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MINSTRELSY AND ITS RELATIONS WITH THE CHURCH

Minstrelsy and Worship

Minstrels were of many types - mostly damnable, according to the medieval church.¹ The Pardoner's description of

Syngeres with harpes, baudes, wafereres,
Whiche been the verray develes officeres

may seem harsh:² but it was justly deserved by the majority of those who travelled around medieval England "under colour of mynstrelsie", and probably reflected faithfully the attitude of the Church towards those who were well known³

To kyndle and blowe the fyr of lecherye,
That is annexed unto glotonye.

At the other end of the scale, however, there was good scriptural justification for the use of minstrelsy in praise of God, and the Church actively supported the Psalmist's exhortation⁴

Yn harpe, yn thabour, and symphan gle,
Wurschepe God, yn troumpes, and sautre,
Yn cordes, an organes, and bellys ryngyng,
Yn al these, wurschepe the heuene kyng.

Thus minstrelsy played an important part in the miracle plays which [61] were a prime vehicle of popular religious communication.

There is no paradox here. The minstrelsy which the Church encouraged was not that of the low-class "develes officeres" but of the skilled instrumentalist,

¹ For the various *strata* of minstrelsy as viewed by Thomas de Chabham in the early fourteenth century, see Chambers/*MS*, ii, pp. 262 ff.

² Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, lines 17 and 18 of the Pardoner's Tale.

³ *Ibid.*, lines 19 and 20. On the long-standing association between music and sexual sin, see Stevens/*M&P*, p. 253.

⁴ Brunne/*Synne*, i, pp. 158 f., lines 4769-4772.

usually liveried, with whom this thesis is concerned. He alone of the various types of minstrel was considered capable of salvation, and it is he who was welcomed in religious houses and employed as a liveried retainer in the household of many a prelate.⁵

The Church, indeed, had nothing against entertainment as such, nor against entertainers. She had no "official" attitude towards minstrelsy, only a desire to keep entertainment in perspective. The writings of Robert Mannyng de Brunne, which have been cited as an attack on "Daunces, karols, somour games" and minstrelsy in general,⁶ are in fact nothing of the sort. "Handlyng Synne" (1303) was written in English, as Mannyng explained, to enable the common man to examine his conscience and so to guard himself against vice. Thus it warns him against too much frivolity, especially on a Sunday:⁷ more specifically, it issues a [62] strong warning against minstrelsy in churchyards or while mass is being said.⁸

"Handlyng Synne" is positive in approach, however, and not merely restrictive. Robert Grosseteste's love of music is justified by reference to the Psalms,⁹ and Mannyng explains that Grosseteste always had his harper near him because the harp symbolised the Cross.¹⁰

The Psalmist's exhortations to worship God with minstrelsy were not accepted by the Church only in theory: minstrelsy was allowed inside the church building, apparently as a legitimate form of adoration. When Edward I visited Chichester Cathedral in May, 1297, he found a certain Walter Lund, a harper, playing before the tomb of St Richard:¹¹ and a few days later the king made a gift to fourteen minstrels playing before the image of the Virgin in the vault of Christ Church, Canterbury.¹² The Wardrobe Books of the reign of Edward III record another four gifts [63] for minstrelsy before the image of the Virgin at Christ Church, the last

⁵ There was no clear dividing-line, of course, between the respectable minstrel and the others. Monks liked to be entertained as much as anybody else, and were probably not always as careful in their choice of guest as they might have been. At the same time, certain entertainers who had reached the top of their profession, but who did not fall within the limits set by the Psalmist, must have been considered respectable – the king's fool, for instance, and his *tregettour* (trickster, or conjuror) and waferer.

⁶ Collier/*History*, i, p. 18.

⁷ Brunne/*Synne*, i, pp. 36 and 156 f.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 283 ff., lines 8987 ff. Lines 8991–94 are:

“ ... entyrludës, or syngyngge,
Or tabure bete, or other pypyngge,
Alle swychë thyng forbodyn es,
Whyle the prest stondesth at messe.”

⁹ See above, p. 60 and n. 4. Grosseteste was Bishop of Lincoln, 1235–1253.

¹⁰ Brunne/*Synne*, i, p. 158, lines 4755–56.

¹¹ 26 May, 1297: Add. MS 7965 (25 Ed I), f. 55. See below, ii, p. 17.

¹² 6 June, 1297: *ibid.*, f. 55v. See below, ii, p. 17.

one specifying that the minstrels played while the king was making his offering.¹³ On this latter occasion the king also made an offering in St Augustine's Church, where he rewarded a harper for minstrelsy.¹⁴ On two occasions in the reign of Edward III, gifts were made to minstrels playing before the cross in the north chapel of St Paul's, London.¹⁵

Several points emerge from these payments. All except one of those occasions which are dated precisely are in the period between Easter and Trinity,¹⁶ while two particular places – Christ Church and St Paul's – seem to have had some tradition of honouring the Virgin and the Holy Cross through minstrelsy.¹⁷ Each occasion was "special" in the sense that it was a royal visit, and no doubt the minstrels (who must have guessed that the visitor would make an offering in the church) felt assured of a reward for their [64] pious minstrelsy. But the prime reason for the minstrelsy had nothing to do with the royal visit: it was an act of reverence before a symbol – the image of the Virgin, the Holy Cross or the tomb of a saint – which must sometimes have taken place when no noble visitor was present.

We must therefore conclude that, at least in these places and at a particular season, minstrels were allowed to perform in church as an act of worship. The minstrels seem always to have been local.¹⁸ The payments in which their instruments are specified show *bas* music in each case: violists and harpers each appear twice, and a fiddler once.

The range of acceptable instruments may well have been wider than this: we do not know that the other minstrels were *bas* rather than *haut* instrumentalists, and the Psalmist included *haut* instruments in his lists.¹⁹ Judging by the iconography of the period, the acceptable forms of minstrelsy were confined to purely instrumental and vocal performance. Secular singers are, in fact, rare in this connection, and although instrumentalists may have sung as [65] well as played, I

¹³ See below, ii, pp. 87, 89, 93 and 114 (calendared in Rickert/*Chaucer*, p. 260): see also below, ii, pp. 114 f. and nn. 60 and 61.

¹⁴ See below, ii, p. 114 (also calendared in Rickert/*Chaucer*, p. 260).

¹⁵ See below, ii, pp. 88 and 89: Collier/*History*, i, p. 22, appears to quote the latter inaccurately.

¹⁶ Easter was on the following dates: 14 April in 1297, 31 March in 1331, 19 April in 1332 (which was a leap year), and 1 April in 1369.

¹⁷ For the use of the image of the Virgin and the Cross as liturgical "stations" at the Mary-antiphon and Jesus-antiphon respectively, Wells Cathedral c. 1479, see Harrison/*MMB*, p. 179 and n. 7.

¹⁸ There can be no doubt of this in the case of Walter Lund, harper of Chichester, and of the minstrels of Canterbury: nor are the "certain" or "various" minstrels likely to have been attached to the royal party. There was not, as far as I know, a royal violist called John in 1331–2 (see Rastall/*MERH*, *temp.* Edward III): Hankin Fytheler and John Harper are less certain, although the wording of the payments suggests that they were not royal minstrels.

¹⁹ Psalms 81 and 150, for instance (new numbering).

have not seen this depicted.²⁰ The forms of minstrelsy which were less completely concerned with music were probably not acceptable, for religious iconography seems rarely to have included jugglers, dancers or animal-keepers in the main illustrations.²¹

Stringed instruments, both plucked and bowed, are most commonly depicted. The harp held a special position because of its connection with King David and its symbolisation of the Cross: and that position was sometimes usurped by the psaltery at the time of that instrument's greatest popularity during the fourteenth century.²² Shawms and trumpets (usually the straight *busine*) are likewise common, and chime-bells are regularly found until the fifteenth century.²³ Less common are the organ, both portative and [66] positive, and the triangle. Nakers are rare,²⁴ as are the rustic instruments, bagpipe, pipe-and-tabor and hurdy-gurdy.²⁵ The crozier of William de Wykeham (Bishop of Winchester, 1367-1404) therefore includes the whole range of acceptable instruments (some of them, perhaps, only just acceptable) – triangle, bagpipe, portative organ, three pipes (shawms?), psaltery, trumpet, hurdy-gurdy and fiddle.²⁶

In using musical instruments to symbolise worship²⁷ the illuminators invariably honoured the Mother of God with the fullest possible resources. Thus an impressive array of instruments, usually played by angels, appears in pictures of

²⁰ A lay singer is depicted among instrumentalists in a twelfth-century manuscript (Cambridge, St John's College, MS B.18): see *NOHM 2*, frontispiece. In a similar group in the Bromholm Psalter, the singer is a monk: see Plate II, above.

²¹ Such people do appear in marginal decorations: see above, pp. xxxi f. Depictions of jugglers are among the main illustrations in a French troper (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Latin 1118, f. 112v) and an English psalter (B.M. MS Cotton, Tiberius C vi, f. 30v), both of the eleventh century. I am indebted to Mr D.H. Turner for information concerning these illustrations, which are reproduced in Robertson/*History* as Plates 10(b) and 15 respectively.

²² See Panum/*SIMA*, p. 90. For King David playing the psaltery, see the *Exultate Deo* initial in the Luttrell Psalter (Add. MS 42130), c. 1340 (Millar/*EIM*, ii, Plate 55).

²³ Generally in the *Exultate Deo* initials in psalters; see those of the York Psalter (facsimile in Millar/*York Psalter*), c. 1250; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 53, early fourteenth century; and the Ormsby Psalter (see Plate IV, below). Examples could easily be multiplied.

²⁴ I have not found an example in English religious iconography.

²⁵ The *Beatus* page of an early fourteenth-century psalter (Add. MS 39810) includes a bagpipe: other such depictions are in foreign manuscripts. Pipe-and-tabor appear (with shawms, trumpet, harps and mandora) in the Angel Choir at Lincoln, late thirteenth century: see Gardner/*Sculpture*, pp. 116–25. The fifteenth-century carvings of angelic minstrels in the nave of Manchester Cathedral include players of the tabor (without pipe), bagpipes of two varieties, and hurdy-gurdy: see Hudson/*MWMC*, pp. 149–74. Pipe-and-tabor are also found in the *Exultate Deo* initial of the Bromholm Psalter: see Plate II, above.

²⁶ See Carter/*Specimens*, i, frontispiece and plate facing p. 47.

²⁷ Worship is included in *Divine Order*, so that this is part of the symbolism already discussed above, pp. 49 f. and n. 130.

the Coronation of the Virgin.²⁸ These works of art should, of course, be taken to [67] symbolise the act of adoration without depicting actual musical performances: but as we have seen, heavenly minstrelsy in praise of the Virgin could have a terrestrial counterpart.²⁹

Instruments and Liturgy

In these circumstances it seems obvious that when minstrels accompanied a procession to and from a church³⁰ there was no reason why they should not have entered and attended the service. But it cannot therefore be assumed that they played their instruments there, much less that they took part in the liturgical music.

Few subjects in the field of medieval music have provoked more argument than the question of instrumental participation in the liturgy. E.A. Bowles has assembled what at first sight seems an impressive mass of evidence against the liturgical use of instruments.³¹ He speaks of the "infiltration of secular music and instruments" into the service of the early Church, adding that the practice of instrumental accompaniment to the singing in church was completely forbidden by about A.D. 370.³² He goes on to say [68] that in the Middle Ages the ban was repeated by various councils and synods³³ until, during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, "Many church councils ... spoke out against bringing instruments into the music of the Mass."

Bowles admits the use of organ – although only a restricted use – throughout the Middle Ages, and he quotes the Council of Milan (1287) as banning all instruments except for the organ, citing the recorder and clarion as examples of banned instruments. He also admits that the trumpet, which became symbolically associated with the elevation of the Host, could become actually associated with the Elevation in the liturgy.³⁴ All other instruments, however, are dismissed

²⁸ Here we find those instruments which are otherwise rare in religious iconography, such as nakers and bagpipe (both found in the French Book of Hours of Queen Joan of Navarre, c. 1330, for instance: see Thompson/*BHQJN*, plate XIX). The connection between minstrelsy and the cult of the Virgin goes beyond the limits of manuscript illumination: it is no coincidence that the major churches most famous for their carvings of musical instruments – the cathedrals of Lincoln and Manchester – are both dedicated to her.

²⁹ Nevertheless, the interpretation put by Duncan (Duncan/*Minstrelsy*, p. 38) on a passage from the 1469 commission for the refoundation of the minstrel-gild (see above, p. 16) is unwarranted. There is no reason to suppose that the king's minstrels would "pray for ... the king and ... queen of England" by making minstrelsy.

³⁰ See above, for instance, pp. 4 and 55. Also Bowles/*Procession*, *passim*.

³¹ Bowles/*Liturgical*.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 48: Bowles cites those of Trier (1227), Lyons (1274) and Vienna (1311).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52: Bowles cites the use of a trumpet during the Elevation in the church of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence. He also cites a passage from *Le songe du vieil pèlerin* (1389) in which Philippe de Mézières warns Charles VI of France against excessive use of mu-

on the grounds that their appearances in contemporary iconography are of purely symbolic significance: the whole material world was regarded as a symbol in the Middle Ages, so that we have to distinguish between the ideal, metaphysical "reality" and the reality of the senses.

The flaws in this argument are obvious, and they lead to a [69] complete reversal of interpretation of much of Bowles' evidence. If church councils found it repeatedly necessary to ban instruments from liturgical use, this is surely an admirable piece of evidence for, not against, the continued use of instruments in a liturgical context: and if the Council of Milan actually singled out instruments which it wished to ban, we can be fairly sure that it did so precisely because those instruments were in fact being used.

Robert Donington's reply to Bowles' article says all this, which I find acceptable.³⁵ On the subject of the iconographical evidence, however, he goes to the opposite extreme in disputing Bowles' conclusions, supporting his argument by reference to the symbolic use of a trumpet being carried out in practice.³⁶ For, he says, the ritual aspect of liturgy is an "inspired attempt to depict eternal truths in symbolic images". Hence "the fact that organ and trumpet, harp and psaltery, lute and rebec all had the most precise significance as symbolic images makes their use in the liturgy not less but more probable."

It is very tempting thus to dismiss Bowles' distinction between the metaphysical "reality" and the reality of the senses. But to do so would force us to regard pictorial representations of instruments (after making allowance for such factors as the [70] *horror vacui*) as depictions of actual performances: and this, as we have seen,³⁷ would involve some most impractical "consorts".

Donington's argument, in any case, brings us back to the question of instruments in *worship* rather than specifically in the liturgy: for as Bowles points out,³⁸ no depiction of instruments can without doubt be assigned to a liturgical context. This is not quite true, for the organ appears in depictions of the liturgy, although very rarely. For other instruments, the statement could be put more positively: in depictions of the liturgy, singers not infrequently appear (usually reading from a lectern) – instrumentalists, never.

The reason for this is simple. Depictions of the celebration of the liturgy are usually concerned with the everyday service, not with special and specific occasions: and even the organ was used only on special occasions and feast days.³⁹

sicians: " ... Lesquelles grosses trompes, beau fils, ès grandes solennités tu feras sonner doucement à l'élévation du Saint Sacrement ..." (quoted in Pirro/*Charles VI*, p. 14). The whole of this passage (*ibid.*, pp. 14 f.) is a superb example of minstrelsy viewed as symbolism.

³⁵ *Galpin Society Journal*, xi (May, 1958), correspondence.

³⁶ See note 34, above.

³⁷ See above, p. xxx f.

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

³⁹ For the use of the organ in liturgy, see Harrison/*MMB*, pp. 202–17, *passim.*, especially pp. 205 f; also Caldwell/*Organ*.

For evidence of instrumental participation, therefore, we need to find out about special celebrations, descriptions of which are likely to be documentary rather than pictorial.

Documentary evidence is rare but positive. At Cardinal Wolsey's visit to St Paul's in 1527, the *Te Deum* was accompanied by the king's trumpets and shawms.⁴⁰ This is a late instance, but [71] some tradition of liturgical performance had existed amongst the king's minstrels slightly earlier, for Hans Naghele, the king's sackbut, played in descant with another man in divine service in the chapel of the Emperor Charles V, c. 1500.⁴¹ A payment to the king's minstrels at the installation of the Archbishop of Canterbury on 9 March, 1505, may refer to minstrelsy at the installation feast rather than during the service in the cathedral.⁴² Minstrelsy had certainly been known in church on such occasions, however, for an Abbot-elect of St Albans had been received in the Abbey with minstrelsy of shawms ("quos *burdones* appellamus"), the bells ringing and the clock sounding, as the *Te Deum* was sung.⁴³

To the above *haut* instruments – trumpets, shawms and sackbuts – we can probably add chime-bells, the *cymbala* of the Psalms, as an instrument played during the liturgy on special occasions.⁴⁴ [72] Whether trumpets were ever used in England at the elevation of the Host or not, I have found no direct evidence. The appearance of "due trumpe argenti" in three inventories of jewels and plate belonging to the Chapel Royal⁴⁵ may be regarded as circumstantial evidence of some ceremonial use of trumpets in the Chapel: the Black Prince purchased two silver trumpets in 1346, perhaps for the same purpose.⁴⁶ Such instruments were expensive – the Black Prince paid 19 marks for his – and would hardly have been used for everyday minstrelsy. Besides, the minstrels seem always to have owned their own instruments.⁴⁷

We may conclude, I think, that church services were generally unaccompanied, and that the only instrument used regularly (and that infrequently) was the

⁴⁰ See Harrison/*MMB*, p. 217.

⁴¹ Straeten/*Ménéstrels*, vii, p. 269. *Ibid.*, vi, p.254, quotes the use of "cornets a bouquin" for a service in Charles V's chapel at about the same date. For a cornet playing in a service in Savoy, 1503, and sackbuts doing the same at Innsbruck, 1503, see Doorslaer/*Philippe le Beau*, pp. 51 f. For these references, which I have not been able to check, I am greatly indebted to Dr Brian Trowell. Naghele, or Naille, appears amongst the king's shawms and sackbuts in the list of minstrels at Queen Elizabeth's funeral in 1504: see Lafontaine/*Musick* under that date and Rastall/*MERH*, p. 36. For other late fifteenth-century Continental instances, see Kinkeldey/*Orgel*, pp. 165 f.

⁴² Dawson/*Kent*, p. 7: accounts of the chamberlains of Canterbury, 1504–5.

⁴³ The reception of John de Hertford, elected in 1235: see Riley/*GAMSA*, i, p. 520. Harrison/*MMB*, p. 206, quotes this (*ibid.*, n. 3) without giving the date.

⁴⁴ For a discussion of *cymbala*, see below, pp. 168–76.

⁴⁵ See below, ii, pp. 20, 25 and 42.

⁴⁶ *RegBP*, i, p. 30. The Black Prince also paid 4/- for the tube (*canoun*) of a latten trumpet on this occasion.

⁴⁷ See below, pp. 107 ff.

organ. At certain times, as we shall see, chime-bells may be added. Other instruments, *haut* instruments of a ceremonial nature, were also used on very special occasions, and this (together, no doubt, with various local practices in which churches were misused) continually caused a reaction from the clergy who wished to see no minstrelsy at all in church.

We need not assume, as Bowles does,⁴⁸ that a minstrel would have to be musically literate to take part in the music of the [73] liturgy. Even on the main feast-days, only a part of the service, if any, would be set polyphonically: and if minstrels did not memorise the polyphonic parts, there would still be plenty of plainsong on which they could "descant".⁴⁹ Descanting was a method of improvisation well suited to use by musically illiterate minstrels: they must have used it in playing popular tunes in their secular work, and there is every reason to suppose that they could treat a well-known plainsong tune in the same way.⁵⁰

Minstrelsy in Religious Houses

Besides those forbidding instruments in the liturgy, Bowles mentions statutes which forbade the clergy even to consort with minstrels, much less to employ them.⁵¹ Here we can certainly say that such statutes were an attempt to discourage a common practice, for minstrels were welcomed to ecclesiastical establishments just as they were to secular households. In particular, the main feasts of the Church's calendar always drew minstrels, as did the patronal festivals of certain large churches. Thus the Durham accounts show that more money was paid in reward to minstrels at [74] the two feasts of St Cuthbert than at other times.⁵²

A celebration of a more occasional nature which must have proved attractive to minstrels was the installation of a prior, abbot, bishop or archbishop. At the installation-feast of Abbot Ralph of St Augustine's, Canterbury, in 1309, the sum of 70/- was given to minstrels.⁵³ There were ten minstrels at the feast of Bishop Alwyn at St Swithin's, Winchester, in 1374,⁵⁴ and two at the consecration of Prior John of Maxstoke in 1432.⁵⁵ The presence of the king's minstrels at the installation of the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1505 has already been noticed:⁵⁶ no doubt the

⁴⁸ Bowles/*Liturgical*, p. 47.

⁴⁹ See above, p. 71 and n. 41.

⁵⁰ On the use of English Discant and related techniques, see Stevens/*CCS*, p. 57, Stevens/*Drama*, p. 90, and Stevens/*M&P*, p. 313.

⁵¹ Bowles/*Liturgical*, pp. 45 f. He specifically mentions the Synod of Chartres (1358).

⁵² See below, Appendix B, *passim*. The feast of St Cuthbert is on 20 March: another feast-day in his honour, which I have not been able to trace, was observed in September.

⁵³ Warton/*History*, ii, p. 96.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, iii, p. 118: "In festo Alwyni episcopi ... Et durante pietancia in aula conventus sex ministralli, cum quatuor citharisatoribus, faciebant ministralcias suas".

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, ii, p. 98: "Dat' duobus mimis de Coventry in die consecrationis prioris, xij d."

⁵⁶ Above, p. 71 and n. 42.

Canterbury waits and other minstrels were also attendant on that occasion, even if they were not rewarded by the town.

As the Durham accounts show, minstrels were welcomed not only at the principal feasts but also on other saints' days and, probably, many other occasions. If the priory extended hospitality to a nobleman, as it did to Lord Percy at Christmas, 1376, his minstrels might be asked to perform. At the Augustinian priory of Bicester, [75] Oxfordshire, minstrels were paid for six separate feasts in a single year, 1431,⁵⁷ while quite as many different occasions are suggested by payments in the contemporary accounts of Maxstoke Priory, Warwickshire.⁵⁸

Religious houses could, in fact, be especially favoured as places for minstrels to work. In 1467 the Coventry waits were so much in demand that the Corporation had to proscribe their activities outside the city: the waits were, however, allowed to continue to perform for abbots and priors within ten miles of Coventry.⁵⁹ Waits were as welcome at religious houses as any other minstrels, and the accounts of Thetford Priory show visits by the Norwich waits as well as other minstrels between 1498 and 1510.⁶⁰

Details of the performances are rare, and it is not often possible even to tell what instruments the minstrels played. Of those which are specified, harpers are easily the most common: indeed, harpers are sometimes distinguished from other, unspecified, minstrels, and an example of this in the accounts of St Swithin's Priory⁶¹ led Warton to believe that the distinction was a common one. Warton points out, however,⁶² that the minstrels sang on [76] this occasion, and the distinction is perhaps made in the accounts because it was the harpers who sang to their own accompaniment. Other *bas* instrumentalists appear in the Durham accounts⁶³ – a fiddler (c. 1336), a crowder (c. 1360), a luter (1361) and a Scottish roter (1394–5). *Haut* instruments were also welcome, and the priory rewarded two trumpeters of the Earl of Northampton (?c. 1357), a piper "and other minstrels" (at Christmas, 1360), a trumpeter called Robert (at the feast of St Cuthbert, 1368 or 1369) and a trumpeter of the king (1394–5).

The Durham accounts also contain a payment to a minstrel "jestour" named Jawdewyne at Christmas, (?)1362.⁶⁴ Very rarely accounts tell us what *gestes* were sung by such minstrels. When Adam de Dalton, Bishop of Winchester, visited St Swithin's Priory in 1338, the entertainment in the Prior's hall included the "Song of Colbrond" (a Danish giant) and "Queen Emma delivered from the plough-

⁵⁷ Warton/*History*, ii, p. 97.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 97 f: in the Maxstoke accounts, "mimus" is the word used for a minstrel.

⁵⁹ Harris/*Coventry*, p. 335.

⁶⁰ Harvey/*Thetford*, *passim*.

⁶¹ See above, n. 54.

⁶² *Op. cit.*, iii, p. 119.

⁶³ See below, Appendix B, under relevant dates.

⁶⁴ For *gestours*, see below, pp. 165 ff.

shares", both sung by a minstrel named Herbert.⁶⁵ During the Epiphany celebrations at Bicester Priory in 1432, six minstrels of Buckingham sang the story of the Seven Martyred Sleepers in the refectory.⁶⁶

[77] Payments for the less purely musical types of minstrelsy are not so common.⁶⁷ The Maxstoke accounts record several payments to players (*lusores*), who probably acted out biblical stories or other stories (such as those of the songs mentioned above) with a religious bias: there is also a payment to a *joculator*, which probably means the same as *gestour*.⁶⁸ On one occasion (in 1381 or 1382) the Prior of Durham was entertained by a minstrel of the Duke (of Northumberland?) with a tumbler or dancer (*saltans*), an entertainment which took place in the prior's own chamber. Dancing, of course, did sometimes have a religious significance,⁶⁹ and so we find disguisers dancing in the abbey at Edinburgh in 1504.⁷⁰

Some abbeys and priories kept musicians in permanent employment. Warton mentions that Jeffrey the Harper received a corrody in 1180 from the Benedictine abbey of Hide, near Winchester, in payment for his minstrelsy on public occasions:⁷¹ and Warton [78] considered also that the abbeys of Conway and Stratfleur in Wales probably had their own harpers at this time.

We should notice, however, that Jeffrey's employment was of an occasional nature: in the life of an abbey there would be less work for a musician than in a secular household – less minstrelsy would be required (or allowed) and there would be no apprentices to teach. At Durham the harpers employed there made themselves useful about the priory in other ways: Thomas Harper, for whom a harp was bought in 1335 or 1336, carried out repairs and other work as a carpenter between 1339 and 1341.⁷² Barry Harper, who was given a tunic in ?1362, was

⁶⁵ Warton/*History*, i, p. 97, quotes the register of the priory: "Et cantabat Joculator quidam nomine Herebertus canticum Colbrondi, necnon Gestum Emme regine a iudicio ignis liberate, in aula prioris."

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, iii, p. 119, quotes the priory accounts: "Dat' sex Ministrallis de Bokyngham cantantibus in rectorio Martyrium septem dormientium in Festo epiphanie 4/-".

⁶⁷ c.f. the discussion above, pp. 64 ff.

⁶⁸ For a use of the word where this meaning is certainly intended, see above, n. 65. For *lusores*, see also the Durham accounts (Appendix B, below) for the year 1375–6.

⁶⁹ With good biblical precedent, such as King David's dancing before the Ark.

⁷⁰ 3 February, 1504: see below, Appendix D, under that date.

⁷¹ *Op. cit.*, ii, p. 98. There are later examples of *royal* minstrels being taken into religious houses as a reward for their service at Court. In 1328 the king required the Abbot and convent of Ramsey to take into their keeping Janettus, Queen Isabella's psaltery-player, and to maintain him: see Rymer/*Foedera*, ii (2), p. 738. In 1364 the Black Prince similarly required the Prior and convent of St Michael's Mount to maintain Gilbert, his trumpeter: see *RegBP*, ii, p. 208. Such a procedure was not confined to minstrels (*ibid.*).

⁷² See below, Appendix B, under these dates.

probably in permanent employment at the priory also. Other men named Harper who carried out repairs at the priory may or may not have been musicians.⁷³

[79]

Personal Minstrels of the Clergy

The higher clergy employed their own personal minstrels, for a prelate's household was in most ways similar to a secular magnate's. At the marriage of Edward I's daughter Elizabeth, payment was made to two harpers of the Bishop of Durham,⁷⁴ and a few years later John de Greyndon, minstrel of the Bishop of Durham, and Guillotus the Bishop's harper were rewarded at Court.⁷⁵ The latter is probably identical with the "Guillaume le Harpour qui est ove le Patriarke" in the list of minstrels at Pentecost, 1306:⁷⁶ the harper of the Bishop of Durham and Robert, harper of the Abbot of Abingdon, were also present on that occasion. John, the crowder of Shrewsbury, may also have been the minstrel of a prelate: Hayes⁷⁷ thought that he was probably the crowder of the Abbot of Shrewsbury, who had been sent for by the king to teach the crowd to the rhymer of the Prince of Wales.

With the exception of John the crowder, all these are harpers: we have seen that there was a symbolical reason for this,⁷⁸ but we should perhaps have expected it anyway from our knowledge [80] of secular households.⁷⁹ The Durham accounts for 1362 show that at that date the Bishop of Norwich, too, had a harper. At the end of our period, when the lute had largely taken the place of the harp as the courtly instrument, two Scottish prelates – the Prior of Whithern and the Bishop of Murray – kept their luters.⁸⁰

⁷³ Heliseus Harper between 1412 and 1422, and William Harper in 1442–3. By the end of the fifteenth century the name Harper – which was not uncommon – had become a "fixed" surname, no longer indicative of the profession of the man who bore it: these dates are, I think, a little early for this, and I am inclined to think that Heliseus and William were both minstrels. One John le Harper was employed as a mason on the king's works in 43 Henry III (*Devon/Issues*, pp. 46 and 49), while a John Harper supplied various provisions to the household of the Duchess of Buckingham in 1465–6 (*Add.* 34213, ff. 8, 15v, 40v and 57v – new foliation). Minstrels made acceptable soldiers, and they well may have been good at other jobs.

⁷⁴ 25 Ed I: *Add.* 7965, f. 52; see below, ii, p. 16.

⁷⁵ *Add.* 8835 (32 Ed I), f. 44; see below, ii, p. 41.

⁷⁶ E101/369/6 (34 Ed I): Anthony Bek, Bishop of Durham (1284–1311), was also titular Patriarch of Jerusalem; he had two minstrels present, therefore; see below, ii, pp. 54 and 57 f.

⁷⁷ Hayes/*KM*, p. 31.

⁷⁸ For Robert Grosseteste's harper, see above, p. 62 and n. 10.

⁷⁹ See below, pp. 163 f.

⁸⁰ See Appendix D, below, under dates 23 April, 1501, and 12–13 June, 1504.

Judging by the size of the payments made to them, the minstrels of the Bishop of Durham were skilled players:⁸¹ a prelate's household could no doubt attract and foster good minstrels just as a secular magnate's could. In May, 15 Edward II, Roger the harper and John Bisshop, minstrels of the Bishop of Ely, were rewarded for minstrelsy at Court, and the latter may have become a royal minstrel; two years later, Robert Polydod and Thomas le Barber, minstrels of the same bishop, were rewarded at Court, and Polydod was certainly a king's minstrel in the following reign.⁸²

One or two seems to have been the usual number of minstrels for a bishop, and we can probably assume that a prelate did not [81] employ trumpeters. The accounts of the chamberlains of Winchester seem to indicate that three minstrels of the Bishop of Winchester, at most, were rewarded there in the early fifteenth century: the bishop must sometimes have been present when these payments were made, and if he had had more minstrels they would no doubt appear in the accounts.⁸³ Fifteenth-century payments to the minstrels of the Archbishop of Canterbury indicate that their number was no greater: but in the case of their appearance in the town accounts of Dover, Lydd and New Romney they may have been travelling by themselves and not in the company of the archbishop.⁸⁴ If this was so, then the minstrels rewarded in those towns may not have been the full complement of the archbishop's minstrels: later payments to the minstrels of the Bishop of Winchester suggest that there may have been three of them in 1479 and four in 1481,⁸⁵ and we should expect that the Archbishop of Canterbury would not employ fewer minstrels than the bishop.

[82]

The Mendicant Friars

⁸¹ At the marriage of Elizabeth and at the Pentecost celebrations of 34 Ed I they are placed amongst payments to royal minstrels, the rewards being comparable: see above, nn. 74 and 76. John de Greyndon received the considerable sum of 40/- for his minstrelsy: see above, n. 75.

⁸² 15 Ed II: Stowe 553, f. 67. 17 Ed II: E101/379/1x, f. 4v. A John Bisshop was a servant of the Chamber in 2 or 3 Ed III: see E101/384/1, f. 35v. For Polydod, see Appendix A, *passim*, between 1 Ed III and 16–18 Ed III. These identifications are tentative, and depend only on the names: Polydod, however, was not a common name; and a William Bisshop (perhaps a relative of John?) was a royal minstrel in 14 Ed III.

⁸³ I have used Mr D.R.F. Roseveare's transcriptions of the Winchester chamberlains' accounts: the bishop's minstrels were rewarded five times between 1394–5 and 1432–3.

The evidence for prelates not having trumpeters is negative, but probably conclusive. In the various accounts and other records searched for the present work, the trumpeters of secular magnates frequently appear: there is not, however, a single reference to the trumpeters of a prelate; but see below, ii, p. 79 and n. 46.

⁸⁴ The archbishop's minstrels appear in Dawson/*Kent*, p. 23 (Dover, 1452–3), pp. 91–95, *passim* (Lydd, 1450–2, 1453–4, 1454–5, 1459–61 and 1465–6), and pp. 119 f (New Romney, 1440–50, 1453–4 and 1454–5). Only Richard Barton is named (pp. 23 and 120).

⁸⁵ Warton/*History*, ii, p. 98, quoting Winchester College accounts.

The exact position of the mendicant friars in musical and dramatic history is difficult, if not impossible, to determine. This is not because records of their activities in this direction have failed to survive, but rather because their influence rarely caused records to be set down. The use of popular sacred song by the Franciscans⁸⁶ is now recognised, but the Franciscan activities are easier to trace on the Continent than in England.⁸⁷ In Italy they actively supported the *laude spirituali* as a means of propagating their teaching: the Franciscans came to England in 1224, and from about 1275 until the early sixteenth century they made use of popular song in this country.⁸⁸

The evidence is slight, however, and the anonymity of the Franciscan activities must be emphasised. Very few friars are known by name as authors of lyrics, and there is no direct evidence that James Ryman's many works, for example, were acceptable to the people for whom they were intended.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the apparent popularity (in the modern sense) of many of the forms of [83] religious parody, and especially that of the carol,⁹⁰ bears at least indirect witness to the success of the Franciscans' methods.

The technique of parody was used at several levels. If a Latin religious song were popular enough to begin with, it was enough to translate the text into the vernacular and sing it to the original tune: thus "Gabriel fram evene king" is a thirteenth-century translation of the very popular (again in the modern sense) Annunciation hymn "Angelus ad Virginem". In other cases, where the tune was popular but the text was unsuitable, a completely new text could be written to be sung to the old tune: the Latin cantilenas in the "Red Book of Ossory" are of this type.⁹¹

The carols are the product of a related procedure – indeed, Greene treats the religious carols as parodies.⁹² They were not, of course, *contrafacta* like those already mentioned: but the fourteenth-century monophonic carol consists of a reli-

⁸⁶ I use "popular" here to mean "popular by destination", following R.L. Greene's classification (Greene/*EEC*, p. cxxi).

⁸⁷ See Heinrich Hüschen's article "Franziskaner" in *MGG* IV, col. 823–41. For a survey of the part played by the Franciscans in England, see Greene/*EEC*, pp. cxxi f.

⁸⁸ Greene/*EEC*, p. cxxiii.

⁸⁹ The point is made in Davies/*Anthology*, p. 24. Greene names the known Franciscan authors (see n. 87, above).

⁹⁰ Of the 166 pieces in Ryman's manuscript (Cambridge, University Library, MS Ee.I.12, dated 1492), 119 are carols: see Greene/*EEC*, p. cxxvi.

⁹¹ See *NOHM* 3, pp. 117–19. The Ossory cantilenas are in Latin, because they were destined for the clergy, but the principle is the same: they are religious words set to popular tunes. These songs were written by the Franciscan Richard de Ledrede, Bishop of Ossory, 1317–1360, for his own clergy. Greene/*EEC*, p. cxvii, expresses the view that the Reading rota may be one of the earliest of this type of *contrafactum*: however, there seems to be good reason to believe that the Latin text "Perspice christicola" ante-dates the vernacular "Sumer is icumen in": see Harrison/*MMB*, p. 144.

⁹² Greene/*EEC*, p. cxvii.

gious text set to music in a popular style.⁹³ As well as carols, the friars [84] also composed original hymns and sequences, the two forms of sacred music which they found best suited to their purpose.⁹⁴

Popular song, however, was only one side of the mendicant friars' "presentation of Religious and Morality in popular and enjoyable forms":⁹⁵ even more direct in their appeal to the populace were the miracle plays which, once or twice a year, took place in the streets of many English towns.⁹⁶ Greene's use of the word "presentation" is fortunate, for the miracle plays, like the song-parodies, were not essentially didactic in character.⁹⁷ Their importance was simply that they presented religious ideas in the vernacular, ideas which could therefore be apprehended by the uneducated.

The emphasis on bringing religion to the people rather than *vice versa* was typical of the Franciscans' methods. Although they were not responsible for the institution of either vernacular drama or vernacular religious song, they were astute enough to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by an already popular art-form. The very phrase of St Francis himself, who conceived of his followers as "Joculatores Dei",⁹⁸ implies an anonymous mixing with the people in the manner of the itinerant minstrels – a [85] situation in which the populace would not realise that it was being instructed by means of entertainment.

It is for this reason that the activities of the friars are so hard to trace, especially in the realm of drama. The miracle plays are completely anonymous, and Reese's assertion that the Church's connection with the religious drama was that of adviser and possibly script-provider⁹⁹ is a guess. It is a reasonable guess, however, for the very existence of the plays presupposes the activity of a "professional class, literate if not learned",¹⁰⁰ and it is the clergy who best fit to this definition.

Very slight evidence exists to support Reese. In 1423 the banns for the Corpus Christi play at Beverley were composed by a Friar Preacher (that is, a Dominican), Master Thomas Bynham.¹⁰¹ The banns on this occasion were probably an impressive affair, for the friar received 6/8d, compared with only 20d given to the town waits for riding with the proclamation. The simplest form of advertisement of a play could be given out by a single bann-crier, and would hardly need to be composed by an educated man. The Northumberland ordinances of 1513

⁹³ See Greene/EEC, p. cxxxii, and Stevens/MC, p. xiv.

⁹⁴ NOHM 3, p. 117.

⁹⁵ Greene/EEC, p. cxxviii.

⁹⁶ See above, p. 53, and n. 140.

⁹⁷ See above, p. 40, and n. 97.

⁹⁸ Greene/EEC, p. cxxi.

⁹⁹ Reese/MR, p. 877.

¹⁰⁰ Greene's phrase: see Stevens/MC, p. xiv.

¹⁰¹ HMC 54, p. 160.

also show that the task of providing a script – in this case for specifically secular dramatic productions – was still assigned to the clergy.¹⁰²

It would be hard to prove that "the Church" in connection with the miracle plays usually (or even sometimes) meant "the mendicant friars", however. The alleged connection of the Franciscans with the Coventry plays,¹⁰³ for instance, will not stand up to examination. Mention of plays performed "by the Grey Friars" has led to the belief that the Coventry Franciscans acted in their own pageant,¹⁰⁴ whereas in fact this need only mean that pageants were performed outside the Franciscans' church.¹⁰⁵

The question does of course remain whether we should attach any special significance to the position of this station. A friary would be a landmark in any town, and it is quite conceivable that the road outside it was the most suitable open space for the presentation of plays. We cannot ignore the possibility of a less circumstantial reason, however: the friars, both at Coventry and elsewhere, took an active interest in the guilds responsible for plays and processions.

As we have already seen, the Carmelites shared in the administration of the Cripplegate minstrels' guild, at least on its religious side:¹⁰⁶ the Coventry Carmelites may have had similar [87] relations with the Carpenters' Guild there, for the Carpenters held their annual dinner at the White Friars'.¹⁰⁷ The guild-principle was particularly dear to the Franciscans, who established the Third Order of St Francis, consisting virtually of religious guilds of men and women bound to a devotional life and to the performance of works of charity:¹⁰⁸ these congregations were under the spiritual direction of the Friars Minor. We find also that the Guild of St Helen and St Mary at Beverley processed to the church of the Minorites on the feast of St Helen,¹⁰⁹ and that the Minorites led the Corpus Christi procession at Grantham.¹¹⁰

¹⁰² Percy/*Northumberland*, p. 43: the list of the household at Michaelmas, 3 Henry VIII, includes amongst the household chaplains "The Almonar, and if he be a maker of Inter-ludys then he to have a Servaunt to the intent for Wrytynge of the Parts. And ells to have non". *Ibid.*, p. 253, gives the same at (?)8 Henry VIII.

¹⁰³ Greene/*EEC*, p. cxxviii.

¹⁰⁴ Duncan/*Minstrelsy*, p. 106, for instance.

¹⁰⁵ The point is discussed in Craig/*TCCCP*, pp. xxi f. See above, also, p. 44, and especially n. 112.

¹⁰⁶ See above, p. 15.

¹⁰⁷ See appendix E, below, under dates 1453, 1461, 1463, 1464 and 1477.

¹⁰⁸ Davis/*ME*, pp. 405 f.

¹⁰⁹ 3 September: see above, p. 55 and n. 151.

¹¹⁰ c. 1339: see Rickert/*Chaucer*, pp. 235 f.