Playing the Man: Acting at the Red Bull and the Fortune

The audiences, the repertory, and the acting at the seventeenth-century playhouses of north London have been condescended to since the sixteenths, when Cockayne’s dedicatory poem to Brome’s published plays spoke of ‘Our Theaters of lower note.’ Condescension in the seventeenth century, however, was something of a trope: Jonson condescends to the Hope playhouse in the prologue to Bartholomew Fair, performed in 1614, and James Shirley to the Globe in the prologue to his play The Doubtful Heir, played in 1640. By the end of the career of the Elizabethan playhouse, disparagement of the large outdoor theatres had become a cultural fashion, without much discrimination about what actually went on within them. Detailed investigation into those matters today is hampered by the large gaps in our knowledge: we have a very hazy idea, for example, of the working repertory of most of the various companies which played at the Red Bull and the Fortune between 1600 and the 1660s. Notwithstanding, condescension has continued to characterise much modern historical writing about these early playhouses, their performers, and their audiences. The Red Bull is a convenient and habitual low-water mark against which to measure the traditionally high tide of the Globe and the Blackfriars.

Mockery of the taste at the Red Bull began early, soon after its opening, and turned into the sort of cultural fashion I’ve mentioned, but the Fortune, at least, began its life as a famous place, planned to outdo the rival Globe, ‘the fairest playhouse in this town,’ according to John Chamberlain in 1621, when it was two decades old. (As the Fortune had been modelled on the Globe, one might wonder if the Red Bull, which opened just a few years after the Fortune, in turn took its inspiration from its predecessor.) The legendary Edward Alleyn came out of retirement to act again with the Admiral’s Men at their new venue in 1600, and was seen at the Fortune during the last Elizabethan and first Jacobean theatrical seasons. Old favourites were dusted off for the occasion: The Spanish Tragedy, with new additions by Ben Jonson; Doctor Faustus, doctored by William Bird and Samuel Rowley; and for a court performance in 1602 Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, with a new prologue by Thomas Middleton. The revival of older material, I’d suggest, established something of a speciality of the northern playhouses and their performers,
and was part of their appeal: the Bull and the Fortune, by the 1630s, were where you went to see the good old plays, forty and fifty years old, from the age of the good old queen, as if the Royal Court, for example, were regularly to recycle the plays of those who used to be called the New English Dramatists, with capital letters.

Such analogies hardly work. While the traditions of the Royal Court’s repertory and its audiences can be traced back at least to the fifties, there isn’t much correspondence to sixteenth and seventeenth century conditions in terms of popularity, style, and taste. The legends of the later days of the Bull and the Fortune – and we’re rather stuck with legends, in the absence of a great deal of more respectable historical detail— the legends, at any rate, are of a certain amount of old-fashioned crowd pleasing. Edmund Gayton, another writer from the 1650s, speaks of the Shrovetide traditions in the 1630s: ‘sometimes Tamerlane, sometimes Jugurth, sometimes The Jew of Malta, and sometimes parts of all these.’ The reliability of this memoir is questionable. The play Jugurth King of Numidia, probably written for the Admiral’s Men in 1600, belonged to the Palsgrave’s company at the Fortune in 1624, and The Jew, notably, was revived by Queen Henrietta’s Men at the Cockpit in 1633 or so, with Richard Perkins as Barabas. But if the Tamburlaine of around 1600 was still Alleyn, that of the 1630s was undoubtedly Richard Fowler, also renowned for a fortissimo version of Hieronimo, certainly an Alleyn part in the early 1600s, as Jugurtha probably also was. The nostalgic seasons of the early years of the century – and Alleyn was then far younger than Mick Jagger is now – set a fashion for retro, and the deliberate retention, perhaps, of an older barnstorming style, like Donald Wolfit in the 1950s. The jibes about the terrible tear-throats at the northern playhouses miss the point; it wasn’t that the actors didn’t know better, but they were quite deliberately keeping alive a broader, showier, declamatory tradition.

Of the many things connected with the theatre history of the Bull and the Fortune about which I’d like to know more, one is the earlier career of Richard Fowler, evidently a bravura performer, but something of a wraith in terms of hard documentation. He was probably still a youngish man when he first appears as a player in the records of the Fortune in 1618; if he had seen Alleyn on stage at the playhouse fifteen or so years earlier, he can have been only a boy. Who saw whom act, and what impression the experience may have made, are matters always worth thinking about. Fowler himself was watched not only by rowdy apprentices on Shrove Tuesdays, but by the boy who was to become King Charles the Second, when Prince Charles’s Men played at court. Within the profession, observation and emulation were considerably impor-
tant. The legend of Robert Armin’s meeting Richard Tarlton, while Armin was a teenaged apprentice, and being turned on to comic performance, is actually quite plausible in historical terms, and possibly true. In the years that Armin was performing at the Globe Andrew Cane, the famous later clown of the Red Bull and the Fortune, was himself a teenaged apprentice in London (like Armin an apprentice goldsmith rather than anything to do directly with the theatre). From 1602 onwards, at any rate, Cane had the opportunity to connect himself, through observation in the theatre, with a tradition of comic playing. Twenty years later he joined the troupe at the Fortune as a leading player, and we have no indication that he’d trained himself as an actor in any way other than through observation. His fame, which lasted beyond his death in the late 1650s, as a performer of jigs, suggests that he too had mastered the older traditions of comic performance – stand-up, improvisation, song and dance, and solo virtuosity – rather than, exclusively, performance in fictional dramatic roles.

I’d like to be able to persuade myself more fully of Fowler’s observation of Alleyn’s last seasons, but it seems no more than a possibility. Probably more likely is that there persisted within the company which remained at the Fortune, changing its title in 1603 and again in 1613, a tradition of Alleyn’s heroic style, practiced by his old colleagues, Juby, Bird, and Massey, and perhaps by those who’d trained under him as apprentices. A sensitive new actor with an eye and ear for style – putatively Fowler in 1618 – might have picked up such indications as remained of the grand acting of the early 1590s. Fowler, at any rate, certainly knew Alleyn, who was active in the management of the Fortune at the time he joined it, so that he saw and heard the legendary performer offstage, if not on it.

If the companies at the Bull and the Fortune in some respects were guardians of old dramatic and theatrical traditions they were also competitive players in a market. In the first decade of the century, like their colleagues in the King’s Men they both had star actors who could attract audiences – Thomas Greene and Richard Perkins at the Bull – and actor-playwrights who could sustain a developing repertory: Heywood at the Bull, and Samuel Rowley, among others, at the Fortune. New plays must always have been important, and the remains of Sir Henry Herbert’s office book give us some hints, from the mid 1620s on, of what was being acquired. The fullest view of repertory, as ever, is supplied by Henslowe’s theatrical records, which extend to the first seasons at the Fortune, precisely when Alleyn was acting again, and the titles of the mostly lost plays suggest the range of his stage roles. Apart from the older showpieces I’ve mentioned already, Alleyn no doubt
took the title part in *Hercules*, a Rose piece from the mid 90s revived in 1601, and probably performed it ‘rarely.’ Some of the plays clearly had an eye on the rivals across the river, and offered parallel roles: *Richard Crookback*, by Ben Jonson; *Caesar’s Fall*, by Munday, Drayton, Webster, and Middleton; *A Danish Tragedy*, by Henry Chettle. *Malcolm King of Scots*, in the spring of 1602, may have provided a suggestive idea to the house playwright of the Globe. Andrew Gurr has suggested that the influence of the company’s patron might be detected in a certain political strain – nationalistic and anti-Catholic – in the Admiral’s Men’s repertory, and I’d say this is especially evident in the years leading up to the change in reign, long expected, and in active negotiation some time before early 1603. Thus Chettle’s *Cardinal Wolsey* of 1601 is a suggestive title, dramatising as it no doubt did the conflict between native and foreign authority within the kingdom, and with some commanding stage roles, whether Alleyn played the title character, or that of the father of the reigning monarch, and of English Protestantism, a part revived at the Fortune a year or two later, in Rowley’s play *When You See Me You Know Me*. A further feature of the plays being acquired in the early Fortune seasons is, to my eye, a surprising preponderance of scriptural material, which we tend to forget as a staple of repertory, having been told when young that the Elizabethan settlement closed down religious drama. One particularly striking title is *Pontius Pilate*, the dramatic content of which is well worth thinking about, but there was also a string of plays on Old Testament heroes: *Jephthah, Samson, and Joshua*, to put them in the order they were written and (probably) produced in 1602, perhaps as a connected series. All three stories in the bible portray godly warrior-heroes overcoming enemies of the chosen people with the guidance of God, and their political application in the period immediately before March 1603 is not difficult to grasp; culminating with the Joshua material, they end with the symbolic destruction of Jericho. There seems to be little doubt that Alleyn would have played the title roles in all these, and they may have been written with him in mind, in that Samson is a kind of Hercules, and Joshua a kind of Tamburlaine. Jephthah is the most truly tragic role of the three, involving a terrible test of faith. Unlike Abraham, and the Jephthah in Handel’s oratorio, the biblical figure is not let off the hook of sacrificing his child; I would take it that Munday and Dekker’s play followed the bible. Alleyn’s performance of anguish must have been especially impressive. Across the river, about the same time, talk of ‘the best actors in the world’ triggered the mocking reply ‘O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst
thou!,' in the mouth of Richard Burbage. The theatrical referentiality of Hamlet is a complex business, but that’s not a story to be told here.

There’s some reason to believe that the Biblical repertory did not entirely die out after 1603, and in fact that the national, religious, and moral applications of stories of heroism and military victory, blessed by divine approval, fitted very well into the robust, ‘manly’ aspect of taste of the northern playhouse audiences; the allegory of the deliverers of God’s people could have been as readily invoked after 1618 as in the late Elizabethan years, as it certainly persisted in sermons and biblical commentaries. The old play A Looking Glass for London, featuring Hosea, Jonah, and God’s wrath on Nineveh, possibly first acted in the late 1580s, was revived by Prince Charles’s company about 1620, and perhaps similar older plays were occasionally seen at the Bull. One clear instance of revival, although not of scriptural drama, is provided by an entry from Herbert’s records as Master of the Revels, the licencer of plays for performance. ‘The Four Sons of Amon, att the intreaty of Worth, and another, being an olde playe tho’ never allowed of before, nor of a legible hand, with promise of my fee 6 Jan. 1623[4], for Prince’s Company 1li.’ One of the men who brought this document in to the Revels Office was Ellis Worth, one of the most fascinating figures of the prewar Stuart theatre, who continued acting until its close, and had begun, as far as we know, at the age of twenty-five, with Queen Anne’s company at the Red Bull in 1612.

In early 1624, evidently, Worth was an agent for Prince Charles’s Men, who had moved back into the Red Bull in 1623, after an interval with Beeston at the Cockpit. Perhaps Worth had temporarily become an entrepreneur rather than a working actor – he denied knowing anything about a scandalous play performed at the Bull later in 1624. The text of the Four Sons he may inherited from the stock of the defunct Queen Anne’s company – certainly Thomas Heywood knew of a play by that title in 1612 – and they may have had it from Philip Henslowe. Herbert said it was old and illegible, probably written in a cramped secretary hand, but also that it had never been licensed, and hence never performed, at least legally. Henslowe had acquired the play – or a play of the same title – in late 1602 from the actor Robert Shaw, with an option for the Admiral’s Men to perform it within the next twelve months. Shaw himself wrote out a receipt in Henslowe’s book:

Memorandum that I Robert Sha|a/ haue receaued of mr Phillip Henshlowe/ the some of forty shillinges vpon a booke/ Called the fower sones of Aymon wch booke/ if it be not played by the company of the/ fortune nor no[r]e other
Neither Shaw nor his queen lived to see the following Christmas, in the event: he probably was a victim of the plague, and was buried in Southwark in September 1603. The agreement itself appears to give the Admiral’s Men an option on an existing play which was Shaw’s own property, and probably some years old (Alleyn himself owned similar older play texts); if they chose to play it he would both keep his advance and perhaps offer it to the company as an outright sale, for a further sum. There are no indications in Henslowe’s records that the Admiral’s Men made any subsequent preparations to produce the play; as the book was Henslowe’s security against an advance of two pounds, we may presume he kept it when Shaw died. The same document, perhaps, still a play text which had not seen production, found its way into Ellis Worth’s hands twenty years later, possibly from Edward Alleyn, and eventually was translated into performance on the stage of the Red Bull.

Quite another scenario might be imagined for the history of the book, however, since Thomas Heywood claimed that a performance of a play with the same title had been given, at the latest, within the decade following Shaw’s death, although not within the jurisdiction of the Master of the Revels. Amongst the instances of ‘guilty creatures sitting at a play’ cited by Heywood in An Apology for Actors the following account is given:

> at *Amsterdam in Holland* a company of our *English* Comedians (well knowne) travelling those Countryes, as they were before the Burgers and other the chiefe inhabitants, acting the last part of the 4 sons of Aymon, towards the last act of the history, where penitent Renaldo, like a common labourer, lived in disguise, vowing as his last pennance, to labour & carry burdens to the structure of a goodly Church there to be erected . . . [His diligence having aroused the envy of the other labourers, they plot to murder him as he sleeps.] Having spy’d their opportunity, they drave a naile into his temples, of which wound immediatly he dyed.

As the actors play this scene there is a cry from ‘a remote gallery,’ followed by a confession to a murder by the same means. The end of the play Heywood recounts corresponds to the narrative end of the (very long) prose romance translated by Caxton from the French original, and first printed in England in 1504. The romance does not specify the means of the killing of Renaut/
Reynaldo, so that the brutality of the nail is a theatrical invention; we may suspect it of being Heywood’s, given his purposes (although he insists on the verity of his other anecdotes), but as theatre it would achieve grim decorum – death by work tools – as well as having emblematic resonance. 20

Whether or not the dramatic version of *The Four Sons of Amon* played at the Bull early in 1624 ended exactly as did the play Heywood knew, we may take it that it followed a similar dramaturgical line in adapting the material of the old *chanson de geste*, 21 selectively following its story of adventure, conflict, loyalty, and betrayal, and closing with the penitential death of its leading figure. To Heywood and his contemporaries the legend held exemplary pathos and moral power, and proved the effect mouldy tales might have on real lives: the power of representation, simply, was to be recognised as having its own validity, quite apart from the literary coherence of the fiction which supported it. In a period when several different dramatic pieces might be drawn from a common fictional or historical source, and when parallel acting versions were performed by troupes touring on the continent, we cannot easily assume close connections between these various manifestations of *The Four Sons of Amon*. Certainly the actors at the Bull in 1624 performed a piece with a long history of dramatisation, and possibly with a legendary reputation. If you are a clumper rather than a splitter, you might imagine that the ‘well known’ troupe in Amsterdam had had their text from Henslowe, and that their performers may have included a younger Ellis Worth, later the colleague of Heywood at the Bull, and later still the re-animator of Shaw’s old play in that very theatre.

At exactly the same time Prince Charles’s company was acquiring newly written plays, both comedies and tragedies: the partnership of Thomas Dekker and John Ford furnished two plays for performance at the Red Bull in 1624, for example. 22 The contemporary troupe at the Fortune, the Palsgrave’s men, including the actors Andrew Cane and Richard Fowler, pursued a parallel course, with a similar amount of activity in acquiring new plays, some of them written by the actor-dramatist Richard Gunnell, and in reviving older material: *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, for example, referred to as having been ‘lately played’ by the company when it was reprinted in 1630. 23 The Fortune and Bull companies competed for similar audiences, and included contemporary, local news in their material: they both had plays in September 1624 dealing with a family murder in Whitechapel earlier the same year, and the two plays apparently opened just a day apart. 24 Thomas Drew’s play at the Fortune probably did not include, as did the Bull play, the secondary material about the seduction and robbery of Anne Elsden, the subject of a
subsequent legal appeal. Up to the time of the death of King James, and the virulent plague outbreak of the same year, 1625, there is every sign that the actors at the northern playhouses were in excellent professional health, and conducting a thriving and active business. After that date it is a good deal harder to tell what was going on there, both because the old companies re-organised themselves, and rather marginal groups of actors moved into the playhouses, and because the fragmentary transcriptions from Sir Henry Herbert’s office book become more scattered after 1624. The major revival of the Bull came in 1633, with the move to that theatre of the troupe I consider below. It is hard to imagine that their activity in the next decade, for seven years at the Bull and two at the Fortune, was any less intense than that of the companies of the mid twenties, in which a number of their players had participated, but the corresponding evidence of it, from Herbert’s notes about the plays he licenced, does not survive – or its whereabouts are not currently known.

Ellis Worth, Andrew Cane, and Richard Fowler came together into the same acting troupe in late 1631: the newly formed Prince Charles’s Company (second of that name, now named for the eldest son of the former Prince Charles, eighteen months old at the time). Of the ten adult actors named in the first surviving record, three had had experience at the Bull, and three at the Fortune; one of the boys, Robert Stratford, was the orphaned son of a former colleague of Fowler, Cane, and Matthew Smith (also a founder-member of Prince Charles’s Company) at the Fortune. Their company was to dominate the Red Bull for the final decade before the wars, matching the career of Queen Anne’s Men in the first decade of the theatre’s life, and then ending up at the Fortune for a couple of years before 1642. Their style gave rise to most of the interregnum and Restoration reminiscences about the Bull in particular. Cane’s last performance there may in fact have been in early 1650, when he is reported to have been arrested by soldiers during a surreptitious performance.

Prince Charles’s company began life in quite a different context, and the most useful surviving document about their playing, a published play with a cast list, *Holland’s Leaguer* (1632), recording the first production at the Salisbury Court playhouse (1631), is a quite conventional Caroline comedy featuring the usual range of humours types: fops, deceivers, true-wits, and would-be-wits, in which the harum-scarum Richard Fowler has a relatively modest role (eighth in the ranking by line-length) as the plain-speaking friend of the deluded lead, played by William Browne, stepson of the Bull actor Thomas Greene, and son of the formidable Susan Baskerville. Fowler’s is
decidedly not a ‘conquering part,’ of the kind for which he was later renowned, even if the character happens to be called Snarl. Cane’s role, the largest in the play, is that of a vacuous man of fashion, Trimalchio, gulled into marriage by the impoverished wits; Worth played the fat parasite Ardelio, obsequious flatterer of Philautius, Browne’s character. The author of the play, Shakerly Marmion, university-educated and an associate of the courtier Sir John Suckling, seems to have been ‘house dramatist’ for the first couple of seasons, so that the style of Holland’s Leaguer might be taken as generally indicative. A lost play called The Country Gentleman was ‘allowed to be acted’ by Herbert in 1632, probably by the Prince’s;27 it was followed by A Fine Companion, entered in the Stationers’ Register in June 1633, and published as ‘Acted before the King and Queene/ at WHITE-HALL,/ And sundrie times with great ap-/plause at the private House in/ SALISBURY Court,/ By the Prince his Servants.’ The court staging may have been at Christmas 1632–3, undoubtedly in the Cockpit theatre completed in 1630.

Any generalisations about actors at the Bull, then, should be made with the recognition that a range of markets, playing styles, and repertory materials was within their reach. In the early 1630s Prince Charles’s company were playing up-to-date humours comedy and topical satire in a small indoor playhouse, and at the new theatre designed by Inigo Jones at Whitehall, before the assembled holiday court. After their first two seasons they made a communal decision to change their theatrical territory, and return to a playhouse some of them knew well from previous professional experience. The calculations behind the move were probably economic, but are as likely to have been driven by success as by distress: that is to say the actors were seeking to increase their profits from the larger audiences at the Bull, perhaps also simultaneously reducing their outlay on rent. G.E. Bentley, the canonical historian of the Stuart stage, particularly tends to write as if playing at the Bull was an index of professional failure, or shamelessness, at least. I myself see no indication that Prince Charles’s men left a small indoor playhouse in 1633 for the Red Bull because they couldn’t hack it. They retained their elite patronage, accompanying the court on progress the following year, appearing at court thereafter several times, and probably also enjoying the support of the Earl of Newcastle, from 1638 onwards the official guardian of Prince Charles, and whose London house stood a mere two hundred yards from Red Bull yard, immediately contiguous to St. James’s church.28

They presumably took with them to their new house the successful comedies that had proved themselves in performance, to be played occasionally on the Bull stage as part of their operating repertory: the surviving texts
of *Holland’s Leaguer* and *A Fine Companion* should be thought of belonging to the Bull as much as to Salisbury Court. The practice of moving repertory from one kind of playhouse to another was hardly new, and was well-established practice for the King’s Men. In 1636, on tour in Norwich, the troupe is reported as performing ‘with good applause and are well clad and act by candlelight.’ That is to say that they were performing at some indoor venue, although their current London base was a daylit playhouse. Bentley, wedded to the paradigm of the Red Bull as an index of vulgarity and cheapness, expresses some scepticism about this account, forgetting the company’s origins in indoor playing of stylish dramatic material, and their continuing appearances at court, recorded until late 1639. Comedy, under Cane’s leadership, was to remain a speciality of the company. His popular appeal included his knowledge of and skill in the old tradition stretching back to Tarlton: that of the stand-up clown, with a comic persona which might be exploited within scripted plays. The satirical play *The Whore New Vamped*, performed ‘for many days together’ in September 1639 (and thus a popular hit), landed the company in trouble for its sharp remarks about contemporary monopolies, legal systems, and certain London politicians. The actors were certainly working from a text, which Sir Henry Herbert had presumably passed for performance; he was to be questioned about it, as was ‘the [unnamed] poet who made the play.’ The fragments quoted in the enquiry documents include some dialogue: whereas one of the speakers is identified as ‘one personating a justice of the peace’ his interlocutor is simply called ‘Cain,’ as if actor and character were one. Official anxiety about such material might legitimately include the question of what, in performance, there might have been ‘more than is set down.’

Herbert’s licences offer a few hints of the other repertory – all now lost as texts – played by the Prince’s company in their later career, apart from the older revivals discussed above. The two-part play *The Devil and the Collier* also sounds like an old theme, but it was licensed as new material, in 1638. The *New World in the Moon*, of the same year, sounds more up to date, suggesting as it does the influence of both Jonson and Brome, and thus competition with contemporary comic repertory at other playhouses. In 1639 *Hogshead* was a revival, refreshed with a new scene; no doubt it was a comedy. A second entry from the same year is worth quoting in full: ‘Massinger, History of Will: *Longesworde*, son to Rosamund, lic. to the bull 1639.’ This tells of a hitherto unknown work by Massinger, then approaching the end of a long dramatic career; G.E. Bentley’s belief that he wrote only for the King’s Men after 1625 must now be further qualified. The acquisi-
tation of a senior dramatist is a further sign of the commercial ambition of the Prince’s company. But the subject was not a new one, and possibly Massinger revised or reworked an old play on the same character, written by Michael Drayton in 1599. The material, at least, was decidedly old fashioned: chronicle romance dealing with a bluff English hero pitted against perfidious French allies in the seventh crusade, and dying valiantly at the battle of Masurah. Whatever refinement Massinger may have lent to the writing, the genre was exotic battle play, and no doubt calculated to appeal to the more robust tastes of the Bull audiences. The heroic title role, we may take it, would have been performed by Richard Fowler.

The rhyme about ‘playing the man’ from which I draw my title is early: about 1612. It goes like this: ‘The players of the Bankside/ The round Globe and the Swan/ Will teach you idle tricks of love/ But the Bull will play the man’ – or ‘the mon,’ to retain the evidently Scots rhyme. This is a partial and broad-brush characterisation. If, as I’ve suggested, the players in the northern houses responded to their audiences’ affection for revivals, and possibly for older styles of performance, there’s no indication that any of the troupes at the Bull, from Queen Anne’s men onwards, were any less interested in playing the woman. That’s to say they included at least the habitual number of boy apprentices trained and training in female roles. When Prince Charles’s company was founded by Bull and Fortune actors in 1631 there were six boys to ten men, and two of the boys were apprenticed to Andrew Cane (who, incidentally, hadn’t come up that way himself). In terms of contemporary practice that is a company designed, I suggest, for playing erotic comedy, and not, primarily, military action drama. Range and adaptability were the keys to survival in the commercial theatre world, and while some performances at the northern playhouses were undoubtedly more garish and knockabout than one might have seen at the Blackfriars I certainly don’t think those were the unvarying and constant notes.

Actors and their acting styles moved among kinds and sizes of theatre and among audiences of differing sophistication and social composition. Richard Perkins, a renowned actor admired by John Webster and Thomas Heywood, began his career performing at the Rose and the Bull, but his revival of Barabas, Marlowe’s Jew of Malta, a bravura rhetorical part originally played by Alleyn, was given at the Cockpit playhouse in Drury Lane in the 1630s, where Perkins was the star player, rivalling his contemporary Joseph Taylor at the Blackfriars and the Globe. When they began their new company in the same period, Andrew Cane and Ellis Worth had ambitions to compete with both Perkins’s and Taylor’s troupes. Assuming that Richard Burbage took
a part in *Mucedorus* when it was played before King James in the Shrovetide holidays at Whitehall,\(^4\) we need not look farther for indications that coarse-grained material was occasionally performed by actors and watched by audiences we might think capable of better. I find the evidence for the marked difference of the Bull and the Fortune from other London playhouses, in terms of playing style, repertory, and audiences, to rest on a remarkably small amount of reliable evidence, and on a good deal of legend. We need to do all we can to increase the former, while keeping an eye on the residual truth of legends.

John H. Astington

Notes

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7 Richard Fowler’s origins may lie in the parish of St Leonard Shoreditch. The registers of the church record the baptisms of three children of a Richard Fowler, senior, between 1591 and 1594 (none named Richard), and he may
be the father of the actor, who was probably born in the same decade. A Richard Fowler was living in the parish again in 1631–2, with his wife Elizabeth: their daughter Alice was baptised on 8 January 1632; the family was resident in ‘Halywell Streete’ near the site of the Curtain playhouse (Guildhall Ms 7493. My thanks to Chris Matusiak for checking this reference). Bentley’s biographical notes include the marriage of Richard Fowler and Elizabeth Freeman in 1627 at St. Botolph Bishopsgate, a neighbouring parish (JCS, 2:439). See the online transcriptions of the St. Leonard Shoreditch parish registers by Alan Nelson: <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~ahnelson/>.

8 Foakes, Diary, 185.
9 Foakes, Diary, 199, 200, 201, 203.
11 Foakes, Diary, 183, 184, 200.
15 Bawcutt, Control, 148.
16 The Late Murder of the Son upon the Mother, or Keep the Widow Waking, which exploited a contemporary local scandal. See C.J. Sisson, Lost Plays of Shakespeare’s Age (London, 1936).
17 Foakes, Diary, 211.
20 The image of Jael killing Sisera was commonly represented in medieval and Renaissance graphic and decorative art. Jael’s act was variously regarded: either as heroic, in the tradition of the militant defenders of the Jews, or, within the topos of ‘The Power of Women,’ as malicious deception. See H. Diane Russell and Bernadine Barnes, Eva/Ave. Women in Renaissance and Baroque Prints (Washington, 1990), 147–8, 154–5.
21 The 1554 edition of Caxton’s translation was no doubt the source for Elizabethan adaptors.
22 The Fairy Knight and The Bristow Merchant: see Bawcutt, Control, 152, 157.
23 Bentley, JCS, 1:156.
24 Bawcutt, Control, 154.
30 See my *English Court Theatre 1558–1642* (Cambridge, 1999), 297.
32 Bawcutt, *Control*, 202. Fulwell’s *Like Will to Like* (1568) initiates the proverbial coupling of devils and colliers.
33 Bawcutt, *Control*, 204.
34 Bawcutt, *Control*, 205.
36 See Foakes, *Diary*, 64, 103. Henslowe’s records, in fact, offer no strong proof that Drayton ever finished the play. In early 1599 Henslowe paid out two pounds as a partial advance on an agreed fee of six pounds: there are no subsequent records of a complete text having been delivered, nor of preparations to produce it, in Henslowe’s book, at least. Complicating evidence is provided by documentation produced by Sir Henry Herbert in pursuing his attempt at asserting the authority of the Office of the Revels after the Restoration. Among these papers was a list of plays licensed in 1598 by his predecessor, Edmund Tilney: ‘Sir William Longsword allowed to be Acted the 24 May. 1598.’ (Bawcutt, *Control*, 249; also 255). Unless Tilney, or Herbert, has his final digit wrong, there may have been three Longsword plays in the pre-Restoration period, and Drayton’s may have been intended as competition to a predecessor, possibly staged at the Globe. If Massinger revised or reworked an old play, then, it need not have been Drayton’s.
37 The comic story of Fowler and the inept extras, retailed in 1664, is connected with material such as *William Longsword*: see Bentley, *JCS*, 2:440.
38 The lines come from the fifteenth stanza of a two-part ballad preserved in the Pepys collection at Magdalene College, Cambridge, *Turner’s Dish of Lenten Stuff* (London, c.1612), STC 24350.
39 See the prologue to *Holland’s Leaguer* (London, 1632).
40 Possibly in 1610, the year of the Q3 edition of the play, which advertises on its title-page new additions, ‘as it was acted before the King’s Majestie at Whitehall on Shrove-Sunday night. By his Highnes Servantes usually playing at the Globe.’ See *English Court Theatre*, 242–3.