Editorial

This issue presents a strong collection of interrelated articles that offer further consideration of boy actors, student and court revels, and the hazy border between theatrical representation and theatrical realities. Susannah Crowder focuses on the performances of children in late medieval and early modern Chester, using questions about gender identity and fashion to unpack the intricate social meanings of their representations in the Chester Midsummer Show. Her particular interest is the shift in pre- and post-1600 performances by boys: early shows used 'naked boys' to fight dragons, selecting actors on the basis of talent, whereas later shows used the sons of prominent local officials, thus shifting the meaning of their representations from the delights of broad social imagination into the narrowly political. Andrew Gurr re-examines information about 'plotters' and their important backstage functions, particularly challenging David Kathman's views of the apprenticeship of boy-actors – see *Early Theatre* 7.1 (2004) – and arguing that theatrical apprenticeships are different in kind from craft or guild apprenticeships.

Robert Hornback addresses costume inventories and performance records, studies of revels at the inns of court, and descriptions of Edwardian Lord of Misrule George Ferrers by an ambassador and a diarist to demonstrate that Tudor occurrences of such Lords emerged and appeared most frequently at court, colleges, and the inns under the zealously iconoclastic influence of Thomas Cromwell and Edward VI. His evidence reveals complications to our understanding of when, how, and why many puritans subsequently came to reject misrule and laughter alike.

Mark Hutchings takes a revisionary look at the evidence that Mary (Moll) Frith herself attended and participated in the Prince Henry's Men play, *The Roaring Girl*. Whatever textual strategies the playwrights used in the quarto published in 1611 to account for Frith's appearance, Frith was unlikely to have been a wholly comfortable collaborator. Indeed, to those well-documented accounts of Frith's rejection of authority may be added this intervention at

the Fortune, which represents a specific act of resistance to the playhouse's attempt to contain and redefine her. Finally, in another essay that reassess the relation between the 'play world' and the 'real world' of historical information, Jennifer Roberts-Smith presents non-theatrical documentary and material records on Norwich inns that elucidate the inns' locations, functions, and dimensions; ownership, status in the community, and relationship to the city government; popularity as performance venues; and fates in later centuries. At their heights, the inns were respectable, lucrative, reliable venues, well-managed, well-appointed, and individually stable for decades. They represent what was likely a thriving and long-lasting entertainment industry, supported by city government but operating outside of official civic auspices.

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