

## Back to normal? Government and Society in Restoration Norwich

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### Introduction

Conventional wisdom teaches that in the 1640s and 1650s Puritan zealots sought to suppress a wide range of popular recreations and celebrations as popish or offensive to God. These included the celebration of Christmas and other traditional Christian festivals as well as stage plays and Sunday sports. The process of 'moral control' reached its zenith under Cromwell's Major Generals in 1655-6, when a heightened concern for security led to bans on race meetings, cockfights and other gatherings that could serve as a cover for Royalist plotting. The Major Generals also tried to intensify the suppression of disorderly alehouses and the punishment of the 'loose, idle and disorderly' poor.

Many English men and women clearly resented these attempts to impose godliness. With the Restoration of the monarchy, the puritans lost power, the old festivals returned and with them came a more relaxed attitude towards popular recreation. Even before the king returned, maypoles sprang up around the country.<sup>1</sup> The theatres soon reopened, along with the pleasure gardens (and the bawdy-houses). For decades before the civil wars, godly urban elites had tried to impose godliness on their fellow citizens. After 1660, we are told, their efforts soon petered out. In the words of Paul Slack, 'zeal had little place in Restoration towns'.<sup>2</sup>

That is the received view, and there is considerable evidence to support the idea of a changed moral climate after 1660. Charles II could not easily be seen as an exemplar of self-denial. Puritan ministers gloomily catalogued what they saw as moral decay.

Adam Martindale, in Cheshire, had denounced the use of maypoles ('profaned', in his words, 'by music and dancing') as a relic of the shameful worship of the strumpet Flora in Rome. On 1 May 1661 a 'rabble of profane youths and doting fools' set one up outside his door. Martindale's wife and three other godly women cut it down, but another pole (rough and crooked) was set up in its stead.<sup>3</sup> From around 1678 Oliver Heywood, another minister, reported a veritable epidemic of foot races in Lancashire and West Yorkshire. All involved gambling and heavy drinking, but some of the races (he heard) featured naked men or half-naked women. On Easter Sunday 1681 crowds played stoolball in the streets of Halifax, a profanation of the Sabbath that would have been unthinkable under puritan rule. 'Hell is broke loose', he wrote.<sup>4</sup> Drunkenness abounded, encouraged by roistering Anglican clergymen and Tory gentry, who appealed to

the basest instincts of the people.<sup>5</sup> In Taunton and Bridgwater, as the pulpits and seats of Dissenting meeting houses were burned, gentry and people drank healths to Church and king.<sup>6</sup>

But the contrast between the morally oppressive regimes of 1640-60 and the morally relaxed, not to say permissive, restored monarchy should not be overdrawn. One should distinguish between the aspirations of those who wished to eliminate ungodly behaviour and their success – or lack of it.

The most recent study of the Major Generals has concluded that their efforts to up the pace of moral repression were generally unsuccessful.<sup>7</sup> Puritans had long disapproved of dancing, especially when it allowed for an unseemly intimacy between the sexes and was linked with drunkenness and promiscuity. Puritans were deeply wary of the flesh, condemning 'carnal reasonings' as well as carnal indulgence. It is not that puritans were incapable of enjoying themselves, rather that they derived fulfilment from contemplating the eternal and delighted in the company of other godly people. While worldly people sang and danced in the alehouse, puritans prayed, read the Bible and enjoyed one another's fellowship. For decades before the civil wars, puritan justices had tried to keep the Sabbath holy, to suppress disorderly alehouses and to root out popular recreations that they regarded as abominations in the sight of the Lord. Between 1640 and 1660 puritans enjoyed more power than ever before, but reports of morris dancing and other customary amusements continued. 'Merry England' put up a stiff fight against efforts to reform it and in many ways bounced back after 1660.<sup>8</sup>

### The Restoration in Norwich

My aim in this paper is to assess how far the moral climate in England really did change after 1660. I shall do so with particular reference to Norwich, England's second city. While it had had something of a reputation as a puritan centre during the civil wars,<sup>9</sup> it had been the scene of a major crypto-Royalist riot in 1648, triggered (among other things) by resentment of the prohibition of Christmas.<sup>10</sup> It was also one of the very few cities to retain a pre-Reformation procession (Coventry was another, with the Lady Godiva pageant; Coventry also had the reputation of being a puritan city).<sup>11</sup> In Norwich, Guild Day, on which the new mayor was installed, was marked by a pageant (organised by the Company of St George), which included whiffers (dressed somewhat like Roman

gladiators) to clear people out of the way, the city waits, fools, standard bearers and a dragon called Snap, with flapping wings and snapping teeth. The streets were hung with tapestries, pictures, garlands and streamers, and a long streamer was hung out of the highest window in the cathedral spire. The cathedral itself was 'strewn', presumably with foliage or flowers.<sup>12</sup> In 1645 it was ordered that the trumpet, dragon, fool and standard of St George were not to be used and there were to be no hangings in the streets, but a procession of sorts continued: there is a reference to a standard and the whiffers in 1652, and on 28 May 1660, the day before Charles II arrived in London, it was ordered that the standards, club and dragon were to be used as formerly.<sup>13</sup>

The Company of St George's other main task was to organise a feast for the new mayor.<sup>14</sup> It seems possible that the Company (to which all of the corporation and many of the freemen belonged) served as a politically neutral forum in which current members of the corporation could mix socially with those excluded in the successive political purges that started in the 1640s, thus maintaining a degree of solidarity among the city's elite. When Mayor John Utting and others were dismissed by order of the central government in 1648, it was resolved unanimously that those who had subscribed a petition in their favour should continue to be members of the Company.<sup>15</sup> After the Restoration it contained Dissenters as well as Anglicans<sup>16</sup> (and so, occasionally, did the corporation).<sup>17</sup> Although most members of the corporation conformed to the Church—the mayor and aldermen attended the cathedral regularly—they usually showed little eagerness to persecute Protestant Dissenters, although in 1670 they removed the governess of the boys' hospital because she never went to church.<sup>18</sup> When Charles II briefly granted freedom of worship in 1672, two congregations (one Presbyterian, one Independent) were allowed by the corporation to lease rooms in the city's old granary for their meetings.<sup>19</sup>

It follows from this that the religious outlook of Norwich's city fathers is not easy to define. What is clear is that they continued to pursue many of the 'puritan' social policies of their forebears as seen during and before the civil wars. They made few references to dancing as such, although in 1671 they told the people of the ward of Over the Water not to spoil the grass in Guilden Croft by 'immoderate camping and dancing' there: the word 'immoderate' implied disapproval.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, they had definite views on the venues where much popular dancing took place (alehouses) and on analogous forms of popular entertainment – stage plays and the like.

The key figures in civic government were the aldermen (who served for life and from whom the mayor was chosen) and the sheriffs (who served for one year). All were magistrates and met twice a week in the mayor's court and less frequently in quarter sessions. The records of these bodies reveal an attitude

towards popular recreations that was far from relaxed or permissive. Zeal was alive and well in Restoration Norwich. It might, of course, be argued these city fathers were old men, belonging to an earlier generation, or that they were unrepresentative of the citizens as a whole. Nevertheless, these social policies continued into the eighteenth century and the constitution of Norwich was unusually democratic. All of the freemen – several thousand – could vote in elections, and the mayor, one of the two sheriffs and all of the common council (the lower chamber of the city assembly) were popularly elected each year.<sup>21</sup> It would be difficult to argue that the policies pursued by the civic elite can have been totally unacceptable to those who elected them.

### Social policies of the civic elite

Underlying these policies lay firm and conventional views about the labouring poor and how they should behave. These views were shared by Anglicans and puritans and were seen as an essential foundation for good government. The poor should be industrious, obedient, frugal and sober. Husbands should keep their wives and children in order, fathers should maintain their families, wives should be faithful to their husbands (and vice versa). These views were undoubtedly coloured by the concern to keep the poor rate (the money raised from the better off to maintain the 'deserving' poor) as low as possible, but it reflected a much older, Christian ethic of self-control. Human beings were inherently flawed and sinful, always prone to give in to their baser instincts: those who would not control themselves had to be controlled by others and so saved from themselves.

Women and young people were seen as particularly inclined to sin. Young single women 'living at their own hand', without a husband or employer, were told to 'get themselves a service' or else be expelled from the city. The underlying fear was that such women could become pregnant and add to the burden on the poor rate, or else be drawn into crime or prostitution. The normal punishment for women living idly or 'lewdly' was a whipping and a short spell of hard labour in the Bridewell or house of correction.<sup>22</sup> (Men who lived lewdly and idly occasionally suffered the same punishment.)<sup>23</sup> Women who quarrelled or scolded might be put in the cage or ducked,<sup>24</sup> though if they apologised and they (or their husbands) promised that they would behave better in future they might escape punishment. Records of such punishments become less common after about 1670, but it may be that they were not recorded. In 1705 a notorious whore, who had been taken in a bawdy house with the chapter clerk of the cathedral, was exposed in the cage on Guild Day, the day of the year when there would be most people in the city.<sup>26</sup>

The city fathers were also concerned about the young. In 1677 there were complaints that boys were playing naked in Chapel Field: the city's marshals

were ordered to bring offenders before a magistrate.<sup>27</sup> There were frequent complaints about boys playing on the Sabbath, especially during the time of divine service.<sup>28</sup>

The mayor's court took Sabbath observance seriously. In May 1660 its joy at the proclamation of the king was tempered by concern that people's celebrations might spill over into Sunday.<sup>29</sup> In 1663 the court ordered that the gates should be shut all day on Sundays and that the gatekeepers should open them only for medical practitioners and those with written permission from the mayor.<sup>30</sup> This order followed a proclamation from the king for the better observance of the Sabbath. Such proclamations were issued repeatedly and Parliament passed Acts to the same effect and against excessive gaming.<sup>31</sup> King and Parliament condemned profane swearing<sup>32</sup> and royal proclamations against profanity and immorality continued into the eighteenth century.<sup>33</sup>

There is no reason to believe that the concerns shown by MPs and city magistrates were not shared by ordinary citizens. In 1697 the city's grand jury wrote to the mayor and aldermen deploring the profanation of the Sabbath by drinking (before and after service time), swearing and 'idle' games such as ninepins and 'trip-farthing'[?]. Interestingly, the jurors commented that they were referring not to 'such as are civil and sober, whose circumstances will allow them a refreshment' (those who drank in moderation and could afford it), but to those whose 'poverty bespeaks better husbandry'. These wasted their time and money in the gardens and yards of alehouses, where the name of God was abused, youth was corrupted and families were destroyed. The mayor's court was asked to order the parish officers to suppress these 'crimes', in order to save many from poverty and the young from ruin.<sup>34</sup>

The mayor's court was also concerned that fast days ordered by King and Parliament should be properly observed. The bellman was to proclaim that all shops should be shut and no carts should pass through the streets.<sup>35</sup> They were particularly concerned that 30 January, the anniversary of Charles I's execution, should be observed in this way.<sup>36</sup> From 1696 the court books often refer to the king's 'martyrdom', an indication of Anglican-Tory ascendancy within the corporation, which continued for much of Anne's reign.<sup>37</sup> References to the marking of 30 January end in 1718, when the Whigs gained control of the corporation.<sup>38</sup>

Normally, however, the court discouraged idleness. It disliked the custom whereby the poor were allowed to beg in the run-up to Christmas. In 1667, 1670, 1672 and 1673 it forbade this practice and ordered collections in the churches instead, but these brought in very little, so one assumes that the begging resumed.<sup>39</sup> Of the other temptations to idleness and dissipation, many could be found in alehouses. There were frequent accusations of 'tippling', an offence often compounded by its taking place on a Sunday.<sup>40</sup> In

1661 each alderman was ordered to visit the inns in his ward and report on tipplers.<sup>41</sup>

The other great temptation of the alehouse was gambling, for which there were if anything even more prosecutions.<sup>42</sup> Starting in 1678 there were several orders to confiscate ninepins,<sup>43</sup> and in 1687 it was ordered that no alehouse would be licensed unless the keeper promised not to have ninepins on the premises.<sup>44</sup> In 1668 it was ordered that licences should go only to those of 'orderly conversation',<sup>45</sup> but the many prosecutions for unlicensed or disorderly alehouses show that the problem was insoluble, so long as the customers wished to drink and to behave in a manner that the magistrates regarded as disorderly.<sup>46</sup> Fights and (after 1689) the drinking of Jacobite healths were common.<sup>47</sup>

In 1720 quarter sessions claimed that one major cause of poverty in the city was the great number of alehouses and ordered that no house should be licensed if its rental value was under £8 a year, unless its owner could give satisfactory security for its orderliness.<sup>48</sup> It is doubtful whether this order had the desired effect. Equally ineffectual were attempts to ban smoking in the streets (including persons on horseback or riding in carts),<sup>49</sup> but the mayor's court may have been more successful in forbidding smoking in its own meetings.<sup>50</sup>

As further evidence that the Norwich city fathers did not abandon 'puritan' social policies after the Restoration, let us consider the instructions given to parish constables in 1707. They were to report on anyone not attending a place of worship on a Sunday, or spending their time 'that day in unlawful sports or games'. They were to report swearers or drunkards and young women, fit for service, 'living at their own hand'. And they were to report unlicensed or disorderly alehouses.<sup>51</sup>

But does it follow that the aldermen who sat at quarter sessions were 'puritans'? Almost certainly not. Drunkenness and disorderly alehouses could be seen either as morally odious, or as a public order problem, or both, by Anglicans as well as Dissenters. The caricatures of the Tory parson as a drunkard and the Tory squire as a boozing wencher ascribed to the whole of the clergy and of the Tory party behaviour that was in reality confined to a minority, albeit a significant minority. Moreover, the competition between Church and Dissent could lead Anglican Tories to act in ways reminiscent of puritan civic rulers before the civil wars.

In 1700 the mayor's court ordered that those in receipt of poor relief would be paid their money only if they came to church (unless they had a very good excuse).<sup>52</sup> This aimed to ensure that the poor attended Anglican services, rather than Dissenting meeting houses. Also in 1700 it was ordered that nobody should be admitted to any of the city hospitals unless they could produce proof of age from a parish register – in other words, show that they had been baptised into the Church of England.<sup>53</sup> (There was a similar order

concerning freemen in 1701.)<sup>54</sup> In 1713 it was ordered that only those who had taken communion in an Anglican church in the previous twelve months could be admitted to the hospitals; several people were discharged because they had not done so.<sup>55</sup> This might be an Anglican (rather than puritan) version of compulsory godliness, but that probably made little difference to those who were being compelled.

### Entertainments

Before considering the city governors' attitude towards plays and shows, a word about their attitude to music. The city employed waits for almost all of this period, and they normally took part in the Guild Day procession. In 1663 they were allowed to play at the cross on holy days and evenings, but not on Sundays.<sup>56</sup> In 1676 they were dismissed for abusing one of the sheriffs, but they were reinstated after a humble submission.<sup>57</sup> In 1683 they were suspended again, for playing at the market cross without the mayor's permission; again they begged pardon and their instruments were returned.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, the waits were encouraged in their efforts to stop other musicians, mostly fiddlers, from playing around the city, in inns and taverns and at weddings. Between 1672 and 1684 the number of such persons increased from one to seven. It was alleged that they went from house to house at unseasonable hours, debauching the young, and the mayor's court urged them to abandon their 'idle' way of life and return to their trades.<sup>59</sup> The court may have been trying to protect the waits' livelihood – the fiddlers were accused of encroaching on the waits' 'office' – but the references to unseasonable hours and debauching the young suggest moral disapproval as well.

The citizens of Norwich were offered a variety of entertainments, apart from stage plays, many of them redolent of the fairground or the circus rather than the theatre.

The punishment of felons – occasionally a hanging, more often a whipping – generally took place in the market place and was designed to inflict shame as well as pain. Both men and women were stripped to the waist and beaten until their backs were bloody (at the least). There appears to have been a rough tariff, according to the seriousness of the offence: some were tied to the whipping post; others were tied to the back of a cart and led around the market, being whipped under every shop and tavern sign; most humiliating of all, some were whipped on the cart as it made its circuit.<sup>60</sup>

Other spectacles were designed to make money. Ballad- and pamphlet-sellers sang or hawked their wares: it was stressed that those wares should be licensed according to law.<sup>61</sup> There were a variety of puppet shows, including 'punchinello'. These 'motions', as they were often called, included traditional tales, such as the merchant's daughter of Bristol, or Dick Whittington and his cat,<sup>62</sup> stories from classical mythology, like Actaeon and Diana,<sup>63</sup> and

characters from English history, such as Edward IV and Jane Shore.<sup>64</sup> The content of other 'motions' is harder to guess: one was variously called 'Art and virtue' or 'The creation of the world';<sup>65</sup> another went under the title 'The prince's ball and prospect'.<sup>66</sup>

Then there were acrobats and tumblers, conjurers and fire-eaters, and numerous 'rope dancers', including the famous Jacob Hall, who at one time enjoyed the favours of Lady Castlemaine.<sup>67</sup> Some of these performances were also freak shows, involving dancing on crutches or a person without arms showing their dexterity with their feet.<sup>68</sup> Others were freak shows pure and simple: monstrous children,<sup>69</sup> a dwarf,<sup>70</sup> a seven-and-a-half-foot woman,<sup>71</sup> a girl without bones,<sup>72</sup> and (most intriguingly) two mermaids and a 'devouring great eating Quaker'.<sup>73</sup> There were animals of all kinds to be gawped at: a porcupine; various camels; a beaver; an elephant; a tiger and jackal; a lion, lioness and lamb (presumably lying down together);<sup>74</sup> an 'ant bear' (sc. ant-eater); and an Arabian hog. Other animals had to perform: dancing bears and dancing mares, monkeys dancing on ropes.<sup>75</sup>

The entertainment on offer was almost endlessly variable, as were the performers or showmen. There were Poles, Dutch, 'High Germans' and people with French-sounding names. A significant minority were women, including Mrs Sarboul Reyners, who in 1676 and 1677 danced on a rope at the Red Lion Inn.<sup>76</sup> Sometimes several elements were combined: Peter Grime offered German water-works and monkeys dancing on ropes<sup>77</sup> and many entertainments (and lottery-sellers) tried to attract customers using trumpets, drums and other music. But the biggest public spectacles were medicine shows. Although a few men were licensed to sell balsam or other drugs relatively privately,<sup>78</sup> most medicine shows were in the market place. Their promoters, usually known as mountebanks, claimed to be practitioners in physic and chirurgery (sc. physicians and surgeons). They would erect a substantial stage – which may have been as large as sixty feet by thirty<sup>79</sup> – on which they not only sold medicines but also claimed to perform cures and carried out surgical operations.<sup>80</sup> Medicine shows not only used music to attract customers, but also sometimes tumblers and rope-dancers.<sup>81</sup> They were clearly substantial operations, employing as many as sixteen people.<sup>82</sup> They were rarely licensed for less than a fortnight and often remained in the city for much longer.

Stage plays were thus just one part of a much wider spectrum of entertainments. As described by Sybil Rosenfeld, the life of a strolling player was hard, often travelling on foot (and carrying the scenery), overworked and underpaid, often in debt. With few purpose-built theatres as yet, the players were required to perform an extensive repertoire of plays in barns, inns and taverns, with inadequate rehearsal or learning time, to an often boorish audience.<sup>83</sup> In the 1660s there were few references to 'plays, operas, masques, shows and scenes' in Norwich.<sup>84</sup> They became commoner in

the 1670s, but they were still far from a regular occurrence. By the early 1690s one of several companies appeared in the city most years. From 1696 one of the players enjoyed the patronage of the Duke of Norfolk, first John Coish, then Thomas Doggett (of Doggett's coat and badge fame). In 1697 (for the first time since 1672) two companies were allowed to perform, but as Doggett's had the Duke's patent, it took precedence and John Power's had to perform after the other had finished.<sup>85</sup> Doggett continued to perform in Norwich until 1700. A variety of players appeared in the 1700s until, in 1710, the mayor's court ordered that in future there should be no plays, mountebanks or other shows except by order of the court,<sup>86</sup> after which there are few references to plays or shows in the court records. It is however abundantly clear from other sources that plays continued to be performed, presumably without the court's permission.<sup>87</sup>

It is not easy to analyse the civic elite's attitude to these various entertainments. Most of the evidence consists of dryly factual official records. The members of the mayor's court were not free agents. Most of those who came to perform in the city had letters patent from the king or licences from the Master of the Revels; some enjoyed the patronage of great nobles, like the Dukes of Norfolk.<sup>88</sup> The civic rulers needed the goodwill of the king and of those who were influential at court. The king could do them considerable harm if he chose, to the extent of challenging the charter under which the city governed itself. The presence of great men brought the gentry and trade into the city: when Lord Henry Howard, the future sixth Duke of Norfolk, spent Christmas at his palace in Norwich in 1664, the celebrations continued into March.<sup>89</sup> It was a blow when the eighth Duke abandoned his palace (and then pulled it down), allegedly because the mayor would not allow his players to enter the city sounding trumpets.<sup>90</sup> (The site of the palace is now occupied by a multi-storey car park.) The mayor's court might refuse to allow entertainers to perform if they were not satisfied with their credentials,<sup>91</sup> but it would have been unwise openly to defy the king. Instead, the corporation tried repeatedly to persuade the king to authorise the mayor's court to restrict the duration of performances; the court also tried to impose conditions on performers, in the interests of public order, and to extract from them at least some benefits for the city.

It does not seem that the mayor's court was opposed to either drama or medicine shows *per se*. In 1667, 1713 and 1714 the court attended plays given by boys from the free school; in 1680 Robert Parker was allowed to use the waits in his productions.<sup>92</sup> In 1677 a mountebank was asked to try to save a poor woman's sight.<sup>93</sup> But the court saw medicine shows and plays as threats to public order. In 1669 the court complained that the 'drolls' acted in John Parker's medicine show were obscene in words and actions.<sup>94</sup> (A Quaker complained to the court that mountebanks stirred up filthiness, lightness and lust.)<sup>95</sup> In 1683 another

mountebank was allowed to put on his show on Saturdays only, the court complaining that the tricks done on stage drew idle people away from their work.<sup>96</sup>

The court complained to the king in 1663 that lotteries, plays and other shows encouraged the meaner sort to waste their time and money. Thanks to the intercession of Lord Howard, the king empowered the mayor to limit the stays of performers, irrespective of the conditions set down in their licences.<sup>97</sup> In 1669, some months after the episode with Russell, one Edward Bedford arrived with commissions from the king and the Duke of York to act plays. The mayor's court urged the town clerk and the city's two MPs to use every effort to prevent the acting of stage plays in the city. The town clerk did not think that a total ban was feasible, but hoped to strengthen the earlier order. The king merely renewed it, enabling the mayor to limit the players' stay. It was to apply to all performers, except for those selling lottery tickets for the benefit of indigent army officers.<sup>98</sup>

There were no further requests to the king for some years, but in 1694 the court resolved to write to the (seventh) Duke of Norfolk asking him to ask the king that the mayor might have the same powers to limit the players' stay as under Charles II.<sup>99</sup> As this Duke was an active patron of the stage, this request bore little fruit. There was little the court could do against the will of the city's most powerful protector; the order in 1710 against plays and shows was, as we have seen, little more than an empty gesture.

This did not mean that the court was powerless. Charles II granted significant powers to the mayor and the court's general responsibility for keeping the peace gave it not inconsiderable authority, as when it withdrew permission to stage a medicine show in the very fraught conditions of December 1688.<sup>100</sup> In July 1695 the court ordered that the lottery men should no longer use dice in the market place, following disturbances the last market day.<sup>101</sup> In 1699 the court ordered that a mountebank's stage be taken down at once, in case it attracted a large crowd and caused a breach of the peace.<sup>102</sup> The performers were often poor people, little versed in the law, so the magistrates' threat to proceed against them might well intimidate them.<sup>103</sup> Besides, the mayor had the power to punish those who wilfully disobeyed his orders.<sup>104</sup>

Although most of the threats to public order came from the mountebanks – perhaps because they operated in open spaces, rather than inns and taverns – the mayor's court showed most hostility towards lottery sellers and stage plays. The lotteries, of course, encouraged gambling, but it is hard to explain why the court disliked stage plays so much, unless they saw them as immoral in themselves, full (like Russell's medicine show) of obscene words and gestures.<sup>105</sup> Unable to keep the players and the lottery sellers out, the court tried to limit them. They were allowed to perform for a limited time and required to behave 'civilly'. This included finishing performances before



a certain hour (ten, nine or even eight o'clock)<sup>106</sup> and refraining from playing trumpets and drums.<sup>107</sup> In 1672 lottery sellers were ordered not to admit servants or 'indigent persons'.<sup>108</sup> They were also encouraged to make gifts to the poor of the city.<sup>109</sup> Stage players of mountebanks might be asked to give one performance for the benefit of the poor.<sup>110</sup> Around 1700 a few medicine shows were set up away from the market, the obvious centre of the city.<sup>111</sup> The power to fix limits for performances gave the mayor some leverage; those who behaved well were often given an extension. Much also depended on the time of year. The players and showmen most often appeared in the weeks before Christmas, a time when normal rules were somewhat relaxed, as we have seen in the case of begging. It was a time when people from the county would come to town (and spend their money); the shows and plays would serve as an added attraction. (The same was true to some extent of Guild Week.) By contrast, those who tried to stay long after Twelfth Night could find themselves peremptorily ordered to leave.<sup>112</sup>

As the civic rulers had no option but to allow the performers into the city, the best they could do was to try to keep disruption and disorder to a minimum. From the 1690s there were signs that either their will or their power to regulate was waning. Players were sometimes allowed to perform where they thought fit,<sup>113</sup> often for several weeks.<sup>114</sup> In declaring in 1710 that plays could be performed only with the court's permission, it was reasserting a power that it had already lost.

### Conclusion

It does not follow that those who were so hostile to plays were either 'puritans' or out of touch with the views of their fellow-citizens. Those in the puritan or Nonconformist tradition had no monopoly on Christian morality, however much they might claim to do so. After 1660, the Anglican clergy tirelessly preached against sin and urged their flocks to acts of benevolence.<sup>115</sup> Anglicans as well as Dissenters participated in the movement for the reformation of manners that developed in the 1690s, and Anglicans often outdid Dissenters in endowing charities and providing education for the poor. Competition for adherents between Church and Dissent gave an added spur to their efforts. The Whigs might pose at times as guardians of public morality, but they were more than willing to use dramatic satire against the Tories.<sup>116</sup> As for the views of the citizens, Humphrey Prideaux, the Dean (and a Whig), bemoaned the Duke of Norfolk's patronage of the players, who (he said) did all they could to ruin the city.<sup>117</sup> A grand jury presentment of 1702 called for the Royal Oak lottery to be suppressed, because it seduced 'children, servants, tradesmen and other unwary persons' into parting with their money. Those 'plays commonly called comedies' were equally mischievous and should also be suppressed.<sup>118</sup> Two years earlier, a London grand jury presented the two

London playhouses and the bear garden as riotous and disorderly assemblies.<sup>119</sup> Forty years after the Restoration, opinions about the theatre, popular entertainments and (I suspect) dance were as divided as ever.

### References

- 1 Underdown 1985, 274-5.
- 2 Slack 1999, 51.
- 3 Martindale (ed. Parkinson 1845), 156-7.
- 4 Heywood (ed. Turner 1882-5), II.246, 264, 270-2, 274, 279-80, 284, 293-5.
- 5 Ibid. II.278, 281-2, 284, 285, 288.
- 6 *CSPD Jan-June 1683*, 286-7; *July-Sept 1683*, 60.
- 7 Durston 2001, *passim*.
- 8 Underdown 1985, 262-5 and *passim*; Hutton 1994, chs. 6-7.
- 9 Evans 1979, 85-96.
- 10 Ketton Cramer 1969, 331-41.
- 11 Kilmartin 1987, 40-2, 337-41.
- 12 MCB 23, fos. 247, 280; NRO MS 78, 116-7; NRO MS 79, 241; Mackrell 1852, 362-4; Breitenbach 1972, 2-13.
- 13 NCR, Case 17b, St George's Company Rules etc, vol. III, 221, 233, 252.
- 14 Mackrell 1852, 365.
- 15 NCR, Case 17b, Company Rules, 224. See Ketton Cramer 1969, 333-5.
- 16 E.g. John Barnham and John Leverington: NCR, Case 17b, Company Rules, 281, 289, 299.
- 17 NCR, Case 16d/8, fo. 37; MCB 24, fo. 252.
- 18 MCB 24, fo. 141.
- 19 NCR, Case 16d/8, fo. 29.
- 20 MCB 24, fo. 171.
- 21 Evans 1979, ch. 2.
- 22 MCB 23, fo. 164; NCR, Case 20a/16, 11 Oct. 1695.
- 23 NCR, Case 20a/16, 18 Jan. 1696.
- 24 MCB 23, fos. 226, 245, 248, 273; MCB 24, fos. 144, 180.
- 25 E.g. MCB 24, fos. 63, 70.
- 26 NRO, DCN 115/2, 139-40.
- 27 MCB 24, fo. 380bis.
- 28 MCB 23, fo. 213; MCB 24, fos. 60, 168; MCB 25, fos. 31, 105, 111, 123, 259. These orders run from 1664 to 1689.
- 29 MCB 23, fo. 120.
- 30 MCB 23, fo. 201.
- 31 *Statutes of the Realm*, V.523, 848.
- 32 See the punishments for profane swearing in MCB 23, fo. 205, MCB 24, fo. 74, MCB 25, fo. 107. Also the grand jury presentment, NCR, Case 12c/2 (10).
- 33 *CSPD 1698*, 107; Luttrell 1857, IV.345-6, V.274.
- 34 NCR, Case 12c/2, unnumbered (dated 17 April 1697).
- 35 MCB 25, fos. 22, 36, 43; MCB 26, fos. 27, 102, 118.
- 36 MCB 24, fos. 231, 376; MCB 25, fos. 61, 246.
- 37 MCB 26, fos. 8, 22b, 57, 75, 98, 165; MCB 27, fos. 137, 183-4, 216, 249.
- 38 Wilson 1995, 386-7.
- 39 MCB 24, fos. 54, 55, 160, 226, 227-8, 260, 263.
- 40 E.g. MCB 23, fos. 173, 239, 258; MCB 24, fos. 62, 234; MCB 25, fos. 259, 315; MCB 27, fo. 199. These range in date from 1662 to 1715.
- 41 MCB 23, fo. 160

## Back to normal?

- 42 MCB 23, fo. 174; MCB 24, fos. 60, 234, 382; NCR, Case 20a/16 (25 April 1696), Case 20a/20 (14 July 1722), Case 12c/2 (516).
- 43 MCB 25, fos. 21, 52, 87, 236; NCR, Case 20a/16 (13 July 1694).
- 44 MCB 24, fos. 35, 36.
- 45 MCB 24, fos. 78, 142.
- 46 E.g. MCB 23, fo. 214; MCB 24, fos. 47, 171; MCB 25, fos. 82, 260; NCR, Case 20a/16 (16 July 1698), Case 20a/19 (16 Jan 1720).
- 47 See the informations in NCR, Case 12b/1 and 2.
- 48 NCR, Case 20a/19 (20 April 1720).
- 49 NCR, Case 16d/8, fo. 43; MCB 24, fos. 275, 283; MCB 25, fo. 7.
- 50 MCB 25, fo. 224; MCB 26, fos. 85, 223. The fact that the order had to be repeated suggests it may not have been observed.
- 51 NCR, Case 20a/17 (18 Jan. 1707).
- 52 MCB 26, fo. 95.
- 53 MCB 26, fo. 80.
- 54 Guth 1985, 416.
- 55 MCB 27, fos. 129, 133.
- 56 MCB 23, fo. 192.
- 57 MCB 24, fos. 356, 357, 359.
- 58 MCB 25, fos. 134, 158, 159.
- 59 MCB 24, fos. 214, 223, 224, 337; MCB 25, fos. 33, 76, 162.
- 60 There are numerous examples in the quarter sessions records: NCR, Case 20a.
- 61 MCB 25, fos. 68, 71, 85; MCB 25, fos. 250, 264, 272.
- 62 MCB 24, fos. 56, 168.
- 63 MCB 23, fo. 205.
- 64 MCB 25, fos. 123, 137, 138.
- 65 MCB 24, fos. 337, 364; MCB 25, fo. 38.
- 66 MCB 25, fos. 139, 165, 210.
- 67 MCB 24, fo. 244. See Latham & Matthews 1971-83, X.166.
- 68 MCB 24, fos. 124, 336, 378; MCB 25, fo. 165.
- 69 MCB 25, fos. 11, 164, 229, 237.
- 70 MCB 25, fo. 232.
- 71 MCB 24, fo. 122.
- 72 MCB 25, fo. 33.
- 73 MCB 24, fo. 333.
- 74 MCB 24, fo. 372.
- 75 MCB 24, fos. 45, 140, 159, 338, 360; MCB 25, fo. 139.
- 76 MCB 24, fo. 372; MCB 25, fo. 12.
- 77 MCB 24, fo. 338.
- 78 MCB 23, fo. 217; MCB 24, fo. 40.
- 79 MCB 25, fo. 80 (it is not clear whether permission was actually given to erect such a large stage—there is a reference to a twenty-foot stage: MCB 26, fo. 56).
- 80 MCB 24, fos. 91, 158, 382; MCB 25, fos. 42, 103, 339; MCB 26, fo. 83.
- 81 MCB 24, fo. 98; MCB 25, fo. 80; MCB 26, fos. 56, 83, 85.
- 82 MCB 26, fo. 150.
- 83 Rosenfeld 1939, ch. 1.
- 84 MCB 23, fos. 191, 219; MCB 24, fo. 121.
- 85 MCB 26, fos. 18\*, 36, 38. Back in 1686 Coish had leave to act to plays while the Duke was in the city: MCB 25, fo. 207.
- 86 MCB 27, fo. 17.
- 87 Rosenfeld 1939, 48-52.
- 88 Ibid. 5-6; MCB 24, fo. 262.
- 89 See Browne (ed. Wilkin 1836), I.44-7, 49, 55.
- 90 Parkin 1783, 252.
- 91 MCB 24, fos. 186, 243; MCB 25, fos. 165, 168, 169.
- 92 MCB 24, fo. 54; MCB 27, fos. 135, 146; MCB 25, fo. 78.
- 93 MCB 24, fo. 384.
- 94 MCB 24, fo. 98.
- 95 NRO, SF 95, p. 21.
- 96 MCB 25, fo. 136.
- 97 *CSPD 1663-4*, 200; Blomefield 1805-10, III.409; Corie (ed. Hill 1956), 28-9.
- 98 MCB 24, FOS. 126, 127, 132; Corie (ed. Hill 1956), 28-9; *CSPD 1670*, 71.
- 99 MCB 25, fo. 316.
- 100 MCB 25, fo. 244.
- 101 MCB 25, fo. 342.
- 102 MCB 26, fo. 57\*.
- 103 MCB 25, fo. 332.
- 104 MCB 24, fo. 375.
- 105 The king's order of 1663 refers to lotteries, plays and other shows; the approach to the king in 1669 was occasioned by the coming of the players and focused on stage plays. In 1671 the court sought an order to make lottery sellers keep more regular hours and behave in a more orderly fashion: MCB 24, fo. 168.
- 106 MCB 25, fos. 3, 10, 35, 187, 314. For an 11 pm curfew for a lottery, see *ibid.*, fo. 331.
- 107 MCB 25, fo. 209.
- 108 MCB 24, fo. 225.
- 109 E.g. MCB 23, fos. 199, 227; MCB 24, fos. 141, 161; MCB 25, fo. 47. The aforementioned John Russell in 1668 paid £1 to the barber surgeons' company: MCB 24, fo. 96.
- 110 MCB 23, fo. 219; MCB 25, fos. 300, 332; MCB 26, fo. 56.
- 111 MCB 26, fos. 83, 120.
- 112 MCB 24, fo. 375; MCB 25, fo. 332; MCB 26, fo. 74.
- 113 MCB 26, fo. 162.
- 114 MCB 26, fos. 18, 18\*, 38, 162, 164, 252, 255.
- 115 See Spurr 1991.
- 116 Wilson 1995, 385.
- 117 Prideaux (ed. Thompson 1875), 193.
- 118 NCR, Case 12c/2(302). There was another presentment against lotteries in 1720: Case 12c/2(205).
- 119 Luttrell 1857, IV.647, 720. An earlier grand jury had presented 'The Provoked Wife' as obscene: *ibid.*, 571.

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