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A Lost Jacobean Tragedy: *Henry the Una* (c 1619)

This article concerns a lost play whose title is partially preserved in ‘List D’ of British Library: Cotton MS. Tiberius E.X. Connecting together existing scholarly work on other plays on the list, and combining this with evidence from the computer database EEBO-TCP, the essay proposes a new complete title for the play; discusses its possible sources in Spanish history; and addresses anew questions of its date, company provenance, and even authorship.

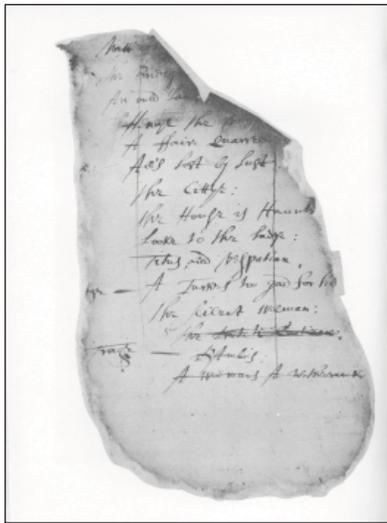


Fig. 1. The manuscript fragment (f 247). © British Library Board (Cotton MS. Tiberius. E.X.).

The Play-list

British Library: Cotton MS. Tiberius E.X. is a manuscript of Sir George Buc's *History of Richard III*. The *History* is written on the recto of each sheet and, on some of the verso sides, there are various cancelled pieces of writing

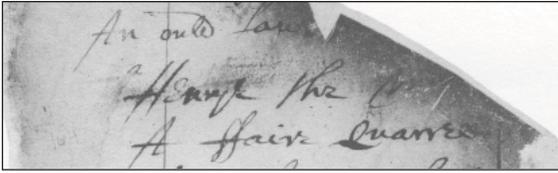


Fig. 2. Enlargement of the manuscript fragment. © British Library Board (Cotton MS. Tiberius. E.X.).

which appear to be connected to Buc's role as master of the revels, leading to the conclusion that Buc was reusing waste paper from the revels office in preparing the manuscript of the *History*. Among the revels documents thus serendipitously preserved are four lists of play titles, first published by Frank Marcham in 1925 and studied by, among others, E.K. Chambers.¹ Chambers argues that the lists seem to describe plays which were under consideration for performance at court, and that they dated from some time fairly close to 1619.

List D, reproduced above, is badly damaged by fire, probably by the Cottonian library fire of 1731. It contains fifteen play titles, and offers a number of tantalizing problems for investigators. The first and most obvious of them is — what is the date of this list? In particular, what is the date of the latest play on it? In a recent essay examining this problem, Gary Taylor argues that List D can, for various reasons, be dated to 1618–19. Absolute proof, though, is lacking, and it could be as late as 1622, the year of Buc's madness and death.² In as-yet unpublished work, however, Richard Dutton offers the alternative, and attractive, suggestion that this list might relate to the winter of 1616–17, when one company, the Prince's Men, is known to have staged exactly fifteen plays at court, including *A Fair Quarrell*.³ For the purposes at hand, the exact date within this range of alternatives is not critical, but the reader should be aware that the 'c 1619' of my title simplifies a complex debate about the exact date of this record and of the plays it mentions.

What is left of List D starts as follows, in Marcham's transcription.

Witt at
 the Bridegr ...
 An ould Lawe . a ...
 Henrye the vna ...
 A ffaire Quarrell
 ... r:—All's Lost by Lust

'If Mr. Marcham has read the manuscript rightly, I cannot identify the play', comments Chambers of the fourth item on the list. Similarly, G.E. Bentley raises the possibility of palaeographical error, calling it '[t]his mutilated title — whatever it may have been in its perfect form, the last three letters are doubtful'.⁴ Although neither Chambers nor Bentley explicitly says so, the reason for their doubt is partly because the letters are difficult, but partly too because it seems impossible to think of any plausible play title that might start with these letters. As a result of its enigmatic partial title, the fourth play on the list has remained firmly unknown, and is referred to, when referred to at all, as *Henry the Una*. In recent years, Benjamin Griffin has described the record as 'impossible to interpret confidently'.⁵

Since Bentley, there have been two significant, and hitherto unconnected, advances in scholarship relating to this list. The first was made by Tucker Orbison, who in 1971 published a record showing that in 1619 William Rowley's company, the Prince's Men, performed at the Middle Temple a comedy, which seems to have involved extensive musical interludes, called *The Bridegroom and the Madman*. Orbison plausibly identified *The Bridegroom and the Madman* with the second title on List D.⁶ As well as giving a faint flavour of that lost play, Orbison's record seems decisively to establish its company provenance. The second, independent advance is in the form of the Taylor/Lavagnino *Collected Works of Thomas Middleton*, whose various contributing editors make several piecemeal adjustments to received wisdom about *Wit at Several Weapons*, *The Old Law*, and *A Fair Quarrel*, affecting issues including authorship, date, and company provenance. The combined effect of the changes made by the edition is to give a much more focussed sense of the homogeneity of the plays in the first section of List D.⁷

The following table, then, shows the current best guesses as to title, authorship, company provenance, and date for the plays in the first section of List D. For the three plays with Middleton associations, these dates, author attributions, and company attributions are taken from the 2007 *Collected Works*; for *The Bridegroom and the Madman*, from Orbison; for *All's Lost by Lust*, from the scholarship conveniently reviewed and summarized in David Nicol's 2006 article on the play.⁸

Table 1. *Plays in the first section of List D.*

Play title	Authorship	Company provenance	Date
<i>Wit at Several Weapons</i>	Rowley and Middleton	Prince's Men	late 1613
<i>The Bridegroom and the Madman</i>	?	Prince's Men	perf. 1619
<i>The Old Law</i>	Rowley, Middleton, and Heywood	Prince's Men	c 1618–19 ⁹
<i>Henry the Una</i>	?	?	?
<i>A Fair Quarrel</i>	Rowley and Middleton	Prince's Men	late 1616
<i>All's Lost by Lust</i>	Rowley	Prince's Men	1618–20

Even in 1971, the first part of this list looked as if it was strongly linked to the Prince's Men, although at that date Orbison could not be confident about the attributions to the company of either *The Old Law* or *Wit at Several Weapons*. All the same, Orbison proposed on that basis that *Henry the Una* might also be expected to have belonged to the Prince's Men. Since 1971, this proposition has been strengthened by the independent contribution of the Middleton edition.

We have, then, a date at which the play was available for performance — c 1619 — and an indication that the plays around it on the list were relatively current ones, suggesting that it too might be from the decade of the 1610s. We also have a possible company, the Prince's Men. The next step, though, is to attempt to complete the title.

The Missing Letters

The database EEBO-TCP enables one to adopt a brute force approach to the question of the incomplete word, and to demonstrate, specifically, that there was at this date one (and, as far as one can tell, only one) meaningful phrase beginning 'Henry the Una'.

EEBO-TCP searches a corpus of, currently, 25,271 full-text transcriptions of early modern English printed books. It is, of course, by no means a complete record even of the books it includes, and its use is fraught with complexities, but it can certainly be considered a large and indicative sample of the extant corpus.¹⁰ For the task at hand, a particularly useful tool is the EEBO-TCP 'variant spellings' feature, which enables one to quickly and methodically account for all plausible variants of spelling including 'Henry', 'Henrye', and

‘Henrie’, in combinations both with ‘una’ and ‘vna’. An EEBO-TCP full-text search for ‘Henrye the vna*’, with variant spellings enabled, currently returns results from three distinct works.¹¹ In each of them, ‘una’ is the start of the six-letter word ‘unable’.

A note in Edward Grimeston’s translation of Pierre Matthieu’s *History of Lewis the eleventh* (1614) refers to a ruler bearing this name: ‘*D. Blanch* being put away by *D. Henry* the vnable, was carried as it were a prisoner to Lescut in Bearne, by *Gaston* Earle of Foix her Brother-in-law, to the end she should not marry againe. The Spaniards write that her sister *Elenor* caused her to bee poysoned’.¹² Thomas Heywood also uses the phrase in his tract about women, *Gynaikeion* (1624). For him, Henry the Unable is an example of a king who was also a procurer:

Nay least this detestable sinne should want a countenancer, euen from royaltie, *Lycosthenes* in his Theater of Humaine life, tells vs of *Henricus Rex Castalionensis*, who shamed not to bee a Bawde to his owne Queene, you may reade further of him in the Spanish historie by the title of *Henrie the Vnable*.¹³

Thirdly, John Taylor, in the tract *A Bawd* included in *All the Works* (1630), uses the phrase in much the same context as Heywood does.

Moreouer, great Emperours and Kings haue beene *Bawdes* [*such as Tiberius, Domitian, and Heliogabalus*] And of later yeeres a King of *Castile*, called *Henry the vnable*, because hee could not haue a childe by his wife to inherit after him, he kindly entreated one of his Lords to take the paines to beget an heire for him. [*Marginal note: A king of Castile or Spaine, Bawd to his owne wife.*]¹⁴

Armed with these clues, one can identify the ‘Henry the Unable’ referred to in each of the passages as a historical figure: King Henry IV of Castile (1425–74), whose unflattering sobriquet — a reflection on both his personal sexual problems and the civil war which effectively led to his deposition from the throne — is now usually translated as ‘the Impotent’. Indeed, this translation supplanted ‘Henry the Unable’ even within the seventeenth century, so that ‘Henry the Unable’ is a very short-lived nickname: hence its obscurity. This unexpected seventeenth-century phrase appears to vindicate Marcham’s palaeographical skills and his transcription of the puzzling letters ‘vna’ in the manuscript. I would propose that the missing letters should be reconstructed

as <ble>, and that this play dealt with the disastrous reign of Henry the Impotent of Castile.¹⁵

Henry the Impotent

Although relatively little-known today, Henry was of considerable interest to renaissance England. This fascination accrues partly, perhaps, because of the multifarious family connections between English and Spanish royalty. He was, for instance, both the great-grandson of John of Gaunt and the half-uncle of Catherine of Aragon. But he was also important as the ruler of Castile, the largest fragment of what is now modern Spain, and indeed his reign was what created the conditions for the union of Castile and Aragon under his successor Isabella — for the creation, in fact, of the nation of Spain as the seventeenth century knew it. His reign stands at a watershed in the history of England's major contemporary rival, which partly explains why he is so often mentioned, under one name or another, in English texts of the period.

In particular, at least two lengthy accounts of his reign were available in print in English at the date that this play is recorded. One we have seen already — Edward Grimeston's translation of Matthieu, published in 1614 — and the other is in Louis Turquet de Mayerne's *Generall Historie of Spaine*, also translated by Grimeston and published two years earlier in 1612. This massive work, exceeding 1,300 pages in length, is probably the book that Heywood means when he refers, in his discussion of Henry, to 'the Spanish historie'.

Of the two accounts, Mayerne's is the longer but Matthieu's is the more compact, demonstrating the main features, to a renaissance eye, of Henry's story, and therefore we will start with that one. Matthieu's account runs as follows, in slightly abbreviated form:

It was formerly said that by the peace made betwixt *John* King of Castille and *John* of Nauarre, *Blanche* the eldest Daughter of Nauarre was married to *Henry* of Castille Prince of the Asturias, and that the marriage was not consummated by reason of the disabilitie and coldnes of the husband. The bashfulnes and modestie of this Princesse made her dissemble her misfortune, whereof no man might inconsiderately grow in doubt, for the Prince was of a manlike and braue aspect, but his actions were faint and languishing. They were but fiue and twentie yeares old when they were married. At one and thirty he succeeded to his father ...

But as the most constant patience is tired at length this Princesse, hauing for a long time endured her husbands disabilitie, began to murmure, and he preuented her complaints, presenting a request vnto the Pope to bee seperated from her, and shewed that she was barren and could not be a mother, and that the affaires of Castille required an heire. The Pope dissolved the first marriage.¹⁶

After the separation, the unfortunate Blanche is imprisoned and eventually (allegedly) poisoned by her family, lest she remarry. Of course, we cannot be certain that the play dramatized this first part of the story since, as we shall see, there is no shortage of plot to go at in the next, and defining, section of Henry's career: however, it is certainly likely to have formed, at least, part of the back story of *Henry the Unable*. Matthieu goes on:

[The Pope] suffered him to marry againe with *Ione Infanta* of Portugall, Sister to King *Alfonso*, and Daughter to King *Edward*, a Princesse exceeding faire, who more desirous to bee a Queene then a wife, consented to this marriage, notwithstanding that shee was fully aduertised of the disabilitie of the husband which she tooke, who although he were a great Prince could not haue found a woman, where as euery one may haue for his money. But shee made it knowne that a politick woman neuer dyes without an heyre. On the other side the King held the blemish of disabilitie to be so dishonourable, as to make the contrarie knowne and to haue children to succeed vnto his Crowne, he consented that *Bernard de la Cueva*, one of his fauourites should lye with the Queene, who presently conceiued with child, and to the end it should not bee thought to be done by supposition, he would haue her deliuered in the presence of *Henry Earle of Alba de Lista*, the Archbishop of Toledo, and the Marquis of Vellena. It was a Daughter, which had for her Godfather the Earle of Armagna, who was at that time Embassador in Castille to King *Lewis* the eleuenth.

A marginal note adds extra spice, speculating that Joan may have suffered rape, at least at first:

Some write that *D. Ioane* consented therevnto by force, but when she had once made this leape, she had more need of a bridle then a spurre. A wonderfull incontinency and impudency. Being at it were confined to the Castell of Alacaes, vnder the custody of the Archbishop of Seuelle she had by *D. Pedro* the Archbishops Nephew two children, *D. Ferdinand* and *D. Apostol*.

Blithely unconcerned by the double standard, Matthieu resumes the narrative.

Wisdom and discretion might haue made this deceit more fortunate then it was, for all Spaine made demonstration, of incredible Ioy for the birth of this Daughter, but there was follie and indiscretion of all sides. The King, who would confirme this opinion that he was a gallant man, sought the loue of other women, who soone discouered the deceit. The Queene made shew to be iealous, entertained her loue securely with *D. Bernard*, so as the great familiaritie he had with her made the world doubt of her chastitie, and when as they saw that the King honored him with the chiefe charges of the Realme, making him master of the order of *St James*, and then Duke of *Albuquerque*, they did imagine that he made him play his part in this Comedie, which ended with cruel & tragicall effects.¹⁷

‘The Grandos of the realme’ are angered by this turn of events and refuse to recognize the legitimacy of Henry’s supposed daughter, instead believing the rightful heir still to be Henry’s younger half-brother. Henry tries and fails to subdue the opposition; they rise in arms against him; and thus begins a civil war, which brings in various other European powers and which Henry eventually loses. Matthieu describes at length the ceremony by which the rebels ‘degrade’ him in his absence, effectively deposing him from the throne of Castile. As the marginal note makes clear, Joan is taken away into the custody of the Archbishop of Seville, where she takes a new lover, his nephew. The deposed Henry eventually dies in Madrid. Bernard (or, as most accounts call him, Bertram) is not mentioned again by Matthieu. Henry’s eventual successor, his half-sister Isabella, unites together the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon.

In addition to Matthieu’s relation of Henry’s career, there is also a nearly 100-page account covering the period of his reign in Book 20 of Mayerne’s *Generall Historie*. Mayerne tells much the same overall story, often in the same words. He includes, though, far more detail and a far broader context: his treatment is annalistic and broken into episodes. In this broader perspective, more time is spent on Henry’s ‘proper’ political career. Mayerne includes, for instance, Henry’s ongoing struggle with the Moors, omitted by Matthieu; many of Henry’s more sensible and successful actions; and a richer picture of the international politics into which his reign fits.

Mayerne’s treatment of the sexual matters is more detailed too. Like Matthieu, he includes the detail of Joan’s alleged rape:

It was credibly reported, that at the first the Queene would by no possible meanes bee drawne to agree and giue her consent to so vile, detestable, and dishonorable a deede, but yet afterwards, shee had more neede to haue beene curbed in with raines and bridle, then of spures.¹⁸

(Mayerne and Matthieu share their phrasing at various points, as this example shows. Both, evidently, are working from the same sources.) Mayerne also adds in many other incidents from Henry's court. These include, to give some illustrative examples, the identities of the other women Henry attempted to seduce; the details of Joan's first child-birth and of her subsequent miscarriage after an incident in which her hair caught fire in the sun; and a reference to the fact that Bertram is married, something missing from Matthieu. A dramatist working from Mayerne would be furnished with literally dozens of possible incidents and minor characters from which to pick and choose.

From Mayerne's work, finally, one can pick up a further example of Henry's sobriquet in use, useful to us here because the existence and currency of that sobriquet underpins the whole argument offered in this paper. 'The surname of unhable was given to him', writes Mayerne of Henry IV, 'by reason of his natural weaknesse, being in the company of women, which his Queenes had experience of: and yet those which have written of his stature and proportion, say, that he was strong and bigge, of a manly aspect, fierce and hairy'. And the formula itself occurs, for instance in this marginal note accompanying the description of his marriage to Joan: 'Second marriage of K. Don Henry the Vnable'.¹⁹ This makes four works in total, all originating between 1612 and 1630, which use the phrase 'Henry the Unable', and none (so far detected) from any date that use any other phrase starting 'Henry the Una'.²⁰

Mayerne and Matthieu, then, both contain substantial accounts of Henry the Unable, easily accessible to an English dramatist, but there are also various other briefer references to Henry which appear in print in England in the period running up to 1619.²¹ Some of these are worth consideration here too, partly because they indicate the currency of his story and partly because they suggest the different lights in which it could be seen, picking up different aspects from within the overall narrative. Three examples suffice to indicate the range of interpretations that were possible. For Henri Estienne, the thing of most interest in Henry's biography is not the sexual dynamic between him and his wife but the power dynamic between him and the young favourite:

Baptista Fulgosius reporteth how that *Henry* King of *Castile*, sonne to king *John*, being frigide and vnable to get children, had one by the helpe of a goodly yong man of the countrey, one *Beltramus Cueua*. As who so will not credite my report, may reade in the third chapter of the ninth booke of the said *Fulgosius*. And it is further to be noted, that he did not this in heate of affection, in some sodaine moode or passion, but after long and mature deliberation, hauing aduanced him from the bottome of basenesse to the height of honor, from the dunghill euen to a Dukedome, to the end he might at the last draw from him this seruice in recompence of so many benefites.²²

John Speed, on the other hand, sees Henry merely as a hapless cuckold:

For *Henry* the fourth, King of *Castile*, and brother to *Elizabeth*, being vnable to begette children, *Ioan* (daughter of *Edward* king of *Portugall*) his wife found meanes notwithstanding to beare one, by occasion whereof, after King *Henries* death, for that it was borne in marriage, a dangerous warre was vndertaken by *Alfonso* King of *Portugall*.²³

Another, strongly monarchist, writer even manages to depict him as merely soft-hearted, castigating

the conspiring *Vailedolitaines*, in the yeere foure hundred & sixtie foure, who rebelled against the King *Don Henrie* the fourth, who were accompanied with certaine of the chieftest personages, beeing moued with a kind of ielousie against *Don Bertrand de la Cueua*, made Maister of the Cauallerie of *S. Iames*, because he was the Kings Minion ... Which was not punished when it might haue beene, through the negligence and ouer-great compassion in the King, who rather loued to shewe himselfe quiet, then valiant. Hee endured the peremptory speeches of the Byshop of *Calorra*, without being moued, and was betrayed on all sides ... was betrayed to the Arch-bishop of *Toledo*, & deprivied of courage, was afterward disgraded ignominiously in *Auila*, & so deposed fro his royall seate.²⁴

These examples between them suggest the range of stories that could be told about Henry the Impotent. His career could be interpreted in various different ways, something which would offer particularly rich possibilities to a drama based upon it.

Henry the Unable Reconstructed

The crux of the story, the incident that made Henry infamous, is his forcing his wife into infidelity. This story is clearly ‘tragicall’, as Matthieu explicitly calls it, in that it results in the loss of his wife and his kingdom, and in a bloody civil war. We’ve seen, too, that Matthieu points out other theatrical possibilities in the story, calling it ‘this Comedie’: a paradoxical mixture of genres which chimes with renaissance attitudes to cuckoldry and wittolry of the sort explored, for instance, in the strangely comic cuckoldry scenes of Thomas Heywood’s tragedy *A Woman Killed With Kindness*. The episodes of Joan’s prostitution must have been at the heart of the play. One can even start to assemble a *dramatis personae* for *Henry the Unable*. It can hardly have done without a King Henry and a Joan, a strong female lead intriguingly balanced somewhere between a rape victim and a sexual temptress. The third necessary member of the triangle would be the young favourite Bernard/Bertram de la Cueva. A fourth character, who recurs frequently in both Matthieu’s and Mayerne’s account, and who would be particularly useful to a dramatist, is the Archbishop of Toledo, Henry’s former supporter who turns into a leader of the rebels.

Beyond this, it is probably futile to speculate on the precise shape that the play took. Questions that remain unanswerable at the moment include: how much of the story did it dramatize, how closely did it stick to any source, and what other matter did it introduce? To what extent was it a domestic tragedy and to what extent was it a tragedy of state? How was the play’s sympathy divided among the three main characters?

And yet what one can do, with more safety, is to relate the play to categories of extant early modern drama. It joins, for instance, the list of renaissance historical drama set in Spain and featuring Spanish royalty, a group including Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, Greene’s *Alphonsus, King of Aragon*, and the collaborative *Lust’s Dominion*. This line of thought reveals, too, one particularly close relative, in the form of the play that appears two below *Henry the Una* on the revels list: William Rowley’s *All’s Lost by Lust*.

All’s Lost by Lust is a tragedy. Set in eighth-century Spain and based, albeit rather loosely, on history, it tells the story of Spain’s last Visigothic king, Roderick.²⁵ Whereas Henry the Impotent runs into difficulties due to his lack of sexual activity, Roderick has exactly the opposite problem. In the course of the play, he sends his chief general off to fight the Moors, partly out of military necessity but partly in the hope of seducing in his absence

his innocent daughter, Jacintha, who, however, refuses all his advances until eventually he imprisons and rapes her. The raped Jacintha escapes from her imprisonment and goes to seek her father who, discovering what the king has done, turns against him and allies himself with the Moors. In the ensuing war, both father and daughter die at the hands of the Moors and Roderick is driven into exile. *All's Lost by Lust* adds in a good deal of material which is not part of the main story, including a subplot with a love triangle; a fat comic clown, a Rowley trademark; battles; and a supernatural sequence. But as this summary shows, in that it concerns a historical Spanish king whose personal sexual behaviour leads to the fall of his kingdom, the basic *donné* is not entirely dissimilar to the story of Henry the Impotent. *All's Lost by Lust*, a tragedy belonging (possibly) to the same playing company as *Henry the Una* and ranked alongside it in the revels list, is perhaps the best analogue by which to imagine the contents of the lost play *Henry the Unable*.

On the basis of the probable Prince's Men connection and also of the links to *All's Lost by Lust*, one might even suggest that *Henry the Unable* should lurk at the edges of the William Rowley canon. Rowley was the chief writer for the Prince's Men and of the five plays with which this one is grouped on the revels list, Rowley was the sole or collaborative writer of at least four. This story's potential for depicting the complexities of rape, consent, and female agency would fit with the interest, in *All's Lost by Lust*, with how the basic 'rape tragedy' formula could be made complicated. What's more, Rowley was consistently interested in Spain, which forms the setting not just for *All's Lost by Lust* but also for two of his plays co-written with Middleton, *The Spanish Gypsy* and *The Changeling*. All these points are somewhat circumstantial, but it could reasonably be said that Rowley is the front-runner to have written or co-written *Henry the Unable*.²⁶

The Prince's Men connection also invites another look at John Taylor's reference to Henry: 'a King of *Castile*, called *Henry the vnable*, because hee could not haue a childe by his wife to inherit after him, he kindly entreated one of his Lords to take the paines to beget an heire for him'. Taylor had a longstanding friendship with Rowley, marked in dedicatory poems and complimentary references in print. He was also, in July 1618 — around the time of the *Henry the Una* — seemingly a drinking companion of two others of the Prince's Men, Hugh Attwell and John Newton.²⁷ He gives no source for his knowledge of the story of Henry the Unable. Of course, as we have seen, Henry was quite a well-known figure in the period, and John Taylor could have come across his story in various ways: but one should at least be aware of

the possibility that his casual allusion represents some indirect performance record of the play.

As for the date of this lost play, it is hard to make a definitive improvement on Harbage's cautious c 1610–22. Male impotence was particularly newsworthy after 1613, for reasons we shall come to shortly, but it wouldn't be categorically impossible to write about it before that date: the major sources discussed here appeared in 1612 and 1614, but the play need not have depended on either. If the date of the list is no later than 1618–19, as is generally believed, then the play was existence by 1619, but the dating of List D is not quite categorically certain. Thus, c 1613–19 is probable and in line with the other plays in the opening section of List D, but not really a safe basis for further conjecture.

There are, finally, three further observations to make about the overtones of the play in a projected court performance around 1619. Firstly, a dramatization of Henry's story, at this date, would be hard pressed not to remind contemporaries of perhaps the greatest of all Jacobean sex scandals, the annulment in 1613 of the marriage between Frances and Robert Devereux, third Earl of Essex. The case revolved (of course) around the public revelation of Robert's alleged impotence; on how male impotence could be defined and tested; and on how it should be regarded. As David Lindley has documented, the annulment and the sensational events that ensued resonated throughout Jacobean culture, cutting as they did to the quick of issues about female sexuality, male power and responsibility, and the status of marriage itself. Echoes of the Frances Howard affair have been detected, for instance, in Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*. The very title of this lost play, *Henry the Unable*, suggests that it could not avoid crashing headlong into memories of that annulment.²⁸

Secondly, *Henry the Unable* was in existence at a date when the marital conduct of Spanish royalty was of particular interest in England, given the ongoing negotiations over the proposed Spanish Match between Prince Charles and the Infanta. As we have seen, English and Spanish royal history were particularly intertwined in Henry's era, and the theme of union of crowns, implicit in the late stages of Henry's story, would be an interesting one both for reflection back to James's own accession in 1603 and reflection forward on the possible consequences of the Match if it were successful. *The Changeling*, once again, proves an interesting intertext, often discussed in connection with the Spanish Match, with Beatrice-Joanna sometimes read almost as a coded warning about the dangers of marrying a Spanish woman.²⁹

In that the sexually dangerous Spanish woman in *Henry the Unable* was actually a princess, it might have been still nearer to the knuckle, for anyone who wished to make such an interpretation. This is not, of course, to propose a one-on-one correspondence between the Infanta and the play's Joan, nor to read the play as unpalatable anti-James propaganda — after all, the play was considered for performance at court. One might, however, suggest that there was a delightfully topical aspect around this date to the representation of Spanish royal marriages.

Thirdly, we have seen that some of the accounts of Henry dwell in particular on his relationship with his 'minion' Bertram: what are the responsibilities of a court favourite? What can and should 'a goodly yong man' do for his king, 'in recompence of so many benefites', and where should he stop? Curtis Perry has traced a fascination with favourites in the Jacobean era, explicable partly in terms of James's own notorious favouritism but also, Perry argues, as a metaphor for the more difficult and dangerous constitutional issues that favouritism brings into focus.³⁰ Again, *Henry the Unable*, putting its favourite into a particularly impossible position, would have been a play well placed to feed this interest. For all three of these reasons, then, a play about the career of Henry the Impotent would have made piquant viewing at court around 1619.

Conclusion

In their recent survey of the achievement of the REED project, Audrey Douglas and Sally-Beth MacLean observe that it tends to deliver not the things one would most directly crave — no new pieces of paper with Shakespeare's name on, not yet at least — but rich information about other aspects of theatrical practice that we might not even have considered before. This archival goal, therefore, directs the sort of research that one can attempt to carry out using that information. 'Rather than asking the research oracle direct questions of our own devising', they suggest, 'we may sometimes have to shape those questions to the replies that it is capable of delivering'.³¹ EEBO-TCP, I would suggest, should be treated similarly. EEBO-TCP is by no means suitable for every problem, but to certain early-theatrical research questions, such as the question of this lost play's incomplete title, it is increasingly capable of delivering convincing answers.

As a result one may say, with circumspect confidence, a little more than was previously known about the play whose title survives on the verso of

a page of Buc's *History of Richard III. Henry the Una* was probably a Prince's Men play, whose most obvious living relative appears to be William Rowley's *All's Lost by Lust*. It was a historical tragedy, set in fifteenth-century Castile, and it explored issues of rape, power, and sexual and political impotence.

Notes

This note has arisen from working with the *Lost Plays Database*, a collaborative project under the general editorship of Roslyn L. Knutson and David McInnis. The *Lost Plays Database* is set to be a major resource in this area, and readers and potential contributors should consult its website, <<http://www.lostplays.org>>.

- 1 Frank Marcham (ed.), *The King's Office of the Revels 1610–1622: Fragments of Documents in the Department of Manuscripts, British Museum* (London, 1925); E.K. Chambers, 'The King's Office of the Revels, 1610–1622', *Review of English Studies* 1.4 (1925), 479–84; 'Henry the Una', *Lost Plays Database*, <http://lostplays.org/index.php/Henry_the_Una>, consulted 5 Dec 2009.
- 2 Gary Taylor, 'Introduction: the Middleton canon', Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (gen. eds), *Thomas Middleton and Early Textual Culture* (Oxford, 2007), 331–4. The essay includes one brief mention of *Henry the Una*, observing that nothing is known about it, and it does not appear to be aware of Orbison's discovery relating to *The Bridegroom and the Madman*. A. Harbage, rev. Sylvia S. Wagonheim and S. Schoenbaum, *Annals of English drama, 975–1700* (London, 1989), 114, provisionally dates *Henry the Una* to c1610–22.
- 3 Richard Dutton, personal communication; my thanks to Professor Dutton for his generosity in sharing this as-yet unpublished work. See also David Nicol, 'Middleton and Rowley's *A Fair Quarrel* at the Court of King James', *Notes and Queries* 56 (2009), 201–3.
- 4 G.E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 7 vols (Oxford, 1942–68), 5.1350. Bentley also identifies the hand as that of a playhouse scribe, who is later associated with the King's Men.
- 5 Benjamin Griffin, *Playing the Past: Approaches to English Historical Drama, 1385–1600* (Woodbridge, 2001), 149.
- 6 Tucker Orbison, 'Traces of Two Jacobean Dramatic Performances at the Middle Temple', *Yearbook of English Studies* 1 (1971), 55–62. The date of the record is probable rather than absolutely certain. The lost *The Bridegroom and the Madman*, al-

- ready provisionally identified with the list D play before Orbison wrote, is also known from another record: see Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 5.1296–7.
- 7 Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (gen. eds), *The Complete Works of Thomas Middleton* (Oxford, 2007), and the accompanying volume, Taylor and Lavagnino, *Thomas Middleton and Early Textual Culture*.
 - 8 David Nicol, “‘My little what shall I call thee’: Reinventing Rape Tragedy in William Rowley’s *All’s Lost by Lust*”, *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 19 (2006), 175–93. Note that the table constructed here is independent of, and uninfluenced by, Dutton’s suggestion that the whole list may have belonged to the Prince’s Men in 1616/17.
 - 9 This date is partly built on Taylor’s conclusions about List D, so there is a danger of *petitio principii* here: but in his essay ‘*An/The Old Law*’, Taylor adduces other, additional dating information tending to the same conclusion. Taylor, ‘*An/The Old Law*’, *Thomas Middleton and Early Textual Culture*, 405–8.
 - 10 For a useful discussion of EEBO’s power and limitations, see Ian Gadd, ‘The Use and Misuse of *Early English Books Online*’, *Literature Compass* 6.3 (2009), 680–92.
 - 11 Actually, EEBO-TCP returns four results, two being from different editions of the same passage from *Gynaikeion*. A fifth result which ought to be pulled by this search — the passage in John Taylor’s 1635 publication *A Bawd*, which reproduces the passage from *All the Workes* discussed below — is for some technical reason not detected. For a sixth occurrence of the phrase, in a text not yet in EEBO-TCP, see 73.
 - 12 Pierre Matthieu, *The history of Lewis the eleventh With the most memorable accidents which happened in Europe during the two and twenty yeares of his raigne*, trans Edward Grimeston (London, 1614), 2.23n.
 - 13 Thomas Heywood, *Gynaikeion: or, Nine bookes of various history* (London, 1624), 344.
 - 14 John Taylor, *All the workes of Iohn Taylor the water-poet* (London, 1630), 93–4.
 - 15 As a further check: EEBO-TCP searches for ‘Henry the un*’, variant spellings enabled, and even for ‘Henry the u*’, reveal no recurring or plausible rivals to ‘Henry the Unable’.
 - 16 Matthieu, *The history of Lewis the eleventh*, 1.215.
 - 17 *Ibid*, 1.215–7.
 - 18 Louis Turquet de Mayerne, *The generall historie of Spaine*, trans Edward Grimeston (London, 1612), 760. EEBO-TCP does not yet include full text of the *Generall Historie*.
 - 19 *Ibid*, 749, 752n.
 - 20 Four works but six publications, if one counts the reprints of *A Bawd* and of *Gynaikeion* discussed above.

- 21 Of course, the merely English-language sources represented in EEBO were by no means the only ones potentially available to the author(s) of *Henry the Unable*: but they certainly demonstrate the outline of the story and they were also, certainly, the closest to hand.
- 22 Henri Estienne, *A world of wonders* (London, 1607), 8.
- 23 John Speed, *The history of Great Britaine* (London, 1611), 743.
- 24 L.T.A., *The Masque of the League and the Spanyard Discouered* (London, 1592), E2v.
- 25 The exact sources of *All's Lost by Lust* remain elusive, although there are plenty of candidates, among them Mayerne. For discussion, see Nicol, “My little what shall I call thee”.
- 26 Orbison, ‘Traces of two Jacobean dramatic performances’, 61. For an up-to-date overview of Rowley’s career and canon, see David Gunby, ‘Rowley, William (1585?–1626)’, *Oxford DNB*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24227>>, accessed 8 Dec 2009.
- 27 For references and further detail, see Matthew Steggle, ‘Players at the Maidenhead Inn, Islington, 1618’, *Notes and Queries* 53 (2006), 519–21.
- 28 See David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London, 1993), who offers a subtle reading of the whole relationship between truth and fiction in the texts linked to the Howard scandal.
- 29 On these readings of *The Changeling*, see Annabel Patterson, ‘Introduction’ to *The Changeling*, Douglas Bruster (ed.), in Taylor and Lavagnino, *The Complete Works of Thomas Middleton*.
- 30 Curtis Perry, *Literature and Favoritism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2006).
- 31 Audrey Douglas and Sally-Beth MacLean, introduction to Audrey Douglas and Sally-Beth MacLean (eds), *REED in Review: Essays in Celebration of the First Twenty-Five Years* (Toronto, 2006), 8.

