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'Euer obedient in his Studies': Thomas Middleton and the City, c. 1621

In the early 1620s Thomas Middleton's profile in London, both on and off the stage, was at its height. Within a few years he would produce some of the most notable late Jacobean plays, including *Women Beware Women*, *The Changeling* and that great cause célèbre, *A game at chesse*. Outside of the professional stage, his run of civic employments was consolidated when he was appointed the first recorded and salaried Chronologer of the City of London on 6th September 1620.¹ The formal appointment as City Chronologer may have been a novelty for Middleton, one which, Gary Taylor argues, 'transformed his status', but it is important to remember that Middleton's involvement in civic pageantry—especially the annual Lord Mayor's Show, by some distance the most high-profile and prestigious form of civic culture—dated back to 1604, when he contributed a speech to the City's welcome to the new king. Somewhat overlooking the fact that Jonson succeeded Middleton as City Chronologer, Taylor also writes that 'what Jonson was for Jacobean court masques, Middleton was for Jacobean civic revelry: its dominant, and most inventive, practitioner'.² It should be emphasised that no writer for the Lord Mayor's Show worked independently; Middleton, like his peers, *collaborated* in the production of mayoral Shows with Munday and others.³ Out of this group of civic writers, Middleton was established as one of the main contenders for the commission for the Show by the early 1620s and

This essay began as a contribution to an SAA panel in 2014. Thanks are due to the convenors Clare McManus, Lucy Munro and David Nicol for the invitation to join the panel and to the other contributors—especially Lawrence Manley—for their comments on my paper. I am also grateful to Penny Fussell and the Drapers' Company for allowing me access to their archives, and to the staff at the London Metropolitan Archives for their assistance. The essay has benefited too from the *London Journal* reviewers' comments.

¹ Middleton successfully petitioned the City for additional money a number of times: his initial annual fee of £6 13s 4d increased to £10 in January 1621 (LMA, CLO/CA/01/01/039, f. 76) and in 1622 he was granted £15 'for his better encouragement' (this was an ad hoc 'guifte', not an alteration to his yearly income) (LMA, CLO/CA/01/01/040, f. 249). Some of his output as City Chronologer is now lost, including a manuscript seemingly entitled *Annales*, which listed, *inter alia*, 'Articles under the year 1621' such as the death of Bishop of London John King, the imprisonment of Francis Bacon and the burning down of the Fortune theatre (see A. Dyce, ed., *Works of Middleton* vol. 1 (E. Lumley: London 1840), p. xxiii and *Thomas Middleton: the collected works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2007), pp. 1907–9).

² Middleton ODNB. There is a reference in the City Repertories from 1633 to an ex-gratia payment of £20 to 'Edward Hewes', 'sometymes the Citties Chronologer', who may have acted in an interim fashion after Middleton's death (LMA, COL/CA/01/01/051, f. 336). This is probably Edmund Howes, the continuuer of Stow's historical works, whose editions of Stow's *Chronicle*, described by Howes as an 'Act of Chronologie', were evidently encouraged by civic dignitaries (John Stow, *The abridgement or summarie of the English chronicle* (London 1607), A4r). Jonson's admittance to the role of Chronologer by the Court of Aldermen 'in place of M^r Thomas Middleton deceased' happened in September 1628, the year after the latter's death; Jonson was granted 'one hundred nobles' (over £33) per annum for his service, quite an increase on the 'yearlie fee' of just under £7 first granted to Middleton in 1621, as outlined above (see LMA, COL/AC/19/042, f. 271).

³ See my *Pageantry and Power* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), especially chapter 2.

accordingly acted as co-producer alongside his collaborators on the mayoral Shows for 1621, 1622, 1623 and 1626.⁴

My focus in this essay is on the early years of his appointment as City Chronologer between 1620-22. The City Chronologer's role may have been primarily designed to act as one of the main public voices of the City, but such 'PR work' was not straightforward for Middleton, as I will demonstrate. Indeed, the fact that such a discrete role was considered necessary, given that the City already had the services of a Remembrancer and a Recorder for matters of protocol, precedent and ceremonial, suggests that there was a more active approach in the early modern period to the dissemination of the City's 'messages' and its interests than simply passive record-keeping. As City Chronologer Middleton had especial responsibility for presenting a positive take on those individuals raised to the City's highest office, and also for what a modern reader would regard as 'spinning' the obligations that fell on these incumbents in terms of civic hospitality, as well as maintaining the City's reputation for moral probity in the context of a period notorious for backroom deals and dodgy would-be monopolists.

1620, then, saw the seemingly thoroughgoing 'translation' of the scabrous satirist of *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* and the unrelenting moralist of *The Changeling* into a writer who could sign off a dedication to a host of City dignitaries with the complaisant-sounding 'Euer obedient in his Studies, to the Seruice of so compleate a Goodnes'.⁵ This was not, however, a complete disjunction for Middleton and there is every evidence that his long-standing commitment to his work for the City was at least equal to the intellectual investment he had made to the stage. Indeed, the fact that Middleton 'petitioned' the City for the role and that this was readily granted by the Court of Aldermen on the back of his prior work in the civic arena underscores the sense of a continuity of service. He issued publications in his own name—*Honorable Entertainments* foregrounds 'Invented by Thomas Middleton' on its title page—and he generally made the post of City Chronologer a visible undertaking, as was doubtless expected of him. Although they have been largely neglected by literary critics, the works Middleton produced for the City (such as *Honorable Entertainments*, further discussed below), were neither one-dimensional sycophancy nor were they hackwork; rather, as Anthony Parr comments, 'they [were] polished efforts perfectly tailored to their individual occasions'.⁶ Naturally, given the formal role in question these works were all directly commissioned, and the City did stipulate that Middleton be prohibited from 'putt[ing] out any of the same actes [of the City] soe by him to be collected into print w[i]thout the allowaunce and approbac[i]on' of the Court of Aldermen.⁷ Middleton did not exactly flaunt this restriction but at times he can be seen to stretch its remit and to produce work might have been more critical in spirit than the City would have desired. The pressures and

⁴ 1625 was a bad plague year and all festivities, monarchical as well as civic, were suspended; in 1624 John Webster was the pageant poet rather than Middleton, the more obvious candidate, perhaps as a response to the notoriety of *Chesse* the year before.

⁵ *Honorable Entertainments compos'de for the Seruice of this Noble Cittie* (London 1621), A2v (further references to this work are given in the text).

⁶ *Thomas Middleton: the collected works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2007), p. 1431.

⁷ LMA, COL/CA/01/01/038, f. 540.

contradictions that he would have experienced as he tried to steer an approved course whilst dealing at times with compromised and controversial figures had an impact on his civic works, as I will show.

Such problems surfaced immediately, and with the benefit of hindsight one might say that Middleton took over the City's cultural 'PR' role at just the wrong time. The commencement of his post as City Chronologer was marked by the publication in 1621 of a series of occasional civic entertainments that took place between Easter 1620 and Easter 1621.⁸ This composite work, entitled *Honorable Entertainments compos'de for the Seruice of this Noble Cittie*, comprises ten separate productions, most of which take the form of songs and speeches.⁹ Such small-scale entertainments have often been overlooked by modern scholars because they only infrequently made it into print, but *Honorable Entertainments* illustrates the ways in which civic service was always punctuated by an annual cycle of events on feast days, some of which had a long history. In generic terms, these entertainments derived from the tradition of banquet speeches and entertainments in civic halls which went back at least as far as the mummings of John Lydgate's day, as well as the medieval interludes performed in great houses. They also share some characteristics with mayoral Shows, such as the employment of moral exhortation and the use of emblematic figures, but differ inasmuch as they were on a much less grand scale, staged indoors and to a select audience.

The book was dedicated to all of those who currently held civic office, who are addressed by Middleton as 'his Worthy and Ho[no]rable Patrons' (A2r). Two of the entertainments took place under the mayoralty of William Cockayne (before Middleton's appointment as City Chronologer) and the remainder during the term of Francis Jones, which, as I explore further below, has more than mere chronological significance. Indeed, those entertainments that pre-dated Middleton's post might well have contributed to his high standing as candidate for City Chronologer, especially given his ongoing relationship with Cockayne.¹⁰ Although the title page of the book proclaims that the individual works were 'compos'de for the Seruice of this Noble Cittie', two of them were performed before members of the Privy Council as well as the Lord Mayor and aldermen, which in itself signals the close links between some of the City oligarchs and powerful aristocratic families in this period. The collection

⁸ In April 1621 the City rewarded Middleton for the publication of *Honorable Entertainments* by granting him the potentially lucrative right to nominate a person for freedom of the City by redemption (LMA, CLO/CA/01/01/039, f. 148). The author seems to have successfully doubled up on the back of this publication, for in 1623 he made a similar request in respect of 'the charges of the service latelie p[er]formed by him att the shuting [sic] att Bunhill ... and for his service to bee p[er]formed att the Cunduit heades', corresponding to the second and third entertainments in the book (LMA, COL/CA/01/01/041, f. 240).

⁹ Andy Gordon has pointed out that this composite work 'covers a complete ritual year' and 'draws upon [Middleton's] experimentation with the almanac form' in, for example, *The owles almanacke*; Gordon also notes that Middleton dealt with 'the ritual year' in a rather different spirit in *Michaelmas Term (Writing Early Modern London)* (Palgrave 2013), pp. 195-6). The Easter entertainments would have been associated with the annual St Mary Spittal sermons.

¹⁰ Lawrence Manley has speculated interestingly that Middleton's post of City Chronologer might have been a kind of parting gift from Cockayne (private communication), a quite plausible explanation of the appointment given that the Court of Aldermen refer to the 'testimonie' placed before them of Middleton's work for the City (CLO/CA/01/01/038, f. 540).

begins with an Easter 1620 entertainment reprised to celebrate the recent marriage between the Lord Mayor William Cockayne's eldest daughter Mary and Charles Howard, Baron of Effingham. The remainder—apart from the 'mock funeral' further discussed below—commemorate ad hoc civic events such as 'Shooting Day' at Bunhill Fields and a Christmas feast at Lord Mayor Cockayne's house.

Although the City Chronologer appointment was a token of the esteem in which Middleton was held in civic circles, these were troubled times for the nation at large as well as for the City that offered Middleton both work and kudos. Middleton's new role came during a run of bad luck for the City and his initial commissions were written during a period described by Thomas Cogswell as having 'a crisis atmosphere'.¹¹ In 1620, for example, the City was due to have its prized royal charter renewed but fell subject to a Star Chamber charge over impropriety in the negotiation of this renewal, which was as a result cancelled, causing 'many inconveniences' to the City.¹² Only a few years previously Cockayne himself had been in the limelight for all the wrong reasons when his intended monopoly on the export of dyed and dressed cloth, known as the Cockayne Project, failed and did deep damage to the English cloth trade.¹³ Beyond these local issues, war had recently broken out on the continent and the English polity was preoccupied with religious division and the divisive question of military intervention. *Honorable Entertainments* may, on the face of it, have been a wholly suitable, even predictable, way for the newly appointed City Chronologer to make his first appearance in print in that guise, but given these underlying issues some of the pieces in this book have a more edgy take on the civic transitions of 1620-21 than the mere 'flattery' identified by Paul Salzman. Rather, they can be seen to use what Andy Gordon has called 'ambivalent popular forms' to incorporate 'a sharpened edge of communal critique into the entertainments'.¹⁴ Parr argues that the entertainments show 'the adaptable, confident, outward-looking face

¹¹ 'Lost Political Prose, 1620-7: a brief account', in *Thomas Middleton: the collected works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2007), p. 1907. Given his appointment as City Chronologer that autumn, it might have been expected that Middleton would be employed in the 1620 mayoral Show: the commission, exceptionally, went to the cleric John Squire, who had slight prior links with Jones and the Haberdashers' Company (his artificer, Francis Tipsley, was a member of that Company): see also J. Caitlin Finlayson, 'John Squire: the unknown author of *The Tryumphs of Peace*, the London Lord Mayor's Show for 1620', *Neophilologus*, 94:3 (2010), 531-39.

¹² In July of that year John Chamberlain informed his correspondent Dudley Carleton of 'a bill put into the Star-chamber [against the City] for combination and conspiracie to the prejudice of the crowne, in renewing their charter' (*The Letters of John Chamberlain*, volume II, ed. Norman Egbert McClure (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society 1939), p. 311. For petitions from the City relating to this suit, see <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/index-remembrancia/1579-1664/pp61-65>.

¹³ For an overview of the Cockayne Project see Barry Supple, *Commercial Crisis and Change in England 1600-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) and Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (London: Verso 2003); for more how the Project was dealt with in cultural terms, see Roze Hentschell, *The Culture of Cloth in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2008). The project also forms the backdrop to the Lord Mayor's Shows of 1614 and 1615: see my *Pageantry and Power*, pp. 294-6.

¹⁴ Paul Salzman, *Literary Culture in Jacobean England: Reading 1621* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2002), p. 90.

of civic authority'; like Gordon, I would argue that they can be read in more complex ways.¹⁵

Honorable Entertainments is ostensibly a faithful record of various events in the cultural life of the City. However, one of the events in 1620 included in the collection, a muster of armed citizens on the Artillery Garden, never actually took place. It is no coincidence that this is the occasion in *Honorable Entertainments* most closely connected to the ongoing Parliamentary debates about military action and the campaign to send armed aid overseas in support of James's daughter Elizabeth and her husband Frederick, the Elector Palatine and King of Bohemia. In his guise of Lord General of the Military Forces Cockayne was supposed to have been the recipient of 'A Speech intended for the generall Training' delivered by Pallas, goddess of wisdom and war. The speech itself is full of exhortations to renew military exercises to defend the kingdom. '[A] small pecuniary Expence', Pallas claims, should not be allowed to endanger the safety of the realm (B8v). Despite Pallas's heightened rhetoric about an 'Army' of 'worthy Citizens', warnings about the consequences of 'neglect of glorious Armes', and the downplaying of the cost (not to mention the political imperative to strengthen domestic forces given events on the Continent), in fact the City did not have the resources to support such a show of military strength and the muster was cancelled.

Although Middleton is vague about the reasons for the muster not taking place, the text does not hold back from taking up a position in the division between James' preferred conciliatory foreign policy and those in Parliament who wanted a more robust military defence of the Protestant Union. The rhetoric of Pallas's speech is especially pointed since the entertainment was scheduled to take place during Frederick and Elizabeth's brief reign in Bohemia and whilst they were under onslaught from Spanish-Imperial forces. Middleton does not mention the background conflict directly, but he preserves the option of the muster taking place at a later date by presenting the non-event as a hiatus instead of a cancellation with the remark that 'uppon some Occasion, the Day [was] deferred' (B7v). Equally, the speech itself is glossed as being intended, despite this 'discontinuance', 'to excite them to practice'. The postponement of the exercises may have been for the best, for as this suggests Middleton's text does not sit on the fence but rather aligns the City, led by Cockayne, with the more bellicose parties in the domestic dispute about whether or not to intervene in Bohemia. Pallas claims that there has been a 'neglect' of military action, and bemoans that 'such a noble Cities Arm'd Defence/ Should be so seldome seene' (B4r). Furthermore, the speech locates the City's action (or lack of action) within a wider sphere: 'If neither Men, City, nor Deeds be safe,/ Where's now Security of State?', Pallas asks, emphasising the centrality of regular military exercises to the safety of protestant England at a moment of international crisis. Even the City oligarchs themselves do not escape (implicit) criticism, for the speech concludes with characteristically Middletonian foregrounding of more profound moral matters than enriching oneself. 'In getting wealth all care should not be set', Pallas would have reminded her civic audience had the entertainment taken place, for not only is such wealth at risk when the nation itself is at risk from its enemies, but also,

¹⁵ Thomas Middleton: *the collected works*, p. 1431; *Writing Early Modern London*, p. 198.

she asks, ‘What i’st to rise in riches [but] fall in honour ... [and] to your Safeties to commit selfe-treason?’ (B4v-C1r).

The following entertainment in the collection continues the sombre note. It was held to mark the termination of Cockayne’s mayoralty and took place on the day before Francis Jones’s inauguration on October 29th 1620, only a matter of weeks after Middleton’s appointment as City Chronologer. Despite Cockayne’s leading role in the disastrous ‘new drapery’ ‘Project’ of only a few years earlier, Middleton appears to have had an especially close relationship with the City magnate in this period. Cockayne had acted as his patron a number of times, and Middleton had also devised the former’s 1619 mayoral Show.¹⁶ This connection might explain why, in contrast to the usual joy expressed in civic pageantry at the commencement of a mayoral term of office, this ‘sad Pageant’ represents the end of Cockayne’s term of office as a funeral where ‘all seem to mourne’ (C1v-2r). Whilst the ‘mock funeral’/‘mock will and testament’ was an established literary genre, it is unusual to see such a trope presented in a civic entertainment. There is certainly a marked difference in tone between this entertainment and the one presented just a few months previously at Cockayne’s house, where the praise is so lavish that even Cockayne’s heraldic bird, the cock, is celebrated as the ‘King of Birds’ (B1v). In the present case, in contrast, it seems the very year has died: there is a ‘Last Will and Testament of 1620’, where ‘1621’, its ‘Successor’, is bequeathed ‘all my good wishes, paines, labours and reformations’ (C2v). The piece concludes with an ‘epitaph’ bemoaning the end of ‘a Yeare of goodness, and a Yeare of right’ (C1v-C3r). ‘1621’ is wished ‘no worse an Epitaph’ than 1620 but in general terms only limited hope and expectation that such virtue would continue into the next mayoralty is expressed.

Honorable Entertainments then moves on from the last day of Cockayne’s mayoralty to a ‘Great Feast’ held in the early days of his successor, Francis Jones. (Eight of the ten entertainments in this collection were presented at Jones’s house, beginning immediately after his inauguration and extending through to Easter 1621.) Aside from reminding Jones (ironically, as we’ll see) of the liberal hospitality and ‘bounty fayre’ he will be expected to provide as Lord Mayor, the first entertainment of Jones’s term is addressed primarily to the Haberdashers’ Company, to which the new incumbent belonged and in whose honour the feast had been celebrated. Indeed, the whole piece centres on an extrapolation of the Haberdashers’ arms, and in this respect the entertainment compares interestingly to one composed by Middleton in April 1622, where it is the Lord Mayor Edward Barkham whose crest is the principal image.¹⁷ Jones himself, who is not named in the speech, is curiously absent, certainly when compared to Cockayne’s centrality to the preceding entertainments. The current incumbent is gestured at fleetingly as ‘yon’d Kind Lord’ but it is the Haberdashers to whom the term ‘Worthiness’ is applied, rather than the Lord Mayor (C4r). Of Jones himself, Middleton comments in

¹⁶ The book of Middleton and Rowley’s 1620 masque *The world tost at tennis* was dedicated to Cockayne and Charles Howard in the year of the marriage that united the two families.

¹⁷ This work, usually called ‘An Invention’ survives in ms form in the State Papers; it is reprinted, with commentary, in *Thomas Middleton: the collected works*; see also Christina Burridge, ‘A Critical Edition of Four Entertainments by Thomas Middleton’, unpublished PhD, University of British Columbia, 1978, pp. 269-94.

at best ambivalent terms ‘I presume his goodness will requite’ the ‘Noble Action’ of his Company. Furthermore, any ‘honour’ that pertains to Jones is merely ‘borrowed’ from the Haberdashers (C4r-v; italics mine). The final section of the speech offers instruction to the Lord Mayor, reminding him of the responsibilities as well as the risks of magistracy. Blessings are offered for Jones’s ‘Health and a Noble Courage’ whilst ‘fame and praise’, the valedictory words of the speech, are directed once again to the Haberdashers’ Company, Jones’s ‘worthy Brotherhood’.

The scene is therefore set for an inauspicious mayoralty. The lack of confidence in Jones signalled in *Honorable Entertainments* was more than borne out by events. Middleton’s Christmas feast entertainment had evoked the venue, Jones’s house, in riskily hyperbolic terms as ‘Bounties pallace/ Where euery Cup ha’s his full Ballace’, where ‘sparkling Liquors’ abound and where ‘Cellar, Hall [and] Larder’ are ‘Iouall’ and ‘blithe’ (C5v-C6r).¹⁸ Despite Middleton’s citation of ‘th’Abundant welcome yon’d Kind Lord affords’ (C4r) in the first entertainment of Jones’s term of office, as it turned out, Jones could *not* afford it. He found the cost of bearing the enforced generosity of the mayoralty too great and absconded just before his year expired. Such an escapade was unheard of in contemporary times, when the dignity of mayoral office was paramount. Ever alert to news and gossip, John Chamberlain wrote to Dudley Carleton a couple of weeks later that, to escape his creditors, ‘the night before he shold have accompanied his successor to Westminster [Jones] did *sgombrare* [clear out], conveyeng all of worth out of his house, and himself and his wife into some secret corner in the countrie’.¹⁹ In so doing Jones had betrayed the trust explicitly laid on him during the 1620 Lord Mayor’s Show that he would ‘execute [his] charge’ with ‘honor’d care’.²⁰ His disappearance could not be kept a secret and it caused the City no little embarrassment for, as Chamberlain comments, Jones had ‘awayes [been] esteemed a man of great wealth’.²¹ Chamberlain also makes it clear that, despite what he calls ‘all [the] faire shewes’ surrounding the mayoralty, Jones’s financial difficulties were hardly unusual in those challenging economic times. Nevertheless, such a high-profile flit necessitated public damage limitation. Contrary to usual practice (and inevitably in the circumstances) Jones was subsequently absent—he was ‘excused’ due to an allegedly ‘sudden infirmity’—when his successor took his oath at Westminster in 1621.²²

¹⁸ The London mayoralty was an ‘office of charge’ with significant demands in terms of hospitality which, as well as endless dinners, could include providing accommodation for visiting diplomats. Francis Jones was a Customs Farmer, usually a source of considerable income, but he was, states Parr, ‘fiscally unreliable’ and ‘an altogether less impressive man’ than Cockayne (*Middleton: the collected works*, p. 1434).

¹⁹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, volume II, p. 405.

²⁰ John Squire, *Tes Irenes Trophaea* (London 1620), B4r.

²¹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, volume II, p. 405. Jones’s predecessor had no such money worries, for at around the same time, Chamberlain relates, along with two others Cockayne contributed to the enormous sum of £30,000 ‘for the Palatinat’ cause (*ibid.*).

²² BL Add. MS 18016, fol. 152r. Lord Mayor’s Day began with a delegation comprising the new and outgoing Lord Mayors, the Recorder of London and other dignitaries travelling by barge to Westminster, where the incoming Lord Mayor swore an oath of allegiance to the Crown before the Barons of the Exchequer. Formal speeches like Finch’s were made on this occasion.

The Recorder of London Sir Heneage Finch was in this instance responsible for the public negotiation of Jones's unexpected absence. There may therefore be a deliberate irony when he says in the same speech that Jones had 'willingly' laid down the burden of office and especially in his pointed remark that Jones 'cannot give a greater testimony of him[self] than his meane estimation of him selfe'.²³ In notable contrast, Jones's successor Edward Barkham's 'greate bounty and hospitallity ... feastes and entertainments' were highlighted when he was presented to the Barons of the Exchequer at the equivalent ceremony in 1621.²⁴ The year after that, on passing on the mayoralty to Peter Proby in October 1622 Barkham was given a valedictory testimonial by Finch in which it was stated that, unlike his predecessor, he had performed the role with 'dilligence from the first [day] of the [mayoral] yeare to the last'.²⁵ Putting a positive, corporate spin on what, as we will see, had been a vexed appointment, Finch's speech in 1621 also relates how the new Lord Mayor 'rose from the Chaire and went to the window where the Town clerk stood ... [then] the Aldermen came one by one and gave their voices all for Ald. Barkham'.²⁶

These words of praise notwithstanding, it had in fact hardly been the case that 'voices all' had been in support of Barkham, whose rise to the City's highest office had been problematic, to say the least. Barkham was the focal point of two transitions in 1621: the mayoralty passed to him from the errant Jones, and Barkham in turn (in order to take office) had to 'translate' from the Leathersellers' Company to one of the 'Great Twelve' Companies—in this case, to the Drapers' Company.²⁷ Thus even without the delinquent Francis Jones as a predecessor, the backdrop to the 1621 mayoral inauguration was not favourable. Barkham, one of the alderman dedicatees of *Honorable Entertainments*, was a wealthy merchant, an investor in the East India Company and Master of the Leathersellers' Company. His process of translation to the Drapers began with an approach to the Company in early July 1621. The request was rebuffed for some months: there were prolonged negotiations (further discussed below) and the matter was only resolved on the intervention of the Privy Council, who compelled the Drapers to accept Barkham.²⁸ The Drapers' historian A. H. Johnson ascribes the reluctance of the Company to accept Barkham to their desire to avoid the expense of a third

²³ *Ibid.*, fol. 150r.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 166r.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 165v.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 141r.

²⁷ The 'Custom of London', which is not to be confused with 'translation', allowed any freeman to practice any trade, not necessarily the trade of the Company to which he belonged. It was rarely insisted upon that such a freeman become a member of the relevant company and in general terms, ties between individual members and their Companies were loosening in the early modern period. Barkham translated to the Drapers because any putative Lord Mayor had to be a member of the Great Twelve, not because he was practicing as a Draper. The 'Great Twelve', in traditional order of precedence, are: the Mercers, the Grocers, the Drapers, the Fishmongers, the Goldsmiths, the Merchant Taylors, the Skinners, the Haberdashers, the Salters, the Ironmongers, the Vintners, and the Clothworkers.

²⁸ See Drapers MS MB13, fols 163-4. Only two men translated to the Drapers during James's reign: Barkham, and John Walter, who translated (uncontroversially) from the Girdlers' Company when he became Clerk of the Drapers (A. H. Johnson, *The History of the Worshipful Company of the Drapers of London*, vol. III (Oxford: OUP 1915), p. 97 n. 3).

mayoral inauguration since 1614, especially since they were anticipating yet another of their members (Martin Lumley) becoming Lord Mayor in 1623. This is broadly demonstrated by the evidence of the Company's deliberations, as will be seen below. As well as the issue of cost, Barkham had made a prior and explicit commitment *not* to seek membership of the Drapers when negotiating to take over a tenancy held by the Company, a betrayed promise which was also raised in support of the Company's position. The whole messy business throws an interesting sidelight onto the ways in which Middleton tried to manage the public image of the bodies and individuals involved in the 1621 mayoralty when he came to design the triumph for Barkham's inauguration, which was printed as *The sunne in Aries* and is further discussed below.

Barkham's request to join the Drapers was debated in protracted terms by the Company's Court four times in July 1621. For a while the Company's position was firm: they were not prepared to accept an incoming Lord Mayor into their ranks, a show of hands resulted in no support for Barkham, and thus their Court agreed to convey to the Court of Aldermen their 'absolute denyall' of Barkham's admission. This emphatic phrase stands out in the midst of the circumspect and conventional language that surrounds it and it is testimony to the strength of feeling in the Company against this enforced admission. It seems that Barkham took the news badly, for the Drapers' minutes record that he felt 'much discontented ... wronged and unkyndlie delt with', and threatened that 'no companie had the power to refuse him'.²⁹ Later in July the Drapers met again and the first item on the agenda was Alderman Barkham. The Company remained intransigent, reiterating that the 'Courte of Aldermen [were] to be made acquainted of the denyall of the generality of this Companie in acceptinge of Mr Alderman Barkeham'.³⁰ In their fourth July meeting there was only one item on the agenda and once more the Master and Wardens were instructed to go to the Court of Aldermen to convey the Company's continued reluctance to admit Barkham. The Company were 'altogether unwilling and unable' to accept the financial charge of having another mayoral inauguration to support.

However, external pressure was doubtlessly starting to tell and their position had shifted somewhat. They were no longer refusing entry to Barkham per se (the phrase 'absolute denyall' no longer features in the discussion), but instead they were asking the Court of Aldermen to exempt them from the costs of a mayoral inauguration. The final discussion of Barkham recorded in the Drapers' Court Minutes took place in August, within a few weeks of the election of the new Lord Mayor. Once more the Drapers proposed to exhort the Court of Aldermen to excuse them the costs of the 'triumphes', adding to the mix the argument that they were thereby trying to avoid any complaints and any 'disgrace' to the City.³¹ Indeed, they protested against the cost to the end, but in the face of the forces ranged against them the Company had finally to capitulate, and Barkham—by then 'Maior elect'—was duly admitted to the

²⁹ This quotation from the Drapers' minutes is taken from Burridge's most useful transcription in 'A Critical Edition of Four Entertainments by Thomas Middleton', p. 315.

³⁰ Drapers MS MB13, fol. 163r.

³¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 164r.

Drapers' membership by translation from the Leathersellers' Company in the nick of time in early October 1621.³²

One would not expect to find any overt sign in *The sunne in Aries* of the considerable strain and prolonged debate that underlay Barkham's translation to the Drapers' Company. On the face of it, the same rhetorical notes are struck as in every mayoral inauguration. The Show is a 'noble solemnity performed ... at the sole cost and charges' of the Drapers' Company, states the title page, using identical wording to other texts of the period. Middleton's preface also notes that Barkham's 'worthy Brothers have dedicated their loues in costly Triumphes'.³³ The repeated use of the word 'cost/costly', although conventional in this context, could be seen at this juncture to potentially gesture towards the issue around which the Drapers' reluctance to admit Barkham was primarily focused: the expense of the inaugural entertainments. More unusually, the relationship between the new Lord Mayor and his Company—and in particular, their role in funding the Show—is made central to the valedictory speech given at the very end of the Show in a way that could be viewed as a veiled commentary on the circumstances.

This final speech presents itself as a 'noble Demonstation of [Barkham's] worthy Fraternities Affection'. The Drapers' 'Loue' for Barkham is likened to the sun breaking through after 'a great Ecclipse'; indeed, their 'Loue' is made all the brighter because of the 'Darknes' that it supercedes. Although the sun shining through cloud refers ostensibly to the Drapers' coat of arms (which features three sunbeams issuing from three flaming clouds), it is certainly possible to see in the now past 'eclipse' a veiled reference to the furore over Barkham's enforced translation. The Drapers' affection, Fame declares, 'is shoun/ With a Content *past Expectation* ... A Care that ha's [sic] beene comely, and a Cost/ *That ha's beene Decent*'. This costly welcome into office, Barkham is told by the valedictory speech, 'ha's [sic] clearly showde/ The Loues of [his] Fraternity' (B4r; emphasis mine). One senses some damage limitation here. The Show itself in all its expensive glamour demonstrates to all present how 'great' the Drapers' love is, and the 'Cost' is (finally) 'requited' by Barkham's accession to the honour of the mayoralty. Equally, the phrase 'past expectation' might serve as a subtle reminder of how forgiving the Company's current benevolence might be, in the circumstances. Middleton's text is striving to incorporate Barkham into the Company, to remind him of the expense they have been put to and perhaps to smooth over the recent controversy about their reluctance to pay for the very event that is taking place.

In the context of that controversy much of what would have been platitudinous in the majority of Lord Mayor's Shows takes on added bite in *The sunne in Aries*. Even the conventional setting of the final pageant of the day 'neare the Entrance to his Lordships House' might in this instance have

³² Drapers MS LL1, fol. 79 (the debate over Barkham takes three full pages of this minute book although I was unable to find any treatment of the issue in the City Corporation Repertories).

³³ *The Sunne in Aries* (London 1621), A3r (further references to this work are given in the text). At a total cost of around £550, the 1621 Show was actually one of the least expensive in the period.

served as a reminder, for those in the know, that Barkham's tenancy of that house, owned by the Drapers, had come up as a matter of contention during the negotiations when, as discussed earlier, the Company cited a previous 'faithefull' promise from Barkham that he would not seek entry to their ranks. Indeed, as was traditional, Barkham's house was re-painted and 'beautified' for the occasion by the Company, which constituted an additional outlay of over £65. Elsewhere, the pageant book does not exactly exude enthusiasm for the new Lord Mayor, who is reminded from the outset that he will have to seek advice and support of his 'Worthy Brethren' if he is to survive the 'gusts of Enuie [and Billowes of despight] that the mayoralty involves (B1r).

References to Barkham himself are relatively scant, and the emphasis on 'Fame' and the individuals who had offered distinguished service to the City in the past that pervades the text has the effect of underplaying the present. In a speech delivered by Fame herself Middleton takes the opportunity to chastise contemporary holders of civic office by comparing them unfavourably to their predecessors. Whereas past Drapers were 'Colledge Founders', 'Temple-Beautifiers' and 'Erecters ... of Granaries for the Poore', now, to 'the [current] Ages misery', these granaries are 'conuerted to some Rich mens Store' (B2r). In contrast, Henry Fitz-Alwin, the first recorded holder of the mayoralty who was always represented in civic culture as a beacon of honour, receives extended praise from Fame for his rectitude: 'he was Truths watch', it is declared, 'He went so right and Euen; and the Hand/ Of that faire Motion, Bribe could ne're make stand' (B2r).³⁴

The stark word 'bribe' stands out here. Middleton might have been prompted to issue this critique by a high-profile ongoing political sensation which we know from the vestiges of his now lost *Annales* work from 1621 had piqued his interest: the fall of Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam. References to corruption in magistrates and a refusal of the grasping hand of bribery in *The Sunne in Aries* might refer obliquely to Bacon's impeachment by Parliament and subsequent imprisonment on charges of bribery in May of that year. An independently-minded Parliament taking on a moral stance against aristocratic venality was bound to chime with Middleton's usual position on such matters. The connection is corroborated by the more direct engagement with 'corruption' in *Honorable Entertainments*. In the final entertainment of the collection, presented before members of the Privy Council—which doubtless explains its take on contemporary political crises beyond those of the City—the recent actions of Parliament in respect of Bacon are rehearsed. 'By this high Synode of the Parliament', Flora proclaims, and 'before whose faire, cleare, and Unbribed Eyes ... Corruption sincks and dies' (D2v).

Naturally, Lord Mayor Barkham is not accused of any kind of ill-dealing but his anomalous status within the Drapers' Company is not entirely overlooked in *The Sunne in Aries*. At the end of a fairly predictable list in this text of famous previous Draper Lord Mayors, there is an oblique reference to Barkham's unusual route to the mayoralty. After such luminaries as Sir Francis Drake comes the name of Sir Richard Pipe, Lord Mayor in 1578, who is commemorated for no other reason than that he, 'being Free of the Leathersellers, was also from them translated to the Ancient and Honorable

³⁴ Bribery is also mentioned later in the Show, as a 'Deede of Night' (B3r).

Society of Drapers' (B1v). The others in Middleton's list, such as the legendary Simon Eyre, feature in the roll of honour by virtue of their civic benefactions, which makes the rationale for mentioning Pipe all the more apparent, especially given that there is no allusion here to the fact that Eyre had translated too, from the Upholders' Company to the Drapers. The explicit mention of Pipe's translation is therefore a curious moment in the text. The earlier Lord Mayor's translation was a precedent that legitimated Barkham's troubled move to the Drapers, but at the same time Middleton leaves matters implicit by not mentioning Barkham, the current Lord Mayor, by name, with only the word 'also' to establish the connection for those in the know.³⁵ David Bergeron calls this a 'direct reference to the circumstances of Barkham's mayoralty'; my point is that it *isn't* 'direct', and that this indirection speaks to continued tensions about just these 'circumstances'.³⁶ Indeed, given the strong opposition it had generated, one is left wondering why Middleton thought it necessary to mention translation from the Leathersellers at all. Perhaps he was picking up on a cue from the Company that such a translation was and must remain exceptional, even though his citation of Pipe in this regard remained ambivalent.

Ultimately, the Drapers had no choice but to accept Barkham and the City had to put the furore behind it and move on. All the same, Recorder Finch's speech when Barkham took his oath at Westminster in late October 1621 strikes a sterner note than usual, probably a reflection of the extent to which Barkham's predecessor had failed to live up to the demands of the mayoralty. 'Magistrates are not sett in Authority for their owne sakes', Finch proclaimed, 'but for the people'. The office of Lord Mayor, he emphasised, perhaps with Jones's disappearance in mind, involved 'a number of cares' which 'cannot [be] putt off with [the Lord Mayor's] clothes now layed under his pillow', and those who take on high office ought to 'consider well the weight of government'.³⁷ By 1622, however, the crisis was but a memory and Recorder Finch's speech at the Exchequer when Peter Proby in turn took his mayoral oath celebrates Barkham retrospectively for his acts of civic altruism such as endowing a new water conduit.³⁸

This belated presentation of Barkham as a man of good deeds features elsewhere too. During his year of office Barkham played an important role in the building of a new church on the site of what had been the priory church of the Holy Trinity, Aldgate. The building of the church, the 1633 edition of *The Survey of London* relates,

proceeded on with good and prosperous successe, to the no meane honour and commendation of the Lord Maior then being, Sir Edward Barkham by name, the Court of Aldermen, and state of this famous

³⁵ Cuthbert Hacket, the Lord Mayor in 1626, also translated to the Drapers and for the same reason, from the Dyers' Company (ranked 13 in the City's hierarchy of precedence), although in this case Hacket moved immediately into the rank of Assistant without the protracted trauma of the Barkham translation (Johnson, *The History of the ... Drapers*, p. 198 n. 3).

³⁶ *Thomas Middleton: the collected works*, p. 1587.

³⁷ BL Add. MS 18016, fol. 149r.

³⁸ BL Add. MS 18016, fol. 166r.

City, by whose good meanes it is made a very beautifull and comely
Parish Church.

Barkham ‘himselfe undertooke, and effected at his owne charge’ the ‘maine and great East light in the Chancell’, and his contribution was commemorated, appropriately enough, in a verse placed in the chancel of the church:

Barkham the Worthie,
whose immortall name,
Marble’s too weake to hold,
for this workes fame.
He never ceast
in industrie and care,
From ruines to
redeeme this House of Praier.

Somewhat ironically given their resistance to his translation, Barkham’s membership of the Drapers is highlighted in this monument to the extent of associating him with one of the Drapers’ most prized—if debatable—past members.³⁹ The verse concludes:

This Cities first Lord Maior
lies buried here,
Fitz-Alwine,
of the Drapers Company,
And the Lord Maior,
whose fame now shines so cleere,
Barkham,
is of the same Society.⁴⁰

We have already seen Fitz-Alwin being cited elsewhere as a means by which to implicitly critique contemporary holders of the mayoralty. I’m not suggesting that this verse intends to be anything other than a celebration of Barkham’s philanthropy, but as with Middleton’s variously fraught, ambivalent and constrained attempts to put a positive gloss on uncomfortable circumstances, and given what we know about the furore over Barkham’s translation to that ‘Society’, ‘now’ can be read as meaning ‘at last’ as much as being a simple temporal location in the present moment. Thus the expectations that fell upon Middleton and those others charged with presenting a virtuous and worthy public image of the City have been shown to come into conflict with the actualities of office at a troubled time for the Corporation. Despite Middleton’s best efforts, the messy reality of civic power, and the failings of some of the incumbents, could not be entirely be transformed into a ‘fame that ... shines so cleere’.

³⁹ Although Henry Fitz-Alwin, the first Lord Mayor, was a totem for the City no one knows for sure of which guild he had been a member and as a result the Drapers were not the only company to lay claim to him (see my *Anthony Munday and Civic Culture*, pp. 166–74, for more on this issue as it played out in pageantry).

⁴⁰ John Stow, Anthony Munday and others, *The Survey of London* (London 1633), O2r-v.