USING DRAMATIC RECORDS:
History, Theory, Southampton's Musicians

Peter H. Greenfield

Literary history, and the scholarship behind it, has perhaps always been regarded as a mere adjunct to the real business of dealing with literature: interpretation and, more recently, theory. Those of us who became involved in the Records of Early English Drama project in the later seventies — the 'second generation' of REED editors — knew that the prop lists, accounting records and court cases we laboured to find and edit held little interest for those who dominated the discipline, whether they clung to the 'New Criticism' or advocated structuralism or deconstruction. Though only Reg Ingram had literally sent himself to Coventry, other REED editors working on provincial records, without extant dramatic texts to which to relate those records, might be forgiven for feeling themselves self-exiled to Coventry, and beyond — indeed, to the very Welsh marches of the discipline of English literature. When we turned to interpreting the records we edited, we had, in fact, crossed the border, from English to, not Wales, but social history. For the records told us little about the content or performance of early drama. Instead, they told of the social and political transactions that occurred through dramatic performances, between noble patrons and civic authorities, between civic authorities and townspeople, between lords and tenants.

With the advent of the new historicism in the eighties, however, came the sense that records research might escape the margins and move toward the centre. After all, New Historicism asserted the centrality of history, and disciplinary boundaries were breaking down, as literature, history, anthropology, and the rest merged into 'cultural studies'. The lack of a literary text to study was not such a problem any more: the records themselves were texts which could be studied. Moreover, the ways that dramatic performance — as a social practice, as cultural performance — functioned to maintain authority, or resist it, was a central concern of the New Historicism. But New Historicists have not run to embrace those of us who do records research, to use our discoveries to generate or bolster their interpretations. In fact, we may feel even more marginalised, for the few who do not continue to ignore us have instead attacked our work, as Theresa Coletti has done in her reviews of the REED project.[1]

There is a strong temptation to ignore such attacks in turn, to rest in our confidence that, after all, we have facts to oppose to the theorists' jargon. Even post-structuralist historian Mark Cousins acknowledges the 'promise [of] a harvest of evidence which contrasts with the endless drought of argument'.[2] But those facts and the uses we make of them lie at the very centre of the theoretical or philosophical problem of history. That problem is perhaps best expressed — without jargon — by Penelope Lively in her Booker-Prize-winning novel, *Moon Tiger*. Her central figure, a historian, lies dying in a hospital. In her mind, she composes her magnum opus, a history of the world. Contemplating the Massachusetts Bay Colony, she thinks:

> I know what the weather was like in Massachusetts on Wednesday March 7th 1620 (cold but fair, with the wind in the east). I know the names of those who died that winter and of those who did not. I know what you ate and drank, how you furnished your houses, which of you were men of conscience and which were not. And I know, also, nothing. Because I cannot shed my skin and put on yours, cannot strip my mind of its knowledge and its prejudices, cannot look cleanly at the world with the eyes of a child, am imprisoned by my time as you were by yours.[3]

To admit that, though we know lots of facts, we know nothing, might lead us to despair, except that theory frees us from this dilemma by turning it on its head. Peter L. Allen summarises the New Historicism's understanding of the subjectivity of history thus:

> the past can never be known objectively and absolutely, but ... by incorporating ourselves into it, we can find our way into a past that has meaning for us ... Without a clearly articulated cultural frame, events do not form chains of meaning; within such a frame, they become significant.[4]

From the theorists' perspective, those of us who do archival research pile up our dramatic records without articulating the cultural frame that would give them meaning. Mark Cousins would undoubtedly lump us with the other professional historians whom he sees as avoiding the problem of History (with a capital H) 'by privileging the craft of investigation'.[5] In the introduction to his recent book, *The Business of Playing*, Elizabethan theatre historian William Ingram admits such criticism has some foundation:

> One finds little evidence in the writings of modern theater historians that [the] current view of the nature of historical inquiry bulks large in their thinking. What is missing in such writing is not advocacy or

> espousal — a matter of personal choice in any event — but mere acknowledgement.

Instead, Ingram agrees with Cousins that:

> 'We justify our work ... "by privileging the craft of investigation", trusting thereby that the point of what we are doing will be self-evident and that whatever theoretical premises seem called for will appear both reasonable and manifest in our practice. Our collegial aim is to "do" theater history better than it was done before, honoring a notion of objectivity and presuming an attitude of rigor toward our resources'.[6]

What Ingram says of Elizabethan theatre historians applies as well to those working on the Middle Ages. In the case of REED, the aim of doing theatre history better has meant the creation of the editorial office in Toronto, with experts in palaeography and Medieval Latin to ensure accuracy, and a general editor to ensure consistency. Our theory is implicit in our practice, and in the best of all possible worlds that would be enough. But in a professional world dominated by theory we risk the criticism that has, in fact, been levelled at us: that we demonstrate a naive, unexamined positivism, believing we can engage in historical investigation and interpretation that is entirely objective and theory-free. This criticism concerns me, because I believe that those of us who work with documentary records do have something to say to literary critics and cultural historians.

Ingram and a few others in the Theatre History group within the Shakespeare Association of America share my concern that if we historians do not take some notice of theory we will find ourselves completely isolated. Alan Nelson tried to make these concerns the focus of one of the group's seminars at the Shakespeare Association's annual meeting by entitling it, 'What Do Facts Mean?' Many of the participants, however, avoided the theoretical question. Instead, they took the question very narrowly, and produced papers which essentially said, 'I have facts A, B and C, and what they mean is X about staging in *Measure for Measure*, or Y about the Rose excavation, or Z about the quartos of *Hamlet*'. These papers were valuable and tightly argued, but what remained unexamined in them was the assumptions or general principles that allow us to connect data and claim. To examine our assumptions is to confront the theoretical problems of history, to admit that we necessarily, inevitably, see the past through the lens of our knowledge and prejudices (to use Lively's words).

Moreover, that is not the only lens that interposes itself between us and a clear view of the past. We can see the past only through the records, and as Coletti has argued, an important contribution of post-modern theory to medieval studies is the recognition that documentary evidence does not provide us with neutral, objective recordings of 'what actually happened'. Recognising the 'textualised nature of historical data' forces us to employ the same tools of textual analysis to interpret documentary records that we use on literary texts.[7] For instance, Daryl Palmer has observed of the records of Norwich in David Galloway's REED edition: 'every textualisation of travelling performers by Norwich authorities produces documents of control and appropriation. The texts claim to simply report performance culture even as they produce it themselves, constructing the very possibilities of performance'.[8] The same is true of the records of Southampton. Accounts are the simplest and seemingly most objective records we use, yet even they do more than record receipts and expenditures when they are written down and preserved. Take a record chosen at random from the Southampton mayors' accounts: 'Paid to my Lorde of Leycesters plaiers xij of them the xxijth of September 1577 — xx s'.[9] This record yields several facts of interest to traditional theatre history, including the size of the company, and the presence of Leicester's company on tour in Southampton not long after they had established a purpose-built London home at the Theatre. But the recording of these facts in a civic document also appropriates the dramatic performance as one small piece of the civic government's construction of its own authority within the city — its power to permit and reward entertainment of its choosing — and of its authority in relation to the player's patron, and through him, to the Crown.

In using dramatic records we thus have to deal with the fact that when we look at the past through the records, we are looking through at least two lenses. One lens is shaped by our own experiences and beliefs. The other lens takes its shape from the nature of the records themselves, from the fact that almost all the evidence we have of early dramatic activity consists of records written down and preserved by agents of authority — town councils, civil and ecclesiastical courts, parish churchwardens, and the like. We cannot remove these lenses, nor can we hope to apply our own correcting lens to reverse the distortions and achieve a perfectly clear and unaltered view of what originally happened. Unlike the optical scientists who designed the lenses to 'fix' the Hubble Space Telescope (itself an instrument for seeing into the past), we have no means of precisely measuring the original distortion.

A better analogy in the case of history might be the lenses of polarising sunglasses, which allow only light oriented in a particular direction to pass through them. Wearing polarised sunglasses, one sees by light that is not only somewhat dimmer than generalised sunlight, but more organised, too. Certainly this is what any theory, any approach, in fact any act of reading does to the material, organising it in a comprehensible direction, while at the same time filtering out whatever resists taking that direction. But, of course, the original act of recording had much the same effect, filtering out everything about the dramatic performance except what interested the authority that made the record. The point of the analogy concerns what happens when you pass light through two polarising lenses. If the lenses are differently oriented — for instance, if one is rotated 90 degrees in relation to the other — then all the light is cancelled out, and we see nothing. If the lenses are similarly oriented, however, the light passes through, only slightly dimmed by the second lens, and we can see, if darkly.

In my own case, I was led to use the lens of New Historicism not by theoretical conviction so much as by practical necessity. Trying on other lenses, I might see flashes of illumination. The Gloucester chamberlains' accounts yield a few facts about stage construction. Expenses for costume repair give glimpses of what characters appeared in Tewkesbury's parish plays. A consistory court case regarding breach of a marriage promise reveals that the Hampshire village of Newton Valence celebrated annually with a Summer Lord and Lady. But only when I used an approach concerned with the representation of power and authority to interpret documents that are themselves representations of authority did I find I could see an entire narrative, did I have a story to tell.

This was particularly true of the records of Southampton. The records of the city and of its parishes tell us nothing about local amateur drama: no civic biblical plays, no parish Robin Hoods. The records of visiting professional players add to our general knowledge of the itineraries such companies followed, and a 1620 ordinance prohibiting players from using the Town Hall adds to our understanding of how urban authorities turned against players in the seventeenth century. But there was no story that was particularly Southampton's, until I turned my New Historical lens on the records of the city's musicians.

In using records of entertainment in the provinces, I have found the most important insight of New Historicism to be its recognition of the theatricality of power in Early-Modern England. New Historicists like Stephen Greenblatt have argued that, in the absence of a standing army or national police force,

royal power was maintained through theatrical means, such as Royal Entries, which visually and verbally represent royal authority, engendering coercive belief as support for the legal foundation of that authority.[10] New Historicism has tended to focus on the authority of the Crown, but the situation was similar for urban élites in the provinces. The mayors and councils of provincial towns did have means of enforcing their authority: fines, stocking, imprisonment, and the like. Yet social historians like Natalie Zemon Davis, Charles Phythian-Adams and Mervyn James have demonstrated that the social structure of late-medieval towns was largely constituted by ceremonial display. Phythian-Adams argues that ceremony 'was a societal mechanism ensuring continuity within the structure, promoting cohesion and controlling some of its inherent conflict'.[11] Or, as Steven Mullaney sums up the New-Historicist view, 'In early modern society, power was inseparable from such public manifestations'.[12]

Among the forms that civic ceremony took in Southampton, among the ways the urban élite could engage in what Phythian-Adams calls 'the spectacular advertisement' of their status and authority, were performances by the civic musicians, or waits. Regardless of what instruments they played or what music they performed, when they performed in civic livery and (in the seventeenth century) wearing silver badges carrying symbols of the city, they offered a cultural performance promoting the existing hierarchy of authority.

This political purpose may well have been in the minds of Southampton's council when it first employed civic musicians, but the records lack sufficient detail to let us read the council's intentions at that time. It seems likely that Southampton first adopted a group of waits in 1433–34.[13] The only minstrels mentioned in the earliest surviving stewards' accounts, for 1428–29, are visiting troupes of the Cardinal, the King, and the Duke of York.[14] When waits do appear in the accounts in 1433–34, their advent raises interesting questions, though the answers remain obscure.

Two different sets of stewards' accounts survive for 1433–34, one apparently 'rough' accounts, and the other a fair copy, but a number of entries and details appear in one set but not the other. The fair copy tells us of the elaborate feast held on 13 January in the Guild Hall, which still exists over the Bargate, the main gate leading out of the city to the north. In addition to all the money the steward paid for food and drink, he gave 20d to *minstrellis Wintonie*.[15] Later in these accounts we get the first mention of the town musicians, the payment at the feast of John the Baptist the wages *minstrellis dicte ville*: Richard March, John Goddislond and William Goldfinch together received 20s for their services for one quarter of the year.[16]

The story gets more interesting when we turn to the rough accounts, because they tell us that the reward given by the Mayor on 13 January went to 'minstrell*is* de Wynches*ter* q*ui* nu*nc* sunt ap*ud* suthampton'. And the very next entry, for 16 January, indicates that the steward paid 'predictis minstrellis' 6s. 8d. as a partial payment of their wages for the year, and it names Richard March and John Goddissond.[17] So on 13 January they played at the feast as minstrels of (or from) Winchester, but by 16 January they were getting wages from Southampton.

Furthermore, the steward also claimed his expenses for going to Winchester on 11 May to go bail for Richard March, John Goddislond and William Goldfynch. The musicians had been arrested at the request of Walter Hore, Mayor of Winchester, and both the musicians and the steward of Southampton had to respond before the justices at the Assizes.[18] The justices must have been satisfied, because shortly thereafter the musicians were back in Southampton, receiving their quarterly wages, as well as their liveries.

So what happened to these musicians in 1433–34? Did the mayor and burgesses of Southampton 'steal' these musicians away from Winchester, perhaps impressed by their performing ability, but especially by their potential for ceremonial display? In that case, the musicians had to appear at the assizes to answer for their betrayal of whatever agreement they had with the mayor of Winchester. Or had they done something at Winchester which led not only to their having to appear at the assizes, but also resulted in their leaving Winchester? In that case, perhaps the musicians' performance at the feast in Southampton was a kind of audition. Having passed that, they received a reward as visiting performers, but were then immediately adopted as the civic waits.

Later records perhaps support the second possibility. The following year, 1434–35, all seems well with Southampton's musicians. They get new liveries and their wages each quarter. Even their names have been changed by the steward to reflect their new positions, for the wages are paid to Richard Wayte, John Wayte and William Wayte. But after a four-year gap in the accounts, the accounts for 1438–39 show no trace of the three waits who were important enough to the town that the steward bailed them out at Winchester assizes — and spent a considerable amount on 'beverages' and other gifts for the sheriff and justices. These three musicians may thus have come to Southampton after spoiling their welcome in Winchester in some way. At some time in the next four years the mayor and burgesses of Southampton discovered that March, Goddislond and Goldfynch were

more trouble than they were worth, and sent them on their way again. Southampton hired the three waits at a time when the city's fortunes were in the ascendant. Henry V's use of the port as the jumping-off place for his expedition to France brought new prosperity to the city early in the fifteenth century, and in 1445 Henry VI granted the city a charter in gratitude for its service to the crown. Two years later the city got its own sheriff, and became the town and county of Southampton. The economy prospered, as Italian merchants treated Southampton as London's outport. They thus avoided the dangers of navigation through the English Channel and up the Thames, as well as the threat to the safety of their ships posed by Jack Cade's rebellion and other civil unrest of the mid-fifteenth century.[19] That a number of Venetian merchants resided in Southampton at this time, often marrying into local families, indicates the port's significant role in Mediterranean trade.

Yet even during the period when that trade was busiest, under Henry VII, London-based merchants actually controlled the majority of the goods passing through Southampton. Thus, when improved shipbuilding and the creation of a guild of pilots on the Thames made navigation to London much safer, the London merchants pulled out of Southampton, decimating the town's trade. Queen Mary answered the town's appeals by granting a monopoly on the sweet wine trade, but even that action did little to remedy the decline. Venetian ships continued to unload their sweet wines at London, forcing Southampton to settle for fines levied against vessels that violated the monopoly.[20] The 1560s and 70s brought a brief economic recovery, but as it was based on exchanges with Spain, the recovery faded as political tensions with Spain increased.[21]

Like most provincial towns, then, Southampton suffered economic decline in the sixteenth century. This decline powerfully affected social conditions in Southampton. Great social mobility had characterised the period of prosperity. Leading burgesses frequently made their fortunes, then left for London or country estates, allowing the next rank to move up. Poverty certainly existed in medieval Southampton, especially in the northern parishes, but on a much smaller scale than in the sixteenth century, and it was relieved by civic and monastic charity. When opportunity for social advancement through trade decreased during the sixteenth century, those burgesses who remained became, as Colin Platt describes them, 'more introverted and exclusive, guarding what was left of [their] privilege.'[22] Men from outside the older burgess families could no longer rise to municipal office. At the same time, increased poverty resulted from the influx of population from the countryside that troubled most towns in this period, as

well as from the economic slide. Intensified tension between classes manifested itself in action from both sides. As early as 1517, enclosure of the salt marshes caused a violent reaction, with the mayor as its target.[23] In 1536 the mayor and council adopted regulations greatly restricting begging in the town, because 'a grett nomber of beggars of late have resortid unto this towne ... intendyng to lyve only by beggyng, to the grett charge of all the dwellers wythin the said towne'.[24]

The precise path that social conflict took in Southampton in the later sixteenth century remains obscure, since civil order never broke down to the point that the assembly had to take documented action, as happened at Gloucester in 1586, when clothworkers rioted over merchants shipping grain out of the city while the poor went hungry.[25] Still, the combination of waxing population and waning prosperity must have taken Southampton in the same general direction as Gloucester and other provincial towns. Faced with increasing class consciousness and social tension, the burgesses needed to consolidate their authority.

One way in which they did so emerges from the criticism of an anonymous fellow townsman writing in 1582:

> Then beganne costly apparell: then downe with old howses, and newe sett in their places: for the howses where the fathers dwelt could not content their children. Then must everie man of good calling be furnished with change of plate, with great store fyne lynnen, rich tapistrie, and all other things which might make shewe of braverie.[26]

From this writer's perspective, such conspicuous consumption indicated only the extravagance and even depravity of the town's wealthier citizens. On the other hand, New Historicism's insight that during this period power and authority were maintained primarily through display allows us to glimpse in this material excess a social purpose. Like urban élites across the country at this time, Southampton's leaders needed secular rituals to replace the pre-Reformation processions that had reaffirmed the hierarchy as they celebrated community. In his study of English town halls in the sixteenth century Robert Tittler notes that local authorities adopted symbolic means designed to engender 'the civic deference necessary for effective government'.[27] Such symbolic measures included the building or re-building of the town hall, enlarging the ceremonial mace, and providing the mayor with a special chair of office.[28]

The employment of civic musicians, their number increased to five, and dressed in new liveries and silver badges, would certainly have struck the 1582

critic as another form of extravagant display, and an especially dangerous one at that, given the frequency with which musicians appear in the records connected with civil disturbances. In 1559, for instance, one minstrel had his head broken, while another was fined for playing at dice with apprentices.[29] Of course, these bad sorts may have been visitors.

That the new musicians were, instead, consciously intended by the mayor and assembly to display the authority of the town is revealed by the agreement the musicians signed in December 1607:

> Wee William greene and Will*ia*m Tompson music*i*ons, s*er*uant*es* vnto the Towne of Southampton Doe hereby acknowledge to haue rec*eue*d of the Maior Bayliff*es* and Burgesse*s* of the same Towne five liu*er*ye Cotes of black broad Cloth, whereof two for ourselves, and theother three to be for such o*ur* Companie as wee shall thinke fitting to ioyne in Consortshipp w*i*th vs; Wee doe alsoe hereby farther acknowledge & confesse to haue this day rec*eue*d of the sayd Maior, Bayliff*es* and Burgesse*s* two Scutchins or cog*n*izaunc*es* of siluer impressed w*i*th the Townes Armes; Namely, three Ros*es* the l*ett*re H; and the forme of a Tonne, waighing together in the whole iiij^{er} ounces and a quarter of an ounce.[30]

This record itself acts as an assertion of authority by Southampton's mayor and council, especially as it occurs as an entry in the 'Book of Remembrance', a document whose principal purpose was to preserve, or extend the council's authority indefinitely into the future. This textual assertion of authority was augmented by the appearance of related records in this and other documents, such as the records which authorised the city's purchase of materials and labour for the musicians' livery coats, and for the silver badges.

Of course, Southampton had not been without musicians for the entire period between 1435 and 1607. In 1493 the town paid for liveries for three waits, who were also probably the 'ministra*llibus* ville Southampton*ie*' who were rewarded by St. Denys Priory, just north of the town, on St. Denys' feast day.[31] The waits then disappear from the records again until 1579, when 'Henrie the Minstrell' was paid four pounds for 'his fredome of the keeping of the waightes'.[32] Henry Mylls received his livery annually for several years, and in 1587 the town gave him a poor boy as an apprentice.[33] In 1594 the 'weightes' (plural) again received liveries, and the plural is also used in a household book of Sir Richard Powlett, who rewarded musicians at Hampton in 1597.[34]

However, the 1607 increase to a consort of five represents a significant augmentation of the town's ability to engage in ceremonial display.[35] The power of that display as a representation of civic authority also increased greatly with the addition of the silver escutcheons to the livery coats the musicians had long worn.[36] These 'cognizaunces' or badges, bearing the letter 'H' and the barrel or 'tun' to signify 'Hampton', made even more explicit the musicians' role as servants of the town. In addition to providing music and perhaps acting as watchmen, that role involved making the population of the town more 'cognizant' both of its unity as a social body, and of social differentiation within that body between those who served and those who had the power to employ servants.

While the town was willing to spend rather lavishly to outfit the musicians as symbols of corporate unity and authority, it gave not one penny in wages, as can be seen from agreements like the one quoted above, and the complete absence of payments to the musicians in the Book of Fines, the mayors' accounts and the stewards' accounts. Presumably much of the musicians' income came from rewards given them at private functions. At Gloucester the civic musicians received annual rewards from guilds like the Tanners and Bakers for playing at new masters' feasts.[37] At Manchester, orders of the court leet specifically prohibited any musicians except the town's own from playing at wedding feasts, which must have been a lucrative practice.[38] Still, the income from such sources would have been irregular and the total apparently inadequate to support the performers and their families, for the records show the musicians found other means of supplementing their income. Some of those means were — potentially, at least — disruptive of civic order and authority, and the town leaders felt deeply ambivalent about them.

One source of additional income the civic leadership could offer the musicians that tended to preserve, rather than threaten, social order was taking apprentices. Only a few weeks after William Greene became a town musician, a boy named John Sopp was brought to the council house. His father, a feltmaker of the town, had died, his mother having died of plague some time earlier. The council immediately bound the boy apprentice to Greene until he reached the age of 24, and paid Greene twenty shillings toward the boy's keep.[39] Members of the town musicians also took on apprentices in 1617, 1619 and 1633; in all four cases the apprenticeships are recorded not in the main apprenticeship register, but in a special register that recorded only those apprentices who had become wards of the town due to their parents' destitution and death.[40] The records suggest, then, that no

living, successful citizen would apprentice his son to the musicians, but the musicians could provide the useful service of taking on children whose lack of family made them financial drains on the town, as well as potential disrupters of the social fabric.[41] At the same time, the apprentices would have contributed to their masters' prosperity beyond the original payment from the assembly.

Granting monopolies, as in the Manchester ordinances about wedding feasts, also allowed towns to aid their musicians financially while simultaneously maintaining social order. The first of these motives dominates the earliest of the Manchester regulations:

> ... And whereas at Weddinges strange pypers, or other Minstrells come and sometyme playe beffore weddinges to ye Churche, sometyme at ye weddinge dyner, by reason whereof, they drawe to theym selves some gaynes, which oughte to redound to the Waytes of this towne. thereffore in consideracion, it is a creditt to ye towne to see theym well mayneteyned. The Iurye dothe order that no pyper or mynstrell, shalbe allowed to playe at any Weddinge dyner, or beffore any Weddinge within the towne to ye preiudice of the Waytes ... And rather augmente theire wages, then otherwise, So longe as they shall vse and behaue theym selves duetiefullye & paynefully as apperteyneth.[42]

Giving its musicians a monopoly on performing at weddings was 'a creditt to ye towne' in more than one way, for by ensuring that the waits were 'well maynetyened', Manchester kept them off the poor rolls. At the same time, the monopoly ensured that important ceremonial events like weddings would involve a display of civic order in the symbolism of the musicians in the town's livery, rather than a representation of the permeability of that order by outsiders, in the form of 'strange' musicians — that is, visiting performers with no visible connection to the civic hierarchy.[43] The latter effect of the monopoly comes through more strongly in an ordinance from Ware, which saw a constant stream of travellers on the Great North Road:

> Also that euery foren musicyon resortinge to ye towne shall not be Suffrede to tarrie or play in any Inn or vsuall resortinge place within the said towne ouer one night & one day vpon payne to be usede & entreted as a commone vagabond by the officers of the said towne.[44]

The Southampton records do not contain similar orders granting the town musicians a monopoly on performances within the town, but resistance to infiltration by 'strange' or 'foren' entertainers can be seen in the assembly's

reaction to one of the attempts William Greene made to supplement his income. On 9 December 1608, the assembly ordered that one Thomas Grymes of London was to stop 'keepinge a dawncinge schoole in mr Greenes howse ... and to settle himselfe into some seruice or depart the Towne which he hath promissed to performe'.[45] Evidently Grymes did not perform quickly enough for the assembly, for on 13 January it issued a further order that Grymes and his wife must leave Southampton within the week.[46] Such orders preventing new-comers to the town from setting up in business without the permission of the authorities were common in Southampton during this period, as they were in most towns. What is significant about this case is that William Greene, a servant of the town, should challenge the town's authority by allowing a musical entertainer not of the town to set up a dancing-school in his own house. Probably Greene himself would have provided the music for the dancing and taken a cut of the fees or charged Grymes for the use of his house.

While the town could not countenance this business venture, involving a performer who had not been made free of the town, it did permit Greene and his fellows to engage in other practices potentially disruptive of civic order and authority. One of these practices was 'huckstering' — purchasing large quantities of food and fuel at the market before the bell rang to signal its official opening, so that most people were forced to buy from the hucksters at inflated prices. Southampton's court leet waged a continual battle against this practice, but instead of prohibiting it entirely, designated certain persons as 'fit' to be hucksters. They were permitted to do business as long as they did not begin buying before the market opened at eleven o'clock, and as long as they held to prices set by the court.[47] In November 1609 the assembly granted that 'William Greene the Towne Musitian was vppon his humble sute allowed to be a Common hughster: keepinge the Towne orders as thervnto apperteyneth'.[48] We can assume that Greene found huckstering reasonably lucrative; at least, no more abortive ventures like Grymes's dancing-school show up in the records.

The ambivalence of Southampton's civic leadership toward hucksters parallels their ambivalent attitude — and that of many towns in the period — toward alehouses. As Peter Clark has shown, alehouses were viewed by both government ministers and Puritan preachers as sites of potential social disruption and subversion.[49] Southampton's court leet described one local alehouse as 'more like a den of whores and thieves than a house of civil government', a place where robbers identified possible victims, much as Gadshill and the Chamberlain do in 1 Henry IV.[50] Alehouses were tolerated,

however, because they had taken over many of the communal functions of the medieval parish, and because many of those impoverished by economic decline found they could escape complete destitution by becoming alehouse-keepers.[51] The assembly indicted Greene's fellow musician William Tompson for keeping an alehouse without a license in October 1609. However, on payment of a fine, he was granted the necessary license.[52]

In fact, the records suggest that for the first two years after Greene and Tompson were designated the town musicians, they and the burgess assembly searched for acceptable ways to make them financially viable members of the community. Greene was assigned an apprentice, but his and Grymes's dancing-school was prohibited. Then, within a few weeks, both Greene and Tompson challenged civic authority by taking up questionable practices. Both had to appear before the assembly, but were ultimately allowed to continue as huckster and tippler. Why did the council take this course, rather than paying the waits for their services? The civic leaders' policy toward huckstering and alehouse-keeping in general shows that when they were faced with a choice between a possible long-term threat to the established order and a certain short-term financial advantage, they tended to lean toward the short-term financial gain. The usual approach seems to have been to allow the questionable practice, yet to curb and control it as much as possible through regulation. This response resembles that of urban élites across the country to the visits of travelling players in the second half of the sixteenth century. Robert Tittler believes that civic authorities 'encouraged' players, who had been performing at inns or churches or market places, 'to relocate in the civic hall for what they saw as purposes of containment and regulation'.[53] Furthermore, performances by itinerant players in town halls can be seen to function as cultural performances providing powerful images of containment. As wanderers, outside the urban social order, the players resembled the vagabonds, the masterless men who were seen as the enemies of the established order.[54] Yet any subversive energies that might be liberated in the audience by this element of the representation were contained by the players' appearance in their patron's livery — which made obvious their status as the servants of some nobleman — and by their appearance in a performance authorised by civic authority and occurring in a space symbolic of that authority.

Southampton's musicians provided similarly complex images of containment. Musicians make frequent appearances in the court records of the period for their involvement in tavern brawls, Sabbath-breaking and numerous other forms of civil unrest. Towns often restricted musicians'

movements and activities. At a time of significant social tension, however, suppressing musicians was a less effective approach than transforming them into images of containment by authorising and regulating their activities, dressing them in livery and badges that marked them as the servants of civic authority. While the records do not detail the duties of Southampton's musicians, if they were similar to those of Gloucester's waits, then the musicians would add to the symbolic display at the 'solempne vsuall assemblies', the secular ceremonies crucial to the urban élite's maintenance of their power. But the musicians also displayed their image of containment daily at 'iiij of the clock in the morninges in the Chief streetes' of the city.[55] That Greene and Tompson also engaged in other potentially subversive economic practices that were similarly regulated and contained — huckstering and alehouse-keeping — only intensified their impact as representations of civic authority.

Undoubtedly it was because the musicians became an accepted part of the town's official and ceremonial structure that they continued to function as symbols of authority right through the seventeenth century, while players became increasingly suspect. Though Puritan sentiments were not strong in Southampton, in 1620 and again in 1623 the town prohibited performances by stage players in the Town Hall, and by 1632 the mayor was paying players to go away without performing, a practice that continued throughout the 1630s.[56] During this same period, the musicians regularly appear in town minutes and accounts detailing the liveries granted to the town officers, including the clerk, the under-steward, the sergeants and the crier in addition to the musicians.[57] Replacement leaders of the consort were admitted by the Assembly in 1613 and 1630 and in the latter year the town paid thirty shillings to have three more silver badges made, so that all five musicians would wear those symbols of the town.[58] In December 1640, not long before the Puritans closed the London theatres, Southampton's assembly increased the musicians' allowance for their livery cloaks by forty shillings.[59]

A rapprochement between archival research and theory offers two advantages. The first is that by acknowledging theory, and especially by acknowledging the theory that informs our practice, we build bridges to the rest of the discipline that can carry our work to a wider audience. The alternative, as William Ingram has suggested, is to risk further marginalising ourselves if we ignore the 'advancing tide of textual understanding in which all utterance is seen as contingent and ... socially constructed'. The danger is that 'We resist these insights only at some cost to our own work, even though they

inevitably undercut whatever empirical assumptions we find ourselves holding onto about the histories we write for one another'.[60]

The second advantage is that some use of theory opens up new possibilities for using and interpreting records. REED editors have often shied away from interpretation, conditioned as we are by our training in the strictures of textual editing, not to mention REED's own dicta, which banished all interpretation even from the introductions and notes (at least until recently). Having found a batch of records from which we cannot forge a narrative according to our standards of objectivity, we have perfected what I might call the 'Here-are-some-records-that-resist-interpretation' conference paper. In some cases, these papers are an exercise in *occupatio*, for in suggesting the conclusions they might come to if there were more of the right kind of evidence, they actually engage in interpretation while insisting on the impossibility of interpreting.

The advantage of acknowledging the problem of History, as raised by contemporary theory, is that we can be bolder in our attempts to interpret. Leeds Barroll, in criticising some practitioners of the New Historicism for not following the spirit of their own theory in their practice, argues that 'we must remind [ourselves] that what we choose to see as records — or materials for the construction of new narratives — offer only multiple interpretative possibilities'.[61] Since 'only multiple narratives' are possible, we can get on with producing those narratives, to see which are the most interesting, the most useful. We should not throw caution to the winds, but rather by combining our careful examination of archival evidence with Allen's 'clearly articulated cultural frame',[62] we can offer new narratives, new stories that give meaning to our newly-found records.

The story told here of Southampton's civic musicians has limitations, even distortions imposed by the new historical lens I have adopted, yet if I had not chosen to look through that lens, the story would not have been written. And now that it is written, it stands as an invitation to respond and challenge, but especially to tell other stories — parallel stories, alternative stories — as we expand our understanding of what medieval dramatic records meant in their historical context, and what they mean to us.

University of Puget Sound

NOTES

1 Theresa Coletti 'Reading REED: History and the Records of Early English Drama' in *Literary Practice and Social Change in Britain, 1380–1530* edited Lee Patterson

(University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990) 248–84; and '"Fragmentation and Redemption": Dramatic Records, History and the Dream of Wholeness' *Envoi: A Review Journal of Medieval Literature 3:1* (1991) 1–13.

2 Mark Cousins 'The practice of historical investigation' in *Post-Structuralism and the Question of History* edited Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington, and Robert Young (Cambridge University Press, 1987) 130.

3 Penelope Lively *Moon Tiger* (Grove Press, New York, 1987) 31.

4 Peter L. Allen 'A Frame for the Text? History, Literary Theory, Subjectivity and the Study of Medieval Literature' *Exemplaria 3* (1991) 3.

5 Cousins 'The practice of historical investigation' 131.

6 William Ingram *The Business of Playing* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1992) 10–11, 3; quoting Cousins 'The practice of historical investigation' 131.

7 Coletti '"Fragmentation and Redemption": Dramatic Records, History and the Dream of Wholeness' 11.

8 Daryl Palmer 'The Transmission of Performance Culture in Early Modern Norwich, "Amending the Dragon"' unpublished paper presented at the Shakespeare Association of America 1991 Meeting.

9 Southampton Record Office: SC5/3/1, fol 167^{r}.

10 Stephen Greenblatt 'Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*' in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism* edited Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1985) 44.

11 Charles Phythian-Adams 'Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry 1450-1550' in *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* edited Peter Clark and Paul Slack (Routledge, London, 1972) 69; Natalie Zemon Davis 'The Sacred and the Body Social in Sixteenth-Century Lyon' *Past and Present 90* (1981) 40–70; Mervyn James 'Ritual, Drama, and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town' *Past and Present 98* (1983) 3–29.

12 Steven Mullaney *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988) 23.

13 In 1394–5 the chamberlains of Winchester paid 18d 'in don*is* trib*us* ministrall*is* de Hampton', which could refer to waits *of* Southampton, but could just as easily refer to minstrels *from* Southampton who had no official position in the town. (My thanks to Jane Cowling for sharing her transcription of this record from her work on the records of Winchester.) If these were waits, this record would be the earliest of civic waits by several years, according to Richard Rastall. It is simpler to assume that these minstrels were not employed by the city, than that Southampton had waits very early, abandoned the practice by the late 1420s,

and then decided to employ waits again in 1433–34. However, the waits do go in and out of the civic records throughout the fifteenth century.

14 Southampton Record Office: SC5/1/1, mbs 3, 2[d]

15 Southampton Record Office: SC5/1/2, fol 2[v].

16 Southampton Record Office: SC5/1/2, fols 4[v], 7[v].

17 Southampton Record Office: SC5/1/3, fol 6.

18 Southampton Record Office: SC5/1/2, fols 3[v], 4[v]; SC5/1/3, fols 7[v], 8[v], 10[v].

19 Alwyn Ruddock 'London Capitalists and the Decline of Southampton in the Early Tudor Period' *Economic History Review, 2nd series 2:2* (1949) 139–40.

20 Ruddock 'London Capitalists 148–49.

21 Colin Platt *Medieval Southampton: the Port and Trading Community, AD 1000–1600* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1973) 221.

22 Colin Platt *Medieval Southampton* 217–18.

23 *The Third Book of Remembrance of Southampton 1514-1602* edited A.L. Merson (University of Southampton Press, 1952) *1*, 20–26.

24 Merson *The Third Book of Remembrance of Southampton 1514-1602 1*, 52–53.

25 Peter Clark '"The Ramoth-Gilead of the Good": Urban Change and Political Radicalism at Gloucester 1540-1640' in *The English Commonwealth, 1547-1640: Essays in Politics and Society Presented to Joel Hurstfield* edited Peter Clark, Alan G. R. Smith, Nicholas Tyache (Leicester University Press, 1969) 175.

26 Public Record Office: SP 12/156; quoted in Platt *Medieval Southampton* 217.

27 Robert Tittler *Architecture and Power* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991) 122.

28 Tittler *Architecture and Power* 98–128.

29 Southampton Record Office: SC5/3/1, fols 104, 104[v].

30 Southampton Record Office, Assembly Book, 11 December 1607: SC2/1/6, fol 56[r].

31 Southampton Record Office: SC5/1/23, fol 51[v]; Public Record Office: SC6/Henry VII/672, mb 4.

32 Southampton Record Office: SC5/3/1, fol 174[v].

33 Southampton Record Office: SC2/1/5, fol 152[r].

34 Southampton Record Office: SCS/3/1, fol 251[r]. Of course, the musicians Powlett rewarded may have not have been Southampton's waits; they could have been other musicians residing at Southampton, or even visitors (Hampshire Record Office: 44M69/E3).

35 The number of musicians may have increased somewhat earlier, as the list of amounts of cloth given for the liveries of various officials in November 1594

indicates that 'the weightes' received 'j yard dimidium & dimidium quarter at 9s [per yard] — xiiij s vij d' (Southampton Record Office, Book of Fines: SCS/3/1, fol 25l^{r}). That allowance of cloth is, however, only one-eighth of a yard more than Henry Mylls alone had received — 'j yeard 2 quarter' — in 1583 (Southampton Record Office: SCS/3/1, fol 188^{v}). Furthermore, the plural 'weightes' may be explained by the language of the recognisance Mylls paid in 1580, when first taking on the job, which indicates that the town received four pounds from him 'for his ffredome of the keping of the waightes' (Southampton Record Office: SCS/3/1, fol 174^{v}).

36 These badges still exist in Southampton's collection of corporate plate, and are worn by the town sergeants on ceremonial occasions. One bears the initials 'E. H.' on the back, presumably the musician Edmund Hannye who signed receipts for two of the town badges and for thirty shillings to have three more badges made in 1629 (Southampton Record Office, Assembly Book: SC2/1/6, fol 237^{v}, 238^{v}, 240^{r}).

37 *Records of Early English Drama: Cumberland, Westmoreland, Gloucestershire* edited Peter H. Greenfield and Audrey Douglas (University of Toronto Press, 1986) 314 and following.

38 *Records of Early English Drama: Lancashire* edited David George (University of Toronto Press, 1991) 58–59, 61–63, 66–67.

39 Southampton Record Office: SC2/1/7, fols 39^{v}, 41^{r}.

40 Southampton Record Office: SC9/2/12; SC9/2/13, fols 6^{v}, 8^{r}, 19^{r}.

41 Of course, many other occupations also took poor children as apprentices, but a preliminary comparison of the two apprenticeship registers suggests that the musicians were the only occupation to draw its apprentices solely from amongst the poor orphans.

42 *REED: Lancashire* 59.

43 Both the persistence of 'strange' musicians and the importance to the town leaders of eradicating them is shown by the fact that the original 1588 order of the court leet had to be repeated in 1600, 1603, 1604, and 1606.

44 British Library Additional Manuscript 27976, fol 109.

45 Southampton Record Office: SC2/1/6, fol 77^{v}.

46 Southampton Record Office: SC2/1/6, fol 80^{v}.

47 *Court Leet Records 1550-1624* edited F.J.C. Hearnshaw and D.M. Hearnshaw (Southampton Record Society, H.M. Gilbert and Son, Southampton, 1905–10) *3*, 379–80, 410.

48 Southampton Record Office: SC2/1/6, fol 105^{r}.

49 Peter Clark *The English Alehouse: a Social History* (Longman, London, 1983) 145.

50 *Court Leet Records 1550-1624* edited F.J.C. Hearnshaw and D.M. Hearnshaw *1*, 137.

51 Clark *Alehouse* 153, 81–82.

52 Southampton Record Office: SC2/1/6.

53 Tittler *Architecture and Power* 150.

54 Stephen Greenblatt 'Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*' 30. For the application of Greenblatt's ideas to travelling players, see my forthcoming article on 'Touring' in *A New History of Early English Drama* edited David Kastan and John Cox (Columbia University Press, NY).

55 *REED: Cumberland, Westmoreland, Gloucestershire* 313.

56 Southampton Record Office: SC6/1/37, fol 16^{v}; SC2/1/6, fol 212^{r}; SC5/3/14, fol 7^{r}; SC5/3/15 pages 5–6; SC5/3/16, fol 3^{r}; etc.

57 See, for instance, the expenses for liveries in 1610 in the Second Book of Debts: SC5/2/2, fol 159^{v}. The history of the civic musicians is very similar at Gloucester and other provincial centres.

58 Southampton Record Office: SC2/1/6, fols 56^{r}, 237^{v}, 240^{r}.

59 Southampton Record Office: SC2/1/6, fol 319^{v}.

60 William Ingram *The Business of Playing* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1992) 10–11.

61 Leeds Barroll 'A New History for Shakespeare and His Time' *Shakespeare Quarterly 39* (1988) 462–63.

62 As note 4 above, Peter L. Allen 'A Frame for the Text?' 3.