of the world where English or European travellers, traders, and colonizers observed performances by other peoples. Although we continue to be primarily interested in the performance history of any art, entertainment, or festive occasion of the period, we also invite submissions of interpretive or literary articles relating to the performances themselves.

The editorial board of the journal is actively involved in the selection and editing process. We expect to publish articles by members of the board in the first few issues, as well as articles and notes by other scholars, and welcome readers’ responses, either by regular mail or by email, in exploring options for the new journal’s future. The members of the editorial board include:

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We are now considering articles and notes for publication in 1998 and 1999. Submissions, written in English, may range from 250–7000 words. Copies of the house style are available by email from the editor, and will be posted on the internet in January. Papers must be double-spaced, including endnotes; further instruction about submitting electronic copy will be sent if the article is accepted. For returns, include a self-addressed envelope and sufficient postage. Address correspondence and submissions to Helen Ostovich, Editor, Early Theatre, Department of English, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8S 4L9. For further information by email, write to: ostovich@mcmaster.ca

Helen Ostovich, Editor

ANNE BRANNEN

Intricate Subtleties: Entertainment at Bishop Morton’s Installation Feast

Of the many obscure aspects of medieval feasts, probably the custom about which we have the least hard evidence is the subtlety. At some point in an important feast, a spectacle would be brought forth, consisting of some sort of model – of a lion, a castle, or saint, for instance – often accompanied by a verse. But the medieval menus of commemorative feasts, in which we find most descriptions of subtleties, are not often forthcoming about the details. Is the subtlety brought out before a course? During? After? Of what
is it constructed? Wood? Paper? Marzipan? What happens to these constructions later? Are they displayed in the hall? Thrown away? Eaten (in the case of the marzipan)? And the verses - are they written out and displayed on the subtlety, so that guests can read them? Are they read aloud? If the latter, by whom? We understand that subtleties were a form of edifying entertainment reserved for feasts. Beyond that, much of what we believe is speculation. The menus do not usually help us.1

One exception to this general rule, at least in part, is the herald's menu for the 1479 installation as bishop of Ely of John Morton, the future archbishop of Canterbury.2 In that menu, we are given a wealth of details. As is true for most medieval menus, we are told the dishes served at each of the three courses, and we are told the identities of some of the more important guests. But it is unusual for a menu to make it clear, as this one does, that the subtleties were presented both before and after each course. Moreover, because the poems accompanying each subtlety are preceded in the account by the word 'rehearsal', we know that the poems were read aloud, thus constituting a form of dramatic presentation one step away from the tableaux vivants often arranged for royal entries; at the installation feast, humans spoke the lines, but they spoke them while accompanying models of 'characters', rather than portraying the characters themselves, creating, in effect, 'subtleties vivants'.3 And from the evidence of the poems themselves, also preserved for us in the herald's account, we can see that the elaborate feast in its entirety celebrated the trustworthiness of the new bishop, a former rebel, while simultaneously manifesting a general consciousness both of his former less trustworthy state, and of the fairly recent date of his pardon.

In 1479, Morton was back in favor with the York king Edward IV, a position he had reached after some severe political setbacks. Lancastrian, and loyal to Henry VI, under whom he had been Keeper of the Privy Seal,4 he had been excluded from the general pardon of 6 March, 1461, escaping from the Tower of London to join with Queen Margaret in exile in France.5 He was not pardoned until 1471, when he and many other Lancastrians were received back into royal favor. By 1472, Edward had made him Master of the Rolls; his appointment to the see of Ely, following five years later, indicates a 'rapid rise in the royal service'.6

Despite, or because of, this rapid rise, his rebellious past had clearly not been entirely forgotten at the time of the installation. The celebratory feast may have been elaborate and costly7 – containing such dishes as roe deer, roasted 'regardaunt'; roasted pheasant; flourished peacock; semeca fritters; carp, a delicacy in England;8 sturgeon, a royal fish – but the symbolism underlying the entire feast – as manifested in the food, the subtleties, the poems, the guest list – was that of a well-knit society, well-governed and impervious to, though aware of the possibilities of, rebellion.

At such a banquet, with both prominent churchmen and nobles present, it was not unusual for both meat and fish dishes to be presented, though it was not a fast-day.9 Since all the guests would be eating at the same time,10 they had to be provided with both fish and meat dishes in both courses, customarily done by providing separate fish and meat menus,11 fish and meat dishes being partitioned equally. This procedure was not followed at Morton's feast, however, at which the first course was composed almost entirely of meat dishes, the 'Graunt lute' being the only fish offered; the second course
was composed more or less equally of mixed fish and meat dishes; while the third course was composed almost entirely of fish dishes, the meat-eaters being accommodated only with fowl: curlew, plover, cranes, and larks. Such a progression provides a symbolic movement from secular to pastoral concerns, appropriate for Morton's first church appointment.12

Markedly elaborate as well, and indeed highly unusual, was the set-up of the subtleties; though they might be presented at the end or the beginning of each course,13 normally we find only one subtlety per course. At Bishop Morton's installation, however, two subtleties were presented at each course, for a total of six in all, one before and one after each course.

The first course, for instance, was preceded by a subtlety representing a white lion, an emblem from Edward IV's coat of arms:

C le premere course pur lestat

Un sotelte de lyon blanke reheg
Thinke and thanke prelate of grete prise,
That it hath pleasid the habundant grace.
Of king Edward in al his actes wise
The to promote hyder to his please.
This lytil yle whyle thou hast tyme and space.
For to repayre do ay thy besy cure14
For thy rewarde of heuen thou shalt besure

Thus, the entire company acted as witness to the new bishop's instructions to remember the king, instructions meant to remind him and the company of the secular power and 'habundant grace' behind the installation and the feast, the king whose decision to promote Morton 'hyder to his please' epitomized his trust in the former rebel.

The first subtlety, then, was focused on secular concerns, as was the first course. The subtlety which followed the course, however, shifted the focus to religious concerns; from then on, the subtleties at the Morton feast were of a religious nature. This second subtlety represented the birth of Saint John, the bishop's name-sake (and the saint upon whose feast day – 29 August – the installation was performed), accompanied by a recitation of a poem petitioning Saint John to pray that the bishop, who had gained his position 'thorough [the saint's] meditacion', be preserved in virtuous life. The subtleties for the first course therefore reflect each other, representing the secular and sacred help received by the bishop.

The second course was introduced by a subtlety of 'le Ile de Ely'; it is not clear here whether the entire district of the Isle of Ely is represented here – that is, Ely itself and the surrounding parishes (now northeast Cambridgeshire), or whether only the city itself – Ely proper – is represented. At any rate, the text of the accompanying poem refers both to the earth of the Isle, and to its 'Lodesterre', which I take to mean the lantern of the church, the eight-sided, light-admitting tower on top of the nave crossing, with which
Bishop Morton is neatly conflated in the poem itself. In that poem, the bishop has become the 'lodestar of Ely', a spiritual counterpart of the Ely cathedral lantern:

Lodesterre of ely, loo suche is godys myght
Hym therfore to serue thou art bonden of right.

Here, the bishop and the Ely lantern alike provide guiding lights, for those traveling through the darkness of sin or the darkness of the fens at night. Though this second course was followed by one subtlety as usual—a representation of God as a shepherd—in this single case there was a poem of two stanzas, rather than one. The first stanza is written in the voice of God—'spoken', therefore, by the subtlety itself—commanding the bishop, as the earthly shepherd of the Ely fold, ever 'from ravenors to be ther true defensor'. This stanza is followed by one written in the voice of the bishop himself—whether or not the actual voice speaking the lines is that of the bishop we cannot know from what we are given in the account—promising not only to rule and guide his church according to God, but specifically 'to expel al rebel'. That the bishop specifically promises, whether in his own voice or that of the subtlety, to guard against rebellion, whether against the state or the church, seems quite pointed, and consciously directed at the bishop's past.

The third course was introduced by a subtlety representing saints Peter, Paul, and Andrew, and an address in the voice of St. Andrew, admonishing the bishop to remember that all earthly things are vain, and stating that the three saints make him the protector of this our chirche.

The course was followed by the last subtlety, quite a solid one, apparently, representing 'le Eglesure letonne', that is, the church modeled in brass, or more probably, in a material made to look like brass. The last spoken stanza welcomes the guests—a welcome after the feast is over, in effect—'ffrom ye highest vnto ye lowest degree', and admonishes them all to love God, not 'me', which, given the conflation of the bishop and the physical church, means both; Morton and the cathedral stand in the same position.

The guest list itself—that is, the list of some of the important guests—naturally includes both religious and secular leaders. Of the secular guests present, though, the guest list shows the same careful planning exhibited by the other reported aspects of the feast. Sir Thomas Howard was there, a member of the king's household who had family holdings in East Anglia; Sir John Donne and Sir Robert Chamberlain, also Yorkists, were there; but Sir William Brandon, who had been Henry vi's banner bearer, and John Fortescu, also Lancastrian, and pardoned with Morton, were there as well. The feast was planned with detailed precision, the magnanimity and watchfulness of the king manifested in the food, the entertainment, the lords on the dais. One was to understand that the king could forgive true repentance, and reward excellence. One was not to assume that he was foolish.

Bishop Morton's installation feast provides us with an especially coherent and intricate group of subtleties, but surely not a unique one. The possibilities for impressive instruction will not have been lost on the makers of other commemorative feasts. Should
other such descriptions of subtleties exist, they would provide a fruitful area for further study.

Appendix
'Bishop Morton's Installation Feast'

Cambridge University Library SSS.41.7
Short-Title Catalogue #782 ('Arnold's Chronicle', printed in Antwerp by A. van Berghen, 1503)

C le premere course pur lestates

C Un sotelte de lyon blanke rehearsal
Thinke and thanke prelate of grete prise
That it hath pleasid the habundant grace.
Of king Edward in al his actes wise
The to promote hyder to his please.
This lytil yle whyle thou hast tyme and space.
For to repayre do ay thy besy cure
For thy rewarde of heuen thou shalt besure

C Pur potage.

Frumency and venyson
Syngnet rosted
Graunt luce in sarris
Roo rosted regardaunt.
Fuesaunt roosted
Venison in paste
Grete custarde
Leche porpul

C Un sotelte de natiuite saint Iohn rehersall
Blissyd Iohn baptist for thy name so precioue.
Gracia dei be thy true interpretacion
Pray euer to god yat in thy lyue vertuouse
Iohn nowe of this see thorough thy meditacion.
Preserued be which be this stallacion
Thus is entred into his chirche
Ther longe to endure many goode dedis to worche

C The seconde course.

C Un sotelte le lle de ely rehersall.

6
O mortal man cal to remembrancce
This text de terra tu plamasti me
What than auayleth al worldly plesaunce.
Sythe to the erthe thou shalt reuerse
De lime terre, how god hath ordeyned the.
Lodesterre of ely, loo suche is godys myght
Hym therfore to serue thou art bonden of right

Gely to potage
Storke roosted
Pecoke florished
Carpe in soppis
Rabett roosted
Breme fresshewater.
Freature semeca.
Orenge in paste
Tarre borboynce
Leche damaske

C Un sotelte de dieu schepard.
Ego sum pastor bonus rehersall
John ofte resolue in thy remembreancce
That of my grace haue made the here protector
And of this folde I geue the gouernance
From rauenors to be ther true defensor
Them to preserue euery tyme & ower
Lerne of me & do thy besy deiuer
From my folke al rauen to disseuer

C Respocioe episcopi

Fayn I wolde blissed lorde yf it like ye
This cure of thy diuine puruiaunce
And special most grace hast giue me
To gyde & rewle after thy plesaunce
& to expel al rebel with thy manitence
From ye chirche good lord & geue me that grace.
And so me to rewle wyth the to haue a place

C The thirde course

C Un sotelte le sentis petre paule, & Andrewe rehersall
Remembre iohn this yat shineth bright
With gret abundaunce al is but vaynglorie
Lerne for to die and welcome in yon we knight
Welcome my preist & bishop verily
The holy peter blissed poule & I
Of this our churche make ye protector
And of this yle ye vertuose gouvernor

C Creme of almondes to potage
Boetour roosted
Perche in gelye curlew
Plouer roosted
Un caste de gely florishyd
Crenes dendose
Larkes roosted
Fresshe storgion
Quynces in paste
Tarte poleyn
ffritour bounce
Leche Reiall

C Un sotelte de le Eglesure letonne rehersall
Now hertely ye bee Welcome into this hal
ffrom ye highest vnto ye lowest degree.
Requiring & specialy praing you al
Yeld to god ye louing & not to me
And ferthermore of your benigne
Domino deo nostro gracias agamus
And praise his name with te deum laudamus

Sytyng at the hygh dees.
My lord of Ely in the myddes
On the right hande
The abbot of berye
The abbot of ramesey
The prior of Ely
The mayster of the rollis
The priour of braunwell
The priour of angelsheye
C On the other hande
Syr Thomas howard.
Syr John donne
Syr John wyngelfeld
Syr harry wentworthe
Iohn sapcote
Syr Edward woodhous
Syr Robert Chamberlyne
Syr John Cheyne
Syr William Branden
Syr Robert Fynes
John Fortescue.

The abbot of Thorney and my Lady Brandon and other estatis in the chambre

Notes


2 The earliest known version of the menu is in the untitled incunabulum (#782 in the Short-Title Catalogue originally compiled by A.W. Pollard and G.R. Redgrave) written by Richard Arnold, beginning, on A2r, 'In this booke is conteyned the names of ye baylifs custos mairs and sherefs of london', printed in Antwerp by A. van Berghen, in 1503(?). A transcription of the menu, taken from the 1503 edition of the incunabulum, can be found in James Bentham's History and Antiquities of the Conventual and Cathedral Church of Ely, from 673 to 1771, etc. (Cambridge, 1771), Appendix 35*-36*. It contains some scribal errors. Excerpts of the menu, taken from Bentham's account, and containing further errors, can be found in Life in the Middle Ages, by George Gordon Coulton, volume iii, pp. 150–151. Reference to the poem within the menu can be found in Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse, edited by Rossell Hope Robbins and John L. Cutler (Lexington, 1965), 3563.5.

3 R. W. Ingram cites payments for subtleties, and for painting subtleties, from the Cappers' Records of 1525 (Coventry, reed (Toronto, 1981), 123); in this case, payments for players appear along with the subtleties, providing one of the few other cases wherein we find subtleties to be associated with what we might normally think of as dramatic activity - though the exact connection in this case of the players and the subtleties is unclear.

4 Charles Ross, Edward iv (Los Angeles, 1974), 184.

5 A.B. Emden, Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500 (Cambridge, 1963), 1319.

6 Ross, Edward iv, 184.

7 It had, for instance, three courses, which in England, where two courses were enough to mark an important feast, would signify a 'very grand occasion' (Anne C. Wilson, Food and Drink in Britain: From the Stone Age to Recent Times, Harmonds Worth, 1984, 42).
Three courses were not as unusual in France, where four courses would mark an important feast (Jean-Louis Flandrin, 'Structure des menus Français et Anglais aux XVe siècles', *Du Manuscrit a la Table*, Carole Lambert (ed), Montreal, 1992, 176).

8 Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain*, 37.


10 The guests would not necessarily be tasting everything offered, however, as Hiatt and Butler, working with guest lists and food payments, point out (*Curye on Inglysch*, 5).

11 Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain*, 31.

12 Hiatt and Butler, *Curye on Inglysch*, state that the medieval feast, according to the *Liber Cure Cocarum*, naturally proceeds from substantial foods to more delicate foods (p 5). Other customs concerning the choice of dishes for a course are known: Flandrin notes that in English menus, salt fish appears in the first course in all menus known to him, and that roast venison appears never in an English first course, but often in a second (p 185); Wilson, *Edward iv*, notes that 'it was rare for the meat of any type of animal to appear more than once in a course, or indeed in a meal' (p 120). All of these customs are features of the Morton feast. What is unusual here is specifically the changing number of meat and fish dishes in each course.

13 There is disagreement about this. Wilson, *Edward iv*, 336–7, assumes presentation after a course, but surviving medieval menus seem to imply, from the order of the entries, presentation before the course.

14 It is not clear how much 'repayre' Bishop Morton actually performed in the See of Ely, as the register of his official acts is missing (Emden, *Biographical Register*, 1320); he did, however, cause some important works of navigation and drainage of the fens to be done, and the 'great artificial cut between Peterborough and Wisbech ... is still called Morton's Leam' (W.D. Sweeting, *The Cathedral Church of Ely: A History and Description of the Building with a Short Account of the Former Monastery and of the See*, London, 1901, 1921, 121–2).

15 The Ely cathedral lantern is its most prominent and famous feature, and has been so since the 14th century. Its construction was started under Alan de Walsingham in 1322, when the central tower fell, and was finished by 1342, when de Walsingham was prior (Sweeting, *The Cathedral Church of Ely*, 21–4). As one approaches Ely over the fens, the cathedral lantern is the first visible feature of the 'isle'. It serves not only to let light into the cathedral, but, at night when the cathedral is lit from within, to let light out, making it a good candidate for the 'fire of Ely', and, to the night traveller, a 'lodestar'.

16 Morton would later again be guilty of rebellion, when he would join—or perhaps engineer—Buckingham's 1483 rebellion against Richard III. Present at the Ely installation feast was another pardoned rebel, Sir William Bandon, who would also later join Buckingham's rebellion (Ross, *Edward iv*, 184). After his arrest in 1483, Morton escaped to Flanders, returning once again from exile at the accession of Henry VII (Emden, *Biographical Register*, 1319). Six years later, he would be appointed Archbishop of Canterbury (Giles St. Aubyn, *The Year of Three Kings: 1483* (New York, 1983), 117).

17 The cathedral was, and is, dedicated to the Trinity; the connection of either the bishop or the see of Ely to the three saints represented in the subtlety is unclear.

18 This is admittedly a vexed reading. Bentham, *History and Antiquities*, reads the incunabulum as 'le eglesure lettone', but does not explain it; Coulton reads Bentham as 'the
Another Look at the English Staging of an Epiphany Play at the Council of Constance

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 XXII and Benedict XIII, and persuaded the third, Gregory XII, 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’. 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, 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, 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-