

FOLKLORE: OPIATE OF THE PEOPLE OR THE SOCIAL CEMENT OF MIDDLE ENGLAND?

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Much cultural conflict during the reign of James I and Charles I centred on the *Book of Sports* (1617/8, 1633); puritan and royalist alike assumed the connection between popular royalism and traditional culture. It is too easily overlooked that Jonson and Brome were involved in this cultural debate and that the royalist side was a church with its own "schisms." Jonson, Brome, and William Cavendish, then Earl of Newcastle, gave prominence to rural pastimes and much that today we should call folklore, in their writings, and satirised aspects of French, Spanish and Italian culture influential at court. They represented English traditions as essentially masculine and conducive to social harmony. Brome's drama in particular can be properly understood only in the light of his use of folk material.

From James I's advice to his son Henry on the conduct of Kingship, *Basilikon Doron* (1599, revised in *Complete Works*, 1616) to the Duke of Newcastle's advice to Charles II just before his restoration, such rural pastimes as maypoles, morris dancing, wassails, churchales, football, wrestling and much else occupied a central ideological position as never before or since in English political history, partly of course, because these activities commonly took place on Sundays.

James recommended traditional popular pastimes to his son Henry as a remedy against fractiousness, "to allure them to a common amitie among themselves... [by]... delighting the people with publick spectacles of all honest games" (McIlwain 1965:27). William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, who had been tutor to Charles II during his minority, in a letter presented to Charles in the spring of 1659, recommended the restoration of all the old holidays in merry England because "these Devirtismentes will amuse the peoples thoughts And keepe them in harmless actions, which will free your Majestie from Faction, & Rebellion" (Slaughter 1984: 63-4).

Leah Marcus has been the most notable critic of recent years to argue that James regarded traditional English customs as an integral branch of his power (1986: 4). Certainly the above quotations indicate a degree of autocratic self

interest, even cynicism, in the minds of James and an old Tory like Newcastle, as if popular pastimes were a sort of opiate and instrument of social control. In fact, however, their other writings highlight other concerns than mere expediency such as social cohesion, the peace and concord of civil society and Englishness or national identity.

In 1618 James issued a proclamation, widely called the *Book of Sports*, which his son Charles I re-issued in October 1633. The full title is *The King's Majesty's declaration to his subjects concerning lawful sports to be used* (Gardiner 1889: 99). James' own reason for making the declaration was as follows:

Whereas we did justly in our progress through Lancashire rebuke some Puritans and precise people, and took order that the like unlawful carriage should not be used by any of them hereafter, in the prohibiting and unlawful punishing of our good people for using their lawful recreations and honest exercises upon Sundays, and other Holy-days, after the afternoon sermon or service, we now find that two sorts of people wherewith that country is much infected, we mean Papists and Puritans, have maliciously traduced and calumniated those our just and honourable proceedings: and therefore, lest our reputation might upon the one side (though innocently) have some aspersion laid upon it, and that upon the other part our good people in that country be misled by the mistaking and misinterpretation of our meaning, we have therefore thought good hereby to clear and make our pleasure to be manifested to all our good people in those parts. (Gardiner 1889: 100)

In present day political parlance, James was supporting 'middle England' and fending off both kind of extremist, Puritan and Papist. His position on popular pastimes aligns him with Elizabeth's settlement. Newcastle's 1658/9 letter harks back to Elizabeth "whose Government Is the beste presedent for Englandes Govermente, absolutly" (Slaughter 1984: 45; Newcastle's spelling suggests he was partially dyslexic). Charles' reissuing of the same declaration carries a prefatory paragraph:

Our dear father of blessed memory, in his return from Scotland, coming through Lancashire, found that his subjects were debarred from lawful recreations upon Sundays after evening prayers ended, and upon Holy-days; and he prudently considered that, if these times were taken from them, the meaner sort who labour hard all the week should have no recreations at all to refresh their spirits: and after his return, he further saw that his loyal subjects in all other parts of his kingdom did suffer in the same kind, though perhaps not in the same degree: and did therefore in his princely wisdom publish a Declaration to all his loving subjects concerning lawful sports to be used at such times. . . (Gardiner 1889: 99)

In appealing for the support of his 'loyal subjects' Charles also implicitly appeals for the support of middle England. A distinguishing feature of Charles' re-issuing the declaration was the active collaboration of the Anglican Church under Archbishop Laud. Charles' court however was very different from that of James; whereas James had actually liked popular pastimes, Marcus argues that under Charles these were distanced from the court and sacramentalized, by which she presumably means, fell under the protection of the established

church (Marcus 1986: 5). Of course the Stuart programme of encouraging old folk and calendar customs met with strong opposition and became a focal point of political and religious controversy. The best summary of this controversy still remains that of Christopher Hill. I refer you to his 'Uses of Sabbatarianism' in *Society and Puritanism* (1964: 194-206).

Leah Marcus remarks that her book is not concerned with anthropology or ethnography but "to establish connections between royal theory and specific literary practice" (1986: 7). I believe that any such connection between royal theory in respect of traditional pastimes and literature is far more problematic than Marcus is acknowledging. Of course many recent communist states did appropriate folklore into what Althusser would have called a state ideological apparatus. However, we may question how far such folklore remains folklore. She quotes Herrick's argument of *Hesperides* (1648):

I SING of
Brookes, of Blossomes, Birds and Bowers
 Of *April, May, of June and July* - Flowers.
 I sing of
May-poles, Hock-carts, Wassails, Wakes,
 Of *Bride-grooms, Brides, and of their Bridall-cakes;*

and mentions his dedication to Prince Charles, the future Charles II. However, these rural customs are listed for decoration and prettiness and incorporate other literary traditions, pastoral and classical. This lyrical invocation of country customs is more sentiment than sacrament. It seems peculiarly inert.

The focus of Marcus' argument is even more difficult to hold if we move from lyric verse to drama. Let us reflect for a moment upon Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and ask a question which students are never asked nowadays: what is the function of folk material in the text of this play and how should it be staged?

Well, first we have to agree what the folk material is and we may well disagree; traditions of marriage and mid-summer for example. But just for the moment, let us consider Robin Goodfellow and the fairies. My response to this question would be that folk material has been reworked and gentrified to remind us comically of human coupling and copulation. However, to answer the second part of the question, so much would depend upon the actual production. Max Reinhardt's film with Mendelssohn's music conveys an ethereal dream world; present day productions often emphasise a Freudian interpretation and Bottom not infrequently has a huge penis in the love scenes. Nothing is known for certain of the first production of this play, though it is fair to assume that some in that audience believed in the reality of fairies.

Shakespeare was dead when the *Book of Sports* was proclaimed from many pulpits in 1618, and the *Dream* belongs to the fifteen nineties. This example may however warn us that the re-cycling of folk material in English Renaissance drama is a vast topic and fraught with problems which Marcus' formulation "to establish connections between royal theory and specific literary practice" cannot

confront; folk material can be very unruly, particularly if we include carnival, skimmingtons, chari-vari and the subversive potential of comic inversion. We cannot know precisely how or how much folk material was performed on stage. We surely should, however, take up the anthropological or ethnographical challenge and make an imaginative effort to penetrate some of the abundance of folk motifs, popular pastimes, folk song and dance material surviving in the drama, and not surrender to a dry critical formulation.

There is a further issue: the London commercial theatre did not, in general, have the resources to commission songs and dances from composers and dancing masters; only the Court, and possibly the companies of boy actors drawn from choirs like St. Paul's and the Chapel Royal, could do that. Dramatists therefore supplying the commercial theatre drew upon popular ballads, published songs and music, and dances from all over the British Isles and from Europe, notably France, Italy and Spain as ready-made material. *Twelfth Night* contains at least ten songs as well as several instrumental pieces (Mahood 1984: 194-205). These songs derive from both traditional and published material. Ophelia's snatches of song in her madness in Act IV scene V of *Hamlet* are all drawn from popular ballads (Jenkins 1990: 536-43). The Bergomask dance at the end of the play within a play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was a rustic dance for two very appropriate to the play's content; the play itself ends in a song and dance in which all participated, an '*omnium gatherum*' for as many as will, thereby emphasising social cohesion. Self evidently such folk and popular material was part of stage semiotics, reinforcing aspects of personality, states of mind, coupling and community and so on. It was not a digression or gratuitous diversion but tightly integrated. Shakespeare may have been the most outstanding practitioner but the use of song and dance for stage semiotics was integral to all theatrical practice before the Civil War. The use of folk material in the drama therefore especially in circumstances that would seem 'prima facie' to exemplify royalist support for folk customs, deserves our close attention. The folk material identified may not be inertly programmatic like the folk dance displays of old communist regimes, but may prove in context subtly subversive or surprisingly polyvalent. We should further bear in mind that a distinction between popular and élite culture should not be drawn too tightly. There was an obvious osmosis; court masques and entertainments commonly re-worked folk material for an élite audience.



Two of the most obvious adaptors and re-workers of folk material for the Stuart stage were Ben Jonson and Richard Brome. They are also obvious candidates for the possible exemplification of Marcus' royalist theory of the politics of mirth on the stage; she devotes much of her book to Jonson. I have elsewhere argued in an article published by the *Folk Music Journal* in December, 1999, that Brome may well have had a hand in the most important collection of English country dances, the Playford collection of 1650/51 a very large number of which were derived from or used in plays (Whitlock 1999: 548-78). I do, of course, speak of

the private as well as the public stage.

It is important not only to read Brome with Jonson, but also Jonson with Brome. Jonson was a largely self educated classicist. His early entertainments and masques are very learned and shaped by his reading of the classics. His *Masque of Queens* of February 1609 however marks a change, for it was this masque which, as Jonson diplomatically states, at the behest of Anne of Denmark, contained an antimasque: "Some *Dauunce*, or shew, that might praecede hers, and have the place of a foyle, or false-*Masque*" (Herford and Simpson 1941: 7.282). The witches of this anti-masque seem literary and derivative. This anti-masque device is not developed in the next two masques, *Oberon* and *Love Freed From Ignorance And Folly* (1611). It is the anti-masque of *Love Restored*, Twelfth Night 1612, which marks a new voice with reworked folk material and reference to morris dancing, ballads, wild music, Robin Goodfellow, country-maids, hot-cockles, in short "rude good fellowship" (Herford and Simpson 1941: 379). There is indeed a significant change in voice. James is addressed directly and familiarly. It is folk material reworked, knockabout that James enjoyed. Perhaps a familiarity with James inspired Jonson's confident writing. Leah Marcus comments that this masque (or its anti-masque) "inaugurates the important Jonsonian theme of asserting a tie between humble devotion to the King and a love of traditional pastimes" (Marcus 1986: 29). Perhaps, but there is also no precedent in Jonson's writing for folk material, which from this time onwards, became such a feature of Jonson's antimasques, and entertainments; and Jonson's record suggests that humble devotion was not his style. A contemporary poem like *Penshurst* written before the death of Prince Henry in November 1612, strongly confirms an organicist, conservative social philosophy.

Now, the chronology of the relationship between Jonson and Brome is one of English Renaissance drama's great mysteries. Brome's date of birth and origins are not known. The first surviving reference to him is in *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) a sort of city of London folk festival: "(I am looking, lest the Poet heare me, or his man Master Brome, behind the Arras)," says the Stage-Keeper in his Induction (Herford and Simpson 1941: 6.13). Brome's position behind the Arras suggests an assistant's role. Jonson's well known dedicatory verses to Brome's *The Northern Lass* acted 1629, published 1632, praises Brome for having served his stage apprenticeship. Perhaps Jonson educated and trained Brome; but Brome's joining Jonson's service has a close chronological coincidence with the incorporation of folk material in Jonson's masques and entertainments.¹ The folk dance and ballad material in Brome's comedies is so abundant that strictly he wrote a form of ballad opera. *The Antipodes* (acted 1638) alone has upwards of twenty musical items, ballads, dances, instrumental pieces and ends in a masque to Harmony. Anyone seeking to demonstrate the use of music on the Stuart commercial stage could not choose a more exemplary text. *A Jovial Crew* (acted 1641) was repeatedly revived from the Restoration and converted into a comic opera in 1731, which had a long stage life (Brome 1968: xii). No modern production does him justice.

1. The best discussion is Kaufman 1961, chapter II.

Brome was clearly a master of dialect, northern, middle Cornish and Cockney in *The Northern Lass*, Somerset in *The Sparagus Gardens* (1635), song and dance (Brome 1966).² Jonson never admitted collaboration. Perhaps he was too proud; but physically he was himself a most unlikely dancer. The records tell us that the dancing masters of the masques commonly were paid more than Jonson or Inigo Jones that is, librettist or stage designer; but these dancing masters, often French, rehearsed the aristocrats. Who advised the professional actors who played in the anti-masques where so much folk material was concentrated and reworked? It is possible to discern a collaborative role for Brome. Hence my remark that we should also read Jonson with Brome.

Such a possibility may throw an unexpected light upon Jonson's well known anger that his own play *The New Inn* notably failed in January 1629, whereas Brome's *The Love-Sick Maid* was acted at court by the same King's men the following April, with great success. Perhaps *The Love-sick Maid* is not a lost play but the earlier title of *The Northern Lasse* also acted by the King's men in July 1629. Both titles fit the content. The revised title names the play after a ballad used in the performance. The surviving text contains eleven songs, a masque with willow garlands, a song sung to mock a female scold, at least three instrumental pieces and a remarkable incident in which a lady's man and gentleman usher, Humphrey Howdee is promised fresh employment with the heroine Constance who is 'diseas'd with melanchollie' and inducted into his new job by executing the courtesies of honouring and the dance reprises standard to the country dances of Playford's *The English Dancing Master* (Brome 1966: 3.71). Brome's play was a smash-hit. Jonson's anguish may have arisen at his being forced to recognise that Brome's entertainment skills exceeded his. The key to those skills was a mastery of folklore and popular culture. In his dedicatory verses to Brome's publication of *The Northern Lasse* (1632) Jonson notably praised his former servant as 'my loving friend'. Perhaps Jonson still needed his skills. Since 1626 Jonson had suffered from dropsy and palsy and became bed-ridden.

In *Love's Welcome at Bolsover*, 30th July 1634, Jonson pilloried Inigo Jones and in consequence was dismissed from writing masques. The incident is very well known, and often treated as a clash of two huge and jealous egos, or more abstractly, as a profound difference between the importance of the words and the importance of scenery and setting. I know of no analysis of the folk material directed against Jones. First some facts:

The Earl, later Marquis and Duke of Newcastle, employed Jonson to create two masques to entertain Charles and Henrietta at Welbeck and Bolsover in Nottinghamshire. Jonson's differences with Jones went back to 1612 and in 1619 he told Drummond that Jones was 'an arrant knave' (Herford and Simpson 1941: 1.145). In *A Tale of A Tub* 1635, Jonson in an early suppressed draft caricatured Jones as Vitruvius Hoop. A strong feature of both Newcastle masques or entertainments is the volume of reworked folk material which they contain. Newcastle was a patron of Jonson and a Brome dedicatee (*The Covent*

2. The editing is minimal, there is no line numbering, and the texts are virtual facsimiles.

Garden Weeded) and attitudes towards popular folk culture may well be a linking shared interest.

The offending passage in the last masque or entertainment that Jonson wrote is the following:

After the Banquet, the King and Queene, retir'd, were entertain'd with Coronell Vitruvius his Oration to his Dance

of Mechanickes.

VIT. Come forth, boldly put forth, i' your Holy-day Clothes, every Mothers Sonne of you. This is the *King*, and *Queenes*, Majesticall Holy-day. My Lord has it granted from them; I had it granted from my Lord: and doe give it unto you *gratis*, that is *bonâ fide*, with the faith of a Surveyour, your Coronell *Vitruvius*. Doe you know what a Surveyour is now? I tell you, a Supervisor! A hard word, that; but it may be softned, and brought in, to signifie something. An Overseer! One that oversee-eth you. A busie man! And yet I must seeme busier then I am, (as the Poet sings, but which of them, I will not now trouble my selfe to tell you.) O Captaine *Smith!* o(u)r Hammer-armed *Vulcan!* with your three Sledges, you are our Musique, you come a little too tardie; but wee remit that, to your polt-foot, we know you are lame. Plant your selves there, and beat your time out at the Anvile. *Time*, and *Measure*, are the Father, and Mother of Musique, you know, and your Coronell *Vitruvius* knowes a little. O *Chesil!* our curious Carver! and Master *Maul*, our Free-Mason; *Squire Summer*, our Carpenter, and *Tnybil* his Man; stand you foure, there, i' the second ranke, worke upon that ground. And you, *Dresser*, the Plomber; *Quarrel*, the Glasier; *Fret*, the Plaisterer; and *Beater*, the Morterman; put all you on i' the reere, as finishers in true footing, with Tune, and Measure. *Measure* is the Soule of a Dance, and *Tune* the Tickle-foot thereof. Use Holy-day legges, and have 'hem: Spring, Leape, Caper, and Gingle; Pumpes, and Ribbands, shall be your reward, till the Soles of your feet swell, with the surfet of your light and nimble Motion.

Well done, my Musicall, Arithmetickall, Geometricall Gamesters! or rather my true Mathematicall Boyes! It is carried, in number, weight, and measure, as if the Aires were all Harmonie, and the Figures a well-tim'd Proportion! I cry still; Deserve Holy-dayes, and have Ôhem. I'le have a whole Quarter of the yeare cut out for you in Holy-dayes, and lac'd with Statute-Tunes [perhaps like a statute-cap, to be played and danced on Sundays and holidays], and Dances; fitted to the activitie of your Tressels, to which you shall trust, Ladds, in the name of your *Iniquo Vitruvius*. Hay for the Lilly, for, and the blended Rose. (Herford and Simpson 1941: 7.809-10)

Jones is caricatured as a military overseer, and like Chaucer's Man of Law, very self important; but the knife goes deeper: Jones is a gaffer of a morris side of mechanicals – the scene is organised around four couples of male dancers – honouring Charles and Henrietta with a popular form of folk dance at that time executed by men only. Jones died unmarried and very possibly was gay. Clearly he had successfully assimilated himself to the court – Van Dyck painted his portrait – and he complained to Charles of this caricature and thereby got Jonson the sack.

Why was Jones so annoyed? Well, Jonson had broken the rules of the game as set out in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*, he had put an identifiable figure on

a stage. Jonson had also reminded Jones of his origins as an apprentice cooper, a mechanical. We do not know what took place on stage or in the acting space, but commonly the gaffer of a morris side marshalls his team, is drunk and carries an inflated pig's bladder with which he bashes his dancers on the bottom to liven them. He also commonly gets involved in back chat with the watching spectators too. Jones has been stripped of status and reduced to anti-masque. Further Jones is a Welsh surname and doubtless Inigo, though born in London, was the son or descendent of much satirised immigrants into London. The capital had been flooded with Welsh, Irish and Scots immigrants. The speech reads like a send-up of a Welsh speaker of English. Dylan Thomas would have been proud!

No incident could more clearly highlight the gulf between Charles' Court and the rural pastimes allegedly espoused under royal protection. There is another feature: Jones had brought classical and Italian architecture to London, indeed at that very moment was involved in planning the new piazza and church at Covent Garden which we see today. Under his influence, London was abandoning Tudor for Italian design. Jonson is attacking a skilful and domineering social climber for being un-English, and possibly un-masculine.

Folk material is then reworked for the stage to emphasise values of Englishness. It is coming free of the Court party and what has been described in the contemporary Spain of Philip III as neo-aristocraticization, and becoming part of an ideological contest for the political middle ground with or without Crown support.

Brome continued Jonson's concept of comedy as both entertaining and reforming society. In some dedicatory verses to Brome's *Five New Plays* printed and published by Andrew Crook in 1659, addressed to Andrew Brome, apparently not a relation, T. S. wrote:

When he strook *nice*, he let the *person* go,
Wounded not *men* but *manners*; nor did do
Like him who when he painted *heaven and hel*,
Amongst the *damm'd* shades and those that fell,
Did draw his Enemies face. (Brome 1966: 2)

Brome does not exhibit Jonson's aggression. He is a conciliator who uses a sort of holiday disorder to generate social harmony and moral renewal.

Brome's *The Covent Garden Weeded* (probably 1635) obviously relates to Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*; Justice Cockbrain who would like to weed Covent Garden states that he imitates Justice Adam Overdoe. The play opens with discussion of the speculative building of Covent Garden and the involvement of the Surveyor Inigo Jones: "Here's Architecture exprest indeed! ... How he [i.e. Inigo Jones] has wedded strength to beauty; state to uniformity; commodiousnesse with perspicuity!" (Brome 1966: 2.1-2); "[The speculative builder Rooksbill] has pil'd up a Leash of thousand pounds in walls and windows there (Brome 1966: 2.2). There is then irony at the expense of Jones; houses are in rows or terraces, Italianate red and white has replaced Tudor black and white, have balconies, and are constructed to attract wealthy provincials to set up in town. A wealthy West countryman Crosswill turns up with his family to take a lease. His elder

son, Gabriel had been a lively young gentleman in Somerset, but after a love affair miscarried has turned Puritan or precisian. So Gabriel must be cured and we have a typical Brome plot of comic inversion. Of course James had wanted the gentry to remain in the country to foster old customs and social harmony. Crosswill has brought his family to live in an Italianate environment, of Italian fiddle playing, and of Italian courtesans. Gabriel's period as a Puritan killjoy in effect represents those who do not support music, song, dance and old customs of good cheer as un-masculine and effete, hence Crosswill's blunt question to Gabriel: "I will now put a question to you concerning the flesh. What think you of yond Virgin there, his daughter?" (Brome 1966: 2.32). Gabriel is tongue-tied and can only hum an evasion. He appears to have lost any sex drive and has no wife in the coupling of the dénouement. In contrast, before his conversion to Puritanism, Gabriel

was the Ring-leader of all the youthful Frie, to Faires, to Wakes, to May-games, footbal-matches, anything that had but noise and tumult in it; then he was Captain of the young train-band, and exercised the youth of twenty parishes in martial discipline. O he did love to imitate a souldier the best, - and so in everything, that there was not an handsom maid in an whole County could be quiet for him. (Brome 1966: 2.51)

Gabriel's younger brother, Mihil, in contrast, is a jolly spendrift student of Law who loves the Christmas revels at the Inns of Court and is set up as a comic opposite. It is important to remember that young men went to the Inns of Court from all parts of the British Isles as much to acquire social graces and become skilful dancers as to master Law and that the Inns of Court became a social focus for the transmission of folk culture and its gentrification in the Court masque:

The antimasque dances (or antics, as they were also called) ... were usually performed by professionals (and sometimes by the highly skilled dancers of The Inns of Court), the Inns of Court men, many of whom were from the remoter countries, introduced elements of popular country entertainments like mummings' plays, sword dances, morris dances and maypole dances. Many of these dances are parts of seasonal rituals and are symbolic representations of fertility, sustenance, or resurrection. (Sabol 1978: 12, 14)

The foreword to Playford's *The English Dancing Master* (1650/51), very possibly written by Brome, pays tribute to "the Gentlemen of the Innes of Court, whose sweet and ayry Activity has crowned their Grand Solemnities with Admiration to all Spectators" (Dean-Smith 1957: 2). Playford's title stresses Englishness. Mihil tries to stage a study session for his father who has just come up to town, and thus conceal his rakish life, for the following to ensue:

Cross. Away with books. Away with Law. Away with madnesse. *I,* God blesse thee, and make thee his servant, and defend thee from Law, *I* say. Take up these books, sarrah, and carry them presently into *Pauls* Church-yard dee see, and change them all for Histories, as pleasant as profitable; *Arthur of Britain, Primalion of Greece, Amadis of Gaul,* and such like de see.

Mi. I hope he do's but jest.

Cross. And do you heare, Sirrah.

Belt. *I* Sir.

Cross. Get *Bells* work, and you can, into the bargain.

Belt. Which *Bell*, sir? *Adam Bell*, with *Clim o'th'Clough*, and *William of Cloudefley*.

Coss. *Adam Bell* you Asse? Valiant *Bell* that kill'd the Dragon.

Belt. You mean St. *George*.

Cross. Sir *Jolthead*, do I not. I'll teach you to chop logick, with me.

Mi. Sfoot, how shall I answer my borrow'd books? Stay *Belt*. Pray Sir, do not change my books.

Cross. Sir, sir, I will change them and you too: Did I leave thee here to learn fashions and manners, that thou mightst cary thy self like a Gentleman, and dost thou wast they brains in learning a language that I understand not a word of? ha! I had been as good have brought thee up among the wild *Irish*. (Brome 1966: 2.23)

Crosswill wants his son to read tales of knight-errantry and learn the fashions and manners of a gentleman at the Inns of Court. This, of course, is English 'downrightness'. Too many Puritans were lawyers.

Brome's folk ballad opera technique, is equally clear in *The English Moor or the Mock Marriage* (1637; Brome 1966: 2. 13-16). Within very few lines Brome has young Millicent who is unhappy in an enforced marriage with a miserly old city plutocrat singing traditional ballad bawdy; a sow-gelder blows a horn, then a masque skimmington (or chari-vari) and a masquers' dance follow. Clearly for Brome music and dance were like processes of thought. Millicent's old usurer husband Quicksands is found already to have a child by marriage with a servant in the provinces, Norfolk, and she is freed from the marriage. There is a lot of comic disguise – indeed blacking up – as in Jonson's *Masque of Queens* which is actually cited in the text (Brome 1966: 2.38) and is a reference highly suggestive that Brome had witnessed or been associated with the performance in 1609. Interestingly in this play Brome caricatures inherited gentility in the character of Buzzard who says of himself "I am a gentleman, though spoil'd i'the breeding. The *Buzzards* are all gentlemen. We came in with the Conqueror" (Brome 1966: 2.43). Brome is no sycophantic court hanger on and his play *The Queen and Concubine* (probably 1635-36), a reworking of the Patient Griselda motif, is partly a direct attack upon court sycophancy; and rural pastimes, dancing, song, wassail-tide – indeed folklore – have a clear role in purging a corrupt court.

The New Academy (possibly 1635) has some relationship with William Cavendish's play *The Variety*, to which Brome wrote dedicatory verses. Both convey a mockery of French dancing masters against which are set "Bull beef and Mustard English looks" (Brome 1966: 2.87). The comedy of the play partly derives from the fact that French and English gentlemen have swapped the education of their offspring, but the play ends with an '*English Omnium Gatherum*' or what is commonly called, a dance for as many as will. English country dancing has the last word.

The Antipodes (acted in 1638), to be revived at the Globe theatre in August 2000, has been much worked over in terms of 'the world turned upside down,' that is, the politics of pre-Civil War English society. I have strong reservations. Comic inversion, chari-vari, skimmington, carnival are all such common features of Brome's dramatic technique that there is nothing surprising in a young man Perigrine, melancholy mad, whose wife is still a virgin after three years of

marriage. He has a longing to travel, and is cured by a pretended journey to a land where sexual and social roles are reversed. The deception of the young husband is achieved by actors in the employ of a Lord Letoy. The character of Lord Letoy could well reflect the qualities Brome admired in Newcastle:

But tell me *Blazge*, what say they of me, ha?

Bla. They say my Lord you look more like a pedlar,
Then like a Lord, and live more like an Emperor.

Let. Why there they ha' me right, let others shine
Abroad in cloth o'bodkin, my broad cloath,
Pleases mine eye as well, my body better,
Besides I'm sure tis paid for (to their envy)
I buy with ready money; and at home here
With as good meat, as much magnificence,
As costly pleafures, and as rare delights,
Can satisfie my appetite and senses,
As they with all their publique shewes, and braveries.
They runne at ring, and tilt 'gainst one another,
I and my men can play a match at football,
Wrastle a handsome fall, and pitch the barre,
And crack the cudgells, and a pate sometimes,
Twould doe you good to see't.

Bla. More then to feel't.

Let. They hunt the Deere, the Hare, the Fox, the Otter,
Polcates, or Harlots, what they please, whilst I
And my mad Grigs, my men can runne at base,
And breathe our selves at Barley-breake, and dancing.

Bla. Yes my Lord i'the countrey when you are there.

Let. And now I am here i'th city, Sir, I hope
I please my selfe with more choyse home delights,
Then most men of my ranke.

Bla. I know my Lord

Your house in substance is an Amphitheater
Of exercise and pleasure.

Let. Sir, I have

For exercises, Fencing, Dancing, Vaulting,
And for delight, Musique of all best kindes;
Stage-playes, and Masques, are nightly my pastimes.

And all within myselfe. My owne men are

My Musique, and my Actors, I keepe not

A man or boy but is of quality:

The worst can sing or play his part o'th' Violls,

And act his part too in a comedy.

For which I lay my bravery on their backs;

And where another Lord undoes his followers,

I maintaine mine like Lords. And there's my bravery.

Hoboyes. *A service as for dinner, passe over the stage, borne by many Servitors, richly apparreld, doing honour to Letoy as they passe.*

Ex.

Now tell me *Blazge*, looke these like Pedler's men? (Brome 1966: 3.244-46)

The Antipodes is unique for the presence of what today we should call a psychiatrist, Hughball, who advises on a cure for Perigrine's condition. Part of that cure lies in the recreational practices of Lord Letoy who remains close to his retainers and shares their traditional pastimes and customs. He is not a bankrupt courtier imitating French or Spanish ways. He is a cultured English aristocrat, who flaunts his Englishness. The play ends in songs, dance and a short masque of Harmony's triumph over Discord. As so often in Brome, the play's comic resolution lies in music, song and communal celebration.



Leah Marcus' book *The Politics of Mirth* sought to establish a connection between Stuart royal theory and specific literary practice by reference to the *Book of Sports*, but leaving out any detailed account of the folklore involved. In the drama her argument fails. Folklore is something done, performed. In dramatic contexts it is exceedingly polyvalent perhaps uncontrollable. Jonson's caricature of Inigo Jones shows folklore, officially espoused by the court, turned against a favoured courtier. In the hands of Jonson and Brome we find folklore used not to justify any explicit absolutist programme nor to apologise for royalist theory but to emphasise values of harmony, Englishness, good cheer, tolerance, a conservatism gradualist and expedient, which has a very long history in English politics. We have only to think of Burke's

Reflections upon the Revolution in France and his hostility to societies new cast upon political theory. Jonson and Brome seem to regard folk or communal celebrations as a sort of community cement.

I have elsewhere argued that Brome probably wrote the foreword to Playford's *The English Dancing Master* of 1650/51 and possibly had a hand in the selection of dances. One of these is called *Brome* (number 74) and is the eponymous tune from his play *The Northern Lass* (1632). Another of the dances in that collection is called *The Shepherds' Holy day* (number 101). This was the alternative title to Jonson's masque *Pan's Anniversary* which was probably performed on King James' birthday 19 June 1620. Pan represents James as the presiding genius of rural sports. Another (number 77), a fine melody and still extremely popular dance almost certainly was one of those performed at Welbeck or Bolsover, perhaps at the very occasion when Inigo Jones was savaged. Its title is *Newcastle*. Playford's dances came out after the death of Charles I and must be seen as in part an attempt to reach across a fissured society not by referring its readers and dancers back to autocracy and divine right but to fellowship and good cheer and Englishness.

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