

"IF BOTH MY SONS WERE ON THE GALLOWES, I WOULD SING": OPPRESSION OF CHILDREN IN BEAUMONT'S *THE KNIGHT OF THE BURNING PESTLE*."

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Critics have described various objects of satire in Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, including "boorish behaviour and the demand that the playhouse serve private preference" (with a "class bias" against the citizens, George and Nell); "chivalric romance;" "citizen success-stories;" "misunderstandings about art;" the "gallants" of the period; prodigal plays; and "a mercenary society." Much less attention has been paid to another possible object of Beaumont's satire: the oppression of children and young adults by their elders, particularly their own parents. This oppression takes various forms throughout the play, including economic oppression, both bribery and deprivation of money. Although Philip J. Finkelppearl notes that "George's threats are the kind a burly would use on a helpless child" (25), it does not seem to have been noted that children are the object of most of the threats of violence, as well as actual violence, in the play.

Since the play was written to be performed by a children's company—the Children of the Queen's Revels, also known as the Children of Blackfriars—all of its roles would originally have been played by children. However, even in a children's company there would

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been a range of ages, and seems at least possible that older children would have played the adult roles. Even if this was not the case, clearly some roles represent mature individuals who themselves have children (the Citizens, the Merrythoughts, and Venturewell), while other roles are these children (Jasper, Michael, and Luce) or labeled as children either by their positions as apprentices or explicitly in the descriptions of their roles (the various "Boy's" of "The London Merchant").

The irony of having children play the adult roles must have been particularly evident in George's continual mode of address to the actors who are trying to perform "The London Merchant." From his first line to the Prologue—"Hold your peace, goodman boy" (Induction 4)—to his last line to the "actors"—"Take you no care of that, sir boy" (5.288)—his attitude toward the performers is contemptuous, and his contempt is expressed largely in terms of superiority based on his status as an adult and theirs as children. In part, the Citizens' power is economic: their attitude is that if they are willing and able to pay, the actors must do as they wish; although the actors frequently protest, they ultimately accede to most of the Citizens' demands (Induction 98-109; 3.172-80; Interlude 3.9-11, 17-18; 4.27-53, 107-109; Interlude 4. 6-21).

The Citizens, however, do not limit themselves to the power of the purse; they also threaten to use the law as a weapon. After Jasper beats Rafe, Nell says, "I am afraid my boy's miscarried. If he be, though he were Master Merrythought's son a thousand times, if there be any law in England, I'll make some of them smart for't" (2.324-26). When Jasper threatens Luce, Nell orders George to "raise the watch at Ludgate, and bring a mittimus from the justice for this desperate villain" (3.92-94). Later, to avenge Merrythought's bawdy song directed at Nell (3.550-53), George declares: "Let me alone, sweetheart, I have a trick in my head shall lodge him in the Arches for one year, and make him sing *peccavi ere* I leave him, and yet he shall never know who hurt him neither" (4.22-25). That these threats of legal action are made against the fictional characters of "The London Merchant" increases their absurdity, but does not decrease the Citizens' animosity.

The Citizens' most frequent way of oppressing the boy actors, however, is through threats of violence, which may be triggered by several aspects of the production. Dissatisfaction with "The London Merchant," particularly Nell's concern that Humphrey may fail to gain Luce's hand, triggers such statements from George as "I prithee, mouse, be patient; 'a shall have her, or I'll make some of 'em smoke for't" and "If [Venturewell] deny [Humphrey], I'll bring half a dozen good fellows myself, and in the shutting of an evening knock't, and there's an end" (1.205-206; 2.14-16). George also suggests physical violence as a solution to his frustration when he feels the players have failed to give him his money's worth: "Ay, Nell, but this is scurvy music. I gave the whoreson gallows money, and I think he has not got me the waits of Southwak. If I hear 'em not anon, I'll twinge him by the ears" (Interlude 2.5-8). George's most frequent motive for physical violence, however, is the players' reluctance to bring Rafe on-stage: "Sirrah, you scurvy boy, bid the players send Rafe, or by God's—and they do not, I'll tear some of their periwigs beside their heads" (Interlude 1.11-13). When the players object to George's command that they allow Rafe to "come in and fight with Jasper," George vows, "I'll make your house too for you else" (2.269,273-74). Eventually, George is so confident of his power that he doesn't feel he even needs to make an explicit threat: "Bring [Rafe] out quickly, or if I come in amongst you"— (Interlude 3.17-18).

Both Citizens are utterly sure of their superiority to the boy actors in terms of economic power, the law, and the physical prowess, and their attitude throughout indicates that they feel they should get their way in all things. Because money, legal standing, and physical strength are all characteristic of adults rather than children, however, George and Nell appear throughout to be bullying (and occasionally patronizing) people who are inferior to them only by virtue of age. Despite the inadequacies of "The London Merchant," Beaumont makes it clear that its players are easily the Citizens' superiors in artistic sophistication and overall wit—they do after all, manage to trick a good deal of money out of the financially prudent Citizens. However,

as Lee Bliss points out, "that [the Citizens] are willing to pay, as well as threaten, to get what they want completes Beaumont's anatomy of art's corruption by commerce" (43). The Citizens' various threats to the boy actors also characterize them as pompous and overbearing adults who will resort to any advantage at their command, however unfair, to establish their authority, however illegitimate, over children.

While the Citizens can use their money and threats of violence to enforce their wills on the child actors, they are frustrated by their inability to control the behavior of Luce and Jasper in "The London Merchant." Nell's approval of Humphrey and Michael (1.131, 201-203, 329; 2.10, 39-42, 261-66, 405-406) allies her with Venturewell and Mrs. Merrythought, of whom David A Samuelson has noted that "[their] ideal children are nonentities, passive and agreeable, like one's baggage or goods" (307). George, on the other hand, demonstrates his similarity to the Merchant and the Mother by his disapproval of the children who try to seize control of their own lives. His first reaction to Jasper and Luce is "Fie upon 'em, little infidels" and he says of Jasper, "Hang him, rogue" (1.61, 387). Nell is even more critical of Jasper, whom she calls an "ungracious child," "a notable gallows," an "unthrifty youth," "an unhappy boy," and a "foul great lungies" (1.334, 383-84; 2.160, 270, 335; see also 4.16-18). Although several of her epithets emphasize Jasper's youth, his age seems to be cause for hostility rather than charity. Growing progressively more irritated with Jasper, Nell threatens first to send Rafe after him and then to gain vengeance herself in some unspecified manner (2.164-65, 254-55). Finally, when Venturewell and his men set upon Jasper, Nell feels no compunction about encouraging violence toward the underdog: "So down with him; down with him. Cut him i'th, 'leg, boys, cut him i'th'leg!" (3.112-13).

However, when Nell, upset with Jasper for beating Humphrey, suggests that "He's e'en in the highway to the gallows, God bless him." George replies, "You're too bitter, cony; the young man may do well enough for all this" (2. 251-60). Himself always ready to resort to threats of violence, George may prefer the man who does the beating

to the one who allows himself to be beaten. This, however, is a unique statement. More typical, as well as more significant, is George's earlier comment on Jasper, "If he were my son, I would hang him up by the heels and flay him and salt him, whoreson haltersack"(1.337-38). This remark suggests the attitude of parents toward their own children throughout the play, which is almost universally negative: the best that children in *The Knight* may hope for from their parents is benign neglect; the worst is open hostility.

Many aspects of parent-child relations dramatized by Beaumont are summarized by "What an Italian visitor to England wrote home 1500":

The want of affection in the English is strongly manifested toward their children; for after having kept them at home till they arrive at the age of 7 or 9 years at the most, they put them out, both males and females, to hard service in the houses of other people, binding them generally for another 7 or 9 years. And these are called apprentices, and during that time they perform all most menial offices; and few are born who are exempted from this fate, for every one, however rich he may be, sends away his children into the houses of others, whilst he, in return, receives those of strangers into his own. And on being asked their reason for this severity, they did it in order that their children might learn better manners. But I, for my part, believe that they do it because they like to enjoy all their comforts themselves, and that they are better served by strangers than they would be by their own children. Besides which the English being great epicures, and very avaricious by nature, indulge in the most delicate food themselves and give their household the coarsest bread, and beer, and cold meat baked on Sunday for the week, which, however, they allow them in great abundance. That if they had their own children at home, they would be obliged to

give them the some food they made use of for themselves. That if the English sent their children away from home to learn virtue and good manners, and took them back again their apprenticeship was over, they might, perhaps, be excused; but they never return, for the girls are settled by their patrons, and the boys make the best marriages they can, and assisted by their patrons, not by their fathers, they also open a house and strive diligently by this means to make some fortune for themselves... (Ashley,243)

Although this might be regarded as an exaggeration (as, of course, is much of *The Knight*) the depiction of parents as self-centered and uncaring toward their children is remarkably similar in both texts. Except for Mrs. Merrythought and her "white boy" Michael (2.79), the relationships between parents and their offspring are consistently portrayed as dysfunctional. Nell mentions their children only twice, and neither mention suggests parental love. First, she describes Rafe's usefulness as a boogiemaster to control their children: "We'll fear our children with him if they be never so unruly. Do but cry, 'Rafe comes, Rafe comes,' to them, and they'll be quiet as lambs" (Induction 70-72). Later, she describes how one of her children, apparently very young, "strayed almost, alone, to Puddle Wharf," where it nearly drowned, an incident that may suggest parental neglect, particularly coupled with her remark that she was comforted by Rafe's statement that he'd get her "another as good" (2.352-57).

Within *The London Merchant*, relations between parents and their children are even worse. Venturewell "is inclined to think of his daughter as a commodity" (Doebler, "Prodigal Son Plays," 339) and intends to force Luce to marry an "arrant noddy" (2.235) whom she does not love. Venturewell repeatedly calls Humphrey "son" (2.1, 20; 4.138, 145, 149) and Humphrey calls him "father" (2.3, 407, 415; 5.36, 39), whereas Venturewell slightly calls his own daughter "the girl," "minion", and "gossip mine" "minion" (2.4; 3.114; 4.134). Mrs.

Merrythought's first speech is a tirade against Jasper, whose only offense is to ask for her blessing after having been unfortunate enough to lose his place with Venturewell:

Give thee my blessing? No, I'll ne'er give thee my blessing; I'll see thee hanged first. It shall ne'er be said I gave thee my blessing. Th'art thy father's own son, of the right blood of the Merrthoughts. I may curse the time that e'er I knew thy father. He hath spent all his own, and mine too, and when I tell him of it, he laughs and dances and sings and cries, '*A merry heart lives long-a'*'. And thou art a wastethrift and art run away from master that loved thee well, and art come to me; and I have laid up a little for my younger son, Michael; and thou think'st to bezzle that, but thou shalt never be able to do it. (1.310-20).

Not only does Mrs. Merrythought accuse Jasper falsely, but her insistence that she would rather see him hanged than give him her blessing (a sentiment she repeats at 1.324-25) seems an extraordinary reaction, particularly given her later threat to "hamper him," her description of him as a "vagabond," and her suggestion that he not only ran away from his master but lied about it (1.347-48, 381-82). Her real objection to Jasper seems to be that he is his "father's own son," something that he can hardly help.

Although Old Merrythought is more sympathetic to Jasper's plight than is his wife, he is not, ultimately, very helpful. He grants Jasper his blessing, offers him advice, and tells him, "If fortune cross thee, thou hast a retiring place. Come home to me"; he also gives Jasper ten shillings, which, being a third of his remaining fortune, might seem generous (1.396-412). However, Mrs. Merrythought tells us that the parents have agreed that, while she saved money for Michael, Old Merrythought "promised to provide for Jasper" (1.378-79). Given that promise, the ten shilling Old Merrythought parts with, and the fact

that he has spent most of the family's fortune on himself, suggest that he is a very irresponsible father. Even though he later declares that he loved Jasper (5.185-89), his treatment of his son is cavalier in the extreme. He refuses even to listen to Jasper when the young man goes off to seek his fortune (1.411, 416), and when Venturewell comes to him to report Jasper's elopement with Luce, he states, "If both my sons were on the gallows, I would sing" (2.501). When Venturewell declares, "For this thy scorn, I will pursue that son of thine to death," Old Merrythought not only does not attempt to apologize or defend Jasper, but replies, "Do, and when you há' killed him: Give him flowers enow, palmer, give him flowers enow. / Give him red, and white, and blue, green, and yellow" (2.513-17). Later, Merrythought declares that he is happy despite the fact that "my wife and both my sons are know not where" (4.331-32). Finally, as Finkelpearl notes, Old Merrythought's "cool, unruffled response to the announcement of his son's death seems to be carrying a good thing too far" (88).

Although the quotation from the "Italian visitor" suggests that masters may be of more help to their apprentices than these children's own parents, even that is not true in this play. The first speech of "The London Merchant" shows Venturewell threatening his apprentice Jasper, who has dared to court his master's daughter; Venturewell discharges Jasper from his service, and later leads the party of men who attack and wound him (1.1-38; 2.419-20; 3.110-11 and s.d.). It is not until the end of the play, when Jasper has tricked Venturewell into thinking that he is being haunted by Jasper's vengeful ghost, that the merchant forgives his apprentice.

Nor is the Citizens' apprentice, Rafe, spared rough treatment by his employers. Although the Citizens' fondness for Rafe is obvious (Induction.59-86, 122-24; 1.98-100, 257-58, 280-83; 2.95, 96 and passim), it doesn't prevent them from constantly ordering him about and threatening him. Nell, after ordering Rafe to beat Jasper, adds "and thou sparest him, Rafe, I would thou wert hanged" (2.288-89). George later remarks, "If Rafe had [Jasper] at the fencing-school, if he did not

make a puppy of him and drive him up and down the school, he should ne'er come in my shop more"(2.338-40). George also says to Nell, regarding Rafe's infantry drill, "Let him look narrowly to his service. I shall take him else"(5.74-75).

Threats, however, are not the only form of abuse inflicted on Rafe; the Citizens, particularly Nell, continually order him to fight and kill other characters (2.135-41, 267-69, 288-89, 309, 400-403; 3.285-86, 423-24; 5.61-62), orders that continue even after Rafe is beaten by Jasper. With no apparent concern that they may be exposing their apprentice to another beating, George declares that "Rafe shall beat him yet" and Nell tells Rafe, "thou shalt have another bout with [Jasper]"(2.331, 337). In fact, the Citizens are willing to risk more than a beating for Rafe. Although we know that Rafe is in little danger from what happens on stage, the Citizens fail to understand, or keep forgetting, that. Nell's continual insistence that Rafe fight someone occurs although she thinks that he is putting his life in danger when he does: "Run, Rafe; run, Rafe; run for thy life, boy; Jasper comes, Jasper comes;" "O, George, the giant, the giant!— Now, Rafe, for thy life"(2.218-19; 3.325). Although George's final order to Rafe – "come away quickly and die, boy"(5.284-85) – is not a command for Rafe's actual death, it is emblematic of the adults' attitude throughout the play that children exist to do their parents' or any other adult's, bidding, whatever the cost or risk to the young people.

Even a couple of the play's songs suggest conflict between the generations. When Merrythought complains of Luce's elopement with Jasper, Old Merrythought sarcastically suggests the hostility that children in this culture might feel toward their parents – "She cares much for her aged sire, I warrant you"- and then quotes a song to support his statement:

*She cares not for her daddy, nor
She cares not for her mammy;
For she is, she is, she is, she is*

My Lord of Lowgave's lassy. (2.508-12)

The song that Mrs. Merrythought and Michael sing in order to get back into Old Merrythought's good graces — the only song, Michael declares, that he is able to sing, tells the story of a virtuous Protestant girl whose mother reveals her refusal to attend Mass (5.226-29). As she awaits execution, the daughter addresses her mother:

*But, my distressed mother,
Why weep you? Be content,
You have to death delivered me,
Most like an innocent. (II.65-68)*

While it seems somewhat ironic that the only song known by Michael, his mother's darling, is a song in which a mother betrays her child to her death, the theme of the parent who sacrifices her child is perfectly congruent with the play's depiction of the rejection and abuse visited upon virtuous children by their parents.

As Stephen J. Grenblatt has pointed out, the Renaissance "had a deep gerontological bias," however much adults of different classes, professions, and beliefs disagreed about other questions, they seem to have achieved consensus on the need to "impose restraints and exercise shaping power" on adolescents and young adults and "to curb their spirits, fashion their wills, and delay their full entry into the adult world"; as Greenblatt also notes, dramatists of this period were "almost obsessively" interested in dramatizing young adults (92, 83-84), often in conflict with the older generation. Furthermore, if *The Knight* was written, as is now generally assumed, no later than 1607, Beaumont composed it in his early twenties, an age when a clever young man may be likely to regard his elders as both stupid and oppressive. But perhaps more significant than the fact that Beaumont mocks the older generation in this play is how he does it: as Bliss explains, "Beaumont shows the Citizens turning the stage into a three-dimensional projection

of the mind's own fleeting, infantile, aggressive, and narcissistic urges"(42). Part of the joke, in other words, is that the play's adult characters are not only oppressive, but in their varying ways childish. The Citizens, Mrs. Merythought, and Venturewell invariably demand their own way and become easily infuriated and violent, or potentially violent, when they don't immediately get it; even Old Merrythought, although invariably happy, is as utterly self-centered and self-indulgent as a baby.

In sharp contrast to the infantile, most of the play's young people behave in a mature fashion, certainly much better than their elders. Luce appears to be a self-possessed young woman who knows her own mind and acts to get what she wants. Jasper, who declares, "I have the wits of twenty men about me"(4.305), does, in fact, outwit Venturewell and gain Luce's hand. Even Rafe, Ridiculous though he may be, is more knowledgeable about theater, as well as more attractive as a human being, than his employers. Finally, the boy actors of "The London Merchant," prevented from performing as they wish, make the best of a bad situation, complete their play, make some extra money, and even manage to enact a measure of revenge on their oppressors by beating Rafe and insulting Nell (3.550-53). Although throughout the play we see the adults neglecting and oppressing the children, the children not only endure, but frequently prevail. Critics have largely ignored the play's generational conflicts, but it is necessarily the case that the original audience, much concerned with such conflicts, did so; possibly Beaumont's treatment of oppressive adults was a contributing factor to the play's failure at the box office. Perhaps, too, it is not quite a coincidence that Walter Burre's Dedicatory Epistle to Robert Keyser describes *The Knight* itself as a neglected and abused child which, however, has managed to survive (Zitner, 51-52).

Notes

All quotations from *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* are taken from the edition by Sheldon P. Zitner (The Revels Plays series, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

- 1 See Bliss 37-39, 51, 54; Booth 52; Doebler, "Introduction," xiv-xxii; Hattaway xi-xii; and Zitner 16-25, 28-39. In addition to parodies of chivalric romances, the play also features parodies of and references to other plays; see Crawford; Doebler, "Prodigal Son Plays," and Samuelson 302.
- 2 Some critics have noted the play's pervasive violence. Zitner notes Old Merrythought's "cruelty" and "darker side" (24-25) and Finkelppearl discusses the violence of the Citizens, of whom he writes: "It is difficult to understand why these brutal characters are almost always described as 'amiable'... if matters in 'The London merchant' are not progressing to [George's] satisfaction, he always has in reserve a 'hardhat's' solution: 'I'll bring halfe a dozen good fellows myselfe, and in the shutting of an evening knock't up, and ther's an end' (2.13-14). Nell, in particular, seems to enjoy physical violence..." (96-97). Glenn A. Steinberg notes the violence of "the Citizens improvisations" (218). See also Bliss 43; Doebler, "Introduction," xviii; and Samuelson 310. However, the concentration of this violence toward children has been little discussed, although Samuelson notes that in "The London Merchant," "Mirth, geniality, good will and related features of *eros* contended against earth, specifically against the life-as-business philosophy, whose cost is living and whose victims are the offspring of *eros*-children" (309). For an almost completely positive evaluation of the Citizens, see Degyansky.
- 3 See Chambers 221 (quoted by Finkelppearl 81 n.).
- 4 Zitner states that "certainly the Queen's Revels Children had some adult members and were a 'now almost adult company' by 1608 (34, quoting G. E. Bentley, ed., *The Seventeenth-Century Stage*, Toronto, 1968, II: 160; see also Zitner 13-14). This age range may have heightened the distance between the adult and children's roles in a play such as *Knight*. Zitner suggests that "possibly the Citizens and Rafe were played by somewhat older actors, underlining [the] effect [of the Citizens representing Life and 'The London Merchant' characters representing Letters] (34). Humphrey's age is a matter of some dispute among critics: Finkelppearl refers to him as "a wealthy older man" (83), while Crane calls him a "young gentleman" (61); Nell refers to him as a "young man" (1.202), but she may mean only younger than herself.
- 5 It may be worth noting that George's emphasis on his maturity versus the youth of the persons with whom he is not dissimilar to old Capulet's attitude when he is arguing with Tybalt, whom he refers to as "goodman boy," "saucy boy," and "princox" (Romeo 1.5.78,84,87). *Knight* is not an entirely anti-children play: Nell expresses kindly feelings toward various of the child actors (1.93-95,299-

300;2.380;3.303-310), and even George at least once acknowledges them appreciatively- "The childer are pretty childer." (1.98-99) – although perhaps he does this to satisfy Nell, rather than from any genuine feeling. Otherwise, George usually is hostile toward the boy actors, and even Nell refers to them as "these paltry players"(2.209).

- 6 Even when the Citizens don't offer money, their demands are usually fulfilled (Induction.29-36,44,55-56,61-64,96,100-106;1.90-91; Interlude 2.8). When one of the boy actors protests George ordering Mrs. Merrythought to leave the stage, the Grocer promises not to interfere with their play again (3.287-307). However, soon both Citizens are back to making demands (4.27-52; Interlude 4.4-21; 5.51-72). George's final demand, however, goes unfilled by the children's company, perhaps because he does not offer them any additional money. George tries to get the players to provide an ending for Rafe's part, but they refuse to do so. Following Nell's suggestion, therefore, George orders Rafe to play a death scene. The players' representative objects to the illogic of Rafe dying for no apparent reason, particularly in a comedy, but George orders him to ignore more generic considerations (5.276-89).
- 7 The actors of "The London Merchant" also threaten legal action in their improvised scene at the in when they arrest Rafe (3.172-80). If their aim is to get Rafe off the stage, they are defeated by George's willingness to pay Rafe's "reckoning"; however, if their aim is to extort money from George, they are successful.
- 8 Nell also makes an implied threat to Old Merrythought after he directs an obscene song at her: "If I were thy wife, i'faith, graybeard, i'faith"- (3.555-56). It is not clear whether she fails to finish her thought because George cuts her off or because she is almost inarticulate with rage.
- 9 They are also unhappy with the character of Tim, whom George refers to as a "Whoreson blockhead [who] cannot remember!" and Nell as "a groutnoll"(1.292;2.380-81); see also 3.371. Their unhappiness in this instance, however, results from the character's supposed lack of intelligence rather than perceived moral failings
- 10 Finkelppearl points out that "After his perverse, contorted testing [of Luce], it is difficult to admire Jasper without strong reservations"(87); while this is true, the play offers no reasons for admiring Michael or Humphrey (Doebler, "Prodigal Son Plays," 343), and Jasper's bizarre behavior with regard to his own true love, as Finkelppearl also notes, places Jasper "among the strange 'heroes' of Beaumont and

Fletcher's most famous romances, where the pulling out of a sword and sometimes its use against a helpless and usually a loving woman is a frequent gesture" (87). Furthermore, as Zitner points out, "with the exception of the love-test... Jasper's behavior is exemplary" (18).

- 11 Even Mrs Merrythought refuses to allow Michael his request to receive his father's blessing (1.418-21).
- 12 See Steinberg, who, however, blames Jasper's "improvisation," rather than his parents, for the unsatisfactory nature of this visit (212-13,215).
- 13 Steinberg, on the other hand, finds that Merrythought's reactions make "his fidelity to his chosen role in life...delightfully consistent" (217).
- 14 George and Nell also cheer Rafe on in his fight with "the giant" (3.341-350), concluding with Nell's "There, boy. Kill, Kill, Kill, Kill, Kill, Rafe," which Zitner (n.3.351) suggests may be an echo of *Lear* (presumably 4.6.187). Later, Nell tells Rafe to have the militia "skimish, and let [their] flags fly, and cry, kill,kill,kill" (5.61-62).
- 15 Ironically, one of the many reasons Nell objects to Jasper is that "his very ghost would have folks beaten." (5.35).
- 16 Jones-Davies, however, argues that George orders Rafe to die because "he wants to exorcise...the fear of death" (81).
- 17 Bonneau states that Merrythought's singing serves to characterize a special type of *senex* and, more broadly, a humour in the current physiological and psychological sense of the day" (9). This does not, however, rule out additional purposes for the songs.
- 18 "A Rare Examples of a Vertuous Maid in Paris, who was by her own Mother procured to be put in Prison, thinking thereby to compel her to Popery; but she continued to the end, and finished her life in the fire." In *The Roxburghe Ballads* 35-37. Zitner describes this song as "a true-blue Protestant broadside ballad" (175).
- 19 For the date, see Chambers 221; Finkelpearl 81; Hattaway x-xi; and Zitner 10-12.
- 20 Even Samuelson, although he takes a particularly charitable view of George (310-12), concludes that "there is something mildly heroic about Ralph" and that "the

anonymous actors... of *The London Merchant* are the characters who "[win] our fullest measure of respect" (315). Degyansky, on the other hand, maintains that "The greater achievement of *The Knight* is a celebration of life that grows out of the values that Nell and George typify" (32).

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