would appear to be a standard phrase of the Robin Hood drama and indeed links these more closely with the Mummers' Plays, where the phrase commonly appears at the death of the antagonist in the Hero-combat plays.

14 Cf. John Matthews, Robin Hood: Green Lord of the Wildwood, (Glastonbury, 1993) for a detailed yet exclusive analysis of Robin Hood as the Green Lord or Summer Knight.


17 Le Jeu de la Feuillère, ll.420-1; 1093.

18 The text of the play, collected in the nineteenth century but said to have been performed during the eighteenth century at least, was published by R.J.E. Tiddy in The Mummers' Play (1923). It also appears as Appendix 6 in Wiles, Early Plays.

19 Cf. Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, 274. Peter Stallybrass, “'Drunk with the cup of Liberty': Robin Hood, the carnivalesque, and the rhetoric of violence in early modern England’, Semiotica 54 (1985), 113-45, examines the role of the carnivalesque in social protest with reference to Robin Hood. The latter part of his study explores the way in which the protest could be contained by, among others, fixing it clearly to a festive occasion and denying its relevance to everyday reality.

ABIGAIL A. YOUNG

Theatre-Going Nuns in Rural Devon?

In the summer of 1329, not long after becoming bishop of the large and demanding diocese of Exeter, John de Grandisson sent a stern mandate to the Austin canonesses of Canonsleigh Abbey in eastern Devon. Canonsleigh, although not a famous or exceptionally wealthy convent like Sion Abbey, was nevertheless in the top 20% as far as income was concerned, with an income of £197 and eighteen sisters (including the abbess) at the time of the dissolution. It would be completely unremarkable, aside from its occasional presence in the bishops' registers of Exeter, were it not for two factors, both connected with its founding c. 1284 by Maud de Clare, countess of Hereford and Gloucester (the widow of Richard de Clare). First of all, the countess created her convent by converting an existing house of Austin canons into a house for women, a very unusual event and one resisted by the canons. Secondly, she gave her nuns a book to guide them in the religious life. This book, a copy of the Ancrene Riwle, is now BL: Cotton Cleopatra c.vi, one of only seven surviving English ms of that work, and the one from which it has been edited for the EETS. But by about forty-five years after its foundation, the diocesan bishop would appear to have thought that the current crop of professed sisters needed even more help in keeping their rule. In his mandate he ordered the nuns' strict enclosure, or confinement, within the walls of their convent. Part of his reasoning was to cut them off from access to secular entertainment:

25
Order directed to.. Abbess of Canonsleigh

John, etc, to his beloved daughter, Lady ..., the abbess of the convent of Canonsleigh in our diocese, greetings, etc. Since it is not suitable for decent women to wander about nor to mix often with gatherings of men because, especially in the case of religious women, owing to the danger to their chastity, one must be on guard the more strictly lest, casting aside the modesty appropriate to a nun as well as the moderation of their sex in an unchaste manner, they rush about with foolish people as an offence to Him to Whom they vowed of their own free will their integrity of life as well as to the shame of the religious life and a scandal to many, we therefore command, firmly enjoining you for certain reasons, by virtue of your obedience and under pain of the greater excommunication, not to allow before our visitation any nuns of your house for any reason whatever to go outside the boundaries of your convent for a distance too great to allow them to return on the same day without our special licence so that they, cut off entirely from common and worldly shows in this way, may be able to serve God more freely and, with the opportunity for unrestrained play removed, guard their hearts and bodies more diligently for Him. Given at Crediton on 9 Kal. July (ie, 23 June).

On the one hand, this mandate must be set in an historical context of church discipline. Since the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the church, seized with a strong desire for reform which expressed itself, at least in part, in a new awareness of the holiness and separateness of people and places set apart for divine worship, had been engaged in periodic renewal movements. The emphasis on clerical freedom from secular control in the Gregorian Reform of the eleventh century and the movement to create and enforce a
clerical celibacy were part of this general desire for reform. Concern for the laity and their encounter with the holy in liturgy and sacrament, as well as redoubled efforts to keep secular business and secular pastimes out of churches and churchyard, bore fruit in the writings of the canonists and penitentialists leading up to the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Attitudes toward priests and nuns, churches and churchyards, sacramental bread and wine, all were touched by this new sense of transcendence and holiness.

To attempt to set apart nuns, then, was part of on-going commitment to institutional and individual renewal, which included new attitudes towards priests and monks as well.

But while still part of this on-going clerical reform, the 1299 bull of Pope Boniface VIII, 'Periculoso', the most immediate canonical source for this mandate, was also part of a theological and canonical tradition that singled out religious women very strictly, more strictly indeed than religious men. It was directed at enforcing strict enclosure generally amongst nuns and canonesses of whatever order, as Eileen Power observes. Under its terms, no nun was to be permitted to leave the confines of her convent for any reason except grievous illness nor were outsiders to be permitted to visit them within the cloister. Boniface only allowed for exceptions that involved an illness so severe that the sufferer could not remain in the community or a situation in which feudal law demanded the personal attendance of the abbess upon a secular lord from whom the abbey held land. De Grandisson thus stopped far short of enforcing the full provisions of 'Periculoso'. Only less than a month later, in July of 1329, he issued a second letter to the nuns of Canonsleigh, in which (although his visitation had still not been carried out) even the original mandate was considerably softened by allowing sisters accompanied by more senior members of the community to be absent for as much as two weeks to visit friends or relatives. But there are two strong reasons to see in this mandate a specific response to specific problems at the abbey. One lies in its timing and the other in its wording. The normal occasion for correction of abuses in a religious house of either sex is at or following the visitation, in which the responsible authority, such as the diocesan bishop, gets an opportunity to see at first hand what is going on there. It is clear from reading mediaeval registers that visitation was frequently a response to a reported abuse or other problem. But here de Grandisson orders a stringent enclosure even before his visitation had taken place, which argues for the report of some particularly scandalous event.

As to the language of the order, this text is very largely a cut-and-paste of language contained in 'Periculoso'. But Power ignored an important difference between the two when she called de Grandisson's letter a verbatim copy of 'Periculoso'. Boniface wanted nuns set apart from common and worldly sights ('a publicis et mundanis conspectibus separate'). De Grandisson changed that wording from 'sights' to 'shows', thus shifting its focus from something to which the nuns might be exposed willy-nilly in the course of travel outside the cloister to an event which they might choose to attend. Whether we perceive Boniface's concern as paternal or paternalistic, to wish to keep religious women from certain sights was a very different thing in the raw and tumultuous world of the mediaeval town from de Grandisson's desire to keep them from shows.

What 'spectacula' might the ladies of Canonsleigh Abbey have upset their bishop by going to see? What little we know about entertainment in early fourteenth-century Devon
comes from de Grandisson's registers, where he naturally only noted what violated canon law in one way or another. Still, in the six injunctions against specific plays or pastimes in Devon the bishop covers a wide range of activity, from clerical misrule at the cathedral and collegiate churches elsewhere in the county to plays and other pastimes at various locations within Exeter. Since any form of clerical misrule equivalent to the highjinks of choristers and minor clergy at St Nicholas' Day or Christmastide would have taken place at the nunnery itself, the type of 'spectacula' which the nuns were to stay away from is more likely to resemble the one of three lay-sponsored events for which Wasson found evidence in Exeter.

These took place in 1339, 1348, and 1352. The latter two events appear to be popular pastimes. De Grandisson's 1352 order was directed against some kind of satiric 'ludus' directed against some of the city's shoemakers that offended the bishop's Sabbatarian tendencies. The 1348 mandate fulminated against an unknown group called the Brotherhood of Brothelingham, whose mockery of a religious order extended to calling its leader an abbot. Their actual activities sound as if they were directed toward fund-raising, since the abbot's followers were detaining passers-by and demanding money, but certainly involved a lot of people, both on horseback and on foot, in a procession or parade. Both these letters make reference to a 'theatrum', or theatre, in Exeter but (as Wasson argues) it is far more likely, especially given the wording of the 1348 letter, that an open public space of some kind is indicated rather than anything like an ancient or modern 'theatre'.

Certainly the 1339 mandate makes the existence of a theatre in Exeter at that date unlikely, for de Grandisson's efforts there were directed against a fourteenth-century impresario named Robert Lucy who had set up a covered space in the churchyard of St Martin's, Exeter, in which a variety of undesirables plied their trades, including actors engaged in putting on plays. All three of these orders suggest a lively tradition of popular entertainment in Exeter which only surfaced in the bishops' registers when it spilled over into sacred time or sacred space or made fun of sacred people or things.

De Grandisson's restriction that the nuns were to go no farther from the nunnery than a day-trip may be in fact have been intended to keep them from going to Exeter. The round trip of about forty miles that would have been required would put it effectively outside the bishop's bounds. Certainly de Grandisson's predecessor, Walter Stapleton, was worried about the behaviour of nuns from Canonsleigh and Polsloe Abbey when they went to Exeter on visits. Canonsleigh was located near the border between Somerset and Devon: Wellington in Somerset and Tiverton in Devon, neither known to have had any dramatic activity in the fourteenth century, were the nearest towns of any size. We will of course never be able to know for sure unless further evidence turns up for fourteenth-century Devonian drama, but what we now know suggests that it was the bright lights and excitement of Exeter, a place where they would likely have been able to see 'spectacula' of every kind, that was drawing the county's nuns from their devotions.

Notes

1 Canonsleigh Abbey was of course dissolved by Henry VIII. Canonsleigh appears on John
Speed's map of Devon as a village in Bampton Hundred; it also appears on the first edition of the one-inch Ordnance Survey map of England. On the modern O.S. map, its name survives as that of a farm near the village of Westleigh, about five miles south-west of Wellington, along the Great Western Canal.


5 The abbess at this time was Margaret Aucher or Auenger (1320-45). The use of the double dot in this way was the mediaeval equivalent of the modern use of 'A.B.' or 'C.D.' instead of real names or initials in examples of legal forms. It is improbable in the extreme that neither the bishop nor his clerks knew the name of the current abbess of Canonsleigh. Rather it appears to be the custom in this register to use double dots for most mandates directed to a person by virtue of his or her office rather than to copy that person's name into the register.

6 *Medieval English Nunneries* (Cambridge, 1922), 353. The whole of this chapter (chapter ix, 'Fish out of Water') is a valuable discussion of the phenomenon of strict enclosure in women's houses.


8 The full text of 'Periculoso' is given in Boniface's Liber Sextus, lib. iii, tit. xvi (*Corpus Iuris Canonici*, 2, cols 1053-4). See *Nunneries*, p 344, for Power's translation of the introduction (in which the language borrowed by de Grandisson comes).

9 See John M. Wasson (ed), *Devon, Records of Early English Drama* (Toronto, 1986), 6-14 (text); 319-27 (translation).

10 Wasson, *Devon*, xxx, 439.

11 Stapleton's concerns are addressed in 1319 orders to the nuns at Polsloe and Canonsleigh; among other injunctions designed to make the nuns' enclosure stricter, he ordered that they only go to Exeter or elsewhere for meals under supervision and that they return the same or the following day. Furthermore they are not to go again to Exeter and go from house to house wandering as they had done in the past. See F.C. Hingeston-Randolph (ed), *The Register of Walter de Stapleton, Bishop of Exeter (A.D. 1307-1326)* (London and Exeter, 1892), 95-6 and 316-18, and Power, *Nunneries*, 354-5. The site of Polsloe Abbey is in the modern city of Exeter, being about a mile from the University grounds.

**News from the REED Office**

Our most important news of the season is the publication of Mark C. Pilkinton's edition of *Bristol* in October, bringing the series total to 17 collections in 17 volumes. The custom-