

Eagle on the Tun', which he takes to be a 'punning rebus on Morton's name' (p 151). Quite likely the incunabulum itself contains misreadings of the copy manuscript; if so, this phrase probably represents one of them.

- 19 Ross, *Edward iv*, 344.
20 remembrance: *for remembrance* (?)
21 Respocio: *for Responcio*

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Another Look at the English Staging of an Epiphany Play at the Council of Constance¹

The Council of Constance (1414–1418), arguably the most important general council between the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 and the Council of Trent of the mid-sixteenth century, met to resolve three crises confronting the Church: the papal schism that had divided Latin Christendom since 1378, the heresies founded by Wyclif and Hus, and widespread clerical abuses. While it responded to all three of these problems, the council's greatest achievement was surely its election of Martin v in November 1417 after it had deposed two of the schismatic popes, John xxiii and Benedict xxiii, and persuaded the third, Gregory xxii, to abdicate.

In a previous issue of this newsletter André de Mandach drew attention to the report of an Epiphany play that was twice staged at this council by the leaders of the English delegation; he concluded with the hope that 'further research may reveal the nature of these performances; they give a glimpse of courtly entertainment, perhaps dramatic, that combines secular and sacred in an intriguing fashion'.² The present article examines the political context of these performances and suggests that they were probably staged for propaganda purposes in support of the policies of the English delegation.

According to Ulrich von Richental,³ the Constance burgher whose journal provides an important eyewitness account of this council, the English bishops hosted two banquets that included the enactment of scenes associated with the feast of the Epiphany: the Nativity with the Visitation of the Magi, and Herod's Slaughter of the Innocents. The first of these banquets was held on Sunday, 24 January 1417, for the prominent citizens of Constance; on the following Sunday, 31 January,⁴ the English hosted a more sumptuous banquet with a more splendid performance for a large group of German nobles and prelates and for the Emperor Sigismund, who had just returned to Constance on 27 January after an absence of about eighteen months.

There are two points to be made before examining the context of these performances: first, there is no other known evidence for dramatic activity at this council; second, Richental's comments on the skill of the players and the quality of the costumes and properties suggest that considerable expense and prior planning went into the staging of these performances. These observations beg the question of why the leaders of the English nation at Constance went to so much trouble to sponsor this particular perfor-

mance for their German guests. An explanation may be offered by considering the relations between the German emperor and the English delegation at this council in early 1417.

The long journey from which Sigismund had just returned in January 1417 yielded three significant results. In Spain, he had engineered the Treaty of Narbonne, whereby most of the remaining supporters of the last schismatic pope, Benedict XXIII, promised to withdraw their obedience from him and join the council in deposing him. Sigismund had then visited the king of France, but their already poor relations only worsened as a result. Finally, the emperor went to England where he concluded a military alliance, known as the Treaty of Canterbury, with Henry v on 15 August 1416.⁵

On 24 September, five weeks after that treaty was signed, two English bishops – John Catterick of Coventry-Lichfield and John Wakering of Norwich – arrived at Constance; according to Richental, they were accompanied by an unnamed doctor.⁶ Two weeks later, on 7 October, Bishop Richard Clifford of London appeared at the council.⁷ These are the last known arrivals of English delegates until Philip Morgan and several other royal emissaries appeared at Constance on 2 February 1417, after the banquets and performances described by Richental. Although the king's commission to Catterick, Wakering and Clifford had been issued on 20 July 1416,⁸ it is very likely that Clifford, at least, was present when Sigismund and Henry reached their agreement three weeks later, and then departed for Constance.⁹ It is also worth noting that Clifford is the only English prelate besides Robert Hallum, the widely-acknowledged leader of the English delegation, who was specifically mentioned by Richental as a host of the banquets and entertainments of January 1417; it is curious that Richental did not mention John Catterick who was the president of the English *natio* for that month and thus played a special role in welcoming Sigismund to the council. It seems probable, then, that it was Clifford who brought to Constance the costumes and properties, and perhaps even the actors, of the Epiphany play, along with the gold and silver plate on which the banquets were served.

It is also likely that the unnamed doctor who arrived at Constance with Catterick and Wakering was a certain Oxford theologian named Richard Fleming,¹⁰ who would soon distinguish himself at the council as a preacher. It has long been known that Fleming's eulogy for Bishop Hallum of Salisbury, who died at Constance in early September 1417, served to announce a shift in the English policy regarding a dispute known as the 'priority conflict' that had brought the council to a stalemate during the summer of 1417. In this controversy, Sigismund, the Germans and the English were united in insisting that the council enact sweeping ecclesiastical reforms before electing a new pope; the French, Italian and Spanish nations and most of the cardinals argued instead that first the unity of the church must be restored with a papal election and only then should reform proceed under the aegis of the new pope. In his funeral sermon for Hallum, Fleming proposed the compromise by which limited reforms were approved by the council and then a new pope was elected.¹¹

A survey of Fleming's other known sermons from this council makes it clear that he was surely the most important English preacher at Constance in 1417, and thus a major spokesman for the English nation. In addition to his eulogy for Hallum and three other sermons noted in Heinrich Finke's register of Constance sermons,¹² Fleming delivered

at least two more conciliar sermons in that year.¹³ This makes him by far the most active English preacher at Constance in 1417; but the case for his role as spokesman is based more on the content than the mere frequency of his preaching. Fleming's eulogy for Hallum, which helped resolve the priority conflict, has already been mentioned; it will be shown that it was also Fleming who, in his debut sermon at Constance, first announced the English position in the coming priority conflict. It is probably no coincidence that this important sermon was preached on the feast of the Epiphany, 1417, a few weeks prior to the English staging of an Epiphany play.

Fleming's sermon, known by the scriptural pericope that forms its *thema*, '*Surge illuminare Iherusalem*' (Isa 60:1), is a very learned and rhetorically powerful expression of reform ideals that often repeats the prophet's exhortation in urging the Church, 'Jerusalem', to 'arise' from the depths into which it has sunk and 'shine forth' from the darkness enveloping it.¹⁴ The sermon is remarkable and probably unique in that it was intentionally designed as a commentary on the conciliar decretal '*Haec sancta*' of 6 April 1415 in which the council had declared its supreme authority in the church and defined its three goals: the healing of the papal schism, the extirpation of heresy, and the '*reformatio ecclesiae in capite et in membris*' (reformation of the church in both its head and its members). As Thomas Morrissey points out, not only does Fleming make specific reference to this decree, but its three goals also correspond 'to the tripartite theme of Fleming's address'.¹⁵ What Morrissey did not notice is that Fleming takes a particular political stand in this sermon. At the end of the sermon's *membrum primum*, which deals with the papal schism, Fleming makes the following important statement:

It is clear that the unrestrained extension of such fringes [of papal authority] and the vicious abuse of ecclesiastical power have been virtually the entire cause of the schism. And unless this synod of Constance (may it be constant in this work) will provide for appropriate remedies against it, an identical defect shall necessarily occur again because of a similar deficiency.¹⁶

And in the sermon's third part, devoted to the issue of clerical reform, he makes a related assertion:

Therefore, this most holy synod has been gathered especially so that the church may be purged in head and in members from these evils by the antidote of inviolable and effective reformation....¹⁷

Fleming's point is clearly this: it would be foolish to elect a new pope until after the abuses that caused the schism in the first place have been eliminated through reform; in other words, reform should take priority over the election of a new pope.

This is the first known public statement by any person at Constance of what would later be the Anglo-German position in the priority struggle. Sigismund himself and members of the German delegation apparently refrained from taking a public stand on this issue until several months later. It is virtually certain, though, that the emperor's

ambiguity was a deliberate strategy intended to assure the success of the proceedings against Benedict; he no doubt intended all along to promote major reforms before an election would take place. Sigismund's attitude in January 1417 is revealed in John Forester's letter to Henry v, written at Constance on 2 February 1417:

My lords of Salisbury [Hallum] and Chester [Catterick]¹⁸ with the consent of all your other ambassadors are fully disposed to forward reform in the Church, in head and in members. They will not have any regard to any benefice which they hold, for they do not want this goal to be thwarted; and of this I do not doubt that these my two lords will always under all circumstances hold by the good advice and deliberation of your brother, the king of the Romans [Sigismund].¹⁹

Significantly, Forester does not mention Benedict or the issue of unity. Not only does this letter attest to Sigismund's commitment to reform, but it also suggests that he and Henry had already reached an agreement on this issue, presumably during the previous summer. In the very next passage Forester relates how at High Mass on Sunday, 31 January Sigismund wore the robes of the Garter and the king's royal collar, which Henry had bestowed upon the emperor during the latter's visit to England the previous year.²⁰ Forester goes on to report that later that day Sigismund joined the duke of Bavaria and the burgrave of Nürnberg in dining with Richard Clifford;²¹ this is surely a reference to the second banquet at which the Epiphany play described by Richental was performed.²²

Considering all of these circumstances, it seems very likely that there was an intentional connection between Fleming's sermon, with its reformist message anticipating the coming conflict over priorities, and the two performances of an Epiphany play shortly after that sermon was delivered, especially the second one viewed by Sigismund and the ecclesiastical and temporal lords of the Empire. If this supposition is correct, then the purpose of the English bishops in staging the play would have been to apprise their audiences of the message Fleming had conveyed in '*Surge*' or, for those who had been present when he preached it, to reiterate his main points, especially those regarding reform and the papal election that were to be the basis of the Anglo-German alliance in the coming months.

Fleming's sermon is naturally replete with references to the account of the Nativity in Matthew 2:1–16, the subject of the Feast of the Epiphany in the Latin church. Indeed, the scenes Richental mentions in his account of the English banquets were those used by Fleming to illustrate several key points in his very politicized sermon. For example, Fleming claims that the rule of the three schismatic popes has been 'truly Herodian': just as Herod deceitfully asked the Magi to lead him to the Holy Family so that he might adore Jesus, these popes never really intended in their hearts to abdicate for the common good as they had promised to do. Fleming then notes that even worse than Herod's cruel massacre of the infants of Bethlehem has been the damnation of countless innocent souls to hell because of the schism. In contrast to the popes of the schism, the pope to be elected by the council should be 'pure, meek, and content with little' like the infant Jesus.²³ In

discussing heresy, Fleming likens heretics to the magi when they forsook the star (faith) and turned to human assistance (flawed reason) in searching for the newborn Saviour.²⁴ Finally, at the end of the section on reform Fleming explains that, once the church has been completely purged of abuses, its priests shall offer to God the 'gold of excellent lifestyle', the 'frankincense of devout administration', and the 'myrrh of severe correction' in guiding their flocks.²⁵ The three gifts also figure prominently in the section on the schism where Fleming notes that the new pope should refuse the gold of simony; be humble in receiving the frankincense of praise; and be receptive to the myrrh of reproach.²⁶

If there was indeed an intentional linkage between Fleming's Epiphany sermon and the Epiphany play twice performed shortly afterwards, the audiences might have been expected to draw that connection without any prompting. But it seems more likely that some form of oral message would have been conveyed with the portrayal of the scenes. The fact that Richental mentions only 'images and gestures' suggests that the performances themselves were pantomimes; although he makes no reference to narration, it is possible that some kind of commentary was provided only to the politically powerful audience at the second banquet, which he probably did not attend. If so, Fleming himself may have delivered a running gloss, as the scenes were being enacted, for the benefit of the emperor and other German magnates, serving as the '*doctor expositor*' who appears in the surviving texts of some medieval religious plays.

Unless further evidence comes to light, the nature of the relationship between Fleming's Epiphany sermon and the play described by Richental will remain only a matter for speculation; but the circumstantial evidence that there was such a connection is quite strong. Very likely, these apparently unique and costly performances were staged for a reason that goes well beyond that of pious entertainment and edification. It is no overstatement to claim that virtually every public sacred act at this council had a political side to it; the example of Sigismund's attendance at High Mass on 31 January wearing the regalia given to him by Henry v is a relevant case in point. As André de Mandach astutely pointed out, it is the combination of secular and sacred that makes Richental's report of this play so intriguing; indeed, that same dual nature suggests why these performances were staged by the leaders of the English nation at Constance: because this Epiphany play probably served as the vehicle for political propaganda.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Professors Alexandra Johnston of the University of Toronto and Christopher Crowder of Queen's University (retired) for their invaluable guidance in my research on this topic.
- 2 André de Mandach, 'English "dramatic" performances at the Council of Constance, 1417', *REED Newsletter* 7.2 (1982), 26–8; the article includes editions and translations of this record. These passages had been previously edited and discussed by Eckehard Simon in 'The home town of the *Schwäbische Weihnachtsspiel* (ca. 1420) and its original setting', *Euphorion* 73 (1979), 318–19.
- 3 Cf. E.K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage* 2 (Oxford, 1903), 101–2, n. 2; and Karl Young,

The Drama of the Medieval Church 2 (Oxford, 1933), 419–20. Both Chambers and Young cite Eberhardus Dacher, rather than Richental, for this report. Their source was Hermann von der Hardt, *Magnum oecumenicum Constantiense concilium* 4 (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1696–1700), 1088–9. According to Christopher Crowder, Dacher was a later Constance chronicler who appropriated much information, including this record, from Richental's journal.

- 4 Manuscripts of Richental's journal disagree over the date of the second banquet; Simon ('*Weihnachtsspiel*', 319) pointed out this discrepancy, noting that one copy he consulted reads 'Uff den fritag vor der liechtmeß...' (29 January), while another has 'Am Sontag vor der liechtmeß...' (31 January). De Mandach used the most recent edition by Otto Feger which has the later date, but some scholars have relied upon older editions with the earlier date; see, for instance, the translation of Richental's journal by Louise Loomis in *The Council of Constance: The Unification of the Church* (New York, 1961), 148. The later date is surely the correct one; see below, note 22.
- 5 C.M.D. Crowder, 'Henry V, Sigismund, and the Council of Constance, a re-examination', *Historical Studies iv: papers read before the fifth Irish Conference of Historians* (London, 1963), 93–110.
- 6 Loomis, *Constance*, 145.
- 7 This is according to another Constance diarist, Giacomo Cerretano; see Heinrich Finke (ed), *Acta concilii Constanciensis* 2 (Münster, 1923), 347. Hermann von der Hardt, citing Cerretano, misdated Clifford's entry into Constance as occurring three days, rather than two weeks, after the arrival of Catterick and Wakering; see *Concilium* 4, 909.
- 8 Thomas Rymer (ed), *Foedera, conventiones, literae, et cujuscunque generis acta publica, inter reges Angliae et alios...* 3rd. ed. (London, 1740) 4.2, 168.
- 9 Clifford's will was made at Dover on 20 August 1416, five days after the treaty was signed; see E.F. Jacob (ed), *The register of Henry Chichele, archbishop of Canterbury, 1414–1443* 2 (Oxford, 1938), 225. Considering their arrival a fortnight ahead of Clifford, it seems likely that Catterick and Wakering left England before the treaty was signed. Catterick's will was made at 'Dertforth' (Dartford, Kent) 'in via versus Constanciam ad consilium generale' (p 179) on 6 August, exactly two weeks before Clifford made his will. Wakering's will (pp 311–14) is dated 1425; the testament he presumably made before leaving for Constance was thus superceded and apparently does not survive.
- 10 See Thomas Morrissey, 'Quidam magister Riccardus and Richard Fleming, bishop of Lincoln: a note', *Antonianum* 67 (1992), 529–33; (Fleming did not become bishop of Lincoln until 1420). Morrissey refutes a suggestion that Fleming was present at Constance in 1415, pointing out that he was still in England after that date and probably came to Constance with one of these episcopal entourages in the early Autumn of 1416. Although he was surely correct on his main point, Morrissey followed Hermann von der Hardt in giving the incorrect date for Clifford's arrival (see above, note 7), and he did not notice Richental's mention of a doctor accompanying Catterick and Wakering. While the case for Fleming being that doctor is admittedly circumstantial, it is worth noting that all of the other prominent English doctors at Constance – Richard Dereham, William Corff, Robert Gilbert, John Wells and Henry Abendon – had already been at Constance for some time when these bishops arrived. It is possible that Richental was referring to

Thomas Polton, who was named in Henry v's commission to the three bishops and played an important role at Constance in 1417, but he was only a bachelor of laws, not a doctor; see A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to 1500* 3 (Oxford, 1959), 1494–5.

- 11 Crowder, 'Re-examination', 105. See also Jean-Marie Vidal, 'Un recueil manuscrit de sermons prononcés aux Conciles de Constance et de Bâle', *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 10 (1909), 498–9, 509–11. Vidal discovered and recognized the importance of this sermon, but the copy in his manuscript was unascribed; Finke later found copies ascribing the sermon to Fleming, and Crowder explored the implications of this evidence.
- 12 Finke, *Acta* 2, 482–3, 496, 513, 516–17.
- 13 See my articles, 'New dating for "Ecce sedes posita in caelo": a sermon by Richard Fleming at the Council of Constance', *Notes and Queries* 240.4 (December 1995), 433–4; and 'Hermann von der Hardt's "MSCt Erfurtensis": a major source for his editions of sermons from the Council of Constance', *Medieval Sermon Studies* 38.2 (Autumn 1996), 38–45, at 40.
- 14 Several short excerpts edited by Heinrich Finke (*Acta* 2, 482–3) have been superseded by a full edition by Thomas Morrissey in 'Surge, illuminare. a lost address by Richard Fleming at the Council of Constance [Clm 28433]', *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum* 22 (1990), 86–130.
- 15 Morrissey, 'Surge', 110, n 81
- 16 '...fimbriarum talium, ut liquido constat, dilatacio effrenis viciosaque ecclesiastice potestatis abusio universo quasi scismati ministrabat originem, et nisi contra hec provideat oportunitis remediis hec utinam constans in hoc opere Constanciensis synodus ex simili causa deficiente consimilis necessario redibit defectus...' (Morrissey, 'Surge', 118). This passage is among the excerpts previously edited by Finke.
- 17 '...ut ergo ab hiis malis inviolabilis et infringende reformationis anthitodo purgaretur ecclesia in capite et in membris, precipue congregata erat sanctissima ista synodus...'. (Morrissey, 'Surge', 125); Finke did not edit this excerpt. The 'evils' referred to here had been defined as 'wicked pride', 'simoniacal ambition', and 'the debauchery of fornicating intercourse' (p 124). Between these two passages Fleming promises to treat these three evils, 'especially the simoniacal plague', more fully 'in another sermon before Easter' (p 125). He would fulfil this pledge in his Passion Sunday sermon, '*Accipiant qui vocati sunt*', a very severe reform sermon which has been traditionally misascribed to a French bishop, Vitale Valentin; my article and edition of '*Accipiant*' will be published in 1998 in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*.
- 18 'Chester' was a common appellation for the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, whose diocese includes the huge archdeaconry of Chester.
- 19 C.M.D. Crowder (ed & trans), *Unity, Heresy and Reform (1378–1460): The Conciliar Response to the Great Schism* (New York, 1977), 107.
- 20 Forester's letter begins with an account of Sigismund's entry into Constance on 27 January; on that occasion he had also worn Henry's collar and the robes of the Order of the Garter.
- 21 Forester actually says that 'when [Sigismund] learnt that the duke of Bavaria and the burgrave were to eat that same day with my lord of London, he let it be known that he

- himself wished to take dinner with them'. Clearly, either Forester was mistaken, or Sigismund's 'request' was actually pretended for the sake of decorum, for the emperor was surely the intended guest of honour at the lavish banquet described by Richental.
- 22 Forester makes no mention of another such a dinner being held on 29 January; moreover, the duke of Bavaria and burgrave of Nürnberg are the only German princes besides Sigismund who are specifically mentioned by Richental as guests of Clifford, Hallum and the other English bishops. This independent evidence confirms the dating of the second banquet to 31 January; see above, note 4.
- 23 Morrissey, 'Surge', 112–13.
- 24 Morrissey, 'Surge', 119.
- 25 Morrissey, 'Surge', 129.
- 26 Morrissey, 'Surge', 113–18.

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The Figure of Robin Hood within the Carnival Tradition

In medieval and early renaissance England, the May Games and Midsummer Feast represent one of the strongest manifestations of the carnival or popular festive tradition. The pre-Lenten Carnival, which was the focus for popular participatory dramatic and disruptive activity in continental Europe, was not the main period of carnivalesque activity in England. Such activity, centring on disguisings, inversion, licensed criticism and temporary disinhibition with respect to established social conventions and the dominant structures of authority, was found rather in the liminal period of early summer at the passage of the season.¹ It is thus in the wide sense which Bakhtin applies to the terms 'carnival' and 'carnavalesque' that I shall be referring to carnival elements and the role of Robin Hood as a figure in the carnival tradition in England.²

Appearances of the Robin Hood figure in late medieval and early renaissance Britain can be divided into three basic categories: historical or legendary references to an actual outlaw figure;³ ballads, or references to ballads (or 'rymes') recounting the exploits of such a named outlaw figure; and May Game records of disguisings, 'revels', 'gatherings' or 'ales' in which the identity of Robin Hood was assumed for festive celebrations and the collection of money (later used for parish matters), often in exchange for 'livery' which marked the contributor as one of Robin Hood's band for the duration of the celebration.⁴ All three of these categories are mutually linked and interrelated, but it is in particular with the ballad Robin Hood figure and the May Game Robin Hood figure that the carnival and especially the dramatic interest lies.

The May Game revels, gatherings, or ales were intrinsically dramatic events, imbued with that characteristically carnival aspect of dramatic representation which eliminates boundaries between performers and spectators, making the 'performance' a universalizing, participatory event, removing also the barriers between art and life, and presenting life itself, life seen as game, as the matter of representation.⁵ Hardly surprisingly, this kind