied at the Merchant Taylor's school under Richard Mulcaster, a self-proclaimed Society member.[13] Since then, Lawrence Manley

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[10] See Roger Sherman Loomis, 'Chivalric and Dramatic Imitations of Arthurian Romance', in *Medieval Studies in Memory of A. Kingsley Porter,* ed. Wilhelm R. W. Koehler, 1 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1939); Laura Crombie, *Archery and Crossbow Guilds in Medieval Flanders, 1300-1500* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016).

[11] Quoted in Sidney Anglo, 'An Early Tudor Programme for Plays and Other Demonstration Against the Pope', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 20 (1957), 176-179 (p. 179); on Morison's praise of the bow see Jim Ellis, 'Archery and Social Memory in Sixteenth-Century London', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 79 (2016), 21-40.

[12] David M. Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642* (London: Edward Arnold, 1971), p. 1.

[13] Charles Bowie Millican, *Spenser and the Table Round* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), p. 55; Andrew Hadfield, 'Spenser, Edmund (1552?–1599)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/26145, accessed 1 January 2021; for recent work on site-specific performance see Andrew Gordon and Tracey Hill, 'Moving London: Pageantry and Performance in the Early Modern City', *The London Journal: A Review of Metropolitan Society Past and Present*, ed. Andrew Gordon and Tracey Hill, 47 (2022), 1-12; Julie Sanders, *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama, 1620-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); R. O. Bucholz and Joseph Ward, *London: A Social and Cultural History, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); 'The Places and Spaces of Early Modern London', ed. Deborah Harkness and Jean E. Howard*, Special Issue of the Huntington Library Quarterly*, 71 (2008), 1-9.

has stressed the ways in which chivalric pageantry legitimised the standing of Londoners in the realm, masking 'novel economic pursuits as traditional loyalty,' and providing a language 'of parity and reciprocity' in which to negotiate their relationship to the crown and aristocracy.[14] Kenneth Hodges emphasises the 'innovative nostalgia' of Society shows as a populist counterpart to the Accession Day Tournaments (discussed in chapter 4). While, according to Millican, the interest of Society 'tradespeople' in King Arthur was 'primitivistic',[15] both Hodges and Alex Davis consider the ways in which the Society testifies to the involvement of a broader class of person in the chivalric tradition, demonstrating how 'urban audiences could approach the Arthurian legend, not as appreciative outsiders, but as people with a stake in chivalric tradition.'[16] So what 'stake' did the Society have in King Arthur and his Round Table? How did their appropriation of the Arthurian legend work in performance and what was its effect, on both early modern audiences and the legend itself?

A passage in Richard Mulcaster's *Positions … Necessarie For The Training Up of Children* (1581) elaborates on the purpose of the Society's Arthurian pageants. Mulcaster—who had a history of writing pageantry as a means of flattery and persuasion having contributed to Elizabeth I's royal entry in 1559, her royal progress to Kenilworth, and speeches for the Lord Mayor's show of 1561—offers an idealised account of the Society's activities in his pedagogical treatise.[17] While *Positions* praises the Society for modelling traditional chivalric virtues, such as generosity and

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[14] Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 186.

[15] Charles Bowie Millican, 'Spenser and the Arthurian Legend', *The Review of English Studies*, 6.22 (1930), 167–74 (p. 64).

[16] Alex Davis, *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 125; Kenneth Hodges, 'Innovative Nostalgia in Popular Chivalry', *Arthurian Literature*, 27 (2010), 179-198; Millican, 'Spenser and the Arthurian Legend', p. 173; Hodges, 'Innovative Nostalgia in Popular Chivalry', p. 179.

[17] See Richard L. DeMolen, 'Richard Mulcaster and Elizabethan Pageantry', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 14 (1974), 209-221.

courtesy, while celebrating archery 'as a principall exercise', it does not mention more competitive virtues like valour and prowess.[18] Instead, Mulcaster stresses the inclusivity of the Society and its appeal to groups not typically associated with knights: 'artificers', 'workmen', and 'Companies'.[19] The primary purpose he attributes to the Society is the 'cherishing [of] loving societie' which requires the enriching of 'labouring pouertie'.[20] According to Mulcaster, the nobility of this community emerges from the modelling of behaviours that build productive relationships, hone skills, help businesses, prevent vice, and inspire 'emulation' by not only inculcating their values but encoding their practice and spread.[21] In this way, he suggests, the Society of Prince Arthur reimagined a tradition associated with exceptional aristocratic individuals as one of collective civic endeavour.

No official Society documents containing a complete plan, route or script for one of their pageants, if such texts ever existed, have been found. An account of the Society members interacting with another fraternity's archery show appears in Sir William Wood's *Bowman's Glory* (1682), which offers a detailed description of the Duke of Shoreditch's Men's show in 1583. Other evidence can be gleaned from more ephemeral sources, such as the lost ballads registered at Stationers Hall.[22] But it is two works by Richard Robinson—a 'Citizen', translator, liveryman, and

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[18] Richard Mulcaster, *Positions wherein those primitive circumstances be examined, which are necessarie for the training vp of children, either for skill in their booke, or health in their bodie. Written by Richard Mulcaster, master of the schoole erected in London anno. 1561. in the parish of Saint Laurence Povvntneie, by the worshipfull companie of the merchaunt tailers of the said citie* (London: Thomas Chard, 1581); on King Arthur and chivalric virtues see Elizabeth Archibald, 'Malory's Ideal of Fellowship', *The Review of English Studies*, 43 (1992), 311-328.

[19] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. N3v.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. N3v.

[22] Suggestive ballad titles include: 'Describing the Valour of our English Archers and Shot that Accompanied the Black Prince of Portugal Their Governor into the Fields on Tuesday 12th August with Welcome into Limestreet by Master Hugh Offely'; 'A Joyful Song of the Worthy Shooting in London of the XIXth Day of September 1581'; and 'Renovacion of Archery. by. Prince Arthur and his companions'; see Hyder Edward Rollins, *An analytical index to the ballad-entries (1557-1709) in the registers of the Company of Stationers* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1924), pp. 53, 115, 195-196.

pikeman in the Farrington Without regiment—that form the bulk of surviving evidence. The first work in which Robinson mentions the Society is in his translation of John Leland's defence of Arthur, *A Learned and true Assertion of the Original, Life, Actes, and Death of the most Noble, Valiant and Renoumed Prince Arthure, King of Great Brittaine* (1582), which the 'learned English Antiquarie of worthy memory John Leland' had once presented to Henry VIII.[23] Robinson's text has multiple dedicatees: Arthur Gray, Baron Wilton; Sir Henry Sidney; Thomas Smythe; and 'the Worshipfull Societie of Archers, in London yearly celebrating the renoumed memories of the Magnificent Prince ARTHVR & his Knightly Order of the Round Table'.[24] Robinson was not a member of the Society, though he may have hoped to become one. He describes himself as 'not worthy to be chosen in the number of 300 […] but yet cherely and frendly I will take my leaue of your good Worships, rejoicing that this Citie hath 300. such persons better then my selfe'.[25] While Robinson's commitment to creating or collaborating on patriotic texts that foster good citizenry is apparent across his career, his interest in the Society was also commercial.[26] Robinson produced his second

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[23] Leland's *Assertio* grew out of his *Codrus, sive, Laus et defensio Gallofridi Arturii contra Polydorum Vergilium* (later published in abbreviated form in the accounts *De viris illustribus*) and attempted to establish the validity of Arthur's historical existence through a comprehensive analysis of ancient texts, place names, ancient artefacts, and landscape features, see James P. Carley, 'Leland, John (c. 1503-1552)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/16416, accessed 1 August 2020; BL C. 20. b. 3 contains a correction in Leland's hand.

[24] Robinson, *A Learned and true Assertion,* sig. π1r; for more on Leland and English history see Cathy Shrank, *Writing the Nation in Reformation England, 1530-1590* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 65-103.

[25] Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. π4r.

[26] Robinson' s scribal output includes an early copy of Sir Philip Sidney's *Old Arcadia*, Folger, MS H. b. 1, and *The Honourable Three Adventures and Memorable Voyages of the* R. *Honourable GEORGE Erle of Cumberland*, D/EL WF 74. He was included among 187 contemporary authors listed in the first edition of *Holinsheds Chronicles* (1577) and translated Francesco Patrizi, *A Moral Method of Civil Policy Contayninge a Learned and Fruictful Discouce of the Institution, State and Gouerment of a Common Weale* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1576), see R. C. L. Sgroi, 'Richard Robinson (1544/5-1603), in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/23866, accessed 20 July 2022.

Arthurian work, *The Ancient Order, Societie, and Unitie Laudable of Prince Arthure and his knightly armory of the Round Table* (1583), for the Society and sold it, to them and others, at the show in the summer of 1583. Dedicating it, once again, to Customer Thomas Smythe and his archers, Robinson offers an unsurprisingly flattering account of the Society.[27] Whether or not the work was commissioned, however, remains unclear. The pamphlet itself is an unusual hybrid that reflects the compound nature of its pageant subject: part history of Arthur's Round table; part classical, Biblical and English history of archery; and part translated heraldry primer.

In the absence of a clear dramatic centre, the Society's show resists the easy privileging of official accounts or dominant viewpoints (of which pageantry scholarship has become wary).[28] None of the texts that mention the Society explicitly set out to record a show as it occurred. Moreover, as David Bergeron notes of later pageant texts, in seeking to 'fix' any part of the event, textual records liberate their writers to create materials not represented in the street entertainment.[29] Thus, while it is not always possible to distinguish textual additions or interpretations from the shows as they occurred, a sense of their pageantry—as processional performances, allegorical devices, social imitations—still emerges.[30] The dispersed, fragmented evidence available may even reflect ways in which these shows could not be experienced in their entirety by any single participant or audience member on any single occasion. They were instead experienced in multiple different ways and through various media across time.

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[27] Robinson notes that Thomas Smythe 'gave me for his Booke v s.: his 56 knightes gave mee every one for his xviij d. and every Esq. for his booke viij d. pece when they shott under the same prince Arthure at Myles ende greene', quoted in George McGill Vogt, 'Richard Robinson's *Eupolemia* (1603)', *Studies in Philology*, 21 (1924), 629-648 (p. 633).

[28] See *Civic Performance: Pageantry and Entertainments in Early Modern London*, ed. J. Caitlin Finlayson and Amrita Sen (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020).

[29] David M. Bergeron, 'Stuart Civic Pageants and Textual Performance', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 51 (1998), 163-183 (p. 167); see also Sarah Briest, *Married to the City: The Early Modern Lord Mayor's Show Between Emblematics and Ritual* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2019).

[30] 'pageant, n. and adj.' and 'pageant, v.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/135998, accessed 1 January 2023.

Even the organisation's name is unstable. Records refer to it as the 'Society', 'Fraternity' and 'Company' of Prince Arthur and sometimes simply as 'Arthur's knights'.[31] I use the term 'Society' here because it is the one I have encountered most frequently in sixteenth-century sources. It also resonates with the tensions between the private and the public that this adaptation of Arthur's Round Table enacted. While the modern term 'society' is arguably the closest approximation to the sixteenth century meaning of 'commonwealth', 'society' emerges in this period from the Latin *societas*, reflecting a concern among humanist writers for 'a kind of social interaction lying somewhere between the realms of "the family" and "the state"'.[32] Society pageants took place as this modern concept of 'society' emerged, one which negotiated between the private sphere and a public one defined principally in terms of offices (like those held by many of the Society's members). The Society of Arthur's show deployed the Arthurian legend to negotiate these changes and, in so doing, inspired one of Elizabethan England's greatest pedagogues, influenced its greatest Arthurian poet, and was itself deployed as a revealing anecdote in the drama of its most celebrated playwright. [33]

## EXEMPLARY ARCHERY

The mounted knight is the defining figure of Arthurian romance. That figure is absent from the Society's reimagining of King Arthur's fellowship. Instead of an order of aristocrats fighting battles and competing in tournaments on horseback, their pageant celebrated the pedestrian archer. The Society's association of King Arthur with archery was new: Arthurian romance had never celebrated the archer as a chivalric figure. Historically the remit of the yeoman and not the knight,

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[31] See, for example, Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. N3v; Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. π1r; and 'Will of William Gilborn, Draper of Saint Katherine Creechurch, City of London', Prob 11/64/393.

[32] Withington, *Society in Early Modern England*, p. 136, pp. 102-33.

[33] See Neil Rhodes, *Common: The Development of Literary Culture in Sixteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 15-16.

archery appears only occasionally in Arthurian romance and, even then, bows only feature in scenes depicting hunts or as weapons that enable duplicitous and un-chivalric action.[34] However, scholars such as Thomas Elyot in *The Boke Named the Gouernour* (1531), lauded the military and sporting traditions of archery as one that 'incomparably excellently all other exercise', and so advocated its practice by all humanists.[35] The pedagogue Roger Ascham explicitly contrasted the positive qualities of archery—as embodied in his own treatise *Toxophilus, The School of Shooting* (1545)—with vain works of chivalric romance.[36] For Ascham the bow, in opposition to an obsolete tradition of chivalric literature, becomes a humanist emblem, one which facilitates the mastery both of a valuable skill and of the self.[37] 'Through Christ, King Henry, the Boke and the Bowe', his title page promises, England will defeat all manner of enemies.[38] For the Society, however, chivalric literature and the noble tradition of English archery were not mutually exclusive. The Society's pageant brought the legend of King Arthur and archery together for the first time as nostalgic representations of a national military ideal that celebrated an aspirant urban present.

Over the course of the fourteenth century archers in England had been increasingly recognised for their military contributions. In earlier centuries, archery suffered from 'the stigma attached to missile weapons as a class, whether javelins, arrows, or stones.'[39] Archers were

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[34] See A. T. Hatto, 'Archery and Chivalry: A Noble Prejudice', *The Modern Language Review*, 35 (1940), 40-54.

[35] Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Gouernor deuysed by syr Thomas Elyot knight* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1537), sig. 92v.

[36] See Davis, *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance*, pp. 1-39.

[37] See Matthew Woodcock, 'Shooting for England: Configuring the Book and the Bow in Roger Ascham's *Toxophilus*', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 14 (2010), 1017-1038.

[38] Roger Ascham, *Toxophilus the schole, or partitions of shooting contained in ij. Bokes, written by Roger Ascham* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1571).

[39] Hatto, 'Archery and Chivalry', p. 41; in Chrétien de Troyes romance, Perceval's mother takes two of his javelins (and wishes she could take the third) when he sets out 'por che que trop samblast Galois' [because it would make him look too wild/ Welsh], *Le Roman De Perceval ou Le Conte Du Graal*, ed. William Roach (Paris: Libraire Minard, 1959), p. 18.

dismissed accordingly or viewed suspiciously as a threat to the efficacy of the cavalry.[40] A more positive reputation in England emerges in chronicle accounts of the battles at Crecy (1346) and Poitiers (1356), which are reflected in texts like the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (c. 1400).[41] By the victory at Agincourt in 1415, archers had become personifications of national character who went on to play vital roles in English victories at Flodden (1513), Solway Moss (1542), and the Battle of Pinkie (1547).[42] The bow became such a significant emblem of national pride that shooting legislation attempted to restrict expertise in archery to the King's own subjects and the 'Act concerning Shooting in Longe Bowes' (1511) decreed that those born outside the realm required a special license.[43] Simultaneously archery began to thrive as a pastime, 'albeit sometimes because it suited the ambitions of local elites to promote social and generational order.'[44] Archery's shift in status, evident in the popularity of the recreational practice of shooting in England, is also reflected in changes to the legend of Robin Hood: England's most famous archer became the 'Earl of Huntington', having been a yeoman in earlier iterations of his story.[45] By the time the Society imagined King Arthur as an archer the yeoman's bow had become a noble weapon.

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[40] Hatto, 'Archery and Chivalry', p. 44.

[41] Jean Froissart, in *Charles W. Colby, Selections from the Sources of English History: A Supplement to Text-Books of English History B.C. 55 – A.D. 1832* (London: Lond & c., 1899), pp. 97-99.

[42] Peter Cross notes that after Agincourt, 'ignobly born men-at-arms were claiming the right to coats of arms as a consequence of their participation in Henry V's war […] the chivalric ideology of the nobility was being used against itself', see *The Knight in Medieval England 1000-1400* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992), pp. 111-112; see also Woodcock, 'Shooting for England', pp. 1017-1038.

[43] 3 Hen. 8, c. 3; see Steven Gunn, 'Archery Practice in Early Tudor England', *Past & Present*, 209 (2010), 53-81.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Hodges, 'Innovative Nostalgia in Popular Chivalry', p. 184; see also Anthony Munday, *The Downfall and the Death of Robert Earl of Huntington*, in *Five Old Plays, Forming a Supplement to the Collections of Dodsley and Others*, ed. John Payne Collier (London: W. Pickering, 1883), pp. 1-99 and Lesley Coote, *Robin Hood: The Origins of a Medieval Outlaw* (London: Reaktion Books, 2020).

By the mid sixteenth century, however, just as the bow had gained acceptance as a chivalric weapon, its use began to decline.[46] Above all, the change was brought about by firearms. The gunner gradually superseded the archer because of his weapon's greater penetrative power and his ability to shoot from a concealed position.[47] Where, in the mid-fifteenth century, it was widely accepted that national security depended on the populace being 'much exercised in shooting', this was no longer the case by the end of the sixteenth century.[48] Although pro-archery legislation remained in force it could not stem the tide of social change; by 1595 bowmen were excluded from the trained bands of part-time county militia.[49] This competition between the bow and the gun is the subject of the 'Commendation of this Booke, written by Thomas Churchyard gent.' in Robinson's *Ancient Order*. While the bias of the poem is clear, so too is the success of firearms:

> For murthering shot came in of late, when *Bovv* in honor stood,
> In elders daies when manhode shone, as bright as blasing starre,
> And christian hart and noble mind, disdaind this turkish warre.

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[46] The various causes for this include: the difficulty of acquiring good bows at suitable prices; the rise of public theatre, which offered an alternative form of collective entertainment; the rising influence of puritans, who insisted that Sunday ought to be spent only in godly exercises; and enclosure, which removed training spaces, see Gunn, 'Archery Practice in Early Tudor England'.

[47] The debate continued into the 1590s: Sir John Smythe's defence of archery praised loyalty to old traditions of military science while other soldiers such as Humfrey Barwick and Barnabe Rich countered him. See *Certaine Discourses, Written by Sir John Smythe, Knight, Concerning the Forms and Effects of Diuers Sorts of Weapons* (London: Richard Johnes, 1590), Barwick, *A Breefe Discourse Concerning the Force and Effect of All Manual Weapons of Fire* (London: Richard Oliffe, 1594), and Rich's *A Martial Conference Pleasantly Discoursed between Two Souldiers* (London: John Oxenbridge, 1598); see also Gunn, 'Archery Practice' and Hatto, 'Archery and Chivalry'.

[48] Sir John Fortescue, *On the Laws and Governance of England*, ed. Shelley Lockwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 108-109.

[49] In 1595 the Privy Council ordered Buckinghamshire, the last of the counties that still used longbows, to 'convert all the bowes in the trianed bandes unto muskette and callyvers and the bill into pykes, and the see thei mai be trained and taught to use theire peeces', quoted in Roger Ascham, *Toxophilus*, ed. Peter Medine (Tempe, Ariz.: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002), p. 22.

> The Bow was vsed as force of m[an], & str[en]gth of arms might draw
> To glad the frend and daunt the foe, and hold the world in awe.
> But wh[en] that str[en]gth and courage fail'd, and c[un]ning crept in place
> The shot and roring Canon came, stout people to deface.[50]

It was once archery had become outdated in warfare that it experienced the cultural revival in London that provoked this poem. Like the legendary King, Churchyard hopes that: 'The Bow shall come againe in fame, and win his wonted grace.'[51] Archery, like Arthur, had become an emblem of nostalgia, a symbol of a glorious bygone age which could both confer prestige on the present and help to define its modernity.[52]

Scholars have accepted that the Society's association of King Arthur and archery began with Henry VII's eldest son and heir, Arthur, Prince of Wales.[53] In *The English Bowman*, for example, T. Roberts explains that Henry VIII's 'brother (Prince Arthur) became so expert in the use of the long-bow, that a good archer was honored by being stiled *Prince Arthur*', though he does not cite his source.[54] Prince Arthur was of course named for the legendary king as a part of Henry VII's wider program of legitimising his new regime and Welsh ancestry.[55] While developing prowess with the Welsh bow might have been another means by which Prince Arthur was encouraged to ingratiate himself with his marcher lordship on the Welsh border, the only surviving evidence of

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[50] Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. π3v.

[51] Ibid., sig. π4v.

[52] On nostalgia in early modern London see Harriet Phillips, *Nostalgia in Print and Performance, 1510-1613* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[53] See Millican, *Spenser and the Table Round*; Soar, 'Prince Arthur's Knights'; Hodges, 'Innovative Nostalgia in Popular Chivalry'.

[54] T. Roberts, *The English Bowman or Tracts on Archery: to which is added the Second part of the Bowman's Glory* (London: C. Roworth, 1801), p. 86, cited by Millican, *Spenser and the Table Round*, p. 57.

[55] See Steven Gunn and Linda Monckton, 'Arthur Tudor, the Forgotten Prince', in *Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales: Life, Death and Commemoration*, ed. Steven Gunn and Linda Monckton (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2009), pp. 1-19; Sean Cunningham, *Prince Arthur: The Tudor King Who Never Was* (Stroud: Amberley, 2016).

his interest is the purchase of a bow by Henry VII 'for my lorde prince' at Sheen in 1492.[56] No contemporary account confirms that the young Prince was a good or even an enthusiastic shot, as later sources claim, or that the Society was founded by or for him.[57] That said, the Society's carefully cultivated association with the lost Prince of Wales, reinforced by its name, not only imbued their endeavours with the hopeful nostalgia shared by both the lost Prince and once and future king, but helped gain it the patronage of a real (rather than just legendary) king. Arthur's younger brother, Henry VIII, conferred 'for the maintenance of the same laudable exercise in this honourable Citie of London by his gracious Charter confirmed vnto the worshipfull Citizens [the] famous Order of Knights of Prince Arthures Round Table or Society'.[58] In *A Learned and true Assertion*, Robinson explains Henry's interest in the Society: 'Bycause his elder brother being named Arthure, he him selfe a most christian King for all heroicall vertues commendable, the rather seemed to fauour and further the aduancement of the fame of his most renoumed auncestor this same our ancient Arthure and the knightly traine of his rounde table'.[59]

While no contemporary evidence for the activities of the Society during Henry VIII's reign has been found, it appears briefly in a record of the 1550s. The will of the painter-stainer John Heath on 22 March 1553 includes a bequest 'to the knightes of the Rounde table if I doit not by my life tyme twentie shyllinges to be spente at myle ende.'[60] Heath was also a friend of the merchant tailor, Henry Machyn. *The Diary of Henry Machyn* (1848) provides an eyewitness account of events

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[56] BL Add. MS 7099, fol. 3, cited in Samuel Bentley, *Excerpta Historica, or Illustrations of English History* (London: S. Bentley, 1831), p. 88.

[57] I am grateful for Sean Cunningham's help in establishing this.

[58] The grant in question refers to a shooting guild founded 'for the better increase of the defense of thys our Realm, and mayntenaunce of the Scyence or feate of Shotynge yn Longbowes, Cros-bowes and hand-gonnes', making no mention of Arthur, but instead calling the Society a fraternity of Saint George. In the seventeenth century, this would become the Honourable Royal Artillery Company, see G. Goold Walker, *The Honourable Artillery Company, 1537-1947* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1954), p. 12; Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. π2v.

[59] Robinson, *A Learned and true Assertion*, sig. π3v.

[60] 'Will of John Heath', PROB 11/F.8.Tashe.

in London between July 1550 and August 1563 in the style of a chronicle continuation. In it, Machyn records the funeral of Heath noting that 'ther wher a grett dener and ther wher the cumpene of Panters and the Clarkes and ys compony had xxs to make mere with-alle at the tavarne.'[61] Whether or not this was the dinner in question, the beneficiaries of the original bequest, with its reference to a 'Rounde table' and 'myle ende' is clear. The fact that Heath 'was both a heraldic painter and a member of the company named after the Arthurian tradition', raises the possibility of an historical association between painter-stainers and the Society via heraldry, which provides a new context for the most surprising element of Robinson's pamphlet (discussed below).[62] It is unlikely, however, that the pageantry of the Society was as splendid as it would come to be in the 1580s as Machyn, who was particularly interested in pageantry, makes no mention of it. He does, however, mention shooting contests in the 1550s and 1560s. These references include one in which Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, is present at a 'grett wager shott in Fynbere feld' and three 'gret suiting[s]' in the summer of 1562.[63] Numerous oral proclamations, moreover, for wrestling and shooting contests in the Court Repertories all take place at or shortly after Bartholomew Fair. As Jim Ellis observes, the marches of bow shooting fraternities in the 1570s and 1580s all seem to happen in the three or four weeks following the Fair, which suggests 'they owe more to the city guilds than to Henry VIII.'[64]

While Robinson's pamphlet does include a twelve-line verse in praise of Henry VIII on the first page of its central, heraldic section, it also registers something of this alternative, urban line of influence:

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[61] Henry Machyn, *The Diary of H. Machyn, Citizen and Merchant Taylor of London, from AD 1550 to AD 1563*, ed. J. G. Nichols (London: Camden Society, 1848), p. 32.

[62] Ian Mortimer, 'Tudor Chronicler or Sixteenth-Century Diarist? Henry Machyn and the Nature of his Manuscript', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 33 (2002), 981-998 (p. 996).

[63] London Metropolitan Archives, COL/SJ/27/030.

[64] Ellis, 'Archery and Social Memory in Sixteenth-Century London', p. 34.

> King HENRY the 8. hath condigne praise and Princely memory,
> (For chusing Knights of ARTHVRES traine to mentaine Archery):
> Whose Majestey at Myle ende with his NOBLES vsed this game,
> That Citizens and Subjects all might exercise the same.[65]

Here the monarch's greatness lies not in martial victories abroad, but in bringing people together through archery. This poem appears beneath several woodcuts: the crest of Queen Elizabeth I; 'Prince Arthures Armes for that Society of Archers in London'; and the coat of arms of 'M. Thomas Smith Cheef Customar for her Majesty in the Port of London'.[66] Thomas Smythe was the Society's Prince Arthur in 1583. Alongside this tribute to the Queen's father there also sits another kind of ancestry.

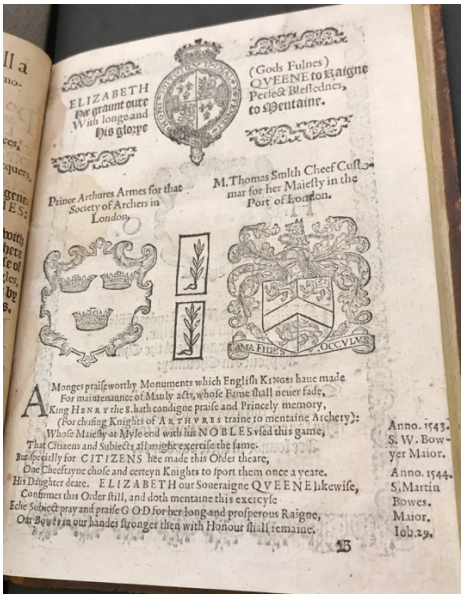



FIGURE 1. Richard Robinson, *The Ancient Order* (London: John Wolfe, 1583), sig. B1r.

Bodl. Douce R 129.

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[65] Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. B1r.

[66] Ibid.; see Brian Dietz, 'Smythe [Smith], Thomas' (*1522-1591)*', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2095/10.1093/ref:odnb/37985, accessed 1 August 2020.

In the right-hand margin beside this poem there are two printed notes that read: 'Anno. 1543, S.W. Bow-yer Maior.' and beneath it 'Anno. 1544. S. Martin Bowes. Maior.'[67] These refer to the mayors of London in 1543 and 1544 respectively, both of whom held the position of Prince Arthur in earlier iterations of the Society.[68] These notes give Thomas Smythe—one of Langham's 'good old freend[s]'—an alternative line of descent: forbears in archery and civic service as opposed to those of consanguinity.[69]

One important strand of this descent, and indeed of archery's elevation, was its use in Graeco-Roman culture. Churchyard concludes *The Ancient Order*'s opening poem with the assertion that archery is 'an auncient arte, a worthy guise, that scornes all practise new.'[70] Ascham had previously 'marvuell[ed]' in *Toxophilus*:

> that ye thinke a man with a bowe on hys backe is more like Robin Hoode seruaunt, than Apollose, seing that Apollo him selfe [said] *It is my wont always me bower with me to beare.* Therefore a learned man ought not to much to be ashamed to beare that some tyme, which Apollo god of learning himself was not ashamed always to beare.[71]

Archery, as a distinctly English martial practice, Ascham argues, need not be associated with the medieval and lower-class tradition of Robin Hood. Instead, he insists, it is reassuringly classical. While attitudes both to class and Robin Hood had shifted since Ascham wrote in the middle of the century, his emphasis on the classical quality of the archer persists. Robinson had clearly read *Toxiphilus*; just as Ascham, for example, included that favourite of English humanism, Xenophon's

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[67] Beneath them is a third note, 'Job.29.' a reference to the Book of Job: 'My glory will not fade, the bow will ever be new in my hand', Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. B1r.

[68] Soar, 'Prince Arthur's Knights', p. 32.

[69] Langham, *A Letter*, p. 286.

[70] Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. π4v.

[71] Ascham, *Toxophilus*, sig. C1r.

account of Cyrus, as an exemplary archer, so 'Cyrus an Childe in this arte was so diligent educate,/ That Xenophon […] write the same' finds a place in Robinson's 'Second Assertion an ys Prophane Hystoricall'.[72] Accordingly, the 'games' of the Society are given classical precedent by Robinson. The sources of the Society's competitions are located in those that were dedicated 'in honour of *Apollo* and *Diana*', events organised by Caesar and '*Anthonius* sirnamed *Pius*', and in the achievements of Hercules, who appears throughout the pamphlet, winning games and battles with his 'shootings dire annoy'.[73]

It is Apollo, however, Ascham's 'god of learning', who remains *the* classical precedent for the Society's Arthur. In the 'Second Assertion', Robinson also renders in verse the parts of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that feature archery, those involving Apollo, Cupid, Diana and others. This is followed by citations of multiple classical sources, including Claudian, Valerius Flaccus, and Virgil, to affirm Apollo's supremacy as 'Chéefest of Archers'.[74] As *The Ancient Order* describes:

> *Apollo* aboue al others was most famous (in war times for recouery of peace) at *Delphos* when being named the God of wisdome and Prince of Archers with his 1000. shaftes slaying and nailing to the ground that perillous serpent *Pithon,* he deliuered the people from perill thereof to liue in peace afterward, and betaking himselfe thereupon to his pleasant pastime accustomed of hunting Deere and Goate, did also institute by this his cheualry, those games in Latin called *Pithij* after the name of the serpent slaine.[75]

[72] Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. L3r.

[73] Ibid., sig. π2r, K2r.

[74] Ibid., sigs. K3v-L2r.

[75] Ibid., sig. π3r.

Despite his feats of arms, the Apollo invoked by Robinson is a god primarily associated with peace. Chivalry, back projected onto ancient Greece, is understood as civil protection and recreation as much as a celebration of martial distinction. The Arthur performed by the Society is the 'Champion', Robinson informs his readers, of this sportive, cooperative 'Cheualrie'.[76] The Society's show fostered the cultivation of a new masculine ideal that 'stresses activity, honest labor, and service'.[77]

The Englishness of this potentially international ideal is created and reinforced in opposition to Irishness. During the Duke of Shoreditch Men's show, the embassy from Prince Arthur that joined the Duke appeared 'upon stately Palfreys' accompanied, not only by ten pages 'also on Horseback' but by 'Irish Lackies with Darts running by their horses on foot'.[78] Irish figures were frequently depicted in this period as wild, disordered, and dangerous.[79] Here, then, they appear to symbolically assert the mastery of the English archers, both over the 'Irish Lackies' who accompany their appearance at the Duke of Shoreditch's tent and over themselves. Robinson, moreover, dedicated his translation of Leland's *Assertio* to two Lords Deputy of Ireland, and Spenser would go on to use the legend as a model for the execution of English imperial ambitions in Ireland in *The Faerie Queene*. This association of the Irish with the Arthurian legend—once the Welsh ancestry of the Tudors had made the medieval version of the uncultivated warrior unviable—appears in John Dee's justification of British Empire in 1576 and in the Accession Day

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[76] It can thus be understood in light of the promotion of self-governance by Thomas Cromwell and his propagandists, John Bale, John Heywood, John Rastell and William Starkey, see Mary Polito, *Governmental Arts in Early Tudor England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

[77] Ellis, 'Archery and Social Memory in Sixteenth-Century London', p. 29.

[78] W. H. 'A Remembrance', p. 269.

[79] See Edmund Campion, *A history of Ireland*; John Derricke, *The image of Ireland, with a discovery of woodkern* and Edmund Spenser, A *View of the Present State of Irelande,* in *Elizabethan Ireland: a selection of writings by Elizabethans on Ireland*, ed. James O. Myers (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1983); see also Elizabeth Fowler, '*A Vewe of the Presente State of Ireland* (1596, 1633)', in *The Oxford Handbook of Edmund Spenser*, ed. Richard A. McCabe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 314-332.

tilts of 1584 (discussed in chapter four) as well as in *The Misfortunes of Arthur* in 1588 (discussed in chapter three), suggesting a new connection between King Arthur and Ireland in the popular imagination of this period.[80]

The exemplarity of Arthur and his knights is developed by Robinson in his 'Breefe Repetition of the Table Rounde'. Here, the foundation of Arthur's famous 'ordenance and institution' prioritises the protection of the realm and the annual gathering of the whole fellowship.[81] In retelling how King Arthur and his knights gathered 'once a year at y$^{e}$ feast of *Whytsontyde*' to recount 'the labour and trauaill of their Bodyes', Robinson presents the Round Table as a model for emulation:

> In such sort that they all, and euery of them so aspired to that estate, that they mightely amplified the said Round Table, whereby the nomber of them was very great. Like as one may see by their *Armories* and *Escucheons,* which haue beene assembled together, and so blazoned: to th' ende that they which sawe and behelde them might take good Example thereat […] for the augmentation of vertewe and attainement of *Glory* and praise […] Yee haue here seene in open appearance therfore thescutcheons, deuises & *Armories* of the noble & valiant Knights of the *Round Table,* which you may beholde & consider of to the same effect and ende.[82]

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[80] See John Dee, *General and Rare Memorial pertaining to the Perfect Arte of Navigation* (London: John Daye, 1577); Alan Stewart, *Philip Sidney: A Double Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000), p. 232; Thomas Hughes et al., *Certaine deuises and shewes presented to her Majestie…* (London: Robert Robinson, 1587); Nicholas Hilliard's design for a Great Seal of Ireland portrays Elizabeth with a harp on one side (Henry VIII's official symbol for Ireland) and the three crowns of Munster, with Arthur's crowns on the other. The same crest is used by Robinson for the Society's Prince Arthur in *The Ancient Order* (sig. B1r), see Elizabeth Goldring, *Nicholas Hilliard: Life of an Artist* (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), pp. 210-211.

[81] Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. J2v.

[82] Ibid., sigs. I2v-I3v.

The Society's show was intended to mimic the Round Table in this way: 'that they which sawe and beheld them might take good Example thereat'. The Society's pageantry enabled its members to assemble and exhibit their 'good Example.' In *The Ancient Order*, Robinson 'amplifie[s]' the Society's fraternity further still, making his pamphlet his own 'simple show'.[83] In the circulation of *The Ancient Order*, the performance of those whose 'Bodyes' participated in the pageant could be presented to readers unable to attend the performance, expanding the audience to whom the example of the Society's Round Table was offered.

## VIRTUOUS AMITY

The Society's pageant used the streets of London as well as Arthur's legend to perform the moral character of their community. By following largely the same route through the city that the Midsummer Marching Watches had taken when they symbolically evoked the vigilance of civic authority in the first half of the century, the Society celebrated civic concord as well as the power and prestige of urban citizenship.[84] The association of this route with the performance of the security and welfare of the city would be adopted and developed over subsequent decades by the Lord Mayor's Show.[85] This would become a procession so lavish, so 'festooned with various

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[83] Ibid., sig. π4r.

[84] See Soar, 'Prince Arthur's Knights'.

[85] Mayoralty processions date back to 1209 when King John created the position of London's mayor for its citizens and stipulated that the candidates elected to the post must first present themselves at Westminster for official approval. Until the middle of the sixteenth century these processions were only accompanied by minstrels but over the course of the sixteenth century the mayoralty underwent an elevation in status, with the institution in 1519 of the custom of regularly conferring knighthood on each year's new officer and the development of the title of 'Lord Mayor' in the 1530s. The first Lord Mayor's procession that included more elaborate pageantry was produced in 1535, see *A Calendar of Dramatic Records in the Books of the Livery Companies of London: 1485-1640*, Vol. 3, ed. Jean Robertson and D. J. Gordon (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. xxv, and Betty R. Masters, 'The Lord Mayor's Household before 1600', in *Studies in London History presented to Philip E. Jones*, ed. Albert E. J. Hollaender and William Kellaway (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969), pp. 111-112.

paintings, huge banners and an infinite number of pennants', that it impressed even the most metropolitan and international spectators.[86] Like the Mayoral show that had replaced the annual midsummer pageant as the high point of the civic calendar, the civic honour displayed in the Society's pageantry reflected the elevation of the merchant elite (possibly at the expense of the social integration of contending social groups within London's urban communities).[87] This kind of pageantry also contributed to a tradition that helped to bridge the ruptures of Reformation: the largely unbroken lineage of civic pageantry from the Middle Ages through to the seventeenth century, fuelled by the active participation of guilds and livery companies, maintained much of the nature of processional cycle plays.[88] Unlike the medieval mysteries, however, late Tudor and early Stuart street pageants were largely stripped of patently religious themes or settings. What they retained was their moral tenor. The Society's shows performed the virtues of the community.

In these shows, the names of different knights operate as generic markers of nobility. *The Ancient Order* reflects this use of Arthurian names as generic signifiers of prestige. Robinson, who modelled the central part of his pamphlet on a popular French book of Arthurian chivalry, *La Devise Des Armes des Chevaliers de la Table Ronde* (1546), makes revealing changes. In *La Devise Des Armes*, in which a page is assigned to each knight, the description of Lancelot describes him as the superlative knight and lover of Arthur's Queen:[89]

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[86] Orazio Busino, *Untitled* (1617), trans. and ed. Kate D. Lein, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), p. 1265; see also Tracey Hill, *Pageantry and Power: A Cultural History of the Early Modern Lord Mayor's Show 1585-1639* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Lawrence Manley, 'Civic Drama', in *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 294-313; Ian Archer, 'The Social and Political Dynamics of the Lord Mayor's Show, *c.* 1550-1700', in *Civic Performance: Pageantry and Entertainments in Early Modern London*, pp. 93-115.

[87] Mervyn James, 'Ritual, Drama, and the Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town', *Past and Present*, 87 (1998), 3-29 (p. 23).

[88] Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642*, p. 8.

[89] Many of the names used in *The Ancient Order* come from French romance rather than the English tradition, such as 'Sir Boort' (sig. B2r) and 'Keux le senseschall' (sig. C2r) as opposed to Sir Bors and Sir Kay, while the blasons direct readers to the Vulgate Cycle Prose *Lancelot* (sig. B2r) and the Prose *Tristan* (sig. B3r) instead of

> Messire Lancelot du lac portoit en les armes dargènt à trois bèdes de bellif. Il estoit preux & hardy & l'vn des plus nobles & eminès de la table róde qui ayma à secret la belle Genieure femme du Roy Artus et fit choses si admirables quon a composé de luy vn liure contenant ses faict & prouésses.[90]
>
> [Sir Lancelot of the lake dressed in arms of silver with three bands oblique. He was valiant and strong and one of the most noble and eminent people of the round table, who secretly loved the beautiful Guinevere, wife of King Arthur, and did such admirable things that a book was written about him containing his great deeds of prowess.]

In *The Ancient Order*, each knight's name is printed in the centre at the top, above a shield, below which two stanzas of rhyming verse describe the knight's blason and summarise his chivalric reputation:

> IN *Siluer* Shield, *Three Bandes* of *Blew*
> Hee bare, full valyant hee,
> And ventrous was, one of the Cheefest
> Approued in Cheualry:
>
> Of knights which did the *Table Rounde*
> adorne with condigne prayse:

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Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. As Kenneth Hodges notes, while Robinson states in his notes to *A Learned and True Assertion* that he had consulted with John Stow to get the correct British place names (sig. B4v), he clearly chose not to translate the names into their English forms here: the French tradition clearly remained visible in London's popular culture, see 'Innovative Chivalry', p. 172.

[90] *La Devise Des Armes des Chevaliers de la Table Ronde* (Lyon: Benoit Rigaud, 1590), p. 14.

His factes and fame in bookes compilde

Are founde in these our dayes.[91]

Lancelot's most distinctive feature is not retained: Robinson makes no mention of his relationship with Guinevere. Clearly, loving Arthur's wife when Arthur was embodied by the real (and married) Thomas Smythe, and when an actual queen occupied the throne of England, could not be sustained by the Society's Arthurian fiction.[92] Its Round Table is not a self-contained Arthurian world but one contingent upon and related to contemporary London life. In this Round Table collective moral virtue is more important than individual excellence or compelling narrative. Robinson does not attempt to distinguish Arthurian knights from one another; instead, *The Ancient Order* uses them as almost interchangeable representatives of their fellowship.

In this context it is not surprising that the Society's Round Table is depicted positively in its show. In Wace's *Roman de Brut* (1155), the first Arthurian text to introduce the Round Table into the legend, and Laȝamon's *Brut* (c. 1190-1215), the first to realise it in English, the table is conceived as a mechanism to both control and sustain knightly rivalries. No knight is placed above another, but each must strive to increase their worth to deserve their shared status.[93] Holding three contiguous meanings by the time Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* was published, each of which

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[91] Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. B1v; 'bellif' is a form of *belic*, meaning 'oblique', an heraldic terms used to refer to the 'Diagonal, falling from either of the upper Angles to the other opposite to it, call'd in French, per Bend, may be either from the Right or Left', see James Coats, *A New Dictionary of Heraldry, Containing all the Rule of Blazon with Reasons for the Same* (London: J. Osborn, 1725), sig. S3v.

[92] Thomas Smythe was married to Alice Judd, the daughter Andrew Judd, a skinner, Lord Mayor of London and the founder of Tonbridge School, see See Ian Archer, *A Lecture Delivered at Skinners' Hall, London,* 26 November 2007, p. 4, https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:4a1c5a8a-78f1-4dfa-9c79-6f94a6161659, accessed 1 June 2021.

[93] Early accounts of the Round Table hold in tandem the impetus of historical narrative, that competition be channelled into the service of a higher cause, and that of romance, the paradigm of the individual hero's quest and triumph, see Laura Ashe, *Early Fiction in England from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Chaucer* (London: Penguin, 2015), p. 47.

might have applied in the Society's show—a physical table, the fraternity that gathered at it, and a chivalric event at which the fraternity and others competed—it is employed in the texts associated with the Society as a generic symbol of good fellowship. This generically positive depiction extends to every one of its constituent members. The 'martial might', for example, of characters like the querulous Aggravain, is depicted in the most benevolent possible light, while the ubiquitously villainous Mordred is not included at all.[94] Even the cultural or religious differences of historically Saracen knights included in the pageant, such as Sir Palomides and Sir Pyramus, are classicised. Made 'from' and 'of' Troy, respectively, their imitation of classical models is praised: Palamides is 'An Imitation trew/ Of that Noble *Palamydes*/ from *Troy*, wich did issew', while Sir Priamus is almost indistinguishable from '*S. Pryam* of *Troy*/ Or els from whence heee haue his name.'[95] In an obvious contrast with Malory's *Morte Darthur*, the conflict, friction and division required of narrative are not performed as features of the Society's Round Table fellowship.[96]

Robinson's 'Epistle Dedicatory' stresses this presiding co-operation. It does not emphasise the military achievements of King Arthur, or of later monarchs such as Henry VII and Henry VIII, but celebrates the fellowships they formed by fostering archery (his choice of 'Chiefe Archers to giue daily attendance vpon his person, whom he named his Garde' and 'a good & godly statute for the vse and exercise of shooting in euery degree').[97] English monarchs are thus presented as natural successors to King David, whose archery programme ensured that 'his peace and prosperitie in al respectes' surpassed that of 'his princely Progenitors'.[98] Not only did he institute that 'all the Children of Israel should learne to shoote in the Bowe' but David also 'mencioneth thereof many times in his Psalmody', the translation of which (sanctioned if not demanded by the Reformation)

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[94] Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. E2r; exceptions from the Welsh and Scottish Arthurian traditions are noted in the next chapter.

[95] Hodges, 'Innovative Nostalgia in Popular Chivalry', p. 9; Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. H2v, I2r.

[96] See Anon, *Ayme for Finsburie Archers* (London: John Partridge, 1601), sig. A1r.

[97] Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. π3v.

[98] Ibid. sig. π3r.

substantially shaped the culture of sixteenth and seventeenth century England.[99] The quotation from Psalm 133 on Robinson's title page, the first of many in the pamphlet, stresses 'Amitie'. Later in *The Ancient Order*, the Round Table of 'cheefest Cheualry' is described as one:

> ordained by the Lord of Lords, and King of Kinges, euen *Iehouah* the God of hoastes before whose heauenly presence (of immense majesty and immortall magnificence) enuironed round about with Patriarckes, Prophets, Princes, Apostles, Euangelistes, Angels, Archangels, and Soules of the righteous, incessantly shal be sounded Amen.[100]

In *The Ancient Order*, Arthur and his knights are carefully presented as part of a celebrated tradition of Protestant English archery, a secular marker of distinction from continental Catholic powers. While positioning itself as part of a continuous tradition, the Society simultaneously declared their difference from the recent pre-Reformation past. Above all, '*Arthures* noble ordinance order and famous memory' is recalled by the Society for its 'Unitie Laudable'.

Even interactions with other archery societies were characterised by amicability. In September of 1583, some of Prince Arthur's knights appeared at the Duke of Shoreditch's tent during his show to offer gifts, having received a buck from the Duke on the occasion of their show several weeks earlier:[101]

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[99] 'More than seventy different, new versions in English were printed during the seventy-year period […] until the end of the century […] These printed versions include scholarly, devotional and literary versions of various kinds. In addition, numerous versions survive in contemporary manuscripts', Rivkah Zim, *English Metrical Psalms: Poetry as Praise and Prayer 1535-1601* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 2; see also Hannibal Hamlin, *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[100] Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. π3r.

[101] On the mutual civic obligations structuring processional ritual and gift giving in pageantry, see Jill Ingram, 'Financial encounter customs: Tradition and form in London's civic pageantry', in *Civic Performance: Pageantry and Entertainments in Early Modern London*, pp. 138-154; on the Duke's possible identity as Richard Martin, Master of the Mint and eminent member of the Goldsmith's Company, see Soar, 'Prince Arthur's Knights', p.

> by the consent of their renowned Prince, these noble Knights mounted themselves on horseback, calling to mind the great courtesy they received of your nobleness, at the late royal show of their famous Prince. For requital of which your great friendship, this troop of noble Knights (for the honour they owe to the long-bow) are repaired hither to present unto your nobleness a friendly gift; which is; five bows of gold, and five silver arrows; requiring your nobleness to bestow them on five of the most valiant, most active, and most expert in all your train, in shooting in the long-bow[.][102]

The repeated references to nobility stress its appeal in this kind of role play.[103] The multiple prizes gifted ensure that a single individual from the Duke's train will not triumph but that exemplary members of the community are celebrated, thereby reinforcing the amicable relationship between the two organisations. While the Duke's show in 1583 did include comic interludes at the expense of religious difference, the affected nobility displayed here does not appear to have been ironic.[104] Rather, it emphasises the virtue and honour of the participants.

While details of the particular character or plot associated with each Arthurian knight does not seem to have featured in Society pageants, the honour of holding a particular alias was clearly valued by the individuals who performed them. Although many of the identities of Society members from the 1583 show are no longer recoverable, glimpses of leading performers and the significance of their roles to them can still be discerned. In *Positions*, Mulcaster names his good

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60; on the Duke's connections with commercial empire, see Ellis, 'Archery and Social Memory in Sixteenth-Century London', pp. 34-35.

[102] W. H., 'A Remembrance', sig. S1v.

[103] See, for example, Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of York and Lancastre* (London: Richard Grafton, 1548), sig. NNn3r.

[104] For example, friars 'clothed in black robes, with bald crowns, and beads in their hands, seeming to pray very devoutly, and blessing them that passed by, causing great laughing at sport', see W. H., 'A Remembrance', sig. S3v.

friend 'in the citie maister Hewgh Offly, and the same my noble fellow in that order Syr Launcelot'.[105] A member of one of early-modern London's wealthiest families, Hugh Offley was twice master of the Leathersellers' Company and elected sheriff of the city in 1588.[106] In 1588 it was Offley and his archers, 'well appointed in black satin doublets and velvet hose; everyone having a bow of yew and a dozen wax arrows […] in good and orderly array' who encountered Queen Elizabeth on their way from his mansion in Lime Street to Mile End Green. The Queen apparently remarked 'that in her life she never saw a more stately company of archers.'[107] The lavish provision of these '300 archers, personable men' was 'set forth, at his own expense, a costly show of Prince Arthur.'[108] Despite the moderation of Offley's private tastes, recalled in the popular rhyme, 'Offley three dishes had of daily roast/ An egg, an apple and (the third) a toast', his contribution to Society shows was substantial.[109]

The importance Offley placed upon his role as the Society's Sir Lancelot is apparent in his will. As well as repeated references to the 'Company of Bowyeres', Offley makes a bequest to John Nicholls and Thomas Bedell, whom he describes as 'my Squyres commonly called Sir Launcelottes squyres'.[110] Hugh Keale, a Goldsmith, is also named as his 'loving friend', and a further bequest is left by Offley to his godson, Lancelot Keale.[111] As well as resolving the question of who played the Society's 'S. Boort de Gauues' (only recorded as 'H. K.'), this suggests that Keale named his son for Offley, whom he asked to stand as godfather. Rather than using his Christian name, however,

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[105] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. N3v.

[106] See Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 552-3.

[107] G. C. Bower, 'A Manuscript Relation to the Family of Offley', *The Genealogist: A Quarterly Magazine of Genealogical, Antiquarian, Topographical, and Heraldic Research*, 19 (1903), 1-140 (p. 87).

[108] Bower, 'A Manuscript Relation to the Family of Offley', p. 87.

[109] See Reuben Percy, *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, 29 (London: Limbird, 1837), p. 123.

[110] 'Will of Hugh Offley', National Archives, PROB 11/84, fols. 294v-301r (fol. 297v).

[111] 'Will of Hugh Offley', PROB 11/84, fol. 300r.

he used Offley's Society one: Lancelot.[112] This was not necessarily unprecedented as the aforementioned painter-stainer member of the Society, John Heath, had also named his son Lancelot and it was presumably that 'Lancelott heth Citizen and paynter stayner myne oversear' who Henry Machyn named 'Execuc'on the same' in the will that he witnessed.[113]

While not all the individuals noted by initials in *The Ancient Order* can be identified—and some, like Mulcaster, who describes the Society as 'the fellowship which I am of', have no corresponding initials in Robinson's text—this evidence suggests that the Society's emphasis on the community and friendship of its fellowship extended beyond its pageantry and into the lives (and even beyond the deaths) of its members.[114] The show of 1583 at which Robinson sold his pamphlet may have been further enlivened by a bequest from a recently deceased member. The Draper William Gilborn had left 'the good company of Archers of London whome commonly be called Prince Arthur's knights Three pounds five shillings eight pence to make theme a repaste'.[115] The stake held by members of the Society in its community traversed the private and public spheres. Their performance of their Round Table fellowship extended beyond their annual pageant.

## FIELDS OF PAGEANTRY

As well as performing a collaborative community, Society shows were festive projects that staged the Arthurian legend on the streets of London and the surrounding suburban fields. As humanist advocates for archery as a 'technology of self-hood' had argued, it was all the more effective for

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112 Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. B2r; I am grateful to Ian Archer for finding and sharing the Offley family records with me.

113 Archdeaconry of London, reg. no. 3, fols. 49v-50r.

114 For the identities of other members see Soar, 'Prince Arthur's Knights', p. 37.

115 'Will of William Gilborn, Draper of Saint Katherine Creechurch, City of London', Prob 11/64/393, I am grateful to Jodie Smith for directing me to this.

involving the participants' bodies.[116] The performance of knighthood enacted by Society shows thus fostered aspiration through the active participation required by Londoners in its mythographic spectacle and revelry. Robinson's translation of this from the streets of London to the sections of his book invites a reconsideration of the nature and limits of early modern pageantry, as well as of conventional approaches to its reconstruction.

Members of the Society often aspired to, and in some instances achieved, a more substantial, permanent social elevation. One example is Robinson's repeat dedicatee, Thomas Smythe. It has been estimated that over the eighteen years that Smythe was a customs collector, his profits amounted to at least £48,000.[117] He was repeatedly accused, though never convicted, of corruption while he held his customs farm.[118] Smythe's success was, in large part, due to the relationships he had cultivated among the Elizabethan aristocratic establishment. Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, for example, not only shared in his profits, but dined with Smythe regularly, referring in his will to his 'great love' of the 'customer'; both Leicester and indeed William Cecil, Lord Burghley, were derisively described by Walter Ralegh as a 'pensioners' to Smythe.[119] Smythe died a wealthy man in 1591, and his monument in Ashford parish church suggests the kind of 'loving societie' that he most cherished while presiding over his lease of customs 'with singular liberality towards those of higher rank'.[120] Despite the Society's radical reimagining of the Round Table as a fellowship for non-noble men, the social aspirations of members of the Society could still be deeply conventional, reinforcing the power of the ruling class. Where Smythe adopted an

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116 Ellis, 'Archery and Social Memory in Sixteenth-Century London', p. 29.

117 See Ian Archer, *A Lecture Delivered at Skinners' Hall, London,* 26 November 2007, p. 5; L. L. S. Lowe, *Mr Customer Smythe* (Oxford, 1950); G.D. Ramsay, *The City of London in International Politics at the Accession of Elizabeth Tudor* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), pp. 154-6.

118 Archer, *A Lecture Delivered at Skinners' Hall, London*, p. 5.

119 S. L. Adams ed., *Household Accounts and Disbursement Books of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1558-1561, 1584-6* (London: Camden Society, 1995), pp. 114-5, 119, 334.

120 Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. N3v; Dietz, 'Smythe [Smith], Thomas' (*1522-1591)*', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

elite alias for show in Society pageantry, three of his sons went on to achieve actual knighthoods. One of them, also named Thomas, would go on to particular eminence in both commerce and colonisation.[121] Just as commentators believed such performances could reinforce good exercise, moral action, and patriotic fervour, so the Society's pageantry might have enabled its members not only to exhibit but to enact social and financial success in meaningful and even lasting ways. Certainly, to adopt an Arthurian alias in London in the 1580s was to make a claim to nobility, however performative, temporary, or modified that nobility was.

This sense of participation as formation is apparent in the most significant change Robinson made when translating from *La Devise Des Armes*. Where the 168 shields of his French source are beautifully detailed and coloured, each of the fifty-eight pages Robinson devotes to individual knights in the central section of *The Ancient Order* features the black outline of a shield and an empty space. This part of the pamphlet is a colouring-in book. The embellishing or colouring of printed woodcut images, by both professionals and readers, was common in early-modern printed books. The deliberate assignment of images to be filled in by readers, however, paired with a guide of the 'COLOVRES & the PENNES or Furres' required to complete them was not.[122] In this respect, *The Ancient Order* anticipates the greater formalisation of purpose-made colouring in books in the eighteenth century.[123] While the desire for a more interactive heraldic pedagogical process might have motivated the inclusion of these unfinished shields, or indeed a

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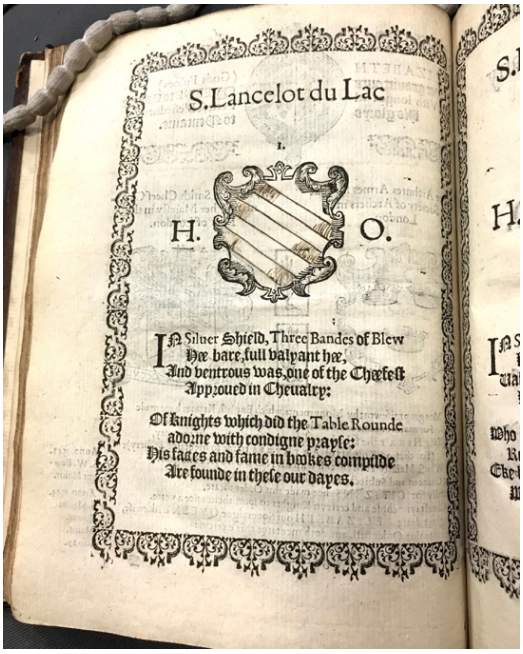
121 Dietz, 'Smythe [Smith], Thomas' (*1522-1591)*', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

122 In one of the British Library's copies the only annotations are confined to the eight-page heraldry how-to with which Robinson prefaces his series of empty shields. At several points in the section of the text where the 'signification' of each heraldic metal, colour and fur (including associated 'Vertues', 'Stones', 'Planets', 'Elements', 'Complexions', 'Sygnes' and 'Dayes in the weeke') are listed, this reader has struck out printed words with lines of thick black ink as well as making several marginal notes, see Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. A2v, A4r (STC 277:05).

123 Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. A2r; see Michelle M. Morris, 'The Dawn of the Age of Print and the Adult Colouring Craze in the 15th Century', *Brewminate* (February 2019), https://brewminate.com/the-dawn-of-the-age-of-print-and-the-adult-coloring-craze-in-the-15th-century/, accessed 2 August 2020; see Robert Sayer, *The Florist* (London: Robert Wilkinson, 1760).

reduced price, their centrality encourages the reader to actively intervene. Surviving readerly engagements with copies of *The Ancient Order*, however, tend not to be overly concerned with the communal values of the Society that Robinson purports to promulgate. Instead, emphasis is repeatedly placed by readers either on particular knights or by demonstrating their own, alternative, forms of prowess.

Lancelot may have been purged of the sole tragic stain on his character as the best knight, both in performance and Robinson's text, but his page appears first in Robinson's series of fifty-eight. Lancelot's blason, moreover, still describes how 'His factes and fame in bookes compiled/ Are founde in these our dayes', where Tristrande has only inspired 'A Booke' and Sir Boorte's page directs readers to 'Lancelot his booke'.[124] In Lambeth Palace Library's copy of *The Ancient Order*, each of Sir Lancelot's 'Three Bandes' has been carefully drawn in and cross-hatched in black ink to match the printed shield's edges.[125] This not only adds to the illusion that the shield has a convex surface but, were it not for the slight fading of ink's colour to a dark brown, it would look as though the bands were part of the original printed book.




[124] Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. B1v.

[125] Ibid., sig. B1v (STC 15441).

FIGURE 2. Richard Robinson, *The Ancient Order* (London: John Wolfe, 1583), sig. B1v.

Lambeth Palace Library, ZZ1582. 16. 02.

It has been completed with care. Yet Lancelot's is the only shield that this careful reader touched. While it is possible that the reader began with the first shield and either lost the interest or the ability, for whatever practical reason, to continue, this single effort might also suggest that the completion of every shield in the book was not the reader's primary goal. Like collectors of basketball cards or footballer sticker books more recently, a reader of Robinson's text may have valued or identified with a particular knight or group of knights over others. This reader may have been Offley himself, a friend or family member, or a fan (of either Offley or Lancelot).

The motivation for selecting the first knight and Malory's superlative hero seems straightforward. The selection made by other readers, however, is less self-explanatory. A reader of Longleat Library's copy of *The Ancient Order* attempted to complete the shields of the forty-fourth knight, 'Thor Filz de Arez', and the forty-eighth, 'Malaquin le Galoys'.[126] These two characters are comparatively insignificant figures in Arthurian romance, loosely associated with the Tristram cycle and Wales respectively.[127] Whether this reader inked in the crosses and the chalice because of who they were, knew, or saw, in the Society's show, because of the blasons they understood, or the shapes that appealed to them, the act of filling them in became their own, particular claim on both Society and text. Each shield, like the knights in the Society's show, became a blank page onto which significance might be performed, in pen rather than person.

Armories of Arthurian heraldry were a popular form of early-modern reading. A reader of The Huntington Library's copy of *The Ancient Order* did not allow their performance of heraldic knowledge to be confined by the outline of Robinson's empty shields. Both annotations by this reader appear outside the decorative border that frames each knight's page along its bottom edge

[126] Ibid., sigs. G3r, H1r.

[127] See 'Combat de Thor et de Hoël', in Paris, BnF, Français 335, fol. 213v.

and are pointed to by manicule in the left-hand margin, detailed with sleeves and fingernails. Written in the same hand, these notes appear on the pages of 'Guallogrenant de Windesor', and of the forty-ninth knight, 'Talemor le Volant'. They reference *Le Blason Des Armoiries: Auquel est Monstree le Manière de la quelle les Ancienes & Modernes on to vse en icelles* (1572), naming its author, Hiérosme de Bara, and even giving a page reference from the 'Edition: at Lyon: 1581'.[128] The comparison made in the first note is clear: in de Bara's book 'Le beau COVART is the 32th knight of the Round Table', whereas in Robinson's it is Guallogrenant.[129] Details about Covart's arms, which 'are Sable a horse salient, d argent. shodd d or', show the reader translating directly from the cited page of *Le Blason Des Armoiries*, where the horse in question is captioned with the description: 'De sable, à vu cheual d'argent ferré d'or'.[130] Under Talemor's page, Robinson's forty-ninth knight whose blazon describes a green shield and silver dove, the second note states that 'S. Lauain d'Astolat (name Guildeford) was also a knight of the Round Table nº. 79 noble Armes are, gueulles, a ship d'or, furnished, or trimmed purple'.[131] Why these two particular knights were selected for comment when all the knights are numbered differently (de Bara begins with Galahad and Robinson with Lancelot) remains uncertain, but for this reader the position of individual figures within the larger cohort was an issue worth noting. Instead of engaging with the unique features of Robinson's pamphlet, this pedantic enthusiast established their expertise comparatively—or perhaps it was their access to or ownership of a range of texts or their skill at translation that they were advertising—by drawing attention to the different numbering of these knights in two Arthurian heraldry texts.

Robinson made one further addition to the model he found in *La Devise Des Armes*. He included a pair of initials on every knight's page. Each empty shield in Robinson's text is flanked

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[128] Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. F1r, H1v (STC 277:05).

[129] Hiérosme de Bara, *Le Blason Des Armoiries: Auquel est monstree le maniere de laquelle les Anciens & Modernes ont vse en icelles* (Lyon, 1572), p. 177.

[130] de Bara, *Le Blason Des Armoiries*, p. 142.

[131] Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. H1v.

by the initials of the member of the Society who performed as that knight in the 1583 show. In the Bodleian's copy of *The Ancient Order*, the fact that a new addition or change of role had rendered the initials on one page out of date was its reader's only legible intervention. As in the Lambeth Palace Library's copy, only a single page is annotated but, in this instance, it is that of the thirty-second knight, 'Guallogrenant de windesor', whose shield is flanked by the printed initials 'R. B.'[132] That the original initials have not been struck through suggests this was not the correction of error but an updating: the reader has carefully inked in the capital Roman letters 'E A' onto the centre of Guallogrenant's shield.

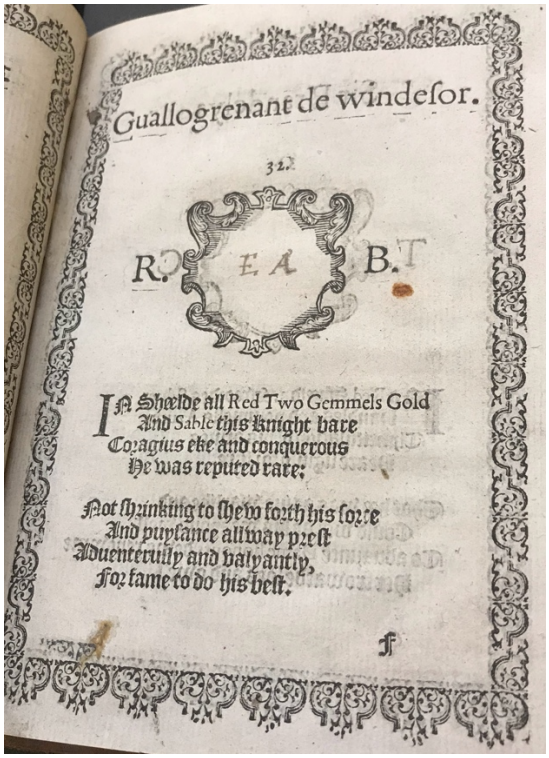



FIGURE 3. Richard Robinson, *The Ancient Order* (London: John Wolfe, 1583), sig. F1r.

Bodl. Douce R 129.

[132] Robinson, *The Ancient Order*, sig. F1r.

Certainly, there was movement across roles in the Society over time. Both Mulcaster and Robinson, in 1581 and 1583 respectively, identify Thomas Smythe as Prince Arthur but, by 1616, that role belongs to Hugh Offley.[133] The reader who annotated the Bodleian's copy of *The Ancient Order* thus reflects the Society's innovation in overlaying the ancestry and descent of a civic position onto a space traditionally devoted to inherited and martial distinction, while allowing for individual distinction to persist.

As Phil Withington suggests, freemen and citizens, like any other social group, were 'very much present at their own making'.[134] That making was, in part, forged by pageantry. The Society's mythologising procession, performances, archery competition, and feast, were all collective endeavours that enabled and celebrated a community and the individuals who comprised it. The places in which they performed and the performers themselves were conscripted by this pageantry as material support for a military glory that reached back to a legendary past and pointed forward, towards a future English commercial empire.[135] In replicating the active involvement required by the Society's show, *The Ancient Order* extends its pageantry from the streets of the City and the fields of Mile End to the sheets of Robinson's pamphlet and the fields of the shields outlined there. As a document sold and circulated during the show of 1583, *The Ancient Order* is both performance and a paratext, a part of the Society's public display as well as a repository for the involvement and engagement of the individuals who purchased it.

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133 Richard Niccolls, *Londons Artillery, Briefly Containing the Noble Practise of that Worthie Societie: with modern and ancient martiall exercises, natures of armes, virtue of magistrates, anqituitie, glorie and chronography of this honourable cittie. By R.N. Oxon.* (London: William Welby, 1616), p. 88.

134 Phil Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth*, p. 13.

135 The 1583 show of the Society's friendly rivals, the Duke of Shoreditch's Men included a ship, 'ready rigged […] by great travel and danger had brought home her burden, laden with Gold and Siler' and with 'two Indian of Blackmores to go near unto it', W. H., 'A Remembrance', pp. 253-54.

## 'THEY MIGHTILY AMPLIFIED THE SAID ROUND TABLE'

The Society's pageantry placed Arthur and his knights in new contexts as its members processed through the streets of Elizabethan London, becoming dynamic symbols of a rising merchant class. Like the word 'Society' itself, the pageant was poised between a 'fellowship', a term long associated with chivalric orders, and a 'company', one that comes to be associated with the City guilds.[136] Instead of just evoking a legacy of narrative incident (of 'open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye'), Society shows (and Robinson's pamphlet) require active participation. This approach would be adopted by Edmund Spenser in the dense allegory of *The Faerie Queene*, disposed '*into twelue books, Fashioning XII. Morall vertues*' to better 'fashion a gentleman or noble person'.[137] The Society's own investment with the process of 'fashioning', while undoubtedly part of its appeal, also made its show a target for mockery.[138]

In *A Martial Conference, Pleasantly discoursed betweene two Souldiers* (1598) Barnabe Rich aligns 'the puissant Prince Arthur' with the ludicrous Captain Pill, who is all show and no substance

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136 'society, n.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/183776, accessed 25 January 2023.

137 Edmund Spenser, 'A Letter of the authors', in *Spenser: The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 714-718 (p. 714); see also Bart Van Es, *Spenser's Forms of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

138 This context may have implications for the commendary verses of *The Faerie Queene*, which imply identifications between members of the privy council and the knights of the poem, see Edmund Spenser, 'Commendatory Verses and Dedicatory Sonnets', in *Spenser: The Faerie Queene*, pp. 719-735; *Arthur of Little Britain*, republished in Lord Berners's translation in 1582, also features a youthful Arthur who pursues the Lady Florence believing her to be the fairy queen and is a likely source for other aspects of the poem, see Richard A. McCabe, 'Prince Arthur's 'Vertuous and Gentle Discipline', in *Noble and Joyous Histories: English Romances, 1375-1650*, ed. Eilean Ní Chuilleanáin and J. D. Pheifer (Dublin, 1993), 221-43 (p. 230). Berners' Arthur is never described as a 'prynce', though that title is used to describe characters such as the 'kynge of Mormall' and the 'kynge Emendus', instead he is a 'noble knight' and 'sone and heyre to the duke of Brytayne', see John Bourchier, Lord Berners, *The History of the Moost Noble and Valyaunt Knight, Arthur of Lytell Brytayne* (London: Thomas East, 1560), sigs. C2v, π2r; on Spenser's characteristic duality see Richard A. McCabe, 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Handbook of Edmund Spenser*, ed. Richard A. McCabe (Oxford: Oxford, 2010), pp. 1-10 (5).

(unlike his opponent, Captain 'Skill').[139] The contention of this dialogue is not the blurring of class distinctions, but of amateurs and professionals. In *A Martial Conference*, Arthur represents urban archers who think their pageantry makes them the equal of professionals who have fought in gunpowder wars, such as Captain Skill, or Rich himself. Captain Pill, recalling both Ascham and Robinson, touts examples from classical texts and English chronicles as evidence of archery's noble history. Captain Skill derides those who favour tradition and book study at the expense of lessons learned on contemporary battlefields in the Low Countries.[140] Unlike guns, he suggests, bows are fit only 'for the service in *Finsburie fields*, to the wonted Regiments of Prince *Arthur*'.[141] Pill, meanwhile, insists 'he that puts himselfe into the arming doublet, with poynts with the siluer tagges, tied vp in the pitch of the shoulder, a scarfe about his arme, and a feather in his cappe, he shal be a Captaine'.[142] Rich's mockery of the speciousness of the Society performances anticipates Ben Jonson's of the Duke of Shoreditch's Men. Their roles, which included Baron Stirrup, the Marquis of Clerkenwell, and the Earl of Pancridge, are evoked by Jonson as images of insubstantiality to deride his earlier collaborator, Inigo Jones, 'An earl of show'.[143] Heralding the burlesques that would characterise King Arthur's appearance on the commercial stage in subsequent decades, Rich's dialogue suggests that accessorising as an Arthurian figure makes a fool not a knight.

The distinction, or lack thereof, between knights and fools is at the heart of Shakespeare's anachronistic allusion to the Society's show. Like much of the play, the first Gloucestershire scene in *2 Henry IV* is nostalgic, both for youth and a heroic martial past. Justice Shallow specifically sets his Arthurian reminiscences in the London of his youth when he 'lay at Clement's Inn'. While the

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139 Rich, *A Martial Conference*, sig. F2v.

140 Ibid, sigs. H3v-H4r.

141 Ibid., sig. F2v.

142 Rich, *A Martial Conference*, sig. B1v.

143 Ben Jonson, 'To Inigo, Marquess Would Be, a Corollary', in *The Poems of Ben Jonson*, ed. George Burke Johnston (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), p. 305.

influence of legal institutions and indeed young law students on the presentation of Arthurian material is the subject of the next chapter, it is in this context that Shallow makes his claim to have played the part of Sir Dagonet, Arthur's jester and a famous coward, in the Society's show. Dagonet was not, for obvious reasons, an alias used in the show and he is not included in Robinson's list of knights. Shallow, a perennially unreliable raconteur, thus betrays that he was never in the Society, just as he was never a 'sworn brother' to John of Gaunt. Every 'third word [is] a lie'.[144] Far from a community in which martial excellence united different classes, Falstaff describes the separation of knights on the tournament ground and the violence done to commoners who get too close to them.[145] Shallow's deceptive recollection of his position in the Society's pageant operates as an image of the England of the play in which (mis)remembering and counterfeiting is not unequivocally comic and can never be separated from the performance of political authority.[146] *2 Henry IV* troubles the very existence of nobility, whether inherited or acquired. In naming Sir Dagonet, who is associated throughout Malory's *Morte Darthur* with mistaken identities, Shakespeare raises the question of whether the confusion of fools for knights is Shallow's alone, or whether it is shared by other characters in the play, and even by their audience.[147]

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[144] The allusion to John of Gaunt creates a connection to a mythologized medieval past that predates Bolingbroke's usurpation and the memory of the older generation depicted in *Richard II* (1595, pub. 1597) ed. Charles R. Forker (London: Arden, 2002); Shakespeare, *The Second Part of King Henry IV*, 3.2.231-232.

[145] Shakespeare, *The Second Part of King Henry IV*, 3.2.231-232.

[146] On ancestral heritage and counterfeiting see, Colin Burrow, 'Shakespeare's Authorities', in *Shakespeare and Authority: citations, conceptions and constructions*, ed. Katie Halsey and Angus Edmund Vine (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 31-53 (p. 41).

[147] On the performance of authority, see Hill, *Pageantry and Power*; on merchant communities and their influence, see Edmond Smith, *Merchants: The Community that Shaped England's Trade and Empire, 1550-1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021).

# 3

# PLAY:
# THE MISFORTUNES OF ARTHUR

The sixteenth century's only surviving Arthurian play, *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1588), is a collaboration by at least eight members of Gray's Inn, which was performed for Queen Elizabeth. An anonymous poem, found among the papers of Francis Bacon's brother, Anthony, offers a contemporary review. Although it begins by hailing a 'second Arthur, bred in brittish brayne', the poem is primarily a critique of one of the play's collaborators: the one who 'wash'd [his] face in printers inke [and]/ Speck on the rest'.[1] Although the 'one man' targeted is not named in the poem, the printed playbook of *Misfortunes* enables his identification. The playbook declares that the play was 'reduced into Tragicall notes by THOMAS HVGHES one of the societie of Grayes-Inne. And here set downe as it past from vnder his hands'.[2] Hughes, who authored much of the play, was the one who ushered it into print. His 'Tragicall' aspirations are ruthlessly satirised by the play's critic:

> Resigne thy buskins Sophocles the great
> Tread morter now w$^{th}$ thy disarmed shanks
> For this mans brayne hath had a happier sweat
> Wherof the world doth con him ample thanks
> Blush Seneca to see thy feathers loose

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[1] BL MS. Add. 4152 is a collection of letters and documents, mostly on state affairs, from the papers of Anthony Bacon. On fol. 394, a separately mounted leaf without watermark, the poem about *The Misfortunes of Arthur* appears which is not listed in the catalogue, see Janet Cowan and Joanna Udall, 'The Critical Misfortunes of Arthur', *Notes and Queries*, 30 (1983), 402-5.

[2] Thomas Hughes et al., *Certaine deuises and shewes presented to her Majestie by the Gentlemen of Grayes-Inne at her Highnesse Court in Greenewich, the twenty eight day of Februarie in the thirtieth year of her Majesties most happy Raigne* (London: Robert Robinson, 1587), sig. π4v (hereafter cited in text).

Pluck't from a swan & sticked on a goose.[3]

As this sceptical reviewer perceived, *Misfortunes* not only dramatizes the account of the end of King Arthur's reign given by Geoffrey of Monmouth's *De gestis Britonum*, it translates extensively from the tragedies of Seneca and recasts King Arthur as a Sophoclean hero. Despite the hyperbole and bathos deployed in this rhyming roast, the 'brayne[s]' evoked here acknowledge the intellectual and imaginative labour performed by *Misfortunes*.[4] What forms, this chapter asks, did that effort take? And what was the effect of performing Arthur's fall as a pseudo-classical tragedy?

According to both the play's title page and an entry in the Revels Office account book, *Misfortunes* was presented before Queen Elizabeth I at Greenwich Palace, between Christmas and Shrove Tuesday or on 28 February 1588.[5] As Alan Nelson has observed, from this period onwards 'the Inns of Court tended to concentrate on revels and masques rather than on plays'.[6] Whilst plays did continue to be performed, they were performed by professional companies rather than gentlemen members.[7] *Misfortunes* thus represents the *terminus ad quem* of a certain kind of Inns

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[3] BL MS. Add. 4152, fol. 394.

[4] Ibid.

[5] The title page states that the performance took place on 28th of February 1587, 1588 Gregorian, a full week into Lent, but the records of the Revels Office state that the production occurred between Christmas and Shrove Tuesday. Of the two hundred and ninety-four plays known to have been attended by the Queen before 1590, *Misfortunes* is one of only fifteen that survive, see Carter Anderson Daniel, *Patterns and Traditions of the Elizabethan Court Play to 1590* (University of Virginia: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1965), pp. 42-53; W. W. Greg lists *Misfortunes* as the eighty-ninth drama printed in England in *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 1:167-8; Harbage and Schoenbaum note sixty-seven dramas printed between 1547 and 1588 in *Annals of English Drama 975-1700* (London: Methuen & Co., 1964).

[6] With the exception of a special Italian production in court during 1574, *Misfortunes* was the only play during Elizabeth's reign to be presented at court after Shrove Tuesday, which fell on 20 February 1588. It is also the last play by gentlemen from one of the Inns of Court to be performed for the Queen, see Brian Corrigan, 'Introduction', in *The Misfortunes of Arthur: A Critical, Old-Spelling edition* (Tulane University: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1990), pp. 5-6; Alan H. Nelson, 'Emulating Royalty: Cambridge, Oxford, and the Inns of Court', *Shakespeare Studies*, 37 (2009), 67–76 (p. 67).

[7] Nelson, 'Emulating Royalty', *Shakespeare Studies*, p. 67.

drama as well as a reflection on it. Whether or not *Misfortunes* was first performed at Gray's Inn and, if so, whether it was adapted for the court, remains uncertain.[8] In its first printed edition, however, eight members of Gray's Inn—Nicholas Trotte, Thomas Hughes, Francis Flower, Francis Bacon, John Lancaster, Christopher Yelverton, John Penrruddocke and William Fulbecke—are credited for their involvement in its creation and production for the Queen.[9] *Misfortunes*, according to that anonymous early review, emerged from a 'Strang' and 'Giant-lyke' collaboration and each of the play's collaborators shared the socio-cultural context of the early modern Inns of Court. Rather than being the product of just the 'one man' with whom the poem finds fault, it is as the product of a particular professional community that the first Arthurian tragedy in English can best be understood.[10]

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[8] James McBain suggests that *Misfortunes* 'was altered for its royal audience with the addition of a new introduction, written by Nicholas Trotte. Whilst the new section superficially praises the Queen, as we might expect, it is simultaneously, and conspicuously, rather more concerned with writing and with the playwrights themselves', see '"Attentive Mindes and Serious Wits": Legal Training and Early Drama', in *The Oxford Handbook of English Law and Literature, 1500-1700*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 80-98 (p. 83).

[9] P. Finkelpearl, 'Hughes, Sir Thomas', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/14090, accessed 3 September 2020; D. Woolf, 'Fulbecke, William', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004), https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/10221, accessed 1 October 2020; David Ibbetson, 'Yelverton, Sir Christopher', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004), https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/30213, accessed 8 November 2020; Markku Peltonen, 'Bacon, Francis, Viscount St Alban', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/990, accessed 2 October 2020.

[10] In this context 'tragedy' is taken to mean 'a classical or Renaissance verse drama, written in an elevated style and dealing with the downfall or death of the protagonist, typically a political leader or royal personage who is brought to ruin because of his or her own error or fault, or because of a conflict with a greater force (such as fate or the gods).' See 'tragedy, n., 1b', *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/204352, accessed 29 June 2022.

As the first dumbshow and the argument of the play explains, the events of *Misfortunes* are set in motion by King Uther, who killed Duke Gorlois, took his wife and fathered Arthur before being poisoned by the Saxons. At the beginning of Act One Arthur is on his way back to Britain, having grown to manhood, inherited Uther's crown and left Mordred (in this version of the story his incestuously begotten nephew-slash-son) in charge of Britain while he waged war across Europe with the aim of conquering Rome. Mordred, seizing the opportunity provided by Arthur's absence, has taken both his father's throne and his wife. In Act One Guenevora is persuaded to abandon her plans for revenge and then suicide. She confronts Mordred, fails to convince him to relinquish the crown, and subsequently retreats to a nunnery. Act Two follows an implacable Mordred through disagreements with his counsellor, Conan, and his brother, Gawin, ending with a meeting of his alliance of British, Irish, Pictish and Saxon leaders. Arthur is initially reluctant, in Act Three, to make war on Mordred, but after receiving a provocative message from him and further counsel from his allies—the Kings of Albanie, Denmark, Little Britain, and Norway, and the Duke of Cornwall—he resolves on war. In Act Four Conan discusses the state of Britain with Gildas, 'a nobleman of Britain', and it is to them that the events of the mutually fatal battle between Arthur and Mordred are relayed by a messenger.[11] Finally, in Act Five, a mortally wounded Arthur returns from battle, mourns the death of his son and laments the fate of Britain with the Chorus.

The play has long been read as a political allegory. It has been scrutinised as a reflection on the fragile Anglo-Scottish relations after the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. For Gertrude Reese, the rapacious usurper Mordred—who asks, pointedly, if he must 'yelde [his] necke unto the axe?' (sig. A1v)—stands for Mary, while the merciful (and overly indulgent) Arthur echoes Elizabeth (sig. B3v). Variations on this theme appear in later studies that have mined the play for evidence of English fear of a Spanish invasion, anxieties about imperial expansion in Ireland, and

[11] All quotations from *The Misfortunes of Arthur* are taken from the British Library's copy of the play, STC 25764.

reflections on concerns regarding military activity in the Low Countries.[12] Mordred's usurpation and Arthur's weakness have been read more widely as a representation of Elizabeth's uncertain relationships with her European allies. Curtis Perry draws out the play's anti-imperial themes, linking them to the political agenda of William Cecil, Lord Burghley, in opposition to the increasingly expansionist militant Protestantism of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and his circle. For Perry, who focuses almost exclusively on senior members of the royal court, the play becomes a 'document' of conflict between Burghley and Leicester.[13] *Misfortunes*, however, is not just a document. It is a play. So how does *Misfortunes* engage with both King Arthur's court and Elizabeth I's as drama?

Building on recent scholarship on the Inns of Court and law and literature, this chapter probes how *Misfortunes*' self-consciousness as a literary and dramatic product fosters innovations in the play's Arthurian material. It begins by establishing the political and poetic context of Gray's Inn. By examining *Misfortunes*' inversion of Geoffrey of Monmouth's presentation of the passage of dominion, it investigates how the deployment of translations in the play, from both Lucan's *De Bello Civili* and the tragedies of Seneca, transforms Arthur's defeat into a triumph for its lawyer-authors. To what end, it then asks, is Britain's greatest mythological king presented as an iteration of one of Greek mythology's most tragic figures? The answer lies in the adaptation of Arthur's incest into an Oedipal inflection, portraying him as both feeling father and flawed king, as well as

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[12] Early examples include Evangelia H. Waller, 'A Possible Interpretation of "The Misfortunes of Arthur"', *The Journal of English Germanic Philology*, 24.2 (1925), 219-45, and Gertrude Reese, 'Political Import of *The Misfortunes of Arthur*', *Review of English Studies* 21.82 (1945), 81-91. More recent titles include Derrick Spradlin, 'Imperial Anxiety in Thomas Hughes' *The Misfortunes of Arthur*', *Early Modern Literary* Studies, 10.3 (2005), 1-20, and Curtis Perry, 'British Empire on the Eve of the Armada: Revisiting "The Misfortunes of Arthur"', *Studies in Philology*, 108.4 (2011), 508-37; see also Susan Doran, '"Revenge her Most Unnatural Murder?" The Impact of Mary Stewart's Execution on Anglo-Scottish Relations', *History*, 85.280 (2003), 589-61. Christopher J. Crosbie suggests that Arthur's incest would have deterred comparison with Elizabeth, see 'Sexuality, Corruption, and the Body Politic: The Paradoxical Tribute of *The Misfortunes of Arthur* to Elizabeth I', *Arthuriana*, 9.3 (1999), p. 77.

[13] Perry, 'British Empire on the Eve of the Armada', p. 514.

in *Misfortunes*' response to, and reflections on, earlier Inns of Court tragedies. Despite the play's legacy of critical misfortunes, this chapter argues that its reimagining of Arthur's fall offers unique insight into both the creative workings of the 'gentilmen of Grayan name' and the innovations of an early experiment in English tragedy.[14]

## BOOKISH INNSMEN

In the second half of the sixteenth century, Gray's Inn was not only a legal centre, but a literary and theatrical one. Gray's Inn formed part of a wider Inns of Court culture that encompassed Lincoln's Inn, Middle and Inner Temple, as well as the Inns of Chancery. These were all institutions that produced men who 'attayne to great places and dignities and offices in the law and in the common-wealth'. This included 'famous lawyers, Worthy members of the common-wealth, and great and much-honoured magistrates' by providing sites that helped fashion social, cultural and intellectual communities.[15] The Inns were culturally poised between the city just outside their walls and, as the title of George Buc's *The third universitie of England* (1615) suggests, the universities which many Inns residents had only recently left. To this we can also add the royal court, from which many Innsmen sought preferment and at which *Misfortunes* was performed.[16] This convergence of and exchanges between university, Inn and court, is reflected in the careers of the play's named collaborators as well as the Arthurian play they produced in 1588.

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[14] BL MS Add. 4152, fol. 394.

[15] George Buc[k], *The third universities of England. Or a treatise of the foundations of all the colledges, auncient schools of priviledge, and of houses of learning, and liberall arts, within and above the most famous cittie of London* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1615).

[16] With reference to the various petitions for educational reform, James McBain argues for a vacuum of formal rhetorical training at the Inns. He locates the source of the exceptional eloquence of a small number of lawyers (including Bacon, Fulbecke, and Yelverton) at the universities from whence they came, see Bain, 'Attentive Mindes and Serious Wits', p. 220.

The best-known of *Misfortunes*' co-authors, Francis Bacon, was the nephew of Elizabeth's closest advisor and Lord Treasurer, William Cecil, Lord Burghley. Burghley, also a member of Gray's Inn, is described by Bacon as his 'patron' in 1580.[17] In the same Christmas season *Misfortunes* was performed, Burghley had commissioned some gentlemen of Gray's to perform the story of Catiline for him (to which the reference in *Misfortunes* to the 'semenarye of lewde Cateline' (sig. G2r) may be an allusion).[18] A letter from Bacon to his uncle describing how 'Graies Inne is well furnyshed of galant young gentlemen […] ready to furnysh a maske' may be a reference to *Misfortunes*.[19] John Lancaster, who helped Bacon with the play's dumbshows and who would be appointed Treasurer of Gray's Inn in 1595, appears to have been under the patronage of Sir Christopher Hatton, the favourite of Elizabeth who was made Lord Chancellor in 1587.[20] The Gray's Inn pension book lists Lancaster as receiving 'his place and preferment' from Hatton from May 1586, opening another connection between *Misfortunes* and a leading statesman of the day, albeit one who did not see eye to eye with Burghley.[21] Hatton, himself a member of Gray's Inn, reportedly came to Elizabeth's attention acting in *Gorboduc* (1561) and had contributed scenes to the Inner Temple play *Gismond of Salerne* in 1566. He appears to have taken a particular interest in both Lancaster and Francis Flower, who assisted with the dumbshows, wrote two of the five Choral odes, and directed the proceedings at court. Hatton granted Flower a book-keeping and collection office in the 1570s and ensured his return as an MP for Huntingdon in 1584, 1586, and

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[17] Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. J. Spedding, R. L. Ellis, and D. D. Heath, 14 vols (1857-74), 8:13-14.

[18] Bacon to Burghley, Lansdowne MS 170, fol. 13r; see also Brian Jay Corrigan, *Playhouse Law in Shakespeare's World* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), p. 32.

[19] Curtis Perry goes as far as to describe the play as 'Burghley's *Misfortunes of Arthur*', see Perry, 'British Empire on the Eve of the Armada', p. 513.

[20] Romola Nuttall speculates that this may have been as a result of his contribution to *The Misfortune of Arthur*, 'Publishing *Misfortunes*: Recording Performance at the Inns of Court', *Early Theatre*, 24.2 (2021), 187-200.

[21] Jacques Ramel, 'Biographical Notices on the Authors of "The Misfortunes of Arthur" (1588)', *Notes and Queries*, 14.12 (1967), 461-467 (p. 463).

1589.[22] He might also have been responsible for Flower's award of the lucrative Latin and Grammar book patent in 1573 (which connected him with *Misfortunes*' printer) and may even have been involved in financing the play.[23]

While Gray's Inn certainly provided its members with opportunities to foster elite connections, another shared characteristic of *Misfortunes*' collaborators was their learning. Before joining Gray's, Francis Bacon had previously studied at Trinity College, Cambridge. Having entered Gray's Inn on 27 June 1576 and been admitted in November, the future Attorney General and Lord Chancellor attended lectures on English statutes, participated in hypothetical legal situations, and argued in moot courts.[24] Making rapid progress, Bacon was admitted to the bar as an utter barrister of Gray's Inn in June 1582, became a bencher in 1586 and, in November 1587, he was elected as a reader, delivering his first set of lectures on church advowsons shortly after *Misfortunes* was performed. He later contributed to the Gray's Inn revels of 1594-5 (the *Gesta Grayorum*), authored an Accession Day celebration commissioned by the Earl of Essex, and was involved in the presentation of the *Masque of Flowers* at James VI and I's court in 1613. His collaborators on *Misfortunes*, Nicholas Trotte (who wrote the prologue), and Thomas Hughes (its primary author) had also been at Cambridge. So too had Christopher Yelverton who helped Bacon and Lancaster with the dumbshows and who became a Serjeant-at-law in 1589, the year after *Misfortunes*' production.[25] Yelverton had also defended Robert Robinson, who would go on to print

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[22] W. J. Tighe, 'The Career of Francis Flower', *Notes and Queries*, 230 (1985), 460-462 (p. 462).

[23] See Francis Bacon, *Early Writings 1584–1596*, ed. Alan Stewart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 71.

[24] His father Sir Nicholas Bacon had been a central figure at Gray's Inn and all his sons had been admitted there, though Francis was the only one who took up law as a profession, see Peltonen, 'Bacon, Francis, Viscount St Alban (1561-1626)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

[25] Yelverton may have been in a position to help finance the production of *Misfortunes*, see Christopher Yelverton, 'The Farewell that I Made at Graies Inn at My Departure From Thence When I was Elected Serjeant' (1598), BL MS Add. 48109, fols. 11r-15r (fol. 13v); Jennifer Young, 'Shakespeare for the "Triers": Richard Hawkins and Q2 *Othello* at the Serjeants' Inn', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 21 (2021), 94-119 (p. 98).

*Misfortunes*, in a monopoly infringement suit.[26] Meanwhile both Lancaster and William Fulbecke, who composed alternative speeches for the play's ghost, had studied at Oxford. Fulbecke would distinguish himself as a legal pedagogue in *A Direction or Preparation to the Study of Law* (1600), amongst other works.[27] The university educations of these innsmen, in which Latin was predominant and learning how to write and perform well were key tenets, shape *Misfortunes*.[28]

The efforts of these learned innsmen were not confined to the law. As Jessica Winston has established, the Elizabethan Inns were both a professional community and an epicentre of literary networks which 'helped [Inns writers] to establish and reinforce their sense of themselves as members of a homogenous and like-minded group'.[29] Despite the fact that the Inns constituted a hub of private theatrical performance in early modern London, only five sixteenth-century plays written and performed by Innsmen themselves survive. All of these were originally performed as part of revels festivity: members of Inner Temple performed Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville's *Gorboduc* in the Christmas season of 1561-2, and *Gismund of Salerne* in 1566; George

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[26] The suit was brought by John Day, see E. Arber, *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London Between 1554 and 1640 A.D.*, 5 vols (1875-1894) 2:790-93 (Star Chamber Proceedings, Bundle 4, Letter D, no.1).

[27] He also wrote *A Book of Christian Ethicks, or a Moral Philosophie* (London: Richard Jones, 1587), *An Historical Collection of the Continuall Factions, Tumults, and Massacres of the Romans* (London, 1601), *A Parallele, or Conference, of the Civil Law, the Canon Law, and the Common Law of England etc.* (London: Thomas Wight, 1602), and *The Pandectes of the Law of the Nation etc.* (London: Thomas Wight, 1602).

[28] See Elizabeth Sandis, *Early Modern Drama at the Universities: Institutions, Intertexts, Individuals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

[29] Jessica Winston, 'Lyric poetry at the early Elizabethan Inns of Court: forming a professional community', in *The Intellectual and Cultural Worlds of the Early Modern Inns of Court*, ed. Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring, and Sarah Knight (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 223-244 (p. 224); see also *Lawyers at Play: Literature, Law, and Politics at the Early Modern Inns of Court, 1558-1581* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); on the importance of ritual and symbolism in reinforcing a sense of communal identity and political authority, see Peter Goodrick, *Languages of Law: from Logics of Memory to Nomadic Masks* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1990), *Law in the Courts of Love: Literature and Other Minor Jurisprudences* (London: Routledge, 1996), and Paul Raffield, *Images and Cultures of Law in Early Modern England: Justice and Political Power, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Gascoigne's *Supposes* and *Jocasta* (written in collaboration with Francis Kinwelmersh), were both performed in 1566 by the gentleman of Gray's Inn, where *Misfortunes* was then produced in 1588. These plays formed part of the extra-curricular dramatic performances that were a regular feature of life at the Inns, often presented as the culmination of their Christmas and New Year revels, overseen by a 'Lord of Misrule'.[30] These revels provided an 'odd blend of unruly energies and sumptuous ceremonial', highlighting social tensions and conflicting political agendas as well as experimenting with dramatic forms and affirming corporate identity.[31] Examining these revels, Bruce Smith describes the Inns of Court as structured, like academic households and the royal court, by another court, which was never present physically: King Arthur's.[32]

Elizabeth Goldring describes the aesthetic of the Inns of Court in this period is 'bookish'.[33] An interest in learning and, perhaps more importantly, in displaying or performing it, permeates numerous aspects of the Inns' and their members' creative outputs. This is apparent not only in the performance of *Misfortunes* but in its publication. The play was not entered in the Stationers' Register, meaning that no member of the book trade paid for the rights to publish it. The absence of such a record may suggest that its publication was organised privately, with the authors approaching the printer. The previous output of the publisher, Robert Robinson, who was known to Flower because of the proceedings surrounding his illegal publication of grammar books,

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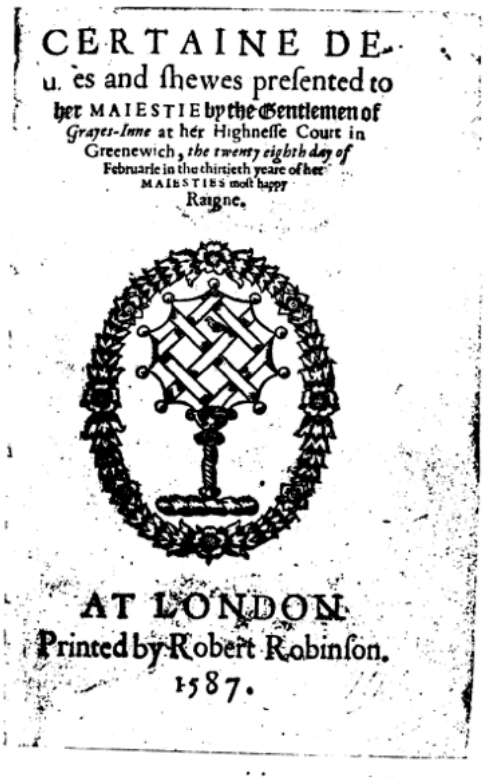
[30] See Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977); Philip J. Finklepearl, *John Marston of the Middle Temple: an Elizabethan Dramatis in his Social Setting* (Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press, 1969); Henry James and Greg Walker, 'The Politics of *Gorboduc*', *English Historical Review*, 110 (1995), 109-121; Jessica Winston, 'Expanding the Political Nation: *Gorboduc* at the Inns of Court and Succession Revisited', *Early Theatre*, 8.1 (2005), 11-34; Kevin Dunn, 'Representing Counsel: *Gorboduc* and the Elizabethan Privy Council', *English Literary Renaissance*, 33.3 (2003), 297-308.

[31] Richard McCoy, 'Law sports and the night of errors: Shakespeare at the Inns of Court', in *The Intellecutal and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court*, pp. 286-301 (p. 286).

[32] Bruce R. Smith, *Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage, 1500-1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 120.

[33] Elizabeth Goldring, 'The Art, Architecture, and Gardens of the Early Modern Inns of Court', pp. 127-137 (p. 128).

indicates an opportunistic, rather than curatorial, approach to publishing. It seems unlikely that Robinson sought out a copy of the play himself.[34] Moreover, further intervention in the play's presentation after its publication is apparent in two of the three surviving copies. The marginalia in Harvard's copy are in an Italian hand—with traces of secretary and spelling characteristic of the latter sixteenth century—and they are primarily concerned with aesthetic emendations (particularly enhancing alliteration and adding capitalization for personification), which is to say they suggest authorial intention. Meanwhile the cancels slips and in-house pen and ink corrections of the British Library's copy suggest in-forme correction. In the printing of its playbook then, *Misfortunes* continues to display the bookishness of Gray's Inn.


CERTAINE DE-
u. es and ſhewes preſented to
her MAIESTIE by the Gentlemen of
Grayes-Inne at her Highneſſe Court in
Greenewich, the twenty eighth day of
Februarie in the thirtieth yeare of her
MAIESTIES moſt happy
Raigne.

AT LONDON
Printed by Robert Robinſon.
1587.

FIGURE 4. Thomas Hughes et al, *Certain Devises and Shewes presented to her Majestie by the Gentlemen of Grayes Inne* (London: Robert Robinson, 1587), title page.

[34] On Robinson's publications, his resistance to the patent system and Flower's Latin and Grammar Book patent, see Edward Arber, *A Transcript of the registers of the company of stationers of London: 1554-1640*, 5 vols (London, 1876), 2.793-9 and Nuttall, 'Publishing *Misfortunes*'.

The primary way the play did this in performance was pseudo-classical. In *Misfortunes* Arthur conquers Rome before losing Britain. The Roman state had long served as a paradigm of the rise and fall of political systems because it had gone through so many, many of which were so well documented. Reappraisals of Roman imperialism were further prompted in the latter part of Elizabeth I's reign by the transition underway throughout western Europe from limited to unlimited monarchies, as well as by fierce competition for empire.[35] The addition of Arthur's victory over Rome to Geoffrey's account, however, does not presage further victory in *Misfortunes*. Rather, it foreshadows that, like Rome's, Arthur's 'state and tottering Empire' (sig. C1v) will fall.[36] As Curtis Perry has argued, the play presents a cultural counterpoint to writing of the period that presented the resonant imperial fantasy of Britain-as-England.[37] This was an idea reinforced in the 1580s by conflict with Spain. In the wake of Mary Stuart's execution and the looming threat of an armada, *Misfortunes* engages more sceptically with triumphalist contemporary imperial rhetoric, offering 'our most detailed and suggestive literary evocation of Elizabethan anti-imperial

[35] The same exemplars from Roman history were often used in this period to draw seemingly contradictory parallels by English writers and politicians: Rome's expansion and exploitation of conquered territories were regularly 'invoked to excoriate Spain's aspiration to universal monarchy, Machiavellian cunning, and brutal enslavement of conquered peoples' while also being routinely deployed to celebrate England's own imperial ambitions and to boost 'her colonial effort and allegedly civilizing mission in Ireland', see Paulina Kewes, 'Translations of State: Ancient Rome and Late Elizabethan Political Thought', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 83 (2020), 467-498.

[36] See Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[37] See Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); as Richard Helgerson and others have demonstrated, it also explains the link between England's growing imperial ambitions in this period and the burgeoning of 'the Elizabethan writing of England', see *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 151-91; the extent to which the complicity of the Irish and Scots with Mordred's rebellion reflects Burghley's concerns about the threat associated with these neighbouring nations is ambivalent, while the Irish appear to be depicted as unequivocally villainous co-conspirators.

thinking'.[38] While the play's plot is primarily taken from *De gestis Britonum*, the play pointedly foregrounds Geoffrey's more sceptical sources.

From the first settlement of Britain by Brutus to the final overthrow of British lordship by the Saxons, Geoffrey's interest is in *translatio imperii*, and his text constantly harks back to Rome. Arthur is foremost in *De gestis Britonum*'s series of strong British monarchs because, following the Roman's demand for tribute, he decisively defeats them. Accordingly, his Arthur is both an expansionist power and a unifying force; Rome tests the true measure of his strength. When considering *Misfortunes*' engagement with Geoffrey, critics have emphasised questions around the Elizabethan succession and the role of counsel.[39] These are questions central to Norton and Sackville's *The Tragedie of Gorboduc* (subsequently printed as *Ferrex and Porrex*) performed by the Gentlemen of Inner Temple for Queen Elizabeth at Whitehall on January 18, 1562. Celebrated as the play that inaugurates a new age of English drama—one characterised by blank verse and five act structures—both *Gorboduc* and *Misfortunes* draw on accounts of a pseudo-historical Britain's descent into civil war from *De gestis Britonum*. *Misfortunes* does, moreover, cite *Gorboduc* in its opening dumbshow (this is discussed in the final section of this chapter). *Misfortunes*' subversion of Geoffrey's presentation of conquest is, however, distinct.

*Misfortunes*' Arthur, like Malory's, goes further than Geoffrey's. Where Geoffrey's Arthur discovers Mordred's usurpation before he has reached Rome, the Arthur of *Misfortunes* does not just fight Roman forces on the continent but returns to Britain having successfully conquered Rome:

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[38] For Perry, thinking 'of Fulbecke's Roman history as adumbrating habits of political thought that also inform *The Misfortunes of Arthur* helps to contextualize further the play's anti-imperialist argument and the associative thought behind the importance of Ireland within Mordred's rebellious coalition', 'British Empire on the Eve of Armada', p. 528.

[39] See Jessica Winston, 'Expanding the Political Nation' and Lorna Wallace, 'Decoding *Misfortunes*: Advice to Elizabeth I and Her Subjects', *Early Theatre*, 24 (2021), 171-186.

> Lo here at length the stately type of Troy,
> And Brytain land the promist seate of Brute,
> Deckt with so may spoyles of conquered Kings.
> Haile native soyle, these nine years space unseen:
> To thee hath long renowmed Rome at last
> Held up her hands, bereaft of former pomp. (sig. B2v)

The defeat of 'long renowmed Rome' means that the Britons have won 'their most renowne'. The British empire is Rome's heir. Rather than a positive predecessor, however, Rome operates in *Misfortunes* as a model of the political degeneration bred by imperial ambition.[40]

The transient and ultimately insubstantial nature of military success tolls throughout *Misfortunes*. Guenevora describes the sails of Arthur's ships returning from their conquest of Rome as 'Puft back' (sig. A2r), and Arthur then describes his youthful military triumphs as the product of ambition, 'Puft up with pride and fond desire of praise' (sig. D1r).[41] Arthur goes on to explain his concern—echoing Guenevora's warning, 'there Mordred stands, whence Paris fell' (sig. B1r)—that 'Rome puffes vs vp, and makes vs too too fierce:/ There, Brytaines, there we stand, whence Rome did fall' (sig. D1v). He is then echoed by the Chorus at the end of Act Three, 'Such hopes as oft haue puft vp many a Realme' (sig. D4r) and the Epilogue, which confirms that 'wordly powers like sudden puffes do passe' (sig. G2v). The links between Arthur's Roman conquest, Mordred's usurpation, and Britain's descent into civil war is also made clear: as Cador, the Duke of Cornwall, observes, 'Since Arthur thus hath ransckt all abroade,/ What meruaile ist if Mordred rave at home?' (sig. C4r). While the achievements of conquest and glory might create the illusion

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[40] The reference made by Fulbecke's Gorlois to 'Traytors and conspirators,/ The semenarye of lewde Cateline,/ The Bastard coouie of Italian birdes' (sig. G2r) may be a version of this fear, see Conyers Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), pp. 420-21.

[41] It does appear as though, in favour of stronger alliteration, Hughes may have revised 'puft' to 'prickt' in annotations on Harvard Houghton Library's copy.

of fullness or substance, *Misfortunes* suggests that, like a puff of air, these are ultimately fleeting and empty.

This sentiment is refined by Gildas, 'a nobleman of Britain' (sig. A1v). An author upon whom Geoffrey drew, Gildas is featured as a character in *Misfortunes*.[42] The historical Gildas wrote the only major work to survive from Arthur's alleged reign. In *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*, Gildas offered a prophetic denunciation of the sins of the British elite, whom he blames for the invasions of the Anglo-Saxons.[43] With the Reformation, interest in him as a writer was revived by controversialists who sought to commandeer him as a proto-Protestant figure.[44] Because a passage of his complex and sometimes obscure figurative style could be construed as confirmation of the independent origins and ancient autonomy of the British church, he became an unlikely Protestant standard-bearer.[45] In *Misfortunes*, Gildas is on stage while offstage Arthur and Mordred fight their last battle. It is in a 'lamenting moode' that he decries 'The staggering state of Brytaines troubled braines' and predicts the subjection of the Britons to the 'Kerns' (Gaelic warriors), 'Scots', 'Saxons'

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[42] Perry, 'British Empire on the Eve of Armada', p. 509; on Geoffrey's use of Gildas in *De gestis Brittonum* see Stuart Piggott, 'The Sources of Geoffrey of Monmouth: I. The 'Pre-Roman' King-List', *Antiquity*, 15 (1941), 269-286; Edwin Pace, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth's Sources for the Cador and Camblan Narratives', *Arthuriana,* 24 (2014), 45–78; Neil Wright 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gildas', *Arthurian Literature*, 2 (1982), 1–40, and 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gildas Revisited', *Arthurian Literature*, 5 (1985), 155–63.

[43] It survives in full in four manuscripts, the earliest, BL Cotton MS Vitellius A.VI, dates from the eleventh century; on *De Excidio* see T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons, 350-1064* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 192-219.

[44] See Felicity Heal, 'Appropriating History: Catholic and Protestant Polemics and the National Past', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 68 (2005), 109-132 and 'What Can King Lucius Do for You? The Reformation and the Early British Church', *The English Historical Review*, 120 (2005), 593-614.

[45] The relevant passage spans from 'Interea glaciali frigore rigenti insulae' to 'id est sua praecepta, Christus', in Gildas, *De Excidio Britonum*, in *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and other works*, ed. Michael Winterbottom (London: Phillimore, 1978), p. 18. Gildas was named a British prophet by William Tyndale, cited by future Elizabethan archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift and Presbyterian leader Thomas Cartwright, praised by John Bale and quoted by John Foxe in his *Acts and Monuments.* Another critical edition of *De Excidio* was also assembled by John Joscelyn and printed in London by John Day in 1568. Joscelyn was an Old English scholar who, like Hughes, had both studied and been a fellow at Queens' College, Cambridge.

and 'Danes', anticipating 'what strange euent,/ And Chaunce insues on these so rare attempts' (sig. E1v ). He presents the collapse of Arthur's Britain as a repetition of Rome's fate, contrasting conquerors with those 'that haue not spent our time in warres,/ But bent our course at peace, and Countries weale' (sig. E1v). Gildas, an authorial figure in the play, contrasts his indictment of imperial expansion with expertise of men who endeavoured not to 'erre as wide in wordes, as they in deedes' and sought to serve with 'pens', not 'swords' (sig. E1r).

This scepticism is reinforced by the inclusion of extensive passages translated from one of the few Roman writers Geoffrey mentions by name: Lucan. Allusions to Lucan's anti-epic account of the Roman civil war, *De Bello Civili*, permeate *De gestis Brittonum* and *Misfortunes* in turn.[46] Lucan, an 'anti-Virgilian' writer, embodied a radical tradition of poetry in a perilous political moment by reimagining a well-known topic, not just from epic, but also history, declaration, and iambus.[47] One of *Misfortunes*' co-authors, William Fulbecke, had authored a Lucanic translation in *An Historicall Collection* (published in 1601 but composed as early as the 1580s) as an analogy between the developing stages of Roman polity and the seven ages of man. For Fulbecke, the zenith of the republican era in Rome corresponds to the fifth age in which military success breeds ambition and creates discord, thereby ending republican unity. Approximately 330 lines of *Misfortunes* derive from Lucan, many of which emphasise his apocalyptic imagery and descriptions of familial conflict.[48] *Misfortunes* appropriates Lucan's imagery to associate 'storme[s]' (sigs. E1r-E2r) of wrath and lust with the external world of war and politics, as well as to depict the horrors of civil war.

The deployment of translations from *De Bello Civili* are not always straight forward in *Misfortunes*. Certainly, substantial extracts from Lucan's account of the battle of Pharsalus are

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[46] See, Russell, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth's Classical and Biblical Inheritance', p. 71.

[47] In this respect, aspects of his reception in late Elizabethan England align with that of his uncle Seneca, see Susan H. Braund, 'Introduction', in *Lucan: Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. xix.

[48] William Fulbecke's selections reveal his agenda regarding constitutional continuity and the legal foundations of Rome; see *An Historicall Collection of the Continvall Faction, Tvmvlts, and Massacres of the Romans* (London, 1601; STC 11412).

deployed to depict Arthur and Mordred's last battle, Hengist and Horsa assume the position of the enemy, held by Lucan's Hannibal, and Gillamore, the treacherous Irish King, speaks lines originally ascribed to Sulla, Pompey's teacher.[49] Arthur, however, cannot be so easily mapped. His first speech on returning to Britain draws on the remarks made by Lucan's Caesar at the crossing of the Rubicon that marks his illegal incursion into Italy. Arthur goes on, however, to speak in lines taken from Pompey that depict his just, albeit lost, cause during the battle: 'When fame shall blaze these acts in latter yeares […] Arthurs cause shall still be fauour'd most'.[50] For attentive members of the audience or assiduous readers, this conflation of Caesar's criminality and Pompey's legitimacy confuses Arthur's culpability while reinforcing the relationship of dominion and decline.[51]

Lucanic translations in *Misfortunes* that do not explicitly depict violence explore ideas of destiny. Just as Lucan abandoned the traditional epic device of a hero, he also dispensed with the divine machinery familiar from Homer and Virgil's epics, replacing it with the Stoic concepts of fate and fortune.[52] One of the cancel slips in the British Library's copy of *Misfortunes* stresses this, personifying 'Chaunce', which appears uncapitalised as 'chaunce' in the other copies of the play. This is in keeping with the personification of both Fate (sixty-five times) and Fortune (twenty-eight times) in the play, reinforcing the spectre of political mutability. By foregrounding Geoffrey's use of Lucan, rather than *De gestis Britonum*'s more substantial Virgilian echoes, *Misfortunes* threads the negative exemplar of Rome not only through the play's action but also its form.[53]

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[49] Heather James, 'Review: *Shakespeare and Republicanism*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 58.1 (2007), 127-30.

[50] 'Haec et apud seras gentes populosque nepotum […] legent et adhuc tibi, Magne, favebunt', see Corrigan, *Misfortunes*, p. 297.

[51] See Edward Paleit, *War, Liberty, and Caesar: Responses to Lucan's Bellum Ciuile, ca. 1580–1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 140.

[52] Braund, 'Introduction', p. xxiii.

[53] On Geoffrey's use of Virgil, see Paul Russell, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth's Classical and Biblical Inheritance', in *A Companion to Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. Georgia Henley and Joshua Byron Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 67-104 (pp. 67-9).

## CULTURAL CONQUEST

The centrality of translation to *Misfortunes* has long been recognised. The play's first anonymous reviewer, suggesting the prominence of the play's translations to contemporary spectators, used the image of Seneca's feathers being 'loosed' and then 'stuck' on *Misfortunes* (a 'goose').[54] More recent critics have also recognized this feature of the play, noting its 'procrustean bed of Senecan verse', 'slavish imitations', and 'faithful plagiaris[m]'. This, according to Gordon Braden, is what renders it a '*lusus naturae*' [a freak of nature].[55] In light of the tradition of translation at the Inns of Court, however, far from being an overly laboured or ineffective feature of *Misfortunes*, the pitfalls and potentials of translation are fundamental to its presentation of the Arthurian legend.

There are of course many words for translation in English, and metaphors associated with it proliferate. Retaining the literal meaning of the Latin *transferre*, the act of moving something, *translatio* was at the heart of humanist curricula in which *Misfortunes*' collaborators were all educated. It also encompassed many of the creative and innovative transformations associated with *imitatio*.[56] Of all the metaphors related to translation, this sense of 'carrying across' is the most persistent. Others include translation as interpretation and opening; friendship, desire, and passion; taking a view; moving across a landscape; as well as loss, death, resurrection, and metamorphosis.[57] The

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[54] See Cowen and Udall, 'The Critical Misfortunes of Arthur', pp. 402–5.

[55] Rob Gossedge and Stephen Knight, 'The Arthur of the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, ed. Ad Putter and Elizabeth Archibald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 104; James D. Merriman, *The Flower of Kings: A Study of the Arthurian Legend in England Between 1485–1835* (Kansas, University Press of Kansas: 1973), p. 31; George M. Logan, 'Hughes's Use of Lucan in *The Misfortunes of Arthur*', *Review of English Studies*, 20.77 (1969), p. 23; Gordon Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger's Privilege* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 175.

[56] See Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2012); Peter Mack, 'Rhetorical Training in the Elizabethan Grammar School', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Age of Shakespeare*, ed. Malcolm Smuts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 200-12.

[57] See Matthew Reynolds, *The Poetry of Translation: From Chaucer & Petrarch to Homer & Logue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

ghost of Gorlois, who delivers the opening lines of Act One in *Misfortunes*, operates as a (sort of) embodiment of these images. He recounts his return from '*Pluto*'s pittes and glowming shades', introducing himself as 'transported back' (sig. A2r), and explaining his desire to avenge himself on Uther's descendants. As Colin Burrow observes, the ghost has long been an image of *imitatio*. Ghosts attended the earliest theoretical and practical explorations of mimesis; in the Roman version of Plato's cave, authors like Lucretius and Quintilian contrasted positive images of imitation with ghosts or simulacra.[58] Because of Lucretius's seminal description of the encounter between the first epic poet, Homer, and the first Roman epic poet, Ennius, the figure of the ghost came to haunt the subsequent epic tradition.[59] Virgil's *Aeneid* plays a significant part in this tradition, elaborating the ghost's significance by associating dreams and simulacral resemblances with imitations of earlier authors.[60] Ghosts thus come to work like Alexandrian footnotes, signalling their recollection or carrying across of another text.[61] Once again, however, Hughes draws the most not from Virgil but from Seneca. Why?

Translation of Seneca claims a significant place in the Inns of Court's rhetorical and literary tradition. But in the early modern tradition of translating Seneca, the already imitative ghost becomes refined from a representation of *imitation*, in *Misfortunes*, into one that specifically reflects the work of *translatio*. In the first translation of the Senecan tragedy *Troas* (1559) into English, Jasper Heywood translates a demand for retribution by the ghost of Achilles, only indirectly reported in the Latin, into dialogue and action in English.[62] Just as Ennius receives instruction from the ghost of Homer, so too does Heywood—from Seneca himself—in his second Senecan

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[58] Colin Burrow, *Imitating Authors: From Plato to Futurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 71–105.

[59] Burrow, *Imitating Authors*, p. 120.

[60] Ibid, pp. 106–35.

[61] Ibid., p. 119.

[62] Quotations derive from the following edition, which contains Jasper Heywood's *Troas* and *Thyestes* together with John Studley's *Agamemnon*: *Elizabethan Seneca: Three Tragedies*, ed. James Ker and Jessica Winston (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2012).

translation, *Thyestes* (1560). This translation's prefatory verse describes the dream visitation of Seneca to the translator as he 'sleapt vppon [his] booke'.[63] Just as Seneca is 'returned' and 'come agayne' in the dream, so Heywood can 'reuiue' and 'renewe' him by making Seneca 'speake in straunger speech […] and skan my verse in other tongue that I was woont to wright'.[64] This beginning makes it hard not to hear the voice of the ambitious translator in the words of Tantalus's ghost that follow: 'now there doth aryse / My broode that shal in mischief farre the grandsyers gilt out goe'.[65] Heywood moved to Gray's Inn the year after he completed his translation of *Thyestes*. Twenty years later *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies, Translated into Englysh* (1581) was published. Alongside Heywood's translations, this collection included *Oedipus* (1563), translated by Alexander Neville of Gray's Inn, and four plays translated by John Studley of Barnard's Inn.[66] Rather than a superficial appropriation of the ghost from Thomas Kyd's contemporary blockbuster, *The Spanish Tragedy* (discussed below), *Misfortunes*' ghost of Gorlois must be understood within a tradition in which reading, performing, and exceeding are inextricably intertwined.

The inclusion of Seneca in examined Elizabethan school curricula imbued his works with a sense of competition. As Elizabeth Sandis notes, 'the Thyestean challenge is rooted in the idea of comparative judgement'.[67] In the universities and Inns of Court, drawing on the self-assertion

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[63] Seneca, *Thyestes*, in *Elizabethan Seneca: Three Tragedies*, ed. Ker and Winston (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2012), p. 14.

[64] Seneca, *Thyestes*, p. 41, 42, 44.

[65] Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Thyestes*, trans. Jasper Heywood (1560), ed. Joost Daalder (London: E Benn, 1982), pp. 7–11.

[66] Elisabeth Leedham-Green, 'Neville, Alexander (1544-1614)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 3 January 2008, https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1093/ref:odnb/19923, accessed 10 August 2020; T. P. J. Edlin, 'Studley, John (c. 1545–1590?)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004, https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1093/ref:odnb/26742, accessed 9 August 2020; see also Winston, *Lawyers at Play: Literature, Law, and Politics at the Early Modern Inns of Court, 1558–1581*.

[67] Elizabeth Sandis, 'The Thyestean Language of English Revenge Tragedy on the University and Popular Stages', *Shakespeare Survey*, 74 (2021), 222-237.

and literary imitation that characterized Seneca's work, his tragedies became vehicles for demonstrating linguistic and rhetorical skill. Gorlois' ghost is recognizably an adaptation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, a warlord who was loyal to Uther until the king seized his wife, though the return of Geoffrey's martial and marginal victim, whose fate initiates the action of Arthur's story, is an innovation. While his outline may be Galfridian, his substance is Senecan. When Gorlois's ghost first speaks in lines translated from *Thyestes*, the passages quoted not only explore the action of the plot, they also introduce ideas about repetition that are rendered in a way that encourages reflection on translation itself. Where Seneca's Latin, for example, speaks of '*stirpe*' and '*genu*s' (which Heywood's translation renders with words like 'broode' and 'grandsyer'), Hughes speaks of 'increase', of excess, and of 'fresh supplies' (sig. A2r), translating new versions of old terrors into creative challenges and opportunities.[68] Where his models focus on the ongoing wickedness of the house of Pelops, Hughes concludes this particular passage of translation: 'Goe to: some fact, which no age shall allowe, / Nor yet conceale: some fact must needs be dared' (sig. A2r). The last half line is Hughes's own addition, repeating the word 'fact', which can mean a deed or effect but also the act or process of making.[69] The competitive revenge-as-literary-principle that drives Senecan tragedy is here adopted by *Misfortunes*' creators to showcase their skill and express their ambition.[70]

Fulbecke's alternative ghost—performed at court and then relegated to an appendix in the printed playbook—is less of a figure for translation than one of metatheatricality. Unlike Hughes's, Fulbecke's ghost refers to his own 'entrance' and 'perform[ance]', noting that Arthur 'shall bee welcom'd with a Tragedie' (sig. G1v). Where a series of lines are translated directly from *Thyestes*

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[68] Seneca the Younger, *Thyestes*, in *Tragedies* 2, ed. John G. Fitch (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2018), 219–32, 232–4.

[69] See 'fact, n., int., and adv' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/67478. Accessed 01 January 2023.

[70] See Sandis, 'The Thyestean Language of English Revenge Tragedy'. On Inns students as playgoers, see Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 3rd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 80.

for Hughes' Gorlois, Fulbecke's echoes Seneca via Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. The similarity of Fulbecke's ghost and that of Don Andrea suggests the reciprocity of Inns and commercial drama; playwrights for the popular stage such as Thomas Kyd were, after all, often also scholars, travellers, and translators, and some were even associated with the Inns of Court. Both Don Andrea and Gorlois describe their journey through a pagan version of hell, featuring Charon's boat on the Acheron. Unlike Tantalus in *Thyestes*, however, both versions of Gorlois are inflected by their legal context, called before a Tribunal at the court Proserpine and sent back to the world to witness the events resulting from their death. Moreover, whereas a Fury forces Seneca's Tantalus to wreak destruction, both ghosts of Gorlois stress their eagerness for 'reuenge' (sig. A2r).[71] Because of the popularity of Senecan translation in Inns circles and the influence of this particular moment of commercial theatre, *Misfortunes*' ghosts set up Arthur's fall as a revenge tragedy.

Guenevora perpetuates Gorlois's hunger for revenge in the next scene. She is even described by him as an 'engine of his hate' (sig. A2v), delivering a series of speeches in the first Act that recall both Seneca's Latin original and earlier Inns of Court translations of these same plays. Guenevora's first speech pairs the 'bloody dreadful, irksome fact[s]' of *Thyestes* with the plots of *Agamemnon*: 'Frame out some trap beyonde all vulgar guile,/ Beyond Medea's wiles' (sig. A2v). Her second speech moves seamlessly from the avenging 'excesse' of *Thyestes* through the 'furie' of *Hercules Oetaeus* and back to the 'high revenge' (sig. A3r) of *Agamemnon*. In her third speech, these elements come alongside the 'great harms' (sig. A3r) of *Medea,* whose vengeful assertion Seneca partially renders as a citational one-upmanship of Euripides. Three of the characters ventriloquized by Guenevora in this scene are wronged wives—Clytemnestra, Deianira, and Medea—each of whom, in the lines chosen, struggles and resolves to accept her role as an avenger; the avenging

[71] Gorlois's agency was manifested further in The Dolphin's Back revival performance as he moved silently through scenes of conflict like a spectral goad, see James Wallace, 'Staging Arthur', *Early Theatre*, 24.2 (2021), 139-156.

Atreus of *Thyestes* quoted is less reluctant, but he too will be betrayed by his spouse. Guenevora's translated lines emphasize grief and revenge, but, because of the chorus of voices from whom they are sourced, these lines are haunted by Guenevora's betrayal of Arthur with Mordred and Arthur's original sin in having conceived him with his sister, as well as the desperate lovers of classical myth. Instead of translating a single Senecan tragedy, as others had before him, Hughes translates from them all, retelling Britain's greatest legend with the reassembled fragments of classical texts, Englished by an Innsman.

In reframing Arthur's fall in this way, *Misfortunes* develops the character of Mordred. Mordred is regarded positively in the Welsh tradition in which he first appears and in the Scottish tradition, where it is Arthur who is the illegitimate usurper. It is Geoffrey—possibly drawing on Gildas' account of Maelgwn—who first makes 'Mordredus' a villain.[72] In the subsequent tradition, via the Old French 'Post-Vulgate Cycle', Mordred continues to be depicted as murderous and lustful. He is, however, only one of the symptoms of the corruption that will destroy Arthur's rule in romance, from *La Mort le roi Artu* (c. 1230), through the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* (c. 1350), to Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Others include the activities of the malcontent Aggravain, the villainous plots of Morgan le Fay, and the adulterous relationship of Lancelot and Guinevere. *Misfortunes* does not attempt to redeem Mordred but traces Arthur's corruption from Uther to him. He is thus portrayed in *Misfortunes* as a Senecan anti-hero, an antagonist who reflects and exaggerates Arthur's own flaws. Mordred is first described in *Misfortunes* by Guenevora:

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[72] Mordred is first mentioned in a Welsh Chronicle in which he and Arthur are associated with the Battle of Camlann in the entry for 537, see *Annales Cambriae*, ed. John Williams Ab Ithel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 4; Hector Boece elaborates on John of Fordun and Walter Bowe in *Scotorum historiae a prima gentis originae*, see *The Chronicles of Scotland Compiled by Hector Boece, Translated into Scots by John Bellenden, 1531*, ed. R. W. Chambers and Edith C. Batho, 2 vols (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons for the Scottish Text Society, 1938); see also Kenneth Hodges, 'How King Arthur Invented Christmas: Reimagining Arthur and Rome in Early Modern Scotland and England', *Arthuriana*, 29 (2019), 25-42.

> Vndared plagues, teach *Mordred* how to rage.
> Attempt some bloodie, dreadfull, irksome fact,
> And such as *Mordred* would were rather his. (sig. A2v)

Stressing his wrath and wickedness, she goes on to the describe her passion for him with the image of 'redoubled' (sig. A3r) love that will be used by Arthur to describe his own love for his incestuously begotten son, in whom he recognises his own youthful pride and faith in chance. Mordred is presented as an uncompromising figure, 'resolu'd and 'fixt' (sig. C3r), against whom Arthur can ultimately distinguish himself. Where Mordred is unmoved by the advice of both Conan and Gawain, Arthur will ultimately follow the advice of his counsellors; where Mordred imagines being a 'grave' and 'tomb' to his kingdom, like Priam who 'Clos'd and warpt vp his Kingdome in his death' (sig. C3r), Arthur will choose an unmarked grave to try and resist 'the buriall of my Realme!' (sig. F2r). The Mordred compiled by Senecan translations in *Misfortunes* personifies the destructive potential of an insatiable appetite for conquest typically celebrated in depictions of Arthur.

This first line of *Misfortunes* explicitly sets up the play's engagement with 'the signs & fruits' of 'Conquest' (sig. π2r). Written by Nicholas Trotte, the prologue features the presentation of five lawyer-performers to the Queen by the three muses who have captured them. The first conquest of the play, however, does not belong to ancient Rome, Uther, Arthur, or even the Muses. Despite the suggestion of the first fifty-three lines of speech, it transpires that Muses are '[e]asly led to glory in [their] powre' (π2v) and the Gentlemen of Gray's Inn have tricked them, allowing their own capture so that they might be brought before the Queen. In her presence they prove that they can simultaneously serve Astraea *and* the Muses. The set-up of the beseeching, conquering Muse anticipates a narrative in which conquest is glorious and civilizing. In the Gentleman's riposte, however, the emphasis falls on feats of the mind rather than arms. Arthur's tragedy reveals the

longevity and durability of the lawyers' 'Industrie' which 'maintaineth vnimpeach't' (sig. π3v) as well as clearly staging the Inns as a cultural threshold.

If *translatio imperii* leads to destruction in *Misfortunes*, *translatio studii* is productive. Rather than just offering discourse on political counsel, *Misfortunes*' indictment of foreign conquest facilitates its celebration of the efforts of its lawyer-authors to 'T'enrich our state with all there forreine fraight' (sig. π3v). Arthur's conquests are repeatedly linked, first through Gorlois and subsequently other characters, to the myth of Troynovant as an image of cultural appropriation and acquisition. Arthur's conquests, from which his 'nauies homewards flott / Triumphantly bedect', are thus connected to *Misfortunes*' method of translating '*Romaine* spoyles' (sig. A2r) to England and into English. The translation of classical texts and forms in *Misfortunes* not only into English, as others had done before, but into Britain's greatest legend, is part of the 'wealth of former world' (sig. F3v) that, the play tells us, will 'inlarge the Brvtaines praise' (sig. F3r). Unlike 'warres abroade' (sig. B1v), this kind of conquest will make Elizabethan England a 'golden age againe' (sig. F4r).

## A BRITISH OEDIPUS

The prologue of *Misfortunes* is not set in Arthur's Britain but in Elizabeth I's England. Here, we are informed, 'All Tragedies are fled from State, to stadge' (sig. π4r). The initial conflict is provoked by the Muses' rebuke of the law students for wrongfully withholding service. It is alleged that they serve Astrea exclusively, 'But Posie she hath in most disdaine,/ And Marshals it next Follyes scorned place' (sig. π4r). These accusations are then rebutted by one of the 'Gentlemen Students' (sig. π4r). Because of its clear emphasis on the habits of Elizabethan Innsmen, interested in reconciling legal and literary 'skils of language and of Arts' (sig. π2r), *Misfortunes*' prologue has been extracted and examined repeatedly without reference to the rest of the play.[73] Consequently, the

[73] See, for example, Winston, *Lawyers at Play*, pp. 1-20 and McBain, 'Attentive Mindes and Serious Wits'.

ways in which its meaning mediates and is mediated by the Arthurian '*deuises and shewes*' (sig. π2r) that follow has been obscured. Trotte's triangulation of classical culture, the creativity of the lawyers, and their relevance to Elizabethan England offers a key to the play's allusions to and appropriations from earlier Inns of Court tragedies.

This dispute between the muses and lawyers is followed by the first of *Misfortunes*' dumbshows. While the influence of Norton and Sackville's *Gorboduc* on the act structure and blank verse of subsequent drama has long been recognised, the ways in which the first dumbshow of *Misfortunes* explicitly evokes that first Inns of Court tragedy has not. 'Sounding musicke, there rose three furies from vnder the stage apparelled accordingly with snakes and flames about their blacke haires and garments' (sig. A1r). These furies and the symbolic objects they hold represent the sins that Uther bequeaths to Arthur, while the three nuns who then appear anticipate 'the remorse and dispaire of Gueneuora' (sig. A1r.). *Gorboduc* had featured a similar spectacle when it was performed for the Queen by the gentlemen of Inner Temple in January 1561. Like *Gorboduc*'s furies, the furies in *Misfortunes* rise 'from vnder the stage' (sig. A1r) wearing the same costumes and carrying the same iconic snake, firebrand, and whip, respectively. In *Misfortunes*, however, each fury holds not just the one emblematic prop but two. An additional 'snake athwart a cup', a 'Cupid', and a 'Pegasus' (sig. A1r) are introduced, as are three nuns to mirror the three furies. These additions, in particular that of the Pegasus, may be an allusion to—and even an outdoing of—the famous Inner Temple Christmas revels of 1561. Robert Dudley's association with Pegasus is well established since he had adopted the persona of 'Patron of the honourable order of Pegasus' during those festivities. In *Misfortunes*, this mythical creature is deployed as a symbol of 'crueltie and ambition' (sig. A1r). Whether or not this allusion was either intended or perceived, this opening dumbshow unequivocally reframes Arthur's tragedy as emerging from an Inns tradition that reworks its own literary productions.

The primary change made in *Misfortunes* to the story of Arthur's fall given by Geoffrey of Monmouth in *De gestis Britonum*, is of Arthur's incest. Mordred's incestuous conception had of

course become part of the Arthurian tradition after Geoffrey, in the collection of French prose romances known as the Vulgate cycle. While it reappeared in *Morte Darthur*, which remained popular throughout the sixteenth century, there is no evidence for anything more than a 'removed' reading of Malory in *Misfortunes*.[74] *Misfortunes*' first dumbshow links Uther's erotic and military conquests in its use of the symbolic firebrand and poisoned cup. These represent his 'vnlawfull heate and loue conceyued at the banquet, which neuer ceased in his posterities' (sig. A1r), and his poisoning by the Saxons, respectively. This is then echoed by the mirroring of the three Furies by the three nuns, a visual reminder of Guenevora's fate and so of Mordred's repetition of this hereditary sin. That this corruption is passed down, from one generation to another, is clearly articulated by the ghost of Gorlois: 'that the shame thou suffredst for his lusts,/ Reboundeth backe, and stifeleth in his stocke?' (sig. A2r). While the emphasis placed on the inherent corruption of the Pendragon line fundamentally compromises the idea of an ideal Arthur, the fault is primarily Uther's. Gorlois' ghost returns to earth to:

> Wrecke all at once, infect the ayre with plagues,
> Till badd to worse, till worse to worst be turnde.
> Let mischiefes know no meane, nor plagues an end.
> Let th'ofsprings sinne exceede the former stocke[.] (sig. A2r)

[74] Malory's *Morte Darthur*, first printed in England in 1485, follows the less well-known, *La Mort le roi Artu* (c. 1230), in asserting Arthur's paternity of Mordred, see Philip Bennet, *La Mort le roi Artu*, in *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, ed. Peter France (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2460/view/10.1093/acref/9780198661252.001.0001/acref-9780198661252-e-3241?rskey=V7U5eM&result=3238, accessed 7 March 2021, and Amy Varin, 'Mordred, King Arthur's Son', *Folklore*, 90.2 (1979), 167–77; Helen Moore, *Amadis in English: A Study in the Reading of Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 30.

Why is Arthur's incest made so prominent throughout *Misfortunes*? The answer is suggested here by Gorlois' repeated use of the word 'plague', the punishment visited on Thebes' most infamous king. The generative corruption of Arthur's incest, stressed throughout *Misfortunes*, casts him as a second Oedipus.

Another Oedipal tragedy had been composed and staged by members of Gray's Inn before *Misfortunes*: George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmersh's *Jocasta*. *Jocasta* was the last classical tragedy, so far as we know, to have been composed and performed by members of Gray's Inn before *Misfortunes*. First performed in 1566, it retells the story of Oedipus' hereditary curse, inherited from his father Laius and bequeathed to his sons (and brothers) Eteocles and Polynices. *Jocasta* was then repeatedly reprinted by Gascoigne: first in his *A Hundred Sundry Flowers* (1573), then in *Posies* (1575), and in *Whole Works* (1587). It was popular enough to be known to Christopher Marlowe and to influence his chariot sequence in *Tamburlaine the Great, Part II* (1587). *Jocasta* was thus relevant, readily available, and had recently been reprinted. Christopher Yelverton, moreover, contributed to both plays. He composed *Jocasta*'s epilogue and helped to devise *Misfortunes*' dumbshows.

The conflict faced by a father who must choose between the welfare of a beloved child and that of his country featured in *Jocasta* recurs in *Misfortune*s. Inns of Court circles had shown interest in this type of conflict before *Jocasta*, though no version of it appears in either Alexander Neville's translation of Seneca's *Oedipus* or Thomas Newton's of *Thebais*.[75] The recusant common lawyer Edmund Plowden, however, had used the dilemma to exemplify his theory of the king's two bodies, albeit by referencing Agamemnon and his sacrifice of Iphigenia: 'he was a king and ought to do as semely was for that estate, yet in the king <there> was a father saithe the Poet, & in this body politicke there was a body naturall.'[76] Where Agamemnon makes the kingly choice,

[75] I am grateful to Lorna Hutson for her help with this.

[76] Edmund Plowden, *A Treatise of the Two Bodies of the king, vis. Natural and Politic… The whole intending to prove the title of Mary Quene of Scotts to the succession of the crown of England and that the Scots are not out of the allegiance of England*,

placing public over private need, *Jocasta* reverses the situation. As in Euripides' version, via Ludovico Dolce, when *Jocasta*'s Creon is presented with the opportunity to save Thebes by sacrificing his son, he encourages Meneceus to flee. *Misfortunes*, clearly departing from any Arthurian precedent, presents Arthur with this same dilemma: his son or his kingdom. Mordred's comparative culpability, when contrasted with Iphigenia's innocence or Meneceus' self-sacrifice, renders Arthur's indecision all the more striking. If this dilemma was intended to echo Elizabeth and Mary, then the presentation of it in *Misfortunes* seems to be less didactic than tragic.

*Misfortunes* explicitly cites *Jocasta* not only to position Arthur in the dramatic tradition of Gray's Inn, but within a longer tradition of tragedy. In the earlier play, 'a great Gulfe' appeared on the stage, into which, after several failed attempts to fill it with clothes and jewels, a knight 'sodeinly lepte in'.[77] This is recalled by *Misfortunes*' Chorus:

> In Rome the gaping gulfe would not decrease,
> Till Curtius corse had closed her yawning jaws:
> In Theb's the Rotte and Murreine would not cease,
> Till Laius broode had paid for breach of lawes:
> In Brytain warres and discord will not stent,
> Till Vther's line and offspring quite be spent. (sig. B2r)

As well as alluding to the theatrical daring of its predecessors, *Misfortunes* clearly links Curtius and Uther through Laius. This association does not just compromise Geoffrey's idealised warrior-King; it further complicates his culpability. If Arthur's literary antecedent is Oedipus, his incest

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Bodl. MS Don. C. 43. The interpolated "there" is only found in this copy and BL Cotton MS Caligula B IV (sig. 19r; sig. 17r) but not in Harley MS or Bod. Rawlinson MS A 124. I am grateful to Daniel Haywood for sharing his work on this with me.

[77] George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmersh, *Jocasta*, in *A Hundredth Sundrie Flowres Bounde Vp in One Small Poesie* (London, 1573; STC 11635), pp. 69-128 (p. 116).

and ultimate fall is part of a hereditary curse, and one with an illustrious literary pedigree (though the ghost of Gorlois is the only character who relays any interaction with gods in the play). One of *Misfortunes*' most striking innovations, moreover, recalls the love of *Jocasta*'s Oedipus for his incestuously begotten son: Arthur loves the treacherous Mordred. Although the incestuous circumstances of his birth are a source of shame for Arthur—"tis my plague for life so lewdly ledde', 'I made my sister bad […] I haue begot as bad', 'Such was his birth: that base, what vulgar vice,/ Could once be lookt for of so noble blood?'—it heightens the kinship he feels. As he describes it when he is confronted by Mordred's corpse, 'My blood and kindred doubled in his birth,/ Inspires a mixt, and twice descending loue' (sig. D4r). Arthur's Oedipal realisation in *Misfortunes* does not just contaminate him: it elevates him to the status of a tragic hero.

Like that of his classical forebear, Oedipus, Arthur's tragic fall in *Misfortunes* is both hereditary and precipitated by his own talent (in this case, for war). But Arthur's portrayal in *Misfortunes* is also inflected by *Jocasta*'s obsession with native soil, for which the eponymous mother is a representative. Eteocles' control of that soil and Polynices' deprivation of it propels *Jocasta*'s conflict. By the play's end, Creon has expelled Oedipus from Thebes and refused to bury Polynices in its soil. As if in answer, at the end of *Misfortunes*, Arthur refuses burial in his own native soil. Where, in Geoffrey's version, Arthur is mortally wounded and carried off to Avalon, having handed over his crown to Constantine, in *Misfortunes*, Arthur returns with Cador after the battle. While dying of his wounds he explains to the lamenting Chorus:

> No graue I neede (O Fates) nor burial rights,
> Nor stately hearce, nor timbe with haughty toppe:
> But let my Carkasse lurke[.] (sig. F3r)

By refusing to be returned to Britain, he seeks to ensure its safety: 'so that in euery Coast/ I still be feard, and lookt for euery houre' (F3r). Echoing *Jocasta*'s Oedipus, 'Ychased from his natiue

country soyle', the Arthur of *Misfortunes* volunteers to 'lurke' rather than being forced into banishment.[78] Tanya Pollard contrasts how Euripidean heroines opened up new possibilities for authorship by 'inspiring female models for engaging collaboratively with the past rather than along adversarially Oedipal lines.'[79] A 'confluence' of the medieval and classical, *Misfortunes* employs the more adversarial model, as we have seen in the competitive aspects of Senecan translation, while also attempting to reconcile a classical literary tradition with a British one (as Geoffrey had four centuries earlier).[80] It thereby provides a new model of creative collaboration with the literary past. In presenting Arthur as a partially Oedipal figure inflected by *Jocasta*, *Misfortunes* stakes its claim as a new kind of English tragedy, one that is both pseudo-classical and home grown.

When the gentlemen of Gray's Inn next staged an Arthurian play in 1611, the experiment was not one in 'tragicall notes' but in tragi-comic parody. *Tom a Lincoln*, discovered in 1973 among the papers of Sir John Coke, Secretary of State under King Charles I, adapts its plot from Richard Johnson's popular prose romance of the same name.[81] Although the first few leaves of the manuscript are missing, the surviving text opens with King Arthur in a different conflict between two bodies. Having forcibly seduced one of his Queen's ladies, Angellica, he fathers the eponymous hero, setting the tone for the play's bawdy innuendos and Tom's subsequent series of seductions (which includes the queen of fairy land). The corruption of Arthur and his court is replicated and extended by his illegitimate son and his common companions on their travels. The play's clown, Rusticano—whose name may be related to the 'Markasius Rusticanus' of the *Gesta Grayorum* (1594)—is the entertainment's primary addition to Johnson's plot. Throughout the play,

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[78] Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh, *Jocasta*, p. 126; on early modern burial see Vanessa Harding, 'Choices and Changes: Death, Burial and the English Reformation', in *The Archaeology of Reformation, 1480-1580*, ed. David Gaimster and Roberta Gilchrist (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 386-398.

[79] Tanya Pollard, *Greek Tragic Women on Shakespearean Stages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, online edn, Oxford Academic, 21 Sept. 2017), https://exprozy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/oso/9780198793119.003.0001, accessed 15 September 2022.

[80] See Bruce R. Smith, *Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage, 1500-1700*, p. 6.

[81] BL MS Add. 61745, fols. 1-46.

'mirrors of the world for chivalry' are evoked only to be undercut by Rusticano: figures such as Sir Lancelot and 'Gallowine' are also deployed to mock members of Gray's (possible targets may have been Lancelot Lovelace, reader at Gray's in 1609, and Thomas Walwyn, to whom the scribe Morganus Evans commits his books and 'suche things as I leave behind mee in my study at my going home' on the final page of the manuscript).[82] Beyond lawyerly in-jokes, the play's primary parody is of the generic conventions of romance and tragedy. In its elaborate dumbshows, its account of 'the lofty Romanes whoe excel/ in feats of armes as historyes can tell', and even a long Lucanic account of the Red Rose Knight's dragon fight delivered by messenger, it seems to satirise *Misfortunes*.[83] Shakespearean drama, however, is also a target. In particular the tragic extremities of *King Lear* and the tragicomic implausibilities of *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, and *Cymbeline*. *Tom a Lincoln* looks back, both to earlier forms of play, and forward to the combination of chivalric parody and homage associated with Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (translated into English by Thomas Shelton in 1612) and performed in plays such as Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. The Arthurian legend was, once again, the site for generic play at Gray's.

## 'HOW SUTES A TRAGEDIE FOR SUCH A TIME?'

*Misfortunes* is a bolder dramatic experiment than it is a political statement. Through the English extracts from Lucan's *De bello Civili* and Seneca's tragedies, the dangers and rewards of conflict are built into the play's form as well as its action. In imitating and remaking elements of earlier Inns of Court plays and presenting Arthur as a pseudo-classical tragic hero, moreover, *Misfortunes* pioneered a new kind of English drama. Gray's Inn provided a literary culture in which King Arthur's fall could be performed as a compendium of classical translations and imitations; the

[82] Ibid., fol. 63b; on Evans and the authorship question see 'Introduction', in *Tom a Lincoln*, ed. G. R. Proudfoot and H. R. Woudhuysen (Oxford: Malone Society, 1992), pp. xxviii-xxxiii.

[83] Ibid., fol. 44a.

Arthurian legend became the site of an experiment in English tragic form that, despite its critics, would haunt the most celebrated plays of the early modern commercial theatre.[84]

A bookish play in performance, *Misfortunes* is also a theatrical book in print. Both the title of the publication, *Certain Devises and Shewes presented to her majestie by the Gentlemen of Grayes Inne*, and the playbook's many paratexts suggest that this was a deliberate choice. As well as the extensive accounts of its dumbshows, it includes scene by scene summaries, notes to the reader, and alternative speeches. One note informs the reader that the text delivered at court differs from the printed text. At the end of the play two more notes highlight two speeches for Gorlois by William Fulbecke. Three notes were printed where one would have functioned perfectly well; four speeches were printed where two would have sufficed.[85] R. W. Chambers commented that it was 'to be wished that editors of more important plays had been as communicative as offended dignity, or some other cause, made Thomas Hughes.'[86] While relations between at least two of the collaborators did break down—Francis Bacon would petition for Thomas Hughes' removal from Gray's Inn in 1600—these paratextual elements are typical of 'the self-consciously literary status' with which dramatic texts were regarded at the Inns.[87] The self-consciousness of *Misfortunes*'

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[84] See Andrew King, 'Dead Butchers and Fiend-like Queens: Literary and Political History in *The Misfortunes of Arthur* and *Macbeth*', in *The Scots and Medieval Arthurian Legend*, ed. Rhiannon Purdie and Nicola Royan (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 121-34 and Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), p. 124.

[85] As Nuttall argues in 'Publishing *Misfortunes*', the inclusion of non-scripted performance elements within the texts of *Certain Devises* would go on to influence producers of the Jacobean masque in print: Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness* (1605) and *The Masque of Queens* (1609) contain extensive accounts of sets and dance sequences, see *The Characters of Two Royall Masques. The One of Blacknesse, the Other of Beautie, Personated by the Most Magnificent of Queens Anne Queen of Great Britaine & c. With her Honorable Ladies, 1605 and 1608 at Whitehall, and Inuented by Ben Ionson* (London: Thomas Thorp for L. Lisle, 1608).

[86] R. W. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 3:349.

[87] On 3 December 1600 Katherine Floyd (or Flood) claimed that Hughes was the father of her child and that he had given her 'a gold hoop ring' which she pawned for 12 shillings. She had taken the child to him at Gray's Inn and told him that if he would not provide for it, she would 'go to Master Bacon & the rest of the gentlemen of house & complain of him'. On 10 December, Anne Morrice testified that anyone, including

playbook further blurs the boundaries, between performance and printed text, closet and stage drama, complicating easy definitions of what would come to be one of Elizabethan England's most popular literary forms, the play.

Bacon, might be the father, but that it was not Hughes. Elizabeth Hore testified that: 'she [Floyd] further confessed that when she lay in childbed, Mr. Bacon sent her a blanket with billament [ornamental] laces, Mr. Muscott sent her a whistle and a silver chain and two bells, and another man of Gray's sent her 30s, and that the best masters of Gray's Inn told her that so long as she laid her child to Mr. Hughes, she should not want anything', *Bridewell Court of Governors' Minute Books*, 4 (1597-1604), entries for 3 December and 7 March 1600/1601; see also Duncan Salkeld, *Shakespeare and London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 159-160. I am grateful to Duncan Salkeld for directing me to the *Minute Books* and for sharing his images and transcriptions; Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

# 4

# TOURNAMENT:
# THE PENDRAGON KNIGHT TILT SHOWS

The Arthurian legend has long been associated with the tournament. Repeatedly featured in the work of Chrétien de Troyes, tournaments became an integral, even defining feature of the world of Arthurian romance in the thirteenth century, as the simple melee of the twelfth century was refined into more elaborate tournament rituals. It was also at this time that Round Table tournaments imitating King Arthur and his fellowship began to appear across the courts of medieval Europe. The crusader lord of Beirut held one in Cyprus to celebrate the knighting of his son as early as 1223. Edward I, who went so far as to build an actual round table, now at Winchester, held Round Tables to celebrate both the occasion of his marriage and of his conquest of Wales. In the allegedly autobiographical poetry collection *Frauendienst* (1255), meanwhile, Ulrich von Lichtenstein recounts deploying a version of the format on his journey through Styria and Austria, where he adopted King Arthur as his alias, challenging every knight he met to a joust, and admitting those who broke three spears on him in succession into his order of the Round Table.[1] These tournaments, both fictive and historical, were associated with a chivalric aristocracy. This remained true of Elizabethan tournaments. In the Arthurian tilt shows examined in this chapter, George Clifford, the third Earl of Cumberland, deploys the legend to affirm his own chivalric

[1] See Roger Sherman Loomis, 'Chivalric and Dramatic Imitations of Arthurian Romance', in *Medieval Studies in Memory of A. Kingsely Porter*, ed. Wilhelm R. W. Koehler (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1939), pp. 79-100 and Ulrich von Lichtenstein, *Ulrich von Lichtenstein's Service of Ladies*, ed. John Wesley Thomas (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); see also Carolyn Dussère, 'Humor and Chivalry in Ulrich von Lichtenstein's Fraudienst and Gerhart Hauptmann's Ulrich von Lichtenstein, Colloquia Germanica, 16 (1983), 297-320 and Albrecht Classen, 'Moriz, Tristan, and Ulrich as Master Disguise Artists: Deconstruction and Re-enactment of Courtliness in "Moriz von Craûn", "Tristan als Mönch", and Ulrich von Liechtenstein's "Frauendienst"', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 103 (2004), 475-504.

credentials and to celebrate military conflict against Spain. As this chapter will argue, however, these seemingly conventional appropriations are deployed in performances that adapt the Arthurian legend in surprising ways. Different traditions are drawn on for compliment, comedy, and critique, endeavouring to entertain as much, if not more, than they entreat. The result expands the bounds of Arthurian chivalry beyond the jousting elite as well as reframing how Elizabethan seafaring was conceptualised by contemporaries.

Participants in Elizabeth I's Accession Day Tournaments were drawn from the Queen's aristocratic courtiers. Staged in the tiltyard at the Palace of Whitehall, the tournament came to mark the Queen's return to London for the winter months. It became a fixed centre of courtly ritual in Elizabeth's reign.[2] The combats took three principal forms: the tilt, in which combatants rode against each other with lances separated by a palisade; the tourney, in which mounted knights fought with rebated swords; and the barriers, often fought inside, in which combatants fought on foot with sword or pike.[3] The most elaborate and performative features of the tournament characterized the tilt. Before jousting, each combatant would appear in the tiltyard in a costume and their fictional guise would be explicated by their servants. These events were open to the public, so competitors were performing to a crowd as well as to their peers and sovereign. As the German traveller Lupold von Wedel describes it: 'thousands of spectators, men, women and girls' were in attendance, 'not to speak of those who were within the barrier and paid nothing'.[4] Accession Day Tournaments in the latter half of Elizabeth I's reign were not just performances by and for a courtly coterie, but a central event in a day of public festivity.

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[2] Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), p. 136.

[3] The palisade was known as the tilt, from which the form took its name, see Gabriel Heaton, *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments: from George Gascoigne to Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 49; see Alan Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments* (London: George Philip, 1987) and David Crouch, *Tournament* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005).

[4] 'Journey through England and Scotland Made by Lupold von Wedel in the Years 1584 and 1585', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, ed. Von Bülow, G. 2nd series, 9 (1895), pp. 223–270.

Elizabethan Accession Day Tournaments formed part of a national 'holidaye which passed all the popes holidayes'.[5] The triumph of the imperial over the papal and 'deliverance' of the English was fêted with prayers and sermons, bell-ringing, bonfires, and feasting as well as with the tournament.[6] The celebrations adapted features of an old Catholic festival, enabling the energies associated with events such as Corpus Christi to be redirected towards the glorification of the monarchy. Bells were rung in honour of the Queen rather than the saints.[7] A succession of special service books as well as particular psalms and prayers of thanksgiving were issued for use in church. Secular tributes proliferated. Examples include a series of poems presented to the Queen by the High Master and boys of St Paul's School in 1573, Edward Hake's tribute in 1575, Lawrence Humphrey's *Carmen* in 1577, the poems of Robert Twist in 1597, and verses in the Hatfield papers titled *Soli Angliae*, composed for Accession Day in 1602, as well as numerous ballads, anthems, and songs giving thanks for the Queen and the peace of her reign.[8] The defeat of the Armada saw a further outpouring of verses commemorating the 17 November as a 'holy-day' on which to

[5] Frances Yates, 'Elizabethan Chivalry: The Romance of the Accession Day Tilts', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 20 (1957) 4-25, cited in Roy Strong, 'The Popular Celebration of the Accession Day of Queen Elizabeth I', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 21 (1958), 86-103.

[6] Strong, 'The Popular Celebration of the Accession Day of Queen Elizabeth I', p. 8; William Camden, *Remaines concerning Britain their language, names, surnames, allusions, anagrammes, armories, monies, empreses, apparel, artillarie, wise speeches, proverbs, poesies, epittaphs* (London: Simon Miller, 1657), p. 158; Yates, 'Elizabethan Chivalry', p. 14.

[7] As Roy Strong demonstrates with reference to churchwarden accounts, the spread of Accession Day solemnities beyond London was not based on government legislation but local interests and sympathies, Strong, 'The Popular Celebration of the Accession Day of Queen Elizabeth I', pp. 88-91; see William Keatinge Clay, *Liturgical Services: Liturgies ad occasional forms of prayer set forth in the reign of Queen Elizabeth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1847), pp. 462, 463, 467; see also Katherine Butler, 'Creating Harmonious Subjects? Ballads, Psalms and Goldy Sings for Queen I's Accession Day', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 140 (2015), 273-312.

[8] Strong, 'The Popular Celebration of the Accession Day of Queen Elizabeth I', pp. 95-96.

celebrate her triumph at having 'banisht away/ all Papisticall play'.[9] The poet and playwright George Peele describes London's Accession Day festivities in *Anglorum Feriae* (1595):

> What paens loud triumphant London singes,
>
> What holy tunes and sacrifice of thanks,
>
> England's metropolus as incense sends.[10]

The replacement of idolatry with Godly thanksgiving is clearly underlined by Peele's use of 'incense'. The Accession Day Tournament, first staged during the 1570s under the aegis of the Queen's self-appointed Champion, Sir Henry Lee, was part of this defiant response to the Catholic threat epitomised by the Northern rebellion of 1569 and the Bull of Excommunication issued by Pope Pius V in 1570. Each tournament, and the individual tilt shows, was self-consciously part of this tradition, referring back to and building on the performances of previous years as well as engaging with more immediate contemporary contexts.

The chivalric ideal of aristocratic manhood that Accession Day Tournaments expressed was different to those performed in medieval iterations of the tournament. In Elizabethan England, tilts no longer functioned as an opportunity for the training of elite cavalry for war. The tournament lost not only its underlying military purpose, but—because participation was limited and the tournament itself was an annual event, rather a fixture on a tournament circuit—it also lost its economic one.[11] The consequence was a shift in emphasis to the performative aspects of the tournament.

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[9] *The Shirburn Ballads, 1585-1616*, ed. A. Clarke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), pp. 177-181.

[10] George Peele, *Anglorum Feriae, Englandes Hollydayes*, in *The Workes of George Peele* (London: 1829-1839), pp. 175-187 (p. 179); see also BL Add. MS 21432.

[11] On the economic incentives of tournaments see Laura Ashe, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Limits of Chivalry', in *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), pp. 159-172 (pp. 161-163) and *A Companion to Chivalry*, ed. Robert W. Jones and Peter Cross (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2019).



FIGURE 5. George Clifford, Third Earl of Cumberland, 1558-1605, by Nicholas Hilliard

Caird Collection, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

The reign of Elizabeth was also an unusual one in having a strong tradition of tiltyard entertainment without the active participation of the monarch.[12] With the Queen in the position of observer, patron, and judge, courtiers had the opportunity to define their relationship with the sovereign, as well as to present personal agendas and webs of allegiance, by performing them in public.[13] The prominence given to the quasi-dramatic features of these performances enabled greater expressive opportunities. Appearing in various guises, the competitors would process onto the tiltyard in, on, or beside a pavilion (a pageant cart) that served as a portable set. They were accompanied by servants, frequently in costume, at least one of whom would deliver a speech

[12] Previously it had been under physically active kings and princes that tournaments flourished. Examples include Henry VIII, Philip of Spain (during his marriage to Mary I), and James I's son, Henry, Prince of Wales, discussed in Chapter 5.

[13] The extent to which tilt shows in Accession Day Tournaments formed effective interventions in the political process was limited.

explaining the quasi-fictional context of the competitor's persona, typically drawn from classical, romance or pastoral literature.[14] While the competitors themselves did not typically speak, they would each display an *impresa*, 'a devise in picture with his Motte, or Word, born by noble and learned personage, to notife some particular conceit of their owne'.[15] The shield depicting each knight's *imprese* was then yielded up to the Queen after the tournament and displayed for visitors in a waterside gallery at Whitehall.[16] The Queen sat at the centre of these tournament rituals which helped to forge the 'cult of Elizabeth' identified by Roy Strong and others.[17] More recent scholarship, however, has stressed the multivocality of Accession Day Tournaments, as well as different aspects of their partisan and polemical character.[18] Like *imprese*, tilt shows evoked supposedly covert personal or privileged political allusions in order to invite rather than obscure interpretation by a number of spectators.

Elizabethan tournaments never acquired a normative textual form. This has contributed to their generic obscurity. Tilts speeches were rarely made available in print and their wide circulation as manuscript separates appears to have been infrequent. Evidence for tournament entertainments is fragmentary, parts of shows survive in manuscript separates, printed pamphlets,

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[14] Camden, *Remaines*, p. 158; Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, p. 144; Richard McCoy, 'From the Tower to the Tiltyard', *Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), 425-235; see also College of Arms, MS M. 6, fols. 56v–57r for an illustration of a tournament in 1559, with eight knights with personal *imprese*; Henry Lee, for example, appeared at one tournament leading a band of shepherds as the 'Green Knight', and at another as the enchanted servant of the Fair Queen, see BL Add. MS 41499A. A tilt show known as *Four Foster Children of Desire*, subsequently published as a pamphlet, deployed the conventions of romance to more explicitly political ends. The challengers (the Earl of Arundel, Lord Windsor, Philip Sidney and Fulke Greville) enacted a failed attack on the Fortress of Perfect Beauty, housing the Queen, to demonstrate her impregnability to desire, in front of a French legation in London to negotiate over Elizabeth's potential marriage to Duc d'Alençon, see Henry Goldwell, *A briefe declaration[n] of the shews, deuices, speeches, and inuentions, done & performed before the Queene Majestie, & the French ambassadours* (London: Robert Waldgrave, 1581).

[15] Camden, *Remaines*, p. 158.

[16] Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, p. 144.

[17] Ibid., pp. 117-119; see also Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments*.

[18] See Gabriel Heaton, *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments*.

letters, narrative histories, books on heraldry, accounts of festivities, and ballads.[19] Like the shows themselves, however, these textual fragments could be assembled and interpreted in many different ways, recalling, reviving, and redefining their own significance. The primary source for Cumberland's Arthurian tilt shows was not written until 1661. Richard Robinson notes how he 'coppied out of the Originall which Mr Robert Hilton of Murton lent me the 29 of June in 1661. I overlooked all these Papers in Pendragon Castle the 3 day of November 1663'.[20] Two tilt show speeches appear in a manuscript which consistently casts the Earl as great explorer and chivalric warrior, between accounts of Cumberland's 'eighth' voyage in 1594 and 'eleventh and later Voyages to the West Indies 1597'.[21] Where Peele's panegyrics emphasise the sequence of shows by multiple combatants within a single Accession Day Tournament, the form and content of this particular manuscript invites us to scrutinise these shows for evidence of Cumberland's career as a 'Privateering Earl'. It also fosters a reading of the entertainments in relation to each other, as two parts of a longer Pendragon Knight show spanning multiple Accession Day Tournaments. This is, of course, not the only way they can be understood. Rather, it is a contention of this chapter that by reconsidering the composition, tone, and, indeed, audiences of tilt shows, different ways in which they interrelate and innovate emerge.

Although royal iconography had long drawn on the alleged Arthurian ancestry of the Tudors, Cumberland's tiltyard shows are almost the only extant evidence of Arthurian tournament

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[19] Evidence for the Callophisus contention, some of which played out in print, is collected in a composite volume of Burghley's Papers. Heaton suggests that the way the document is filed may give an indication of Burghley's opinion of his fellow courtiers' antics as the volume includes: Lansdowne MS 99, a volume comprising letters from madmen; invectives and pasquils, absurd petitions, obsessive denunciations, counterfeit warrants, and challenges to a duel, see Heaton, *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments*, pp. 49-89.

[20] MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol 1r.

[21] Details, like the fact that 'worthie Captaine William Midleton' who gives the first of these two accounts had been 'a solider and Lieutenant as also Ensigne-Bearer vnder the virtuous renowned Sir Phillip Sydney Knight in the Lowe Countries and here a Follower in all these voiages', suggests the kind of heroic identity that the volume imagines for Cumberland, see MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6.

performances staged in Elizabethan England (one notable exception is a tournament in 1565 at which the Earl of Leicester, the Earl of Sussex and Lord Hunsdon issued challenges under the names of Segremor, Guy and Lancelot).[22] Scholarship on Elizabethan Accession Day Tournament performances, from Roy Strong to Gabriel Heaton, has emphasised the relationship between combatant and the Queen, favouring performances by figures such as Sir Henry Lee and Robert Devereaux, the second Earl of Essex.[23] This chapter builds on that work, emphasising Cumberland's contribution and investigating the significance of other possible audiences, internal and external, to his Arthurian tilt shows. Alan Young has characterised Cumberland's first Pendragon Knight show as a 'witty essay in compliment, presenting Cumberland as a kind of latter day Arthur in the service of Elizabeth'.[24] This chapter examines that wit and how it is deployed to innovate within the complimentary function of these performances, as well as how different parts of the Arthurian legend are evoked in these shows to reimagine the chivalric tradition of the Accession Day Tournaments. How playful is the Arthurianism of these shows? And to what extent did they reshape the scope of chivalry in the Elizabethan imagination?

## RUINS AND RELICS

The year that Sir Henry Lee bequeathed his position as Queen's Champion to Cumberland, the Earl was the subject of one of the dedicatory sonnets attached by Edmund Spenser to the publication of the first three books of his Arthurian epic poem, *The Faerie Queene*.[25] In it, Spenser

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[22] College of Arms, Portfolio of Tournament Cheques, 5 March 1565.

[23] See Paul E. J. Hammer, 'Upstaging the Queen: The Earl of Essex, Francis Bacon and the Accession Day Celebrations of 1595', in *The Politics of the Early Stuart Court Masque*, ed. David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 41–66.

[24] Alan R. Young, 'Tudor Arthurianism and the Earl of Cumberland's Tournament Pageants', *Dalhousie Review*, 67 (1987), 176-89 (p. 182).

[25] See Ewan Fernie, 'Lee, Sir Henry Lee (1533-1611)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004, https:// ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/16288,

praises Cumberland as 'The flower of chivalry, now bloosming faire'. He is singled out for his 'late asssaies', a possible allusion to Cumberland's earlier role in the Accession Day tournament of 1587, his exploits in the Azores in 1589, or both. The sonnet goes on to suggest that the example 'of long passed daies' recounted by Spenser in the poem will help fill the Earl's mind with 'magnanimitee'.[26] Spenser combines the idea of the Arthurian legend's exemplarity, its capacity 'to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline', with the Earl of Cumberland's real world martial endeavours. This combination, with an emphasis on the potential 'ensample' of Arthur, is likely to have been the Earl's inspiration for adapting the legend in his tilt show of 1591.[27] In adopting Spenser's Arthurian theme, however, Cumberland did not just earnestly perform his 'love of vertue […and] martiall praise' before the Queen. Instead, he used heraldry, Merlinic prophecy, and humour to involve and entertain his wider audience.

At the Accession Day Tournament of 1590, Lee, Elizabeth I's self-appointed champion, staged his retirement from the tiltyard and named Cumberland his successor.[28] According to the herald William Segar:

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accessed 5 January 2022; a group of tiltyard speeches and verses survive in a manuscript associated with him: the 'Ditchley Manuscript' BL Add. MS 41499A.

[26] Edmund Spenser, 'To the right honourable the Earle of Cumberland', in *Spenser: The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 729.

[27] See Richard McCabe, 'Spenser and Holinshed', in *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*, ed. Felicity Heal, Ian W. Archer, and Paulina Kewes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 543-558 (p. 546).

[28] Elizabeth I did also have an official Champion, a position that was not in her gift: a fourteenth-century legal dispute concluded with the judgement that the office of champion was inalienably connected to the Lincolnshire manor of Scrivelsby, and the property of the Dymoke family. The Dymoke family's fortunes were at a low ebb by the 1570s, so when Sir Henry Lee first adopted this title in the tiltyard they were not in a position to challenge him, see Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), Sydney Angelo, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), and Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments*, p. 140.

> these annuall exercises in Armes, solemnized the 17. day of November, were first begun and occasioned by the right virtuous and honourable Sir Henry Lea, Master of her Highnesse Armorie, and no deservingly Knight of the most noble Order [of the Garter], who of his great zeale, and earnest desire to eternize the glory of her happy reigne, voluntarily vowed (unlesse infirmity, age, or other accident did impeach him) during his life, to present himself at the Tilt armed, the day aforesaid yeerely, there to performe in honor of her Sacred Majestie the promise he formerly made.[29]

While Segar appears to have romanticised the origin of the tournament by tracing it back to the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, he did not exaggerate Lee's central role in its establishment (though no other account of this episode is known to survive).[30] Lee's age was a central feature of his retirement performance at the tournament of 1590, recorded in George Peele's verse account of the tournament, *Polyhymnia* (1590).[31] After describing the tilting 'couple[s]', Peele depicts how Lee singled out:

> The flower of English Knightes, the valiant Earle
> Of Cumberland, and him (before them all)
> He humbly prayes her Highnesse to accept,
> And him install in place.[32]

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[29] William Segar, *Honor Military, and Civill, contained in foure Bookes* (London: Robert Barker, 1602), p. 197.

[30] Heaton, *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments*, pp. 49-89.

[31] George Peele, *Polyhymnia describing, the Honourable Triumph at Tylt, before her Majestie, on the 17. of Nouember, last past, being the First Day of the Three and Thirtieth Yeare of her Highnesse Raigne. With Sir Henrie Lea, his Resignation of Honour at Tylt, to her Majestie, and Receiued by the Right Honorable, the Earle of Cumberland* (London: Richard Jones, 1590).

[32] Peele, *Polyhymnia*, sig. B4r.

In promising that Cumberland would 'continue the yeerely exercises aforesaid', Lee attempted to turn his unique position into a post that was within his own gift.[33] Lee divested himself of his armour, giving it 'and his launce' to Cumberland before donning a hermit's mantle. The presentation of a personal feature as elaborate fictional conceit was coming to be characteristic of the form and would be adopted by Cumberland.

The persona Cumberland adopted for his first appearance as Queen's Champion in 1591 was the Pendragon Knight. The Pendragon Knight is not a figure from Arthurian legend but one created for the tiltyard, where Cumberland appeared in a pavilion depicting Pendragon Castle and was accompanied by 'Merlin', who delivered a speech. The role of Merlin appears to have been performed by a page and not a hired actor, though the evidence for this is inconclusive.[34] In it, Merlin marvels at the presence of Pendragon Castle in Westminster, relays the tale of how the castle was founded, and shares a prophecy that the castle will not be fortunate until a red dragon flies into the sea to encounter a black eagle. Demoralized by his lack of success at sea, the knight finds a prophecy in his castle walls which Merlin reads, revealing that the bird will be vanquished by a virgin who has reigned for thirty-three years. The knight decides against his original plan to invite the Queen to the castle, in which a number of Arthurian relics allegedly survive, and instead presents her with a stone from the castle, engraved with his promise to fulfil his role as her Champion.[35]

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[33] Segar, *Honor Military, and Civill*, p. 199; this is an adaptation of a trope from medieval romance. Guy of Warwick becomes a hermit at the end of his life and Lancelot becomes a monk at the end of Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Despite his efforts, however, Cumberland would never truly succeed in taking up Lee's tiltyard role, contending in tournaments of the subsequent decade with the increasing prominence of the 'major creative force in tiltyard entertainments in the 1590s', the Earl of Essex, see Young, 'Tudor Arthurianism and the Earl of Cumberland's Tournament Pageants', p. 176.

[34] Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, p. 138; Heaton, *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments*, p. 52.

[35] The 'stone' may have been a jewel presented to the Queen at the event, in which case the engraving might have been done on its setting.

The Pendragon Knight's name and his association with Arthur come from the remains of a Castle inherited by Cumberland. Once the stronghold of Cumberland's family, the ruin of Pendragon Castle still stood on the Earl's lands. Pendragon Castle was erected in the twelfth century in Westmoreland by either Sir Hugh Morville or Ranulph de Meschines. It was enlarged and strengthened by Robert de Clifford around 1300, burned in 1341, rebuilt in 1360, burned again in 1541, and rebuilt in 1660 by Cumberland's daughter, Lady Anne.[36] In the Arthurian legend, the epithet 'Pendragon' is traditionally associated with King Uther, Arthur's father. It means 'head dragon' in Welsh but was used figuratively to mean the chief commander. Geoffrey, taking it literally to mean 'the head of a dragon', created an origin story for the epithet in which Uther sees a portentous dragon-shaped comet and is inspired to adopt a dragon as his standard.[37] Located above a bend in the River Eden in Mallerstang Dale, Cumbria, local legends associate Pendragon Castle with Uther. In one local legend, Uther and all of his men were killed at Pendragon Castle when Saxon invaders poisoned the well. In another—recalled in the couplet, 'Let Uther Pendragon do what he can,/ Eden will run where Eden ran'—Uther endeavoured, without success, to turn the course of the river Eden so as to enlarge the site and provide a moat for his castle. A note written at right angles to the tilt speech in the manuscript containing them reads: 'The Riuer of Eden will/ keepe his Course still/ Lett Vther Pendragon/ Say what he will.'[38] Cumberland drew on the Arthurian associations of this ruin, appearing on the tiltyard with his pavilion designed as a likeness of it.[39] It is perhaps significant that the symbol at the centre of these tilt shows is associated with an individual's frustration in the face of forces beyond his control.

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[36] G. C. Williamson, *George, Third Earl of Cumberland (1558-1605): His Life and His Voyages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), p. 107.

[37] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin Book, 1966), pp. 200-202.

[38] MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 1r.

[39] Francis Bacon writes in *Of masques and triumphs* that 'For jousts, tourney, and barriers; the glories of them are chiefly in the chariots, wherein the challengers make their entry; especially if they be drawn with strange beasts', see Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, p. 137.

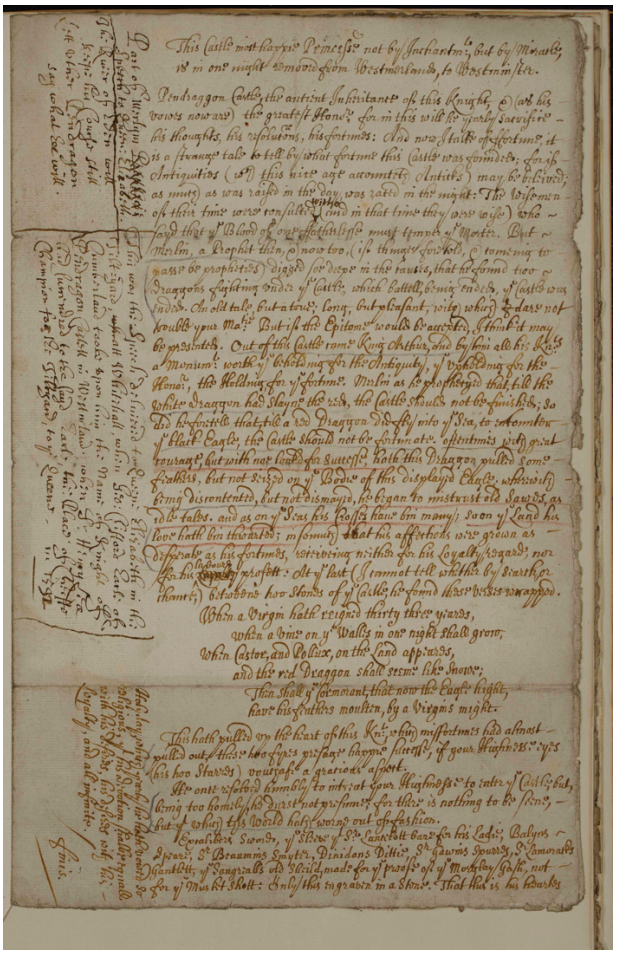


FIGURE 6. MS WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 1r.

Kendal: Cumbria Record Office.

While Pendragon Castle had still been in use when the antiquarian John Leland visited in 1539, by the time Cumberland adopted his Pendragon Knight persona the castle was 'uninhabited save for a housekeeper and some servants'.[40] The ruined state of Cumberland's castle-pavilion enabled it to represent not just the actual ruin after which it was named but also the prophetic site of the crumbling tower in what is known as the "Omen of the Dragons". According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, King Vortigern attempts to build a tower that keeps collapsing. Whatever his

[40] Williamson, *George, Third Earl of Cumberland (1558-1605)*, p. 107.

stonemasons 'ex diuersis patriis'[41] [from various regions] built each day, 'absorbebat tellus illud in altera'[42] [the earth swallowed up] the next.[43] His advisors tell him it will stand if the blood of a fatherless boy is sprinkled on the foundations. The Merlin of Cumberland's performance recalls part of this 'old tale':

> as much as was raised in the day was rated in the night: The Wise men of their time were consulted with (and in that time they were wise) who sayd that ye Blood of the Fatherlesse must temper ye Morter. But Merlin a Prophet then, & now too, (if things foretold, & comeing to passe as prophecies) digged soe deepe in the causes, that he found two draggons fighting under ye Castle, which battell being ended, ye Castle was ended. An old tale, but a true, long but plesant, with which I dare not trouble your Majestie.[44]

Whereas in Nennius' account of this episode the blood of a fatherless boy is to be sprinkled 'on the ground' where the citadel is to be erected, Geoffrey describes sprinkling it onto the 'caementum et lapides' [mortar and stones] with which Vortigern's tower is to be built.[45] Geoffrey, not Nennius, is the primary source for this version of the "Omen of the Dragons", as it is explicitly echoed in the tempering of 'ye Morter' by Cumberland's Merlin. As Merlin's description and refusal to relay Geoffrey's 'tale' in full suggests, however, the citation is potentially more tongue-in-cheek than it is portentous.

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[41] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. Michael D. Reeve, trans. Neil Wright (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), p. 137; Vortigern's tower in *De gestis Britonum* is initially on Mount Erith but after Merlin's prophecies it is relocated to the region of Herging on a hill named Doartius above the river Wye.

[42] Geoffrey, *De gesits Britonum*, p. 137.

[43] Merlin and Ambrosius in Geoffrey, Emrys in Nennius.

[44] MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 1r.

[45] Geoffrey, *De gesits Britonum*, p. 137.

The presentation of Merlinic prophecy is similarly playful. Unlike Geoffrey of Monmouth's Merlin, Cumberland's offers no interpretation either of the "Omen of the Dragons" or of the prophecies he shares. Where Geoffrey's Merlin explains the significance of the red and white dragons discovered beneath the foundations of Vortigern's tower: 'cauernas ipsius occupabit albus draco, qui Saxones quos inuitasti significat. Rubeus uero gentem designat Britanniae, quae ab albo opprimetur' [its caves will be taken by the white dragon, which symbolises the Saxons whom you have summoned. The red represents the people of Britain, whom the white will oppress],[46] Cumberland's notes only that the building collapsed and that young Merlin established the cause. This 'Epitome' not only presents a familiar context within which the earl's performance can innovate and surprise, but it sets up the speech's interpretive expectations of his audience.[47] They are expected to decipher the referents of the prophecy themselves.

The ruin of Pendragon Castle also works as an image of Cumberland's ruined finances. In the show of 1591, Merlin claims to have previously prophesised that the 'red Draggon did fly into ye Sea, to encounter ye black Eagle'.[48] This evokes the part that Cumberland, whose family crest was a 'fiery Dragon', played in naval battles with the Spanish by referencing Phillip II's heraldic Eagle of St John.[49] As war with Spain was beginning in 1586, Cumberland had begun his career as a privateer, as much to recoup some of his gambling losses as for patriotic duty and maritime glory. After his first venture he engaged, with almost annual regularity (but limited financial success), as either the commander or promoter in privateering voyages. He distinguished himself in service on the Armada campaign of 1588 as well as in repeated trips to the Azores.[50] His first Pendragon

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[46] Ibid., p. 144.

[47] MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 1r; Lesley A. Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2000), p. 37.

[48] MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 1r.

[49] See Peter Holmes, 'Clifford, George, third earl of Cumberland (1558-1605)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/5645, accessed 1 January 2021.

[50] Holmes, 'Clifford, George, third earl of Cumberland (1558-1605)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Knight performance suggests that his fortunes have 'grown desperate' because of his efforts to undermine Philip II's thrust for hegemony across Western Europe and the Atlantic Ocean. Merlin reminds the crowd that:

> as on ye seas his Crosses have bin many; so on ye Land his love hath bin thwarted; insomuch that his affections were grown as desperate as his fortunes, receiving neither for his Loyalty, regard, nor for his labour profett[.][51]

Unsurprisingly, other contributing factors, such as the earl's great love of expensive sports—horseracing, tilts, bowling matches, shooting, and hunting which, according to his daughter, 'did contribute more to the wasting of his estate'—are not mentioned.[52] It is the Earl's maritime initiatives that Merlin evokes when he elaborates that 'oftentimes with great courage, but with noe lookd for successe, hath this Draggon pulled some feathers, but not seized on ye Bodie of this displayed Eagle'.[53] As well as its literal suggestion of Spanish pride at sea, the use of 'displayed' here further hints at the heraldic key to interpretation. 'Displayed' is the heraldic term for a bird shown *affronté* with its head turned to dexter and wings spread to the sides to fill the area of the field, which is the attitude of Philip II's eagle. Far from being inside jokes for an elite audience, these symbols are easily understood by spectators from beyond the court. Indeed, their accessibility and the interpretative participation that they invite from spectators, both on and off the tiltyard, explains something of the tournament's popularity beyond the Queen and the inner circle of competitors. Their very simplicity, moreover, may well have contributed to the show's self-conscious playfulness, demystifying the cryptic self-interest characteristic of political prophecy.

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[51] MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 1r.

[52] Richard Spence, *The Privateering Earl: George Clifford, 3rd Earl of Cumberland, 1558-1605* (Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1995), p. 211.

[53] MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 1r.

Perhaps the most striking example of this show's use of humour is in its presentation of antiquarian Arthurianism. At the end of his speech Merlin relays how, having resolved to 'intreat your Highnesse to enter' his castle, he changed his mind and decided that there was nothing worth seeing 'but yt which this world hath worn out of fashion.'[54] These unfashionable objects in his 'homely' castle include:

> Excaliburs Swords, ye Sleeve yt Sr. Lancelott bare for his Ladie, Balyns Speare, Sr Braumins Smyter, Dinidans Dittie, Sr Gawins Spurres, Sr. Lamoracks Gauntlett, ye Sangrealls old Shield, made for ye proofe of ye Morgley Gash, not for ye Musket shott[55]

Both the nature and the number of items listed suggests a tone of parody, perhaps a pointed one in the context of a performance intended to promote conflict with Spain; the gathering of Arthurian objects is likened to a popish emphasis on relics. But it also parodies texts such as Caxton's Preface to Malory's *Morte Darthur* and John Leland's antiquarian efforts in *Assertio inclytissimi Arturii Regis Britanniae*, which cite the 'dyvers places of Englond [where] many remebraunces ben yet of hym and shall remayne perpetually, and also of hys knyghtes', linking extant objects to individuals and events from romance.[56] By mocking the popular trend for refuting challenges to Arthur's historicity with Arthurian relics, Cumberland sets his appropriation of the myth apart. The 'upholding for the Honor, the Holding for ye fortune' associated with Arthur and his knights is only of interest, these shows suggest, if it inspires action. The Arthur found by antiquarians in relics and ruins is 'out of fashion' because the time has come to realise a glorious

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid; 'Morlgey Gash' may be a reference to Bevis of Hampton's sword, Morglay.

[56] William Caxton, 'Caxton's Preface', in *Malory Works*, ed. Eugène Vinaver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. xiii-xv (p. xiv).

future rather than to dwell on evidence of the past. This show's central joke then, it to send up its own form: fictive role-play before a joust when the real battle is at sea.

## ARTHUR AT SEA

The prophetic verse at the centre of the Pendragon Knight's 1591 appearance anticipates the emphasis on the maritime community that Cumberland's next performance would develop:

> When a Virgin hath reigned thirty three yeare,
> When a Vine on ye Walles in one night shall grow
> When Castor, and Pollux, on the Land appears,
> and the red Draggon shall seeme like Snowe;
> Then shall ye Cormorant, that now the Eagle hight,
> have his feathers moulten, by a Virgins might.[57]

The first line echoes Peele's commemoration of the Accession Day Tournament of 1590 in *Polyhymnia*: 'Therefore, when thirtie two were come and gone./Years of her raigne', clearly positioning Cumberland's first performance as champion in the tradition inaugurated by Lee.[58] The prophecy goes on to introduce an astrological aspect, found at the end of *Prophetiæ Merlini*, with the image of Castor and Pollux. Consistently associated with horses and depicted as helmeted horsemen carrying spears, the Dioscuri provide a classical, demi-god image of the knights jousting at the Accession Day Tournament.[59] The myth of their partnership, death and shared immortality might also be understood as a compliment to Lee and celebration of the position of Queen's Champion: as one replaces the other and both ascend to immortality. Even more significantly,

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[57] MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 1r.

[58] Peele, *Polyhymnia*, sig. A2v.

[59] According to Young, the allusion to Castor and Pollux, is not clear, 'Tudor Arthurianism', p. 182.

however, the mythical twins were the protectors of sailors. The image of sailors appearing on land, like the 'Red Draggon' (which was also the name of one of Cumberland's ships) alludes, once again, to his service at sea.[60] On his maritime adventures, Merlin has already informed listeners, 'his Crosses have bin many', and for them, it is suggested, Cumberland has received 'neither for Loyalty, regard, nor for his labour profett'. Queen Elizabeth's 'eyes (his two Starres)' evoked in the sentence that follows the prophecy thus become an image of the earl navigating his career.[61] Elizabeth's 'gracious aspect' is elevated to the stars where Castor and Pollux are commemorated as Gemini, protecting her sailor from above—ideally, the speech implies, this protection will be financial as well as metaphorical. In this tilt performance, Cumberland first links the Arthurian legend with his seafaring activities, a theme he would develop when reprising the role of the Pendragon knight.

After another plague year, Cumberland returned to the tiltyard in the guise of the Pendragon Knight in 1593.[62] In November 1593 the Accession Day Tournament was held beneath

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[60] Cumberland purchased the Red Dragon in 1586, see Holmes, 'Clifford, George, third earl of Cumberland (1558-1605)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

[61] MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 1r.

[62] The first appearance of the Pendragon Knight has repeatedly been misdated, see Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments*, pp. 164-170. The manuscript that preserves Cumberland's first Pendragon speech labels it as the occasion when he took 'upon him the name of the Knight of Pendragon Castle he was appointed to the position of Chief Champion for the Tilt-yard to the Queen in 1592 in lieu of Sir Henry Lee', but no Accession Day tournament took place that year because of the plague. The original copy of the manuscript containing these speeches was in the possession of Robert Hilton of Murton, Westmoreland and on 29 June 1661 he lent it to Richard Robinson who transcribed it into the manuscript that now survives, see Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth* p. 208. The first Pendragon Knight speech does refer to the fact that 'the Red Draggon [Cumberland] shall seeme like Snowe', and in *Polyhymnia* Cumberland is depicted tilting 'yclad in coate of steele,/And plumes and pendants al as white as Swanne' (George Peele, *Polyhymnia*, sigs. A1v-A2r). This costume choice evokes his allegiance to the 'Virgins might', a theme developed in Lee's 'sacred Temple of the Virgins Vestall' in 1590. The confusion is easily resolved if Cumberland wore the same suit of armour two years in a row, as the transcription error is an easy one if the original read 1591 but an unlikely one if it was 1590, see Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), entry 901. This is not the extant fleur-de-lis suit made under the direction of Jacob Halder, nor the star

the walls of Windsor Castle on account of the plague, rather than at Whitehall. In the intervening year Cumberland had been associated with the greatest prize of the privateering war, the capture of the *Madre de Dios*. This was described by Hakluyt as evidence of 'Gods great favour towards our nation'.[63] Cumberland, however, had not sailed with the fleet that captured it, a fact that had cost him financially as the terms of his patent ensured him a substantial share of the profits only if he commanded in person. Despite the ensuing contention about the division of profit this briefly caused with the Queen, his involvement nevertheless served to enhance his reputation as a privateer. William Bourne, who had been Cumberland's contemporary at Trinity College, dedicated his revised practical guide to maritime affairs, *A Regiment for the Sea*, to the Earl that year.[64] Cumberland's presence at the tilt of 1593 was enabled by the fact that his next maritime excursion had been cut short when, off Flores, he had been taken ill and 'valuing the earl's safety above all the profits of the voyage', the ship hastened home.[65] This was the cause of his 'long absence from home and hard adventure abroad' referred to in the show and explains its reference to the 'Knight being sicke'.[66] For his show of 1593, Cumberland was accompanied onto the tiltyard by a squire who delivered the speech, probably in the guise of Merlin again, although that is not made explicit, and several mariners.[67] This speech reports that the Knight has spent the intervening time in the

studded one featured in his portrait as Champion, see Spence, *The Privateering Earl,* p. 81, 112 (see also the Topf manuscript at the V&A, which includes ink and watercolour illustrations of twenty-nine suits of armour, including Cumberland's and Lee's, copies of most of these are also included in *An Almain Armourer's Album*, ed. Viscount Dillon (London: W. Griggs, 1905)). The record of Cumberland's presence at the tournament in 1591 is preserved on the herald's score cheque in the College of Arms, College of Arms, MS M. 4, fol. 40.

[63] Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, & Discoveries of the English Nation*, 12 vols (Glasgow: MacLehose, 1903), p. 116.

[64] William Bourne, *A Regiment for the Sea: Containing Verie Necessarie Matters for all sorts of Men and Travailers* (London: Thomas Weaver, 1592).

[65] William Monson, *Naval Tracts in Six Books* (London: A. and J. Churchill, 1703), p. 181.

[66] MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 12r.

[67] Whether the sailors who accompanied Cumberland onto the tiltyard were real seaman, servants in costume, or professional actors remains unclear.

company of loyal seafaring men who, upon hearing of his plan to participate in the tilt, insisted on accompanying him. This means that the tilt fulfils another prophecy found in Pendragon Castle, of 'Albions […] Bliss' under the rule of a virgin.[68]

Using King Arthur to evoke patriotic feeling and inspire military action was by no means new in the 1590s, but the particular association made by Cumberland's tiltyard performances between the Arthurian legend and maritime warfare is striking. Given the Earl's love of mathematics which had, according to his daughter, led to his interest in navigation while at Cambridge, Cumberland would almost certainly have been familiar with John Dee's *Brytanici Imperii Limites* (1577-78). In it, England's sovereign right to establish an empire in the north seas is largely based on King Arthur's supposed prior conquests there. Dee's conception of empire, MacMillan and Abeles note, was not commercial, cultural or ideological; rather, 'it was historical: his formulation was the ancient empire for three kings founded by Brutus and enlarged to over thirty kingdoms by Arthur'. This was something which he met with the Queen repeatedly to discuss.[69] Dee's claim that Arthur had conquered Gaul, Scandinavia, Iceland, Greenland, all the northern island around Russia, and the North Pole, was not entirely his own invention. The concept of Arthur as a conqueror of the Artic and even parts of North America predates Dee in texts like the *Gestae Arthuri*, summarized by Jacob Cnoyen in the fourteenth century. It also appears in the *Leges Anglorum Londoniis Collectae*, which dates from the start of the thirteenth century and includes Greenland, Vinland and the North Pole amongst Arthur's conquests.[70] Like his sources, Dee is not interested in the maritime exploits necessary to get Arthur to these far flung places. Because

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[68] Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 1r.

[69] John Dee, *The Limits of the British Empire*, ed. Ken MacMillan and Jennifer Abeles (Prager: London, 2004), p. 16; Ken MacMillan, 'John Dee's "Brytanici Imperii Limites"', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 64 (2001), 151-159.

[70] Thomas Green, 'John Dee, King Arthur, and the Conquest of the Arctic', in *The Heroic Age: A Journal of Early Medieval Northwestern Europe* (2012), http://www.heroicage.org/issues/15/green.php#hakl1599, accessed 10 August 2022.

civil law required that discovery be followed by actual inhabitation (without possession the acquisition of legal title to a territory was incomplete) Dee focuses on Arthur's exploits on land.[71] The same is true of Richard Hakluyt, who, having read Dee, describes in *Principall Navigations* (1589) how Arthur 'valiantly subdued […] Norway, Sweueland, Ireland, Gotland, Denmarke, Semeland, Windland, Curland, Roe, Femeland, Wireland, Flanders, Cherilland, Lapland', amongst others. Arthur supposedly helped their 'wild and sauage' people 'receiue and keepe inuiolably for euer, faith in Christ onely', but Hakluyt offers no details about the considerable time he would have had to spend at sea to achieve this.[72]

The association Cumberland drew between the Arthurian legend and the maritime community was not wholly original: medieval Arthurian literature abounds with ships. A number of the boats associated with King Arthur and the Arthurian legend—for example the boat of the May Day Massacre, the ships of the Grail quest, and the boat of Queens that takes the dying Arthur to Avalon—are almost as iconic in Arthurian romance as the Round Table. The emphasis in these episodes, however, is rarely on the skill required to man the boat, or to defeat other boats in naval conflict. 'Heroic prowess, or indeed any kind of deliberate action,' Helen Cooper notes, 'is largely eliminated from such stories.'[73] Arthur does travel by sea in medieval texts, but that travel or its role in warfare is rarely emphasised. Early in his reign, Geoffrey's Arthur sails to the continent; first: 'Paratis deinde nauigiis, Norguegiam prius adiuit ut illius diademate Loth sororium suum insigniret' [He readied his fleets and headed first for Norway to make his brother-in-law Loth its king], and then 'nauigauit Arturus ad Gallias' [Arthur sailed to Gaul].[74] In both instances, however, the focus is not on his time at sea but on events that occur on his arrival. Geoffrey offers his only

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[71] Dee, *The Limits of the British Empire*, pp. 46-7, 55-7, 61-9, 82-5.

[72] Haklyut, *The Principal Nauigations etc.* (London: George Bishop, Ralph Newberie, and Robert Barker, 1599), sig. A2r.

[73] Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 107.

[74] Geoffrey, *De gestis Britonum*, p. 204, 206.

elaboration on Arthur's seafaring nine years later in the story, when Arthur returns to the continent in response to Lucius's demand for tribute:

> Arturus […] cum exercitu suo Portum Hamonis adiuit, ubi tempestiuo uentorum afflatus mare ingressus est. Dum autem innumeris nauibus circumsaeptus prospero cursu et cum gaudio altum secaret, quasi media hora noctis instante grauissimus sompnus eum intercepit.[75]

> [Arthur went with his army to Southampton, from where he sailed with a following wind. While he was ploughing the waves with his huge fleet, enjoying a safe passage, at about midnight he fell into a deep sleep.]

Arthur's ensuing 'sompnium' [dream] takes the form of the kind of Galfridian prophecy imitated by Cumberland's Merlin: a bear fights a fiery dragon and is cast to the ground.[76] Arthur then relays the dream to his retinue and different interpretations are discussed. The fact that Arthur's dream occurs at sea demonstrates many of the same qualities that Cooper identifies in the motif of romance's rudderless boat: the boat is real and the hero is helpless.[77] With its depiction of a prophetic revelation at sea, this passage of *De gestis Britonum* may well have influenced the centrality of Merlin and prophecy in Cumberland's tilt shows. Unlike the Pendragon Knight, however, Geoffrey's Arthur is no mariner.

There are several Arthurian texts which may have inspired Cumberland's inclusion of sailors, 'by nature painefull, by practise courageous, loving to their Captaine, mindfull of their

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[75] Ibid., p. 222.

[76] Ibid., 222.

[77] Arthur's ship is not, however, missing sails, tack or rudder, see Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, pp. 106-107.

countrie'.[78] Wace's description of Arthur's embarkation from Southampton in his translation of *De gestis Britonum*: *Roman de Brut* (c. 1155) makes space for the mariner as an active agent. Where Wace's fondness for scenes at sea otherwise manifests in more conventional depictions of storms and shipwrecks, one passage features sailors in action and is replete with technical nautical terms:

> Dunc veïssiez ancres lever,
> Estrens traire, hobens fermer
> Mariniers saillir par cez nés,
> Deshenechier veilles e trés;
> Li un s'esforcent al windas,
> Li altre lof e betas;
> Detriés sunt li guverneür,
> Li maistre esturman li meillur.[79]
>
> [then you could see anchors raised, stays pulled, guy-ropes secured and sailors bounding through the ships unfurling sails and canvas. Some strove with the windlass, others with tacking and with yard-ropes; behind them were the pilots, the best master helmsmen.]

This is one of several instances of specialist knowledge that add richness and plausibility throughout *Roman de Brut*. While Wace's mariners are distinct from Arthur and his knights—they are portrayed as a collective mass of activity in which individuals are not distinguishable—the glamour of romance ideals is loosely linked to the skill of the seafarer in the final sentence of this passage:

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[78] Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 12r.

[79] Wace, *Roman De Brut: A History of the British*, ed. Judith Weiss (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), p. 282.

Mult fu hardiz, mult fuz curteis
Cil ki fist nef premierement
E en mer se mist aval vent,
Terre querant qu'il ne veeit
E rivage qu'ill ne saveit.[80]

[How bold and skilled was the man who first made a ship and put to sea before the wind, seeking a land he could not see and shore he could not know.]

Although the craft of the seamen is not seen as chivalric while they are at work, this image of the first man who 'put to sea' comes close to recasting their efforts as a kind of quest.[81] Before Wace returns to the dream sequence more conventionally associated with maritime travel in romance, the idea that seafaring has a role in a chivalric world is seeded.

The role of the sailors and the business of seafaring is amplified by the poet of the fourteenth-century *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, in both Arthur's journey to the continent and on his

[80] Wace, *Roman De Brut*, p. 282.

[81] The interest of the *Roman de Brut* in seafaring may reflect the cultural impact of the White Ship disaster in 1120. The ensuing civil war was resolved by the accession of Henry II, whose queen, Eleanor, Wace supposedly presented his text to.

return to Britain after Mordred's usurpation.[82] Nautical vocabulary is again deployed to reinforce alliterative lines and their particular character is evoked: [83]

> Schipmen scharply schoten þaire portez,
> Launchez lede apon lufe, lacchen þer depez;
> Lukkez to þe lade-sterne when þe lyghte faillez,
> Castez coursez be crafte when þe clowde rysez,
> With þe nedyll and þe stone one þe nygghte tydez;
> For drede of þe derke nyghte þay drecchede a lytill,
> And all þe stryne of þe streme strekyn at onez.[84]

> [Shipmen shut their portholes,
> And launched the lead over the luff, plumbing the depth;
> They looked to the lodestar when the light failed,
> Cast their course by craft when the cloud rises,
> With the needle and the stone on the night's currents;

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[82] It is possible but by no means certain that Cumberland knew Wace's *Roman de Brut* as several of the extant manuscript copies were in England and being read throughout sixteenth century. Arundel XIV (London, College of Arms) was in the possession of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel by the 1590s; Henry Savile de Banke (d. 1617) owned BL Cotton Vitellius Ax; Lincoln Cathedral Library 104 may still have been in the possession of the Courtenays; William Lambarde, a historian of Kent, owned BL Add 45103 after 1582; and Matthew Parker had a copy (Corpus Christi Cambridge, 50) and in his library, see also Elizabeth J. Bryan, 'Matthew Parker and the Middle English Prose *Brut*', in *The Prose Brut and Other Late Medieval Chronicles: Books have their Histories. Essays in Honour of Lister M Matheson*, ed. Jaclyn Rjasic, Reik Kooper and Dominique Hoche (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016), pp. 165-180. This is a characteristic feature of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, see J. A. Burrow, 'The fourteenth-century Arthur' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 69-83 (p. 70).

[83] *The Alliterative Morte Arthure: A Critical Edition*, ed. Valerie Krishna (New York: Burt Franklin & Co, 1976), p. 60, 61.

[84] *The Alliterative Morte Arthure*, p. 61.

For dread of the dark night they slowed a little,

And all the stretch of the stream they strike at once.]

The sailors are depicted as sensitive and skilled. While they appear as a group (and so remain distinct from the 'bolde kynge' [brave King] and his knights who are individuated, both by Arthur in battle as he rows from ship to ship calling their names, and by the poet throughout), their professional expertise and even their feelings are featured.[85] Subsequently in Malory's *Morte Darthur* there is almost no mention of active seafaring. The one partial exception is the moment in which, amidst the 'great noise of minstrelsy', mariners can be heard where 'the see bee uppon that one syde of the wallys, where were many shyppis and marynars noyse with hale and how.'[86] While identifying a particular Arthurian source for Cumberland's sailors is not possible—not least as one may not have been used—the greater prominence of maritime figures in earlier texts may be another reminder that *Morte Darthur* was not the only Arthurian text available in early modern England.

Cumberland's tiltyard show of 1593 brings these shadowy presences from medieval Arthurian literature to the fore as distinctly Elizabethan mariners. Merlin describes the Pendragon Knight's sailors as:

a kinde of people by nature painefull, by practise couragious, loving to their Captaine, mindfull of their countrie, and profitable to the Common Wealth, yet earnest expect of

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[85] *The Alliterative Morte Arthure*, p. 138; as in *De gestis Britonum*, the sea remains the setting for portentous dreams, but the mechanics of the ship and the characteristics of those who perform the labour of sailing it contribute to the epic-heroic quality of Arthur's endeavours.

[86] This description in the tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney adds to the intimidation of approaching the knight of the Red Launds. Having passed the hanging corpses of previous challengers at this point in the tale, Beaumains and Linet are hemmed in on both sides, one by the 'double dyked […] full warly wallys' and on the other by a sea populated with mariners, Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. James W. Spisak (Berkely University of California Press, 1983), p. 173.

> reward, which commonly comes but slowly and hott ensuers of desert which is not thought on till it be tryed.

The use of 'painefull' here suggests their diligence and care in the service of the Queen, as well as the physical and mental hardships endured at sea, and perhaps even a joke at their expense (which the subsequent depiction of their clamouressness elaborates). Like the Pendragon Knight they are petitioners, not yet in receipt of the recognition and reward they deserve. The case they make to the Knight to allow them to accompany him and take part in the tournament, that 'if the hazard be equall the honor should in some measure bee like', echoes the chivalric ideology that underpins the Elizabethan tournament. The depiction of sailors in the Pendragon Knight show of 1593 repeatedly emphasises the sound and speech of the sailors. While it is unclear whether the sailors spoke in performance, Merlin relays how the Pendragon Knight conceded to being accompanied by them when he was 'unable to abide any [more] noise'. In a comic moment he exclaims:

> Good God howe these good fellowes laide about them after their arrival when the knight had imparted at his departure […] how clamorous they continewed what arguments and expostulations they used, that they might bee admitted as companions in this action.[87]

Like the Pendragon Knight's own tiltyard persona, their story indulges in the agonies of yearning that result from exclusion from the closed circle of Elizbeth's court, the gravitational centre of

[87] MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 12r; the use of the word 'companion' here seems to play on its ability to mean a member of an order of knighthood, a person who accompanies another, and a chosen associate, see 'companion, n. 1.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2022 www.oed.com/view/Entry/37402, accessed 27 January 2023.

Tudor literature, reimagining sailors as figures from an Arthurian romance, fit for appearance at an Accession Day tournament.[88]

Sailors in Elizabethan England were free from the restrictions and regulation of other trade groups controlled by guilds, but they also lacked the protection offered by them.[89] This rendered seamen both unusually free, 'each man decided such critical factors as how long he spent on land and at sea – a right he cherished', and particularly vulnerable to the Crown's interference during the war years of 1585-1604.[90] State Papers are replete with examples of the Lord Admiral and other high ranking officials petitioning the Crown for the seamen in their charge.[91] Cumberland was no exception, as his letter to Burghley on 12 December 1592 demonstrates: 'my heart is free from the poison of ambitious humours, only the desire to relieve my friends and servants in danger of bonds for me'.[92] Long absences, moreover, led seamen to gravitate to the outskirts of Elizabethan society, both literally and metaphorically.[93] As the Galfridian-style prophecy in the 1593 show suggests, like them, the 'uncouth Prophesy […] runneth over all the Shore'. While in no way conventional chivalric figures, this marginal identity, a parallel between the errant knight and the mariner, is drawn out in Cumberland's show. Like the earlier personas of the Green, Black, blind, solitary, and enchanted knights adopted by Lee, Cumberland deploys the romance figuration of a knight who is central to his own performances

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[88] Colin Burrow, 'The Sixteenth Century', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1500-1600*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 11-28 (p. 16).

[89] Cheryl A. Fury, *Tides in the Affairs of Men: The Social History of English Seamen, 1485-1649* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), p. 118.

[90] Fury, *Tides in the Affairs of Men*, p. 118.

[91] Ibid., pp. 122-23.

[92] Williamson, *George, Third Earl of Cumberland*, p. 112.

[93] See Kenneth R. Andrews, *The Elizabethan Seaman* (London: National Maritime Museum in conjunction with The Society for Nautical Research, 1982) and Eleanor Hubbard, *Englishmen at Sea: Labour and the Nation at the Dawn of Empire, 1570-1630* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021).

but marginal to the world in which they take place. He, and the sailors who accompany him, are portrayed as figures from the margins.

Cumberland's 1593 performance clearly positions its sailors as an extension of him. Where, in the original performance, the promise of 'Castor, and Pollux on the Land' was fulfilled by Cumberland alone, in 1593 the 'Red Dragon' leads 'shipmen on dry land'. It is a select crew of sailors who appear 'in behalf of the rest' in the 1593 tilt show.[94] While they are thus 'some few' representing many—presumably a practical and cost-cutting as well as symbolic choice—they also operate in the performance as a 'multitude' representing the Pendragon Knight. He is like them, this performance suggests, a victim of hardship and sacrifice who is still awaiting adequate recompense. Through his own analogy with the sailors, Cumberland is able to importune the Queen for 'better fortune' not just for himself but for his men.[95] While he is undoubtedly entreating Elizabeth for financial aid here, the power of Cumberland's petition derives from the invocation of the common subject and not just from a coded, personal plea.

It would, however, be a mistake to overstate the subversive implications of Cumberland's sailors. As the retinue of an aristocratic lord, they can be understood to fulfil a socially conventional role. Moreover, as the Earl's performance of 1591 suggests, there is something playful and even parodic about his Pendragon Knight shows. The depiction of the 'arguments and expostulations' of Cumberland's 'clamorous' sailors might easily have been exaggerated and made explicitly comic in performance; their presence could have operated as much as an indictment of the chivalric model as an elevation of the mariners. As people 'mindfull of their countrie, and profitable to the Common Wealth' the implication might have been that their (and by implication Cumberland's) 'adventure abroad' are more substantial than 'this action' of the tilt and so more deserving of 'reward'.

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[94] MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 12r.

[95] Ibid.

Nevertheless, Cumberland's 1593 tilt show does align its mariners, however playfully, with knights of the tournament, paralleling the dangers and wonders of privateering with those of romance. The 'long absence from home and hard adventure abroad' of seamen is analogous with the trials experienced on an Arthurian knight's quest. In this performance the sailors discover not a rich carrack or a distant shore, but a 'miracle'. The 'Old Castle which was founded in Westmorland and once removed to Westminster, [is] now strangely erected in Windelysore.'[96] The strangeness of seeing the ruin of Pendragon Castle move from Westmoreland to the tournament in Windsor is a source of wonder, like the sight of 'shipmen on dry land'.[97] Both the presence of the castle and the mariners, the estate that has funded Cumberland's maritime ventures and all the men who have served with him on them, represent the marvel that is privateering. The magic that has enabled Pendragon Castle to reappear is:

> marvelous to relate, and more marvelous to conceive, but the Knight as an Inheritor to such prodigies tooke the matter to himself both as an incitor of his humble service bound perpetually to follow the worlds most wonder[.][98]

The 'worlds most wonder' can of course be understood as a compliment to the Queen. Cumberland and his mariners have travelled the world but its greatest wonder now sits before them in the gallery. In another sense, however, it is suggested that where, in earlier centuries, wonder was confined to the pages of romance, it now belongs to seafarers who roam the world. Seafaring is the new knight errantry.

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[96] MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol. 12r

[97] Ibid.; on early modern associations of romance with travel and wonder see Moore, 'Coda: Crocodile and Catawampus', in *Amadis in English*, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/oso/9780198832423.003.0008, accessed 1 July 2022.

[98] MS Kendal: Cumbria Record Office, WD/Hoth Acc. A988 6, fol 12r.

## RISKS AND REWARDS

While no further Arthurian tilt speeches of Cumberland's survive, it is possible that he reprised his role as the Pendragon Knight once more in 1595. George Peele describes that year's Accession Day Tournament in another verse panegyric, *Anglorium Feriae*:

> renownèd Cumberland,
> Knight of the Crown, in gilded armour dight,
> Mounted at Queen Elizabeth's approach,
> Inflam'd with honour's fire, and left his hold
> Kept by a dragon, laden with fair spoils
> And there his duty done, and large device
> Made by his page known to her majesty,
> Whose gracious eye reflecting on this earl
> Was like Prometheus' life-infusing fire,
> Behold, he stands impatient of delay,
> A waiting there his friendly foe's approach![99]

It is possible that Cumberland's pavilion depicted the more generic romance setting of a dragon's hoard (the Earl of Southampton competed in the same tournament in the guise of 'that good knight' Bevis of Southampton).[100] Cumberland's association with dragons as the Pendragon

[99] As well as complimenting the zeal with which Cumberland discharges his duty, Peele's reference to his impatience may also be an allusion to the elaborate tilt show, known as *Love and Self-Love*, staged by his opponent here, Robert Devereux, the second Earl of Essex, see Heaton, *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments*, pp. 49-89.

[100] Peele, *Anglorum Feriae*, p. 181.

Knight, however, and the reference to 'his hold' means that it is possible he appeared, once again, from a mock-up of Pendragon Castle. No maritime associations are apparent.

Cumberland would go on to appear in the Accession Day Tournaments of 1596, 1597, 1599, 1600, and 1601, though no evidence of another appearance by the Pendragon Knight survives.[101] A number of tilt speeches by other competitors from these occasions are extant, but the only one of Cumberland's is from 1600. While this show continues to imagine the Earl's relationship to the Queen in celestial imagery and to perform the ruin of his fortunes, this time Cumberland appeared as the Melancholy Knight.[102] His new persona's defining characteristic may have reflected the Earl's failure to secure the Governorship of the Isle of Wight, as well as his increasingly desperate financial position. The Melancholy Knight, we are told, has been overshadowed by others despite his greater worth; devoted to a life of darkness he moves on land 'from castell to castell now rowleth up and downe, in open field, a field of shaddow', until he is confronted with the radiance of the Queen.[103] Unlike the heroic seafaring of the Pendragon Knight, the Melancholy Knight 'is lyke him that built ye ancker to save others, and themselves to be drowned'.[104] The optimism of Cumberland's earlier, pseudo-Galfridian prophecies is also inverted, remembered as a 'shadow, embracing names instead of things, dreames for trouthes, blind prohesais for seeing verities.'[105] Moreover, besides the page who delivers the speech on his behalf, the Melancholy Knight, unlike his Pendragon predecessor, appears alone.

Nevertheless, the recasting of the figure of the errant knight as a maritime one in the Pendragon Knight's early tilt shows did not end with Cumberland's use of that persona. Rather,

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[101] See Wiggins, *British Drama 1533-1642*, 3 and Martin Wiggins and Catherin Richardson ed., *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue, 1598-1602*, 4.

[102] See Cumberland's Letter to Lord Burghley, 26 April, 1597 in Williamson, *George, Third Earl of Cumberland*, pp. 241-2; see Wiggins, *British Drama 1533-1642*, 4, entry 1265.

[103] Chatsworth: Bolton Abbey MSS, Sundry Documents, no. 54.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

the Earl's presentation of a chivalric maritime community was adopted and adapted by others.[106] A draft entertainment by Lord Henry Howard, later Earl of Northampton (1540-1614)—the second son of the poet and courtier, the Earl of Surrey—takes up Cumberland's subject matter.[107] Found in a collection in which all but two poems are in Howard's hand, the speech appears to have been composed by him (its highly visual imagery and language parallels his 1579 Latin prose encomium to Elizabeth *Regina fortunate*).[108] Probably written not long before Essex's voyages to Cadiz in 1596 and the Azores in 1597, Cumberland's association of Merlin and the maritime is adopted in the entertainment which D. C. Andersson identifies as the fragment of a masque.[109] The structure of its single speech (by a Merlin-like figure), however, suggests that it could be a tilt show. Howard's draft is littered with corrections, crossings out, and interlinear additions, but it remains uncertain whether it was ever performed. In this draft, the speaker celebrates the Welsh language as 'so much more natural and propere to our nation as from the Britons it is Originall' and recalls a prophecy about a perfect virgin and 'faire ladie (of wch Merline speakes) […] sprung out of the roote of renownede Cadwalader'.[110] Taken literally, the speech goes on to advise aspirant

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[106] Similar themes are presented in the elusive 'Device made by the Earl of Essex for the Entertainment of the Queen', an entertainment associated with Accession Day festivities in 1595. The size of its cast, a single squire and attendant, in conjunction with the silence of the central character, the young, blind Prince of the West Indies, suggests that this may have been conceived as a tilt speech though whether or not it was performed is unclear. Like Cumberland, Essex uses an entertainment comprising prophecy, mythology, and explicit allusions to Spain, to advocate for the greater assertion of England's presence in transnational waters, see Lambeth Palace Library, MS 936, no. 274.

[107] See Pauline Croft, 'Howard, Henry, earl of Northampton (1540-1614), in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/13906, accessed 4 May 2022.

[108] BL Cotton MS Titus C VI, fols. 203–5 (fol. 204); I am grateful for Blair Worden's help with this.

[109] Paul E. J. Hammer, 'Devereux, Robert, second earl of Essex (1565-1601)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/7565, accessed 1 April 2022; D. C. Andersson, '"Embarke, But Under Caution": A New Elizabethan Masque Fragment', *Notes and Queries*, 55 (2008), 171-5.

[110] BL Cotton MS Titus C VI, fol. 204.

young men how best (or why best) to travel. The 'fair princess' to whom the Merlin figure speaks is allegorised as a sea to be navigated. While the status of those to whom 'The destinies themselues will giue winde' is not explicitly specified by Howard, in light of his obsession with noble blood, rank, and arms, it is fair to suppose that 'pilgrims and wold be petitioners for grace' are noble young men and not Cumberland's more humble 'Seamen and Marriners'.

Howard's draft tilt speech uses the imagery of seafaring to stress the risks rather than just the rewards of adventure and fame. Howard warns 'that the waters are most deepe, wch make beaste noise, and those vesselles for the most parte emptie, that giue greatest sowndes'.[111] He goes on:

> it is easie to obserue a mightie ocean for transporte of worthie courses and affectiones, but euer calme. A gale of winde for the quicke speede of all wise aduenturores, and euer prosperouse an encouragement to all faithfull and humble spirites to embarke, but under caution a warrante of respectiue fauore in rewarde of approued merite, and without sanctie […] to all deuoute pilgrims, that are not yet in appetite, and haue freedome of election to sette saile ore to cast anchore, to steppe forwarde ore drawebacke, that theie will be thoroughlie aduised before theie begin this hopefull viage, leaste by pursuing ouer hastily the bright blasis of encouragement, (with Petrarkes flie) theie be scorchid in the flames of their folly. For presumption is ever apte to drawe comforte from the vast ocean of appetite, but discrecion form the sweete springes of opportunity [.][112]

Seafaring here is as much as state of mind and soul as it is one of body and geography. The 'comic affectation' of Cumberland's sailors is transformed into something more serious.[113] As well as

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111 Ibid.

112 BL Cotton MS Titus C VI, fol. 204.

113 Young, 'Tudor Arthurianism', p. 183.

gratifying Elizabeth (Howard's attempt to ingratiate himself and so to move from outsider to conciliator was ongoing), this call for caution was the same advice that Howard would give Essex and his circle in other works.[114] Instead of promoting greater military activism, Howard recalls the association of Merlin and maritime motifs presented by Cumberland as an extension of the patriotic legacy of the Arthurian legend, to advocate for a more moderate, circumspect approach to foreign policy.

The herald William Segar, meanwhile, an enthusiastic documenter of the Accession Day tilting of Cumberland and others, moves from accounts of Elizabeth's Accession Day Tournaments in *Honor, Military and Civil* (1603), through a chapter 'Of the Knights of the Round Table', to describing analogues between the wonderful deeds of Arthur's knights and the recent voyages of John Hawkins, Francis Drake, Martin Frobisher, and others.[115] The first 'Article' of Arthur's fellowship given by Segar specifies that 'every knight should be well armed, and furnished to vndertake any enterprise wherein he was emlpoyed [sic], by Sea or land' and the chapter concludes with the detail that '(as some Poets haue supposed) [Arthur] was taken vp into the firmament, and remaineth there a Starre among the nine Worthies; which fancie is founded vpon the prophecie of old *Merlyn*'.[116] In the chapter titled 'How enterprises aduenturous ought to be admired, but not discredited', Segar compares the acts recorded in romances of 'King *Arthur* of England' to:

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[114] See Durham University Library, Howard MS 2; Paul Hammer, 'Lord Henry Howard, the Earl of Essex and the Politics of Friendship', *English Manuscript Studies*, 13(2007), 1–34; Essex had carried his taste for knightly combat onto the battlefield at least twice, at Lisbon and Rouen, see Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 51.

[115] See William Segar, *Honor, Military and Ciuill, contained in foure Bookes. Viz 1 Iustice, and iurisdiction military. 2. Knighthood in generall, and particular. 3 Combats for life, and triumph. 4. Precedencie of great estates, and others* (London: Robert Barker, 1602).

[116] Segar, *Honor, Military and Ciuill*, p. 55, 57; in the Huntington 2266661 this page has been annotated: 'But the truth is Arthur was buried [at]/ Avalon in Somerset where upon his tomb/ His epitaph was found engraven/ In the raign of K. Henry the Second/ Hir iacet sepultus inclitus rex Arturus/ Insula Avalonia'. The same hand has also cited 'Giraldus Cambrensis' and 'Camdens Britt'.

> the Actions which worthy men of our owne Nation or our neighbours (as that of Hernando Cotez, Pisarro, and others) haue (within our knowledge) to the eternizing of their fame and honour, performed. The greater part of which enterprises haue been atchieued in this present age, and shall no doubt hereafter (when men are lesse industrious) be thought rather fabulous, then matters credible.[117]

Here, as in Cumberland's tilt shows, Arthur and his knights set a precedent for the extraordinary exploits of contemporary naval heroes. Segar specifically includes in this category the 'many Merchants, Nauigators, and simple Sailers of our land, that haue not onely attempted, but also performed marueilous actions, to vulgar people and vnskilfull thought impossible.'[118] It is not just the endeavours of the knighted that are reimagined as romance adventures. It is, moreover, this turn to 'simple Sailers' that prompts Segar's praise of 'the late, and last, (yet not the least) victorie gained by the noble Earle of *Cumberland,* who by his proper vertue, and at the particular charge of him and his friends, assaulted and possessed the Isle of *S. Iohn de Porto Ricco,* a place both by nature and art reputed impregnable.'[119] For Segar, then, it is possible that the 'Captaines of our countrey' are not exclusively defined by their noble birth. They might include those who achieve 'notable aduentures and victories'.[120]

## 'ANTIQUITIES (WHICH THIS NICE AGE ACCOUNTETH ANTICKS)'

Elizabethan Accession Day Tournaments have largely been understood as earnest political and exclusively elite spectacles. This is in part because of the medieval ritual they inherited and the

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[117] Ibid., p. 58.

[118] Ibid., p. 59.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid., p. 60.

biographical contexts of their leading participants. It is well established that these performances were opportunities for courtiers to present themselves and their agendas in a guise of their own devising and to petition the Queen. Responses to Cumberland's Pendragon Knight tilt shows include a draft entertainment by a peer, and the text of a herald who wrote about Garter knights, the office of earl marshal, the origins of the princely orders of collars, and the heraldry, and genealogy of the English royal family and peerage.[121] In a genre defined by Lee and Essex, and to a lesser extent the Earls of Arundel and Oxford, however, Cumberland's contribution calls into question aspects of the form's political seriousness and, to some extent, its exclusivity.[122] The humour of his adaptations of the Arthurian legend in performance is worth lingering over, as such entertainments have typically been understood as sombre or sycophantic examples of the "Tudor Myth" in action.[123] What we have seen, however, is a light-hearted appropriation, one that sends up the conventions not only of Merlinic prophecy and antiquarian Arthurianism, but the tilt show itself. Unlike the pseudo-historical tradition, Arthurian romance has always had a place for comedy and for critiques of chivalry, but this influence has not typically been associated with the Elizabethan tournament. The Pendragon Knight tilt shows suggest that it should be. They also confirm that chivalric parody was not confined to the "lower" Arthurianism of ballads or the professional playhouse.[124] Rather, playful use was made of Arthur (and indeed other romances) across the social spectrum.

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121 Anthony R. J. S. Adolph, 'Segar, Sir William (1554-1633), in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004, https:// ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/25033, accessed 5 January 2022.

122 See Alan H. Nelson, *Monstrous Adversary: The Life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), pp. 249–75 and Heaton, *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments*, pp. 49-89.

123 See Elisabeth Michelsson, *Appropriating King Arthur: The Arthurian Legend in English Drama and Entertainments 1485-1625* (Edsbruck: Akademitryck AB, 1999), pp. 32-66.

124 Admittedly this is partially speculative or retrospective, depending on either the commercial dramas of the seventeenth century, or the lost plays of the sixteenth.

Ultimately, the tournament was a public event. As this chapter has shown, Cumberland's Pendragon Knight tilt shows were not impenetrable to those from lower social strata beyond the courtly coteries of the Queen. Rather, they were potentially accessible to and entertaining for a wide audience. They did not depict King Arthur or any his knights; Arthur himself is named only once and knights such as Lancelot, Balyn, Braumins, Dinidan and Lamorack are referred to only in relation to their out-of-date swords, sleeves, spears, and spurs. Cumberland did not adopt an Arthurian theme to present himself as part of an elite fellowship of either legendary or contemporary knights.[125] Instead, the Pendragon Knight tilt shows identify Cumberland with a different set of companions, those of his privateering ventures. In presenting and romanticising their plight, as well as celebrating their achievements, even in jest and as an extension of his own, these shows performed the sailor as a potentially chivalric figure. This was an idea that would capture the imagination of contemporaries and come, in subsequent centuries, to be a popular personification of Elizabethan England.

[125] Cumberland had done this in the Accession Day Tournament of 1590 in his collaboration with Sir Henry Lee.

# 5

# MASQUE:
# PRINCE HENRY'S BARRIERS

In 1610 an Arthurian masque was performed at the heart of James VI and I's royal court. The entertainment known as *Prince Henry's Barriers* was written by Ben Jonson and designed by Inigo Jones for Prince Henry Stuart, James's son and heir. Lavishly staged in the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall on Twelfth Night, the show was set around Merlin's lakeside tomb. Sir Meliadus was the only knight named in the performance and Arthur appeared, not as a king, but—in an allusion to the alleged etymological derivation of Arthur from Arcturus—as a star.[1] This chapter examines how the *Barriers* reimagines the Arthurian legend for a new reign by attending to Jonson's selection and adaptation of Italian sources. Examining Jonson's use of the epic hero's shield type scene, it also explores *Barriers*' negotiation of the dialectic of ancient and medieval.[2] Turning to the entertainment's presentation in *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson* (1616), the ongoing interest and investment in '*British Arthur*' is addressed, as well as the ways in which decades of reimagining by diverse groups in performance transformed the legend's significance.[3] Moving beyond a vision of

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[1] Arcturus derives from the Greek *arktourus* (a combination of *arktos*—the bear, and *ouros*—guardian), a bright star associated with the Great Bear, Ursa Major, and often used to denote the polar region in Latin literature. The name of the star may have given rise to the adjective used by Lucan for the Gauls, '*arctoas gentes*' [people of the north]. To name a hero Arcturus might then imply that he was bear-like or that he belonged to the north, see Caitlin R. Green, 'The Historicity and Historicisation of Arthur', in *Arthuriana: Early Arthurian tradition and the Origins of the Legend* (Louth: Lindes Press, 2009), pp. 3-46; see also Rachael Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961); Toby D. Griffen, *Names from the Dawn of British Legend: Taliesin, Aneirin, Myrddin/Merlin, Arthur* (Felinfach: Llanerch, 1994); and J. H. Rogers, 'Origins of the ancient constellations: II. The Mediterranean traditions', *Journal of the British Astronomical Association*, 108.2 (1998), 79-89.

[2] Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 19-62.

[3] Jonson, 'The Speeches at Prince Henries Barriers', in *The Workes of Beniamin Jonson*, pp. 965-974 (p. 965).

the Arthurian legend informed by elite militarism or royal benevolence, this chapter explores the ways in which this entertainment places fame firmly within the grasp of its writers, designers, spectators and, ultimately, readers.

*Barriers* was a hybrid event that synthesised two previously distinct performance traditions. Drawing on a chivalric convention from the late fifteenth century in which foot combats were rendered less dangerous by the institution of a wooden barrier, the performed barriers combat was brought to Whitehall by gentlemen of the Inns of Court in the last years of Queen Elizabeth's reign. *Barriers* was not Ben Jonson's first foray into the form; in 1606 he had pioneered a version of the dramatic barriers combat as part of the celebration of the wedding of Robert Devereux, third Earl of Essex, and Lady Frances Howard.[4] In this earlier event the celebrations spanned two evenings. A masque about 'VNION', *Hymenai* had been performed on the first night of the festivities, promoting the Essex-Howard marriage as a means of rapprochement at court, forging alliances between rival factions. The second evening featured the performance of a barriers combat framed by dramatic exchanges between Truth and Opinion, who took the sides of marriage and virginity respectively.[5] Predictably, Truth won out. Unlike earlier masques that engaged with the theme of union—Samuel Daniel's *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* in 1604 and Thomas Campion's *Lord Hay's Masque* in 1607—the spectacle of the barriers reinforced the ways in which *Hymenai* performed the necessity of violence to union. The view of monarchy presented was not one of

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[4] See Viscount Dillon, 'Barriers and Foot Combats', *The Archaeological Journal*, 61:1 (1904), 276-308.

[5] Eleven participants, most fighting in defence of virginity, had been knighted by Essex while on service overseas in the 1590s and several were implicated in his revolt. The supporters of virginity wore Essex's colours for the barriers and were led by the Earl of Sussex, who had been arrested for complicity in the rebellion, as was Sir William Constable, who had narrowly missed censure. The defenders of marriage included five Howards and several Howard clients and they wore the bride's colours. Two defenders, Lord Effingham and Sir Robert Maunsell, had led the attack on Essex House in 1601, and the whole combat was overseen by the Earl of Worcester, who had sat in judgment on Essex and, by 1606, occupied the post he had coveted: Master of the Horse. See Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 168.

reciprocity between kings and their subjects but rather as 'a constantly reiterated conquest'.[6] While the participants who fought on the side of Opinion (and virginity, with its obvious Elizabethan resonances) were defeated in 1606, in 1610 similarly Elizabethan associations were evoked with the form and Arthurian theme of *Barriers*. Rather than a combat distinct from the masque, however, the two were integrated. The masque's association with the quest, as in *The Vision of Twelve Goddesses* and Jonson's *Masque of Blacknesse* (1605), was not cultivated so much as dispelled by the barriers, which provided safe 'employment for [Henry's] pike and sword'.[7] By reimagining the potential violence of the tournament as a version of the dance in a masque, *Barriers* structurally enacted the action it advocated: the transformation of medieval (and, indeed, Elizabethan) chivalry into 'Civil' and, ultimately, poetic 'Arts'.[8]

Further masques, tournaments, and pageants celebrating Henry's coming of age and creation as Prince of Wales were already scheduled for 4 June when *Barriers* was performed in January. While *Barriers* was more of a stand-alone event (the culmination of the court's festive season) than the paired entertainments of 1606, it was preceded by a dramatic challenge from Prince Henry to the knights of Great Britain, issued in the name of Meliadus, Lord of the Isles, and proclaimed in the Presence Chamber on 31 December 1609.[9] The challenge relayed how Meliadus, having sent agents abroad in search of virtue, had discovered that it flourished most in

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[6] Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture*, p. 119.

[7] Jonson, 'The Speeches at Prince Henries Barriers', p. 974.

[8] The Venetian ambassador, Anzolo Correr, observed that the Prince had 'some difficulty in obtaining the King's consent'. Strong suggests this may have been when the event was planned as a tournament, outside and public, though Sir Dudley Carleton, later Viscount Dorchester, wrote to Sir Thomas Edmondes after the event that this was to save money, see Dispatch of 17 December 1609, CSP Venetian 1607-10, p. 401 cited in Roy Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1986), p. 141.

[9] BL Add. MS 12514, fols. 135r-136r; the Privy Council issued summonses to participants on Monday 25 December and the challenge was issued on Sunday 31 December in the Presence Chamber at Whitehall Palace, after a court dance. See Sir Charles Cornwallis, *The Life and Death of Our Late Most Incomparable and Heroique Prince, Prince of Wales* (London: Nathaniel Butter, 1641) and Martin Wiggins and Catherin Richardson ed., *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue, 6: 1609-1616*, entry 1600.

Britain. To prove this, he and six confederates resolved to defend a series of principles against all challengers.[10] Henry would go on to reprise his role as Meliadus in the nautically themed masque that celebrated his investiture in June: Samuel Daniel's *Tethys' Festival* (1610). His performance in *Barriers*, however, was his only embodiment of Meliadus in an Arthurian context before his premature death in 1612.[11]

*Barriers*' first speaker was the Lady of the Lake, who revealed that she has been instructed by King Arthur, 'translated to a Star', to raise Merlin from his tomb.[12] Behind them, Inigo Jones's set design for the ruined House of Chivalry gave way to the restored St George's Portico, which contained Meliadus (Prince Henry) and his six assistants: Ludovic Stewart, second Duke of Lennox; Thomas Howard, twenty-first Earl of Arundel; Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton; James Hay, first Earl of Carlisle; Sir Robert Gordon; and Sir Thomas Somerset (three English and three Scotsmen).[13] On behalf of Arthur, the Lady presented Meliadus with a shield; Merlin described and interpreted a series of episodes from English history, allegedly depicted on it, culminating in a flattering description of King James VI and I's rule. Chivalry was then awakened by the sound of Meliadus' name and invited the knights to prove their worth at the barriers. The prince and his assistants proceed to fight with eight opponents, each in two separate

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[10] Henry and his companions maintained that the most becoming garment for a knight is stained with the rust of armour; that a knight should be as ready to maintain a lady's honour as his own word; and that it is more glorious to be defeated in an honourable cause than to be victorious in a bad one, see Wiggins, *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, 6, entry 1600.

[11] Henry feasted his assistants in the week prior to *Barriers*. The total cost of the event, including costumes, sets, weapons and the fees paid to its actors and creators, came to the £6,473. 19s. 9d, see BL, Add. MS 12514, fols. 135r–136 and Cornwallis, *The Life and Death of Our Late Most Incomparable and Heroique* Prince, pp. 14-15. On Henry's investiture see Catriona Murray, 'The Pacific King and the Militant Prince? Representation and Collaboration in the Letter Patent of James I, creating his son, Henry, Prince of Wales', *Electronic British Library Journal* (2012), pp.1-16.

[12] Jonson, 'The Speeches at Prince Henries Barriers', p. 966.

[13] See *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue, 6: 1609-1616*, entry 1602; Lennox, Hay and Preston were Scottish, and Arundel, Southampton and Sir Thomas Somerset were English, see Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture*, p. 120.

combats, push of pike and swords, across the eponymous barrier in the middle of the hall. After the combat, which ran through the night and into the next morning, the performance concluded with a final speech by Merlin, prophesying Britain's future greatness.

The monarch has long been understood by scholars as the centre of both the conception and performance of any masque.[14] Accordingly, critical work on *Barriers* has tended to focus on its political implications within the Jacobean court.[15] Arthur's British associations as well as the thematic centrality of restoration and union in the entertainment have been linked to James's British project. Its performance of a martial, chivalric culture, in the personification of Chivalry and the barriers show, meanwhile, has been understood as an extension of the interventionist pan-Protestant ideology of Henry's court.[16] As a result of this critical focus, apparent contradictions in the work have overwhelmingly been understood as reflecting the difficulty faced by Jonson in reconciling these tensions between the *rex pacificus* and his militant son (tensions scholars have also

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[14] See Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1975); masques also provided opportunities to honour the representatives of foreign powers. In a dispatch home, the Tuscan agent Ottaviano Lotti described: 'Alla barriera, che mantiene fra due gioni il Serenissimo Principe, sono invitati per vedere, I Signori Ambasciato ri Spagna, at Venezia, et no ci essendo hora ne lí Ambasciator di francia, ne quell di Fiandra, manacano le contese di precedenza' [The ambassadors of Spain and Venice have been invited to the barriers, which the prince will hold in two days' time. There is no quarrel about precedence as neither the French nor the Flemish ambassador is here at present], Archivio Mediciea de Principator, Firenze, Filza 4189, see John Orrell, 'The London stage in the Florentine correspondence, 1604–1618', *Theatre Research International*, 3 (1977–8), 157–76 (p. 165), also cited in 'Prince Henry's Barriers 25', *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online*, https://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/k/masque/187BarriersFlorence/, accessed 12 February 2021.

[15] See Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture*, p.171.

[16] See Jason White, *Militant Protestantism and British Identity, 1603-1642* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales, and England's Lost Renaissance* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986); Graham Parry, *The Golden Age Restored: The Culture of the Stuart Court* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981); Richard Badenhausen, 'Disarming the Infant warrior: Prince Henry, King James and the chivalric revival', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 31 (1995), 20-37; J. W. Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror: Henry Stuart, A Study of Seventeenth-Century Personation* (New York: AMS Press, 1978); Jerzy Limon, *Dangerous Matter: English Drama and Politics in 1623/24* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and Jean E. Graham, 'The Performing Heir in Jonson's Jacobean Masques', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 41 (2001), 381-398.

identified in the Prince's investiture as Prince of Wales and the various events and texts surrounding it).[17] Where work by Roy Strong, Graham Parry, Richard Badenhausen, and others, has stressed the division between the households and ideologies of King and Prince, reconsiderations by Timothy Wilks, Jason White, and Susan Doran emphasise areas of crossover and cooperation between father and son. In these reappraisals, potential points of divergence between James and Henry's respective visions for Britain are revealed not to be 'transformative enough to create polarization'.[18] Evidence of the King's martial side can, for example, be found in *Basilikon Doron* (1603), his willingness to join the Protestant League, and his martial image, examples of which include the silver crown of 1603 that depicted the King in armour with a sword and bear the words from Psalm 68, 'EXVRGAT. DEVS. DISSIPENTVR. INIMICI.' [Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered].[19] Prince Henry's militarism, meanwhile, should not be overstated. In a dialogue about the various merits of war and peace, citing examples from history, Henry reputedly backed peace.[20] Not only were James and Henry less at odds then has been imagined, but their relationship is not the sole, or even primary, subject of *Barriers*; an

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[17] These events included a parliamentary ceremony, the pageant on the Thames *London's Love to Prince Henry*, written by Anthony Munday and Samuel Daniel's masque, *Tethys' Festival*; Badenhausen, 'Disarming the Infant warrior'; David M. Bergeron, 'Creating Entertainment for Prince Henry's Creation (1610)', *Comparative Drama*, 42 (2008), 439-449; Murray, 'The Pacific King and the Militant Prince?'; J. R. Mulryne, '"Here's Unfortunate Revels": War and Chivalry in Plays and Show at the Time of Prince Henry Stuart', in *War, Literature and the Arts in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, ed. J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1989), pp. 165-190; Mary C. Williams, 'Merlin and the Prince: The Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers', *Renaissance Drama*, 8 (1977), 221-30; Sara Trevisan, 'Lady of the Lake or Queen of the Ocean? The Representation of Female Power in *Prince Henry's Barriers* and *Tethys' Festival*', in *Representations of Elizabeth I in Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 158-174.

[18] See Timothy Wilks, *Prince Henry Revived: Image and Exemplarity in Early Modern England* (London: Southampton Solent University in association with Paul Holberton, 2007); Susan Doran, *Regime Change: From Elizabeth I to James I, 1603-1612* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

[19] See 'James I, 1603-1625, Silver Crown (1603-4)' at https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/20086/lot/1011/, accessed 21 March 2021.

[20] Robert Cotton, *An Answer Made by Command of Prince Henry to Certain Propositions of Warre and Peace* (London: John Evelyn, 1655).

entertainment which is as interested in the interplay of literary and cultural forms as political ideologies.[21]

Court masques were written for occasional or select performance and so were ephemeral by design. Yet they were no less affective for this. Rather, enormous sums were spent on their spectacle, which combined music, costume, choreography, design and poetry.[22] As a result, these 'toys so perishable' were almost never reprised.[23] Because the largest body of surviving evidence about them is constituted by published texts (and stage designs by Jones, meaningful primarily in relation to those texts) critical work has inevitably been skewed towards the textuality of these supremely collaborative and multimedia productions. Scholars such as John Peacock and Barbara Ravelhofer have made significant headway in recovering some of the more elusive elements of the Stuart masque while Lynn S. Meskill and others have persuasively argued that the post-performance text of a masque represents a generically new work.[24] The printed text of *Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers* thus represents only one element of *Barriers* in performance.[25] On the day it

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[21] *Barriers* does present the common ground shared by circumspect foreign policy and patriotic zeal, see Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1975); Roy Strong and Stephen Orgel, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court* (Berkley: University of California, 1973); Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton and the Literary System* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1983); A. W. Johnson, *Ben Jonson: Poetry and Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); John Peacock, *The Stage Designs of Inigo Jones: The European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Norman Council, 'Ben Jonson, Inigo Jones, and the Transformation of Tudor Chivalry', *English Literary History*, 47 (1980), 259-275.

[22] The total cost of the event is hard to separate from the expenses for *Oberon, the Fairy Prince*, performed in 1611. On the various costs see Wiggins, *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, 6, entry 1600.

[23] Cited in Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture*, p. 9.

[24] John Peacock, *The Stage Designs of Inigo Jones: The European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Barbara Ravelhofer, *The Early Stuart Masque: Dance, Costume and Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Lynn S. Meskill, '"High-Piled books, in Character'y": Jonson's Court Masques', in *The Oxford Handbook of Ben Jonson*, ed. Eugene Giddens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199544561.013.14, accessed 2 February 2021.

[25] *Speeches* occupies a unique position as both the first masque to have been printed solely in Jonson's folio and the first in which there is virtually no wider evocation of occasion. In part this may be because, like the barriers

is likely that many of the entertainment's spectators, and indeed some of its performers, did not attend to the words spoken, if, that is, they could hear them. As the most substantial evidence for that performance, however, *Speeches* is used throughout this chapter, partially to reconstruct *Barriers* as well as on its own terms as a Jonsonian textualization of that event. This approach reveals an entertainment deeply engaged with questions of permanence and transience, and the different forms they take.

Scholars positioning *Barriers* within Ben Jonson's wider oeuvre have emphasised the recurrence of characteristic strains of imagery (of circles and buildings, 'turning' and 'standing'), various ideologies characteristic of the masque as a genre (control, balance, and containment), and the politics of possessive authorship (particularly regarding relations crafted with readers in his folio of 1616).[26] The influence of other writers on Jonson's presentation of his creative process and position is also well established. In *Imitation and Praise in the Poetry of Ben Jonson*, Richard Peterson, building on the work of Thomas Greene and Edward Partridge, argues that Jonson sought to absorb the texts he imitated into a stable personal identity; praising contemporary figures by imitating classical authorities, Jonson constructs images that become objects of ethical imitation.[27] For Peterson, Jonson's conception of imitation is a moral one. In *Imitating Authors*,

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of *Hymenaei* (1606), *Speeches* contains none of Jonson's learned marginalia, see David Lindley, 'Prince Henry's Barriers: A Textual Essay', in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, pp. 1-7, https://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/k/essays/Barriers_textual_essay/1/, accessed 27 March 2021.

[26] Richard S. Peterson, *Imitation and Praise in the Poems of Ben Jonson*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2016); Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); A. D. Cousins and Alison V. Scott, 'Introduction', in *Ben Jonson and the Politics of Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1-13; Alison V. Scott, 'The Jonsonian masque and the politics of decorum', in *Ben Jonson and the Politics of Genre*, pp. 43-72; Meskill, '"High-Piled books, in Character'y": Jonson's Court Masques'.

[27] Thomas M. Greene, 'Ben Jonson and the Centered Self', *Studies in English Literature*, 10 (1970), 325-348; Edward Partridge, 'Jonson's *Epigrammes*: The Named and the Nameless', *Studies in Literary Imagination*, 6 (1973), 153-198; see also Stanley Fish, 'Author-Readers: Jonson's Community of the Same', *Representations*, 7 (1984), 26–58.

Colin Burrow approaches Jonson's own derivative writing about *imitatio* in *Timber or Discoveries* (1641) more sceptically. He suggests that Jonson's principal innovation as an imitator of classical writing in England was his response to the rhetorical structures and formal characteristics of other authors:[28] 'Jonson's imitations are not motivated by a desire to *conceal* a source, but rather by a desire to display *how* he has read it', in the process forging a style which was itself imitable.[29] Bringing Burrow's work (which focuses on the *Epigrams*) to bear on *Barriers* invites closer scrutiny of Jonson's selection and deployment of his sources, which are notably legible and integral to the *Barriers*. Moreover, the interplay between *Barriers* and its sources, the multimedia of the performance, and, subsequently, the publication of his first folio raises new questions about both Jonson's imitative style and his presentation of the Arthurian legend.[30]

## CLASSICAL TEXTS AND CLOSE READERS

The Arthurianism of *Prince Henry's Barriers* seems to have been suggested to Jonson by Prince Henry. The role of Meliadus, Lord of the Isles, first appears in challenge speeches that Jonson probably did not write.[31] 'Lord of the Isles' was Henry's title as the heir to the Scottish throne, and the appeal of 'Meliadus' to him may have been the anagram it held in its Hellenised version, 'Moeliades': *Miles a Deo* [soldier of god].[32] Jonson's alleged scepticism about chivalric literature is well known. According to William Drummond, he once remarked that 'the whole summe/ Of

[28] Colin Burrow, *Imitating Authors: Plato to Futurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 237.

[29] Burrow, *Imitating Authors*, p. 257.

[30] See Lorna Hutson, 'Introduction', *Discoveries* 1641, in *Cambridge Edition of Ben Jonson*, https://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/k/works/discoveries/facing/, accessed 11 October 2021.

[31] BL Add. MS 12514, fols. 135r-136r; *Challenge at Tilt* and *Tilt Entertainment: Eros and Anteros* both include their challenge; see also J. R. Mulryne, '"Here's Unfortunate Revels": War and Chivalry in Plays and Show at the Time of Prince Henry Stuart', in *War, Literature and the Arts in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, ed. J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1989), pp. 165-190.

[32] *Ben Jonson's Conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden*, ed. R. F. Patterson (London: Blackie, 1924), p. 11.

errant Knight-hood, with Dames, and Dwarfes;/ The charmed Boates, and the inchanted Wharfes:/ The Tristrams's, Lancel'lots' were fit for burning. As a result, his careful selection and adaptation of Arthurian sources in *Barriers* has been largely overlooked.[33] Jonson did not draw on the most obvious Arthurian examples of the character Meliadus. Meliadus appears as the name of Tristan's father in Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* (1485), and he is the hero of *Meliadus of Leonnoys* (1531), the first part of the thirteenth-century romance *Palamedes* (c. 1235-40), a text replete with military adventures, tournament victories, and even a Scottish love story.[34] Instead, Jonson chose a version of *Les Prophécies de Merlin* (printed 1498, reprinted 1528), a composite late thirteenth-century Franco-Italian prose text as his primary narrative source.[35] Why?

*Les Prophécies de Merlin*, heavily associated with the French romance literature that was circulating in northern Italy, was written in Venice in a Francophone dialect and deals with the political history of the Veneto.[36] Like the *Estoire de Merlin* (c. 1215-20) and the *Suite du Merlin* (c. 1235-40), it is often appended to a version of the prose *Merlin* (c. 1215-20), though it sometimes stands alone as an extended sequence in which Merlin delivers his prophecies, either orally or in

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[33] Ben Jonson, 'XLIII. An Execration upon Vulcan', in *Ben Jonson, Vol. 8: The Poems; The Prose Works*, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 202-212.

[34] Despite this alleged distaste, Jonson's ongoing engagement with the Arthurian legend in both romance and performance culture is evidenced in both *Barriers* and *The Masque of Owles at Kenelworth* (1624).

[35] The Franco-Italian *Les Prophécies de Merlin* by 'Maistre Richart d'Irland' in Venice c. 1279, was essentially a new romance that worked information from French romances, including the Vulgate Cycle, the *Suite de Merlin*, and Robert de Boron's *Merlin*, into a new story throughout which Merlin dictates prophecies to a series of scribes. Once Merlin is trapped in his tomb by the Dame du Lac, he dies but his ghost speaks. The Dame du Lac is in a relationship with Meliadus (Tristan's brother, named for their father), who starts writing down the prophecies Merlin's ghost speaks to him; *La Vita di Merlino* is first printed as *La Historia de Merlino, divisa in VI libri*, by Luca Venititano, Venice 1480 (if there are earlier manuscript versions they have not survived). This text follows the story of *Prophécies* but reduces the narrative. For a chronology of primary texts in this tradition see 'Appendix 1' in Laura Chuhan Campbell, *The Medieval Merlin Tradition in France and Italy: Prophecy, Paradox, and Translation* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), pp. 179-180. I am grateful to Laura Campbell for her help navigating these texts.

[36] Campbell, *The Medieval Merlin Tradition in France and Italy*, p. 6.

writing, to various named individuals.[37] The source for *Barriers* appears, however, to have been the later Italian version, *La vita di Merlino con le sue profetie* (1539), which strips away many of the surrounding episodes from *Prophécies* to focus on the prophecies themselves.[38] Like *Prophécies*, *La vita di Merlino* intersperses prophetic, theological and scientific matters with anecdotes that illustrate Merlin's supernatural power, the weakness of the clergy and the chivalric adventures of Arthurian knights. *La vita di Merlino*, however, is divided into six books, each of which is assigned to one of Merlin's scribes. It is from the final book, *Libero VI*, the book of Meliadus, that Jonson takes *Barriers*' framing narrative: the Lady of the Lake leads Meliadus to the tomb where she has imprisoned Merlin. Mary C. Williams suggests that Jonson was drawn to Merlinic source texts because of Merlin's literary ancestry as an authorial figure and the political nature of his prophecies.[39] While this is convincing, the particular preoccupation with reception and interpretation of texts in *La vita di Merlino* and the ways in which this reverberates through *Barriers*, merits further consideration.

Merlin's role as an authorial figure has long informed the composition and interpretation of Arthurian texts. In medieval romance Merlin repeatedly oversees the composition of books which allegedly become sources of his story. He aids narratives by instructing Arthur and his court on courses of action, arranging liaisons that conceive future characters, and circulating his prophecies within the text. In *Prophécies*, and its derivatives like *La vita di Merlino*, Merlin's truths are realised in both his life and prophecies (a dualism present from his earliest inception as a literary figure by Geoffrey of Monmouth). The centrality of prophecy in these texts, however, seems to have resulted in a generic discomfort and uncertainty that may be responsible for their critical neglect. Lucy Allen Paton, who recognised *Prophécies* as 'a unique production even in an age of

[37] For the controversy surrounding the exact dating of the Vulgate Cycle, see Frank Brandsma, *The Interlace Structure of the Third Part of the Prose Lancelot* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 6-9.

[38] Wiggins, *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, 6, entry 1602.

[39] Williams, *Merlin and the Prince*, p. 224.

extraordinary compilations', contends that its romance material was regarded as incidental to the prophecies.[40] Nathalie Koble has challenged this assessment, arguing that the manuscript reception of the *Prophécies* in French and Franco-Italian vernaculars indicates that medieval readers of the text regarded it primarily as a romance. As Laura Chuhan Campbell notes, however, the three Florentine and Venetian *volgarizzamenti* of the *Prophécies* (including *La vita di Merlino*) all privilege Merlin's political prophecies over the more traditional romance elements.[41] This well-established tradition of Merlin's existence on the diegetic and chronological boundaries of romance is particularly emphasised in *La vita di Merlino*, which restructures *Prophécies* around the ways in which Merlin's words are repeated, written down, assembled, distributed, revised, and reread. Rather than presenting a problem that requires reconciliation in *Barriers*, this generic instability helps facilitate Jonson's emphases on the restorative power of close reading and the poet's potential to immortalise his subject(s).

This emphasis is visually depicted in the title page of *La vita di Merlino*. Beneath a banner that reads 'SEPOLTVRA DE MERLINO' [The Tomb of Merlin], the top half of the image depicts an elaborate, classical tomb in a cave. Pictured standing in profile beside it, with one hand resting on the tomb, is Meliadus.[42] In the lower half of the page, Merlin addresses the six seated companions whose books structure the text: 'MAntonio epo', 'Prolo-meo epo', 'Blaxio rohmito', 'Elia romito', 'La dona del ago', and 'Meliadus', who is taking notes in a codex. Three of the others are writing on scrolls while the figure closest to Merlin listens, rapt.

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[40] Lucy Allen Paton, 'Notes on Manuscripts of the *Prophécies de Merlin*', *PMLA*, 28 (1913), 121-139 (p. 122).

[41] Campbell, *The Medieval Merlin Tradition in France and Italy*, p. 11; Geoffrey's *Prophetiae Merlini* did of course circulate separately from *De gestis Britonum* which suggests that readers were interested in the prophecies in and of themselves. The extent to which medieval readers were particularly concerned about the genres into which texts did or did not fit is less clear.

[42] Quotations are all taken from Bodl. Douce MM 268.




FIGURE 7. *La vita di Merlino con le sue profetie* (Venice, 1539).

Bodl. Douce MM 268.

Meliadus' companions here are not Round Table knights but scribes and scholars, including two named bishops, the Lady of the Lake, and the hermit Blaise. The image is also appropriately synchronic: Merlin is both alive and dead at the same time, speaking for himself and through others, while Meliadus is depicted both listening and writing. Prince Henry's alias then is imagined by Jonson as a figure who bridges not just the physical and spiritual worlds but those of chivalric action and clerical composition, 'Meliadus torno per comandamento del spirito di Merlino al sauto clerico maestro Antonio' [Meliadus returned, as instructed by the spirit of Merlin, to the wise clerical master Antonio].[43] From its title page to the final line of the Book of Meliadus, 'Et a tal modo come e detto di sopra, furno adunate & messe in scrito le merauegliose prophetie di Merlino' [And in this way, as stated above, the marvellous prophecies of Merlin were gathered and written

[43] *La vita di Merlino colle sue Profetie* (1539), sig. 252v; Jonson carries over this role for Henry in *Barriers*, where Meliadus connects the Arthurian scene of the masque with the Stuart court by leading his gentlemen from the set out into the hall.

down], *La vita di Merlino*'s emphasis is less about the plot (the events of Merlin's life, or his prophecies) than their creation and reception.[44]

From the outset, *Barriers*, like *La vita di Merlino*, announces itself as a masque about the making of poetry as well as the making of monarchs. The Lady of the Lake welcomes the audience's 'rais'd attentions', directing them to her 'silver feet' and 'to this seat,/ Vow[ing] my new duties and mine old repeat.'[45] The 'ample Lake/ Of which I am styl'd' both introduces the Lady and her epithet and offers an image of the wide range of sources from which Jonson has styled this composite figure.[46] While the Lady's promise to combine the old and new anticipates the restorative process expounded by the entertainment, the reference to her silver feet, as well as gesturing to her versified speech, enacts this promise by recalling Homer's Thetis. She makes an impassioned plea to the elevated Arthur, as Thetis does to Zeus, before raising Merlin and presenting Meliadus with the shield. Jonson aligns her with the maternal Thetis, thereby conjuring the Lady's famous foster son as another guise for Prince Henry. Meliadus is cast as the literary heir to both the greatest of the Greek heroes, Achilles, and of the Arthurian knights, Lancelot, who is presented at Arthur's court in *La vita di Merlino*, much as Henry is at James's court in *Barriers*. Jonson combines the ancient and medieval to mythologise the superlative Stuart Prince, but it is also a reflection on his methodology.

Scholars have understood *Barriers* as an entertainment that promotes the male educative figure (Merlin), over the wily female interferer (the Lady).[47] In this narrative, the Queen of the Ocean in *Tethys' Festival* accordingly becomes Queen Anna of Denmark's corrective, reinforcing

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[44] *La vita di Merlino*, sig. 231v.

[45] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 965.

[46] As Lorna Hutson demonstrates, Jonson's ability to communicate implicitly through his adaptation and assembly of sources 'becomes part of the stylistic ideal of conversational plainness, and helps to define the "virility", which, as Patricia Parker has shown, is inevitably associated with this stylistic ideal', see *Cambridge Edition of Ben Jonson*, *Discoveries* 1641, ed. Lorna Hutson and Patricia Parker, 'Virile style', in *Premodern Sexualities*, ed. L. Fradenburg, and C. Freccero, (New York: Routeldge, 2013), pp. 201–22.

[47] See Williams, 'Merlin and the Prince', and Trevisan, 'Lady of the Lake or Queen of the Ocean'.

the importance of maternal influence on her son, Prince Henry.[48] This interpretation simplifies *Barriers*' presentation of the Lady of the Lake, who describes Merlin's tomb as the 'Grave of his cunning, as of mine the Womb'.[49] Merlin will 'live/ Eternally, for being deprest a-while,/ Want makes us know the price of what we avile.'[50] Merlin represents the ancients. The Lady, like earlier artists and scholars, had allowed Merlin, or classical authors, to be entombed, 'My errour I acknowledge, though too late/ To expiate it'. What she must now do is 'restore' them.

Jonson diverges from *La vita di Merlino* and the wider Arthurian tradition by staging not just Merlin's prophetic voice emerging from his tomb, but the figure of Merlin himself rising from it. In *Barriers*, Merlin is resurrected for the purpose of interpreting Arthur's shield on its presentation to Meliadus, 'that by the might/ And magick of his Arm, he may restore,/ These ruin'd Seats of Vertue, and build more', the first in a series of revitalisations enacted.[51] In order to restore Britain, Jonson suggests, aspects of classical culture must be revived and put to work. While the conflation of medieval chivalry with classical glory has precedent in the model of the Nine Worthies, the absence of clear distinction between pagan and Christian heroic models is notable

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[48] Trevisian, 'Lady of the Lake or Queen of the Ocean', pp. 167-168.

[49] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 965.

[50] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 967; the word 'avile' raises the spectre of the kind of defilement and dishonour that earlier iterations of the Lady's character fear. In the Arthurian tradition the Lady is a victim defending her virginity, a maternal figure to foster sons such as Lancelot, and a knowing temptress who ensnares a wise man for his power. Merlin is both the Lady's son-of-a-devil lecher and King Arthur's benevolent counsellor, the wise man in love. Although the prose *Lancelot* (where Merlin's death is deserved) and the *Estoire de Merlin* (where he is a devoted but unfortunate lover) were written at different times and by different authors, their combination in the Vulgate Cycle results in co-existing but conflicting interpretations of Merlin's entombment. This paradox, far from being resolved by the *Suite de Merlin*, is absorbed and exaggerated by it. Jonson's use of 'avile' here might also be understood in a more general sense of contempt or depreciation, and as such, it may offer another variation of *Barriers*' exploration of the relationship of deeds and words in creating fame, discussed below. *Speeches*' use of 'avile' is one of the examples give in the OED for its definition: 'To hold cheap or in small esteem, to depreciate', see 'avile. v.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/13765, accessed 25 August 2021.

[51] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, pp. 966-7.

here; *Barriers* imagines one becoming the other.[52] Once risen, it is 'learned' Merlin whose 'Letters […] 'reer/ The Deeds of Honour'.[53] Long buried, Merlin's thoughts 'grow great' for 'the pride/ Of the old *Græcian Heroes*', like a latter-day Homer. As Roy Strong and Stephen Orgel's catalogue notes, Merlin's costume, designed by Inigo Jones, derived from the bearded and laurel-crowned figure of Homer in Raphael's Parnassus.[54]



FIGURE 8. Inigo Jones, Merlin, pen and ink on paper, undated.

Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth House.

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[52] See Audrey Martin and David Mason, 'Arthur Among the Nine Worthies', in *The Arthurian World*, ed. Victoria Coldham-Fussell, Miriam Edlich-Muth, Renée Ward (London: Routledge, 2022), pp. 49-68.

[53] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 967.

[54] Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court, including the Complete Designs for Production at Court for the Most Part in the Collection of the Duke of Devonshire, together with Their Texts and History Documentation* (Berkely: University of California Press, 1973); see also *The King's Arcadia; Inigo Jones and the Stuart Court, a Quartercentenary Exhibition held at the Banqueting House, Whitehall, from July 12th to September 2nd 1973* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain); Simpson and Bell initially identified Jones's sketch as a statue of Homer for *The Masque of Queens* in Percy Simpson and Charles Francis Bell, *Designs by Inigo Jones for Masques & Plays at Court: a Descriptive Catalogue of Drawings for Scenery and Costumes mainly in the Collection of His Grace the Duke of Devonshire* (Oxford: Printed for the Walpole and Malone Societies at the University Press, 1924), but since all his other sketches for statues have pedestals, Merlin's costume is more likely, see also Norman Council, 'Ben Jonson, Inigo Jones, and the Transformation of Tudor Chivalry', *ELH*, 47 (1980), 259-275 (p. 270).

Once the Lady has revived Merlin, *Barriers*' Homeric sage then 'reads' both the shield and the set, glossing the meanings of Meliadus' shield, St George's Portico, and the figure of Chivalry, as well as predicting glorious futures for the King, Queen, their children, and Britain. The revival of past works ensures future success.

Restoration, in the sense of building up again, re-erecting or renewing, is a central theme of the entertainment (repeated three times in Arthur's only speech).[55] James has restored Britain; Henry 'by the might/ And magick of his Arm […] may restore,/ These ruin'd Seats of Vertue'; the Lady of the Lake restores Merlin's 'freedom'; Meliadus' appearance restores the house of chivalry.[56] Behind these manifold restorations, however, lies the figure of the poet. This is apparent by the way in which Lady of the Lake describes the ruins of Inigo Jones's set:

> Shields and Swords,
> Cob-web'd, and rusty; not a helm affords
> A Spark of Lustre, which were wont to give
> Light to the World, and made the Nation live
> When in a Day of Honour fire was smit
> To have put out *Vulcan*'s, and have lasted yet.[57]

Her emphasis on the forging of armour here is significant. As Jonson observes in an annotation to *The Haddington Masque* (1608), in which he depicted the blacksmith deity at work: '*The ancient Poets, whensoeuer they would intend any thing to be done, with great Masterie, or excellent Art. made Vulcan the artificer, as Hom. Iliad. Σ. in the forging of Achilles his armour: and Virg. for Aeneas, Aenei.*

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[55] See 'restoration, n.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/163986, accessed 28 January 2023.

[56] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 967.

[57] Ibid., p. 966.

*8*.'[58] The armour in *Barriers* stands for martial greatness (and therefore Henry) but the focus on the armourer evokes the poet's role as the creator of culture, forging something new which proudly displays his own craftsmanship. Princes can do what they like, but without poets, they will be forgotten.

Merlin's interaction with Meliadus' shield places close reading at the centre of creativity. As the known earliest example of ekphrasis in western literature, the description of the hero's shield is a type scene that invites reflections on medium and method, allowing Jonson to underline Meliadus' shield's primary metaphoric purpose 'wherein is wrought/ The truth'. Like Homer's depiction of Achilles' shield in Book 18 of the *Iliad*—translated in 1598 by George Chapman, who would go on to dedicate his *Twelve Books of the Iliad* to Prince Henry—Jonson's description moves from the centre of the shield out to its rim.[59] Although Aeneas' shield in Book 8 of the *Aeneid* is described inward from its edge, Jonson imitates Virgil by presenting a progression through time as well as space on the shield. In the *Iliad* the poet lingers on the process involved in making Achilles' shield.[60] In the *Aeneid*, Virgil's focus is on Aeneas' reception of his shield.[61] In *Barriers*,

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[58] Jonson, 'The Haddington Masque', *Workes*, p. 940.

[59] See Mark Thornton Burnett, 'Chapman, George (1559/60-1634)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/5118, accessed 25 October 2021.

[60] 'Ποίει δὲ πρώτιστα σάκος μέγα τε στιβαρόν τεπάντοσε δαιδάλλων, περὶ δ᾽ ἄντυγα βάλλε φαεινὴν τρίπλακα μαρμαρέην, ἐκ δ᾽ ἀργύρεον τελαμῶνα.πέντε δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ αὐτοῦ ἔσαν σάκεος πτύχες· αὐτὰρ ἐν αὐτῷποίει δαίδαλα πολλὰ ἰδυίῃσι πραπίδεσσιν.' [First he made a shield, great and sturdy, adorning it cunningly in every part, and round about it set a bright rim, threefold and glittering, and from it he fastened a silver baldric. Five were the layers of the shield itself; and on it he made many adornments with cunning skill.] Homer, *Iliad: Books 13-24*, 2, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, transl. A. T. Murray (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 2:322-323.

[61] 'Ille deae donis et tanto laetus honore/ expleri nequit atque oculos per singula volvit,/ miraturque interque manus et bracchia versat/terribilem cristis galeam flammasque vomentem,/fatiferumque ensem, loricam ex aere rigentem,/ sanguineam, ingentem, qualis cum caerula nubes/ solis inardescit radiis longeque refulgent/ tum levis ocreas electro auroque recocto,/ hastamque et clipei non enarrabile textum.' [Rejoicing in the divine gift and in this high honour, he cannot be sated as he moves his eyes from piece to piece, admiring and turning over in his hands and arms the helmet, terrifying with its plumes and spouting flames, the death-dealing sword, the stiff bronze corslet, blood-red and huge—just as when a dark blue cloud kindles with the sun's rays and gleams afar;

however, Fate is credited, after the fact, with the artistic creation of Meliadus' shield and, as convention dictates, Meliadus/Henry's part is a silent one.[62] Jonson's emphasis then, unlike Homer's and Virgil's, is not on the creation of the shield or the response of its recipient. Instead, how the shield should be 'read' is the focus of the scene and its exemplary purpose, 'To arm [Meliadus'] maiden Valour; and to show/ Defensive Arms th'offensive should fore-go'.[63] Through Merlin, this purpose is enacted by Jonson's verse.[64] Williams's argument about Merlin's significance as a poetic figure can thus be refined. Jonson's Merlin is not the entertainment's only authorial figure; nor does he stand solely for Jonson, but also for Jonson's classical models and the works imitated and adapted in *Barriers*. The poet, his influences and his output are not consistently distinct. As in *La vita di Merlino*, the Arthurian legend of *Barriers* enacts the ongoing processes of its own creation: one of recovery, close reading, composition and reception.

The relationship between production and reception is one that not only informs every aspect of Jonson's method in *Barriers* but has a particularly patriotic resonance. As well as using the Arthurian legend to reanimate the martial and literary distinction of Homeric heroes, Jonson also has Merlin usher in a reading of English history that echoes his poetic method, one in which 'it is nobler to restore than make'.[65] In the *Iliad*, the scenes on Achilles' shield present a panoply of life, at peace and at war, in the city and in the country. If these scenes offer a vision of the future, it is not one that will be shared by the shield's bearer. Contrastingly in the *Aeneid*, the shield's scenes present the future of Rome: Aeneas' destiny and that of his descendants (a feature also

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then the smooth greaves of electrum and refined gold, the spear, and the shield's ineffable fabric.] Virgil, *The Aeneid: Books 7-12. Appendix Vergiliana*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, trans. H. R. Fairclough, revised G. P. Goold (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 102-105.

62 Under Henrietta Maria this was reformed and masquers did speak, see Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion: Queen Herietta Maria and Court Entertainments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and Karen Britland, *Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

63 Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 967.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

adopted by Ludovico Aristo in *Orlando Furioso*, discussed below). Jonson presents Meliadus' shield as a symbol of poetry, animating and explicating history. Distinguished from the martial 'Deeds' of romance and mythic heroism, Merlin's reading of English monarchs is prefaced with explicit instruction regarding imitation: the shield's contents are designed to 'yield/ Such Copy of Incitement' both from Meliadus/Henry and *Barriers*' audience.[66] The Arthurian narrative is used in a Spenserian fashion not only to interpret history but, ultimately, to shape it.

The first part of Merlin's description of the shield depicts the peacetime achievements of a series of sovereigns: 'warlike Edward [I]' increases 'Trades and Tillage'; Edward III 'erected first/ The trade of Clothing'; Henry VII 'heapt' treasure; Henry VIII 'made generall musters, trayn'd youth on/ In exercise of armes'; and 'Eliza add[s]/ A Wall of Shipping'.[67] Merlin's celebration of these mercantile, even bourgeois achievements offers a radical reimagining of the medieval model of chivalric kingship with which Arthur has traditionally been associated.[68] The appropriation of the 'golden Fleece' as an image of Edward III's contribution to the English wool industry is telling. Instead of seeking plunder abroad, like Jason and his Argonauts, Edward creates wealth at home. As an image from Greek myth reimagined as a valuable English fleece, moreover, it links the political message that England has no 'need [of] foreign Mine,/ If Industry or home do not decline', with Jonson's literary one.[69] In the second part, the military achievements of two monarchs, Richard I and Edward I, are given in more detail, though both conclude with a warning:

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[66] Ibid., p. 969.

[67] Ibid., pp. 969-972; this can be understood as an oblique criticism of James's failure to support these ideals of peace, see Russell West, 'Perplexive Perspectives: The Court and Contestation in the Jacobean Masque', *The Seventeenth Century*, 18 (2003), 25-43.

[68] Even in *The Faerie Queene*, when Arthur and Guyon read their histories, Elizabeth I's ancestors are portrayed as conforming to a more traditional chivalric model.

[69] The 'Wrath and Fire' of Richard the Lionheart with which he ploughs 'whole Armies up, with zealous Ire', does not lead to victory but renders him 'a Prisoner to the State' and 'a mark of Fortune's spight', Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 970. This part of the shield is not then a 'complete contradiction' to the previous section's 'feeble parade', as Strong suggests, but an inversion of it, see Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance*, p. 143.

Fate makes Richard 'a wretched Prisoner' and Edward is almost assassinated.[70] In the third section a balance is struck with three more examples: Edward III, though fearsome as an enemy uses his prisoners with 'humanity'; Henry V's 'virtue' is inherited by Prince Henry himself; and Elizabeth turns the sea red with blood, but only in defence of the realm. The final passage of this section reiterates its message: Wales, the Low Countries, France and Spain are all scenes of triumph for British kings and 'may make t'invite/ Your valure upon need, but not t'incite'.[71] The final section of Merlin's description of the shield details the achievements of James's reign. These include unity, peace, mercy, justice, and the flourishing of the arts.

The message of the shield gifted by Arthur is clear: 'That Civil Arts the Martial must precede'.[72] Good war is defensive war. Merlin thus reframes the push of pike and swords at the barriers to follow as part of a wider spectacle of good governance, 'To Peace no less than Arms'.[73] Like the dance in a masque, the barriers performance was highly choreographed and ritualised. The spectacle requires the attention and interpretation of its audience as no one side wins out. 'Elements fight' Merlin explains, when 'time sends forth/A Wonder or a Spectacle of Worth'.[74] Merlin—characteristically a part of a wider discursive universe that encompasses a historical realm much closer in time and space to his audience—is not just the messenger but the message. He is the figure who opens up both the lessons of the past and prophecies of the future. Rather than resolution, in this account of England's past it is the ability to accommodate difference and

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[70] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 970; Christopher Tyerman traces the disparaging view of Richard as a king who impoverished England, rather than in his high medieval repute, to Samuel Daniel's *Collection for the History of England* (1612-18), but it is anticipated here by Jonson, see *The Debate on the Crusades* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 58.

[71] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, pp. 970-972.

[72] Ibid., p. 970.

[73] Ibid., p. 969.

[74] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 967.

improve upon the past that advances both political achievement and poetic appreciation.[75] Chivalry, and indeed the reign of Elizabeth, is not rejected by *Barriers*; it is 'restored'.

## RAISED BY ART

What, then, of the stellified Arthur? The association of King Arthur with Arcturus, the brightest star in the northern sidereal hemisphere, was not new. The tradition of 'Arthourys Plowe', associating the legendary king with Ursa Major, was well established by the sixteenth century, despite the fact that Arcturus was not part of the constellation.[76] A century before *Barriers*, a dramatic allusion to Arthur as a star featured in the London pageants celebrating the arrival of Prince Arthur Tudor's intended, Katharine of Aragon, in November 1501. There, Arthur's constellation was described as the aggregate of the virtues required to attain honour, the pageant's (and the young couple's) ultimate destination.[77] The emphasis in *Barriers* is on the connection between man-made structures and Arthur's position, 'aboue'.[78] Where the earlier event played extensively on the verbal and visual symbolism linking the celestial and Arthurian, *Barriers* presents Arthur's immortality as the product less of great governance than great design.

The Lady of the Lake introduces Fame's transcendence at the beginning of the masque, assuring the audience that the island of Britain is poised to regain its 'Fame/ Intire'. Merlin's fame, the Lady claims, cannot be appropriated and, on rising from his tomb, Merlin promises to show Meliadus 'That must of all worlds fame the ghirland winne'.[79] After he has enumerated the many

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[75] On Jonson's conception of a literate, if elite, public sphere in which a heterogeneity advances men and letters, see Lorna Hutson, 'Introduction to *Discoveries* 1641', in *Cambridge Edition of Ben Jonson*.

[76] See, for example, Corporation of London Records Office, *Repertories*, I, fols. 62 and 61v, and College of Arms MS. 1 M. 13 fols. 27-74v, cited in Sydney Anglo, 'The London Pageants for the Reception of Katharine of Aragon: November 1501', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 26 (1963), 53-89.

[77] See Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 60-85.

[78] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 966.

[79] Ibid., p. 968.

challenges of kingship depicted on the shield, Meliadus' name is used by Merlin as a '*Charm*' to wake Chivalry: 'I'll use his *Fame*' he declares, before repeating his name a further three times.[80] The Lady, echoing the Pendragon Knight discussed in the previous chapter, informs her audience that the 'House of Chivalry […] decayed/ Or rather ruin'd' is a place where ancient monuments, '*Obilisks* and *Columns*', once 'strook the Stars'.[81] She anticipates Merlin's interpretation of the shield by glossing the ruins of Jones's set: 'O, when this Ædifice […] Whose very Sceleton boasts so much worth,/ What grace, what Glories did it then send forth?'. Even the 'Caracass' of the past's structures 'hath such Majesty' that it can 'invite/ Young Valours forth, by their old Forms to fight'. Henry and his companions have become the 'knights/ That watchd for all *adventure*' from the House of Chivalry.[82] In a version of Roger Ascham's notorious contrast between the Goths and the Greeks—which Jonson would explicitly echo in 'Ode to Himself'—the Lady deems the 'Truth of *Architecture*' blazing in the ruins greater than 'all the ignorant *Goths* have rais'd'.[83] Where the chivalric quality of the combatants appears to be distinct from the destructive forces that have led to ruin and to promise fame, Merlin sounds a caution:

> Not the Deeds
> Of antique knights, to catch their fellowes steedes
> Or ladies palfreyes, rescue from the force
> Of a fell gyant, so some score to vn-horse.
> These were bold Stories of our ARTHVRS Age
> But here are other acts; another *stage*.[84]

[80] Because of what appears to be textual damage one of them says 'Leliadus', Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 973.

[81] Ibid., p. 966.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

This stage—onto which Arthur 'Let[s] down from Heav'n' a shield, the ideal symbol of *defensive* combat—rests on the recovery of classical alongside chivalric models. Jonson thus transforms Prince Henry's actual ambition to reform architecture in England into the masque's central conceit of a process by which Elizabethan chivalry is restored by Jacobean classicism.[85]

It is in another Italian text that Jonson found the verbal and visual architectural imagery put to such striking use in *Barriers*. As a continuation of Matteo Maria Boiardo's unfinished *Orlando Innamorato* (1483-95), *Orlando furioso* (1516-32) develops the intermingling of the Arthurian and Carolingian cycles, a phenomenon known in Italy as a trait of the *cantari* and *poemi cavallereschi*, but novel to an English reader.[86] In Canto III of Ariosto's pseudo-Arthurian epic, Bradamant encounters the Mantuan sorceress, Melissa, who leads her to Merlin's tomb, relaying the tale of his entrapment by the Lady of the Lake. There, Bradamant and her future line are blessed by the ghostly voice of Merlin; and his prophecy is confirmed by the spirit-pageant of her descendants, the future House of Este (Ariosto's patrons). These figures are conjured by the 'sage Melysa' (3.9.8), who goes on to give Bradamant the means to rescue her beloved from the magician Atlas and his winged horse. The centrality of Merlin's tomb, the use of a female guide, and the positioning of the episode before the conflict of Bradamant's fight with Atlas, are all echoed by Jonson in *Barriers*.[87] So too is Ariosto's praise of Bradamant's family, which is adapted in *Barriers*'s solar imagery, emphasis on peace, allusions to Trojan descent, and predictions of a return to good governance in a Golden Age under the Stuarts. Most significantly—and unlike Edmund Spenser's reimagining of this Ariostan scene in *The Faerie Queene* (1590)—the emphasis in *Orlando* is on the generative effects of its architecture.

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[85] Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, p. 171.

[86] Eleonora Stoppino, 'Arthur as Renaissance Epic', in *The Arthur of the Italians*, ed. F. Regina Psaki (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), pp. 121-130 (p. 124).

[87] Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso: Translated into English Heroical Verse by Sir John Harrington* (London: Richard Field, 1591).

Bradamant enters 'A square and spacious chamber […] solemn and sacred as a church, its roof most gracefully supported on the slender columns of alabaster'.[88] This alignment of the strength of architectural design with the poem's dynastic theme is echoed in *Barriers*, as Prince Henry and his friends are revealed as part of the House of Chivalry's restoration in St George's Portico, filling the places of missing statues. But Ariosto also uses the marble edifices of the grotto to represent the 'ancient and memorable' quality of Merlin's (and, arguably, his own) words:

> His voice lives, and you shall be able to hear how clearly it sounds from the marble tomb [of] hard polished stone, the colour of flame [that] gleamed so that the sunless place was radiant with its light […] the radiance disclosed many beautiful works of sculpture and painting which embellished the sacred precincts.[89]

The relationship of architecture and poetry is emphasised in the translation of *Orlando* by John Harington, Prince Henry's tutor, published in 1591 and reprinted in 1607. According to Harington, 'marble pillars small and round' are 'raised by art' (3.8.2-3) and Merlin's 'stately toombe erected/ Of marble pure' (3.15.3-4) is lit by 'art' and 'skill' (3.16.2-4), an addition that influenced Jones's designs for *Barriers*.[90] Ariosto's conception of architecture as emblematic of an artistic truth capable of condensing periods and genres is central to *Barriers*.

The architectural aspects of *Barriers* may have begun with Ariosto's account of Merlin's tomb, but they are developed with reference to Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499). Circulated widely through the artistic communities of Renaissance Europe, *Hypnerotomachia* had attracted an English readership by the 1590s and was translated in a truncated

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[88] Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. Guido Waldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 22.

[89] Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. Waldman, p. 21.

[90] Jonson's poor opinion of this translation suggests he read the text in Italian, though Inigo Jones used Thomas Coxon's illustration from the translation as his inspiration for Merlin's tomb, see John Peacock, 'Inigo Jones's Stage Architecture and Its Sources', *Art Bulletin*, 64 (1982), 195-216.

version, *The Strife of Love in a Dreame*, by 'R. D.' (probably Robert Dallington) in 1592. It was, however, the Aldine Italian edition dating from 1545 that Jonson owned and annotated.[91] While not Arthurian, *Hypnerotomachia*, like *Orlando*, is generically complex, conflating dream narrative, romance, antiquarian investigation, and archaeological manual, while linguistically combining Italian syntax with Latin vocabulary.[92] What A. W. Johnson notes of the dream-like quality of Colonna's text, 'with its contrasts, transformations, instability between the real and the symbolic' is equally true of the associative hyper-activity of *Orlando*, and the strangely cyclical fragmentation of *La vita di Merlino*.[93] While Inigo Jones converted *Hypnerotomachia*'s opening scenes of desolation, ruin and their transformation into St George's Portico, Jonson adopted its curious mixture of regret and wonder in his depictions of architectural edifices. Jonson transformed the inscription from the statue of the winged horse in *Hypnerotomachia* (reminiscent of the Hippogriff that Bradamant encounters on leaving Merlin's tomb in *Orlando*) about time lost and the passing of generations, into his own spirit-pageant of Prince Henry's ancestors. In Jonson's copy of *Hypnerotomachia*, moreover, on the page opposite the 'glorious porch' of the horse, the 'MELISSA' passage has been underlined.[94] Explicit verbal borrowings, such as the conjunction of the 'Trophies' and 'Colossus', are also deployed by Jonson to echo *Hypnerotomachia*'s use of architecture

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[91] BL C.60.o.12; see also James Charles Russell, '"Many Other Things Worthy of Knowledge and memory": The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* and its Annotators, 1499-1700' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Durham University, 2014).

[92] In places the text 'tumbles into incoherence', Joscelyn Godwin, 'Introduction', in Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: The Strife of Love in a Dream*, trans. by Joscelyn Godwin (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), p. ix; *Hypnerotomachia* is also reputed as a masterpiece of the school of the Venetian art of wood engraving; the creator of the woodcuts has variously been identified as Mategna, Gintile Bellini, Giovani Bellini, Sandro Botticelli, and even Rafaello Sanzio, see Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, ubi humana omnia nisisomnium [sic] esse docet atque obiter plurima scitu sane quam Digna commemorat* (Venice: Aldi Manutii, 1499).

[93] A. W. Johnson, *Ben Jonson: Poetry and Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 51.

[94] *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili,* p. cvii.

simultaneously to lament the passing of a concatenation of arts and represent a vision of their revival.[95]

This is reflected in Jones' perspectival stage-set, crucial to the hierarchised spatial structures of the Jacobean masque, that figured the King as its central spectator, enabling the confusion of the categories of gaze and observation. Influenced by both *Orlando* and *Hypnerotomachia*, the movement from medieval to classical architectural styles is figured by Jones as a metaphor for progress: from ruin to restoration. Buildings like the Piliers de Tutelle and the Torre delle Milizie feature, but they are initially almost unrecognisable, before being restored, enlarged and classicised when Meliadus is revealed. One example is the upgrade from simply scrolled Ionic columns to the ornate and visually striking curls of Corinthian columns.



FIGURE 9. Inigo Jones, The Fallen House of Chivalry, pen and ink on paper, undated. Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth House.

[95] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 966, 972.



FIGURE 10. Inigo Jones, St George's Portico, pen and ink on paper, undated.

Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth House.

Merlin's tomb, meanwhile, acts as a kind of self-quotation. It is depicted at the start of the masque as the funeral monument based on Roman sarcophagi that Jones had seen in France and recently designed for Lady Cotton. It is then transformed in the restorative set-change into a Medici Chapel tomb designed by Michelangelo.[96] Visually as well as verbally, architecture in *Barriers* reflects the achievement of the artist, of which the stellified Arthur, 'Discovered as a star above', is the apotheosis.[97] Human endeavour, represented by architectural structures, once raised the British crown 'To be a Constellation' and, the show suggests, it may do so again.[98]

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[96] While including his own work in a classical scene might seem aspiring and ambitious these renovations seem to suggest its imperfect quality in comparison with Michelangelo's masterpiece, see Peacock, *The Stage Designs of Inigo Jones*, p. 68.

[97] Jones's design for the reveal of St George's Portico is the earliest extant deign on paper for a perspective stage-set in England, see West, 'Perplexive Perspectives'. Francis Bacon describes perspective as a form of deception, noting the 'shifts these formalists have, and what prospectives to make superficies to seem body that hath depth and bulk', Francis Bacon, 'Of Seeming Wise, in *The Essays of Francis Bacon (1625)*, ed. Mary Augusta Scott (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. 114.

[98] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 966.

But the crown would never pass to Prince Henry, who died on 6 November 1612. Amidst a variety of responses—which included the militant, moderate, and sceptical—elegists repeatedly returned to the image of the ruin that had dominated *Barriers*.[99] George Chapman's *An Epicide Or Funerall Song* (1613) imagines the bleeding 'ruines' of the prince's body as 'the ruines of some famous Towne':

> Of which (ahlas) some broken Arches, still
> (Pillars, or Columns rac't; which Art did fill
> With all her riches and Diuinitie)
> Returne their great, and worthy memorie:
> So of our Princes state, I nough rehearse
> But show his ruines, bleeding in my verse [.][100]

The ruined city, typically associated with the prophetic books of the Old Testament, operates here as a poignant synecdoche for the cities (literal and metaphorical) that the Prince might have built or conquered, had he lived.[101] Henry Peacham's allusion to *Barriers* is more specific. He too focuses on the 'Royall Body' in 'Epicedium of the Author' in *The Period of Mourning Disposed into Sixe Visions*

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[99] On the unstable and keenly contested implications of Henry's death see Adrian Streete, 'Elegy, Prophecy, and Politics: Literary Responses to the Death of Prince Henry Stuart, 1612-1614', *Renaissance Studies*, 31 (2017), 87-106.

[100] George Chapman, *An Epicede or Funeral Song on the Most Disastrous Death, of the High-Borne Prince of Men, Henry Prince of Wales, &c* (London: TS for John Budge, 1613), sig. C4r.

[101] As such, it contributes to the prophetic voice that is central to elegiac writing in the aftermath of Henry's death, see Dennis Kay, *Melodious Tears: The English funeral Elegy from Spenser to Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 134-5.

(1613), repeating the Prince's name, an echo of Merlin's Meliadus charm, as if it might wake him or at least provide 'his like againe'.[102] After his series of 'HENRIE[s]', the allusion is made explicit:

> And Britaine, warlike *Arthur* lost:
> Friendes and fathers want their stay,
> And ouer-clouded is our day,
> This starre is fallen from our sight,
> And lost with all our compasse quite.[103]

Where *Barriers* spatially realised Arthur's star as the pinnacle of architectural achievement (and so performed the restorative role of the artist, carrying over and adding to his sources), later elegists renegotiated the masque's imagery in print. So too would Jonson. Henry may have 'fallen' from sight, but the achievements of *Barriers*' author would be made visible in his folio of collected works.

## RESTORATIVE READING

Throughout his *Workes*, Jonson engages with the question of fame, established by the book's monumental form and titlepage. Fame is not, however, an easy ideal in *Workes*. Epistles and dedications rebut libels and misreadings while paratexts and poems protest against poorly received work. The sense of fame as the product of poetic restoration performed in *Barriers* is then realised

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[102] Henry Peacham, *The Period of Mourning Disposed into Sixe Visions. In Memories of the Late Prince* (London: TS for John Helme, 1613), sig. C4r.

[103] Peacham, *The Period of Mourning*, sig. C4r; the poem goes on to warn: 'Yet all Adams earthly weake/ Adord like Idols till they breake' (sig. C4r). In different circumstances, as Stuart rule fragmented into civil war, and for different reasons, John Milton would also redirect his poetic energies from plans to '*Brittonicum strides*' [whistle a British tune] of Arthur towards a tragedy of 'Adam unparadiz'd', John Milton, 'Epitaphium Damonis' pp. 162-71 and The Trinity Manuscript, Wren R.3.4, p. 40; on Milton's Arthurian imagination see Helen Cooper, 'Milton's King Arthur', *The Review of English Studies*, 269 (2014), 252-265.

in different ways by Jonson's readers. One rare seventeenth-century annotator of *Speeches* has underlined 'fain'd' where the Lady of the Lake's says that she will not proclaim more of herself and her actions than 'Were so full fain'd in *British Arthur*'s Court'. '[F]ain'd for fame'd' has also been written beside it in the right margin.[104] While this might appear to be a correction, its form is not in keeping with this zealous annotator's practise elsewhere in their copy, where corrections are struck through and substitutions made as interlinear, rather than marginal, additions. So, if fame does not replace 'fain'd', with its possible meanings of imitated, shaped, imagined, and counterfeited, what is their relationship?[105]

Open at this line, *Barriers*' first page sits beside the final one of *The Masque of Queens*, the masque that directly precedes it in *Workes*. Nowhere is the conflict between good and bad fame more explicitly played out than in *Queens*, which concludes with the lyric:

> WHo, *Vertue*, can thy power forget
> That sees these liue, & triumph yet?
> Th' *Assyrian* pompe, the *Persian* pride,
> Greekes' glory, and the Romanes, di'de;
> And who yet imitate
> Their noyses, tarry the same fate.
> Force greatnesse all the glorious waies
> You can, it soon decaies,
> But so *good Fame* shall neuer:
> Her triumphs, as their causes, are for euer.[106]

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[104] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 965, Huntington 606578.

[105] The sense of 'fain' as something joyful, later used by Merlin, 'My thought grows great of him, and fain would break', is also suggested by these annotations.

[106] Jonson, 'The Masque of Queens', in *Workes*, pp. 945-964 (p. 964).

Good fame is built to last, a challenge when working in so ephemeral a form, not least when Jonson's contribution was just one among many.[107] As Meskill demonstrates, however, the masque and entertainment texts that appear in Jonson's first folio were produced after the spectacle and so represent their own form of literary contribution: they are ekphrastic, elucidating the meaning of the masque in a different medium; and elegiac, never quite recovering their subject and mourning that absence. When read together, they can also be understood as an epic project.[108] That is to say, the monumental form of *Workes* can be understood as a realisation of the agenda set in performance in *Barriers*, to reach for good fame by renovating British culture.

Situated in *Workes* between *Masque of Queens* and *Oberon*, both of which are heavily annotated by Jonson, *Speeches*' expanse of empty white margins is striking.[109] It is tempting to offer a formal explanation for the absence of annotation on *Speeches* (because the *Hymenaei* barriers and the later *A Challenge at Tilt* are similarly bare). This absence of apparatus, however, is probably the result of the nature of the underlying copies and the retrospective purging of any mention of the doomed marriage of the Earl of Essex and Frances Howard, rather than a resistance of martial performance to explication.[110] The result is that *Speeches* seems to stress the need for restorative reading. Out of a hundred copies of *Workes* that survive in public libraries and private collections around the world, twenty-one of the thirty-plus copies held by the Huntington Library are marked

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[107] Lauren Shohet, *Reading Masques: The English Masque and Public Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[108] Lynn S. Meskill, '"High-Piled books, in Character'y": Jonson's Court Masques'.

[109] In light of Jonson's claim that he had researched his marginalia for *Queens* at Prince Henry's particular request this is all the more striking. While Prince Henry was dead by the time Jonson had his first folio published it seems likely that similar might have been requested or just provided around the time of performance.

[110] Lindley, 'Prince Henry's Barriers: A Textual Essay'.

by seventeenth century readers, and nine have substantial annotations.[111] The levels of annotation are highest in the plays (with *Sejanus* receiving the most sustained attention), followed by *The Epigrams*, *The Forest* and, finally the masques and entertainments.[112] Only two copies evidence any intervention on *Speeches*. One of these, while only annotated anonymously with the dashes and the occasional dot, reflects a shrewd appreciation of Jonson's sense of how a lasting legacy is created. On the first page 'restore' is dotted, and 'fame' has a dash beside it in the right margin. Both lines of 'At common births the world feels nothing new;/ At these she shakes; Mankind liues in a few' have dashes beside them in the right margin and the same thing happens in the left margin beside the lines: 'Or like a fire carried with high windes/ Now broad, and spreading, by and by it findes' and 'All that stood nigh, or in the reach to wast:/ Such was his rage that day; but then forgot'.[113] The few lines selected by this reader speak eloquently to the ways in which the excellence, epitomised by the stellified Arthur, is presented as the product of artistic restoration.

As this reader noted, Jonson used the Arthurian legend for a sustained examination of the poet's role as a restorer in *Speeches*, but it is also a theme evoked elsewhere in *Workes*. Jonson's comedies are peppered with promises of restoration, for tempers and even complexions; in *Everyman Out of his Humour* (1600), Sordid promises to 'Restore to all men, what with wrong I rob'd them'.[114] The possibility of setting things right, however, reinstating or putting them back in place, is belied by narrative context. It is in the *Epigrams* that the reader of *Workes* first encounters Jonson employing the word 'restore' to suggest improvement and renewal as well as a kind of recovery

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[111] The other major collection is in the Folger Shakespeare Library. These holdings received some attention on the quatercentenary of the book's publication in the form of a blog published by the library, see Abbie Weinberg and Elizabeth DeBold, 'The Other First Folio' (11 October 2016), http://collation.folger.edu/2016/10/the-other-first-folio/, accessed 16 April 2021.

[112] See Jane Rickard, 'Seventeenth-Century Readers of Jonson's 1616 Works', in *Ben Jonson and Posterity: Reception, Reputation, Legacy*, ed. Martin Butler and Jane Rickard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 85-104.

[113] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 971.

[114] Jonson, 'Everyman Out of his Humour', in *Workes*, pp. 81-175 (p. 132).

and return. Certainly, the latter sense persists, as in Sir John Roe's restorative tears, or Fine Lady Would-Be's pot. When the poet turns to the art of his subject, however, the more active, creative sense of what it means to restore, subsequently elaborated in *Speeches*, emerges. Although some sense of the word's hyperbolic impossibility from the comedies remains, this is transformed from irony into wonder: Tacitus is 'restor'd' by Sir Henrie Savile, and the poet congratulates the breach that Fate caused in history, previously lamented, only to boast Savile's 'merit in supply'.[115] Similarly, Lady Mary Wroth's restoration, in herself, of 'all treasure lost of th'age before', suggests both a recovery and improvement.[116] In these, and other poems, this sense of restoration as something 'made a-new' seems to reflect Jonson's own epigrammatic efforts on behalf of his poetic subjects, as much as their own literary endeavours, anticipating his use of Arthur.[117]

It is in Jonson's masques that this idea of the artist-as-restorer is most fully explored. Restoration would come to be the refrain of the masques that followed *Speeches* and is particularly marked in the titles of *Love Restored* (1612) and *The Golden Age Restored* (1616). In the former, Robin Goodfellow assumes the combined roles of the Lady and Merlin, energetically uncovering Plutus' deception, restoring the constrained Cupid and interpreting the significance of the masque's action: poetic achievement unconstrained by budget. Meanwhile, the final text of *The Golden Age* collected in the 1616 edition of *Workes* reads as an extension and response to *Speeches*. Expanding upon *Barriers*' insistence on the golden attributes of Britain (fleece, Victory, vein), this masque takes up the subject. The 'better flames and larger light' of poets, who actually appear as 'far-famed spirits of this happy isle', literalise the fiery image of invention that surrounds Merlin's tomb.[118] The Lady of the Lake's cryptic claim that having 'deprest' Merlin a while she would be the cause of his eternal life, is also glossed by Pallas. In the later text, the goddess calls to the poets, describing how their

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[115] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, pp. 777-778, 796-797.

[116] Ibid., pp. 800-801.

[117] Ibid., p. 801.

[118] Jonson, 'The Gold Age Restord', in *Workes*, pp. 1010-1015 (p. 1012).

names will nourish the new age 'Since virtue pressed shall grow, and buried arts shall flourish', a line that might operate as a description of Jonson's poetic methodology.[119] The active role of Pallas' shield, moreover, which so vividly recalls Meliadus', suggests that the careful reading of ancient works can throw 'a lightening' and 'let all the doubtful darkness yield'.[120] *Golden Age* concludes with the return of Astrea who, like the Lady of the Lake (and so, perhaps, the poet with a new edition of his works), has 'silver feet'.[121] Once again the later text expands *Speeches*' image: her 'silver feet, like roots, are wreathed/ Into the ground'. Restoration here is a natural process, one in which the new grows from the old.

Arthur's 'Scepter and [his] Stile', which appeared to be King James's in performance, are Jonson's in print.[122] The Lady of the Lake's reference to the prophetic pun, 'claimes ARTHVRS seat', is similarly transformed from a compliment to the King into an image of the poet's power.[123] Cited in *Remaines of a Greater Work Concerning Britain* (1605) by William Camden, Jonson's former headmaster at Westminster School and the dedicatee of *Workes*, the anagram of 'Charles Iames Steuart' clearly compliments James as 'the successor of the valorous king *Arthur*'.[124] It is not surprising that nameagrams like this emerge more clearly when seen rather than just heard, but this is further emphasised by its repetition in the masque that follows *Speeches* in *Workes*.[125] The first

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[119] Ibid., p. 1012.

[120] Ibid., p. 1013.

[121] Ibid., p. 1014.

[122] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 966.

[123] Ibid., p. 965.

[124] 'Charles Iames Steuart. CLAIMES ARTHVRS SEATE', see William Camden, *Remaines of a greater worke, concerning Britaine, the inhabitants thereof, their languages, names, surnames, empreses, wise speeches, poësies, and epitaphes* (London: Printed by George Eld for Simon Waterson, 1605), p. 153.

[125] George Chapman, dedicating his Homer to 'Henry Prince of Wales' anagrammatised his patron's name into 'OVR SVNN, HYR, PEACE, LIFE' by splitting the W of Wales into two Vs, *The Iliads of Homer prince of poets: Neuer before in any languag truly translated. With, a com[m]ent vppon some of his chiefe places; donne according to the Greeke by Geo: Chapman* (London: Richard Field for Nathaniell Butter, 1611), sig. π3v.; see also Colin Burrow, 'Ti tum ti tum ti tum: *Along Heroic Lines* by Christopher Ricks', *London Review of Books*, 43 (2021), https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v43/n19/colin-burrow/ti-tum-ti-tum-ti-tum, accessed 15 October 2021.

reference to 'Arthur's seat' in *Oberon* appears in the song that celebrates the discovery of the knight-masquers:

> MElt earth to sea, sea flow to aire,
> And aire flie into fire,
> Whilst we in tunes to ARTHVRS chaire
> Beare OBERONS desire;
> Then which there nothing can be higher,
> Save James, to whom it flies[.][126]

There is a playfulness in the way the verse directs the gaze of the masque's spectators from the King's throne at one end of the hall to the Prince playing Oberon at the other (where he has just appeared in a chariot 'drawn by two white polar bears'), and back again to James.[127] There is also, perhaps, something mischievous about the end stop after 'higher,' that delays the transformation of a potential treason into an elegant compliment: the singers do the Prince's bidding because it is the King's will. The position of Arthur's chair, however, as a relic of the past and the masque's animating force, echoes *Speeches*' reimagining of the Arthurian legend. This reading is developed across *Oberon*, where 'A night of homage to the British court,/ And ceremony due to Arthur's chair' and the 'true majesty, restored in this seat' become allusions not only to the King who spectated the entertainment's performance, but the entertainment itself. In *Workes*, Arthur's seat it not just the throne of Britain but the cradle of its artistic potential.

The centrality of the author as reader-restorer in *Speeches* seems to have been recognised by a reader of *Workes* who reflected on the Lady of the Lake's fame: Abiel Borfet (*c.* 1632-1710)

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[126] Jonson, 'Oberon', *Workes*, pp. 975-983 (p. 980).

[127] Ibid.

of Christ's College, Cambridge, a clergyman and minor writer.[128] As Jane Rickard notes, despite the fact that the *Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts 1450-1700* lists Borfet's copy as 'copiously annotated in 1698', he evidently annotated his copy over a forty-year period, correcting his earlier annotations and recording their date as part of his conception of the public (as well as private) dimension of his reading: 'Witness my hand, A. Borfet.'[129] Borfet clearly has his own future reader in mind when he notes 'Duke Charles' next to 'that young Lord' and '†after Queen of Bohemia' beside Merlin's prophecy of 'that most princely †Maid', Princess Elizabeth, as well as when he underlines determiners and adds exclamation points, as if to recover some of the drama of performance on the page.[130] Borfet seems eager to display his own process of reading and restoration. He underlines the word 'fate' repeatedly. Where a pronoun stands in for it, he notes, 'She. i.e. his fate, 3 lines above', noting elsewhere the sources of Jonson's personification of Fate: 'She. i.e. Your Fate 2 lines/ above. for in Greek it/ is feminine: And so are the/ 3 Parca in Latin'. Alongside his notes on the Lady of the Lake 'procur[ing]' Merlin's tomb, his reading of her as a British *Parca* aligns the Lady's powers with those of the author, 'Ben', to whom Borfet regularly (and familiarly) defers: 'Would Ben were here to resolve this Question'.[131] *Speeches* invites readers like Borfet to continue Jonson's work of restoring '*British* Arthur' and, in so doing, to perpetuate the fame of the poet.

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[128] Borfet was also the author of *The minister of* Richmond's Reasons *For refusing to Subscribe the ASSOCIATION* (London: John Harris, 1696).

[129] Jonson, *Workes*, p. 142, Huntington 606578.

[130] The other annotator has wryly deployed only two dashes on the final page of *Speeches* on the left of the lines: 'In the most princely Mayd whose forme might call/The world to warre, and make it hazard all', Jonson, 'Speeches', in *Workes*, p. 974, Huntington 606199.

[131] Ibid., p. 207, Huntington 606578.

## 'NO GYANTS, DWARFES, OR MONSTERS HERE, BUT MEN'

In *Barriers*, Jonson turned the reality of a political compromise, the incorporation of the barriers combat in a court masque, into a performance of his poetic method. It is the choreographed way in which his sources interact that creates meaning. The revival of Merlin and his interpretation of the shield performed the process of Jonson's own close reading and writerly craftsmanship; the architectural imagery of script and set positioned Arthur's fame as the pinnacle not of royal but of artistic triumph; and Jonson's folio conscripted his readers into the restorative work on British culture advocated by the entertainment. Neither *Barriers* nor *Speeches* depict an obviously 'popular' Arthur. *Barriers* was an elite, courtly entertainment that (quite literally) elevated Arthur into an emblem of extraordinary achievement. Jonson's *Workes*, meanwhile, gestures towards its author's view of common people in its epigraph, quoted from Horace, and printed on its title page: '*Contentus paucis lectoribus*' [Content with few readers]; the defensive jibe at popular philistinism is implicit in this apparent expression of authorial modesty.[132] Nevertheless, by 1610 Arthur and aspects of his world could no longer be deployed, even in a quasi-military masque performed by and for the royal family, solely as a means of exploring virtues definitive of a noble class. If, as the end of the masque suggests, Britain is to 'fly/ Beyond the line, when what the seas before/ Did bound, shall to the sky then stretch his shore' the achievement will be as much one of imaginative creation as the product of political effort.[133] In calling to take an insular history and cast its implications out across the oceans, it also offers a grim vision of the role of the artist in a nascent imperialist vision.

The central threat, implicit throughout *Barriers*, is that the fame of kings and princes rest on the cultural production of poets. The virtues performed are ultimately representations of Jones's scenographic imagination and Jonson's 'Bibliographic ego', rather than Henry's prowess

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[132] Jonson, *Workes*, title page.

[133] Ibid., p. 974.

or James's wisdom.[134] Using the Arthurian legend to think through the nature of power and permanence, both *Barriers* and *Speeches* ultimately locate Britain's virtues in exceptional writers, designers, spectators, and readers, as much as with their 'great King and Queen […] young Knight […] young Lord […and] that most princely Maid'.[135] This is not a dismissal of 'the whole summe/ Of errant Knight-hood, with Dames and Dwarfes', but a celebration of human potential and creativity. Jonson evokes 'Bold stories of Arthurs age' to present 'other acts; another stage/ And scene appears; it is not since as then:/ No gyants, dwarfes, or monsters here, but men.'[136]

[134] Joseph Lowenstein, *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 143.

[135] Jonson, 'Speeches', *Workes*, p. 974.

[136] Ibid., p. 969.

# Conclusion

This thesis began by asking how performance shaped the Arthurian legend in early modern England. It has demonstrated that King Arthur and elements of his storyworld were detached from medieval narratives and set into new contexts. Many of these contexts were pseudo-classical. Occasional performances aligned the Arthurian legend with Ovidian metamorphoses, Senecan tragedy, and Homeric wisdom. Meanwhile, the adoption of the legend at archery competitions and Accession Day tournaments fostered radical adaptations of Arthur's Round Table fellowship and renegotiated the bounds of chivalry. Performance, however, does not just shape the Arthurian legend, it is shaped by it. The adaptations discussed here reveal experimentation in both the forms of identity and authority represented by the Arthurian legend, and the (quasi-)dramatic forms in which they were played out. Examining the legend across different manifestations of non-commercial drama has enabled me to explore intersections between forms of ceremonial, sporting, military, and dramatic demonstration; to expose the porous and unstable boundaries between occasional performances and the texts which recounted them; and to rethink relationships between the various individuals and communities who created, comprised, and consumed performance culture. At times it seems as if it is this instability, in both meaning *and* form, that facilitates the most unexpected innovations.

One aim of this thesis has been to examine the ways in which the Arthurian legend is a popular subject, not just an elite one, in the performance cultures of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England. Far from being confined to the dragon banners of Tudor propaganda or Spenser's epic allegory, I argue that the influence of the Arthurian legend was more potent, widespread, and polysemic than has previously been understood. This claim is, however, limited by the evidence. While this thesis has examined the creative investment of a range of people in the Arthurian legend, it has not evidenced engagement by a comprehensive intersection of early

modern society. Civil servants, senior liverymen, members of the Inns of Court, and writers commissioned for royal entertainments may not be aristocratic, but they comprise their own professional elites. Figures such as the minstrel of Islington, the archers in Thomas Smythe's train, or the sailors who accompanied the Earl of Cumberland onto the tiltyard in 1593, can only be glimpsed through the self-consciously literary efforts of these more privileged others. Their true identities—itinerant artist or fictional character? apprentices or magnates? loyal seadogs or paid actors?—even their names, remain unknown. The anonymity, moreover, of most of the spectators at the events considered and almost all the annotators of their textual records cause further complications. Although the full extent of Arthur's popularity in the period does remain elusive, this thesis has established that the legend was a site of intellectual engagement and exchange in the period.

What this thesis can conclude with conviction is that the Arthurian legend was a subject of substantive and varied creative investment in this period. The version of the legend presented to spectators at Kenilworth in 1575 was very different from that found in copies of George Gascoigne's *Princely Pleasures*; and different again from that of Langham's *Letter*; or the shows of the Society of Prince Arthur. At Gray's Inn, a site of intellectual exchange between university and court culture, Arthur's legend enabled experiments in tragic form, with results ranging from the erudite to the obscene. These shows, and subsequently those of the Pendragon Knight Tilts, redefined the nature and scope of Arthuriana. They unhorsed the knight, gave him a bow, sent him to sea, and stellified him. It is in Ben Jonson's presentation of the Arthurian legend as the convergence of political and poetic power, however, that the tension between an assimilation of earlier Arthuriana and a critical appraisal of it in early modern culture is most pronounced. The subsequent transmutation of an ephemeral, hybrid entertainment into print reveals a great deal about contemporary cultural values: about the author as creator and collaborator, as well as the nature of play, and its potential to enact criticism, aspiration, celebration, repudiation, and anxiety, all at once.

This thesis has set out not simply to reassess Arthur's meaning in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. Rather, it has sought to demonstrate the limitations of our understanding of Arthurian literature: what it constitutes, who makes it and for whom, as well as when and how it flourishes. I have worked through various adaptations of the Arthurian legend in order to think about how Arthurian entertainments of any kind—elite and popular, literary and lowbrow, earnest or satirical—depend on the historical convergence of aesthetic forms, textual artifacts, social practices, and the human actors involved. Since my premise is that these experiments with the legend in early modern performances are not only historically contingent but that their neglect limits Arthurian literary criticism, I have tried to overcome that limitation by taking both the aesthetics and practicalities of these performances seriously. As a result, I have argued that attending to the development of Arthurian literature requires us to expand our notion of the genres, individuals, and institutions we consider, beyond the bounds of the traditionally literary or dramatic.

The findings of this thesis thus provide a corrective to critical narratives of Arthurian literature which portray this period as one characterised by absence—from the lost Arthurian plays of the Elizabethan commercial theatres to the abandoned Arthurian epics of John Milton and John Dryden. Instead, this thesis supports a narrative of Arthurian presence. The Arthurs uncovered here were not deployed statically in the reigns of Elizabeth I and James VI and I to promote either idealised royal authority or British unity. They did not just express 'a Gothic ideology of renascent aristocratic power'; they dynamically embodied, adjusted, and reimagined it.[1] Above all, they played with it. We have seen nobles and liverymen processing in Arthurian aliases and competing in sporting events; lawyers and merchants composing and celebrating aspects of their corporate identity in Arthurian plays and pageants; and spectators across the social spectrum witnessing and reading Arthurian entertainments created for (and even partially by) members of the royal family.

[1] Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 59.

Authors and actors, exploiting the inevitable ambiguities of improvisation, interpretation, and even interruption characteristic of occasional performances, play on the conventions of genre, form, and subject, as well as with audience expectation. The boundaries between authorship and audience are also played with, so the questions of who is playing, with what, and for whom, are repeatedly provoked and interrogated. Rather than resolving the inherent heteroglossia of performance, the Arthurian entertainments of this period exploit it, drawing out the (sometimes simultaneous) associations of the legend with development, freedom, distraction, and ambiguity.[2]

I have argued for the presence of Arthurian performance as a feature of early modern English life. As we have seen, that presence comprised the embodied and the textual. Despite substantial inquiries into the indefinite boundaries (and interpretative relevance) of event and text in the early modern drama, many non-commercial performances still lack fulsome reappraisals as cultural occasions *and* literary forms. Our critical paradigms—and perhaps also our cultural inclinations—are still ill-equipped to reckon with their uncertainties: distributed and anonymous authorship, extensive collaborations, substantial loss, and the negotiations between creator, performer, performance, and audience. The example of early modern Arthurian performance is especially instructive for thinking about this complicated relationship between archive and repertoire. The intertwined traditions of an historical, romance, and Worthy Arthur are always staged with the legend; the tensions between fact and fiction, past and present, and textuality and more ephemeral forms of culture that they raise are consistently in play. The accounts that survive performances of this hybrid Arthurian tradition (and, indeed, those that have been lost) do not necessarily precede or follow them. Instead, transmission and creation are elided. A festival book is composed before and assembled after a progress entertainment; a pamphlet responds to one pageant and becomes part of the next; a playtext rearranges speeches, prioritising those that went

[2] See Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky; Maurizio Bettini describes play as 'that impossibly difficult word' in *The Portrait of the Lover*, trans. Laura Gibbs (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 216.

unspoken in performance; a tilt speech performs part of its own script as text; and the ephemerality of a masque is enshrined in a textual monument. The complex temporal relationship and contingencies of their reciprocity—mirroring, distorting, merging, and separating—might productively be developed in relation to cultures of early modern performance and forms of play more broadly. Building on work by Tiffany Stern and Claire Bourne, it would be interesting to investigate how the models of integration between archive and repertoire provided by occasional performances might offer new ways into thinking about commercial theatre. So too would a more extensive investigation, in light of Joe Moshenska's work on violent and disenchanting aspects of early modern child's play, into the power of role-play to reshape aesthetic significance in open-ended, adventurous, and serious ways.

There are also further elements of Arthurian adaptation that might be fruitfully pursued. While Arthur's British identity and contested historicity give his legend a particular resonance, my exclusive emphasis on Arthurian performance is slightly artificial. It would be valuable to place these performances in more direct dialogue with contemporary dramatizations of other romances. From the local significance of Guy of Warwick to the pan-European appeal of Amadís de Gaula, it would be productive to compare how a range of romances were conceptualised and refigured for the stage. Such an enquiry might yield a clearer and more complex understanding of the changing relationships between people, place, and forms of play in the period, as well as ritual, professional, and recreative expression. The approach taken in this thesis might also be extended further into one of British history's most tumultuous centuries. From William Rowley's *The Birth of Merlin* (1622), through John Dryden's opera, *King Arthur: Or, The British Worthy* (1691), to the emergence of Tom Thumb as a dramatic subject early in the eighteenth century (most famously in Henry Fielding's *The Tragedy of Tragedies; or, The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (1731)), it would be illuminating to consider the relationship between shifting theatrical practice and

demarcations of high and low culture.[3] It would, moreover, be exciting to examine how far the political and philosophical conflicts of the seventeenth century underpin Arthur's ultimate usurpation in the public imagination by King Alfred as a figure for national identity and imperial authority.[4]

This thesis has aimed to show that the Arthurian legend was staged many times over, by many different people, and that what they staged often differed from both traditional "medieval" and "modern" conceptions of the Arthurian. I have endeavoured to revise this dyad of periodisation in Arthur's determination by examining various interim experiments in Arthurianism. Of course, not all of them take hold. I hope to have demonstrated the interest not only of successful instances of performance which have contributed to Arthur's evolution, but also of the innumerable one-off attempts to create something new and, indeed, of those that have failed in some way (on stage, page, or in subsequent critical histories). The pseudo-classical Arthurianism of this period is one such example, one that disrupts critical narratives in which the "medieval" and "modern" are analogous to past and present. Many of the most interesting innovations in the

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[3] On *The Birth of Merlin* see Elisabeth Michelsson, *Appropriating King Arthur: The Arthurian Legend in English Drama and Entertainments 1485-1625* (Edsbruck: Akademitryck AB, 1999), pp. 199-202 and Anita Obermeier, 'Merlin's Conception by the Devil in William Rowley's Play "The Birth of Merlin"', *Arthuriana*, 24 (2014), 48-79; on *King Arthur: Or, The British Worthy* see J. M. Armistead, 'Dryden's *King Arthur* and the Literary Tradition: A Way of Seeing', *Studies in Philology*, 85 (1988), 53-72, Jamie J. Weinmann, 'Dryden and Purcell's King Arthur: A Production History', *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research*, 16 (2001), 40-52, and Andrew Pinnock, 'A Double Vision of Albion: Allegorical Re-Alignments in the Dryden-Purcell Semi-Opera "King Arthur"', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700*, 34 (2010), 55-81; on Tom Thumb see Thomas Green, 'Tom Thumb and Jack the Giant-Killer: Two Arthurian Fairytales?', *Folklore*, 118 (2007), 123-140, Jeanne Dunning, 'Tom Thumb, the New Oedipus', *Art Journal*, 72 (2013), 5-26, Andrew Hiscock, "'O, Tom Thumb! Tom Thumb! Wherefore art thou Tom Thomb?": Early Modern Drama and the Eighteenth-century Writer – Henry Fieldling and Fanny Burney', *The Ben Jonson Journal*, 21 (2014), 228-263, and Lynne Vallone, *Big & Small: A Cultural History of Extraordinary Bodies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), pp. 29-59.

[4] On Alfred's emergence as national hero see Oliver Cox, "'Rule Britannia!" King Alfred the Great at the Creation of a National Hero in England and America, 1640-1800 (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2013); see also Lucy Monroe, "'Nemp your sexes!": Anachronistic Aesthetics in *Hengist, King of Kent* and the Jacobean "Anglo-Saxon Play', *Modern Philology*, 111 (2014), 734-761.

performances addressed here occur where the Arthurian tradition intersects with classical forms and figures. This would not be an approach widely adopted by authors of Arthurian drama across the seventeenth century. While the physician and theologian Richard Blackmore did produce the Arthurian epic long deferred by English poets, *Prince Arthur, an Heroick Poem in X Books* (1695) served to secure Arthur, not as a pseudo-classical figure, but as one associated with satire, his most popular mode in seventeenth and eighteenth century performance culture.

There is no single Arthurian storyworld in performances of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century and there is no one Arthur. Instead, there are many: each surprising, entertaining, and challenging both conventions and audiences. The capaciousness of Arthur and his legend lends itself to forms of performance characterised by play and contingency rather than the comparative control of other genres. Just as the passing of Arthur is ambiguous in earlier iterations of the legend, an absence pregnant with the possibility of return, so too are occasional Arthurian performances. It is the playful instability of Arthuriana that—to use Milton's term—'resounds' in early modern England.[5] As with the Eccho performed at Kenilworth, each repetition is an innovation.

[5] Admittedly Milton's use is a diabolic one, comparing troops of Satan's devils in hell to 'what resounds/ In fable or romance of Uther's son/ Begirt with British and Armoric knights' (1.579-81), see *Paradise Lost*, ed. John Leonard (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p.17.

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