

be sure, the documentary foundation for chapter 5 is impressively ample; building in part on recent publication, Tavuzzi has found far more trials than I was aware of in my own early work on witchcraft. But he assumes too lightly that the trials in question are all for diabolical witchcraft, he takes fragmentary reports in the *Malleus maleficarum* as seriously as judicial documents, and even when the evidence points to difference between Vaudois patterns of confession and Italian patterns, he elides these differences.

Still, apart from chapter 5 the evidence is meticulously weighed and the conclusions are solid. Even chapter 5, apart from its dubious interpretations, presents a wealth of material that can only be helpful for further work in the field.

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Drama and Religion in Provincial Society, 1485–1660. By Paul Whitfield White. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. xii+247 pp. \$93.00 cloth.

Among scholars studying the early modern English theater, the assumption persists that provincial drama was a Catholic cultural form that went into deep decline after Elizabeth I suppressed religious plays at the midpoint of her reign and secular theater flourished in London. In his most recent book, Paul Whitfield White sets out to revise this assumption. Using data primarily gleaned from the Records of Early English Drama (REED) at the University of Toronto, White argues that theatrical performances in the provinces peaked in the 1580s and 1590s and continued well into the interregnum. Stage playing, White maintains, was bound up with parish fundraising even after the Reformation, which belies the idea that the carnival-esque was always “subversive” of religious authority. Instead, White claims, festive celebrations were complicit with the interests and the religious values of the established Protestant Church.

Chapters 1 and 2 of White’s book focus on plays and pageants sponsored by parish churches from about 1475 through the midpoint of the sixteenth century: the former chapter describes the mechanics of staging religious plays and the latter the process of mounting “folk” festivals, such as the Robin Hood revels, meant to raise funds for church maintenance, intercessory masses, and charity work. With the help of churchwardens, the laity was instrumental to the staging of religious fundraising performances, and White suggests—without offering textual evidence for his claim—that they remained so even after the Reformation because parishioners saw “good works” as evidence of

election. By contrast, not the laity but religious guilds often organized Robin Hood games, staging Robin as a religious hero and devotee of the Virgin. Although this “medieval” Robin disappeared with the Reformation, provincial devotional drama endured sporadically until the ascension of James I.

In chapter 3, White traces the evolution of three “Corpus Christi” cycles organized by three urban trade guilds: Coventry, Norwich, and Chester. White argues that these cycles evince the adaptation of religious ceremonial and drama to Protestant doctrines, making these plays loci not of conflict between pre- and post-Reformation ideologies but of consensus and accommodation, which allowed guild drama to survive through the 1570s. White uses the pre- and post-Reformation versions of Norwich Grocer’s “play of paradise” (available only in eighteenth-century transcriptions) to show how one play adapted to doctrinal change; he can only speculate, however, when dealing with the spottier textual evidence of the Coventry and Chester cycles.

Chapter 4 moves to Cambridge, where White examines the interplay between drama, religion, and the university community. Although academic authorities suppressed Corpus Christi festivities in 1535, subsequent vernacular plays staged at Cambridge dramatize not sectarian conflict, White argues, but town/gown divisions. Thus *Gammer Gurton’s Needle*, although staged during the reign of Edward VI in a collaboration between scholars and local commoners, depicts the lay culture surrounding the university as Catholic and other; and *Club Law*, mounted sixty years later, derides puritanism while it mocks the town’s civic leaders.

Chapter 5 is a bit of a grab bag, collecting four different, if interrelated topics: a discussion of the role drama played in the country-house hospitality of aristocrats and Protestant bishops; a reading of Thomas Nashe’s *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*, staged at the palace of Archbishop Whitgift during the plague of 1592; a reconstruction of a performance of the Catholic play *St. Christopher* at the residence of Sir John Yorke; and a look at the Simpsons, the Catholic acting troupe that toured the recusant north in the early seventeenth century. Chapter 6 expands upon White’s look at the Simpsons, examining traveling acting companies more broadly and arguing that provincial touring peaked in the 1580s and 1590s. This chapter also compiles a motley of materials: a survey of how provincial companies spread religious propaganda from Henry VIII through Elizabeth I; a look at the staging of what White calls “Foxeian history plays” (182); a reading of *The Late Lancashire Witches* of 1634; and a brief consideration of anti-theatrical objections to provincial drama. Out of all this material, I would single out White’s work on *St. Christopher* as particularly detailed and interesting since it builds convincingly on the voluminous testimony

produced when Yorke was arrested and charged with complicity in the Gunpowder Plot and with harboring Jesuits.

In chapter 7, White concludes by reconstructing an Oxfordshire performance of *Mucedorus*, staged by the parish players of Stanton-Harcourt during Christmas of 1652, in which the floor of the inn being used as a stage collapsed, killing six people, mostly children. Drawing almost entirely on the anti-theatrical account of the tragedy by John Rowe, White argues not only that this performance combined all the threads that wove through provincial drama in general—feast-day entertainments, regional touring, civic politics, and religiously motivated hostility to theater—but also that it was mounted, as were the Catholic parish dramas with which his study opens, to raise funds for parochial income. The evidence for this latter claim, however, is speculative at best.

Lack of evidence is what prevents White's book from accomplishing its grand ambition to revise our understanding of the relationship between religion and drama in early modern England. The data White cites is too anecdotal to support his contention that stage-playing and festive games were an integral part of Reformation church culture in provincial England. White does, however, offer an extremely interesting and salutary set of counterexamples to the current orthodoxy that the Reformation secularized drama, severing its ties to religious institutions, and that provincial theater disappeared after the 1570s. As White demonstrates, in some key cases early modern Englishmen and women expressed their religious devotion by dressing up and playing parts for at least one hundred fifty years after Henry VIII declared England a Protestant nation.

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Herculean Labours: Erasmus and the Editing of St. Jerome's Letters in the Renaissance. By **Hilmar M. Pabel**. Library of the Written Word 5. The Handpress World 3. Leiden: Brill, 2008. xvii+389 pp. \$148.00 cloth.

Any study of Erasmus's extensive editorial career would be an overly daunting undertaking, and in this eloquent and engaging monograph Hilmar Pabel has set for himself an ambitious task, which he accomplishes with considerable skill. Pabel's ambition lays in his examination of Erasmus's editing of Jerome's letters which were published in 1516. While referring to Erasmus's efforts as Herculean, Pabel's book is no less so. By exploring how Erasmus and other editors arranged and commented on Jerome's letters Pabel seeks to "re-envision" (6) Erasmus's editing of Jerome within the theological and