

target audience? Or might the play have been open, and therefore presumably accessible, to anyone who chose to come?

We do not know whether the John Burgess who wrote the play of *St Mary Magdalene* in 1506/7 was the same Burgess who was elected President of the College in 1527. But we do know, from the relevant record, that he was paid 10d for the play, whilst George Kendall, the Organist, received 12d *pro diligentia sua ... Mandato vicepresidis*, ‘for his diligence ... at the Vice-President’s command’.¹⁰ I could go on.

It might seem rather obvious, given the fact that what we have here are payments recorded in college account books, that evidence of early dramatic activity at Magdalen has generally only survived if that activity incurred some sort of expense. I make the point because as much as they outline a body of performances, the records simultaneously and inevitably suggest that the dramatic corpus to which they pertain would have been far larger and also that we have a huge amount of work to do in order to mine the records for their full value. We should note that not all expenses recorded relate directly to dramatic production (actors, musicians, props, costumes), but also to their wider staging, as in the case of accompanying meals above, for example. And there are regularly records of similar ‘indirect’ costs, such as the expenses for repairs to college buildings that seem to have been damaged fairly regularly by dramatic activity. Whoever ‘Walter Oven’ was, most likely the College’s carpenter, he seems to have done quite well out of Magdalen’s dramatic traditions, judging by the records for 1567/8, for example:

*Solutum oven et duobus famulis occupatis circa theatrum per diem
ij s. vj d.*

Paid to Oven and two servants busy about the theatre for the (one)
day 2s 6d
....

*Solutum oven et duobus famulis operantibus circa scanna confracta in
comœdia exhibita per .6. dies dietim singulis x d. xv s.*

*Solutum eisdem idem agentibus et alia ibidem per 4^{or} dies dietim ut supra
x s.*

Paid to Oven and two servants working about benches broken in
the performance of the comedy for six days at 10d a day for each 15s

Paid to the same (men) doing the same and other things there for
four days (at the same amount) a day as above 10s¹¹

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Since Oven's name appears on a number of occasions in the records, we might begin to imagine a regular tradition of drama at the College that required a significant amount of carpentry and labour. And also, presumably, a tradition of drama that did not necessarily invite decorous and sedate behavior among the audience. Incidentally, whilst the expenses of mending windows, benches, and other fixtures and fittings at Magdalen seem always to have been recorded alongside other dramatic expenses, it is fascinating to note that we have records of similar indirect expenses that merely hint at the extent of drama at other colleges that would otherwise have been lost. A record of four pence *solutum pro purgandis aedibus post ludos* 'paid for cleaning the houses after the plays' in 1552/3 at New College, for example, is all that we have within an otherwise empty span of half a century for that college.¹²

I have deliberately drawn attention to the scant early records here, but it should be stated that they do not generally get much more substantive for Magdalen until late in the sixteenth century. But I hope it gives some sense of the challenges posed. We are essentially hoping to use the EDOX project to try and put some of the flesh back onto the bones that the REED editors have exhumed in order to understand what kind of drama was produced in the College first, and then in the wider University, in the early modern period; how and why particular plays might have been selected; what meanings and significances they might have been intended to carry. And that is very much the method of enquiry in relation to one of John Bale's plays at Magdalen.

In the REED record for Hall costs in 1560/61, we have an apparently identifiable extant play, based upon the following entry:

*Solutum loyner pictori, depingenti nomina heræsium in spectaculo, quod
choristarum moderator ædidit* iiij s. iiij d.

Paid to Joynere, (a) painter, [for] painting the names of the heresies
for the show which the choirmaster produced 3s 4d¹³

The editorial suggestion accompanying the record is that the 'spectacle' for that year at Magdalen might have been John Bale's *Three Laws*.¹⁴ Before it gets too exciting, however, we should perhaps evaluate the evidence for Bale and consider the degree of conclusiveness that REED seeks to offer. At first glance, the entry regarding the Magdalen play of 1560/61 above is remarkably general; whilst *Three Laws* does contain a number of heresies, it is quite a speculative leap to decide that it is Bale's play here.