REFORMATION AND REVELRY

THE PRACTICES AND POLITICS OF DANCING
IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND, c.1550-c.1640

by

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Abstract

This study examines the cultural and religious politics of dancing in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England. Although theologically dance was considered morally neutral, as a physical, embodied practice, context determined whether each occurrence was deemed acceptable or immoral. Yet, judging and interpreting these contexts, and thus delineating the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, was contested and controversial. Advocates argued that dance enabled controlled, graceful movement and provided a harmless outlet for youthful energy. Opponents decried it as a vain, idle, and lascivious indulgence that led to illicit sexual liaisons, profanation of the sabbath, and eternal damnation.

The first chapter introduces early dance fundamentals, describing steps, genres, and sources. The chapter also discusses venues in which people danced, times of day and seasons that were most popular, and demographic details for dancers in western England. Chapter 2 demonstrates how, by varying details of their performance, dancers could influence a dance’s appropriateness, as well as express aspects of identity, such as gender and social rank. Chapter 3 examines how clergymen and religious reformers addressed and tried to undermine pro-dance arguments through their treatment of biblical dance references in sermons and treatises. Chapters 4 and 5 feature case studies of parochial clergymen and lay persons whose opinions about dancing became flashpoints for local
controversies. They explain why prosecutions for dancing were so sporadic and geographically scattered: dancing practices rarely entered the historical record unless a “perfect storm” of community tensions and personal antagonisms created irreconcilable differences that led to violence or court cases. The dissertation argues that a category, such as festive traditionalist, is needed to describe those who conformed to or embraced Protestant worship but who strongly resisted attempts to “reform” their behaviour outside of the church.
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Introduction

Late Tudor and early Stuart England was a critical period in early modern British history. It was also a unique and challenging time in the history of dance. A long tradition of celebrating life-cycle events, seasonal festivals, and religious occasions with dancing collided with a religious reform movement that was actively opposed to dancing. Proponents held dance up as symbol of cosmic order and harmony, recommended it as an excellent means of gaining grace and mastery over the body, and encouraged it as a component of courtship. Opponents argued that dancing not only led to illicit sexual encounters, but it also exacerbated vanity, idleness, and disorderly behaviour. They found dancing on the sabbath day particularly egregious. How could dancing be perceived so differently? Was dancing the key to reforming manners or one of the manners in need of reformation? Were the differences in the eyes of the beholders or in the dances themselves?

Philip Stubbes and Sir John Davies were two such beholders of dancing in late Elizabethan England. The widely read publications of these contemporaries epitomise the two primary perspectives on dancing. The oft-quoted Philip Stubbes begins his chapter on “The horrible Vice of pestiferous dauncing” in The Anatomie of Abuses (1583) with an emphatic statement of dancing’s pernicious consequences:

Dauncing, as it is used (or rather abused) in these daies, is an introduction to whordom, a preparative to wantonnes, a provocatwe to uncleanes, & an introite to al kind of lewdenes, rather than a pleasant exercyse to ye mind, or a holsome practise for ye body.¹

¹ Philip Stubbes, The anatomie of abuses contayning a discouerie, or briefe sumarie of such notable vices and imperfections, as now raigne in many Christian countreyes of the worlde: but (especiallie) in a verie famous ilande called Ailgna (London, 1583), Book I, sig. M7v.
He describes the lustful potential of dancing in colourful detail, “For what clipping, what
culling, what kissing and bussing, what smouching & slabbering one of another, what
filthie groping and uncleane handling is not practised every wher in these dauncings?”
Dancing either involves or leads to illicit sexual encounters and general troublemaking.

Sir John Davies presents dancing rather differently in Orchestra or a Poeme of
Dauncing (1596). Dancing is the means by which order is imposed on chaos: “Kind Nature
first doth cause all things to love, / Love makes them daunce and in just order move” and
serves as “the modell of the worlds great frame.”

Throughout the poem, Davies invokes
dancing to denote harmony and accord amongst planets, people, and ideas:

Dauncing it selfe both love and harmony,
Where all agree, and all in order move;
Dauncing the Art that all Arts doe approve:
The faire Caracter of the worlds consent,
The heav'ns true figure, and th'earths ornament.

His language stresses dancing’s positive attributes, as well; it is “faire” and “true,” and an
“ornament” to the world.

At first glance, Philip Stubbes and Sir John Davies appear to offer dramatically
divergent views of dancing. These passages belie the complexity and ambiguity of their
authors’ views. Stubbes, for example, in the preface to The Anatomie of Abuses, states very
clearly:

\[\text{References}\]

3 Sir John Davies, Orchestra or A poeme of dauncing Iudicially proouing the true observation of
time and measure, in the authenticall and laudable vse of dauncing (London, 1596), stanzas 56, 33.
4 Davies, Orchestra, stanza 96.
Concerning dancing, I would not have thee (good Reader) to think that I condemn the exercise itself altogether, for I know the wisest Sages and the Godliest Fathers and Patriarchs that ever lived, have now and than used the same, as David, Salomon, and many others: but my words do touch & concern the Abuses thereof only.  

Stubbes might not have been an active proponent of dancing, but he stresses that it is only certain aspects of contemporary dance practices that he prohibits, not dancing itself. Thus he hopes to convince readers well-versed in Scripture that his condemnation does not contradict biblical passages that condone dancing. (See Chapter 3.)

Similarly, in Orchestra, Davies mentions dancing in negative as well as positive terms:

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What meane the Mermayds when they daunce and sing
But certaine death unto the Marriner?
What tydings doe the dauncing Dilphins bring
But that some dangerous storme approcheth nere?
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Davies acknowledges the potential for dancing to lead men astray or to indicate celebrating for the wrong reasons. Moreover, he highlights the distinction between the metaphorical dance of the cosmos and the actual dance practices of his contemporaries:

```
What eye doth see the heav’n but doth admire
When it the movings of the heav’ns doth see?
My selfe, if I to heav’n may once aspire,
If that be dauncing, will a Dauncer be:
But as for this your frantick jollitie...
[Many consider it] base of birth
And newly borne but of a brainsick head.”
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5 Stubbes, The anatomie of abuses, sig. ¶ 6v. Interestingly, it is only the first printing of The Anatomie of Abuses that contains this qualifier, which means that later editions convey a more clearly anti-dance stance.

6 Davies, Orchestra, stanza 101.

7 Davies, Orchestra, stanzas 26-27.
Davies may have included these views of dance as “frantick” and “base” in order to then dispute them; nevertheless, in so doing, he acknowledged both the existence and reasonableness of scepticism about dancing’s merits.

What this brief examination highlights is that in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England, even self-described opponents and proponents held ambivalent, qualified views about dancing. According to most early modern courtiers, commoners, and theologians, dance was among the adiaphora or “things indifferent”—a morally neutral practice that was made good or bad, sanctioned or illicit, by the particular manner in which it was done and the context in which it occurred. However, since dancing, as a physical practice, was always done in some kind of social and cultural context, it was only “indifferent” in theory. In practice, it was always either good or bad, orderly or disorderly, permissible or forbidden.

This is also true of perspectives on dance. Individuals might hold indifferent or ambivalent views on dance, in general, but any particular instance of dancing could be polarising. Nearly all commentators expressed either pro- or anti-dance views in response to specific moments of dancing; however, the focus on polarising contextual details makes it easy to overlook shared understandings. Both proponents and opponents of dance in specific cases agreed that dancing could be orderly or disorderly, chaste or wanton, divinely or diabolically inspired, harmless or harmful in other cases. What made a given incident of dancing one or the other was the contextual details—the location and time of day, the gender and age of dancers, the style of movements performed, and so on. Thus, it

8 John Lowin, Conclusions vpon dances, both of this age, and of the olde. Newly composed and set forth, by an out-landish doctor (London, 1607), sig. B1v.
was the details of performance and context that early modern authors and authorities worried about, wrote about, and tried to regulate.

This dissertation examines both widely held beliefs about dance and the nuances of the contexts in which it occurred in early modern England. Particular attention is paid to the dance practices of gentry and commoners, which have received less scholarly attention than courtly dancing, situating these practices in their political, social, cultural, and local contexts. The dissertation focuses on the 1550s to the 1640s, roughly the period from the beginning of Elizabeth I’s reign to the end of Charles I’s, but it also examines certain earlier texts, such as Sir Thomas Elyot’s *The Boke Named the Governour* (1531), which had a substantial impact on later writings and attitudes. This work intentionally examines a period in which dance was notably present in cultural and religious discourse but for which there are no surviving English dancing manuals. Therefore, although Chapter 1 provides an overview of the dance steps and styles of the period, the focus of the dissertation is on the social, cultural, political, and religious context of dance, not on the dances themselves.

Through analysis of a variety of printed and manuscript sources, this work maps the spectrum of early modern perspectives on dancing, from enthusiastic advocacy to vehement condemnation. It traces how these views both affected and were shaped by local practices, community politics (especially the views of local clerics), and national initiatives. In addition, the dissertation argues that attitudes toward sabbath observance and festive

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As discussed in more detail in Chapters 1 and 2, there are scattered choreographic descriptions but no English dancing manuals between the Gresley Manuscript (c. 1500) and John Playford’s *The English Dancing Master* (1651). It is not clear to what extent the two French dancing manuals dedicated to George Villiers in the early seventeenth century describe English dancing, since Villiers was often criticised for his overly French tastes.
traditions sometimes overlapped with, but were distinct from, views about the liturgy and sacred rituals. Attending to festive dancing, controversies over dancing around maypoles, and Sunday church ales reveals nuances in religious beliefs and practices. This is especially true for commoners. The range of their religious beliefs cannot always be ascertained by focusing on church attendance, behaviour during services, or the attire of their parish clergymen. Finally, dance records provide a window into the recreations and festive rituals in which servants, youths, and women participated, offering colourful glimpses of the lived experience of members of the early modern populace whose quotidian activities all too rarely enter the historical record.  

Reformers, Conformers, and Festive Traditionalists

As Christopher Marsh, among others, has observed, “The most famous critics of popular festivity in the sixteenth century were, of course, the puritans—those men and women who, by 1580, had come to feel with a sometimes frightening intensity that the Elizabethan church was only partly reformed, and that it retained far too many reminders of an evil popish past.”  

Very few puritans condemned dancing entirely—after all,


Ecclesiastes 3:4 says there is a time to dance—but most were suspicious of men and women dancing together, especially if the dancers were not of high social status, and nearly all puritans strongly opposed dancing on Sundays and holy days.

The term “puritan” is considered slippery and contentious even by those who use it, “a contextual, imprecise term, not an objective one, a term to use carefully but not take too seriously in itself.”¹² One of the problems with the term is that it suggests a more unified movement than existed in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England:

It was some considerable time before this stereotypical, antithetical stigma hardened into something almost tangible, a word which instantly evoked a widely shared set of assumptions and prejudices; longer still before it was acknowledged and accepted as an honourable badge by those to whom it was attached.¹³

Nevertheless, given that the alternatives, such as “godly” and “hot Protestant,” are even more subjective and polemical, this dissertation employs the term “puritan” to describe those who sought to reform the liturgy and rituals of the Church of England along more Calvinist and sabbatarian lines than the compromises of the Elizabethan Settlement.¹⁴

Some scholars have relegated the term “puritan” to those who separated from the Church of England. I am following the precedent of Patrick Collinson, Peter Lake, Christopher Haigh, and Christopher Durston, among others, who use the term more broadly and instead

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¹⁴ For a survey of the most significant contributions to the debate over definitions of puritanism, see John Craig, Reformation, Politics, and Polemics: the Growth of Protestantism in East Anglian Market Towns, 1500-1610 (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2001), p. 9 n. 6.
distinguish between separatist puritans and moderate or conforming puritans.\textsuperscript{15} This broader definition of puritanism works well when investigating dance because the vast majority of puritans, whether separatists or conformists, were uncomfortable with dancing.

At the same time, puritans were not the only ones who sought to suppress or constrain dancing in early modern England. For example, under Mary I, Edmund Bonner, the Bishop of London, forbade games and plays on Sundays and holy days in his 1554 episcopal injunctions, “with a strictness which would have delighted his most severe medieval predecessors and Protestant enemies.”\textsuperscript{16} Similarly, John Forrest has found that morris dancing and church ales in the sixteenth century waned and waxed in response to the religious policies of Edward VI and Mary I. From the late sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century, there was an overall decline in the popularity of these festivities across England, and not just in puritan areas or areas subject to campaigns against festive traditions.\textsuperscript{17} Indeed, Forrest argues that it was the episcopacy’s concern with disorder that led to the decline of morris dancing, not puritan attacks on festivity.\textsuperscript{18} As Christopher Marsh notes, hypotheses to explain the decrease of festive traditions include price inflation, which made elaborate entertainments prohibitively expensive; church rates replacing the church ales as the preferred form of parish fundraising; and rapid population growth, which “inevitably bred an intensified anxiety concerning the maintenance of good order” and led

\textsuperscript{17} John Forrest, The History of Morris Dancing 1458-1750 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 173, 204-205, 212.
\textsuperscript{18} Forrest, The History of Morris Dancing, p. 212.
the “shapers of local and national policy to view festive gatherings of people as potential sources of trouble.”

Of course, as Patrick Collinson has famously observed, puritanism was “only one half of a stressful relationship.” The other half of this relationship was even harder to define. Historians have described its members as anti-puritans, anti-Calvinists, Laudians, Arminians, conservatives, and “the traditionally minded,” among others. There are problems with all of these terms, especially when looking at dance; most are either too specific or too broad to describe those who condoned Sunday dancing and festive revelry. Men who defended dance did so in defiance of secular authorities and reformers across the religious spectrum, not just puritans and Calvinists. Moreover, Collinson’s two halves potentially leave out the majority of English men and women, those who lacked strong feelings one way or another on the topics of religious doctrine, ritual, and festivity.

This dissertation uses an alternative, or at least complementary, set of terms: reformers, conformers, and traditionalists. “Reformer” refers to those who believe that the

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22 For example, Erasmus was no fan of dancing. (See Chapter 3.)
23 For years historians used “Anglican” to describe mainstream members of the early modern Church of England, but due to the differences between early modern and modern definitions, it has fallen out of use. No concise term has emerged to replace it, except perhaps Marsh’s “conformist” in *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England,* and one occasionally encounters “Anglican” in recent scholarship, e.g., Kevin Killeen, “Chastising with Scorpions: Reading the Old Testament in Early Modern England,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2010): 499, 504, 505.
current situation is unsatisfactory, particularly from a moral or religious standpoint, and
desire and agitate for change. “Conformer” describes those who tolerate, accommodate, or
adapt to a situation, regardless of their true feelings about it. Conformers might have
different motivations for accepting the status quo—e.g., to avoid conflict, out of apathy or
fear, because they agree with the views of those in authority, or because they assume that
those in authority know best—but the manifestation is the same: conformity. 24

“Traditionalist” denotes those who find the current situation satisfactory and resist
change. 25 When a situation is static, traditionalists are indistinguishable from conformers,
but when change is proposed or implemented, traditionalists become visible, contesting the
changes on any grounds possible and calling for a restoration of the prior situation in the
name of tradition. 26

These categories are arrayed across a spectrum. At one end are zealous reformers,
conformers lie in the middle, and zealous traditionalists occupy the other end. This
spectrum is an alternative way of understanding the conventional, confession-based
categories that are usually applied to discussions of religion in early modern England. 27

The proposed spectrum can provide a useful complement or even a corrective to the

25 This definition differs from that of historians who use “traditionalist” for those who sought to
restore England to Catholicism in the late sixteenth century. Some people I term “traditionalist”
were Catholic, such as William Blundell, but certainly not all.
26 Although these categories are defined here specifically for the purposes of this dissertation, terms
such as “reformer,” “conforming,” and “tradition” were employed in early modern religious debates
by contemporaries and continue to figure in secondary literature.
27 Susan Doran and Christopher Durston suggest a spectrum of this type: radical or separatist
puritan↔moderate or conforming puritan↔mainstream conformist↔anti-Calvinist or
Laudian↔church papist or conforming Catholic↔recusant Catholic. Susan Doran and Christopher
confessional spectrum because the former highlights attitudes toward religious change and acknowledges the instability and relative nature of those views. For example, when William Piers, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, supported the Laudian initiative of replacing communion tables with altars, some of his parishioners saw this as a traditionalist move to restore the altars of the pre-Reformation era, while others saw it as a reforming innovation because it was a departure from the current practice. These terms can also be modified to make them more precise. For example, this dissertation is particularly concerned with “festive traditionalists,” individuals who actively defended Sunday dancing, Whitsun morris dances, maypoles, and church ales.

Among these festive traditionalists were a handful of gentlemen, clerics, and other writers who defended dancing and festive revelry in poems, songs, plays, and calendars that emphasised their quaint, rustic, and, above all, harmless character. Some of these defenders were Catholic, but most were protestants who simply found the idea of young men and women dancing on the village green charming rather than disturbing. A few, such as the clergyman Christopher Windle, discussed in Chapter 4, were specifically concerned with sabbatarianism and defended dancing on Sundays, as long as it occurred after church services. Most praised dance more generally, often with a certain air of nostalgia, naïveté, or condescension. Blundell’s country song, discussed in Chapter 1, shares this pastoral tone. The poems by Michael Drayton, Ben Jonson, and others in *Annalia Dubrenzia*

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29 Ronald Hutton gives a handful of examples, including George Puttenham, Michael Drayton, Richard Carew, John Marston, Thomas Dekker, and Nicholas Breton. (Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, pp. 135-137.)
(1636), which praise the “Olimpick Games” sponsored by Robert Dover in the Cotswold Hills of Gloucestershire, is another.\textsuperscript{30} (See Chapter 4.)

Outside of this group, festive traditionalists readily acknowledged that dancing could lead to disorder or illicit sexual encounters. However, they observed that such incidents were rare and so concluded that the benefits of traditional pastimes outweighed the risks posed by occasional misconduct. As the seventy-plus ministers surveyed by the Bishop of Bath and Wells in 1633 reported, church ales and dedication feasts raised needed funds for the church and “the poorer sort” while providing a structure for “composing differences” among parishioners and “for increase of love and amity.”\textsuperscript{31} Moreover, for “as long as they have lived in their several parishes,” none of them had experienced “any disorders” at the ales and feasts in their own parishes nor heard of any in neighbouring towns.\textsuperscript{32} Bishop Piers concludes that disorderliness was not the true reason why “the preciser sort” objected to feasts of dedication and ales; rather, it was their occurrence on Sundays, a day “upon which they would have no manner of recreation,” that was the underlying motivation for attempts to suppress church-sponsored festivities in Somerset.\textsuperscript{33}

This conflict between festive traditionalists and sabbatarian reformers was just one battle in a culture war that began in the late sixteenth century and continued throughout the period examined. Battles were fought on many fronts—in print, in the churchyard, from the

\textsuperscript{30} Not only was dancing part of the Cotswold games, for some it was the defining feature. The title of William Durham’s contribution is “To my noble friend Mr. Robert Dover, on his Dauncing Assembly upon Cotswold.” (Michael Drayton et al., Annalia Dubrensia. Vpon the yeerely celebration of Mr. Robert Dovers Olimpick Games vpon Cotswold-Hills (London, 1636), sig. B2v.)
\textsuperscript{32} Bruce, CSP-D, Charles I, 1633-1634, p. 275.
\textsuperscript{33} Bruce, CSP-D, Charles I, 1633-1634, p. 275.
pulpit, and in the courts. Their particular terms and nuances are among the central interests of this thesis.

**Sources and Methodology**

The choreographies of early modern dances, individuals’ perspectives on contemporary practices, and the contexts in which dancing occurred are preserved in a variety of printed and manuscript sources. The best known are dancing manuals and anti-dance treatises, which describe dancing practices in substantial detail. These are discussed at length in Chapters 1 and 3, respectively. There are also thousands of other sources that make mention of dancing. Looked at in isolation they illuminate little. Taken as a whole, patterns and trends emerge. In addition, while all of the dancing manuals and most of the anti-dance treatises are directed toward an elite, literate audience, many of the tangential references allude to the dancing practices of commoners and the country gentry who bridged the worlds of the court and the countryside.

For finding references to dancing in printed works, I have utilised word searches on the Early English Books Online collection. (See Chapter 1 for a summary of findings and methodological challenges.) Many of the references are to specific dances, such as the galliard and jig, that are quoted in Chapter 1; the recommendations for and against dancing in conduct manuals and education treaties quoted in Chapter 2; and the commentaries on dance in printed sermons examined in Chapter 3, were discovered in this manner.

For finding mentions of dancing in manuscript sources, this dissertation has relied heavily on the Records of Early English Drama (REED) collections. The REED project amasses excerpts pertaining to drama, music, and dance found by sifting through English
county and national archives and publishes them in county studies accompanied by explanatory notes, maps, translations, and detailed indices. The REED volumes are particularly helpful for pinpointing performing arts references in manuscript sources devoted to other subjects. Christopher Marsh has described them as “haystacks with indexes.” However, the brevity of the excerpts means that they lack context. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the documents from which the excerpts were taken and further investigate the persons mentioned, the local environment, and the historical moment to properly assess their significance. My findings from a representative sample of REED excerpts form the bulk of the microhistory-style case studies in Chapters 4 and 5.

The dance records excerpted in the REED volumes reveal little about specific dance choreographies or performance styles. Instead they convey a great deal about the experience of dancing. Some records mention the site or venue where the dancing took place; the time of day, day of the week, or season in which dancing occurred; and details about the dancers, such as their age, gender, or occupation. To better comprehend these contextual details, this dissertation examines the dance references in the REED collections quantitatively in addition to the qualitative approach of the aforementioned case studies. For this study, I created a database of the 325 records mentioning dancing in the REED county collections for Lancashire, Cheshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, and Somerset. Chapter 1 discusses the general characteristics of dance

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35 Although some REED collections contain records from the Middle Ages, I have only included records in the database in the primary date range for the dissertation, i.e., 1550 to 1642. The latter is the end date for the REED collections; the year Parliament closed the London public theatres.
participants and occasions gleaned from this database. Dance is the central focus in 49% (160) of these records, one component among several in 46% (150), and a tangential detail in 5% (15) of the records examined. (See Appendix: Table 1 for specifics.) Of these records, 76% (248) are court prosecutions mentioning dance—with 62% (202) from ecclesiastical courts and 14% (46) from secular courts—10% (34) are visitation articles; 8% (27) are payments for dance performances, lessons, and special attire; and 7% (23) are poetic, dramatic, and other types of literary records.\(^\text{36}\)

These numbers are specific, but caution is advised in generalising from them. Record survival makes it difficult to make generalisations and comparisons, especially between counties. For example, there are complete quarter sessions records for this period for Somerset, but none for Herefordshire, and very few surviving churchwardens’ accounts and no extant quarter sessions or archidiaconal court records exist for Gloucestershire.\(^\text{37}\) (See the discussion of quarter sessions and other court records, below.) Diocesan and consistory court records have had better survival rates than quarter sessions records and represent the primary archival source base for the dissertation. At the same time, reliance on court records tends to give an overly negative picture, since such records generally only refer to dancing when it was problematic. Whenever possible, case studies utilise wills, parish registers, letters, and petitions to supplement the ecclesiastical court records.

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\(^\text{36}\) There is a small amount of overlap in the above classifications, which leads to a total of 332 although the database only has 325 entries.

Inconsistent survival of records complicates analysis. So, too, does criteria for what constitutes a record make precise quantification difficult. For example, a single reference to a repeated event was entered as a single entry in the database. Thus, the churchwardens of Llangarren’s presentment that the parish youth were “all waiies accustomed” to dance upon Sundays and holy days is one entry.\(^{38}\) On the other hand, in the handful of cases where there were multiple records referring to a single dance event, they were entered as separate entries if they were recorded in different sources. For example, the communion cloth incident in Clee St. Margaret, Shropshire, has three entries in the database because the case was heard in two different archdeaconry courts during two different years. (See Chapter 5.) Nevertheless, although the exact numbers in the charts and tables in Chapter 1 should be viewed as approximations, they are still capable of suggesting general trends and highlighting issues and incidents that merit further scrutiny. The case studies in Chapters 4 and 5 delve further into these issues.

The bulk of my analysis is based on the REED collections for Lancashire, Cheshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, and Somerset, supplemented by those of Oxfordshire and Cambridge.\(^{39}\) These counties form a contiguous line down the western border of England. (See Map 1.)

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\(^{39}\) In the early modern period, many of the dioceses in this area shared roughly the same borders as counties. The boundaries of the Diocese of Bath and Wells approximated those of Somerset county; the Diocese of Gloucester, Gloucestershire; and the Diocese of Worcester, Worcestershire. Other dioceses contained some part or the entirety of a couple of counties. The Diocese of Hereford was comprised of Herefordshire and southern Shropshire; northern Shropshire was in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield; and the Diocese of Chester encompassed both Cheshire and Lancashire.
During the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth century, this was primarily a pastoral area specialising in sheep and cattle rearing and fattening, with much less emphasis on arable land than in eastern and central England. However, most land types and farming styles are represented among the six counties. For example, Herefordshire was known as the “corn
barn of the west Midlands;” Somerset had fertile fens, or marshlands; and Cheshire was famous for cheese-making.40 Other area specialties included cloth-making, glove-making, and lace-making in Somerset and Gloucestershire; coal mining and forest husbandry in Lancashire; and dairying and pig rearing in Shropshire.41

Although this work does not engage with agrarian history directly, patterns of settlement, which correlated with land use, influenced the community dynamics and attitudes toward authority that helped shape perspectives on and responses to dancing. Unlike the primarily fielden areas of central and southern England that had a strong manorial tradition and nucleated villages, the western counties were mostly comprised of small hamlets and single farmsteads, and family loyalty tended to trump allegiance to the local manor.42

Moreover, land use was not static and changed in response to economic circumstances and as a result of land improvement ventures. Such changes could lead to social tensions and poverty during the period of adjustment, as in Somerset, where many of the clothiers lacked sufficient land for sustenance farming, and in Herefordshire, “where specialization in corn-growing was at odds with some of the social institutions appropriate to pasture-farming.”43 Having many poor parishioners increased community tensions and made authorities more concerned about order and disorder, in general. This may have increased the likelihood that minor dance-related incidents, such as morris dancers

41 Thirsk, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. 4, pp. 12, 72, 84, 103-104.
becoming rowdy at a church ale or parish youth dancing in the churchyard, would be considered problematic enough to be prosecuted in secular and ecclesiastical courts. Inflation and a series of bad harvests in the 1630s further exacerbated England’s economic woes and heightened parochial concerns about disorder.

Detailed consistory and archdeaconry court records also provide evidence of the variety of religious views and practices in western England, making manifest the tensions and conflicts that arose between traditionalists and reformers at the parochial level. The REED collections for these counties include references to dancing from communities that cover the range of parochial religious dynamics: puritan-leaning towns such as Gloucester; powerful, openly Catholic elite households in Cheshire and Lancashire; early Laudian followers in Somerset; and primarily conformist and peaceful villages and towns across the region. In addition, the two counties that contributed most to the issue and reissue of the Book of Sports, Lancashire and Somerset, bookend the geographic area on which this dissertation focuses. The controversy surrounding the Book of Sports was the most public manifestation of the debate on dancing in this period and is discussed in more detail below.

Disciplining Dance: Government Institutions

The majority of the REED excerpts that mention dance are from court records, especially church court records, which include consistory court cases, visitation articles and proceedings, and *ex officio* act books, which record the processes of prosecuting offenders.\(^4\) There are also a handful of dance-related references that survive in secular court records, especially in depositions and examinations for cases heard at quarter sessions or the assizes. The following introduction to the secular and church courts and the types of cases that mention dancing is provided to help non-specialists understand the legal context of dancing in early modern England.\(^6\)

Dancing in secular court cases is usually incidental to the crime. For example, we learn that a young man accused of pickpocketing in Chester in 1615 was trying to earn

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\(^4\) The REED collections also include valuable details about dance practices in financial records, especially account books for churchwardens, towns, and elite households, which mention payments to dancers, and in personal correspondence, petitions, and autobiographies. These records confirm the prevalence of dance sponsors and critics, participants and spectators, in the western counties and across early modern England. In this thesis, I primarily use these sources to supplement my analysis of court records, especially in the case studies, but they would benefit from more scrutiny, such as that provided for payments for morris dancing in Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing*.

money by dancing and singing at the Chester fair, probably performing alongside the pipers with whom he was lodging. There are also cases where dancing or permitting dancing exacerbated or reinforced the primary transgression, such as running an unlicensed alehouse. For example, in 1603, the constables of Midsomer Norton presented Thomas Watts at quarter sessions for “tiplinge without license and keeping of dauncing on the Sabaoathe daie v daie of June last past at tyme of divyne servise.” A presentment was an accusation of transgression presented to, or brought before, the court by an official, usually a constable, in the case of secular courts, or a churchwarden, in the case of ecclesiastical courts. Quarter sessions were the quarterly meetings of the secular court made up of all or most of a county’s justices of the peace (JPs). JPs were drawn from the upper gentry and county aristocracy, and they served as official county representatives for the commission of the peace. At quarter sessions, JPs passed judgement on minor crimes and misdemeanors. They referred felonies and more serious crimes to the assizes.

The assize courts were the principal criminal courts in England. Two judges travelled a circuit of several counties twice a year, hearing felonies and serious misdemeanours referred from quarter sessions and settling local disputes. As in quarter

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sessions records, dancing usually appears as an incidental detail in assize cases. For example, in a 1579 murder case from Shotwick, Cheshire, the alibi of one of the suspects was that he had been “drinking & dawnesing untill mydnight,” and had witnesses who could attest to his whereabouts during the time the crime was committed.\(^5\) Dancing is likewise a component of several cases heard in the Court of Star Chamber, a royal court particularly concerned about disorder. Star Chamber was essentially the Privy Council sitting as a court, and it specialised in punishing “breaches of the King’s peace” quickly and effectively.\(^7\) The case of *Hole v. White* was one such Star Chamber case that involved dancing. John Hole, the puritan constable of Wells, Somerset, tried to halt the traditional “Maygames Morice daunces longe Daunces” and church ales held in Wells during May and June.\(^8\) Edmund and Thomasine White and their fellow revelers responded by openly continuing their merrymaking and mocking Hole and his friends in subsequent entertainments and through libelous verses spread around town. Hole’s petition to the King as a result launched an extensive investigation that uncovered a deep


rift between puritans and festive traditionalists in Wells. Another example of dancing coming to the central government’s attention through petitions and letters preserved in the State Papers is the case of Gerard Prior, discussed in Chapter 4.

Less frequently, particularly activist JPs, sometimes working with central court judges visiting for the assizes, issued county orders demanding that dancing offenses (especially dancing on Sunday) be presented in the secular courts. This was the origin of an early sabbatarian campaign in Lancashire against Sunday dancing and other recreations. The JPs passed an order regarding the “Enormities of the Sabbothe” in need of reformation at the Lancaster assizes in 1587. Although this order did not have as far-reaching an effect as the similar Lancashire “Orders for Sabbath Observance” of 1616 discussed below, it did prompt at least two presentments in quarter sessions for dancing on Sundays and holy days. In 1588, the Rochdale churchwardens presented two gentleman for having minstrels and “a greate number of men and women dauncinge” in their houses during Christmas and on Sunday evenings. Nevertheless, for the most part, in secular court records, dancing was tangential to rather than at the heart of the crime. Still, when dance occurred alongside criminal behaviour, it gave credence to the fears of many authorities that dancing was inherently disorderly.

55 For how Archbishop Laud used circuit judges in the assize courts to further his own religious agenda, see Thomas Garden Barnes, “A Charge to the Judges of Assize, 1627/8,” Huntington Library Quarterly 24, no. 3 (1961): 251-256.
57 George, REED: Lancashire, pp. 89-90, quoting Churchwardens’ Presentments to the Quarter Sessions, 1588, Cumbers House: Kenyon MSS, Memorandum Book, fol. 10v (15 April).
In spite of efforts by both puritan reformers and festive traditionalists to blur the boundaries between secular and ecclesiastical jurisdictions for cases involving Sunday recreations, the vast majority of those pertaining to dance are found in church court records. At the highest level of government, the politics of sabbatarianism and recusancy led to royal proclamations, such as the Book of Sports (discussed below), which affected dancing practices and distinguished lawful from unlawful dancing.

Church courts could hear cases by one party against another, but most references to dance occur in “correction cases” brought by court officials against individuals. The number of correction cases increased dramatically in the aftermath of the Reformation, since it fell to the church courts to enforce the various changes in religious liturgy, ceremony, and festive ritual introduced by the Tudor and Stuart monarchs. The ecclesiastical courts of greatest relevance to this dissertation are the consistory courts and the archidiaconal courts, the courts of bishops and archdeacons, respectively. In small dioceses, archdeacons might refer cases to the consistory court, but in large dioceses, archdeacons presided over their own archidiaconal courts, which only referred the most serious and complex cases to the consistory court. At the bottom of the hierarchy were the parishes, presided over by the parish priest or incumbent, usually a rector or vicar. In large but sparsely populated parishes, such as those in the northern dioceses, freestanding

58 Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*, pp. 8, 53.
59 The basic church hierarchy in descending order: archbishop, bishop, archdeacon, rural dean, parish rector, parish vicar, chapel curate, parish clerk, sexton.
60 Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*, p. 33.
61 A rector was entitled to the earnings from glebe lands and the great tithes (ten percent of the annual increase of each parishioner’s corn, peas and beans, hay, and wood). A vicar received a stipend and the small tithes (ten percent of the increase of wool, milk, pigs, etc., and of the profits earned by tradesmen and labourers). The parish’s rector or lay patron received the rest of the profits. (Doran and Durston, *Princes, Pastors, and People*, pp. 148, 170.)
chapels might fulfill many of the functions of a parish, with the chapel curate holding services on Sundays and holy days so parishioners would not have to travel great distances to fulfill their religious obligations. Sometimes, this situation caused conflict, since those who attended chapel services had little connection with the incumbent of the parish who was their official spiritual supervisor. (See Chapter 5.)

The smooth functioning of the church, in general, and the church courts, in specific, depended on a number of deputies and assistants. In the church court cases examined in subsequent chapters, it was nearly always the bishop’s deputies or commissaries, such as the official principal or vicar general, who presided over consistory court cases, not the bishop himself.\(^{62}\) Likewise, it was the principal registrar or one of his deputies who oversaw the writing of all diocesan administrative and judicial documents.\(^{63}\) Dioceses also had apparitors or summoners who served the mandates of the courts and reported matters of additional concern to their superiors. This secondary function was not always appreciated, leading to complaints that some apparitors, “‘range about the countrie for gayne,’ troubling people for trivial offenses.”\(^{64}\) Edward Reese, curate of Mathon, makes a similar insinuation about an apparitor who goes after the youth of Reese’s parish for dancing. (See Chapter 4.)

\(^{62}\) Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*, p. 24. The positions of official principal and vicar general could be held by the same person. These posts were usually held by beneficed clergymen who had doctorates of law or acquired them during their tenure.

\(^{63}\) Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*, pp. 25-26. The principal registrar held his position for life, which gave him substantial autonomy. Indeed, it was common for bishops and their registrars to be at odds.

\(^{64}\) Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*, p. 28. See also Price, “Elizabethan Apparitors in the Diocese of Gloucester”: 37-55.
Parishes also had multiple officers. The parish clerk assisted the parish rector, vicar, or curate with his duties. The sexton, in turn, assisted the clerk. Parish clerks are mentioned in reference to dancing on occasion, such as the parish clerk of Bowdon in Cheshire who was presented for dancing on the Sabbath along with other parishioners in 1619, but their involvement with music in the church does not seem to have translated to providing dance music outside of the church.

The parochial office that features most in dance records is that of churchwarden. Parishes elected two churchwardens annually, preferably with the approval of the incumbent. Churchwardens had a variety of responsibilities, which increased throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. These included keeping accounts of expenditures and earnings; organising fundraising endeavours, such as church ales; monitoring church attendance and the conduct of both parishioners and clergy; and attending ecclesiastical court sessions to respond to visitation articles. Churchwardens usually held their posts for

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67 From the medieval period to 1604, if there was a disagreement about nominees, the parishioners overruled the incumbent. However, the canons of 1604 (see below) specified that when the clergyman and parishioners could not agree, they could each select one of the churchwardens. Therefore, prior to 1604 both churchwardens always represented the views of the majority of parishioners, but from 1604 on, that can only be assumed for one of the churchwardens. (Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England*, p. 73.) Also see Eric Carlson, “The Origin, Function, and Status of the Office of Churchwarden, with Particular Reference to the Diocese of Ely,” in *The World of Rural Dissenters*, ed. Margaret Spufford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 164-207.
a single year, as opposed to parish clerks and sextons who had long-term posts. Parish
dynamics could change drastically with a change of churchwardens.

Bishops, archdeacons, and their deputies enforced church law through visitations.
Before a visitation, the bishop or archdeacon sent out visitation articles or articles of
enquiry to all the parishes. The articles were a series of questions asking about the state of
affairs in the parish, from the condition of the church buildings to the behaviour of the
incumbent and parishioners. Some of them inquired about the parish’s dance practices,
specifically about dancing in the church and churchyard and during divine service time. 69 A
few asked if the vicar or curate were inclined to dance. 70 When the consistory or
archidiaconal court convened for visitation sessions, the churchwardens and lay
representatives for each parish would “make their returns” or responses to each article. 71
These ranged from simple statements that nothing untoward had happened since the last
visitation to numerous reports, or presentments, of transgressions committed. In the latter
case, the transgressors would be called before the court in a subsequent session to respond
to the presentments. 72 Episcopal visitations were supposed to happen every three years, and

69 For example, articles 18 and 19 of John Whitgift’s 1597 General Articles. James M. Gibson, ed.,
Records of Early English Drama: Kent: Diocese of Canterbury (Toronto: University of Toronto
Press, 2002), vol. 2, p. 932, quoting General Articles for Visitations within the Province of
70 J. Alan B. Somerset, ed., Records of Early English Drama: Shropshire (Toronto: University of
Toronto Press, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 3-4, quoting Articles of Enquiry of Bishop Richard Neile, 1610,
71 Houlbrooke, Church Courts and the People, pp. 29, 44. Lay representatives included questmen,
sworn men, and enquirers.
72 There is scholarly disagreement about how rigorous or negligent churchwardens and questmen
were in fulfilling these duties, but the current consensus is that they were reasonably responsible
and most saw serving as an honour rather than a burden. Still, they had to balance the requirements
of their office with pressure from neighbours who did not appreciate being presented for
transgressions, and there are many examples of parish officers getting presented by parishioners for
archidiaconal visitations were supposed to happen at least once a year, but in reality they were sometimes much less frequent.\textsuperscript{73} After people were presented, they would be cited to appear before the court.\textsuperscript{74} If those cited did not appear on the designated date, they would be declared contumacious and excommunicated, which meant they could not enter a church and were “barred from the company of all Christians.”\textsuperscript{75} When the accused did appear before the court, he or she would be absolved upon paying a fine.\textsuperscript{76} If the suspect denied guilt under oath, then he or she would have to produce compurgators, friends or neighbours who would vouch for the suspect’s good character and support his or her denial of the transgression.\textsuperscript{77} If the accused failed compurgation or admitted guilt, he or she would be assigned penance, which was typically performed barefoot and wearing a sheet, in the parish church.\textsuperscript{78} In order to resolve the case, the person would have to bring the judge a document from the parish incumbent not presenting prosecutable offenses. (John S. Craig, \textit{Reformation, Politics, and Polemics: the Growth of Protestantism in East Anglian Market Towns, 1500-1610} (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 37-38, 43.)

\textsuperscript{73} Houlbrooke, \textit{Church Courts and the People}, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{74} Church court cases could be pursued as either \textit{ex officio} or instance cases. Instance cases were initiated by a plaintiff against a defendant, while \textit{ex officio} cases were brought by the court—by a clergyman, court official, or parish officer. (B. J. Sokol and Mary Sokol, \textit{Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 18-19.) Most dance presentments were \textit{ex officio} cases brought by churchwardens and parish clergy and recorded in archdeaconry and episcopal Acts of Office books and visitation proceedings.

\textsuperscript{75} Houlbrooke, \textit{Church Courts and the People}, p. 48. Houlbrooke also discusses the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of spiritual censures such as excommunication.

\textsuperscript{76} This situation was quite common. For example, of the fifty-one presentments for dancing in the Diocese of Hereford that contain information about whether or not the accused person or persons responded to the citation to appear before the court, twenty were excommunicated at some point during the proceedings, although all but four are recorded as being subsequently absolved.

\textsuperscript{77} Only seven of the fifty-one Diocese of Hereford presentments involved compurgation.

\textsuperscript{78} Houlbrooke, \textit{Church Courts and the People}, p. 46. This is what was meant by penance “in usual garb,” such as that assigned to John Botchet, the minstrel who played for Sunday dancers in Bishops Frome, Herefordshire, in 1619/1620 (Klausner, \textit{REED: Herefordshire/Worcestershire}, pp. 64, 207-208, quoting and translating Diocese of Hereford Acts of Office, 1619/1620, HRO: box 24, vol. 90, fols. 128v-9 (12 Jan).)
certifying that penance had been done. Sometimes judges would permit offenders, especially those of higher status, to pay a fine instead of performing public penance, and for lesser transgressions, those who “showed obvious contrition” might be dismissed with a warning. They might also distinguish among participants, such as in the Clee St. Margaret communion cloth case. (See Chapter 5.)

There are numerous church court cases that lack a recorded resolution. Judges could terminate proceedings prior to passing judgement for various reasons, such as the intervention of a clergymen or high-status supporter, which might not be recorded. The letter that Edward Reese, the curate of Mathon, wrote on behalf of the youth of his parish who were accused of illicit Sunday dancing is one such example. (See Chapter 4.) Finally, as Chapter 5 explores, dancing was rarely presented and prosecuted in the church courts, unless there were pre-existing tensions and disagreement about the acceptability of dancing in particular contexts, such as on Sundays, in the churchyard, or as part of a traditional festivity, such as May games or church ales. In other words, the number of presentments

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79 Twenty-one of the fifty-one Hereford diocese presentments assigned penance, but only ten of them record that the offenders returned with the required certification.
80 Houlbrooke, Church Courts and the People, p. 47. In twenty-three of the Hereford Diocese dance cases, one or more of those presented was dismissed with a warning.
81 Somerset, REED: Shropshire, vol. 1, pp. 43-50, 527-531, quoting and translating Latin passages of Archdeaconry of Ludlow Acts of Office, 1619/1620, HRO: box 36, vol. 136, fols. 12v-17v, 138v, 141v. Dancers who confessed that they knew the flag for their morris dance was actually a communion cloth were ordered to perform public penance, but the dancers who swore that they only learned the flag’s origin after the fact were dismissed with a warning.
82 Houlbrooke, Church Courts and the People, p. 45 n. 75. Houlbrooke found no record of appearance for 15%-40% of all those called before the Norwich archdeaconry court from 1520-1570. However, he points out that this may simply indicate careless record keeping rather than high contumacy levels. In addition to the aforementioned fifty-one dance presentments in the Diocese of Hereford, there are also five more that do not record any information about whether the alleged offender appeared, was declared contumacious, etc.
83 Houlbrooke, Church Courts and the People, p. 43.
for dancing is not a good indicator of how much dancing there was in a parish; it only provides evidence of a community or incident in which dancing was deeply controversial. Since differing perspectives on what sabbath observance ought to entail lay at the heart of most of these local controversies, the following section goes into more detail about English sabbatarianism and its impact on practices and perceptions of dancing.

**Sabbatarian Reformers, Festive Traditionalists, and the Book of Sports**

In the late sixteenth century, a growing number of English religious reformers became proponents of sabbatarianism, a religious reform movement dedicated to making the sabbath a day devoted to “public and private religious exercises.”

A few sabbatarians were drawn into debates about whether Saturday rather than Sunday should be the Christian sabbath, but the main focus for most sabbatarians centred on convincing their fellow parishioners that Sundays and holy days should be devoted to reverence only, not to a mix of reverence and recreation.

Most English religious reformers, as well as many middle-of-the-road clergymen and members of Parliament, embraced the idea that Sunday should be reserved for “worship, good works, and religious education.”

Indeed, the *Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiasticall* (1604), agreed upon by King James and the Bishop of London, included Canon 13 on the “Due celebration of Sundayes and Holy dayes,” which specified:

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85 Katz, *Sabbath and Sectarianism*, p. 5.
All manner of persons within the Church of England shall from henceforth celebrate and keepe the Lords Day, commonly called Sunday, and other Holy dayes, according to Gods holy will and pleasure, and the Orders of the Church of England prescribed in that behalfe: that is, in hearing the word of God read and taught, in private and publike prayers: in acknowledging their offences to God, and amendement of the same, in reconciling themselves charitably to their neighbours where displeasure hath bene, in often times receiving the Communion of the body & blood of Christ, in visiting of the poore and sicke, using all godly and sober conversation.\textsuperscript{86}

Canon 13 did not specifically allow or disallow recreations on the sabbath, but it emphasised the importance of the day’s holiness. One could argue that May games and church ales facilitated parishioners’ “reconciling themselves charitably to their neighbours,” but one could also argue the opposite. Since dancing was occasionally disorderly or wanton, it made an easy and convenient target for those who attacked Sunday pastimes as profanation.\textsuperscript{87}

Moreover, since many of the events at which dancing occurred, such as Whitsun festivities and church ales, were held in the parish churchyard or church house, those who did not object to dancing on Sundays \textit{per se} might still take issue with Sunday dancing that took place on church property. Canon 88 condemned the customary use of the church and churchyard for communal recreations and other secular events:

\begin{quote}
The Churchwardens or Questmen and their Assistants shall suffer no Playes, Feasts, Banquets, Suppers, Church-a\-les, Drinkings, temporall Courts or Leetes, Lay-juries, Musters, or any other prophane usage to be kept in the Church, Chappel, or Churchyard.\textsuperscript{88}
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{86}Church of England, \textit{Constitutions and canons ecclesiasticall treated vpon by the Bishop of London, president of the convocation for the prouince of Canterbury, and the rest of the bishops and clergie of the said prouince: and agreed vpon with the Kings Maiesties licence in their synode begun at London anno Dom. 1603} (London, 1604), sigs. E1v-E2.

\textsuperscript{87}For sabbatarian bills proposed in Parliament, see Hutton, \textit{The Rise and Fall of Merry England}, pp. 171, 173, 189, 232-233.

Dancing was a common feature of church ales, feasts, and banquets, and could also, arguably, fall under the general category of “other prophane usage” here forbidden. At the same time, dancing was not specifically listed and was biblically sanctioned, so it was not necessarily considered profane, especially in communities with well-established festive dance traditions. (See the discussion of biblical support for dancing in Chapter 3.) Further complicating matters, the canon’s opening phrase makes it the responsibility of the churchwardens and questmen to present for correction those who did engage in the forbidden activities. Therefore, not only was it unclear as to whether or not dancing was a profane activity banned by Canon 88, but its uncertain status was almost guaranteed to cause conflict in parishes with both puritans and festive traditionalists. Churchwardens and questmen were required to present transgressors, and parishioners were bound to disagree about whether or not dancers qualified as such. Nevertheless, it was the question of sacred time, rather than sacred space, which led to both the initial publication and the reissue of the Book of Sports.89

In August of 1617, while on progress through Lancashire, James I received complaints from local gentry and commoners that they had been “debarred from dancing, playing, church-ales—in a word, from all recreations on Sundays, after divine service.” This was a result of the “Orders for Sabbath Observance,” part of a sabbatarian campaign against Sunday sports and recreations led by some of Lancashire’s more reform-minded Justices of the Peace (JPs). The last of the eight orders drafted by the JPs declared:

That theare bee no pipinge, Dancinge, unlawful bowlinge, beare or bull batinge or any other profanacion upon any Saboth Day in any parte of the Day or upon any festivall day in tyme of Devyne service, that the persons so offendinge bee bound to the good behaviour and to apeare as aforesayd [at the next assize].

Since most of the populace laboured on the other days of the week, Sunday was the customary day for church ales, weddings, and other social and celebratory events that included dancing. Thus, for working people, banning dancing on Sundays was not unlike banning dancing entirely.

The “Orders for Sabbath Observance” also included instructions for enforcing and publicizing its injunctions. Constables and churchwardens had to bring sabbath offenders before the justices or the assizes, where the justices could order them to appear in court, as stated in the order. The justices could also exact summary punishment, such as fines or fines, at the justices’ table or the assizes, as stated in the order. This emendation would have been added to the order after the king’s 1617 declaration.

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Book of Sports, 1618-1642 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1905). Vaulting was similar to modern-day gymnastics.


91 There had been a previous, if less successful, sabbatarian campaign in Lancashire in 1587 that also included Sunday dancing among the “Enormities of the Sabbothe” in need of reformation. George, REED: Lancashire, p. 219-221, quoting Report of Seventeen Lancashire Preachers, 1587, Bodleian: Tanner MS 144, fols. 28-29v, and Proposals of Sixteen Lancashire Justices Concerning Sabbath Observance, 1587, BL: Harley MS 1926, fols. 80-82v.)

92 Brian Quintrell, Proceedings of the Lancashire Justices of the Peace at the Sheriff’s Table during Assizes Week, 1578-1694 (Bristol: Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1981), p. 73, quoting Mosley MS, MCLA: MS i347.96 M2, pp. 25-26. In the margin is the note, “Pipinge, dancinge, valtinge, leapinge, shootinge etc lawfull upon sondaiies by the King’s Declaracion.” This emendation would have been added to the order after the king’s 1617 declaration.

93 Govett, The King’s Book of Sports, p. 16.
before a JP to be bound to appear in the assize court or face prosecution themselves. This was a more severe punishment than the prior system of presentment in the church courts. (See above.) Furthermore, ministers had to publicly read the orders four times a year so that the injunctions “may the better bee remembred and observed by the parishioners.”

The “Orders for Sabbath Observance” were endorsed on 8 August 1616 by the assize judge, Sir Edward Bromley. As explained previously, assize judges had broad jurisdiction over criminal and civil matters and used orders as judicial instruments. However, the “Orders for Sabbath Observance” were atypical in their religious and controversial content. Most assize orders pertained to subjects such as poor relief, road maintenance, and the settlement of personal disputes. By rerouting sabbath offenses so that they fell under the jurisdiction of the assizes, the JPs ensured that matters of sabbath observance would be decided by the assize judges rather than by the local bishop or his surrogates. Since the assize courts met more frequently than bishops made visitations, this change enabled more timely punishments of sabbatarian offenses. It may also indicate the authors’ lack of faith in the church courts’ ability or willingness to prosecute sabbath offenders.

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97 The assize courts met twice a year while episcopal visitations were supposed to occur every three years, although they might be even less frequent depending on the diocese. (Cockburn, *A History of English Assizes*, p. ix; Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*, p. 29.)
King James was reluctant to prosecute sabbath offenders to the extent called for in the “Orders for Sabbath Observance.” He was anxious to rein in the “puritanes & precise people” and decided that declaring dancing and various sports “lawfull recreations & honest exercises upon sondaies & other holiadaies” was one way to accomplish this goal.\footnote{George, \textit{REED: Lancashire}, p. 229, quoting The Kings Declaration Concerning Lawful Sports, 1617, MCLA: MS f 347.96 M2, p. 14.}

The result was \textit{The King’s Declaration Concerning Lawful Sport}.\footnote{Thomas Morton, Bishop of Chester, a moderate Calvinist, may have written or contributed the ideas behind most of the declaration. (Tait, “The Declaration of Sports for Lancashire (1617)”: 562; Quintrell, “Morton, Thomas.”)}

The king’s declaration gave royal sanction to dancing and other recreations on Sundays and holy days, undermining the sections of the “Orders for Sabbath Observance” that had forbidden them. Yet, James I did not simply sanction Sunday recreations. Instead, he divided them into lawful and unlawful exercises. Recreations declared lawful on Sundays included piping, dancing, archery, leaping, vaulting, and rush-bearing.\footnote{Rush-bearung was the late summer ritual of ceremonially replenishing the rushes that covered the floor of country parish churches. (Ronald Hutton, \textit{The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 323-325.) See Chapter 1.}

Recreations that remained unlawful on the sabbath included bear-baiting, bull-baiting, interludes (short plays or similar theatrical entertainments), and bowling. These designations followed common usage in which “the term ‘unlawful’ was used in the period to describe activities that were thought to be ‘Contrary to the law’ and/or activities thought to be ‘contrary to moral standards or principles.’”\footnote{Semenza, \textit{Sport, Politics, and Literature in the English Renaissance}, p. 89. Semenza explains that notions of lawfulness derived from, “the intersecting discourses of English jurisprudence on the one hand and God’s law, as set down in the Bible, on the other.”}

Furthermore, even lawful recreations were only permitted under specific conditions. They could only take place after the end of Evening Prayer, not between morning and
evening services, nor during service time. Participants had to attend services in their parish on the same day in order for subsequent revels to be considered lawful, and recreations could only be hosted by a single parish for the people of that parish, “eich parish by it selfe.”

Since traditionally members of neighbouring parishes attended each other’s church ales, and morris dancers travelled to different parishes to perform at ales, wakes, and Whitsun festivities, the king’s declaration curtailed parish revels, as well as protected them from outright suppression. Yet, as Gregory M. Colón Semenza has observed, “James’s moderate advocacy of sport was not innovative in any way whatsoever.”

Rather, it was a reiteration of the qualified recommendation of sport he had given in the *Basilikon Doron* (1599, 1603) and of the mildly sabbatarian sabbath observance he promoted in earlier proclamations in which certain “lawful exercises were acceptable once divine services were ended.”

The following year (1618), for reasons that remain unclear, James I reissued the declaration on sports, this time addressing it to all of his subjects instead of just to Lancashire residents. Aside from an additional introductory paragraph in the latter, the texts of the 1617 declaration for Lancashire and 1618 declaration for all of England are very

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102 George, *REED: Lancashire*, pp. 230-231, quoting “The King’s Declaration Concerning Lawful Sports,” 1617, MCLA: MS f 347.96 M2, p. 15. This clause was directed at enticing Catholics loathe to attend services in their parish church to reconsider.


105 Semenza, *Sport, Politics, and Literature in the English Renaissance*, p. 93. In 1603 the king issued a proclamation calling for stricter sabbath observance, and shortly thereafter issued an order that JPs should not permit profanation of the sabbath from “unlawful games and exercises,” including dancing as one of the examples. Semanza argues that these examples are to be read as sports that could be profaning in excess but were not “inherently unlawful activities.”
similar. The 1618 declaration, or Book of Sports, as it soon become known, adds explicit permission for May games, Whitsun ales, morris dances, and maypoles, but drops permission for piping, perhaps reflecting sensitivity to regional music trends. Piping was extremely popular in the North, especially in Lancashire and Cheshire, but less prevalent elsewhere in England.\footnote{James I, \textit{The Kings Maiesties declaration to his subiects, concerning lawfull sports to be vsed} (London, 1618), p. 7.} (See Chapter 1.)

The 1618 Book of Sports did not meet with universal approval. However, it did not cause as much conflict between reformers and festive traditionalists as one might expect, because there was no organised campaign to ensure compliance. Only clergymen and others who openly and publicly condemned the king’s declaration faced chastisement and prosecution. (See Chapter 4.) Still, there were periodic attempts to pass sabbath observance measures in Parliament, including a 1620 bill for “the keeping of the Sabbath, otherwise called Sunday” and the Sunday Observance Act of 1625.\footnote{Govett, \textit{The King’s Book of Sports}, p. 44.} Although the Sunday Observance Act carefully avoided directly contradicting the king’s declaration, it certainly violated it in spirit.

What prompted the 1633 reissue of the Book of Sports by Charles I, however, was a sabbatarian campaign in Somerset not unlike the one in Lancashire that led to the original 1617 declaration. In 1593, 1595, and 1615, Somerset assize judges passed orders against wakes, and similar orders were passed in 1628 at the Exeter assizes. Wakes, or feasts of dedication, were celebrations in honour of a church’s dedication held on its anniversary. Puritan reformers considered this a popish custom. In 1632, at the Somerset
assizes, the justices passed orders that suppressed wakes and ales entirely. Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud felt that the orders “intruded on the authority of the church in such matters and deprived parishioners of healthy and harmless recreation.” In response, Charles I reissued the Book of Sports on 18 October 1633.

While the majority of the text is identical to the 1618 and, by extension, the 1617 declarations, Charles I added introductory and closing comments. He explains that he shares his father’s concern that the common people “who labour hard all the weeke” were being prevented from engaging in recreations on their one available day, which is how they “refresh their spirits.” The king also alludes to the recent suppression of wakes in Somerset and explicitly adds wakes to the list of approved recreations. Similar to James I’s addition of Whitsun ales to the list of authorised recreations in the 1618 declaration, by adding wakes to the 1633 declaration, Charles I made an intervention that further restored the church’s pre-Reformation function as the main site for parochial celebrations. This was because both Whitsun ales and wakes tended to take place on church property in either the churchyard or the church house. The revised declaration was the antithesis of the church reforms sought by puritans.

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112 Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, pp. 70, 118. Patrick Cowley explains that while the church house or parish house was designated for secular purposes and might be owned by a private
In the 1633 declaration, Charles I also called for a combination of ecclesiastical advertisement and secular enforcement. This created an overlapping of ecclesiastical and secular jurisdictions similar to the sabbatarian orders of the Lancashire JP that were described above. It was a departure from the earlier declarations, which had merely indicated that “both Our Judges of Our Circuit, and Our Justices of Our Peace be informed” about the contents of the Book of Sports. In the 1617 and 1618 declarations, only the usual parochial officers who presented ecclesiastical transgressors—i.e., churchwardens and questmen—were asked to present those who indulged in recreations before the end of divine services or otherwise violated the declaration.

Furthermore, Charles I and Archbishop Laud went to much greater lengths than James I had to enforce the reading of the Book of Sports in parish pulpits. The reissue thus met with a greater backlash from reformers. Clergymen who refused to comply were suspended and punished. As Kevin Sharpe has observed, “Charles’s intention in the Book of Sports had been first to preserve, not least against puritan assault, the rhythms and party, it was administered by the churchwardens, and income from hosting events such as wedding celebrations and ales went to the parish. (Patrick Cowley, *The Church Houses: Their Religious and Social Significance* (London: S.P.C.K., 1970), p. 40.) Parishioners also tried to have the church house as close to the parish church as possible and seem to have considered it an extension of the church and churchyard. (pp. 25-26.) Therefore, even though the church did not always technically own the church house, for the purposes of the dissertation, I am considering the church house a church property or church building.

116 For a list of printed works calling for more strict observance of the sabbath, see Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I*, pp. 352-353.
rituals of parish life which were central to his perception of the *ecclesia Anglicana*.”

However, the reissue had the opposite effect. The king’s defense of Sunday sports widened the gap between puritans and Laudians, reformers and traditionalists, hastening the ultimate interruption of parish rhythms and rituals: civil war. Indeed, Sharpe contends that, “more than any other of his injunctions,” Charles I’s reissue of the Book of Sports, “raised opponents who were not natural enemies to the church and forced them to make a radical choice that presaged the choice many were to have to make in 1642: that between conscience and obedience.”

**Note on Style and Dating**

Unless otherwise specified, I have preserved original spellings and punctuation in quoted passages, but I have updated “u” and “v” and “j” and “i” following modern practice, e.g., “iuuenal” becomes “juvenal.” For early printed works mentioned within the text, I have used modern-day capitalisation and typography for readability, but in footnotes and the bibliography, I have retained the original capitalisation, punctuation, and typography for early book titles. Particularly long titles have been shortened, with the omissions denoted by ellipses. I have adopted the Records of Early English Drama style for writing dates, which combines old style, where the new year starts on March 25, and new style, where the new year starts on January 1. For example, a letter dated February 2 of 1609 (old style), I have designated as written on 2 February 1609/10.

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Chapter Overview

This dissertation examines the cultural and religious politics of dancing in the English countryside, with special attention to the contextual details that decided whether a given dance occurrence was deemed acceptable or not by contemporaries. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the fundamentals of early modern dancing, describing the main dance steps and genres, as well as the dancing manuals that have preserved this information. The chapter also describes the different venues in which people danced, the times of day and seasons that were most popular, and some of the demographic details of dancers in western England. Moreover, the styling choices made by the dancers within these contexts could alter the meaning of a performance. Chapter 2 demonstrates how, by varying details of their performance, dancers could express or call into question certain aspects of identity, most notably gender and social rank. The instability of a dance’s meaning created anxiety in a number of different spheres of early modern life. Chapter 3 considers how clergymen and religious reformers addressed and tried to undermine pro-dance arguments through their treatment of biblical dance references in sermons and moral treatises. Chapter 4 provides a more in-depth, close-up look at the range of clerical views on dancing through four case studies of parochial clergymen. Chapter 5 also focuses on case studies, looking at several examples where dancing became a focal point for local controversy. One might well ask why prosecutions for dancing were so sporadic and geographically scattered. The case studies in Chapters 4 and 5 indicate that for dance to be prosecuted, there needed to be a “perfect storm” of actively pro- and anti-dance community members, underlying resentment or prior conflict, plus a trigger that prompted escalation beyond or outside of the built-in community structures for conflict resolution.
Chapter One
Early Modern Dance Fundamentals: Types and Sources

In *Anthropology and the Dance: Ten Lectures* (1991, 2004), Drid Williams argues that gestures do not have universal meanings; they are, in fact, quite arbitrary:

Different ethnicities have generated different values for the dimensions of right/left, up/down, front/back, inside/outside to choose obvious instances of the conception fields in which dances or any human action take place. These contrary oppositions do not *mean* the same things cross-culturally.¹

This dissertation argues that the variability and arbitrariness of gestural meaning Williams identifies across cultures also applies to dances within cultures and across time. Indeed, the instability of gestural meaning lies at the heart of early modern anxiety about dancing. The social, religious, and political contexts in which dances occurred affected their meaning. This is why, as Williams phrases it, dances cannot be “studied in isolation;” they cannot “stand on their own,” but must be historicised and contextualised to be understood.²

Dance may be ephemeral, but it leaves many traces behind. Piecing together dance references in printed and manuscript sources creates a picture of what the dances of the early modern period were like and in what sorts of contexts they occurred. Dancing manuals and choreographic descriptions explain dance steps and types. References in plays and treatises convey styling and associations. Scholarly works increasingly draw on the practical, kinaesthetic research of dance reconstructors and vice versa, leading to more accurate readings of texts and more historically informed reconstructions. In addition, the Records of Early English Drama project has made accessible hundreds of

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relevant excerpts from archival sources. The excerpts rarely name or describe the dances done, but they do provide evidence of who danced, when, where, and for what occasions.

While each of these types of sources only illuminates certain aspects of dancing, together they provide a more nuanced understanding of the physical and social aspects of dancing in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. This is important, because it is not possible to assess critically the complaints of anti-dance writers if one is not familiar with the dances about which they complain. Nor can one distinguish among clever, unusual, and generic usages of dancing in plays and masques unless one is familiar with the characteristics of the dances evoked. Similarly, because dancing always takes place within a particular context and environment, knowing more about the original contexts in which dances like the galliard and volta were performed enables modern-day dancers and reconstructors to create more accurate, historically informed reconstructions and performances of these dances. Finally, compiling brief references from a wide variety of sources gives a clearer sense of the characteristics of dances like the jig and hornpipe that are not described in any of the extant dancing manuals.

**Defining Dance**

When someone mentioned dance or dancing in the early modern period, what did he or she likely have in mind? In the early modern period, the term “dance” described a wide variety of movements done by people (and occasionally animals) to music. These movements were either choreographed or improvised. Choreographed dances had predetermined arrangements of steps that were learned by dancers and performed in the same way each time they did that dance. Improvised dances involved making up a new
series of movements each time the dance was done, dancing “after sundrie fashions.” Improvisations were not completely random movements, however. They drew from a known body of dance steps and had to take into account the rhythms and structure of the music. There were also hybrid forms. Dances like the galliard and the canary incorporated improvised solos into a larger choreographed duet structure. A male-female couple performed the opening, closing, and “chorus” figures together, but in between the man and woman took turns improvising four to sixteen musical bars worth of kicks and jumps (for the galliard) or stamps and toe taps (for the canary). Dancing masters also encouraged experienced dancers to use embellishments or “accidental” steps to add variety to the regular or “natural” steps specified in choreographed dances.

The term “dance” in this period encompassed several activities that modern-day observers might define otherwise. These include rope dancing, which was almost identical to what we call tightrope-walking, and processional dancing, which we might describe today as marching, parading, or simply walking to music. In addition, “dancing” was invoked metaphorically to describe the motion of objects, especially when that motion was deemed unusual—either notably agitated and chaotic or surprisingly ordered and rhythmic. For example, in the agricultural guide, *Markham’s farwell to husbandry* (1620), Gervase Markham explains that if a farmer covers the ground with long strips of cloth with feathers

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knit into them, “with every breath of winde the feathers may dance, turne and move about,” which keeps crows and other birds away from newly planted corn.  

**Sources for Early Dance**

References to dancing appear in a myriad of printed and manuscript sources, demonstrating the visibility of dance in early modern English society. A search on the term “dance” and its variants between 1550 and 1650 in the Early English Books Online (EEBO) collection returns over 14,000 references in more than 3,000 texts, and there are also references to specific dance types such as the galliard and jig. (See Table 1.) Dance references in a number of texts examined in this dissertation were initially discovered via such searches, including in the dictionary entries mentioned in this chapter, the plays examined in Chapter 2, and the sermons and biblical commentaries discussed in Chapter 3. Interestingly, although music in early modern England has received much more attention from scholars than dance has, the number of references to music and dance in the searchable EEBO texts is quite similar: “music” and its variants garner 14,240 hits from 3,077 records, while “dance” and its variants return 14,481 hits in 3,031 records. Clearly there is a wealth of references to dancing in printed sources that has yet to be explored.

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7 Gervase Markham, *Markham’s farwell to husbandry or, The inriching of all sorts of barren and sterill grounds in our kingdome, to be as fruitfull in all manner of graine, pulse, and grasse as the best grounds whatsoeuer together with the anoyances, and preseruacion of all graine and seede, from one yeare to many yeares* (London, 1620), p. 88.

8 As of September 2011, the EEBO collection contained over 128,000 works printed between 1473 and 1700. However, unless the search term appears in the work’s title, using the built-in interface to search the collection only finds references from the approximately 32,800 fully searchable, transcribed texts not from the entire collection.
### Dance References in the Early English Books Online Collection

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**Table 1:** Dance references found by searching the approximately 13,000 searchable texts in the Early English Books Online (EEBO) collection for works published between 1550 and 1650.⁹

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⁹ These results include spelling and part-of-speech variants such as “daunce” and “dansinge,” as well as some non-relevant phrases containing variants, such as “abou~dance” and “atte~dance.” Certain spelling variants are not automatic, such as “da~ce” and “dau~ce,” and must be searched separately. Searches were not informative for many dance types, such as the almain, old measures, carole, and branle, because the majority of references found referred to non-dance usages. Searching “daunce the ____” found some relevant passages for the hay and canary but still missed references with different phrasing. Searches were done on 26 September 2011: there were 128,070 total records in the EEBO collection, 32,863 searchable or keyed full text records, and 13,003 searchable works printed between 1550 and 1650.
There are also numerous references to dance in archival sources, such as court records, account books, and personal correspondence. Such archival records are used in succeeding chapters. Although these sources rarely include choreographic descriptions, they often contain valuable contextual details, such as where dancing occurred, at what time of day, and the number, age, status, and gender of the dancers. Oftentimes, it is possible to ascertain whether the dancing in question was sanctioned or illicit, typical or unusual. Most importantly, these records provide glimpses of early modern dance as it was practiced, supplementing and sometimes complicating depictions of dancing in more theoretical didactic and polemical sources, such as dancing manuals and anti-dance treatises.

Most of what we know about the dance steps and choreographies of the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries comes from a dozen or so instruction manuals written by dancing masters and dance enthusiasts from across Europe. Formats vary, but all the extant dancing manuals provide one or more of the following: step descriptions, set choreographies for different dance types, accompanying music, accompanying illustrations, recommendations for performance, rules of ballroom etiquette, and defences or rationales for dancing based on Greco-Roman writings, biblical passages, and historical precedents. All of these manuals are aimed at elite audiences and describe court dances, with the exception of Thoinot Arbeau’s *Orchésographie* (1589), which is addressed to a middling-status audience and contains a mix of courtly and rustic dances. A handful of the manuals are comprehensive enough to enable full-fledged reconstructions of choreographies—most notably the manuals of Fabritio Caroso, Cesare

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Negri, and Thoinot Arbeau—but some of the less step-focused manuals, such as Juan de Esquivel Navarro’s *Discursos sobre el arte del dansado* (1642), provide welcome details about dance instruction, styling, and dance competitions.\(^\text{11}\)

In Renaissance Spanish, there were two types of dancing, which had distinct names: *danzas* for courtly, elite dances and *bailes* for the dances of the lower social classes. However, English speakers used the term “dance” to describe dancing by both elites and commoners.\(^\text{12}\) This lack of distinction in terminology might indicate that Englishmen and women did not distinguish between elite and non-elite dance styles, but the many references in English conduct manuals and educational treatises to the importance of dancing in a style that matched one’s social status suggest otherwise.

At the same time, even though most dancing manuals are addressed to aristocrats, in England, at least, there was broad knowledge of, and wide participation in, court dances outside of the target audience. For example, middling-status as well as high-status young men at the Inns of Court were expected to be able to dance galliards, corantos, and other court dances.\(^\text{13}\) Similarly, there is evidence of aristocratic men and women watching and performing country dances.\(^\text{14}\) However, they did not usually dance them in public or in

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\(^{11}\) Dance “styling” refers to a variety of subtle movement choices that influence the overall perception of a performance. Aspects of styling include the dancer’s posture or carriage, dynamics or “energy” of movements, size of steps, degree of rigidity or relaxation of the arms, height of elevations and depth of knee bends, smoothness of transitions between steps, number and complexity of embellishments, and use of the Italian technique called *pavonegiarsi* or “peacocking” to accentuate torso movements by making the dancer’s cape or skirt fan out.


Wood, “Some Notes on the English Country Dance before Playford”: 94-95. On 5 January 1600, Rowland Whyte wrote that although she had just had her favourite, the Earl of Essex imprisoned,
mixed-status company, and observers noted exceptions, such as when “the country people” performed “a pleasant daunce with taber and pipe” for Queen Elizabeth at Cowdray in 1591, “and the Lord Montagu and Lady among them, to the great pleasure of all the beholders, and the gentle applause of hir Majestie.”

Unfortunately, there are no surviving English dancing manuals for the period between the compilation of music and dance instructions known as the Gresley manuscript (c.1500) and the publication of John Playford’s *The English Dancing Master* (1651), which are both outside the time frame of this dissertation. However, two French dancing masters in the employ of George Villiers, the Marquess and later Duke of Buckingham, each wrote a dancing manual in the early seventeenth century, which they dedicated to their English patron, and there are a handful of choreographic descriptions of the group of English processional dances known as the measures or old measures that survive in the personal papers of Inns of Court affiliates. In addition, the aforementioned Continental dancing manuals provide choreographies and conduct rules for dances known in England. While it

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16 The Gresley Manuscript is a small book containing twenty-six choreographies and tunes, collated with Latin prayers and other unassociated materials by John Banys (c.1500) in Derbyshire. (David Fallows, “The Gresley Dance Collection, c.1500,” *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle* 29 (1996): 2.) Fallows’ article includes a transcription of the choreographies and music. *The English Dancing Master* (1651) was the first dancing manual of English dances to be published in England or Europe, and includes step descriptions and music for each dance. John Playford, incidentally, was not a dancing master, but a music publisher, and it is not clear whether he or an associate collected the dances.
18 Anne Daye, comp., *A Lively Shape of Dauncing: Dances of Shakespeare’s Time* (Salisbury, Wiltshire: Dolmetsch Historical Dance Society, 1994).
is certainly possible that the canario danced in Italy may have varied somewhat from the canary danced in England, there is substantial evidence that traveling dancing masters, ambassadors, and the households of royal brides spread courtly dance fashions across Europe. There is also some evidence that at least the most privileged English readers had access to Continental dancing manuals. According to a 1605 inventory, Sir Thomas Bodley’s library contained a copy of the Italian dancing manual, Fabritio Caroso’s Il Ballarino (1581). At least for courtly dances, these dancing manuals and choreographic notes enable scholars to construct a reasonably detailed picture of many of the dances that appear most frequently in English sources.

Early Dance Studies and Historiography

Mabel Dolmetsch’s Dances of England and France from 1450 to 1600: With their Music and Authentic Manner of Performance (1949) was one of the first scholarly works to consider English dance in the late Renaissance. Dolmetsch studied original sources, including Robert Coplande’s brief notes on basse dance (1521) and a manuscript description of the old measures (Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poet. 108, c. 1570), and provided instructions for reconstructing dances from those sources. However, later dance historians have criticised Dolmetsch’s reconstructions for adding “spurious elements,”

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20 Smith, “What Did Prince Henry Do with His Feet on Sunday 19 August 1604?” Early Music 14, no. 2 (1986): 201. For this study I will be looking at the expanded and revised version of Il Ballarino, Caroso’s manual, Nobiltà di Dame (1600), as it is available in a modern critical edition and translation. The two manuals contain most of the same choreographies and images. The main difference is that the later manual adds additional repetitions to several dances to make them more symmetrical.
“major ornaments,” and embellishments of her own devising.\textsuperscript{21} Moreover, a number of other sources have since been discovered, including several more versions of the old measures, which clarify ambiguities in Dolmetsch’s sources and allow for much more accurate reconstructions.\textsuperscript{22} James Cunningham published five additional manuscript descriptions of the old measures in \textit{Dancing in the Inns of Court} (1965), and David R. Wilson published a corrected transcription of these in the journal \textit{Historical Dance} (1986-1987).\textsuperscript{23} Records of Early English Drama editor James Stokes found another version in the Somerset county record office, which with dance historian Ingrid Brainard, he discussed in the \textit{REED Newsletter} in 1992. The manuscript’s author, John Willoughby, had connections to the Inns of Court, but lived his entire life in Devon, supporting John Ward’s contention that the measures were not just danced at the Inns of Court, but were likely also danced at balls at court and in English country manors.\textsuperscript{24} Most recently, Ian Payne has published a critical edition of the old measures manuscripts.\textsuperscript{25} Payne’s scrutiny of the tunes associated with the individual dances makes the work valuable to musicologists as well as dance historians.\textsuperscript{26} In addition, John Ward and Robert Mullally have looked at the measures in

\textsuperscript{22} See below for a description of the old measures.
\textsuperscript{26} See also Robert Wienpahl, \textit{Music at the Inns of Court during the Reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles} (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International for the Department of Music, California State University, Northridge, 1979), which includes chapters on dance.
their larger context, including as a component of the revels, the social dancing that followed court masques.27

Dance in dramatic performances, namely in court masques and plays, has also received scholarly attention. Court masques were lavish performances combining poetry, music, and dance performed by courtiers for their peers. There were spectacles including dance at the Henrician and Elizabethan courts, but the court masque blossomed under the patronage of the Stuart monarchs.28 Enid Welsford’s *The Court Masque: A Study in the Relationship between Poetry & the Revels* (1962) was one of the first studies of the masque that acknowledged the central role that dance played.29 Anne Daye and Barbara Ravelhofer have continued to explore the nuances of dance in the masque, illuminating the details of creation and rehearsal, the development of the antimasque, the relative importance of dancing compared to other aspects of performance, and the role of masque dancing in the Stuarts’ larger political and cultural agenda.30 Barbara Ravelhofer’s *The Early Stuart*


Masque: Dance, Costume, and Music (2006) also includes a careful discussion of the benefits and perils of applying the choreographic descriptions in Continental European dancing manuals to English dances.\textsuperscript{31} Both Daye and Ravelhofer are scholar-reconstructors who draw on their own experiences reconstructing dances from primary sources to inform their readings of dance records, and Ravelhofer highlights the research of other reconstructors, as well.\textsuperscript{32}

Alan Brissenden’s Shakespeare and the Dance (1981), on the other hand, relies on internal evidence from the plays themselves much more than on dance manuals or reconstructions. Brissenden remains the authority for interpreting how dance functions within Shakespeare’s plays, and Shakespeare and the Dance is frequently cited by scholars in many disciplines. However, there has been little acknowledgement that Brissenden’s conclusions about Shakespeare’s use of dance do not always apply to all playwrights of the period. For example, while Shakespeare gives brief stage directions such as, “They dance,” other playwrights, such as John Marston, indicate the type of dance they envision, such as the galliard or coranto.\textsuperscript{33}

Whereas dances within plays included galliards, corantos, and other dances described in dancing manuals, the dance that occurred after plays, the jig, retains its inscrutability. No new sources have emerged to shed further light on Charles Read Baskervill’s hypotheses in The Elizabethan Jig and Related Song Drama (1929, 1965).\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} Ravelhofer, The Early Stuart Masque, pp. 16-20.
\textsuperscript{32} Ravelhofer, The Early Stuart Masque, p. 113 n. 47.
\textsuperscript{33} See entries for “caper,” “dance,” “galliard,” “lavolta,” “make a leg,” “obeisance,” “tread,” and “trip,” among others, in Alan Dessen and Leslie Thomson, A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
\textsuperscript{34} Charles Read Baskervill, The Elizabethan Jig and Related Song Drama (New York: Dover Publications, 1929, 1965). For a useful summary of relevant recent research and more focus on the usage of the term than Baskervill provides, see William West, “When is the Jig Up—and What is it
English dance practices in the countryside, however, have benefited from the wealth of dance references uncovered by the Records of Early English Drama (REED) project. (See Introduction.) Two works in particular have utilized REED dance material: John Forrest’s *The History of Morris Dancing 1458-1750* (1999) and Christopher Marsh’s *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (2010).

*The History of Morris Dancing, 1458-1750* (1999) finally puts to rest the myth that the morris originated as an ancient pagan fertility dance or rite of spring. Forrest traces the development of morris from a performance dance at court to a semi-professional dance performed by teams of local youths at church ales and in town processions. Many of his contentions are based on the exhaustive archive and database of morris references compiled by Forest and Michael Heaney for the Early Morris Project.

The discussion of morris dancing below and my reading of the Clee St. Margaret morris dance discussed in Chapter 5 draw heavily on Forrest’s observations.

In the substantial chapter on dance in *Music and Society in Early Modern England*, Christopher Marsh looks at many of the same sources and comes to many of the same conclusions as this dissertation. We both focus on social or “sociable” dancing rather than on theatrical or “performative” dance; describe different dance forms and styles; discuss “the dance debate” and the impact of the Book of Sports; and consider how people of

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35 Robert Mullally’s monograph *The Carole* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011) focuses on the carole in its medieval heyday and only touches on references from the early modern period.
different social standing danced and understood dancing differently. However, given differences of space, time, and focus, the dissertation is able to develop more fully many of the issues Marsh raises. For example, incidents that Marsh mentions briefly, such as the cushion dance performed by John Wilmot, the rector of Tortworth, Gloucestershire, in 1602, become the basis of full-fledged case studies investigated in Chapters 4 and 5. In addition, my experience as a dance reconstructor leads me to interpret differently certain details pertaining to dance steps and figures, especially for earlier dances. Marsh concludes with the apt observation that “the relationship between the cultural pursuits of the gentry and those of the people” was complex; “many aristocrats nursed a somewhat problematic admiration for the dancing of the drones” and enthusiastically practised, or indulged in according to critics, what were known as “country dances.”


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40 Marsh looks at a wider time frame than I do and leans heavily on John Playford’s *The English Dancing Master* (1651). I rely more on the old measures manuscripts and Italian and French dancing manuals from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as discussed below.
contributions are by dance scholars—Barbara Sparti, Jennifer Nevile, and G. Yvonne Kendall—and Keith Polk’s piece in the music section is on dance music. Thus, dance is presented as a topic of equal importance in comparison to other arts such as music, theatre, and architecture. The overarching argument common to all these essays, that opportunities for improvisation were built into many Renaissance dances, informs my analysis of the galliard in this chapter and of male and female solo dancing in Chapter 2. The essay collections by Matluck Brooks and Nevile cover an even wider time frame and focus on courtly and theatrical dancing. They both include several essays that touch on relevant themes to this work, even if only one of the contributions, Anne Daye’s “At the Queen’s Command: Henrietta Maria and the Development of the English Masque” in Women’s Work, directly addresses English dance practices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

**Dance Reconstruction**

Dance history and dance reconstruction are complementary approaches. Dance reconstruction, which refers to modern-day performance or instructions for performance of choreographies from early dancing manuals and other original sources, is quite different from period-style choreographies, which are historically informed (or uninformed) dances created by modern-day choreographers using historical steps, floor patterns, and music. Dance reconstructors try to approximate the steps and style of the original choreography as closely as possible, eschewing the temptation to intentionally make the dance more palatable to a modern audience. However, dancing manuals do not describe many aspects

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43 For example, the “jigs” performed at the end of Elizabethan-costumed performances at the New Globe Theatre in London are new creations using a historical vocabulary of steps, not reconstructions. Period-style dances in cinema are notoriously inaccurate. For example, the beautiful and dramatic “volta” in the film Elizabeth (1998), directed by Shekhar Kapur and starring Cate Blanchett, is closer to modern flamenco in style than to sixteenth-century dancing.
of early modern performance. Therefore, knowledge of the historical context of dance performances is necessary for creating accurate dance reconstructions. Conversely, knowledge of dance steps and styling enables more nuanced understandings of the contexts in which dance occurred.

The most groundbreaking and insightful studies of early dance in recent decades have been the work of scholars who draw on physical reconstructions of early dances as well as written sources. While certain aspects of movement have changed in the last four hundred years due to differences in attire and physical training, other characteristics, such as how long an ordinary person can stay in the air while jumping, have probably not. Through reconstructions, dancer-scholars have proved that it is possible to dance the galliard in chopines, and that Arbeau’s warning about the volta is warranted: spectators really can see up a woman’s skirt to her thigh unless she holds her skirt down with her free hand during the turning lift. More importantly, viewing or participating in dance reconstructions makes it much easier to realise that the complaints of anti-dance writers only apply to a small number of dances and only to dancing in a manner that was

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44 In this dissertation, I follow in this tradition of reconstruction-informed scholarship as modelled by Ingrid Brainard, Lynn Matluck Brooks, Anne Daye, Angene Feves, G. Yvonne Kendall, Katherine Tucker McGinnis, Jennifer Nevile, Ken Pierce, Patricia Rader, Barbara Ravelhofer, Barbara Sparti, and Julia Sutton, and David Wilson, among others.

45 This is particularly relevant for the galliard, which involves a lot of kicks and jumps. The lack of communication between performers of early music and dance reconstructors has resulted in most recordings of galliards, as well as many other early dances, being the wrong tempo. Recordings by the UK-based The Broadside Band are one of the few exceptions. Music director Jeremy Barlow works closely with the Dolmetsch Historical Dance Society to ensure danceable tempos.

46 Dance reconstructors Pat Rader, Laura Crockett, and Julia Sutton report that dancing with chopines, wooden platform shoes up to a foot in height worn over slippers, has “no serious impact on dancing skills or self-expression,” confirming Fabritio Caroso’s assertion in 1600 that with care a woman wearing chopines could dance “entirely with grace, seemliness, and beauty.” (Ravelhofer, *The Early Stuart Masque*, p. 113.) I personally discovered the importance of Arbeau’s caveat during rehearsals for the volta in *The Bard’s Galliard, or How to Party Like an Elizabethan*, a performance I directed and choreographed in 1999 for my undergraduate certificate in Theater and Dance at Princeton University. Dancers wore period costumes including hoop skirts.
condemned by dancing instructors. However, the importance of dance reconstruction to historical dance scholarship and to all scholarship that touches on dance has been slow to gain recognition.47

**Basic Steps and Principles**

Dance manuals indicate that the vast majority of dances in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe were composed from a few stock steps and figures. The most common and fundamental of these steps were singles and doubles. A single was a single step begun with one foot and finished with the other. The finish could be a hold or “pause” with the legs remaining open, a “close” with the second foot closing next to the first foot or touching beside the first foot with the ball of the foot, or the single could finish with a low brush or “kick” forwards with the second foot.48 The double consisted of three steps in the same direction alternating feet followed by the same finishing options of pause, close together, touch, or kick.49 The name “double” likely derives from the musical structure of the steps, since the double took twice the time musically to dance as the single.50

Singles and doubles could be done forwards, backwards, or sideways. They could be grouped together to form recognizable patterns—e.g., the pavan step was two singles

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47 Perhaps more scholarly conferences will follow the example of the 2011 meeting of the Society of Dance History Scholars in Toronto, which featured three dance workshops that explored kinaesthetically themes discussed in the papers on Renaissance and Baroque dance topics. Ken Pierce, comp., *Proceedings of the 34th Society of Dance History Scholars Annual Conference (23-26 June 2011)* (Riverside, CA: Society of Dance History Scholars, 2011).

48 Caroso, *Nobiltà di Dame*, p. 104. “Closing together” was done either remaining flat or rising onto tiptoe and then lowering gently once the feet were together. The latter was particularly associated with Italian styling.

49 Caroso, *Nobiltà di Dame*, pp. 106-107. The Italian version had the first and third steps flat, but the second step on tiptoe, with the close having the aforementioned rise and fall, as well. When doing a double to the side, it may seem like two singles, as Christopher Marsh suggests, but both Arbeau and Caroso specify that the double is three steps and a close or pause. (Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England*, p. 350.)

50 Anne Daye, private conversation, 24 June 2011.
and a double—or subtly altered to change the look and flavour of a dance. For the canary dance, which had Spanish influences, the doubles were done with a stomp on the first step. For the almain or aleman, the singles and doubles were done with a kick at the end. The coranto added hops and skips to the singles and doubles, which enabled dancers to traverse quite a lot of ground with each step, giving the dance its name: the running dance. Even without the extra hops of the coranto, a string of regular doubles enabled dancers to travel at nearly the same speed as if they were walking, but with better coordination and synchrony. It is not surprising that processional dances such as the pavan and old measures featured doubles prominently.  

There were also certain figures that appeared in many different dances. A figure is a series of dance steps that follows a certain path or floor pattern. One figure that was extremely common in courtly dances was the “figure eight.” This figure could be made by a single dancer starting in one spot and then making circles to each side of the starting point (See Figure 1: A), or by two dancers with each half of the couple making one of the circles (See Figure 1: B). In the latter case, the dancers always started their circles by turning towards the same shoulder, using rotational symmetry rather than mirror symmetry.

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51 Although choreographies for popular or rustic dances do not survive for this period except in Arbeau’s Orchésographie, singles and doubles were used by Playford in his 1651 collection of country dances; they form the foundation of Baroque dance with coupés substituted for the closes; and singles and doubles are still found in folkdances worldwide. Therefore, it is likely that they were used at least some of the time in early modern popular dances.
Another popular figure was the hay. The hay is noteworthy because it is one of the few elements common in country and popular dances for which we have reliable choreographic descriptions. In the hay, dancers weave in and out of each other in the manner of modern-day maypole dancing or the Scottish reel. The most common version has the dancers ending in the same place as they start, but there are many variations. There is the half hay, where the top and bottom dancers in the line end in opposite places, or the progressive hay, in which the dancers end shifted one place over (the first dancer or leader becomes the last in the line, and the second dancer becomes the new leader, the third dancer the new second, and so on). (See Figure 2.)

The hay could be done in a line, in a circle, or around a square. The hay could be danced as an entire dance or it might feature as a section of dance. The “Branle de la Hay” and “Branle Montarde” in Arbeau’s dancing manual are line dances that alternate between
a “chase” section, where a line of dancers follows the leader around the room, and a hay section, where the leader of the dance does a hay through the line of dancers until he or she reaches the end, making the next dancer the new leader for the next iteration of the dance.

Writers were fond of alluding to the weaving motion of dancers. In the court masque *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1618) by Ben Jonson, the character of Daedalus sings:

> Come on, come on! and where you go,  
> So interweave the curious knot,  
> As ev’n th’ observer scarce may know  
> Which lines are Pleasure’s and which not.

> ...  
> Then, as all actions of mankind  
> are but a Labyrinth, or maze,  
> so let your Daunces be entwin’d,  
> yet not perplex men, unto gaze;

> But measur’d, and so numerous too,  
> as men may read each act you do,  
> and when they see the graces meet,  
> Admire the wisdom of your feet.\(^{52}\)

The choreography for this masque does not survive, but the interweaving lines of the hay would fit well with this masque’s theme of the maze. Phrases in the song such as “interweave the curious knot” and “let your Daunces be entwin’d” could refer to the hay.\(^{53}\)

Finally there are a few universal characteristics of early modern dances that bear mention. The vast majority of choreographed courtly dances were performed by a single male-female couple while everyone else watched. (See Chapter 2: Table 1.) All of the

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\(^{53}\) Christopher Marsh gives the title page of *The Country Garland* (1687) as an example of a hay. (Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England*, p. 336.) However, although it is possible that the dancers in the image were performing a dance that had a hay in it, the image itself does not show any interweaving motions that would identify it as a hay. Rather, I would call this a circle dance or round.
courtly dances could be danced by men or women, and, aside from the galliard, dances were primarily performed by men and women together.\textsuperscript{54} In a ball, couple dances might be proceeded by or alternated with processional group dances such as the pavan or measures, which called for a long line of couples. However, there is no evidence that dances such as the galliard or coranto were ever danced by more than a few couples at a time.

When dancing as a male-female couple, the man was always on the left and the woman was always on the right. Even though this orientation might change during a dance, all dances with one or more couples began and ended in this formation. Nearly all the dances for which there are choreographies start on the left foot. This was true for both men and women. Unlike in modern-day partner dances such the waltz or tango where the man (or lead) and the woman (or follow) do the same or related steps with opposite feet while facing each other, in early modern couple dances, the man and woman always used the same foot when dancing at the same time. Thus, the couple either stood side by side (See Figure 3: A) and moved in the same direction, or they faced each other and moved in opposite directions (See Figure 3: B).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{c c}
\textbf{A)} & \textbf{B)} \\
\includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{a.png} & \includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{b.png}
\end{tabular}
\caption{Orientation and Movement Symmetry}
\end{figure}

One of the bonuses of men and women having the same footing was that their footwork
would not change if they danced the part of the opposite gender. For example, neither the
boy actors who played female characters on the public stage nor the cross-dressed men who
played Maid Marion in morris dances would have to learn new footwork for those roles.55
They would only have to modify their styling to show their gender as a dancer (See
Chapter 2).

Types of Dances

The dance that provided the most opportunities for highlighting a dancer’s gender
was the galliard. This was due in part to its flexibility. The galliard could be a flashy,
technically demanding solo piece for a man; a moderately energetic duet for a man and
woman; a section of a longer dance suite; or the basis of a dance game or competition. The
galliard was also ubiquitous. Barbara Sparti has observed that every Italian dance treatise or
dance music collection published or re-published between 1560-1630 included a galliard,
and there are galliards in the extant French and Spanish dancing manuals, as well as in the
manuscript notes describing the English old measures.56

Without a doubt, the galliard was popular in England, and it is mentioned more
frequently than any other specific dance type in printed sources. (See Table 1, above.)
References range from laudatory metaphors to frustrated complaints and cynical quips.
“The starres do daunce proud Galliardes in the skie,” writes Thomas Greene in A Poets
Vision, and a Princes Glorie (1603); “were thy feete created to dance a fine galliard, or

55 Stephen Orgel, Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare’s England
(Cambridge University Press, 1996); John Forrest, The History of Morris Dancing 1458-1750
(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
Wilson, “Dancing in the Inns of Court.”
leape a long jumpe, or runne a long race, and not rather to walke to sermons, to carrie thee to prisons, & to beare thee to the chambers of sicke persons?” asks Edward Topsell, *Times Lamentation: or An Exposition on the Prophet Joel* (1599). 57 Although the galliard is most closely associated with courtiers, it was also danced by barristers at the Inns of Court and by country ladies and gentlemen like the “countrie yong Gallant” who tries to impress everyone with his “flouncing and frisking about” in Peter Colse’s *Penelopes Complaint: or, A Mirrour for Wanton Minions* (1596). 58

Dancing manuals provide detailed instructions for how to perform the galliard. One galliard step-pattern, or *tempo di gagliarda*, consisted of four kicks and a *cadenza*, or closing step. These five steps led to the galliard’s nickname of the *cinq-pas, cinque passi*, or sinkapace. 59 The basic galliard had the four kicks going forwards, alternating left and right, but there were numerous variations including kicks to the back or side and bending or crossing the leg instead of keeping it straight. 60 Like nearly every courtly dance in this period, galliard step-patterns started with the left foot and were then repeated with the right foot, since symmetry was one of the characteristics that made dances beautiful. 61 The kicks and *cadenza* could be augmented by caprioles or capers—jumps with multiple beats or quick switching of the feet in the air—as well as turning jumps, spins, and other impressive

embellishments. “Some in their cinqueapase did nimbly bound, / Some did the Cros-
point, some high Capers cut, / And on the toe some other turned round,” notes Hugh
Holland in Pancharis (1603). Thoinot Arbeau includes several simple illustrations of
galliard steps and embellishments in Orchésographie, including a crossing step and a
caper. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4: Galliard Steps from Orchésographie (1589). From left to right: front kick right,
cross step left, back kick right, capriole or caper.

To come up with new galliard step variations and execute them smoothly and
gracefully required a substantial amount of study and practice. Cesare Negri recommended
practicing caprioles and other en l’air steps while holding onto a table and chair. There
were even dancing manuals dedicated entirely to the galliard, such as Lutio Compasso’s
Ballo della Gagliarda (1560) and Prospero Lutii di Sulmona’s Opera bellissima nella
quale si contengono molte partite, et passeggi di gagliarda (1589). These manuals

62 Caroso, Nobiltà di Dame, pp. 116-127.
63 Hugh Holland, Pancharis the first booke. Containing the preparation of the loue betweene Ovven
Tudyr, and the Queene, long since intended to her maiden Maistie: and now dedicated to the
invincible Iames, second and greater Monarch of great Britaine, King of England, Scotland,
France, and Ireland, with the islands adjacent (London, 1603), sig. C10v.
64 Cesare Negri, Le Gratte d’Amore (Milan, 1602), p. 60; G. Yvonne Kendall, “Le Gratie d’Amore
146a.
provided numerous variations or *mutanze* to help dancers put together new step combinations.\(^{65}\) Having a ready supply of fresh, impressive variations or “trickes” was particularly important for dances like the galliard that allowed for or demanded improvisation, “happye was he that before his Ladye coulde do the lustiest tricke.”\(^{66}\) While not everyone appreciated courtiers’ “lofty galliards, which alter every day with new devises,” for the most part, innovation was prized, especially when the galliard was danced as a male solo or as part of a competition or challenge.\(^{67}\)

Competitive galliard dancing included the tassel game, in which men took turns trying to elegantly kick a tassel hung above the ground. In *Nobiltà di Dame*, Caroso describes “The Jump To the Tassel” or *Salto del fiocco*:

> Have the tassel held as high as a man—more or less, as one pleases—stand with your side turned toward the tassel; then raise your left foot somewhat (simultaneously lifting your right), and turning your entire body to the left, while jumping as high as you can, crossing your right leg over your left, raising your [right] toe high enough to touch the tassel, and landing on the ground on the same spot as when you began, still with your right foot.\(^{68}\)

Cesare Negri also describes galliard jumps and kicks used for jumps of the tassel, providing thirteen different versions in *Le Gratie d'Amore* (1602), ranging from easy to difficult.\(^{69}\) The tassel game could be played competitively with the tassel raised higher with each round until all but one dancer is disqualified. Negri provides illustrations of several of these jumps, including one that matches Caroso’s description quite well—at least if one flips the

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\(^{67}\) Peter Colse, *Penelopes complaint: or, A mirrour for wanton minions. Taken out of Homers Odissea, and written in English verse* (London, 1596), sig. A4v.

\(^{68}\) Caroso, *Nobiltà di Dame*, p. 119.

instructions for what is done with the right or left side. (See Figure 5.) Several examples of the galliard being used competitively by male dancers are discussed in Chapter 2, as well.

![Galliard Step with Tassel from Le Gratie d'Amore (1602).](image)

**Figure 5:** Galliard Step with Tassel from *Le Gratie d'Amore* (1602).

Jumping for the tassel was only done by men, but all the other kicks, turns, and jumps were also danced by women when the galliard was performed as a duet for a couple. In Caroso’s *Gagliarda di Spagna* (Spanish Galliard), for example, the man and women begin and end dancing together, with the middle of the dance containing two sets of solos. In each set, the gentleman performs a complex galliard variation, and then the woman “repeats what the gentleman has just done.”

Having the man dance his solo first each time might be a nod to patriarchy, and the styling of the moves could be gendered, as discussed in detail in Chapter 2, but the galliard steps themselves and the combinations called for in

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71 Caroso, *Nobiltà di Dame*, p. 197.
choreographies were egalitarian. During a partner’s solo, the other dancer watched but did not stay so still as to “resemble a statue” but was supposed to take a few steps, adjust his gloves, or fan herself in order to “appear most graceful.”

Gracefulness improved the galliard, as it did all dances, but it was particularly critical for dancing the pavan. The pavan was a slow, solemn, processional dance of Italian origin made up of singles and doubles (passi and seguitos), the foundational steps of all dances in this period. Because the steps of the pavan were quite simple, the dancer’s poise and grace (or lack thereof) was clearly evident. (See Figure 6.)

![Figure 6: A Palace Interior with Ladies and Gentlemen Dancing and Playing Music, Louis de Caullery, seventeenth century. A painter of the Flemish school with strong Italian influences, Caullery’s serene procession of dancers most likely depicts a pavan.](image)

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72 Caroso, Nobilità di Dame, p. 163.
Musically, the pavan and galliard could be paired, with musicians playing the same tune (melodic or harmonic material) in duple metre for the pavan and in triple metre for the galliard.\footnote{This type of pairing is also found in earlier dance suites where the pavan was followed with a saltarello. However, most sixteenth-century pavans and galliards were stand-alone pieces simply played one after the other.} Changing rhythms and speeds creates aural variety, but there might also be a more practical reason for pairing pavans and galliards. The pavan is much less strenuous than the galliard, and so provides dancers with a chance to catch their breath before dancing the next galliard.\footnote{Many different types of dance employ this strategy in balls, informal social dances, and performances, with musicians or DJs alternating slow and fast tunes.} English printed sources often mention pavans and galliards together.

Barnabe Rich describes lusty gentleman and “brave and gallaunt dames” dancing “Pavyans and Galliardes” in “a merveylous large and beautifull chamber” in \textit{A Right Exelent and Pleasaunt Dialogue, Betwene Mercury and an English Souldier} (1574).ootnote{Barnabe Rich, \textit{A right exelent and pleasaunt dialogue, betwene Mercury and an English souldier contayning his supplication to Mars: bevvified with sundry worthy histories, rare inuention, and politike deuises} (London, 1574), sig. J2.} In \textit{The Arte of English Poesie} (1589), George Puttenham notes, “the Italian Pavan and galliard are at these daies in Princes Courts and other places of honourable or civill assembly” danced.\footnote{George Puttenham, \textit{The arte of English poesie Contriued into three bookes: the first of poets and poesie, the second of proportion, the third of ornament} (London, 1589), p. 37.}

In England the double step ending with a low kick or brush of the foot in the air became particularly associated with the almain or aleman, one of the dance types, along with the pavan, included in the group of English processional dances known as the old measures.\footnote{Wilson, “Dancing in the Inns of Court”: 14.} The old measures, performed at official events at the Inns of Court, at the end of court masques, and as a component of royal ceremonies and spectacles, was a set of dances that John Ward argues “formed a standard introductory course at the dancing
schools” at least in London. The dances that made up the old measures were a set group of choreographed, processional dances performed in the same order with only a few alterations and additions between c. 1570 and c. 1675. The old measures—which included pavans and almains—were danced by a long line of couples arranged by social status. The steps were fairly simple—mostly singles and doubles forwards and backwards with the occasional step to the side or turn in place—but happily for scholars, several men felt the need to write down the steps and figures for each dance, perhaps to help them remember the exact details of each of the rather similar dances. Although none of these manuscripts include the music for the dances, pieces with the same name have been found in other sources, enabling reconstructions. Reconstructions confirm the simplicity of these dances, but also reveal a certain elegant grace.

References to measures abound in printed sources, although it is not always clear whether they refer to a choreographed dance in general or specifically to the old or solemn measures, such as when Benvolio in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* quips, “let them measure us by what they will, / We'll measure them a measure and be gone.”

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80 Wilson, “Dancing in the Inns of Court”: 3, 13-16.

81 Seven versions of the old measures dances have been found so far, briefly describing the Quadran Pavane, Turkeyloney, the Earl of Essex Measure, Tinternell, the Old Almain, the Queen’s Almain, Madam Cicelia Almain, and the Black Almain. The earliest manuscript also gives instructions for the Lorayne Almain, the New Almain, the New Cicelia Almain, the Cicelia Pavan, the Long Pavan, and Brunswick, as well. (Wilson, “Dancing in the Inns of Court”: 3-5.)

82 For detailed analysis of musical scores, choreographic variants, and reconstruction challenges, see Payne, *The Almain in Britain*.

83 See Durham, “Dances from the Inns of Court,” and Pugliese and Casazza, “Practise for Dauncinge.”

Gager may have been referring to the old measures when he defends university students’ dancing in a play by explaining that, “they dansed onely two solemne measures, without any lighter galliard,” but again it is hard to be sure which definition of measures is being invoked.\(^{85}\) William Gager, a poet and playwright who wrote Latin academic dramas, had become embroiled in a controversy over the acceptability of the theatre with John Rainolds, a puritan theologian and scholar at Oxford.\(^{86}\) Rainolds, who had performed the female role of Hippolyta in a play presented before Elizabeth I when she visited Oxford in 1566, had some personal experience on which to base his condemnation of the theatre.\(^{87}\) However, his objections to the dancing in Gager’s *Ulysses Redux* (1592) were based on hearsay, since he refused to see the production himself. Gager dismissed Rainolds’ fears concerning the “hurt of amatorie dansing,” by assuring him that “none could be touched with anie sparke of lust by seeing the supposed gentlewemen danse so small a time, so gravelie.”\(^{88}\)

If the old measures epitomised grave, solemn dancing, the volta best represented wild, wanton dancing. Brought over from France, it involved much greater and more intimate contact than any other courtly dance. Thoinot Arbeau’s dancing manual, *Orichesographie* (1589), provides the only detailed choreographic description of the volta.\(^{89}\)

The dance was comprised of sections of galliard kicks and capers alternating with sets of four turning lifts. Arbeau explains that to do the trademark turning lift, the man held the

\(^{85}\) John Rainolds, *Th’overthrow of stage-playes, by the way of controversie betwixt D. Gager and D. Rainoldes wherein all the reasons that can be made for them are notably refuted; th'objections aunswered, and the case so cleared and resolved, as that the iudgement of any man, that is not froward and perverse, may easelie be satisfied* ([Middelburg], 1599), p. 104.


\(^{88}\) Rainolds, *Th’overthrow of stage-playes*, p. 104.

\(^{89}\) Arbeau, *Orchesography*, pp. 119-123.
woman by the waist (or back and busk) to lift her, while he used his “right thigh under her buttocks” to help her turn.\textsuperscript{90} She in turn placed her hand on the man’s shoulder or collar to push off of and lift herself higher during the turn.\textsuperscript{91} This made for much greater intimacy than in other courtly dances, where holding or clapping hands was the only form of physical contact. (See Figure 7.)

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{penshurstportrait.png}
\caption{The Penshurst portrait, also known as \textit{Queen Elizabeth I Dancing with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester}. French school, early seventeenth century. Barbara Ravelhofer cautions that, “genre paintings which show a cavalier lifting up his lady in the \textit{volta} have been spuriously connected with Elizabeth,” with the result that this portrait, “has (wrongly) settled down in collective memory as ‘the Queen dancing with the Earl of Leicester’.”\textsuperscript{92}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{90} Arbeau, \textit{Orchesography}, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{91} Arbeau, \textit{Orchesography}, p. 121.
\textsuperscript{92} Barbara Ravelhofer, “Dancing at the Court of Queen Elizabeth,” in \textit{Queen Elizabeth I: Past and Present}, ed. Christa Jansohn (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004), p. 110. Ravelhofer gives examples of recent critical studies that make this mistake, and notes that there are five sixteenth-century examples of this genre in \textit{L’arte della danza ai tempi di Claudio Monteverdi}, ed. Angelo Chiarle.
Arbeau cautions that the volta was considered immodest because it called for “long strides and separations of the legs,” and because the woman’s skirts could fly up when she was being swung through the air.\(^{93}\) Indeed, as the woman jumps, she must place her “left hand on her thigh to hold her petticoat and dress in place, lest the swirling air should catch them and reveal her chemise or bare thigh.”\(^{94}\) Finally, Arbeau warns the man that in order to perform the turn in the time allotted, it was necessary to “seize and press the damsel close to you,” a requirement, which though true, hardly improved the dance’s respectability.\(^{95}\)

The volta was certainly danced in England, but probably much less frequently than the galliard, pavan, or coranto. (See Table 1, above.) One of the old measures manuscripts, Bodleian MS Douce 280 by John Ramsey (c. 1630), includes “The French Levolto” among the dances to follow after the measures. Ramsey begins by saying the dance must be learned “By demonstration” but he gives a brief description that is similar enough to Arbeau’s choreography that it can be reasonably assumed to describe the same dance.\(^{96}\) Ramsey explains that the volta is performed by, “falinge in to your pace, holdinge handes, & conveyinge ye gentlewoman with your right arme & right legg by boundes in to .4. severall places. honor & ende.”\(^{97}\) Both Arbeau and Ramsey’s voltas call for the man to lift the woman with both an arm and leg and for these turning jumps or “boundes” to be done in sets of four. However, this is the only one of the seven old measures manuscripts that mentions the volta, although several others call for galliards to follow the measures, and

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\(^{93}\) Arbeau, *Orchesography*, p. 121.
\(^{94}\) Arbeau, *Orchesography*, pp. 121.
\(^{95}\) Arbeau, *Orchesography*, pp. 122.
\(^{96}\) Wilson, “Dancing in the Inns of Court”": 8.
\(^{97}\) Wilson, “Dancing in the Inns of Court”": 8.
Ramsey provides a brief description of a similar dance, the “Spanioletta,” in which the roles are reversed in the second part of the dance. The choreography specifies that the “woman heave up ye man,” for the lift.\textsuperscript{98}

A search of the Early English Books Online database only turns up a handful of references to the volta. For example, Sir John Harington uses the phrase “to daunce \textit{la volta}” as a euphemism for sex or perhaps rape in his translation of \textit{Orlando Furioso} (1607).\textsuperscript{99} In Shakespeare’s \textit{Troilus and Cressida}, Troilus confesses that “I cannot sing, Nor heel the high lavolt.”\textsuperscript{100} Manly, a character reminiscent of Queen Elizabeth’s dancing master, Thomas Cardell, who dresses in old-fashioned Elizabethan attire, is half-lauded, half-mocked for his dancing of the volta in James Shirley and William Cavendish’s play \textit{The Varietie} (1649):

\begin{quote}
With wonderful skill, he put his right arme about her, and took her left hand in his, and when he did so touze her with his right thigh and legg, and lift her up so high, and so fast, and so round ... Marry as soon as he had ended his dance she would lye down as dead as swing’d chicken, with the head under the wing, so dissie was she, and so out of breath.\textsuperscript{101}
\end{quote}

This volta is quite similar to those described by both Arbeau and Ramsey, and the vertigo experienced by Manly’s partner parallels the dizziness Arbeau warns Capriol about in \textit{Orchésographie}. Reginald Scot’s \textit{Discovery of Witchcraft} (1584) offers a much more unsettling association with the volta. It is the dance favoured by devils and witches:

\begin{quote}
At these magickall assemblies, the witches never faile to dance; and \textit{in} their dance they sing these words; Har har, devill devill, dance here, dance here, play here, play here, Sabbath, sabbath. And whiles they sing and dance, every one hath a broom in
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{98} Wilson, “Dancing in the Inns of Court”: 7.
\textsuperscript{99} Sir J. Harington, transl. \textit{Orlando Furioso}, 1607, Book 15, Stanza 43.
\textsuperscript{100} Shakespeare, \textit{Troilus and Cressida}, 1604, publ. 1609, Act IV, Scene 3.
\textsuperscript{101} James Shirley and William Cavendish, \textit{The Varietie} (London, 1649), pp. 43-44. The play was probably performed between 1639 and 1642. (Barbara Ravelhofer, “Dancing at the Court of Queen Elizabeth,” in \textit{Queen Elizabeth I: Past and Present}, ed. Christa Jansohn (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004), p. 109.)
her hand, and holdeth it aloft. Item he saith, that these night-walking or rather night-
dancing brought out of Italy into France, that dance, which is called La Volta.  

All of these references associate the volta with sexual license, scandal, or at best, courtship,
but it is not always clear whether or not the authors know the dance, or merely know of it.
Cavendish and Shirley are able to describe the volta’s choreography quite accurately; Scott,
however, might have meant his witches to use their broomsticks for dance partners, if the
Devil were not available, or he might simply have known that the volta was a sexually
suggestive and controversial foreign dance and therefore assumed it would be attractive to
devils and witches.

Several other dance types appear in English sources. Of these, the coranto was the
most common. Masques by Samuel Daniel and Ben Jonson, among others, call for the
performers to dance “Measures, Galliards and Curranto’s” with spectators during the revels
following the main masque, and Francis Lenton contrasts “Capring Corantoes” with
“smooth-fac’d” measures in The Young Gallants Whirligig; or Youths Reakes (1629).  
Like the volta, the coranto was a male-female couple dance. However, its footwork, made
up of sets of two singles and a double, was closer to that of the pavan, while in style it most
resembled the galliard. This was because singles and doubles were performed with hopped
steps or springs, giving the dance a more sprightly feel, as well as enabling dancers to
traverse the floor quickly.

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102 Reginald Scot, Discovery of vvitchcraft, London, 1584, Book 3, Ch. 2.
103 Samuel Daniel, The vision of the 12. goddesses presented in a maske the 8. of January, at
Hampton Court: by the Queenes most excellent Maiestie, and her ladies (London, 1604), sig. A9;
Ben Jonson, Hymenaei: or The solemnities of masque, and barriers magnificently performed on the
eleventh, and twelfth nights, from Christmas; at court: to the auspicious celebrating of the
marriage-vnion, betwenee Robert, Earle of Essex, and the Lady Frances, second daughter to the
most noble Earle of Suffolke (London, 1606), sig. C3; Lenton, Francis. The young gallants
whirligig; or Youths reakes Demonstrating the inordinate affections, absurd actions, and profuse
expenses, of vnbridled and affected youth: with their extravagant courses, and preposterous
Branles are another popular dance mentioned in various English printed works. Branles were usually circle dances, although a few choreographed branles, such as Arbeau’s “Branle de la Montarde,” were line dances. Branles could be danced by any number of people of any gender, but oftentimes they were structured as a circle of couples, with men and women alternating around the circle. They were simpler and more rustic in style than galliards and corantos, and Arbeau, on occasion, mentions them being danced by “lackeys and serving wenches.” Nevertheless, he considers even the more energetic branles to be suitable for young gentlemen and gentlewomen to dance in the ballroom, in a masquerade “disguised as peasants and shepherds,” or “for a lark” in a private gathering.

In England, branles (pronounced “brawls”) were also danced by courtiers and gentle folk. In James Shirley’s play *The Example* (1637), Sir Solitary Ploit says that his wife, Lady Ploit, likes to “daunce the brawles” with young gallants, and John Ramsey of Middle Temple includes “The French Brawles” as the final entry in his recommendations for what to “Practise for Dauncinge,” in one of the old measures manuscripts. The dance retained its French association when it crossed the Channel, and, like the volta, is often described as a French dance, “What Gallants have you ne're a Page can entertaine / This pleasing time with some French brawle or Song?” asks Sir Edward in John Marston’s *Jacke Drums Entertainment: or The Comedie of Pasquill and Katherine* (1601). A servant asks his master, “Will you win your love with a French braule?” in Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour Lost* (1598, 1623). Because the boy’s next comment also alludes to dances,
we know he is referring to the dance the branle rather than to fighting, as his master misinterprets, “How meanest thou, brauling in French?” The boy responds by advising his master, “to Jigge off a tune at the tongues end,” and “canarie to it with the feete,” to win the love of Jacquenetta, a country wench. In this playful passage, Shakespeare suggests that a French branle would be an appropriate dance with which a Spanish gentleman could court an English country girl.

There were other dances besides the branle that had a rustic or popular flavour. The most frequently mentioned in English works are the jig, the hornpipe, and the morris. Because these dances are not included in any of the extant dancing manuals nor described in the old measures manuscripts, their exact steps and structure remain unknown. Nevertheless, it is possible to piece together a general idea of their steps and style from other sources.

The word “jig” was used to describe both a dance and a dance-heavy, comedic theatrical afterpiece that followed plays on the London public stages. The dance was associated with Scotland, as when Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing (1600) quips that wooing is “hot and hasty like a Scotch jigge (and full as fantastical)” while a wedding is “manerly modest, (as a measure) full of state & anchentry.” Apparently, the jig was an energetic dance. Randle Cotgrave’s A dictionarie of the French and English tongues (1611) associates the jig with galliards and corantos, defining “Balladinerie” as “High, or lively

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109 Shakespeare, Loues Labour’s lost, p. 128.
111 William Shakespeare, Much Ado About Nothing (1600 quarto, 1623 folio), Act II, scene 1, lines 75-76 and 76-77.
dauncing, as, of galliards, Corantoes, or Jigges.” However, no jig choreographies survive. Brief descriptions indicate that it was a fast dance and involved spinning or turning, but this is insufficient to reconstruct the dance with any accuracy. The handful of references are not even clear as to whether it was a solo dance, a dance for couples, or a song or a short comic play with a danced component. There are some surviving jig tunes such as “Kemp’s Jig,” but since there are no choreographic descriptions of any detail to go with them, when one sees a “jig” performed onstage, such as at the New Globe Theatre in London, it is the result of more wild surmises than reasonable hypotheses.

Similarly, while hornpipe tunes survive, there are no known choreographies from before the second half of the seventeenth century. Indeed, there seems to be even less consistency in descriptions of the hornpipe than of the jig. It is most often mentioned as a man’s solo dance, but there are also references to two dancers alternating solos and to male-female couples dancing a hornpipe together. The general consensus is that the hornpipe was rustic in character, energetic, and associated with the north more than the south, especially Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lancashire, and Scotland. Although there

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are no surviving choreographies for the hornpipe, there is extant music. Prior to the
eighteenth century, hornpipe music was always in triple time, with syncopated rhythms.\textsuperscript{117}

One of the longer references to dancing the hornpipe occurs in a song or poem
recorded by William Blundell in 1641. The dancing takes place in Little Crosby in
Lancashire. Blundell owned Crosby Hall in Little Crosby, so his perspective is that of a
gentleman describing the festive practices of his lower-status neighbours. REED editor
David George notes that the song may describe the celebrations in honour of May Day and
the dancing that often accompanied the decking of the maypole.\textsuperscript{118} The details in the song
confirm the above description of the hornpipe. Some of the dances are for couples
competing against each other for a wheat cake:

\begin{quote}
But Gilbert and Thomas and Harry
whose sweethearts weree Nell Nann and Marie
Tooke sydes against Gyles James and Richard,
whose wentches weree Joane Jane and Bridgett\textsuperscript{119}
\end{quote}

Other dances are for groups of men:

\begin{quote}
The ladds of Latham did daunce
thire Lord Strange hornepype which once
was held to have bene the best
and far to exceede all the rest\textsuperscript{120}
\end{quote}

Unfortunately, the song does not give many choreographic details. The dancers “tripped
and skipped,” and they “did hopp,” with the result that “loose legs shaked,” and “the

\textsuperscript{118} David George, ed., \textit{Records of Early English Drama: Lancashire} (Toronto: University of
\textsuperscript{119} George, \textit{REED: Lancashire}, p. 33, quoting Blundell Family Hodgepodge Book, LRO: DDBI
Acc 6121, fol. 182.
\textsuperscript{120} George, \textit{REED: Lancashire}, p. 33, quoting Blundell Family Hodgepodge Book, LRO: DDBI
Acc 6121, fol. 182.
maydes buttocks quaked.”\textsuperscript{121} Clearly, the hornpipe was energetic—the dancers “did swett them selves into a Jelly” dancing it—but otherwise the descriptors are quite generic and could apply to most high-energy dances. Still, the overall impression created by the dancers is one of joyous celebration and friendly competition rather than the more formal displays of athleticism associated with the galliard. Blundell repeatedly describes both the dancing and the music as being performed “merily” and “chearily.”\textsuperscript{122}

A few other contextual details can be gleaned from the song, as well. The dancing went on for most of the day, and several pipers provided the musical accompaniment. One of the groups of men is mentioned dancing “about the maypoule,” but it is not clear whether the other hornpipes took place around or near the maypole, as well.\textsuperscript{123} There is no mention of going inside, so it is likely that all the dances took place outside. Although Blundell does not say so specifically, the vigorous nature of the dance suggests that the couples as well as the “ladds” who dance the hornpipe were young and fit.

The morris was another dance best suited to the young and fit. Morris was a semi-professional dance form, rather than a social dance type, with rehearsed dancers performing for an audience and receiving compensation in money or refreshments. It was a physically strenuous dance with choreographed, technically demanding steps. It was performed by groups of six to ten men (and occasionally women), probably in their late teens and early twenties. The dancers wore bells around their ankles or just under their knees and special coats with long, dagged sleeves or ribbons to accentuate arm gestures. (See Figure 8.)

\textsuperscript{123} George, \textit{REED: Lancashire}, p. 33, quoting Blundell Family Hodgepodge Book, LRO: DDBI Acc 6121, fol. 182.
Some of the dances utilised props like handkerchiefs accent the dancers’ movements or sticks and swords for mock combat. Morris dancers were frequently hired to dance in festive processions and as entertainment at church ales and other parish events. Morris groups went on tours of neighbouring parishes as well as danced at local events.\(^\text{124}\)

![Image](image-url)

**Figure 8**: Will Kemp, *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder* (1600). Title page.

Costumed characters, such as Maid Marion and Friar Tuck of the Robin Hood legend, a fool, a devil, or a hobby horse, often accompanied the dancers and sometimes danced among or alongside them. The Maid Marion would generally be a cross-dressed male, not a woman, and might engage in salacious or comic action with Friar Tuck. The hobbyhorse or fool’s job was to make sure that the dancers had enough room and to solicit bystanders for donations. Musical accompaniment was generally on pipe and tabor, played by a single musician. The Betley Hall window from Staffordshire depicts a selection of the most common characters, as well as regular morris dancers, a pipe and tabor player, and a maypole around which the dancers can be imagined to be performing. (See Figure 9.)

Figure 9: Betley Hall Window, 16th-17th century. Victoria & Albert Museum. From left to right, Row 1: Fool or jester, dancer, dancer. Row 2: dancer, maypole, pipe and drum player. Row 3: Dancer, hobbyhorse, dancer. Row 4: Dancer, Maid Marion, Friar Tuck.

The painting “The Thames at Richmond, with the Old Royal Palace,” (c.1620), housed in the Fitzwilliam Museum at the University of Cambridge, shows a typical morris
dance scene.¹²⁵ (See Figure 10.) There are six performers—three men in special dancing attire with ribbons or handkerchiefs tied around their sleeves and legs, a Maid Marion, a hobbyhorse, and a fool.

**Figure 10:** Morris dancers, detail from “The Thames at Richmond, with the Old Royal Palace,” c.1620. Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge.

The three dancers and fool wear the iconic morris bells on their legs, and the Maid Marion and hobby horse may as well—their costumes obscure their legs. The three dancers and the hobby horse also wear matching hats. The fool, wearing a parti-colored doublet, solicits contributions from onlookers. Judging by their clothing, the spectators range from middling to elite in status. A single musician playing pipe and tabor accompanies the dancers. He is not in costume but wears the usual attire of a middling-status man, similar to the man watching the dancers in the right foreground. The Maid Marion wears typical middling-status female attire as well, including a long white apron. The performance takes place

¹²⁵ This painting is a popular illustration in early modern histories and appears on the cover of John Forrest’s *The History of Morris Dancing.*
outside on a path along the river. Since most records indicate morris dance performances took place in towns, villages, and at festive events, this may depict an impromptu rather than a scheduled or commissioned performance. Dancers on the way from one village to the next might decide to put on a short show for a small group of interested spectators, if they thought it might earn them some compensation. Since at least one of the onlookers is shown making a donation here, in this case it was a worthwhile gamble.

Modern-day “traditional” morris dances derive from the dances collected by Cecil Sharp and his fellow folklorists in the early twentieth century.\(^{126}\) It is unlikely that these dances bear much resemblance to the early modern morris. Certainly morris is not a vestige of some “primitive rite” that “lingers in the minds of the country people,” as Sharp suggested.\(^{127}\) There is no unambiguous evidence of English morris dancing prior to 1458.\(^{128}\) More promising is the hypothesis that the English morris dance and European sword dances such as the morisco, matachin, and the barriers share a common ancestor and therefore may have similar choreographies.\(^{129}\)

There were also dances that were referred to by their geometrical configuration—round or circle dances, line dances for a single line of dancers, linear processional dances for a long line of couples (sometimes called a longways dance), and specially choreographed dances that called for a series of different figures. Most of the court masque choreographies for noble dancers called for a series of figures such as triangles, diamonds, half circles, or equally spaced rows. The dancers might even spell out words, such as

“ANNA REGINA,” in the manner of modern-day marching bands.\(^\text{130}\) The majority of the geometrical terms could be used to describe either courtly or country dances. In an entertainment for the royal family in 1603, Ben Jonson describes a group of fairies, “who falling into an artificiall ring, that was there cut in the pathe, began to daunce a round.”\(^\text{131}\) Barnabe Barnes, a Yorkshire-born poet and playwright, on the other hand, depicts the round as a rustic dance in “Ode 11” of \textit{Parthenophil and Parthenophe}, “The shepheardes poopen in their pype / One leades his wenche a country rounde.”\(^\text{132}\) Interestingly, while courtly versions of linear processional dances included pavans, almains, and the individual dances that made up the old measures, there are not any named country processional dances. Of course, there were named country dances, such as the cushion dance, but there is too little known about their steps and figures to begin to classify them. (See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the cushion dance.)

**Dance in Context**

Occasionally, dance references, like the mentions of galliards, corantos, and hornpipes quoted above, include some contextual details. For example, in the surrounding stanzas of “Ode 11,” Barnabe Barnes has the dancers perform hornpipes, galliards, and morris dances, as well as the aforementioned round dances; a piper provides musical accompaniment; a hobby-horse dances alongside the shepherds; the dancing takes place

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\(^\text{131}\) Ben Jonson, “A Particvlar Entertainment of the Qveene and Prince their Highnesse to Althrope, at the Right Honourable the Lord Spencers, on Saterday being the 25. of June 1603. as they came first into the Kingdome” in \textit{B. Ion: his part of King Iames his royall and magnificent entertainement through his honorable cittie of London, Thurseday the 15. of March. 1603} (London, 1604), p. 2.

\(^\text{132}\) Barnabe Barnes, “Ode 11,” in \textit{Parthenophil and Parthenophe Sonnettes, madrigals, elegies and odes} (London, 1593), p. 119. I have not found another example of “poopen” in an early printed work, but it appears to be used here as a synonym for piping or playing a musical instrument.
outside; and the dancing is part of the festivities to celebrate “merrie may.”\textsuperscript{133} Barnes’ description is at least somewhat fanciful, but he manages to convey a detailed picture in a few dozen lines. To what extent is the dancing he describes accurate or typical? Did dancing often take place outdoors or in particular venues? Was piping a common accompaniment for dancing? Did most dancing occur in the context of an official festival or celebrations?

Although there are all too few choreographic descriptions of early modern dances, answers (or at least hints of answers) to these and similar questions can be gleaned from non-choreographic dance references. The following observations are drawn from a database of 325 records referring to dance that were published in the Records of Early English Drama collections for the counties of Lancashire, Cheshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, and Somerset. (See Appendix: Table 1.) More than half of all the records—62% (202)—are ecclesiastical prosecutions. The majority are presentments of transgressors in the consistory court, but dance is also mentioned in depositions, interrogatories, and examinations. (See the Introduction regarding the ecclesiastical and secular court system and types of records generated.) There is a significantly smaller number of secular prosecutions that mention dancing—14% (46); these are mostly from quarter sessions and great sessions cases. Presentments are the most common type of secular prosecution record, but there are also a number of examinations, a few interrogatories, and several indictments. The remaining records include payments to dancers in household, town, and churchwardens’ accounts; journal entries and autobiographies; poems, plays, and entertainments; letters and petitions; and non-prosecution-related ecclesiastical records, such as visitation articles.

\textsuperscript{133} Barnes, “Ode 11,” pp. 118-120.
One of the challenges in tabulating and analysing these references is that dance is only sometimes the main focus of the record. At other times, it is simply one activity among several, such as a presentment for drinking, dicing, and dancing. Dancing or dancers are also sometimes mentioned in passing as a tangential detail, such as the murder suspect whose alibi is dancing in an alehouse. Because all of these types of dance references can contribute to a better understanding of the practices of dancing in this period, they are all included in the following analysis. Table 1 in the Appendix shows the relative numbers of records for which dance was the “main focus,” “one component,” or “tangential.”

As discussed in the Introduction, haphazard survival of records makes it impossible to make definitive comparisons, but the extant records give a sense of trends and possibilities, even if they are far from comprehensive. Since most of these records are prosecutions, they illuminate problematic or illicit dance practices more clearly than generally accepted, uncontroverisal dancing. At the same time, because the majority of prosecutions are for dancing on Sundays and holy days, the dancing itself was probably reasonably orderly and modest. It was the timing of the dancing not the dancers’ movements that were deemed objectionable. Moreover, many of the incidental details in these cases are telling and can help answer questions about who danced, where, and when, and for what reasons.

Participants

Who was involved in dance events, whether as a dancer, spectator, host, or critic, affected how dancing was perceived. John Wilmot, the rector of Tortworth, learned by experience that a dance deemed appropriate for parishioners might be judged inappropriate for a clergyman to dance. (See Chapter 5.) Religious authors including Christopher
Fetherston, Philip Stubbes, and Christopher Windle argued that youths and maidens were naturally drawn to dancing, although they disagree as to whether this was a good or a bad tendency. (See Chapter 3.) Archival records often, although by no means always, provide the age, gender, and marital status of participants. In court prosecutions, the role of the participant in the event may also be indicated, especially for hosts of events and musicians.

Sometimes court depositions provide biographical information including occupation and age, in addition to the person’s name and parish, but for the most part, dancers’ ages are not given in archival records. However, it was often noted if dancers fell into one of the following groups: children, youths, or the elderly. Of these, dancing youths were by far the most numerous for all types of records. Children are not mentioned in any prosecution cases, although they did get in trouble for dancing inappropriately. In 1620, a schoolmaster at Clitheroe Grammar School in Lancashire beat a boy for dancing and playing games during divine services. Children were paid for performing or as participants in a larger festival. In Chester in 1562-1563, several children received four pence for dancing with a hobby horse, and in 1612-1613, “younge children” danced in one of the guild performances in honour of Queen Anne’s visit to Wells. Elderly dancers and patrons appear only in ecclesiastical cases in this set of records, but they appear on both sides of the law. Commonly, older members of communities were witnesses called as

134 Six records refer to children dancing, four mention elderly persons dancing, and thirty-four records refer to young men, young women, maidens, or youths dancing.
authorities on customary practices. In Dundry, Somerset, in 1635, several village elders (all male) were called as expert witnesses regarding the traditional usage of the churchyard for dancing and other recreations. But older people also sponsored dancing, even if they did not actively participate. In Glastonbury, Somerset, in 1617, eighty-year old Henry Saint was presented for “keeping minstreells and dauncing in his house duringe the whole tyme of divine prayer uppon a sondaie.”

Dancing was seen as both the province of the young and a corrupting influence on them. Both of these views could lead to court cases. In Frome, Somerset, in 1580, William Stokes, who was in an ongoing dispute with at least two clerics, defended the youths of the parish from the rebuke of the minister when the latter chastised them for dancing in the churchyard at seven on a Sunday evening. At Wrenbury, Cheshire, in 1571, the young people gathered to dance were less innocently occupied. The evening may have started with “a great number of leude youtes dansinge in the house,” but it ended with at least one illicit liaison around ten in the evening. It is not always clear to whom the term “youths” refers. Although it could denote a mixed-gender group, “youths” usually refers to young men, with young women referred to as maidens or young persons. For example, a man from Catcott, Somerset, was presented in 1625 because he “gathered mutch companie to his house of younge men, and maydens” for dancing and other recreations.

One of the fears associated with dancing, in general, and with youth dancing, in particular, is that it would lead to disorderly behaviour. One reason why dancing appears so frequently in prosecution records is because it often occurred alongside other activities disapproved of by secular and ecclesiastical authorities. (See Figure 11.) Drinking, fighting, and game playing are the most frequently cited accompaniments. These activities tended to be associated with men more than women, but too few of the records specify the sex of the dancers to be able to confirm whether or not men were more likely than women to drink, fight, and play games at events that also featured dancing.

Nevertheless, the portion of records that indicate whether the dancers are male, female, or of both sexes is not without interest. While it is a common assumption that

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141 Game playing included a diverse selection of recreations from card and dice games to football and bowling.
“rather less frequently, men danced without women” than the other way around, these archival records tell a different story. Of the 325 records examined, 111 records indicate the dancers’ sex. (See Figure 12.)

![Gender Breakdown of Dance Records](image-url)

**Figure 12:** Breakdown of the subset of records specifying dancers’ gender.

In the records where the sex of dancers can be determined, fifty-three records describe only male dancers; forty-eight describe both male and female dancers, or what was known at the time as “mixed” dancing; and ten records describe dancing with only female dancers. In other words, there is more evidence that men danced in all-male groups than there is

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143 It is possible that men and women named in prosecutions for dancing on Sunday were dancing in male-only and female-only groups at the same event. However, there are enough examples where men and women are explicitly described as dancing together to make it reasonable to assume that when men and women were prosecuted for dancing at a single event, at least some of them were dancing together. Therefore, even though the exact numbers are tentative, the relative proportions of male, female, and mixed dancing should be representative.
evidence of all-female dancing—or at least there is more evidence of all-male groups getting in trouble for dancing and thus generating more prosecution records than all-female groups. Most of the records for all-male and mixed-gender dancers are presentments for dancing on Sundays or holy days; a significant minority are prosecutions for lewd dancing or dancing leading to lewdness.

One of the reasons the abundance of male-only records is surprising is because anti-dance literature claimed that mixed dancing was the only kind of dancing in which contemporaries had any interest: “You in your daunces must have women, or else the market is marred.”¹⁴⁴ Men and women dancing together instead of separately was one of the “abuses” moralists cited to distinguish between the permissible dancing of biblical times and the unlawful dances of their own day. The pervasiveness of single-gender dancing indicated by these records means that those who claimed all contemporary dancing was mixed gender were either completely disconnected from the actual dance practices of their own day, or they knowingly misrepresented those practices to further an anti-dance agenda. (It was much easier to assert the claim that dancing led to sinning when men and women danced together.)

Since the vast majority of choreographies in dancing manuals are for male-female couples, this raises the possibility that there were a lot of other dances, now lost, that were designed for single-sex groups. (See Chapter 2.) Moreover, these findings mean that not only must we be sceptical of the way moral treatise writers interpreted dancing, but we must also be sceptical of their descriptions of dance steps and styling, since these may be drawn from imagination rather than observation. There is no known choreography that calls

for “filthie groping,” which Philip Stubbes claims in *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583) is “practised every where in these dauncings.”

There are, however, a few accounts of what one might term “lewd dancing.” For example, in 1639 in Bridgwater, Somerset, Henry Pillchorne was presented in the consistory court because, “he daunced with his britches downe bout his heeles” and “did shew his privie members unto the companie most uncivillie there being then women many present.” Another Somerset man had been presented a few years earlier in 1634 in Compton Bishop for “putting off his cloathes and dauncinge in his shirte on Shrove sondai last,” and using “verie unseemelie gesture in his said dauncinge before divers people that were ashamed thereof.”

While the above examples clearly refer to dancing that was sexually suggestive and considered inappropriate by most, if not all, of the spectators, there are also several references that are more difficult to assess, such as a complaint from Wraxall, Somerset, in 1615 about a group of men who, “in most riotous and deboshed manner in drinkeing daunceing and swaggering did most lewdly behave themselves” at an ale. Here, “lewd” appears to be a catch-all term for disorderly, raucous behaviour, but there is a possibility, especially since drinking was involved, that the men were dancing in a sexually suggestive or aggressive manner. Therefore, to err on the side of caution, I have classified records as

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148 Stokes, *REED: Somerset*, vol. 1, p. 398, quoting Bill of Complaint in Keene v. Cox et al., PRO: STAC 8/192/7 item 2, sible mb (19 June); and vol. 2, p. 964 n. 398. The dancing occurred at an unsanctioned ale thrown by Robert and Conan Cox. The Coxes had laid claim to fourteen acres of land in Wraxall held by the complainant. Keene complains in the aforementioned bill that Robert Cox and his companions assaulted his servant when he tried to keep them off the disputed land.
“lewd” in the database in such cases, which means that the small number of lewd dancing cases in the records examined—4% (12 out of 325)—is most likely overestimated rather than underestimated.

The charge in the above cases was that the dancers had danced in a lewd manner or style. However, evidence of the usual complaint of anti-dance treatises, that dancing led to lewdness, does appear in these records, just in much smaller amounts than critics might lead one to expect. According to Philip Stubbes, dancing aroused the passions with bawdy gestures and embraces, which led to fornication and adultery. Yet accounts in which dancing leads to illicit sexual encounters such as adultery or fornication make up only 4% (13 out of 325) of the records. This low number even includes poems and songs that mention dancers going astray, not just prosecutions.

On a side note, the sexuality of widows got a lot of attention from contemporaries, but widows do not figure prominently in these records at all. There are two accounts of widows dancing during service time and one record of a widow having drinking and dancing in her house during evening prayers, but there is only one record where a widow’s dancing is mentioned in conjunction with her having inappropriate sexual relations. However, in this record from Alvanley in 1638, the widow’s amorous adventures were not what were being prosecuted. Rather, they were discussed in a quarter sessions examination.

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after the widow disappeared, and the husbandman with whom she had had sexual relations was charged with her kidnapping and possible murder.\textsuperscript{151} Dancing might be the kind of activity a woman of questionable morals might engage in, but dancing was not considered sexually or generally immoral in of itself. Indeed, it was a legitimate recreation for married couples to do together. Approximately the same number of records mention married couples out dancing together as mention unmarried couples (10 and 9, respectively).

In addition, there seems to be little difference in the way male and female dancers were treated in the courtroom. (See Figure 13.)

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{gender_breakdown_by_legal_consequence}
\caption{Gender Breakdown by Legal Consequence}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Figure 13:} Final rulings in ecclesiastical prosecutions specifying dancers’ gender.

In cases where the verdict is known, single-sex dance events were equally likely to be assigned penance or fined regardless of whether the dancers were male or female. Mixed-gender dancers were marginally more likely to be dismissed with a warning than those who danced solo or in single-sex groups. Still, so many cases have unclear or unknown conclusions that it is possible that there was a gendered difference that is simply masked by incomplete or missing records.

“A time to dance”

In addition to judging dancing guilty by association with drinking, fighting, and illicit sexual encounters, both secular and ecclesiastical authorities considered dancing disorderly if it occurred at certain unsanctioned times. Not surprisingly, dance events that occurred late at night were considered inherently disorderly, as were dancers who interrupted church services, as a large group of men and women did in Heapey, Lancashire, in 1621.152 Dancers who skipped church services to dance elsewhere during service time, such as at an alehouse or a private residence, were also considered disorderly, even if the disorder was mostly moral. Dancing at other times of day could be permissible or forbidden depending on a number of other factors, as discussed below.

One of the main controversies regarding dancing in the early modern period was the sabbatarian question: Should recreations such as dancing be allowed on Sundays and holy days? (See Introduction.) Those who supported dancing lauded it as a long-standing tradition that fostered goodwill and neighbourliness. Those who disagreed condemned dancing on holy days as both a sin and an act of disorder. The dancer not only imperilled his immortal soul, but he also called down the wrath of God unto the entire community.

152 Baldwin et al., REED: Lancashire including Isle of Man Addenda, pp. 17-19, quoting Chester Diocesan Visitation Proceedings, CCALS: EDV 1/23, fol. 33v (13 April), fol. 37v (27 April).
This made it impossible to simply stand by while neighbours danced. Across England, puritan reformers tried to suppress Sunday dancing, and festive traditionalists responded by organizing Sunday maypole dances, Whitsun morris dances, and church ales. When the two sides could not reach a compromise, they presented each other in the church courts. Such cases became increasingly prevalent in the early seventeenth century. Of the 325 records examined, over half (187) pertain to dancing on the sabbath or holy days. (See Appendix: Table 2.) Most are presentments in the consistory court for dancing, although there are also several visitation articles that inquire about Sunday dancing and petitions that complain about those who engage in it or prevent others from doing so. In a substantial number of these records (84), parishioners are charged with or questioned about dancing causing them to be absent from divine services. However, there are also a few complaints about dancing on Sunday evenings prior to James I issuing the Book of Sports.

The Book of Sports—a catch phrase that included the 1617 declaration for Lancashire as well as the 1618 and 1633 national declarations—focused national attention on dancing on Sundays and holy days by giving it royal sanction. (See Introduction.) There are a handful of records in the REED collections examined that specifically invoke the Book of Sports. Of these records, roughly two thirds are for dancing that violated the Book of Sports, while the other third is for dancing sanctioned by the kings’ declarations. For example, four men and three women were presented for dancing on a Sunday in December 1619 in Colwall, Herefordshire, between morning and evening prayers “contrarie to the kinges declaracion.” However, since this is most likely the phrasing of the court clerk rather than the dancers, it is not clear to what extent they were aware of the royal

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declaration’s protection of Sunday sports. Terms such as “lawfull” or “unlawfull sportes” crop up from time to time, as in the complaint made by Oliver Chiver, the curate at Keynsham chapel in Brislington, Somerset, to Archbishop Laud in 1636 that the Brislington churchwardens “inhibited the young people their lawfull sport after evening prayer,” but it is difficult to tell whether the speaker is invoking the Book of Sports specifically or referring to licit and unlawful pastimes more generally.¹⁵⁴

The Book of Sports permitted dancing on Sunday but only after Evening Prayer. This calls attention to the importance not just of the day on which dancing occurred but the time of day. (See Figure 14.)

![Dance Records Breakdown by Time of Day](image)

**Figure 14:** Number of records by time of day. Morning service records are categorized as “morning,” between service and evening service records as “afternoon,” and after-evening service records as “evening.”

The afternoon and evening were the most frequently mentioned times to dance. Dancing in the morning is rarely mentioned in archival records, although it was recommended by educators as a good way to improve students’ concentration on school days. It would have been considered permissible by some on Sundays, as well, prior to the publication of the Book of Sports, which mandated that dancing only occur after Evening Prayers. (See Introduction.) That there are few mentions in the records could be either because it was not very common or because it was not very controversial.

Dancing in the afternoon was viewed similarly to dancing in the morning; there was nothing scandalous about afternoon dances. The problem was when people danced in the afternoon on Sundays and holy days. The Book of Sports only sanctioned dancing after Evening Prayers. Those who danced in between morning and evening services were still subject to prosecution. Most of the dancers prosecuted for afternoon dancing had also skipped Evening Prayers, but several, such as four women at Withington, Herefordshire, in 1619 and a morris dancer at Wellington, Herefordshire, in 1621, were simply presented for dancing before Evening Prayers.

Dancing in the evening—from after evening service until dark or later—was sanctioned by the Book of Sports but was considered more morally suspect than dancing in the daytime, while dancing late at night or all night was, not surprisingly, seen as very suspicious. In 1609, a constable from Taunton, Somerset, presented information before the Justices of the Peace at quarter sessions against a man for a litany of transgressions including keeping a disorderly house, aiding horse thieves, and having young men and

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155 See Robert Weinpahl, *Music at the Inns of Court during the Reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International for the Department of Music, California State University, Northridge, 1979), pp. 23-47.
156 Klausner, *REED: Herefordshire/Worcestershire*, p. 175, quoting Acts of Decanal Court, 1619, HCL: fol. 5v (26 Feb), fol. 6; and p. 175, quoting Acts of Decanal Court, 1621, HCL: fol. 55 (2 Dec).
women at his house for “moste part of the night or all the night to gether with minstrealls, dancinge and drinkinge,” which was considered by his neighbours to be “verye uncivell.” 

Charges of dancing all day or all night were probably complaints about a general lack of moderation in revelling rather than literal descriptions of multiple-hour dance marathons. Examples include two men and one woman who spent most of the Sunday after Midsummer’s Day dancing on Stokes Green at Stoke St. Milborough in Shropshire in 1615. There was a constable who hosted dancing and drinking during divine services and all night after at Darnhall, Cheshire in 1602 and also had carousing all night on a Monday with pipers.

Dancing could and did occur at all times of day and night, but the afternoon and evening were the most common times for dancing in these records, especially on Sundays. This suggests that Sunday afternoons and evenings were the preferred times for engaging in leisure activities as well as for hosting community celebrations. Most of the populace worked during the daytime Monday through Saturday. Therefore, those who wanted to dance had limited times available: in the evening on weekdays or after divine services—i.e., in the afternoon or evening—on Sundays and holy days. For farmers, husbandmen, servants, and the other working people who had to be up early in the morning, dancing on weekday evenings would have been irresponsible. Ironically, the only realistic, responsible time for working people to dance was on Sundays and festive days—the same times for dancing that puritan reformers condemned and decried as profanation. Commoners who danced had to choose between being irresponsible or irreverent.

Events at which Dancing Occurred

Another contentious issue for puritan reformers was the assortment of community events that included dancing as a component. In fact, attempts by reformers in Somerset to suppress church ales led to Charles I’s reissue of the Book of Sports in 1633. (See Introduction.) Dancing took place within a number of different contexts: public and private; formal and informal; performative and participatory. Where people danced—both in the sense of at what sort of events did dancing take place, as well as at what kind of sites and venues—shaped dance practices and their reception.

In the records studied here, informal social events were the most common type of event at which dancing occurred. (See Figure 15.)

**Figure 15:** Breakdown of the types of events in which dance occurred for records where the type of event could be determined. Life-cycle celebrations include weddings and christenings.
Informal social events included private get-togethers as well as impromptu merrymaking at alehouses, instances where there was no particular occasion for the dancing specified, as opposed to in celebration of a wedding or as part of a May game. Since nearly all dances of this period could be performed by one to six people and, if necessary, in a small space, there were not a lot of obstacles for those who decided on a whim that they wanted to dance. The main challenge would be providing musical accompaniment for the dancing. However, as Christopher Marsh has observed, musical proficiency was common throughout early modern English society, and it is not unreasonable to assume that someone could be found to fiddle, pipe, or drum. Alternatively, dancers could provide their own accompaniment by singing or clapping, as did the four female servants who danced and sang together around a lantern one evening in 1585 in Chester.

Most dancing at informal social events went unrecorded. Such occasions generated historical records when some sort of disorderly behaviour occurred that brought the event to authorities’ attention, whether because a jest went wrong, a fight broke out, or because the dancers were skipping church services. For example, we learn of the four female servants’ dancing in a quarter sessions case because shortly thereafter they were scared by a man making shadows with his cloak in the lantern light, and their master pressed charges. More typical is the case of Richard Simes of Moorlinch, Somerset, who was presented in the bishop’s court in 1626 for “tiplinge and dauncing in his howse” on Sundays and holy

days. Unfortunately, there is no way to know if Simes drank and danced in his house on other days of the week; it was only when he did so on holy days that authorities took note.

Although a formal occasion was not necessary for there to be dancing, dance was a common component of celebrations for every aspect of early modern life: religious festivals, seasonal celebrations, life-cycle events, and civic entertainments. Sometimes organizers of events hired dancers for entertainment. At other times, dancing was one of the celebratory activities engaged in by the revellers. Events such as ales and Whitsuntide celebrations might have both a morris dance performance and open social dancing.

In these records, ales were the most common event at which dancing occurred. The host would brew a large quantity of ale, which attendees would purchase at higher than usual prices, combining fundraising and sociability. Dancing, bearbaiting, and other activities might be included to draw larger crowds. Church ales were organized or sponsored by parish churches under the aegis of the churchwardens to raise funds to maintain the church fabric and pay for building projects. Of the eighteen cases shown in Figure 11 in which dancing at ales was prosecuted, eight were church ales. The other types

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of ales were hosted by and for individuals. These included bride ales to assist a couple preparing to wed and help ales for those who fell on hard times.\textsuperscript{165}

Most accounts of dancing at ales occur in prosecution records for sabbath violations. For example, one of the churchwardens of West Pennard, Somerset, got presented in 1586 for hosting a church ale on the Sabbath with dancing and tippling, while it was the churchwardens of Speke, Lancashire, who presented Thomas Blackey for having an ale and “Typlng Revelling [gaming] & dancing at his house upon the sonday” in 1635.\textsuperscript{166} Whether or not ales on the Sabbath were permissible was a matter of debate in this period, especially before the first publication of the Book of Sports in 1618, but everyone agreed that ales were not an acceptable alternative to attending church services. The bed ale in celebration of the 1608 christening of a Congresbury, Somerset, butcher’s child was a large affair, with “twoe fidlers att his howse all that day,” but the butcher got presented in consistory court because the “playing & daunsing” went well into the evening, including right through evening prayer time.\textsuperscript{167} Dancing was not required at ales, but it was common and certainly contributed to the general air of festivity and merriment they fostered.

Dancing was also one of the components of ales to which religious reformers objected strongly, especially for church ales. (See Chapters 3 and 4.)

Similarly, holy day celebrations—most often for the parish church’s wake (the annual saint’s day festival) or for Whitsuntide in late spring, but also for All Saints’ Day, Easter, and Christmas—might include dancing as part of the festivities. The wake at

\textsuperscript{165} Bennett, “Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England”: 20-21.


Farlow, Shropshire, in 1608 had a substantial amount of dancing. The parish rector made the initial accusation, but the accused dancers named others until sixteen men and nine women in all were tried for dancing at the wake during service time.\textsuperscript{168} Philip Abree’s desire to celebrate religious festivals with dancing, however, was not appreciated by all of his fellow parishioners in Stanton Lacy, Shropshire. In 1617, Abree was presented for hiring minstrels and morris dancers who performed at the time of morning services on St. John the Baptist’s Day and for hiring a minstrel to play for dancers on Whit Sunday.\textsuperscript{169} Dancing at seasonal celebrations of spring and summer, such as Whitsuntide May games or Maying and Midsummer festivities, was common. Dancing might also accompany the rush-bearing ritual that took place in July or August when parishioners ceremonially replaced the old rushes on the floor of the parish church with new ones after processing to the church carrying rushes and flowers.\textsuperscript{170} These festivities came under fire from religious reformers in this time period, especially rush-bearing and maypoles, which generated cases in the church courts and entries in visitation proceedings in response to visitation articles.

One might be surprised that other types of events in which dance occurred, such as wedding receptions, performances, and civic entertainments, are not mentioned more frequently in archival records. However, the paucity of records is most likely due to the uncontroverted nature of these events, rather than because they were necessarily less


frequent than ales or holy day celebrations or because they did not include dancing.

Although religious reformers had complained about dancing at weddings for centuries, it was widely practiced and considered acceptable by the general populace.\footnote{Heinrich Bullinger, \textit{The golden boke of christen matrimonye ... newly set forthe in English} by Theodore Basille. (London, 1543), p. 49. See also Ann Wagner, \textit{Adversaries of Dance: From the Puritans to the Present} (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press), pp. 3-18, 407-412.} Dancing in performances such as plays and masques was rarely commented on unless there was something notable or unusual about it, such as the “Turk on the rope” who travelled with the Queen’s Men theatre troupe to Shrewsbury in 1589.\footnote{Somerset, \textit{REED: Shropshire}, vol. 1, p. 247, quoting “Dr Taylor's History,” SSL: fol. 174v.} Similarly, dancing in civic entertainments, such as town watches or for royal visits, is rarely criticised; we only learn about it if there was a payment to the dancers in the town or guild’s account book, such as the six shillings, eight pence paid to the morris dancers who danced before the sheriff at the watch in Chester on 25 June 1588.\footnote{Lawrence Clopper, ed., \textit{Records of Early English Drama: Chester} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 15, quoting Treasurers' Account Rolls, CCA: TAR/1/18, mb 6.}

Account books make visible another event at which there was dancing: dance lessons. It is not clear how most people in England learned to dance. In small villages and hamlets, dances must have been learned informally from other dancers. Larger towns and cities offered opportunities for formal dance instruction. There are extant leases for dance schools in Oxford and London, and there were dancing masters attached to royal households.\footnote{Elliott, John R. Jr., & Alan Nelson (University); Alexandra Johnston & Diana Wyatt (City), eds., \textit{Records of Early English Drama: Oxford}. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), vol. 2, p.622. Ravelhofer, \textit{The Early Stuart Masque}, pp. 21, 35, 44-45. The Oxford dancing school run by city wait John Bossely included the future Charles II among its students.} Some professional musicians, such as George and Robert Callie, who were city waits in Chester, were also dance instructors.\footnote{Clopper, \textit{REED: Chester}, pp. 289-90, quoting \textit{Assembly Files}, CCA: A/F/10, fol. 53 (November 1615). The Callie (or Cally) family features prominently in Elizabeth Baldwin,
one apprentice, and they may have also taught members of the guilds who hired them to play at guild celebrations. Members of aristocratic families could hire traveling dance instructors to come to their country estates. For example, the Howard household books for 1633-1634 include a payment of forty shillings, “To Mr Robert Hymes for one Moneth Teachinge Mr William Howard and Mrs Elizabeth his Sister to daunce.” While little is known about these itinerant dancing masters, forty shillings is a substantial sum for a month’s work. The honorific “Mr.” attached to the instructor’s name suggests that he was a man of higher status than a common household servant.

**Venues and Sites**

A question that follows closely upon what events included dancing is where did dancing occur? A single dancer or a small group can make do with a few feet of space, but large-scale dance events required large, open spaces. Archival records indicate that dancing occurred in a wide variety of venues: private locations, such as houses and estates; in semi-private locations, such as inns, alehouses, and dancing schools; and in public locations, such as in the street, at the town cross, or around a maypole. (See Figure 16.) Many of these sites were outdoors, so their suitability was seasonal and dependent on the weather.

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*Paying the Piper: Music in Pre-1642 Cheshire* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications Western Michigan University, 2002).


Houses were clearly the most common venue named as a site in which dancing occurred. The term “house” includes both private and semi-private residences. Sometimes dancing in a house was an entirely private affair—a few friends getting together. In many other cases, the house in which dancing occurred was also an unofficial or quasi-official alehouse, and so the dancing would have taken place in a semi-private context at best.\textsuperscript{178}

Such records often include drinking or tippling as offenses in addition to dancing. For example, in 1619 in Neen Savage, Shropshire, “Johannes Barker aleman had dauncing in

\textsuperscript{178} It would be worthwhile to distinguish between private and semi-private houses acting as \textit{de facto} alehouses, but here I have accepted the designations of “alehouse” and “house” given in the records. See Peter Clark, \textit{The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830} (London: Longman, 1983), especially “The Pattern on the Ground: The Incidence of Alehouses 1500-1839” and “The Rise of Regulation 1500-1750,” pp. 39-63, 166-194.
his howse about the xxjth daie of June Last past being the saboath daie, and a great assemble there drinkeing.  \(^{179}\)

Dancing also occurred in licensed alehouses, as well, often in conjunction with more problematic activities. For example, the alehouse keeper of Tarporley, Cheshire, was presented in 1616 for having dancing, drinking, and disorder in his alehouse after Tarporley’s wake. \(^{180}\) Many of the records of dancing occurring in an alehouse name one or more musicians. Did these musicians just happen to be at the alehouse that day, and their presence inspired an impromptu dance party? It seems likely that alehouse keepers would have hired or encouraged musicians to frequent their establishments, thus making dancing much more likely among patrons. Having entertainment on hand would doubtless make an alehouse more attractive to would-be-dancers and spectators and would draw in a larger crowd than alehouses lacking this option.

The next most frequently mentioned venue for dancing was church properties. Most often dancing occurred in churchyards, but there was also dancing in church houses, chapels, and churches on occasion. Other than as a possible component of rush-bearing rituals, the majority of records in which dancing occurred in the church itself describe single, isolated instances. For example, a young boy who attended Clitheroe Grammar School in Lancashire was beaten for dancing and playing coverpin in the church during the service. \(^{181}\) Dancing in the churchyard, however, tended to be a regular occurrence, even when not sanctioned, and prosecutions tend to list repeated offenses. For example, the


“younge men, and maydens” of Catcott, Somerset, were in the habit of dancing the cushion dance, a kissing dance, in the churchyard on Sundays during the summer.\textsuperscript{182} (See Chapter 5 for a detailed description of the cushion dance.) Maypoles might be set up in churchyards in the springtime, especially in the early part of this period, as well as on village greens.\textsuperscript{183} Church ales, which often included dancing, generally took place in the churchyard, unless the parish had a church house—an enviable option, especially when it rained.\textsuperscript{184}

Dancing on church property, whether permitted or forbidden, fell under the jurisdiction of the church courts; it would only be mentioned in a secular prosecution if dancing were just one component of the case or a tangential detail, such as the quarter sessions prosecution of Mary Vayly for “borrowing” Joan Thomas’ cloak while the latter was dancing in the churchyard at Locking, Somerset, perhaps at a church ale.\textsuperscript{185}

Dancing in secular public places was most often recorded in civic accounts and the like rather than in prosecution records. This is because most of the dancing in the town square, on the village green, or in the street took place at civic events and performances such as town watches, Midsummer or May games, and market fairs. Such events were usually sponsored or sanctioned by authorities and so were unlikely to end up being prosecuted unless a fight broke out or the event was held on a Sunday, causing festive

\textsuperscript{182} Stokes, \textit{REED: Somerset}, vol. 1, p. 72, quoting Compert Book for Bishop's Peculiar, 1625, SRO: D/D/Ca 233, fol. 70v (14 October).

\textsuperscript{183} Given the popularity of maypoles as well as the large amount of antagonism directed towards them by puritan reformers, it is surprising that there are very few prosecutions that name dancing as one of the activities accompanying maypole celebrations. Perhaps this is because in communities where maypoles were contested, conflicts usually occurred before the maypole was up for long enough to be the site of dancing. For an exception, see the maypole dancing at Dundry discussed in Chapter 5.

\textsuperscript{184} Many parishes had church houses or parish houses in the early modern period. They were used for a mix of secular and religious purposes. (Patrick Cowley, \textit{The Church Houses: Their Religious and Social Significance} (London: S.P.C.K., 1970), p. 15.) Also see Chapter 5.

traditionalists and religious reformers to disagree about its acceptability. This was the case in Neston, Cheshire, in 1617 when two fiddlers led a crowd of 200 through the streets on a Sunday, dancing and revelling.\textsuperscript{186} Part of the problem may have been that not everyone in the crowd was actually dancing. It would have been nearly impossible to hear the sound of the two fiddles at the back of the procession.

### Musical Accompaniment

In *News From the North* (1579), Francis Thynn tells the story of country rustics who visit a dancing school in London, “Upon entering, a deaf man in their company, unable to hear the music, mistook a leaping galliard dancer for a madman and out of compassion ‘ran to him and caught him in his armes and held him hard and fast.'”\textsuperscript{187} The joke is that without music, dancers appear to be madmen.

Music was an integral component of early modern dancing. Musical accompaniment is mentioned in one third of the records (i.e., 109 out of 325), but music likely accompanied most dancing. In those records where an instrument is specifically named, piping is mentioned most frequently, followed by fiddling, drumming, and the combination of pipe and tabor.\textsuperscript{188} (See Figure 17.)

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\textsuperscript{186} Baldwin et al., *REED: Cheshire with Chester*, vol. 2, p. 732, quoting TNA: PRO CHES 24/114/2, single sheet (15 September).


\textsuperscript{188} Minstrels are mentioned in 27 of these 109 records, but the term is too ambiguous to be of use. Likewise, 6 records mention one or more musicians accompanying dancing but do not specify the instrument played.
Figure 17: Musical accompaniments classified by the terms used in the records themselves.

Piping is a somewhat problematic and ambiguous term, since it could refer to playing a bagpipe, a shawm or wait-pipe, a whistle-flute, or possibly even pipe and tabor.\textsuperscript{189} However, piping probably refers to bagpipe playing in most of these records, although it is difficult to be sure, especially since “piper” could be used as a generic term for musician, as well.\textsuperscript{190} Moreover, the predominance of piping was regional: 85% (40 of the 47 records) are from the diocese of Chester, the northernmost diocese in the area examined, roughly corresponding to the counties of Lancashire and Cheshire, and six of the remaining seven records are from Shropshire, the county just south of Cheshire.

After piping, the next most common accompaniment was fiddling.\textsuperscript{191} In Nantwich in 1622, for example, a man was presented for “playeinge upon his fidle upon Palme

\textsuperscript{189} Baldwin, \textit{Paying the Piper}, pp. 162, 165-166.
\textsuperscript{190} Baldwin, \textit{Paying the Piper}, p. 162.
\textsuperscript{191} See Peter Holman, \textit{Four and Twenty Fiddlers: The Violin at the English Court, 1540-1690} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).
Sunday the whole after noone” while four women danced. Violins and viols are also mentioned in the records, though less frequently. In 1609, a man arrested for stealing rabbits in Stoke St. Michael, Somerset, mentioned that he played a “vyolyn” for “daunceingge & Typpling,” while in 1617 in West Coker, Somerset, Richard Millerd did “att the request of twoe young gentlewomen play 2 or 3 lessons upon his vyoll.”

Violins and viols are included in the category “fiddling” in Figure 17 above as is the single mention of a rebec (a three-stringed violin) being used to accompany dancing.

Drumming was another popular accompaniment and can be found at a variety of events, including church wakes, May games, Midsummer festivities, rush-bearing, and town watches. Drummers also played for morris dances, the most common type of dance performance accessible to commoners. Drumming might possibly refer to the playing of pipe and tabor, as well. The pipe and tabor was a combination particularly suited to dancing since a single musician played both instruments at the same time, providing both melody and rhythm. This required a fair amount of coordination, since one played the pipe, a three-holed duct flute, with one hand, while beating the tabor, a small drum, with a stick held in the other hand. (See Figure 18.)

Other instruments that were used to accompany dancing from time to time include the cithern and gittern (early guitars) and the voice, either a cappella or in concert with other instruments. Although only three of the records examined specify singing as an

194 A rebec provided the accompaniment for the youths who danced in the churchyard on a Sunday evening in Frome, Somerset, in 1580. (Stokes, REED: Somerset, vol. 1, p. 121, quoting Bishop's Court Deposition Book, SRO: D/D/Cd 16, nf.)
195 Baldwin, Paying the Piper, p. 166.
accompaniment for dancing, it was probably quite common. Since singing did not require instruments or hiring experienced musicians, it was always available for dancers who did not have access to pipers or fiddlers. Moreover, as Robert Mullally’s study of the medieval carole demonstrates, there was an ancient tradition in England of singing to accompany dancing dating back to the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{196}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{pipe_tabor_2007.jpg}
\caption{Demonstration of pipe and tabor playing by Michael Franklin at the University of Toronto. © Emily Winerock, 2007.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{196} Mullally, \textit{The Carole}, pp. 5, 29.
Old Meg of Hereford

Having considered the individual characteristics of dancing, dancers, and dance contexts, we can now draw on them to better understand a problematic text. One of the most cited dance events in early modern English history is Will Kemp’s marathon morris dance from London to Norwich in 1600. (See Chapter 2.) However, there is another tale of morris dancing from this period that merits attention. Old Meg of Herefordshire (1609) is an anonymous account of a morris dance performed by twelve nonagenarians and centenarians. The piece can be described as a playful combination of the fantastical and the realistic. While the main emphasis of the account is on the vigor and stamina of the aged dancers, the author includes a wealth of details about the performers and the performance. Considering these details in relation to the above analysis of the dance records in the REED collections, as well as to other morris dance accounts, enables the reader to distinguish between the story’s more fantastic and realistic aspects.

Although the role of Maid Marion was usually performed by a man in woman’s attire, in the Hereford morris, Meg Goodwin, the “Old Meg” of the story’s title, danced the part. It was not completely unknown for women to dance the morris, but it was certainly unusual. (See Chapter 2.) There are no prosecution or payment records that clearly indicate that a woman was dancing the morris, although there are two ambiguous cases where women were presented for being at a morris dance. In the Hereford morris, two

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Klausner, REED: Herefordshire/Worcestershire, p. 132, quoting Old Meg of Herefordshire, 1609, STC: 12032, sigs. A3-C3v.}
\footnote{Klausner, REED: Herefordshire/Worcestershire, p. 170, quoting Archdeaconry of Hereford Acts of Office, 1602, HRO: box 21, vol. 80, pt 3, p. 75; and pp. 161-166, quoting Archdeaconry of Hereford Acts of Office, 1629, HRO: box 25, vol. 94, fols. 252v-4, fols. 255-5v (28 Jul.), fol. 256, fol. 76 (24 Oct.). John Forrest’s interpretation is that women were dancing the morris, but that the}
\end{footnotes}
musicians accompanied the dancers, a fiddler and a pipe and tabor player. Pipe and tabor was the most typical accompaniment for morris dancing, and fiddling was a common accompaniment for dancing, in general, so the music for this morris is described reasonably realistically. As in the case of most morris dances, the Hereford morris takes place outside.

The attire of the dancers is also mostly typical. The dancers wore “long coates of the old fashion, hie sleeves gathered at the elbowes, and hanging sleeves behind” in red and white. Although the upper sleeves are not gathered at the elbow but at the wrist, the morris coat worn by William Kemp is otherwise similar to that worn by the Hereford dancers. (See Figure 8 above.) The “Jewes cap” in red or white worn by the elderly dancers is less typical. Kemp and the Thames morris men wear tall hats, not tight-fitting caps like the Jew’s cap or skull cap. (See Figures 8 and 10.) An intriguing detail is that the aged morris dancers hail from twelve different parishes in Herefordshire, all within 18 miles of Hereford. Presumably the dancers were drawn from across the county because centenarians were rare, and dancing ones even more so. However, this also implies that morris dancing was a common enough skill that readers would not be surprised that men from a number of different parishes were proficient in the dance. Archival records support this supposition. Between 1602 and 1629 there were nine presentments of morris dancers in the diocese of Hereford, and there were likely many more morris dancers who never ran afoul of the law.

morris was in transition, influenced by the increasing popularity of country couple dances. (Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing*, pp. 279-280.)

Conclusion

Dancing was a popular recreation throughout English society. Plays, poems, and treatises include scenes of dancing, while dancing manuals and choreographic descriptions explain the steps and figures out of which dances like the galliard, pavan, and old measures were built. However, the contexts in which these dances were performed influenced their performance and reception. The Records of Early English Drama (REED) project has facilitated dance research by making accessible hundreds of dance-relevant excerpts from archival sources. Prosecutions for dancing, the most prevalent source for dance references in the REED collections, highlight aspects that were problematic or controversial, but they also preserve incidental details that help contextualise the dances described in dancing manuals and other printed sources. Even a fairly small number of records (325) can provide insights into who danced, giving clues about age, marital status, and even the sobriety of dancers. These records often name the types of activities that dancing tended to accompany; the days and times when dance was most prevalent; the events and venues at which dancing occurred; and the instruments favoured for dance music.

Overall, archival records show that most dancing occurred at informal social events that took place in houses, although dancing at ales held in the parish churchyard was also common. Moreover, because most of the records examined are prosecutions, these records illuminate the unofficial and sometimes disorderly side of merrymaking that dancing manuals and laudatory verses ignore or romanticise. At the same time, they complicate the complaints of critics. There certainly were drunk and disorderly dancers, but there were not nearly so many lewd and licentious dancers as anti-dance writers liked to claim.
Late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Englishmen and women enjoyed a variety of social dances. Most of these can be classified as either courtly dances, such as the pavan, or country dances, such as the morris. Nevertheless, there were no hard boundaries separating these categories, and there is substantial evidence of what Christopher Marsh terms “crossover and fusion.” Indeed, Marsh’s “two-way traffic” between country and courtly dance practices is similar to Jennifer Nevile’s observations on the fluidity of social and theatrical dance, “Choreographies that were regularly danced in a ballroom setting were also performed as part of theatrical productions, while dances that were composed for a specific theatrical event could and did migrate to the ballroom.” These cultural crossovers were facilitated by the fact that social and theatrical dance used the same steps and music types. It is highly probable that both court and country dances were also composed of these same singles, doubles, and kicks. What then separated aristocratic dancers from commoners if they danced the same steps?

Chapter 2 argues that it was through the manner of performance and “dance styling” that dancers asserted gentility and nobility. The instructions and caveats found in early modern conduct guides, educational treatises, and dancing manuals suggest that dancers of all social ranks used styling choices to convey personal characteristics such as grace, modesty, and virility.

Chapter Two
Dance Recommendations and Proscriptions in Secular Literature

In *The Court and Country, or A Brieue Discourse Dialogue-wise Set Downe between a Courtier and a Country-man* (1618), Nicholas Breton refers to dancing as a natural and customary activity of both courtiers and country folk. At court, beautiful ladies and courteous gentlemen dance at balls and masques, and Breton observes that dancing well is, “What most delighteth a Ladies eye in a Courtier,” alongside “neat apparell, wise speech,” and good horsemanship. ¹ In the countryside, on holy days, young men and women dance “on the greene, in the market house, or about the May-poule, where the young folkes smiling kisse at every turning,” or they compete for prizes by “dauncing for the Garland.”² Chapter 1 describes many of these dances and provides evidence that people did, indeed, dance around maypoles and on holy days as well as in venues that Breton leaves out, such as alehouses.

However, dancing was not just a customary pastime for men and women of different social ranks in early modern England; it was also a matter of controversy and debate. One reason was due to changes in religious observance and interpretation. This will be addressed in detail in Chapter 3. Another factor was the development of what Stephen Greenblatt has famously termed, “Renaissance self-fashioning.” The sixteenth century witnessed “an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a

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manipulable, artful process.” This led to an explosion of interest in instructional guidebooks and self-help manuals, including a number that promoted dancing as a necessary skill for courtiers and gentry because it facilitated proper comportment and deportment and improved self-control of the body and its actions. In addition, advocates asserted that dancing was an excellent form of exercise for both men and women and a refreshing, harmless recreation for people of all social ranks. Critics countered that dancing was, at best, a waste of time and money, and at worst, a licentious and irreverent indulgence that served as a gateway sin to even worse transgressions. Young people were particularly vulnerable to the temptation of dancing, which only confirmed its dangerous allure. Several prominent humanists, including Erasmus and Juan Luis Vives, warned of the perils of dancing, and their writings provided dance’s opponents with valuable precedents. (See Chapter 3.)

There were also a number of commentators who tried to navigate a middle ground. They acknowledged the dangers of dancing but contended that, with care, dancers could enjoy the benefits of dancing while avoiding the pitfalls. These educators, conduct writers, and dancing instructors stressed the necessity of dancing in the correct manner for a given situation in order to ensure that one did not violate propriety or social norms.

This chapter will investigate the aspects of the debate on dancing that were addressed in secular instruction manuals, paying particular attention to concerns about hierarchy and order, gender and sexuality, and the risks and rewards that accrued to individual dancers and spectators. Attending to caveats in written sources gives clues as to how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Englishmen and women used and perceived

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dancing, offering a unique lens through which to view and understand early modern fears, compromises, and assumptions about social hierarchy and gender relations, in general.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, dancing was controversial for several reasons. Both Chapters 1 and 2 call attention to the contextual details that made dancing appropriate or inappropriate in a given context. Chapter 1 focused on the impact of factors such as the venue, the time of day, and the age of the dancers. This chapter examines in detail two of the factors that influenced both observers and participants when judging dance: the manner of performance and dance styling. Finally, this chapter will examine a favorite but rarely studied early modern format for dance expression, competitive male dance contests.

A Note on the Sources

For its source base, this chapter draws on a combination of printed courtesy guides, education treatises, dancing manuals, play scripts, and accounts of dancing in manuscript sources, such as journals and court records. Dancing manuals are a critical source for understanding the dances of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. (See Chapter 1.) Formats vary, but all the extant dancing manuals provide one or more of the following: step descriptions, set choreographies for different dance types, accompanying music, recommendations for performance, rules of ballroom etiquette, and defences or rationales for dancing based on Greco-Roman writings, biblical passages, and historical precedents.

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4 Jorge Arditi argues persuasively for a distinction between courtoisie (or courtesy) and civility literature, but since the respective writings treat dance very similarly, for the purpose of this study, I have used references to courtesy, conduct, and civility instruction manuals interchangeably. (Arditi, A Genealogy of Manners: Transformations of Social Relations in France and England from the Fourteenth to Eighteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 4-5.)
There are no surviving English dancing manuals for the period between the compilation of the Gresley manuscript (c. 1500) and the publication of John Playford’s *The English Dancing Master* (1651). However, there are two French manuals written in England in the early seventeenth century by the two French dancing masters of George Villiers, the future Duke of Buckingham: “Louange de la danse” (c. 1619) by Barthélemy de Montagut and *Apoloige de la danse* (1623) by François de Lauze. Unfortunately, these do not have the clarity and scope of continental manuals such as Thoinot Arbeau’s *Orchésographie* (1589), Fabritio Caroso’s *Nobiltà di Dame* (1600), and Cesare Negri’s *Le Gratie d’Amore* (1602), which include detailed comments on carriage and comportment, as well as instructions for dozens of dances. Therefore, this chapter relies on continental manuals to complement English sources. As Barbara Ravelhofer has argued, if used cautiously, they can provide reasonable approximations of English dance types, steps, styling, and etiquette. In addition, the manuals’ detailed instructions enable source-based

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5 The Gresley Manuscript is a small book containing twenty-six choreographies and tunes, collated with Latin prayers and other unassociated materials by John Banys (c. 1500) in Derbyshire. *The English Dancing Master* (1651) was the first dancing manual of English dances to be published in England or Europe and includes step descriptions and music for each dance. John Playford, incidentally, was not a dancing master but a music publisher, and it is not clear whether he or an associate collected the dances. For an argument for Richard Brome and other playwrights’ possible involvement, see Keith Whitlock, “John Playford’s the English Dancing Master 1650/51 as Cultural Politics,” *Folk Music Journal* 7, no. 5 (1999): 548-578.

6 Barthélemy de Montagut, *Louange de la Danse* (1619), ed. Barbara Ravelhofer (Cambridge, UK: RTM Publications, 2000). François de Lauze, *Apoloige de la Danse by F. De Lauze 1623: A Treatise of Instruction in Dancing and Deportment*. Ed. and transl. Joan Wildeblood (London: Frederick Muller, 1952). As Ravelhofer explains in her introduction, de Montagut made a secret copy of de Lauze’s manual when the latter gave it to him to get his feedback and then presented the plagiarised copy to Villiers under his own name. De Lauze published a more polished version subsequently in response, but the text was no longer novel and de Lauze never achieved the acclaim and favour at court that de Montagut received.

reconstructions of early dances, which have helped the author and other modern-day scholars envision and assess the significance of dancing in early modern texts.\textsuperscript{8}

The authors of \textit{Nobiltà di Dame} and \textit{Le Gratie d'Amore} were Italian dancing masters and choreographers who travelled in courtly circles. Fabritio Caroso published several elegant, expensive, and commercially successful dancing manuals.\textsuperscript{9} Cesare Negri (1536-1587) instructed, choreographed for, and performed for such notables as Cosimo de'Medici, Don Juan of Austria, and King Henri III of France.\textsuperscript{10} Negri published \textit{Le Gratie d'Amore} towards the end of a lucrative career and reissued the manual two years later as \textit{Nuove Inventioni di Balli} (1604).

Caroso and Negri’s manuals were directed towards aristocratic readers, but Arbeau’s \textit{Orchésographie} sought a broader audience. The French canon Jehan Tabourot (1520-1595) published \textit{Orchésographie} under the pseudonymous anagram Thoinot Arbeau.\textsuperscript{11} Although some of the dances described in \textit{Orchésographie} were already out of fashion by the first printing, the dance manual was popular enough to be reprinted in

\textsuperscript{8} Dance reconstructions serve a similar purpose and suffer from many of the same difficulties as early music performances and “original practices” theatre projects. See, for example, Jenna Steigerwalt, “Performing Race on the Original-Practices Stage: A Call to Action,” \textit{Shakespeare Bulletin} 27, no. 3 (2009): 425-435.

\textsuperscript{9} \textit{Nobiltà di Dame} was a revision of Caroso’s first manual, \textit{Il Ballarino} (1581), and there was a second printing of \textit{Nobiltà di Dame} in 1605, as well as a posthumous reissue as \textit{Raccolta di Varij Balli} in 1630. Caroso’s exact dates are unknown, but according to internal evidence he was born in the late 1520s or early 1530s, and though he may have been alive in 1605 for the second printing of \textit{Nobiltà di Dame}, he is referred to as deceased in Alessandri da Narni’s \textit{Discorso sopra il ballo} (1620). (Fabritio Caroso, \textit{Courtly Dance of the Renaissance: A New Translation and Edition of the “Nobiltà di Dame”} (1600), ed. and transl. Julia Sutton (New York: Dover Publications, 1986, 1995), pp. 14-15, 19.)


1596.\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Orchesography} includes members of professions, such as the law, among those who might benefit from its explanations, step descriptions, and choreographies with music for both courtly dances like the galliard, but also for simpler, more rustic dances such as branles, discussed in more detail below. This mix is similar to the combination of simple but elegant old measures, athletic galliards and corantos, and gentrified country dances danced at the Inns of Court in England. (See Chapter 1.)

Like dance instruction manuals, most conduct guides were aimed at a noble or genteel audience and thus do not directly discuss the types of movement appropriate to dancers of different stations. Because conduct guides dominate the sources, this chapter focuses on elite dancing expectations and practices. Nevertheless, we can glean some details about the movement style of commoners from these sources, because there are a number of instances where the authors compare the dancing of elites and commoners. Such descriptions are likely stereotypical or exaggerated, but they do give some indication of the differences, or at least the imagined differences, in the dancing of those of different social ranks. This chapter includes some archival material, as well, to further contextualize and compare elite and common dance practices.

In addition, plays can help to fill in some of the gaps. There are a handful of scenes, as well as actor William Kemp’s account of his morris dance marathon, that depict the dancing of commoners. Plays are problematic as historical sources, since they sometimes show unusual and even fantastical dancing as well as dance in typical or representative contexts. However, when read carefully and in conjunction with other sources, they can provide helpful clues to how dance was used and perceived in particular contexts.

Moreover, as John Forrest observes, a dance performed within the context of play is still a

\textsuperscript{12} Arbeau, \textit{Orchesography}, p. 1.
dance, “When professional actors perform a rural morris dance on stage it may be viewed as a piece of crude rustic horseplay (dramatically) or as a sophisticated parody (theatrically)—but in both contexts the audience is seeing the events as dances.”13 This is quite different from a staged fight to the death, which is a “stylized choreography” of a violent act not simply an act performed on stage. In this sense, plays give two kinds of information about dance; they show dancing being performed within specific contexts in the world of the play, and they give evidence that those dances were known to the actors who performed them and made known to the audience members who watched the play.

Early modern conduct literature, education treatises, and dancing manuals are simultaneously didactic and informed by common practices. Although they primarily delineate how people ought to dance, they also provide glimpses of actual practices. Complaints and caveats indicate the ways in which dancers failed to live up to the authors’ expectations. In addition, these sources show that dance was an integral component of how nobility and gentry asserted or “performed” their status and gender and formed an essential criterion for judging the success of such performances. Finally, these works demonstrate that recommendations in instructional guides could be contradictory or paradoxical, and what constituted appropriate dance styling varied according to context.

**An English Gentleman’s Notes on Dancing**

In 1633, Justinian Pagitt, the son of the pipe and baron cursitor of the exchequer, set down some notes on dancing in his journal.14 Pagitt was, in many ways, a typical English

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gentleman, and his thoughts about dancing are likely representative of English gentlemen in this period. Like many young men from the gentry and aristocracy, Pagitt attended university for a few years (Christ’s College, Cambridge) but did not receive a degree. He was admitted to the Middle Temple of the Inns of Court in 1628 and was called to the bar in 1635. He married soon after and had five children. He acquired a lucrative office in the court of the king’s bench (keeper of writs and records), served as a justice of the peace (JP) for Middlesex, and participated in local government in both Hertford and Middlesex. While at Middle Temple, his diversions included playing music, riding, vaulting, and dancing. In this he was not unusual. All barristers were required to dance at Inns of Court solemnities and those who refused could be fined or disbarred. Pagitt may also have studied dancing while at Cambridge. Dancing was a common feature of festive revels, plays, and other entertainments, and there were dancing schools in the vicinity of both

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15 Prest, “Pagitt, Justinian.”
16 Wienpahl, Music at the Inns of Court, p. 180.
17 In 1610, “the Under Barristers were by Decimation put out of Commons, for examples sake, because the whole Bar offended by not dancing on Candlemas day preceding, according to the antient Order of the Society, when the Judges were present: with this, that if the like fault were committed afterwards, they should be fined or disbarred.” (Sir William Dugdale, Origines juridiciales, or, Historical memorials of the English laws, courts of justice, forms of tryall, punishment in cases criminal, law writers, law books, grants and settlements of estates, degree of serjeant, Innes of court and chancery (London, 1666), p. 246.) See The Black Books of Lincoln's Inn, vol. 2, p. 131.
universities. Pagitt also played the viol (an early violin) and enjoyed music well into old age, according to his friend Samuel Pepys.

Since many of the men discussed in this dissertation would also have learned to dance, or at least encountered dancing, at the universities, at the Inns of Court, and as justices of the peace, it is worthwhile to examine Justinian Pagitt’s notes in some detail.

In one of his weekly journal entries, the twenty-two-year-old Pagitt wrote down the following suggestions:

_De arte Saltandi [The Art of Dancing]_

1. ffollow yr dauncing hard till you have gott a habit of dauncing neately
2. Care not to daunce loftily, as to carry yr body sweetly & smoothly away with a graceful comportment
3. In some places hanging steps are very gracefull & whill give you much ease & time to breath
4. Write the marks for the stepps in every daunce under the notes of the tune, as the words are in songs.

Interestingly, these notes do not describe how to do particular steps or figures. Rather, they show Pagitt’s concern with something more nuanced: what we might call “dance

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20 Weinpahl, _Music at the Inns of Court_ , pp. 67-68. Roughly 2.5% of the ~50,000 men who were 17 years of age in 1630 attended the universities and Inns of Court. (Lawrence Stone, “The Educational Revolution in England, 1560-1640,” _Past and Present_ 28 (1954), pp. 54-55.) See also Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring, and Sarah Knight, eds., _The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court_ (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).
22 Pagitt’s notes may refer to dancing the old measures. John Ward argues strongly for the possibility that the old measures were taught as part of the stock repertoire in London dancing schools. (John Ward, “Apropos ‘The olde Measures,’” _Records of Early English Drama Newsletter_
styling.”23 The first note stresses the import of dancing effortlessly, practicing enough so that one’s skill seems accidental or habitual rather than hard won. Two of the notes mention the related issue of gracefulness, which will be discussed more below. The final note is a practical tip on how to remember which step corresponds with which musical phrase.24 As both the first and final notes remind, grace and skill in performance can only impress viewers if one also dances the right steps at the right time.25

Justinian Pagitt’s notes on dancing focus on his desire to dance in a way that appears easy and graceful yet is correct and skillful at the same time. This is similar to the idea of sprezzatura or studied nonchalance advocated by Baldesare Castiglione in Il libro del cortegiano (1528), a work that strongly influenced sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English ideas and writings about courtesy and gentility. Yet, Pagitt (and Castiglione’s) emphasis on gracefulness may come as a surprise to modern readers. Today, this term is primarily associated with feminine movement. However, in the early modern period, graceful movement was a common goal for both male and female dancers.

Sprezzatura and grazia

Many English works and English translations of Continental European conduct manuals include dancing among the required skills for courtiers and sanctioned recreations

18, no. 1 (1993): 7.) Also, see Chapter 1 for definitions and descriptions of the basic steps, figures and floor patterns, and dance types for this time period.
23 Briefly, “styling” refers to a variety of subtle movement choices that influence the overall perception of a performance. Aspects of styling include posture, length and vigor of steps, smoothness or grace, and use of embellishments. See Chapter 1 for more details.
24 This note describes choreographed dances, such as the old measures described in Chapter 1. In these dances, one danced particular steps in a particular order to particular music. In improvised dances like the galliard, on the other hand, the dancer could perform any combination of galliard steps, as long as they fit the dance’s rhythmic structure.
25 For several amusing accounts of courtly dancers who did not dance the correct steps, see Ravelhofer, The Early Stuart Masque.
Chapter 2: Dance Recommendations and Proscriptions in Secular Literature

for students, although a few strongly discourage it. Works that describe dancing as a requisite courtly art tend to follow in the footsteps of Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano*. Castiglione was a noted courtier in his own day, as well as a writer, and his discourse on courtly interactions was “celebrated throughout Europe as a delightfully sophisticated analysis of elite manners and morals, which offered an excitingly expansive vision of what a Renaissance courtier could, and should, be.”

*Il cortegiano* can be considered a courtesy book, but it is not a guide to conduct as much as a discursive analysis of different social contexts and situations:

> It attempts not to formulate a set of rigid rules and maxims hopelessly wedded to the specific aspects of a particular culture, but to make the reader conscious of the general nature of social operations as well as their moral dimension, so that he may then evolve his own, flexible approach to the particular social realities of his own culture.27

This flexibility contributed greatly to *Il cortegiano’s* initial, enthusiastic reception across Europe and to its lasting popularity.

Sir Thomas Hoby published the first English translation of Castiglione’s work, entitled *The Courtyer of Count Baldassarre Castilio*, in 1561.28 Hoby was himself a courtier and ambassador, as well as a scholar, and his high rank and family connections (William Cecil was his wife’s brother-in-law) ensured that his translation would be well-

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26 Mary Partridge, “Thomas Hoby’s English Translation of Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier,*” *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 4 (2007): 782. Castiglione (1478-1529) was born near Mantua and was related to the Gonzaga family through his mother. He grew up with Cesare Gonzaga, and Elisabetta Gonzaga, the beloved Duchess of Urbino, who presides over the conversations and entertainments in *Il cortegiano*, was a cousin. (Julia Cartwright, *Baldassare Castiglione, The Perfect Courtier: His Life and Letters, 1478-1529* (London: John Murray, 1908), vol. 1, pp. 8-10, 30, 71-73.)


received. Hoby retains the term “courtier” in the book’s title, but in the subtitle and throughout the work Hoby refers to “Gentilmen and Gentilwomen” at least as frequently as “courtiers.” This translation choice suggests a subtle revising of Castiglione’s work, perhaps to extend its relevance to the English gentry as well as the nobility. Hoby also anglicizes the names of the participants in the dialogues, which might have heightened its appeal to English readers by making the text seem less “foreign.”

Castiglione’s discourse was widely read in England in its original Italian and in Latin and English translations. Scholars, clergymen, musicians, and nobles—including Roger Ascham, Gabriel Harvey, John Rainolds, Thomas Whythorne, and Henry Howard, the earl of Northampton, among others—referred to Castiglione’s work, annotated their own copies, or shared copies among their friends. English women—including Elizabeth Parr, marchioness of Northampton, whose husband had requested Hoby’s translation—also read Castiglione, and Queen Elizabeth “who may have been familiar with the original” since she was proficient in Italian, was the dedicatee of Bartholomew Clerke’s Latin translation. As Peter Burke has observed, “As in the dialogue itself, the female element

30 Baldassarre Castiglione, The courtier of Count Baldessar Castilio diuided into foure booke. Very necessary and profitable for yonge gentilmen and gentilwomen abiding in court, palacie or place, translated by Sir Thomas Hoby (London, 1561), title page.
among the readership of the *Courtier* is more significant than it may appear at first sight.”

The popularity of Hoby’s translation both increased the influence of Castiglione’s work in England and justifies examining *The Courtier* in some detail in a study focused primarily on English perceptions and practices.

In *The Courtier*, Castiglione contends that dancing was one of the “exercises of the body” in which the ideal courtier should be proficient and able to perform “with good grace.” Castiglione contends that a gentleman should be able to dance well and that this was best done by dancing with *sprezzatura*, or “contrived spontaneity,” and *grazia*, or “grace.” A gentleman’s dancing should be moderate and aesthetically pleasing, especially when dancing in public, “if he daunseth in the presence of many, and in a place full of people, he must (in my minde) keepe a certaine dignitie, tempered notwithstanding with a handsome and sightly sweetenesse of gestures.” Happily, for those like Justinian Pagitt for whom it did not always come naturally, a little grace goes a long way. As Count Lewis (Count Ludovico da Canossa) notes in *The Courtier*, if one provides a brief demonstration of skill in an activity such as fencing or dancing, observers assume one possesses full mastery of the art, “in daunsinge, one measure, one mocion of a bodye that hath a good grace, not beyng forced, doeth by and by declare the knowledge of him that daunseth.”

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35 For this reason, I will quote from Hoby’s translation rather than more modern translations.
The importance of physical grace and proficiency was one of the aspects of The Courtier that most impressed itself on English readers. Gabriel Harvey’s annotations in his copy of Hoby’s translation stress that, “Above all things it importeth a Courtier to be graceful and lovely in countenance and behaviour; fine and discreet in discourse and entertainment; skilful and expert in Letters and Arms; active and gallant in every Courtly Exercise, nimble of body and of mind,” while the earl of Northampton wrote “Sprezzatura” in the margin of his copy of Cortegiano and underlined the remarks on grace in dancing.\(^{40}\)

In The English Gentleman (1630), which will be discussed more below, Richard Brathwaite recommends dancing and fencing as “especial Ornaments to grace,” and writes that dancing in particular will “grace and beautifie” the young gentlemen, provided that he dances with “a reserved grace” rather than with “an affected curiositie.”\(^{41}\)

To initially establish and maintain this reputation of knowledge and grace, one had to dance in an understated manner. Castiglione warns that, even if a gentleman is particularly skilled in dancing, he should avoid spectacular moves unless he is in private, “for all he feeleth him selfe very nimble and to have time and measure at will, yet let him not enter into that swiftnesse of feet and doubled footinges.”\(^{42}\) The exception to this rule was if a gentleman were disguised or masked, as “to be in a maske bringeth with it a

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\(^{41}\) Richard Brathwaite, *The English gentleman containing sundry excellent rules or exquisite observations, tending to direction of every gentleman, of selecter ranke and qualitie; how to demeane or accommodate himselfe in the manage of publike or private affaires* (London, 1630), p. 204.

certaine libertie and lycence,” and exempts the wearer from needing to display the “certain Reckelesness” or nonchalance otherwise essential to graceful, noble conduct.\textsuperscript{43} This freedom probably applied to women, as well.

Moreover, in his dancing manual \textit{Orchésographie} (1589), Thoinot Arbeau confirms that the mask exception applied to dancing. In describing the “Branle of Haut Barrois,”\textsuperscript{44} he writes, “This branle is danced by lackeys and serving wenches, and sometimes by young men and damsels of gentle birth in a masquerade disguised as peasants and shepherds, or for a lark among themselves at some private gathering.”\textsuperscript{45} In general, though, elite dancers were encouraged to strive “to daunce well without over nimble footings or to busie trickes,” allowing their carriage and motions to “reveal” their nobility or gentility and strengthening their reputation as one who was effortlessly graceful, dignified, and accomplished.\textsuperscript{46}

Sir Thomas Elyot’s education and conduct manual, \textit{The Boke Named the Governour} (1531), also describes the ideal properties of courtly movement.\textsuperscript{47} However, Elyot goes further than Castiglione in his approbation of dancing, recommending dancing

\textsuperscript{43} Castiglione, \textit{The Courtier}, Book II, sig. M3.
\textsuperscript{44} The branles were a genre of simple circle and line dances for small to large groups of dancers in duple or triple meter. (See Chapter 1.) Many branles were named according to their supposed geographical origin, e.g., “Branle d'Ecosse” (“The Scottish Branle”), or after the subject they imitated, e.g., “Branle des Lavandieres” (“The Washerwomen's Branle”) and “Branle de Chevaux” (“The Horse's Branle”). (Julia Sutton, “Branle,” in \textit{International Encyclopedia of Dance: A project of Dance Perspectives Foundation, Inc.}, ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), vol. 1, p. 522.)
\textsuperscript{45} Arbeau, \textit{Orchesography}, p. 136.
\textsuperscript{46} Castiglione, \textit{The Courtier}, Appendix, sig. Zz1.
\textsuperscript{47} Although Elyot does not overtly mention Castiglione’s \textit{Il cortegiano}, his knowledge of and influence by the work has been well established. (Pearl Hogrefe, “Elyot and "The Boke Called Cortigiano in Ytalion,” \textit{Modern Philology} 27, no. 3 (1930): 303-309; Burke, “The Courtier Translated,” p. 168.)
as a means to teach virtues. Sir Thomas Elyot was a humanist scholar, member of Parliament, clerk of the king’s council, and royal ambassador for Henry VIII. The Boke Named the Governour is his best known work and was dedicated to Henry VIII. Aimed at the guardians and parents of young men “destined to be members of the governing class,” it was well-received by a broad audience of educators, scholars, and students, going through eight editions in the sixteenth century and influencing later education treatises.

In The Boke Named the Governour, Elyot proposes an educational program that includes physical training and arts as well as classical philosophy and history. Elyot suggests dancing as a teaching tool in order that “children of gentyll nature or disposition may be trayned into the way of vertue with a pleasant facilitie.” He advocates dancing as a complement to book learning so that “there be myxte with studye some honest & moderate disport, or at the lest way recreation, to recomfort and quicken the vitall spirites.”

Yet, Elyot considers dancing as more than a pleasant diversion. He contends that the orderly and structured movements of courtly dancing facilitate self-control and virtuous thoughts in young men and women, providing moral and physical benefits:

There is no passe tyme to be compered to that, wherin may be founden both recreation and meditation of vertue: I have among all honest pastymes, wherin is

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50 Lehmberg, “Elyot, Sir Thomas.”
52 Sir Thomas Elyot, The boke named the gouernour (London, 1531, 1537), fol. 79. Quotations are from the 1537 folio printing.
53 Elyot, The boke named the gouernour, fol. 79.
exercise of the body, noted daunsyng to be of an excellent utilitie comprehending in it wonderfull fygures... of vertues and noble qualities.\textsuperscript{54}

In seven chapters of \textit{The Boke Named the Governour}, Elyot pairs specific dance steps from the basse dance, the most popular dance of the early sixteenth century, with particular virtues to help students conceptualize and practice qualities such as prudence and circumspection.\textsuperscript{55}

In his chapter, “How dancing may be an introduction unto the first moral virtue, called prudence,” Elyot compares the bow or honour at the beginning of a dance with the reverent attitude with which one should approach every endeavour:

The first mevynge in every daunse is called honour, which is a reverent inclination or curtesie, with a longe deliberation or pause, and is but one motion, comprehending the tyme of thre[e] other motions or setting forth of the foote: By that may be signified, that at the beginnyng of all our actes, we shulde do due honour to god, whiche is the roote of prudence, whiche honour is compact of these thre[e] thinges, feare, love, & reverence. And that in the begynnynge of al thinges, we shoulde advysedly, with some tracte of tyme, beholde and foresee the successe of our enterpryse.\textsuperscript{56}

Honouring was a common feature of a wide range of social interactions, used to greet peers and honour superiors, as well as to acknowledge one’s partner and the audience at the beginning and ending of a dance. The terms “honour” and “reverence” were used for both men and women’s “making obeisance;” whereas “bow,” “make a leg,” and “conge” were associated with men and “curtsy” with women.\textsuperscript{57} Plays include numerous examples, from the troop of exotic Indians who accompany Pluto “singing and dancing wildly about

\textsuperscript{54} Elyot, \textit{The boke named the gouernour}, fol. 79v.
\textsuperscript{56} Elyot, \textit{The boke named the gouernour}, fols. 80-80v.
\textsuperscript{57} Alan Dessen and Leslie Thomson, \textit{A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 36, 55, 63, 116, 138, 152, 180.
him, and bowing to him” in Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher’s *Four Playes, or Morall Representations, in One* (written c. 1613, published 1647) to the curtsy that a young woman disguised as a page makes at the beginning of a galliard instead of the male bow in Thomas Middleton’s *More Dissemblers Besides Women* (written c. 1615, published 1657), which prompts the dancing master to exclaim, “did you ever see a Boy begin a Dance, and make cursey like a Wench before?”  

Dancing manuals such as Fabritio Caroso’s *Nobiltà di Dame* provide detailed descriptions as to what the male and female versions of the honour or a *riverenza* (reverence) entailed. (See Figure 1.)

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**Figure 1:** The Reverence. Fabritio Caroso, *Nobiltà di Dame* (1600).

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The man's reverence involved sliding the left foot slightly forward and then back so that the toe of the left foot was even with the heel of the right foot. Bending both knees followed. Lastly the man straightened his legs while placing the left foot next to the right in readiness to begin the next step.\textsuperscript{59} The woman's curtsy was similar but more subtle; she drew back her left foot only the “distance of three fingers” before bending her knees.\textsuperscript{60} This distinction between the male and female reverence was consistent with other gender-based differences in dance steps and styling discussed below. There were also symbolic hand gestures that accompanied the footwork of the reverence. Both gentleman and lady pretended to kiss their hand (right for the man, left for the woman) before offering it to their partner.\textsuperscript{61}

Although the footwork, knee bend, and hand gestures of the bow were simple, there were nuances to master and pitfalls to avoid if one was to make a reverence with decorum and grace. Caroso describes the potential dangers particularly vividly. If a gentleman does not draw the foot directly backwards or if he spreads the knees to the side during the knee bend, he will “appear to be preparing to urinate.”\textsuperscript{62} Likewise, Caroso warns that as a gentlewoman finishes her curtsy, “she should slowly straighten up” as she joins her feet together.\textsuperscript{63} Gentlewomen should avoid at all costs “the habit of some who first draw back their bodies back while bending deeply, and then thrust their bodies forward (a movement so unseemly that were I to say what it resembles, everyone should die laughing).”\textsuperscript{64} Equally risible are women who curtsy too rigidly; those who “bend so very straight down and then

\textsuperscript{59} Caroso, \textit{Nobiltà di Dame}, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{61} Caroso, \textit{Nobiltà di Dame}, pp. 96-97.
\textsuperscript{62} Caroso, \textit{Nobiltà di Dame}, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{63} Caroso, \textit{Nobiltà di Dame}, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{64} Caroso, \textit{Nobiltà di Dame}, p. 141.
rise ... truly resemble a hen about to lay an egg.”

Although the reverence was designed to display genteel manners while honouring others, a poorly executed bow or curtsy could result in embarrassment, mockery, and a damaged reputation.

In The Boke Named the Gouernour, Elyot elevates the reverence that begins a dance from a customary courtesy to an act of spiritual reverence. Honouring one’s partner and the assembled company reminds the dancer of the need to honour God, the dancer’s true audience. Moreover, Elyot capitalises on the honour’s location at the beginning of the dance to stress that honouring God should be part of planning one’s future actions.

Elyot’s chapter, “Of the fifthe branche, called circumspection, shewed in reprinse,” offers a similar connection between dance steps and virtue. Elyot writes: “Commonly next after singles in daunсing is a reprinse, whiche is one movyng only, puttyng backe the right fote to his felowe.” This “reprinse” is likely the same step as the “reprise” mentioned a few years earlier by Robert Copeland in his brief notes on The manner of dauncynge of bace daunces (1521). Copeland writes, “A reprise alone ought to be made with the right foot in drawing the right foot backward a little to the other foot. The second reprise ought to be made…with the left foot in raising the body in likewise.” These steps also share characteristics with the Italian ripresa of later dancing manuals. In the reprise, one is physically stepping backwards, so Elyot’s linking of the step with circumspection, or looking backwards, is logical and intuitive. Moreover, he modifies his definition with terms

65 Caroso, Nobiltà di Dame, p. 141.
66 Elyot, The boke named the gouernour, fols. 83v-84. For a description of singles, see Chapter 1.
67 Quoted from “reprise, n.” in OED Online, definition II:5, but there is a modern spelling version published as Robert Coplande, “The Manner to Dance Bace Dances,” in Mabel Dolmetsch, Dances of England and France from 1450 to 1600: With Their Music and Authentic Manner of Performance (New York: De Capo Press, 1949, 1975), pp. 2-4. David R. Wilson defines the reprise as “a true traveling step” backwards that takes the time of a double step, with the first and third steps taken directly back, but the second step angled a bit. (Wilson, “The Basse Dance,” p. 168.)
like deliberation and retreat, arguing that circumspection is a step that looks backwards in
order to again go forwards, and therefore has an “affynitie with provydence and
industrie.”

After discussing several more virtues and steps, including maturity (the branle) and
industriousness (the single), Elyot concludes his discussion of dancing with the chapter,

“Of the sixth, seventh, and eighth branches of prudence.” He states that:

A double in daunsynge is compacte of the nombre of thre, wherby maye be noted
these thre branches of prudence, election, experience, and modestie; by theym the
sayde vertue of prudence is made complete, and is in her perfection.

Once again Elyot displays both his knowledge of dance steps and his creativity. A double,
which can be danced forwards, backwards, or sideways, is the most common step in dances
of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The double, which takes twice the time to
perform as a simple or single step, has three steps and a close to the single’s one step and a
close. (See Chapter 1.) Although they continue his strategy of employing dancing to teach
prudence, the virtues Elyot attributes to the double are more abstract in their relationship to
the dance step than the virtues linked to the honour and reprise. The first virtue, election,
requires the judging of mitigating factors, such as when and where and then choosing a
plan of action; the second virtue, experience, supervises the execution of the plan, while the
third, modesty, which “semeth, to be moche lyke to that, whiche men communely call
Dyscretion,” dictates the manner in which one acts. These three virtues are collectively
rather than individually matched with the three steps of the double, but they are all
important components of both dancing and decorum in general.

68 Elyot, The boke named the gouernour, fol. 84.
69 Elyot, The boke named the gouernour, fol. 86.
70 Elyot, The boke named the gouernour, fol. 87v.
As educators and conduct manual writers continually stressed, the appropriateness of dancing varied with the location, the company, and a host of other changeable factors. It was absolutely critical for successful courtiers and aspiring ladies and gentlemen to possess the prudence to assess situations and act accordingly. In *The Boke Named the Governour*, Elyot instructs young gentlemen in the virtues needed to become a wise governor as he teaches the steps of the basse dance. By its ability to connect and convey these skills and virtues, Elyot reveals dancing “as well a necessary study, as a noble and vertuouse pastime.”

Graceful movement suggested nobility, and selecting appropriate dances and style choices for a particular occasion reflected good judgement. As conduct writers emphasized repeatedly it was crucial that a gentleman demonstrate both. He should be graceful and dignified in his dancing, but he must also know when it is appropriate to dance which dances. For a gentleman “to goe about the streetes daunsing the Morisco” or to “daunce the Morisco in the market place” would be a “common foly,” “though he could doe it never so well.” This was because the morisco was an active, dramatic dance that required too many “over nimble footings” and “busie trickes” to maintain the noble grace and nonchalance required of a gentleman in public, even if he possessed the technical skill to perform the dance. This is quite like the advice James I offers his son in *Basilikon Doron* (1599, 1603). The king includes dancing among the exercises that are “most commendable to be used by a young Prince,” at least in moderation, but he stresses that “tumbling

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71 Elyot, *The boke named the gouernour*, fol.88v.
73 There are different forms of the morisco or moresca, including a mock battle or sword dance and a relative of the English morris danced with bells and handkerchiefs, but none of the variants would have been appropriate for an unmasked gentleman to dance in public. (Ingrid Brainard, “Moresca,” in *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, vol. 4, pp. 460-463.)
trickes” are only appropriate “for Comedians & Balladines, to win their bread with,” not for noblemen’s recreation.\(^{74}\)

Amateurs were supposed to leave the most demanding and complex steps to the professionals, e.g., dancing masters, actors, rope dancers or tightrope walkers, tumblers, etc. However, in private, a gentleman could attempt more complicated, technically demanding steps than would be appropriate in the public arena. Similarly, wearing a mask also entitled the wearer to dance with more impunity, as Castiglione notes, even if the spectators would have been able to determine the masquer's identity.\(^{75}\) In general, however, the genteel dancer had to strike a balance between executing complex steps properly and performing them so well that viewers mistook him for a professional dancing master. In both cases status was at stake; dancing badly insinuated that one lacked the grace inherent in true nobility, while dancing too well implied one was a working professional from an inferior social rank. This latter point primarily applied to men, since gentlewomen would not be mistaken for professional dancing masters or actors.\(^{76}\) Women who danced too well or too avidly were more likely to be assumed to have low “honesty” (chasteness) than low


\(^{75}\) Regarding masque and mask conventions, see Anne Daye, “‘Youthful Revels, Masks, and Courtly Sights’: An introductory study of the revels within the Stuart masque,” *Historical Dance* 3, no. 4 (1996): 5-22; and for an earlier example, Henry VIII and his attendants’ masked or “disguised” dancing in 1512, see Jennifer Nevile, “Dance in Early Tudor England: An Italian Connection?” *Early Music* 26, no. 2 (1998): 239, 241.

\(^{76}\) There are no known female dancing masters or professional actresses in this time period in England. Women did not appear on the English public stage until the Restoration, although noblewomen danced in masques and private entertainments.
status. As the soldier-poet Barnaby Rich contends in *The Excellency of Good Women* (1613), “shee that can dance the most loftiest sinquapace,” does not appear modest, which is “the true marke of every good woman.” The notably proficient female dancer is considered “impudent” and likely lacking in virtue and chasteness, as well.

Castiglione also presents the possibility that, at times, it could be necessary to amend these recommendations to suit local traditions. Lord Gaspar Pallavicin (Gaspare Pallavicino) notes that in Lombardy, young gentlemen dance and compete in physical contests with commoners, “there yonge Gentilmen upon the holy dayes come daunce al the day long in the Sunne with them of the countrey.” Sir Frederick (Frederico Fregoso) expresses scepticism that such egalitarian contests have any merit, and he warns that losing to a commoner causes a much more significant loss of honour and reputation than winning would gain, “for it is to ill a sight and to foule a matter and without estimation to see a Gentilman overcome by a Cartar . . . Therfore I beleve it is wel done to abstaine from it, at the leastwise in the presence of many, because if he overcome, his gaine is small, and his losse in being overcome very great.”

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Lord Gaspar defends the practice in Lombardy by explaining that the contests do not question the superiority of nobility but instead cultivate “a certein lovely freenesse.” A similar contention was made by English advocates of Sunday recreations who argued that communal pastimes such as dancing and church ales contributed to neighbourliness, conflict resolution, and a sense of community. (See Chapter 5.) However, this was a controversial and divisive view in England, as a Somerset gentleman discovered.

In Milborne Port, Somerset, in June of 1604, Sir Edward Parham participated in a morris dance as part of Milborne Port’s May games and Whitsuntide festivities. Although Parham’s intentions may have been innocent, they were not interpreted as such. Parham was a Catholic recusant and the only accused conspirator in the Bye plot of 1603 to escape conviction. How we know he participated in the morris dance is because it was mentioned by Parham’s Protestant opponent, William Walton, in a suit he brought against Parham and his father for sponsoring May games that included war-like and “Rioutious” martial displays.

Walton argued that Parham had participated in the morris dance “to gette the love and affection of the common people” because commoners “doe more delight in such veyne

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82 Castiglione, The Courtyer, Book II, sig. M2v.
84 Mark Nicholls, “Treason's Reward: The Punishment of Conspirators in the Bye Plot of 1603,” The Historical Journal 38, no. 4 (1995): 823. The trial was held in London on 15 Nov. 1603. Parham had been knighted only a few months earlier.
85 Walton implies that such martial exercises were highly unusual, but, in fact, they were quite common as a component of May games and Midsummer watches. (Forrest, The History of Morris Dancing, p. 130.) According to the Parhams and their defendants, the armed men simply came to their house “in merry & sportfull manner” as was customary in order to request their attendance at the upcoming parish church ale (James Stokes, ed., with Robert J. Alexander, Records of Early English Drama: Somerset, including Bath (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), vol. 1, p. 169, quoting Examination of John Beaton, Defendant in Walton v. Parham et al., 19 May1606, PRO: STAC 8/291/12 item 1, fol. 2v.)
Toyes then in matters of moment.” 86 Certainly, it was unusual for a knight to participate in a morris dance. By the late sixteenth century, as John Forrest has shown, the morris had cast off its initial association with the court and had become “predominantly a rural sport” associated with commoners and staged in plays to give “an authentic rustic air.” 87 Parham likewise broke with convention by dancing alongside commoners. Dancing masters like Fabritio Caroso and conduct writers like James Cleland, as well as Castiglione, agreed that gentlemen were supposed to dance in a manner that matched their station. Even if he subscribed to Sir Thomas Elyot’s theory that his dancing would reveal his innate virtues, Parham would have been hard-pressed to convey his higher status through his movements in this scenario. The morris was a group dance, and so for aesthetic and choreographic reasons, Parham would have needed to dance the same steps with the same styling as the lower-status dancers, thus undermining and destabilising the notion that genteel dancers moved in an inherently genteel manner.

Of course, there were likely other issues and assumptions that prompted Walton’s complaint against Parham. Religious differences were a point of contention between the two men, and it is possible that Walton’s Protestant views made him less accepting of dancing, in general. (See Chapters 3 and 4.) Yet, Walton’s phrasing conveys snobbish disdain for morris dancing, rather than the vehement condemnation associated with puritan reformers. Moreover, Catholic humanist scholars such as Erasmus and Juan Luis Vives considered dancing a frivolous vanity, as well. (See Chapter 3.) Thus, Walton’s disapprobation of dancing might indicate puritanical leanings, but it seems at least as likely

that he was responding to Parham’s suspicious violation of propriety. Walton assumes that Parham must have an ulterior motive to dance like a commoner.

It is worth noting that there are several aspects of Parham’s dancing about which Walton does not feel the need to comment. These include Parham’s age, attire, and masculinity. Parham was a young man, so dancing the morris was less inappropriate for him than it would have been for a parish elder such as his father. Likewise, since Walton does not mention it, it is safe to assume that Parham did not play the cross-dressed character of Maid Marion. Moreover, the morris was a mock battle dance where the participants used sticks to imitate sword play and military exercises. (See Chapter 1.) Parham was martially inclined and subsequently spent thirty years fighting in the Netherlands. The morris might not be the best dance for displaying gentility, moderation, and noble grace, but it was a logical choice of dance for a young man wishing to showcase his masculine vigor and martial skills, an aspect of self-presentation and dance styling that will be explored subsequently. In other words, even though the morris was not usually danced by members of the elite, in dancing it Sir Edward Parham only violated some of the expectations and conventions for a gentleman’s dancing, not all of them. Nevertheless, that Sir Edward Parham’s morris provided fodder for his enemy’s suit demonstrates the necessity of a gentleman’s exercising good judgement in deciding what dances were appropriate for a given context.

Some of the instructions in dancing manuals indicate that dancing masters had a narrower view of what was an acceptable dance style than those dancers to whom they

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88 Parham likely wore a typical morris dance coat and bells. See Chapter 1.
89 Nicholls, “Treason's Reward”: 838.
directed their advice. In his twenty-third note on conduct, Caroso condemns the customary manner of gesturing in the dance, “Il Piantone.” He writes:

> When a lady participates in the dance called “Il Piantone,” which is more popular than any other dance, she should never move either hand about more than usual as she dances, as is the custom and unseemly behaviour of many (for they resemble peasants scattering seed at sowing time).  

Caroso acknowledges that some ladies move their hands in a peasant-like manner when dancing “Il Piantone,” but he is not unmoved by the claim that such rustic gestures are traditional for this particular dance. Caroso prizes grace so highly that he would rather change the dance than condone dance moving in a plebeian, “unseemly” fashion.

Negri expresses similar concerns in his description of “La Nizzarda,” a dance for one or more couples. “La Nizzarda” is a fast, almost chaotic dance calling for hopping, spinning, and jumping. Indeed, one section of the dance calls for the man to take the woman “under the arm” and “do hops around” the room, “now in one way, now in another.” The dance is so stylistically different from Negri’s structured, symmetrical choreographies that the dancing master seems resigned to just doing “damage control.” He merely claims that his suggestions may enable the gentleman and lady to “dance together with some degree of gracefulness.” Negri advocates dancing “La Nizzarda” with the same precision he demands for more typical courtly dances. When the man and woman perform a jump together while holding both hands, he writes, it should be done “exactly in time to the music.” He also tries to recover any loss of the dancers' dignity by making the final moment of the dance a serene one. At the end of the dance, Negri enjoins the dancers

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90 Caroso, *Nobiltà di Dame*, p. 141.
to “do together the riverenza with grace, and decorum.” Unlike Caroso, Negri does not explicitly condemn the typical manner of performing the dance as plebeian, but he does manage to convey a sense of concern and disapproval about the dance's unseemliness through his repeated injunctions that it be danced with more than customary precision and grace. Although they are directed at a courtly readership, the complaints of Caroso and Negri in their dancing manuals also indicate steps and styling choices they associate with commoners: lots of hand gestures, including ones that mimic working; energetic hopping by men and women together; and asymmetrical, chaotic floor patterns.

English conduct manuals and education guides mirror these concerns about dancing in a manner appropriate to one’s status. The educator and humanist Roger Ascham discusses dancing in several passages of his education treatise *The Scholemaster* (1570). In his treatise, Ascham acknowledges his debt to Castiglione’s *Cortegiano*, praises the recent English translation by Sir Thomas Hoby, and recommends that young men read it and follow its suggestions diligently. In fact, Castiglione’s “delineation of sports appropriate to gentlemen,” is the one aspect of *Cortegiano* that Ascham cites directly.

Roger Ascham was a well-connected and respected educator who was a noted Greek scholar, Cambridge fellow, and the tutor of Queen Elizabeth I. Ascham had

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95 Burke, “The Fortunes of the Courtier,” pp. 76-77. Ascham was in Hoby’s circle at Cambridge.
97 Rosemary O'Day, “Ascham, Roger (1514/15-1568),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/732. *The Scholemaster*, which was published posthumously, was an instant bestseller with additional printings in 1571, 1573, 1579, and 1589 and new editions or reissues published throughout the eighteenth century up through the present day. Ascham was also tutor to the Princess Elizabeth, the future Elizabeth I, who was lauded for her skill in dancing and even had a trademark dance, the galliard. (Barbara Ravelhofer, “Dancing at the Court of Queen Elizabeth,” in *Queen Elizabeth I: Past and Present*, edited by Christa Jansohn (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004), p. 109.)
already shown an interest in education and physical exercise in his earlier writings.

Rosemary O'Day notes that Ascham's “learned defence” of archery, *Toxophilus* (1545), “is remembered specifically as the standard authority on physical training as an essential part of a gentleman's education” and “became a model for his contemporaries and near contemporaries.”98 In *The Scholemaster*, Ascham broadens his argument from *Toxophilus*—that gentlemen should be skilled in archery as well as in book learning—to encompass a much broader selection of the arts of peace and war. Young men should learn to play instruments and to dance, train in shooting the bow and wrestling, and be able to write elegant Latin letters, so that “learninge shold be alwaise mingled, with honest mirthe, and cumlie exercises.”99

Indeed, Ascham contends that dancing is not just an appropriate skill for a courtier to possess; it is a necessary one:

> To daunce cumlie: to sing, and playe of instrumentes cunnyngly: to Hawke: to hunte: to playe at tennes, & all pastimes generally, which be joyned with labor, used in open place, and on the day light, containing either some fitte exercise for warre, or some pleasant pastime for peace, be not onelie cumlie and decent, but also verie necessarie, for a Courtlie gentleman to use.100

Ascham expresses some reservations about dancing but believes the benefits of dancing outweigh the dangers. Gentlemen should spend enough time and effort to gain proficiency and be able to dance “cumlie” and to play “cunnyngly.” In case there is any confusion about his position on dancing, he clarifies:

> I do not meene, by all this my taulke, that yong Jentlemen, should alwaies be poring on a booke, and by using good studies, shold lease honest pleasure, and haunt no good pastime, I meene nothing lesse: For it is well knowne, that I both like and

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98 O'Day, “Ascham, Roger.”
100 Ascham, *The scholemaster*, Book I, sigs. G3v-G4. The extended title of the book, which specifies that the work is “specially purposed for the private brynging up of youth in gentlemen and noble mens houses,” advertises from the outset that *The Scholemaster* is aimed at an elite audience.
love, and have alwaies, and do yet still use, all exercises and pastimes, that be fitte for my nature and habilitie.\textsuperscript{101}

Ascham unequivocally condones dancing as an appropriate pastime for elite men, both young and old, while simultaneously reminding the reader that gentlemen needed to dance in a manner “fitte” for their status and abilities.

In \textit{ΠΡΩΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ or the Institution of a Young Noble Man} (1607), James Cleland advises remembering one’s rank, wearing nice clothes, and dancing well to make a good impression, “When you go to Daunce in anie Honourable companie, take heede that your qualitie, your Raiment, and your skil go al three togither: if you faile in anie of those three, you wilbe derided.”\textsuperscript{102}

\textit{The Institution of a Young Noble Man} addresses the education, responsibilities, and proper activities for young men of elite status and draws on Elyot and Castiglione, both directly and indirectly.\textsuperscript{103} Cleland recommends dance strongly, asserting, “I thinke it one of the best exercises that a Noble man can learne in his young years, and that fashioneth the bodie best.”\textsuperscript{104} However, dance should be used in moderation, “for there is nothing so good, but if it be used with excesse wil become bad.”\textsuperscript{105} Cleland warns against trying to excel too much in dancing, “Imitate not so much the Masters Capers, as to have a good grace in the carriage of your bodie: this is the principal, and without the which al the rest is

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ascham, \textit{The scholemaster}, Book I, sig. G3v.
\item James Cleland, \textit{ΠΡΩΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ, or The institution of a young noble man} (Oxford, 1607), p. 226. There is little known about James Cleland other than that he was the tutor of Sir John Harington and that \textit{Institution of a Young Noble Man} was reprinted under the title \textit{The Scottish Academie, or Institution of a Young Noble-man} in 1611. A second printed entitled \textit{The Instruction of a Young Noble-Man} appeared in 1612. (Mary F. Tenney, “Tacitus in the Politics of Early Stuart England,” \textit{The Classical Journal} 37, no. 3 (1941): 157.)
\item Cleland, \textit{Institution of a Young Noble Man}, p. 225.
\item Cleland, \textit{Institution of a Young Noble Man}, p. 226.
\end{enumerate}
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naught.” Grace does not require the spectacular leaps and capers of the professional dancer but can be displayed through posture and movement style. On the other hand, some proficiency is commendable. Cleland writes, “I praise not those Ordinarie Dauncers, who appare to be druncke in their legs... in shaking alwaies their feet, singing continuallie, one-two-three: foure; & five.” A man should seek the happy medium between the novice dancer who must count the steps of the galliard aloud in order to keep his place and the low-status, if high-capering, professional dancing master.

_The Honest Man: or, the Art to Please in Court_ (1632), a translation of Nicolas Faret’s _L’honneste homme. Ou l’art de plaire à la court_ (1630), shows the continued interest in Continental European advice on courtly conduct in England, as well as the continued importance of dancing in courtly life. Nicolas Faret (c.1596-1646) was a French statesman and scholar best known for his translation of Eutropius's _Roman History_ (1621). As the son of a shoemaker “turned expert on courtly behaviour,” Faret was his own best advertisement. The translator for _The Honest Man_, described only as “E. G.” on the title page, is most likely the prolific English translator and compiler Edward Grimeston, best known for his histories of Spain, France, and the Netherlands. Grimeston dedicated the work to one of Charles I’s courtiers, Richard Hubert, the King’s groom porter.

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106 Cleland, _Institution of a Young Noble Man_, p. 226.
107 Cleland, _Institution of a Young Noble Man_, p. 226. Counting the steps out loud or under the breath instead of listening to the music is a common bad habit of dancers. “One--two--three: foure; & five” refers to the galliard basic step, which has five steps for six beats of music; hence the “and” which denotes time in the air during the jump or caper that precedes landing for the fifth step.
111 Clark, "Edward Grimeston, the Translator," p. 589.
In *The Honest Man*, Faret names dance as one of the “actions of dexterity which are in use, and fitting for a Gentleman.”\footnote{Nicolas Faret, *The honest man: or, The art to please in court*, transl. Edward Grimestone. (London, 1632), pp. 39-40.} Faret specifies that a courtier should be “active to Dance, play at Tennice, to Wrastle, to Leap, to Swim, to Shoot” and be able to participate in similar sports and recreations, as they are “not so simply honest, but they many times prove profitable.”\footnote{Faret, *The honest man*, p. 42.} Although dancing well may not be as essential to the gentleman as good horsemanship and martial skills, dancing is nonetheless “usefull in a thousand occasions, to gain the esteeme and affection of those by whom wee desire to bee beloved.”\footnote{Faret, *The honest man*, pp. 40-41.}

Faret explains further that although a single skill may be a small thing, collectively and in combination with other accomplishments, skills become noteworthy and praiseworthy:

> The gretest part of these things being divided, are in [wor]eth of small moment, but being all valued together, they make a perfect man, who is not look't on, but with some kind of admiration, especially when they are beautified with the qualities of the minde, which gives them the last lineaments of perfection.\footnote{Faret, *The honest man*, p. 43.}

Not only is dancing an appropriate activity for a courtier, but it is also useful because the skilful execution of dance steps leads to appreciation and admiration. Perhaps William Walton’s accusation that Sir Edward Parham danced the morris in order to curry favour with his tenants and neighbours might have some truth to it after all.

Admiration and appreciation of dancing skills did not just come from one’s inferiors. It is worth noting that many of the gentlemen to whom these manuals were addressed spent time in service to other members of the elite. Dancing in the right manner

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could serve a double purpose: confirming the dancer’s gentility while calling attention to characteristics that might be of interest to his superiors.

In *A Health to the Gentlemanly Profession of Servingmen: or, The Servingmans Comfort* (1598), the author describes the five types of men who make the best servingmen. These are men of discretion and wit, valour and courage, strength and activity, who are neat and nimble, and who are proficient in hawking and hunting. Of the third type, those of strength and activity, the author specifies that such men should be “excellent in shooting, running, leaping, dauncing, pitching the Barre, throwing the Hammer, or other feates of lyke facultie, wherewith Potentates in times past were highly pleased.” He asserts that dancing is both an activity “naturally belonging to a Gentleman” and one of the requisite skills for a servingman. The author pitches his tract at younger brothers and members of the lesser nobility and gentry in service to their superiors. Many of these men also studied (and danced) at the universities or at the Inns of Court. For these men, dancing was a means of demonstrating their gentility and good breeding. In addition, skill in dancing helped would-be gentlemen approximate the “countenance of a gentleman” necessary to “be taken for” one. Dancing could both confirm gentility and help confer it.

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Modesty, Moderation, and Grace

Like social rank, gender was supposed to be inherent and obvious; men should dance in a masculine manner simply because they were men and women in a feminine manner because they were women. In practice, however, men and women had to learn appropriately masculine and feminine dance styling alongside studying footwork and floor patterns. This meant that dancers could use dance to subvert or interrogate gender conventions. Instructional dance manuals provide glimpses of how dancers conformed to, adapted, and ignored these conventions.

Women, especially noblewomen, are noticeably present in dancing manuals. Authors note differences in male and female dance styles, discuss gender-specific etiquette, and dedicate choreographies to particular noblewomen. This female presence is notable because in addition to being “at considerable remove from formal centers of learning and institutions for cultural definition,” and from centres of “royal, civic, and senatorial” political power, early modern women are often absent from, underrepresented in, or otherwise marginalized in the historical record.121 On the early modern dance floor, however, women are literally and figuratively as central and visible as men. As Jean-Paul Desaive observes, “Along with riding … dance was the only form of body language that allowed a woman to express herself as an equal of, and in perfect symmetry with, a man.”122

Fabritio Caroso dedicates each of the forty-eight choreographies in Nobiltà di Dame to an Italian noblewoman. In some cases, such as “Alta Colonna” (“The Great Lady Colonna”) dedicated to Lady Arsilia Sforza Colonna, he also names the dances in honour of the dedicatees.\(^1\) Not only do dancing manuals demonstrate the centrality of women on the dance floor, but their step instructions and conduct notes also provide concrete details of what types of movement were considered masculine or feminine and under what circumstances. Although “all steps of the repertory could be executed by men and women,” in dances like the galliard, “men were given the complicated jumps and fast beats while women moved with a more leisurely grace.”\(^2\) They also comment on the interactions between female and male dancers, illuminating gender assumptions, expectations, and relations.

Fabritio Caroso features twenty-four notes on conduct in addition to descriptions of dance steps and complex choreographies in his dancing manual Nobiltà di Dame.\(^3\) Caroso’s conduct notes for women stress the dual concerns of gracefulness and modesty.\(^4\) For example, when dancing backwards, a woman must take care not to trip on her train or gown. Instead of lifting up her train, a woman should step back while “strutting a little and moving in a snakelike way with a slight swaying of her dress and the farthingale underneath it,” which accomplishes the same effect “much more

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\(^3\) Caroso’s dancing manuals were successful publications. Nobiltà di Dame was a revision of his earlier manual, Il Ballarino (1581), and there was a second printing of Nobiltà di Dame in 1605, plus a reissue as Raccolta di Varij Balli in 1630. (Caroso, Nobiltà di Dame, p. 19.)

\(^4\) Women’s dancing was judged appropriately feminine if it was modest and chaste, regardless of the woman’s social rank. In Arbeau’s Orchésographie, which was aimed at a lower-status audience, the main concern with women’s dancing was also modesty.
gracefully.” In this note, Caroso emphasizes female gracefulness and defines smooth, serpentine movement as graceful. He also warns against immodesty, since it is possible when raising her dress that a woman may accidentally raise her petticoats as well as her outer skirts, “thus revealing such things as modesty will not permit me to mention!” Likewise, a woman “should also remember not to raise her eyes too high while dancing, as some do, nor to turn her head hither and thither in order to look at this or that gentleman.” It is not enough that a woman be graceful in dancing. She must also preserve her reputation.

Yet modesty had its limitations. Caroso points out a logistical problem when, due to excessive modesty, “some new brides and other ladies cast their eyes so low that the gentlemen cannot tell which one of them has been invited [to dance], so that one rises to his feet rather than the other.” Most dances called for the man to invite the woman to dance, but there was a whole category of dances that required women to ask men to dance. This category included object or prop dances such as “Ballo del fiore” (“Dance of the Flower”) in Caroso’s Nobiltà di Dame and “Branle de la torche” (“Candlestick Branle”) in Thoinot Arbeau’s Orchésographie. In these dances, the leader of the dance chose a partner of the opposite sex, danced with that person, handed over the object, and then retired. The new possessor of the object would choose another partner, and the dance would continue in this pattern. Thus, every other repetition of the pattern required a woman to ask a man to be her partner. Although Caroso warns against a woman having a roving eye, he also acknowledges that certain aspects of a dance, such as asking a partner

127 Caroso, Nobiltà di Dame, p. 144.
128 Caroso, Nobiltà di Dame, p. 143.
129 Caroso, Nobiltà di Dame, p. 144.
130 Caroso, Nobiltà di Dame, p. 146.
131 Caroso, Nobiltà di Dame, pp. 281-283; Arbeau, Orchesography, pp.161-163.
to dance, required eye contact between men and women to avoid confusion and embarrassment.

For men, Caroso also stresses grace, but he defines masculine grace in terms of agility, strength, and having control over the body and accoutrements. His instructions for the galliard include, “land agilely in this cadence... making it more graceful by separating your knees a little,” and “do not hold [your right arm] down stiffly, for then you would appear to have fractured or burned your arm.”\(^\text{132}\) The *salto tondo*, or turning jump, requires jumping off both feet and then “raising your entire body as high as your strength will allow” in order to make “two complete turns before landing on the ground” in the same spot, and facing in the same direction.\(^\text{133}\) Jumping high enough to perform a double turn in the air requires a great deal of strength, while being able to land in a specific spot demands skilful control of the body’s momentum.

Caroso also reminds men that they must manage their garments and accoutrements gracefully. He chastises those who wrap themselves in their capes “as if swaddled,” covering their swords and sword hilts so that “the swords are so obstructed that if they should be needed, they could not be [got at], thereby endangering their lives.”\(^\text{134}\) He recommends securing one’s sword with the left hand when dancing the galliard and other athletic dances “so that it will not wave around wildly.”\(^\text{135}\) Wearing a sword displayed elite status and highlighted masculinity, but only when it was worn properly.

\(^{132}\) Caroso, *Nobiltà di Dame*, p. 117.
\(^{133}\) Caroso, *Nobiltà di Dame*, p. 119.
\(^{134}\) Caroso, *Nobiltà di Dame*, p. 136.
\(^{135}\) Caroso, *Nobiltà di Dame*, p. 135.
In addition to managing their swords, to preserve their reputations, gentlemen also had to control their strength skilfully. This was particularly true when dancing the galliard. The galliard was the dance showpiece for men at court, offering plentiful opportunities to display strength and agility.\textsuperscript{136} The basic galliard step of four kicks and a cadence, or closing step, could be augmented by caprioles or capers, which were jumps with multiple beats or quick switching of the feet in the air.\textsuperscript{137} Skilled dancers could add turning jumps, spins, and other impressive embellishments.

To come up with new galliard step variations and execute them smoothly and gracefully required a great deal of study and practice. There were even dancing manuals dedicated entirely to the galliard. Lutio Compasso’s Ballo della gagliarda (1560) is essentially a long list of mutanze or step variations “for gentlemen to devise their own improvisations.”\textsuperscript{138} The galliard could be danced as a male solo, as when the Duke of Buckingham, during the presentation of Ben Jonson’s masque Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue (1618), famously “saved a tedious performance by cutting a series of athletic capers.”\textsuperscript{139} Alternatively, the galliard could be danced by a male-female couple, either for the whole dance or as a section in a suite of dances.\textsuperscript{140}

It was only when dancing alone that a gentleman was invited to display his pyrotechnics, but even solo dancing carried restrictions. Excessively vigorous and skilful dancing made a gentleman look like a lower-status professional dancer or dance instructor instead of a naturally graceful dilettante. Many dancing instructors actively

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\textsuperscript{137} Caroso, \textit{Nobiltà di Dame}, pp. 116-127.
\textsuperscript{139} Ravelhofer, \textit{The Early Stuart Masque}, p. 69.
\textsuperscript{140} Sutton, “Galliard,” pp. 107-108.
discouraged gentlemen from dancing the most ornate steps, although they would be the ones most likely to benefit from a dancer’s desire to learn complicated choreographies.\textsuperscript{141} In “Louange de la Danse” (c. 1619), Barthélemy de Montagut, the French dancing master who taught the Duke of Buckingham and Charles I, recommends that noble dancers should dance “very simply and without affectation,” avoiding difficult steps such as \textit{fleurets} and \textit{caprioles} or capers.\textsuperscript{142}

Not dancing could be just as challenging as dancing when trying to maintain dignity and exude grace. Caroso observes that “Frequently at balls there are some ladies who are never invited to dance.”\textsuperscript{143} Therefore, he includes advice for “Ladies Who Are Not Invited To Dance” among his conduct notes. Caroso suggests that wallflowers “should not be melancholy or dejected,” but rather “should disguise their feelings by pretending to be as happy as possible, and by conversing with other ladies sitting nearby.”\textsuperscript{144} Although he is aware of the sadness and disappointment that result from not being asked to dance, he considers it uncouth to display such feelings. The dancing master therefore provides recommendations to help the gentlewoman who is not asked to dance at a ball maintain the dignity appropriate to her station.

Although men asking women to dance was more common, it was perfectly respectable for women to ask men to dance. In his note on “A Lady's Conduct When Inviting a Gentleman To Dance,” Caroso offers instructions to help a woman maintain her

\begin{footnotes}
\item[141] Montagut, \textit{Louange de la Danse}, p. 36.
\item[142] Montagut, \textit{Louange de la Danse}, pp. 10-12, 133. It is interesting that Montagut discourages ornate steps, as his student, George Villiers, the future Duke of Buckingham, was arguably the best dancer in England and one of the few who could perform capers and multiple turns with ease. The \textit{fleuret} is likely related to the \textit{fiore}, which involved lifting the left foot, jumping onto both feet, landing on tiptoe. The left foot then cuts under or replaces the right foot, which is lifted in the air. (Caroso, \textit{Nobiltà di Dame}, pp. 114-115.)
\item[143] Caroso, \textit{Nobiltà di Dame}, p. 148.
\item[144] Caroso, \textit{Nobiltà di Dame}, p. 148.
\end{footnotes}
“discretion, modesty, grace, and good manners” and avoid accusations of “poor breeding” when doing so. Yet, while he writes that it is praiseworthy for both ladies and gentlemen to return an invitation to dance by asking the one who had asked them initially, the dancing master does not have a conduct note on how men who are not invited to dance should behave. He only says that if no one asks a prince to dance for over an hour, this is a discourtesy, and a husband who notices should send a message to his wife to invite the prince to dance. Fabritio Caroso's conduct notes in *Nobiltà di Dame* provide evidence that early modern dance floor etiquette depended on the gender as well as the status of dancers.

“More counninge then sweetenesse”

*The Courtier* confirms this interweaving of status and gender. The central concern about male dancing for Castiglione is status, but gender-associated movement conventions play a larger role in *The Courtier’s* discussions of the attributes and responsibilities of the genteel lady. Regarding the perfect gentlewoman’s physical activities, Lord Julian (Giuliano de’ Medici) says that she should be “skilfull in daunsinge.” However, her dancing style should reflect “the soft mildenesse that we have said is comelie for her,” and express “a certain bashfulness, that may declare the noble shamefastnes that is contrarye to headinesse.” Indeed, Lord Julian would prefer that the gentlewoman eschew more vigorous and energetic dance steps: “in daunsynge I

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146 Asking someone to dance who had previously asked you, however, is a favour that should only be returned once. If you are asked to dance again by that same person, you ought not to return the invitation or you will be thought to favour that partner “beyond normal decency.” (Caroso, *Nobiltà di Dame*, p. 148.) This social convention holds true for modern-day social dancing, as well.
would not see her use to swift & violent trickes... that declare more counninge then sweetenesse.”

Overly boisterous dancing “doeth both cover and take away that sweete mildenes which setteth so furth everie deede that a woman doeth.”

At first Castiglione may seem to be opposed to women dancing in any but the most mild and sedate manner, but the author sanctions a very different sort of dancing for gentlewoman through an anecdote told by Count Lewis (Count Ludovico da Canossa). The Count tells a story about a gentlewoman who asked a man to dance with her at a public assembly. He refused on the grounds that “suche trifles” did not become his profession, which was to fight. She then observed, much to the amusement of those standing by, that:

seeing you are not nowe at the warre nor in place to fight, I woulde thinke it beste for you to bee well besmered and set up in an armorie with other implementes of warre till time wer that you should be occupied, least you waxe more rustier then you are.

With her conclusion that a man who is only interested in fighting should be put in the armoury with the other weapons until the next war, the gentlewoman clearly wins the argument. In so doing, the anecdote encourages the reader to condone the gentlewoman’s playful, almost aggressive interactions. Her character might be “more counninge then sweetenesse,” but the story casts this cleverness as admirable. Finally, it is the gentlewoman who asks the man to dance in the first place, but this detail does not generate comment from Count Lewis nor surprise or condemnation from his listeners.

By considering Lord Julian’s recommendations for dancing alongside Count Lewis’s

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154 Choreographies such as “Ballo del fiore” by Fabritio Caroso, described above, confirm that women asking men to dance was an established and uncontroversial practice in courtly circles.
anecdote, one gains a more nuanced picture of the range of acceptable dance practices for gentlewomen. Women could ask men to dance, and the high jumps and complex tricks that Lord Julian found offensive when danced by women were the same steps that Sir Fredericke discouraged gentleman from dancing in public. It was the excessive effort required to successfully execute such steps, rather than the gender of the dancers, that made these steps unsuitable for gentlewomen and gentleman.

Richard Brathwaite also discusses concerns and expectations for male and female dancing in his pair of conduct manuals, *The English Gentleman* (1630) and *The English Gentlewoman* (1631). However, for Braithwaite, gender is one of the dividing lines between appropriate and inappropriate dancing. His manuals, addressed to the English gentry “of selecter ranke and quality,” were well received in the author’s lifetime, with an expanded edition of *The English Gentleman* published in 1633 and both manuals reprinted together in a single volume in 1641. However, these works are largely derivative. *The English Gentleman* leans heavily on Castiglione’s *The Courtyer* while *The English Gentlewoman* borrows from Juan Louis Vives’ conduct guide for women, which had been translated into English by Richard Hyrde as *A very fruteful and pleasant boke callyd the instruction of a christen women* (1541). (See Chapter 3.)

Richard Brathwaite was a gentleman poet and writer who owned estates in Westmorland and Yorkshire, attended Oxford and Cambridge, and studied law briefly at

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155See below and Richard Brathwaite. *The English gentleman, and The English gentlevwoman both in one volume couched, and in one modell portrayed : to the living glory of their sexe, the lasting story of their worth : being presented to present times for ornaments, commended to posterity for presidents : with a ladies love-lectvre and supplemunt lately annexed, and entituled The tvrtles triumph* (London, 1641).
Gray’s Inn in London.\(^\text{156}\) At Oxford and Cambridge and at the Inns of Court, he would have had ample exposure to dancing, as noted previously.\(^\text{157}\) In *The English Gentleman*, he recommends dancing, along with fencing, for young gentlemen, especially those who “intend to *Court or Gallant* it” by seeking advancement at court.\(^\text{158}\) As for Castiglione and Cleland, it is graceful carriage and style that Brathwaite deems essential, not the execution of difficult steps. Gentlemen should dance “with a reserved grace” in order to “come off bravely and sprightly, rather than with an affected curiositie.”\(^\text{159}\) This is because a “gracefull presence” garners respect and commendation, but affectation leads to ridicule and scorn.\(^\text{160}\) Moreover, Brathwaite’s phrasing suggests that a gentleman should be able to simultaneously dance in a masculine style, “bravely” and “sprightly,” and gracefully, displaying subtle rather than overt skill, so as to avoid affectation. Both men and women attended revels, masques, and other dance-filled entertainments at court, so Brathwaite’s recommendations likely reflect the expectations of both male and female viewers as to how gentlemen ought to dance.


\(^{158}\) Brathwaite, *The English gentleman*, p. 204.

\(^{159}\) Brathwaite, *The English gentleman*, p. 204.

argues that even though “to lead a dance gracefully” may seem one of the “commendable qualities,” or at worst, a harmless diversion, dancing is actually one of the “wanton and immodest revels” descended from ancient “prophane feasts by Pagans.” Moreover, “in the opinion of the Learned,” Brathwaite writes, dancing was considered, “the Divels procession: Where the Dance is the Circle, whose centre is the Devil.” Although it is possible for a gentlewoman to dance modestly and with dignity, “to shew a kinde of maiesty in a Dance,” the author argues that such superficial accomplishments pale in comparison to “the Complement of a Religious taske.” Those who are “so delighted in songs, pipes, and earthly melody, shall in hell rore terribly and howle miserably.” Brathwaite’s anti-dance conclusion could not be clearer; gentlewomen who insist on participating in the fleeting pleasures of dancing will have all of eternity to regret their misplaced priorities.

Richard Brathwaite’s opposition to dancing was hardly novel, and *The English Gentlewoman* was only one of several conduct books for women that discouraged dancing. More conduct manuals are directed towards men than women, but a higher percentage of the works aimed at women condemn dance, perhaps because works for women focus more on morality than on gentility or civility. What is noteworthy is that while Brathwaite strongly condemns dancing for the gentlewoman, he condones dancing

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165 Examples include two works by Barnaby Rich: *The excellency of good women The honour and estimation that belongeth vnto them. The infallible markes whereby to know them* (London, 1613), and *My ladies looking glasse VVherein may be discerned a wise man from a foole, a good woman from a bad: and the true resemblance of vice, masked vnder the vizard of vertue* (London, 1616).
for the gentleman. As *The English Gentlewoman* was only published a year later than *The English Gentlemen*, Braithwaite’s difference in attitudes towards dancing based on gender is unlikely to be the result of a change of opinion, especially since in 1641 the author oversaw the reissue of the two works bound in a single volume. Therefore, it seems safe to conclude that Brathwaite simultaneously approved of dancing for gentleman and disapproved of it for gentlewomen. Since he gives no explanation for these conflicting views in the 1641 reissue, it appears that either he did not notice this contradiction or that he did not find it problematic. Nevertheless, Brathwaite’s views created a paradox. As previously noted and discussed below, the vast majority of courtly dances were for one or more male-female couples. If gentlemen were allowed to dance, but gentlewomen were not, with whom were gentlemen supposed to dance?

**Dancing as the “Perfect Unitie” of Male and Female**

Richard Brathwaite believed that even if dancing were useful, or at least harmless, for gentlemen, it led to the moral downfall of gentlewomen. There were proponents, however, of the opposite view that dancing encouraged virtuous thoughts and actions for both men and women. *The Boke Named the Governour* promotes dancing as one of the few activities that men and women may do together. In general, Elyot is very concerned about the presence of women arousing lust and being a general distraction for young men. However, Elyot believes that the benefits of the “tempering of extremes” of masculinity and femininity that occur through dancing trump his worries about the close vicinity of men and women leading to sexual temptation.\(^{166}\)

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In *The Boke Named the Governour*, Elyot looks to dancing to exemplify the proper characteristics of men and women. First he describes the ideal man and woman:

A man in his naturall perfection is fiers [fierce], hardy, stronge in opinion, covaitous of glorie, desirous of knowledge, appetiting by generation to brynge forthe his semblable. The good nature of a woman is to be milde, timerouse, tractable, benigne, of sure remembrance, and shamfast.  

In this description, which focuses on traits pertaining to emotions, desires, and interpersonal interactions, what is most notable is the difference in degree or intensity in the characteristics Elyot ascribes to men and women. A man’s personality should be bold and expressive; a woman’s mild and retiring. Elyot then explains that the manner in which men and women dance (or ought to dance) corresponds with and conveys these gendered traits:

And the mev [moving] of the man wolde be more vehement, of the woman more delicate, and with lasse advancing of the body, signifienge the courage and strenthe that oughte to be in a man, and the pleasant sobreness that shulde be in a woman.

Elyot implies that by simply being male, a man’s dancing will automatically be more vigorous than a woman’s movements, thus demonstrating the masculine attributes of courage and strength. However, he recognises that this is an ideal, “the courage and strenthe that oughte to be in a man,” “the pleasant sobreness that shulde be in a woman” [my emphasis], and so offers specific instructions as to how to dance properly. Somewhat reluctantly, Elyot acknowledges that masculinity and femininity are not inherent, but performances that can be directed and influenced.

Nevertheless, in *The Boke Named the Governour*, Elyot presents the male-female dancing couple as the logical symbol for conjugal harmony and happiness. As Skiles

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167 Elyot, *The boke named the gouernour*, fols. 82v-83.
168 Elyot, *The boke named the gouernour*, fol. 83.
Howard has observed, “Elyot carefully promoted the dancing couple as an image of ideal marriage, with the ‘vehement’ movements of the man and the ‘delicate’ movements of the woman expressing the ‘sundry virtues’ of each partner and the perfection of their intercourse.”\(^{169}\) This idea of virtue as the mean between two extremes derives from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, an important influence on Elyot, as John Major has posited.\(^{170}\) Elyot argues that dancing represents marital concord because the gentleman and lady dance in step to the music together, “bothe observinge one nombre and tyme in their mevynges.”\(^{171}\) Yet, Elyot’s dancers performing their gendered movements present a logistical problem. If, as Elyot recommends, a gentleman were to dance at a “vehement” pace while holding hands with a female partner proceeding at a “delicate” pace with “less advancing of the body,” it would be difficult for the couple to stay together as they progressed around the floor.

Indeed, focusing on the differences in how men and women were supposed to dance can be misleading. Dancers had to adjust their performance style to accommodate different contexts. Whether dancing with a partner of the opposite gender in a duet, or with many dancers of the same gender in a court masque choreography, conformity among dancers trumped displays of individual skill. It was more important for a couple or group to dance in harmonious synchrony with each other and the music than for a man to show off his high, turning jumps or a woman her small, smooth steps. Rather, dancers had to find a “happy medium” when dancing together, even if that meant dancing in a way that was less than the epitome of ideal masculine or feminine movement. As the


\(^{171}\) Elyot, *The boke named the gouernour*, fol. 82.
majority of choreographies in the early modern canon were for one or more male-female couples, this “medium” style compromise would have been the general rule rather than the exception.

A breakdown of the choreographies in the most detailed and influential dancing manuals confirms the predominance of male-female couple dances. (See Table 1.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number &amp; Gender of Dancers</th>
<th>Number of Choreographies with Configuration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nobiltà di Dame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 man</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 woman</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group of men</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group of women</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 couple</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 couples</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 couples</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 couples</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 man, 2 women</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 men, 1 woman</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any number of couples</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguous or multiple options (^{172})</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Choreographies</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Dance Manual Choreographies Classified by Number and Gender of Dancers.\(^{173}\)

Statistics are drawn from Caroso, *Nobiltà di Dame* (1600); Negri, *Le Gratie d'Amore* (1602); and Arbeau, *Orchésographie* (1589).\(^{174}\) In the chart, “couple” denotes a male-female couple.

\(^{172}\) This category includes dances that can be done with different numbers of dancers, but not necessarily any number, and dances where it is simply not clear how many dancers are needed.


\(^{174}\) Montagut’s “Louange de la Danse” describes many of the same dance types but does not give specific choreographies so is not included here.
Although there are references to women dancing alone or in single-sex groups in court masques, these accounts do not mention specific dances. Extant choreographies in dancing manuals and other sources only describe dances for men, for a combination of men and women, or do not specify the sex of the dancers at all. While these dancing manuals vary somewhat in their choreographic configurations, dances for male-female couples dominate all the manuals: Fabritio Caroso’s *Nobiltà di Dame* favours dances for one couple, Cesare Negri’s *Le Gratie d’amore* features dances for one or two couples, and Thoinot Arbeau’s *Orchésographie* mostly contains branles for any number of couples. The only dances in these manuals that are not for couples are solo galliard variations (as opposed to the duet galliards), several all-male sword dances, and two court masque choreographies for single-sex groups of men or women. All the other dances—almains, branles, corantos, galliards, pavans, voltas, and dance suites—are for men and women to dance together. In addition, in almost all of these choreographies, men and women performed the same steps; thus it was dance styling and performance that was gendered, not the dances themselves.

If most dances were performed by male-female couple requiring men and women to dance with compatible styling and the same-sized steps, why did dancing manuals describe male and feminine styling at such length? The structure of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century choreographies suggests a probable answer. It was common to have the opening and closing figures and intermediary choruses danced by the man and woman together, with several alternating men’s and women’s solos in between. Caroso’s “Passo e Mezzo,” for example, features an opening figure danced together, two sets of
alternating solo variations for the gentleman and the lady, a circular figure danced jointly, 
two more sets of solo variations, and a coda “for both to do together.”

Almost all of the dances in Nobiltà di Dame follow a similar pattern. It is likely 
that these solos gave the gentleman the opportunity to show off his “masculine” grace 
with jumps, turns and large, “vehement” steps. Likewise the woman’s solo enabled her to 
demonstrate her “feminine” grace with smooth styling and small, “delicate” steps. During 
the rest of the dance, the man and woman could dance in tandem, with steps smaller than 
in his solo, but larger than in hers. In this way, a dancing couple could demonstrate 
harmonious concord by having their movements embody a middle ground between the 
“extremities” of masculinity and femininity, bringing together male and female in 
“perfect unitie.”

Dancing in “Perfect Uniformitie”

Interest in dance was not restricted to dancing manuals and conduct guides. Sir 
John Davies’ Orchestra Or a Poeme of Dauncing (1596) also stresses the importance of a 
dancing couple moving together in harmonious accord. Sir John Davies (1569-1626) was a 
poet, lawyer, and Parliament member, remembered as much for his legal and 
administrative activities in Ireland as for his poetry. While it never received the acclaim 
of his Nosce Teipsun (c. 1594), Orchestra was sufficiently successful to receive a second 
printing in 1622.

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175 Caroso, Nobiltà di Dame, pp. 177-179.
176 Sean Kelsey, “Davies, Sir John (bap. 1569, d. 1626),” in Oxford Dictionary of National 
In *Orchestra*, Davies uses dance as a model and metaphor for perfect relationships between men and women:

And every one doth daunce a severall part,  
Yet all as one in measure doe agree,  
Observing perfect uniformitie:  
All turne together, all together trace,  
And all together honor and embrace.\(^{178}\)

In this passage, Davies emphasizes the similarity of men and women’s movements. The male and female dancers turn, step, bow, and embrace “all together.” While the dancers may perform different or “several” parts, all these parts fit together perfectly, “as one in measure,” to form the dance. Thus, Davies’ description of the dancers as being in “perfect uniformitie,” refers to movements that are complementary but not necessarily identical. Nevertheless, when dancing a pavan or another dance for couples, Davies emphasises that the man and woman must stay together, if only because they are holding hands:

For whether forth or back, or round he goe,  
As the man doth, so must the woman doe.\(^{179}\)

These two lines are of particular interest to the dance historian because they indicate that the man leads the woman in the dance. Yet, dancing manuals such as Caroso’s *Nobiltà di Dame* and Montagut’s “Louange de la Danse” make no mention of men leading in couple dances. Nevertheless, certain group dances had different roles for dancers, such as leader and followers.\(^{180}\) In patriarchal cultures, such as those of early modern Europe, the roles of leader and follower had gender implications. Therefore, it is noteworthy that both men and women could be leaders or followers in a dance.


\(^{179}\) Davies, *Orchestra*, pp. 119-120, stanza 111.

\(^{180}\) Interestingly, sermons and religious treatises frequently refer to people “leading the dance,” at least metaphorically. See Chapter 3.
One of the few choreographic references to leading in a dance is in “The Montarde Branle” in Arbeau’s *Orchésographie*. “The Montarde Branle” is a line dance for an even number of men and women. One of the men leads, followed by the first woman, and so on, alternating by gender so that the last woman brings up the rear. The man leading the dance chooses the path that the rest of the dancers follow. This scenario could possibly fit Sir John Davies’ description of the woman having to follow the man’s lead, especially since the beginning of the dance requires holding hands. However, after he has led one playing of the music, the leader goes to the end of the line, and the woman who had been in the second place becomes the new leader. The dance then repeats with the woman leading, then the next man, and so on until all the dancers, both men and women, have had a chance to lead the dance.

Arbeau’s “Branle de la torche” and Caroso’s “Ballo del fiore,” described above, call for similar alternations of male and female leading, with the leader getting to choose his or her partner for the next section of the dance. In these choreographies, a man is always the first leader, so there is some nod to patriarchal hierarchy, but all the male and female leaders have all of the same privileges and responsibilities within the dance. This evidence suggests that Davies fabricated the convention of having the man lead the woman throughout the dance, presumably to heighten the effect of his opposition of masculine strength and vehemence with feminine delicacy and modesty.

While a dancer’s style and stamina might bolster or lessen his perceived masculinity, the act of dancing itself was not considered effeminate for males and did not

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call a male’s masculinity into question. Early modern authors may specify masculine and feminine styles of dancing, but they rarely worry that dancing itself is effeminate or effeminising. There are occasionally counterexamples, such as Stephen Gosson’s description of Roman soldiers as “smoothly appareled, soft lodged, daintely feasted” dancers in *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579), a treatise attacking the theatre and related arts. However, even in Gosson’s example, dancing might make a man seem frivolous or devoted to pleasure, but it does not impair other masculine characteristics such as martial abilities. Gosson’s dainty dancers were the same Roman soldiers who brutally and thoroughly crushed Queen Boudicca's rebellion. In fact, there were several dances primarily performed by, or associated with men, such as morris dances, jigs, and sword dances. These dances involved mock battles with sticks or swords and particularly vigorous movements. In addition, the galliard, although often performed as a male-female couple, was the dance showpiece for men at court. In *Orchestra*, Sir John Davies describes the

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galliard as having “A spirit and a vertue Masculine,” due to its “loftie turnes and capriols in
the ayre.”

Yet, these “loftie turnes” and capers were precisely the steps educators and conduct
writers warned against unless a gentleman were in private or masked. Only the most
talented amateurs, such as George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, could perform capers and
leaps with the requisite nonchalance and grace demanded of Castiglione’s courtier. Spectacular leaps and turns were impressive and displayed masculine traits, but they were
the province of the professional, not the gentleman. One of the difficulties of being a
gentleman in the early modern period was recognising and negotiating the boundaries
between admirable and excessive proficiency.

**Competitive Male Dancing**

There was one context, however, where a gentleman would be allowed, even
encouraged, to display the greatest mastery of dancing possible. This was the male-only
dance competition. Although there was potentially an element of male-female competition
in alternating solos in courtly couple dances, and some women may have behaved
competitively towards each other on the dance floor, for elite dancers there is only evidence
of men participating in organized, official dance competitions such as the tassel contest and
Alexandra Shepard observes that, “Male preoccupations in slanderous exchanges were
often a direct product of contests over rank and status, to which patriarchal concepts of

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189 Davies, *Orchestra*, stanza 68. In the original, stanza 67 is mislabelled 70 and stanza 68, the one
cited here, is mislabelled 71, although on the following page stanzas 70 and 71 are labelled
correctly.
191 For lower-status dancers, see discussion in Chapter 1 of the mixed-gender hornpipe competitions
described by William Blundell and the eccentric morris dance in “Old Meg of Hereford.”
manhood were firmly harnessed.”¹⁹² A very similar “competitive assertion of position” between men could also manifest itself in competitive dancing.¹⁹³

There are hardly any mentions of competitive male dancing in conduct literature and only brief comments in dancing manuals. Among courtesy and conduct guides the likeliest example is in The Courtyer. Castiglione may be alluding to such contests when Lord Gaspar Pallavicin speaks of the young gentlemen of Lombardy who: “daunce al the day long in the Sunne with them of the countrey, & passe the time with them in casting the barre, in wrastling, running and leaping.”¹⁹⁴ It is possible, although not definite, that Lord Gaspar means that dancing is one of the competitive feats among the young men along with the wrestling, running, and other contests. Dancing manuals, such as Negri's Le Gratie d'Amore, do not explain the rules of competitive dances like the tassel game described in Chapter 1, but presumably each dancer would try to jump higher, spin faster, and land more gracefully than his competitors. These were also the probable goals of the related galliard dance-off.

The most detailed description of a galliard competition comes from an early seventeenth-century play. In Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's The Old Law, or A New Way To Please You (1618), the elderly husband, Lisander, challenges three young courtiers and would-be suitors of his young wife to a competition in the “feats of youth”:

Bring forth the weapons, we shall find you play!
All feats of youth too, jack-boys, feats of youth,
And these weapons: drinking, fencing, dancing,
Your own roadways, you glisterpipes!¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Philip Massinger, Thomas Middleton, and William Rowley, The excellent comedy called, The old law, or, A new way to please you (London, 1656), III.ii.107-110. The play’s main author is
Much to the surprise and embarrassment of the young men (and the amusement of the audience), Lisander outdances, outfences, and outdrinks all three of them:

What! Shall we put down youth at her own virtues?
Beat folly in her own ground?  

We can assume that the weapon for the dance contest is the galliard, as this is the dance Lisander has been practising and on which the Dancing Master compliments him:

For your galliard, sir,
You are complete enough, ay, and may challenge
The proudest coxcomb of 'em all, I'll stand to it.

This mastery of the galliard is especially impressive for Lisander, a man of seventy-nine, as the basic step involves four kicks followed by a caper, a high jump in which the legs switch from front to back to front again all while in the air. While more advanced variations such as those presumably performed by Lisander might include turns and extra beats, the basic step is quite strenuous and impressive in of itself. The competition's response, “You've done well, i'faith, sir,” is quite possibly a genuine compliment.

By associating dancing with drinking and duelling, Middleton suggests that dancing provides a similar display of male bravado and youth. Thus by winning the three contests, Lisander proves himself the better man and best deserving of his wife. However ironically,

likely Thomas Middleton, with Rowley contributing the comic subplot including Act III, and Massinger adding some later revisions. Although published in 1656, the play was probably written c.1614-1618 and revised by Massinger c.1626. (David J. Lake, The Canon of Thomas Middleton's Plays (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 206-211; Terence P. Logan and Denzell S. Smith, eds., The Popular School: A Survey and Bibliography of Recent Studies in English Renaissance Drama (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), pp. 70, 265.)

Massinger, The old law; III.ii.197-198.
his mastery of youthful activities suggests that despite his age, he is still virile enough to beget children:

Why may not we be held as full sufficient
To love our own wives then, get our own children,
And live in free peace till we be dissolved?\(^{199}\)

Moreover, he has revealed the three courtiers as shams. By outperforming them in dancing, fencing, and drinking, Lisander calls into question their entitlement to be called gentlemen, courtiers, or even men, “you are all but maggots / For all your beamy outsiders!”\(^{200}\)

But is not Lisander himself a sham? Skiles Howard writes that, “the dancing duel that [Lisander] foolishly provokes ridicules the deadly competitiveness of courtly self-fashioning,” but Lisander's inclusion of dancing in his arsenal is hardly foolish; even his rivals must admit his superior skills.\(^{201}\) What is foolish is Lisander's desire to prove himself by competing with young men in the arts of youth in the first place.

While Middleton indicates that dancing is a requisite skill for a young gentleman, he calls into question its appropriateness for an older man. As Thoinot Arbeau notes in \textit{Orchésographie}, “every dancer acquits himself to the best of his ability, each according to his years and his degree of skill.”\(^{202}\) Young people who could “nimbly trip” danced the most energetic and athletic dances, while less physically demanding, more sedate dances were considered appropriate for older dancers.\(^{203}\) (See Chapter 1.) In this regard, Lisander's dancing in \textit{The Old Law} is both impressive and ridiculous. His skill is noteworthy, and he wins the contest, but his participation in the contest reveals his lack of propriety. He is like

\(^{200}\) Massinger, \textit{The old law}, III.ii.205-206.
\(^{202}\) Arbeau, \textit{Orchesography}, p. 129.
\(^{203}\) Arbeau, \textit{Orchesography}, p. 129. Arbeau mentions age appropriateness for different varieties of branles, but his comments are applicable to most dance types.
Master Morello (Morello da Ortona) in Castiglione's The Courtyer, one of the old men who instead of accepting his age, does “study to appere yonge,” dying his hair and dancing with young women. In The Old Law, Middleton uses dancing to both display and interrogate masculinity and gentility.

Competitive dancing could also occur between friends. Elizabeth Foyster's explanation that, “Instead of seeking mutuality, men's talk is often featured in the records left to us as highly competitive and concerned with one-upmanship,” also applies to men's dancing. A dance-based contest of this type occurs in William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, or What You Will (1602). In their first scene together, Sir Toby Belch demands of Sir Andrew Aguecheek, “Art thou good at these kickshawses, knight?” “What is thy excellence in a galliard, knight?” On the one hand, Sir Toby acknowledges and complements Sir Andrew on his social position by stressing his title and assuming that he is familiar with the galliard and its steps, as required for a proper courtier and gentleman. On the other hand, stressing the word “knight” is a challenge; if Sir Andrew cannot dance well, he is not living up to his title.

Sir Andrew rises to the bait, claiming “Faith, I can cut a caper,” which he then proceeds to demonstrate. The quality of his performance is suspect, however. The caper is difficult even for the sober and physically fit. The French dancing master Thoinot Arbeau writes that “there are many dancers so agile that while executing the saut majeur [or large jump] they move their feet in the air and such capering is called capriole [or a

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206 Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, Liii.120.
207 Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, Liii.121.
caper].”\(^{208}\) If Sir Andrew's demonstration is anything less than impressive, Sir Toby's response “Ha, higher! Ha ha, excellent!” is mocking and ironic, or if read as sincere, reveals Sir Toby's own ignorance.\(^{209}\) According to Skiles Howard, “As the breathless boasts of the two seedy courtiers in *Twelfth Night* suggest, the measure of a man was the height and amplitude of his ‘kickshawses.’”\(^{210}\) Yet, while Sir Andrew's boasts may be breathless, Sir Toby's responses are clever and mocking. He successfully goads Sir Andrew into further embarrassing himself, “Wherefore are these things hid?... I would not so much as make water but in a sink-a-pace.... Let me see thee caper.”\(^{211}\) Howard's contention that the excellence of a man's galliard reflected the excellence of the man is more easily supported. In both *Twelfth Night* and Middleton's *The Old Law*, the galliard is used to question and prove (or disprove) manliness.

But these galliard displays do not unequivocally confirm the dancer's masculinity or courtier qualifications. Instead, they highlight the ambiguity and complexity of contemporary debates surrounding dancing, gender, and gentility. An older married man would ordinarily have a higher status than a young unmarried man, but Lisander's proficiency at dancing, the art of young men, compromises his social status at the same time as it suggests his virility. Does he still deserve the respect due to an elder and head of household if he associates himself with the lifestyle of a young man about town? Likewise, Sir Andrew must strike a balance in his galliard steps. A certain proficiency in dancing is expected of a courtier, but if Sir Andrew's capers are too good, he risks being mistaken for

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\(^{208}\) Arbeau, *Orchesography*, p. 91.


\(^{210}\) Howard, “Hands, Feet and Bottoms,” p. 334.

a professional dancing master instead of a gentleman. In *The Old Law* and in *Twelfth Night*, Middleton and Shakespeare exploit the nuances of early modern dance etiquette and expectations for comic effect, but they also record for posterity the difficulties encountered by those who attempted to assert their gender and status through dance.

**The Dance Instruction Paradox**

The sometimes contradictory suggestions of conduct writers, educators, and dancing instructors regarding what appropriate dancing entailed created a paradox. Some argued that dancing with grace was an innate characteristic of those who were high born. Others asserted that dancing in a properly graceful and noble manner required practice and instruction. Among the latter, there was disagreement as to whether only elites could learn noble grace or whether others could also learn to dance in a graceful, noble style.

In *The Courtyer*, Lord Cesar (Cesare Gonzaga) observes that Count Lewis has repeatedly claimed that “the Courtier ought to accompany all his doings, gestures, demeaners, finally al his mocions with a grace, and this, me think, ye put for a sauce to every thing, without the which all his other properties & good condicions were litle woorth.” Lord Cesar asks how grace should be acquired:

I would faine knowe with what art, with what learning, and by what meane they shall compasse this grace, aswel in the exercises of the bodye (wherin ye thinke it so necessarie a matter) as in all other thynges that they dooe or speake.

Lord Cesar complains of confusion because on the one hand the Count has “saide sundry times that it is the gift of nature and of the heauens,” but on the other, that when a gentleman's grace is “not so perfect, that it maye with studye and diligence be made muche

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more.”²¹⁴ Count Lewis, however, ducks the question by responding that “I am able to tel
you what a perfect Courtyer ought to be, but not to teach you how ye should doe to be
one.”²¹⁵ The Count merely recommends that the courtier “learne his principles of cunning
men” and imitate those who already possess it, “So shall our Courtyer steale thys grace
from them that to hys seming have it.”²¹⁶ The conversation then moves on to the discussion
of sprezzatura and the avoidance of affectation discussed previously.

It is interesting that a book as concerned with grace as The Courtyer does not
explain how to acquire it. Lord Cesar brings up the issue of whether grace is innate or can
be learned, but none of the other characters takes up the question. Perhaps this is because it
was not only an open question in the early modern period, but a touchy one. Because grace
was so closely associated with nobility, if one could learn to be graceful, then one might
also be able to learn to be noble. In a society where status was inherited and thought to be
assigned by God, the possibility of learning to be noble, the possibility of “upward
mobility” created profound problems. As teaching dance included teaching, or at least
refining, grace, this put dancing masters in an awkward position, simultaneously arguing
for and against grace as teachable. Katherine Tucker McGiness writes that, “By the time of
Negri in the second half of the sixteenth century, the professional dancing master had
become the ubiquitous servant of the self-improving man and woman.”²¹⁷

This raises the question of whether the “self-improving” men and women seeking
the services of dancing masters were elites wanting to improve their inherent noble grace or
lower ranking individuals hoping to improve their social status. The future Charles I, who

studied at the Bocardo dancing school in Oxford, would fall into the first category.\textsuperscript{218} However, it is probable that dance students in the second category were more common. Certainly those who attended dancing lessons in poems and plays did so to improve their reputation and perceived status. In \textit{The Young Gallants Whirligigg} (1629), Francis Lenton mocks the pretensions of a young man, nominally studying at the Inns of Court, who, “His dauncing Master he supposeth can / Make him a right accomplisht Gentleman, / Although his birth abridg'd it.”\textsuperscript{219} Although the poem paints an unflattering portrait of dancing, it is those who dance for social advancement who receive Lenton’s scorn not dancing itself.

In Fabritio Caroso’s first dancing manual, \textit{Il Ballarino} (1581), he states that dancing is best suited to the nobility, and one was supposed to take dancing lessons merely to augment one’s inherent grace.\textsuperscript{220} In his second manual, \textit{Nobiltà di Dame}, he expresses a similar sentiment when he writes in the letter to the reader that he hopes his dance manual may be helpful “to those more noble spirits who can most appreciate it.”\textsuperscript{221} Yet, in \textit{Il Ballarino} he adds that “through devotion of spirit” to one’s dancing, a lower-status individual could “become the equal of those created by birth.”\textsuperscript{222} The closest equivalent in \textit{Nobiltà di Dame} is the wish for his readers that “through the fruits of my labours they have

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{218} Eleanor Chance et al., “Social and Cultural Activities,” vol. 4, p. 427.
\item \textsuperscript{221} Caroso, \textit{Nobiltà di Dame}, 88.
\item \textsuperscript{222} Translation quoted from Smith, “The Art of Good Dancing,” p. 30.
\end{itemize}
obtained some good training and delightful recreation.” In his second dancing manual, Fabritio Caroso backs away from his earlier assertions that low rank need not prevent one from dancing in a noble style.

Even William Shakespeare engages in this debate. In *The Winter’s Tale* (1623), King Polixenes makes the observation to his advisor Camillo that the young shepherdess Perdita has a certain noble air at odds with her station:

This is the prettiest Low-borne Lasse, that ever
Ran on the greene-sord: Nothing she do's, or seemes
But smackes of something greater then her selfe,
Too Noble for this place.

This comment is reinforced when Polixenes sees Perdita dance with the other shepherds and shepherdesses. He remarks, “She dances featly.” Because Perdita, the shepherdess, is being courted by Prince Florizel, Polixenes' son, in disguise, initially it appears that Shakespeare is arguing that a graceful shepherdess can dance like a noblewoman, and thus catch a prince and become noble herself. However, later in the play Perdita turns out to be the long-lost daughter of the neighbouring king. Perdita does not dance in a manner “too Noble for this place" because she is a “self-improving" shepherdess. Shakespeare instead proposes that noble grace is inherent. Even though Perdita is raised from infancy as a lowly shepherdess, she cannot help but dance in a noble manner because noble blood is manifest in movement. Prince Florizel falls in love with her, not because she is a particularly graceful shepherdess, but because he is drawn to her innate nobility.

There was a certain anxiety in English society about particularly skilful dancers (especially men) gaining a certain upward social mobility by arousing admiration or lust in

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224 William Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*, in *Mr. VVilliam Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies Published according to the true originall copies* (London, 1623), IV.iv.156-159.
those of higher status. It is telling that the meteoric rise of both Christopher Hatton and George Villiers, favourites of Elizabeth I and James I, respectively, was attributed by their contemporaries to pleasing figures and skilful dancing rather than to intellectual or political acumen. Sir Christopher Hatton reputedly “ Came into court ‘by the galliard’” when his role in an Inns of Court masque, and “ his activity and person, which was tall and proportionable,” brought him royal advancement.\textsuperscript{226} As the Venetian observer Orazio Busino noted, when James I grew impatient at the masque \textit{Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue}, Villiers “ sprang forward, and danced a number of very high and very tiny capers with such grace and lightness that he made everyone admire and love him, and also managed to calm the rage of his angry lord.”\textsuperscript{227}

Patrick Collinson disparages Hatton’s dancing skills in \textit{The Elizabethan Puritan Movement}, asserting, “We have discarded the legend of the dancing chancellor and a proper estimate of his abilities now includes an appreciation of one of the great parliamentary orators of the age.”\textsuperscript{228} However, terpsichorean and oratorical skills were not mutually exclusive. Hatton and Villiers were particularly successful (and therefore particularly threatening) because they were consummate courtiers, cultivating their talents in dancing and other social arts as a complement to more traditional political manoeuvrings. If anything they were guilty of being a little too good, a little too skilled. They did not heed Castiglione's recommendation that a gentleman's dancing should be graceful but understated, “without over nimble footinges or to[o] busie trickes.”\textsuperscript{229} Rather, their skill was visible to, and noted by, their peers. Following his description of Villiers’

\textsuperscript{226} Brissenden, \textit{Shakespeare and the Dance}, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{229} Castiglione, \textit{The Courtyer}, Appendix, sig. Zz1.
impressive, impromptu performance, Orsino adds, “The King then honoured the Marquis with extraordinary signs of affection, touching his face.”

At the same time, Hatton and Villiers both reaped the benefits promised by Castiglione and his successors. By cultivating the assortment of skills conduct writers recommended, one would always be before the eye of the monarch and the court. As Nicholas Faret explains in *The Honest Man*, to “be dextrous in Dancing, at the Tennis-Court, at Wrestling, Leaping, Swimming, Shooting, and all other Diversions” was useful:

Most of these Things, separately considered, are indeed small; but together, render a Man accomplished, and cause him to be looked upon with some Kind of Admiration; especially when they are brightened by the Qualities of the Mind, which give them the last Features of Perfection.”

If a gentleman presented a polished, masterful performance on the dance floor, as well as on the parliamentary floor, this created a strong impression of him as generally able, and thus a good candidate for important offices. Dancing well enabled men (and women) who were candidates for positions of power to distinguish themselves and attract the attention of a sovereign, even if they needed to possess other talents and connections to secure the post. Even the most anti-dance character in *The Courtyer*, Lord Octavian, admits that dancing could be a useful means of gaining a prince's attention and favour. For the would-be courtier, dancing lessons might be expensive, but they were a potentially lucrative investment.

**Will Kemp’s Kemps Nine Daisies Wonder**

Nearly all the examples discussed thus far have focused on the dancing practices and concerns of the elite. This is because the elite are the subject of, and audience for, the

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majority of surviving conduct and dance manuals. There are, however, a handful of printed works that describe the dancing of lower-status men and women, including professional performers. Therefore, to paint a richer and fuller picture of early modern English dancing, it may be helpful to consider the boastful, exaggerated, but nevertheless informative tract, *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder* (1600).

In 1600, William Kemp, the famous Elizabethan comic actor and master of the jig, performed the impressive feat of dancing a morris dance all the way from London to Norwich. Shortly thereafter, Kemp published an autobiographical pamphlet about the venture entitled *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder*. The morris was an active, vigorous dance with technically demanding jumps, kicks, and stamps usually performed by several men dancing in symmetrical configurations. (See Chapter 1.) Morris dancers wore bells on their legs and coats with special long, sleeves. (See Figure 8 in Chapter 1.) A musician playing a pipe and tabor, a small drum, usually provided accompaniment. (See Figure 18 in Chapter 1.) Will Kemp’s pipe and tabor player was Thomas Slye.

Kemp's version of the morris was apparently a solo dance and so did not involve the choreographed figures for multiple dancers common to the genre. Nevertheless, *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder* notes several men and women who joined Kemp in dancing. The account is of general interest to dance and theatre historians, but the descriptions of these amateur dancers are particularly relevant to a discussion of dance, status, and gender.

In his account, Kemp describes various people who danced with him for part of his journey. One of the people who joined Kemp in dancing during his journey was a butcher,

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234 John Forrest also points out that unlike most dances, Kemp’s morris had no definite beginning or end and no set length. He dances for different amounts of time each day, and other dancers join him for variable lengths of time and at different points in his dance, not necessarily from the beginning. (Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing*, p. 240.)
“a lusty, tall fellow.” The butcher pronounced that he “would in a Morrice keepe mee company” from Sudbury to Bury, a distance of around fifteen miles. However, after a short distance, the butcher quit:

Ere wee had measur’d halfe a mile of our way, he gave me over in the plain field, protesting, that if he might get a 100. pound, he would not hold out with me; for indeed my pace in dauncing is not ordinary.

The butcher might have been a stout, energetic fellow, and a proficient dancer, but he could not keep pace with a professional performer like Kemp.

However, Kemp writes, “a lusty Country lasse” from among the spectators, calling the butcher a “faint hearted lout,” said she herself could dance a mile. Tucking up her russet petticoat, she “garnisht her thicke short legs” with some of Kemp's morris bells, and alongside Kemp “shooke her fat sides: and footed it merrily to Melfoord, being a long myle.” Kemp’s description of the woman, with her “thicke short legs” and “fat sides” is not entirely complimentary, but he readily acknowledges that her ability to keep up with him was impressive. He also praises her dancing skills saying, “she had a good eare,” and that she “daunst truely.”

For a woman to outdance a “lusty tall fellow” called the butcher’s strength, courage, and masculinity into question. Less physically “lusty” than a woman, the butcher is mocked as a “faint hearted lout” and his perpetual shame is ensured by Kemp’s printing of the account. At the same time, the impressive dancing of the country lass does not fall

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235 William Kemp, Kemps nine daies vvonder Performed in a daunce from London to Norwich.Containing the pleasure, paines and kinde entertainment of William Kemp betweene London and that citty in his late morrice (London, 1600), sigs. B3-B3v.
236 Kemp, Kemps nine daies vvonder, sig. B3v. Google maps estimates walking from Sudbury to Bury St. Edmunds would take approximately five and a quarter hours.
237 Kemp, Kemps nine daies vvonder, sig. B3v.
238 Kemp, Kemps nine daies vvonder, sig. B3v.
239 Kemp, Kemps nine daies vvonder, sig. B3v.
240 Kemp, Kemps nine daies vvonder, sig. B3v.
within the boundaries of acceptable feminine behaviour, especially since she was “ready to
tucke up her russet petticoat” in order to dance, revealing her legs to all in a most
indecorous manner.

Even more indecorous than a woman lifting her skirts to show off her footwork was
revealing her legs entirely by wearing men’s attire. Male cross-dressed dancers famously
(or perhaps infamously) appeared on the English public stage, since female characters, who
often danced, were played by boy actors until the theatres were closed down by Parliament
in 1642. 241 However, both male and female cross-dressers pepper archival records of rural
festivities. May games often featured cross-dressed young men and women, and the Maid
Marion character featured in many morris dances was generally a man dressed in women's
clothing. 242 The Archdeaconry of Chichester Detection Book for 1620-1621, for example,
describes an incident in West Thorney, Sussex, in which “certeyne maydens did daunce in
mans apparell & young men in maydes clothes uppon sunday the 4th of ffebruary at
Thomas Romins & on sunday the eleventh of ffebruary at hargoodes house.” 243 Subsequent
entries charge John Hargood with “suffering maydens to dance in mans apparell & men in
maydens Clothes in his howse” and Thomazina Bonny “for dauncing in mans apparell.” 244

The reason for cross-dressing in this case is unclear. Since the dancing takes place
on two Sundays in early February, the cross-dressing is not for a May game, and since

241 That boys played women's roles in the public theatres, which included wearing women’s apparel,
was one of the aspects of the theatre that prompted puritans to condemn acting and playgoing. (See
Stephen Orgel, Impersonations: The performance of gender in Shakespeare’s England (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1996).)
243 Cameron Louis, ed., Records of Early English Drama: Sussex (Toronto: University of Toronto
244 Louis, REED: Sussex, p. 180.
many people were cross-dressed, it was not likely for a morris dance, which only calls for one cross-dressed man for Maid Marion.245 (See Chapter 1.) Cameron Louis suggests that it might be part of a “carnavalesque celebration,” but there is no mention of other carnival festivities in the record to support this possibility, nor have I found other evidence of cross-dressing for carnival or Shrovetide elsewhere in England during this period.246 However, what is indisputable is that a number of young men and women in Sussex engaged in cross-dressing and then danced in their costumes. It is quite possible that they tried to dance in the style of the opposite gender, as well, further offending more puritanical community members. It is also indisputable that at least someone was offended by the cross-dressed dancing, since we know about the incident because the dancers were presented as transgressors in the consistory court.

Cross-dressed dancers also appear in accounts of a 1607 church ale at Wells in Somerset.247 The ale, and a libellous pageant in the accompanying procession, exacerbated pre-existing tensions between proponents of traditional festivities and the local puritan contingent. One of the leading puritans, John Hole, who also happened to be the constable that year, brought a bill of complaint against the revelers in the Star Chamber. The case dragged on for several years, creating a large paper trail, and involving a good portion of Wells’ inhabitants.

In many respects, the Wells ale was just another example of the kinds of local, religio-political controversies that Chapters 4 and 5 examine. Yet, because of the wealth of

246 Louis, REED: Sussex, p. xlviii. Ronald Hutton’s Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) includes no carnival festivities, and while Shrovetide celebrations included ball sports, they did not include morris dancing. Moreover, Shrovetide occurred later in the year than the dancing in this record.
documentation it generated, we have more details than usual about the various festivities, including what they danced—the “Longe dance,” probably a processional dance for a long line of couples similar to an almain or pavan—and what some of the dancers wore.  

The litany of “abuses” in John Hole’s bill of complaint included cross-dressed dancers; there were “many disordered Maygames Morice daunces longe Daunces men in weamens apparall new devised lordes and ladyes and Churchales.” Likewise, in the interrogatories for principal defendants, a defendant was asked if he did “apparell Divers boyes and Maydes in Woomans apperell” and then “go about the streetes of the said towne with other Company of Morice dauncers Drumes Musketes and other shewes.”

Apparently, at this event, men and boys wore women’s apparel while young, unmarried women dressed up as if they were married women. In other words, the Wells revellers cross-dressed in terms of status as well as gender.

Moreover, morris dancers, drummers, and armed men accompanied the cross-dressed dancers as they processed through the town. Indeed, many aspects of the festivities at Wells are similar to the martial procession and morris dance that Sir Edward Parham participated in just a few years earlier and less than twenty miles away. William Walton’s discomfort with that gentleman’s participation in a morris dance becomes easier to understand when considered in the context of local festive customs that upset status and gender norms, as well as the not so subtle threats of violence to opponents conveyed through symbolic displays of arms and martial morris dances. Recognizing the differences

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between Justinian Pagitt’s smooth, graceful, understated steps for the ballroom and Sir Parham’s vigorous, morris dance at a church ale can help explain how clergymen who had danced at Cambridge and Oxford and justices of the peace who had danced at the Inns of Court could nevertheless find the dancing of their lower-status neighbours so foreign and so threatening. Styling and context shaped the performance and perception of dancing to such a great degree that they could make the familiar steps from which all dances of this period were composed seem unrecognizable.

Conclusion

According to John Stanhope, a gentleman of the privy chamber, Elizabeth I was accustomed to dance “six or seven gallyards in a mornynge” for her daily exercise.\textsuperscript{251} André de Maise, the French Ambassador, described the queen as “a mistress of the art, having learnt in the Italian manner to dance high.”\textsuperscript{252} As dancing “high” referred to a vigorous and athletic style that featured high kicks, turns in the air, and capers, these reports suggest that Elizabeth I openly danced in a “masculine” style. Dancing even one galliard requires a substantial amount of energy, so to dance half a dozen galliards highlights the queen’s physical strength and stamina, again characteristics associated with male rather than female dancing. The queen managed her image very carefully, so her overt usage of masculine dance styling must have been intentional. Perhaps she wanted to evoke memories of her father, as Henry VIII was a much lauded dancer in his youth, impressing

ladies with “leaps like a stag.”

Perhaps, by dancing as vigorously as a man, she wished to suggest to observers that she could rule as vigorously as a man, as well.

Elizabeth I, as Queen of England, could ignore or defy gendered movement expectations more easily than could her subjects. Early modern didactic literature provides evidence of the significant social pressure exerted on gentlemen to balance displays of masculine strength with noble grace, and on gentlewomen to demonstrate grace and proficiency without compromising their modesty, when they were permitted to dance at all. At the same time, dancing and conduct manuals suggest, through their authors’ complaints and qualifications, that dancers were capable of subverting or circumventing movement expectations. They exploited loopholes and exceptions, such as dancing masked or in a private setting, in order to dance in ways that would otherwise be judged inappropriate.

The various and unstable meanings of dancing provided fodder for the early modern debate over the merits of dancing (or lack thereof). On the one hand, gentlemen and gentlewoman studied dancing to ensure that their comportment and deportment reflected their elite status, thus upholding and enforcing the status quo and giving support to those who argued that dance promoted order and self-control. On the other hand, by taking lessons or reading dancing manuals, lower-status individuals could learn to dance in a noble style enabling them to approximate or fake gentility and catch the eye of those in a position to prefer them. Such persons used dancing to subvert the “natural” hierarchy, validating the fears of those who warned that dancing led to chaos and disorder. Likewise, men and women could choose to dance in a manner that conformed to and confirmed gender expectations or in a contrary style that ignored or defied them, undermining claims

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253 Ravelhofer, “Dancing at the Court of Queen Elizabeth,” p. 108.
that masculinity and femininity were natural, inherent characteristics rather than constructions.

In printed literature and archival records, dance is usually one of several related topics, rather than the main focus. It is nevertheless worthwhile to examine and highlight the dance component of these records. Since dancing was not inherently problematic, but only made so by certain contextual factors, how people described and reacted to dance in specific situations tells us about how they interpreted those contexts. The writers of instruction manuals acknowledged that dancing could be immoral or disorderly but argued that such “abuses” were rare. They suggested that it was the responsibility of the individual to dance in an appropriate manner, and they provided guidelines about what this entailed depending on the status, gender, and other characteristics of the dancer. Nevertheless, the repeated reminders of conduct writers and dancing masters to dance in a manner that matched one’s status and gender indicate that Sir Edward Parham, Kemp’s country wench, and the cross-dressed dancers of West Thorney and Wells were hardly the only dancers who ignored or subverted dance floor etiquette, just as William Walton was hardly the only critic discomfited by dancers who flouted convention.

Whereas the authors and manuals discussed in this chapter primarily address the benefits and risks of dancing in relation to the individual dancer, authors of religious works tended to discuss dancing in terms of the effect on the larger community. Chapter 3 will examine the debate on dance as discussed in religious writings, focusing on theological arguments, the claims of reformers and traditionalists, and the emphasis on dancing as a threat or benefit to the whole community as expressed by clergymen and theologians in sermons, biblical commentaries, and treatises.
Chapter Three  
Dancing References in Religious Texts  

In *The History of the Sabbath* (1636), Peter Heylyn provides one of the most detailed descriptions of what early modern lascivious dancing entailed:

> The women ... even in the sight of wanton and lascivious youthes, *daunce immodest dances*, tossing about their hayre, drawing aside their coates that so they might lay open what should not be seene; their garments open in many places for that purpose also, their armes quite bare: clapping their hands, capering with their feete, chanting obscene and filthy songs ... stirring up the lusts of ungoverned men, by those uncomely motions, wanton lookes, and shamefull spectacles.¹

This passage’s litany of shocking behaviours evokes the sense that dancers are headstrong sinners tumbling headlong towards impending damnation. This kind of litany of negative behaviours is typical in religious reformers’ writings, in general, and puritan anti-dance literature, in particular. Yet, when one reads the above passage more carefully, it becomes clear that the majority of the description is not about dancing. Tossing hair and wearing revealing attire affect the reception of a dance, but they are not forms of expression exclusive to dancing. The only parts of the passage that describe dance steps and gestures are “clapping their hands” and “capering with their feete.” There was nothing remotely wanton about clapping. Moreover, even though a few hardliners might grumble that it was inappropriate for women to hop or jump under any circumstances and many critics might consider it a waste of time for women, or men, to skip about, capering dances such as the galliard had no lascivious connotations. Indeed, by the time of

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¹ Peter Heylyn, *The history of the Sabbath In two bookees* (London, 1636), sig. 86. For Heylyn’s biographical details, see below. Ironically this work primarily defends dancing. This passage is an acknowledgement of Saint Ambrose’s criticisms of dancing, which Heylyn goes on to refute, not by pointing out that St. Ambrose’s fears are not really about the dancing at all, but by arguing that most women do not dance in such a manner, only prostitutes.
Heylyn’s writing, capering would have been most closely associated with Queen Elizabeth, whose favorite dance was the galliard.²

Yet, religious writers were convinced that “It was a vile note of whorish wantonness for a damsel marriageable to dance,” as the English translator of John Calvin’s commentaries on the three evangelists (1584) subtly asserted.³ This raises the question of “why?” What exactly was whorish and wanton about dancing? The vast majority of dances in the early modern canon were comprised of variations on walking and hopping. As Chapter 1 demonstrates, there were only a handful of choreographies, such as the volta, that specified steps or gestures that could be construed as lascivious. In what sense was “One double forward & one single backe” wanton?⁴ As discussed in Chapter 2, Sir Thomas Elyot actually advocates using dance steps like the double, single, and bow or “honour” to teach virtues like prudence and industriousness.⁵ Moreover, not only do John Ramsey’s choreographic descriptions in “Practise for Dauncinge” at the Inns of Court specify singles and doubles, but they all begin with an honour, including the infamous volta.⁶ In other words, it was likely very similar combinations of forward, backward, and

² See Chapter 2 for distinctions between choreography and styling, for a description of the caper, and for Elizabeth I’s fondness for and proficiency at the galliard.
³ Jean Calvin, A harmonie upon the three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke with the commentarie of M. John Caluine: faithfully translated out of Latine into English, by E.P. Whereunto is also added a commentarie vpon the Evangelist S. Iohn, by the same authour (London, 1584), p. 421.
⁴ A double step forward and a single step backward, repeated four times, is part one of the Earl of Essex Measures, one of the old measures choreographies. (David R. Wilson, “Dancing in the Inns of Court,” Historical Dance 2, no. 5 (1987-1986): 5, quoting MS Harl. 367, British Library.) See Chapter 1 for detailed explanations of double and single steps and the old measures.
⁵ Sir Thomas Elyot, The boke named the gouvernour (London, 1531, 1537), fols. 80-80v, 86.
sideways movements that Peter Heylyn, Sir Thomas Elyot, and, of course, John Calvin “read” so differently.\(^7\)

While John Calvin was never a proponent of dancing at any time for any reason, and dancing was forbidden in Calvin’s Geneva, the controversies over dancing in early modern England were not a direct import from Continental Europe.\(^8\) Calvin’s condemnation of dancing was a result of its potential to arouse lust and his belief that the best way to resist temptation was to avoid it entirely. However, most of the attacks on dancing by English authors decried the tradition of dancing on Sundays and holy days at least as vehemently as they condemned lascivious dancing. This was a departure from Continental views. Calvin was not a sabbatarian and “made a point of playing at bowls on Sunday to demonstrate his own attitude to the question.”\(^9\)

Similarly, Luther encouraged working and playing on Sunday to “remove this reproach from Christian liberty.”\(^10\) Luther even said, “If anyone sets up the observance of Sunday upon a Jewish foundation, then I order you to work on it, to ride on it, to dance on it, to feast on it.”\(^11\) Although scholars such as David Katz argue that it was a confluence of factors including increasing literacy and the economic utility of a day of rest that led to a desire for a more orderly and educational Sunday or “Lord’s Day” in England, James T. Dennison argues strongly that the widespread sabbatarian campaigns of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were primarily motivated by English reformers’ stricter

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\(^7\) The main difference between the honour as done c. 1531 and c. 1605 is the depth of the knee bend; in the earlier version the bend is deeper so the knee of the back leg touches the floor.
\(^10\) Katz, Sabbath and Sectarianism, p. 4.
interpretation of the fourth commandment, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.”\textsuperscript{12} 
With few exceptions, English puritans envisioned a Sunday that had no place for dancing.\textsuperscript{13}

Once again, one must ask, “why?” Or rather, “why not just forbid dancing on Sunday?” If English reformers agreed with Calvin that dancing could lead to lust and wantonness, and by and large they did agree, why did they not ban it entirely as in Geneva?\textsuperscript{14} This chapter contends that English puritan reformers’ tendency to interpret Scripture literally made it very difficult to condemn dancing across the board, because the Bible offered many positive and neutral references to dancing. Nearly every early modern author who discouraged dancing also acknowledged situations where dancing was permissible or even divinely sanctioned. At the same time, biblical precedents did not easily apply to contemporary dance practices and so could support a wide range of interpretations.

While Chapter 2 observes that immodest styling choices, such as a woman lifting up her skirts or maintaining eye contact with men for longer than necessary, were not specified in any known choreography and were actively discouraged by dancing masters, opponents of dancing were quick to point out that dancing did, indeed, provide opportunities for flirtation and immodest display. Most authors of religious tracts contended that even though some dancing was truly chaste and harmless, it should still be avoided. That way no one had to judge whether a dance was or was not being done in a modest and appropriate manner. Plus, it is always easiest to resist temptations one does not

\textsuperscript{13} See Robert Cox, \textit{The Literature of the Sabbath Question} (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1865), vol. 1. This extensive collection of texts pertaining to sabbatarianism quoted and summarised by Cox with historiographical notes remains useful though dated.
\textsuperscript{14} Clive, “The Calvinists and the Question of Dancing in the 16th Century”: 296.
encounter. Finally, these authors asserted, since the benefits of dancing are outweighed by the dangers, little is lost and much is gained by not dancing. Only a few religious writers argued otherwise.

Clergymen and religious reformers were drawn to the debate on dance by both the practical aim of affecting widespread practices and by the intellectual challenge the debate posed. This chapter examines how writers of religious texts interpreted biblical dance passages and countered the views of their opponents, with particular attention to dance references in sermons, biblical commentaries, and treatises. It touches on the Greek and Roman works these authors used to bolster and complement biblically based arguments; notes the common tripartite categorisation of dances into good, bad, and indifferent; and highlights the striking similarities among treatises that laud, condemn, or cautiously permit dancing. This author largely agrees with the observations of Mary Pennino-Baskerville on Elizabethan anti-dance treatises and of Jeremy Goring on puritan sermons, especially their emphasis on the importance of context in interpreting certain biblical verses and the concerns of critics that dancing was disorderly and licentious.\(^{15}\) However, this work also highlights the mostly imagined connection between such fears and actual dance choreographies. Very few dance steps or figures were inherently disorderly or wanton; it was certain styling and performance choices (discussed in Chapter 2) made in response to specific contextual details that made them so. This is why it is critical to study historical dances in their historical context.

Finally, this chapter argues that many religious reformers were blinded by their own assumptions about the motivations of dancers and their own convictions about how dancing affected both participants and spectators. When they encountered men and women moving forwards, backwards, and sideways together to music, all they saw was sexual suggestiveness and opportunities for sinning. Indeed, one might speculate that if John Calvin and Sir Thomas Elyot or Philip Stubbes and Christopher Windle had described the same performance of the Earl of Essex Measures, it would be difficult to believe that they had seen the same dance. While the references to dancing in this chapter contribute little to our knowledge of what dancers actually did with their feet, they do illuminate the preoccupations of early modern religious reformers, especially the sabbatarian, puritan-minded clergymen who presided over so many of England’s parish churches.

**Influence of Humanist Sources**

Humanist scholarship was an important influence in shaping religious writers’ views on dancing. Scholars such as Jennifer Nevile and Barbara Sparti have examined how dancing masters, “appropriated humanist discourse to promote their art and endow it with scholarly authority.”\(^{16}\) As discussed in Chapter 1, many dancing manuals from the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries begin with a defence of dancing that relies on classical authorities, and several are written as dialogues. References to dancing are found throughout texts by authors such as Homer, Aristotle, Aristophanes, Plato, and Lucian, and dance manual writers were quick to cite those who spoke in favour of dance.\(^{17}\) Thoinot Arbeau names Socrates and Appius Claudius, among others, in his dancing manual,


Chapter 3: Dancing References in Religious Texts

*Orchésographie* (1589), and lists examples of Roman gods dancing or teaching people to dance.¹⁸ Likewise, the conduct manuals and educational treatises discussed in Chapter 2 drew on humanist learning and techniques.¹⁹ English authors cited Greco-Roman authors and contemporary humanists to bolster both positive and negative assessments of dancing.

This chapter examines a different body of writings, namely religious texts. Sermons and moral treatises cite many of the same authorities as the treatises in Chapter 2. As Margo Todd, among others, has observed, both separatist and conforming puritans read and selectively embraced the writings and ideas of humanist scholars such as Erasmus and Juan Luis Vives who remained within the Catholic church.²⁰ However, English religious authors tended to emphasise different aspects of their writings than the conduct and education treatise writers discussed in Chapter 2. Whereas Philip Stubbes made sure to cite Erasmus and Vives’ anti-dance comments, Sir Thomas Elyot, Roger Ascham, and Richard Mulcaster strategically failed to mention Erasmus and Vives’s views on dance, even though they cite those scholars’ works in their treatises. To help contextualise the subsequent discussion of sermons and treatises, the following is a brief overview of the comments of Erasmus and Vives on dancing.

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¹⁹ In *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Margo Todd defines humanism as characterized by “a disdain for ecclesiastical corruption… combined with a veneration of ancient literature and the society which had produced it to bring forth a new conception of human potential, social as well as individual.” (p. 22.)

There is no question that Erasmus held decidedly anti-dance views.\footnote{Erasmus visited England several times, developing close relationships with English humanists such as Thomas More, John Colet, and John Fisher, and inspiring many more through his writings, including Roger Ascham and Sir Thomas Elyot. A royal injunction of 1547 specified that his Paraphrases on the New Testament should be available in every English parish, further extending his influence. (James McConica, “Erasmus, Desiderius (c. 1467-1536),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39358.)} In *Institutio principis Christiani* (1516), he writes:

How, then, can you expect that anyone who has spent his first years among flatterers and frothy women, corrupted first by base opinions and then by sensual pleasures, and wasting these years engaged in gambling, dancing, and hunting, could later on be happy in those duties the fulfillment of which requires the most diligent thought?\footnote{Desiderius Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, transl. Lester K. Born (New York: Octagon Books, 1936, 1965), p. 246.}

The attack on hunting, a favourite royal activity and a mark of nobility, undermines the impact of Erasmus’ disapproval of dancing. Still, Erasmus makes clear his conviction that dancing is a poor use of valuable time. Elsewhere in his work, he mocks those who delight in such frivolous, “idle nonsense,” and asserts that those who engage in dance are “utter fools.”\footnote{Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, p. 184.} Moreover, those who value dancing skill in others are equally direputable. “What is more stupid than to judge a prince on ... his ability to dance gracefully?” he asks.\footnote{Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, p. 150.}


Latimer contends:
And when the king is set in the seat of his kingdom, what shall he do? shall he daunce, and dally? banket? hauke and hunte? No forsoth syr. For as God set an order in the kinges stable as I tolde you in my laste Sermon, so will he appoint what pastime a king shal have. What must he doo then? He must be a student.26

While Latimer claims that dancing and hunting are not appropriate royal pursuits, he does modify his initial disapproval:

And yet a Kinge may take his pastime in hauking or hunting or suche lyke pleasures But he must use them for recreation when he is wery of waightye affayres, that he may returne to them the more lustye: and this is called pastime with good company.27

Latimer carefully distinguishes between hunting (and similar activities) as one’s primary occupation, which is reprehensible for a king, and as a periodic recreation, which is allowable. Latimer is more lenient than Erasmus in allowing dancing as an appropriate recreation for royalty, but he is equally adamant that dancing must not distract monarchs from their responsibilities.

In “The Young Mans Taske” (1593), Henry Smith addresses a similar complaint to a somewhat lower-status audience. The gentry have neglected their children’s religious and general education:

In stead of catechising their children, as Salomon teacheth them, they catechise them to hunt & hawke, to ride and vaute, to ruffle & sweare, to game and daunce, as they were catechised themselves; least the childe should proove better than his father, and then he is qualified like a Gentleman.28

Dancing is not singled out, but it is certainly included among the gentlemanly arts Smith believes have overshadowed proper religious education. Unlike Latimer, Smith finds little justification for “pastime with good company,” even if recreations are only used sparingly for rejuvenating the spirit. Nevertheless, Latimer, Smith, and Erasmus all disagree with the

26 Hugh Latimer, 27 sermons preached by the ryght Reuerende father in God and constant matir [sic] of Iesus Christe (London, 1562), fol. 34v.
27 Latimer, 27 sermons, fol. 35.
28 Smith, The sermons of Maister Henrie Smith, p. 470.
contention of Baldessare Castiglione, Sir Thomas Elyot, and the other conduct writers discussed in Chapter 2, who laud dancing as a *necessary* skill for members of the aristocracy and gentry.

For women, Erasmus is less concerned about dancing as a frivolous distraction, than as a morally damaging activity.\(^{29}\) In *Christiani matrimonii institutio* (1526), he writes that a household that “resounds with the noise of frequent rowdy parties, lewd stories, singing, dancing, and silly games,” will foster intemperance and lust rather than chastity, hard work, and thrift.\(^{30}\) Expectant mothers should avoid dancing or they might disturb their “physical equilibrium” or acquire a troubled conscience.\(^{31}\) Erasmus even questions the appropriateness of depicting scenes of dancing in churches, especially the salacious dancing of the daughter of Herodias.\(^{32}\)

Juan Luis Vives had similar concerns about dancing, particularly its deleterious effect on the morals of women.\(^{33}\) Vives dedicated his treatise on women’s conduct and education, *De institutione feminae christianae* (1524), to the future Mary I of England.\(^{34}\)

\(^{29}\) Unlike some of the authors in Chapter 2, Erasmus makes a distinction between gestures and dancing. (Mark Franko, *The Dancing Body In Renaissance Choreography*, c. 1416-1589 (Birmingham, Alabama: Summa Publications, 1986), p. 52)


\(^{34}\) However, Vives’ admonitions against dancing do not seem to have influenced the princess particularly. Mary, like her sister Elizabeth, was an avid and proficient dancer. (David Loades, *Mary Tudor: A Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 31-34.)
Richard Hyrde, a tutor in More’s household, translated and published Vives’ treatise as *A Very Fruteful and Pleasant Boke callyd the Instruction of a Christen Women* (1529). Hyrde’s translation had “enormous popularity in England and became the prototype of various conduct books for women during the Tudor period.”35

In *The Instruction of a Christen Women*, Vives describes dancing as not just foolish and unnecessary, but dangerous. It leads to the “kendlyng of leachery” and undermines the “chastite of bodye and mynde,” especially for women.36 He compares dancing schools to “houses of baudry” and decries the “newe fashion of daunsynge” with its “unclenly handlynges, gropynes, and kyssyngis.”37 Indeed, Vives considers dancing “the extreme of all vicis.”38

Vives also puzzles over the appeal of dancing, “what good doth all that daunsynge of yonge women, holden up on mennes armes, that they maye hoppe the hygher?”39 Whereas someone who enjoyed dancing would likely find flying through the air or tapping out a rhythm with one’s feet to be enjoyable in of itself, this concept is beyond Vives’ comprehension. He is convinced that lust is the sole motivation for dancing. He is particularly perplexed by women who dance “with sobre footynge” or who watch dancing “demurely & sadlye.”40 Why, he wonders, would anyone “go about to handle suche a folisshe thynge so sadly”?41

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35 Fantazzi, “Vives, Juan Luis.”
36 Juan Luis Vives, *A very fruteful and pleasant boke called the Instructio[n] of a Christen woma[n]/ made fyrst in Laten/ and dedicated vnto the quenes good grace/ by the right famous clerke mayster Lewes Uiues/ ; and turned out of Laten into Englysshe by Rycharde Hyrd*, transl. Richard Hyrde (London, c.1529), sigs. P3v-P4.
Vives’ mystification about the attraction of dancing was not without precedent. He directly quotes Cicero’s quip from the defense of Murena against Cato that “never sobre man daunsed, excepte he were madde” and cites the reference indirectly, as well, “For no man (as a certayne wyse man of the pagans saith) daunseth, if he be sobre, excepte he be madde.” Clearly Vives supports Cicero’s skepticism that sane or sober people would dance voluntarily. Vives, Erasmus, and most of the other authors discussed below found it nearly impossible to believe that men and women could simply enjoy dancing for its own sake. They saw dancing as a tool or strategy for pursuing sinful goals such as fornication or adultery. They did not recognize it as a goal or enjoyment in of itself.

Vives expresses anti-dance views in some of his other works, as well. Because *Linguae Latinae exercitatio* (1539) is written in dialogue form, Vives provides both the pros and cons of dancing before ultimately condemning it. His foolish counsellor recommends dancing as a healthy respite from studying, calling it one of “the studies in which young nobles most delight.” The wise counsellor concludes, however, that, “It is incumbent on youth, to reject and despise sluggishness, ease, little delicacies, and frivolity, whilst the whole mind should be intent on the study of letters and the cultivation of goodness of soul.” While Vives does not condemn dancing outright for young men, by having the foolish counsellor recommend dancing and the wise counsellor dismiss it, Vives encourages his readers to conclude that dancing is one of the foolish and unnecessary activities that take time away from more important pursuits.

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English puritan-leaning reformers were quick to cite the anti-dance views of continental humanist scholars such as Erasmus and Vives, as long as those views provided support and precedents for attacking dance on moral grounds.\textsuperscript{45} For example, John Northbrooke echoes Vive’s complaints in \textit{De institutione feminae christianae} about dancing schools being dens of iniquity. In \textit{A Treatise wherein Dicing, Dauncing, Vaine playes or Enterluds...are Reproved} (1577), Northbrooke writes that dancing schools are little better than “houses of baudrie” that kindle the flames of lechery.\textsuperscript{46}

Similarly, in \textit{The Anatomie of Abuses} (1583), Philip Stubbes points out that both Erasmus and Vives thought dancing was wanton and morally degenerating.\textsuperscript{47} Erasmus, in his Booke, \textit{de contemptu Mundi}, saith, Whose minde is so well disposed, so stable, or wel setled, which these wanton dances, with swinging of armes, kicking of legs, playing upon instruments, and such like would not overcome and corrupt... \textit{Ludovicus Vives} saith, amongst all pleasures, dauncing and voluptuousnes is the kingdome of \textit{Venus}, and the empire of \textit{Cupid}: wherfore, saith hée, it were better for thée to stay at home, and to break either a leg, or an arme of thy body, then to break the legges and armes of thy minde & soule, as thou doost in filthie scurvy dauncings. And as in all Feasts and pastimes, dauncing is the last, so it is the extream of all other vice.\textsuperscript{48}

Stubbes embellishes freely, but his summaries are faithful to Erasmus and Vives’ texts. However, his particular choice of quotes and paraphrases creates a greater focus on the corporeal nature of dancing than is found in the originals. Phrases such as “swinging of armes,” “kicking of legs,” and describing moral degradation as “to break the legges and

\textsuperscript{45} For an extensive list of European critics of dancing, see Ann Wagner, \textit{Adversaries of Dance: From the Puritans to the Present} (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997), pp. 407-422.

\textsuperscript{46} John Northbrooke, \textit{Spiritus est vicarius Christi in terra. A treatise wherein dicing, dauncing, vaine playes or enterluds with other idle pastimes [et]c. commonly vsed on the Sabboth day, are reproued by the authoritie of the word of God and auntient writers. Made dialoguewise by Iohn Northbrooke minister and preach\er of the word of God} (London, 1577), p. 166. See also Wagner, \textit{Adversaries of Dance}, pp. 13-14.

\textsuperscript{47} For Philip Stubbes’ biographical details, see below.

\textsuperscript{48} Philip Stubbes, \textit{The anatomie of abuses containing a discouerie, or briefe summarie of such notable vices and imperfections, as now raigne in many Christian countreyes of the worlde: but (especiallie) in a verie famous ilande called Ailgna} (London, 1583), Book I, sig. O2.
“armes of thy mind & soule” emphasise the physicality of dancing and its associations with the sinful human body.

In addition to quoting contemporary humanists, authors of anti-dance religious tracts used Greek and Roman works to complement the handful of anti-dance passages in Scripture discussed below. Particularly popular references include Sallust’s condemnation of Sempronia for “her over great skil in dauncing” in The Conspiracy of Catiline (De coniuratione Catilinae) and Cicero’s aforementioned assertion that “No man daunceth being sober, unles peradventure he be madde.” However, the bulwark of anti-dance sermons and treatises remained the dance references in the Bible.

**Scriptural Texts**

Since Scripture included a mix of pro-dance, anti-dance, and neutral references to dance, early modern commentators had the challenging task of explaining and reconciling seemingly contradictory passages. They also had to apply their biblical commentaries to contemporary practices. Many adopted a tripartite classification system. For example, in A Christian Dictionarie (1612), the first dictionary of the Bible in English, Thomas Wilson defines dancing as:

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50 Thomas Wilson served as the rector of St. George the Martyr in Canterbury, Kent from 1586 to his death in 1622. The author of several published sermons and catechisms, he became chaplain to Edward Wotton, Lord Wotton of Marley, in 1611 shortly before publishing his groundbreaking dictionary. Although concerned with religious education and so a reformer, in some sense, he was not notably puritanical. (Stephen Wright, “Wilson, Thomas (1562/3-1622),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com /view/article/29689.)
Chapter 3: Dancing References in Religious Texts

A comely motion of the body, stirred up by the Inward & spirituall Joy of the hart, to testify thankfulnesse for some great benefit or deliverance from God. 2. Sam. 6, 16. David danced before the Arke. 1. Sam. 18, 6. Exod. 15, 20. Judg. 11, 34. and 21, 21. Luke 15, 25. This kinde of Dancing is lawfull and holy.

2 A motion of the body, seemly or unseemely, stirred up by naturall or carnall Joy, to please and satisfie our selves or others; Marke 6, 22. And the Daughter of Herodias danced, and pleased Herod, &c. This kind of dancing is unlawful and wanton, unlesse it be privately, by the one sexe alone, for moderate recreation. 51

At first glance, the two definitions appear to divide dance into two categories: “lawfull and holy” or “unlawful and wanton.” A second look, however, reveals that there are actually three classifications. The second definition includes dance that is acceptable under certain conditions—when dance is “seemly... stirred up by naturall ... Joy.” Even though it is motivated by the ignoble desire to “please and satisfie our selves or others” rather than to celebrate God’s grace, Wilson will allow this type of dancing provided it is done “privately, by the one sexe alone,” and for the purpose of “moderate recreation.”

Wilson delineates what may be considered the standard proof texts for Protestant writers. In the first definition, he lists six passages that exemplify lawful and holy dancing. These refer to dancing by: King David before the Ark (2 Sam. 6:16), the Israelite women after David killed Goliath (1 Sam. 18:6), Miriam and the Israelite women after crossing the Red Sea (Exod. 15:20), Jephthah’s daughter to celebrate his triumph over the Ammonites (Judg. 11:34), the daughters of Shiloh shortly before being kidnapped by the tribe of Benjamin (Judg. 21:21), and the revellers celebrating the prodigal son’s return home (Luke 15:25). Only one citation supports the second definition (Mark 6:22), “And the Daughter of

Herodias danced, and pleased Herod, &c. Wilson does not provide any examples of dancing for “moderate recreation” or personal enjoyment. This creates the impression that the Bible favours dancing much more than it condemns it.

However, there are other biblical passages that Wilson fails to mention that present dancing in either an unfavourable or more neutral light. The former includes the Israelites dancing before the Golden Calf (Exod. 32:19), and the latter includes the injunction that there was both “a time to dance” and “a time to mourn” (Eccl. 3:4). What may explain these omissions is that Wilson defines illicit dancing as wanton and motivated by carnal desires. Yet, the Bible did not share the early modern concern with licentious dancing.

There is only one biblical story in which dancing could be construed as wanton. This is the account of Salome, the daughter of Herodias, whose dancing so pleased King Herod that he swore to give her anything she desired. Still, neither of the two versions specifically say that her dancing was sexually suggestive, which allowed for interpretations such as that of Juan de Esquivel Navarro.

In his dance instruction manual, *Discursos sobre el arte del danzado* (or *Discourses on the Art of Dancing*) (1642), Esquivel asserts that Salome’s dancing was chaste and modest. He argues that it was Herod’s own wantonness that led to his excessive pleasure in his step-daughter’s dancing. Esquivel writes that Herod, “so enjoyed seeing that graceful Dancing of the lovely [Salome] with his degenerate eyes,” that his own lust distorted his

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52 Mark 6:22. *KJV*. The Bible does not name the daughter of Herodias, but she is often referred to as Salome, following the example of Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities*.


54 At the bidding of her mother, she asked for and received the head of John the Baptist, who had opposed Herodias’ marriage to the king. The story appears in both Matthew 14:6-8 and Mark 6:21-28.
perception of her movement.\footnote{Lynn Matluck Brooks, *The Art of Dancing in Seventeenth-Century Spain: Juan de Esquivel Navarro and His World* (London: Associated University Presses, 2003), p. 270.} It was not Salome’s dancing that was wanton; it was Herod’s “degenerate eyes” that made it appear so. Esquivel demonstrated that it was possible to argue that the Bible had no examples of licentious dancing at all. This contention could have undermined the foundation on which religious anti-dance arguments rested. However, Esquivel appears to be unique in embracing this interpretation. Indeed, both pro- and anti-dance authors of sermons and biblical commentaries mention the passage only briefly.\footnote{See, for example, Robert Willan, *Eliah's vvish a prayer for death. A sermon preached at the funerall of the Right Honourable Viscount Sudbury, Lord Bayning* (London, 1630), p. 12; Thomas Scott, *Vox Dei* (1623), p. 23; Thomas Becon, *The gouernaunce of vertue teaching all faithfull christia[n]s, how they oughte daily to leade their lyfe, & fruitfully to spend their time vnto the gloriye of God & the health of their owne soules* (London, 1566), fol. 81v.} In discussing these passages, they focus more attention on the dangers of vain oaths than on the evils of dancing.\footnote{Examples include Niels Hemmingsen, *A Postill, or, Exposition of the Gospels that are usually red in the churches of God, vpon the Sundayes and feast dayes of Saintcs written by Nicholas Hemminge a Dane, a Preacher of the Gospell, in the Vniuersitie of Hafnie*, transl. Arthur Golding (London, 1569), p. 332; George Abbot, *An exposition vpon the prophet Ionah Contained in certaine sermons, preached in S. Maries church in Oxford. By George Abbot professor of diuiniteit, and maister of Vniuersitiie Colledge* (London, 1600), p. 304; Richard Greenham, *The workes of the reuerend and faithfull servant af Iesus Christ M. Richard Greenham, minister and preacher of the Word of God* (London, 1612), p. 754; John Stoughton, *Choice sermons preached upon selected occasions Viz. The happinesse of peace: before K. James at Trinitie Colledge in Cambridge. The love-sick spouse: at St. Pauls Crosse. The burning light: at a visitation in Christs Church, London. The magistrates commission, or wisdome justified: before the judges* (London, 1640), p. 19.}

The treatise often attributed to the actor John Lowin, *Conclusions upon Dances, Both of this Age and of the Old* (1607), presents a similar tripartite system of classification.\footnote{John Lowin (1576-1653) was a prominent actor with the King’s Men, William Shakespeare’s company. He seems an unlikely author for this treatise, especially given the prominence of dance on the Jacobean stage, but recent biographers continue to uphold the attribution. (Martin Butler, “Lowin, John (bap. 1576, d. 1653),” in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17096.)} The author discusses dancing in terms of three categories: godly, profane, and indifferent, and he provides biblical examples to demonstrate the legitimacy of each
category. He writes that some “learned men” consider dancing godly because of biblical passages such as the second book of Samuel in which, “the Prophet David danced before the Arke of the Lord… with shouting and sound of Trumpet.”

Like Wilson, Lowin names the dancing of Jephthah’s daughter as holy, because she “danced in magnifying the Lord” and that of the Israelite women who honour David with dancing after he kills Goliath. In addition, he gives the example of Judith, who dances to celebrate the flight of her enemies after assassinating Holofernes, the chief captain of the Assyrians (Judith 15:12-13).

For his section on unlawful or profane dancing, Lowin cites two passages. He gives as his first example the dancing of the daughter of Herodias before Herod. Unlike Wilson, he does not claim that her dancing is wanton or licentious. Instead, he argues that the dancing is profane, because, “it clearely appeareth to all persons endued with some discretion, that in her Dance she had no regard unto God, but onely unto Herod.” For his second example, Lowin points to Chapter 32 of Exodus, where the “corrupted Israelites did dance in their idolatrie about the molten Calfe.” Most dancing for Lowin, however, is “a thing altogether indifferent.” His supporting passages include Luke 7:32 and Ecclesiastes 3:4; he also classifies as “indifferent” one of the examples Thomas Wilson gives for holy dancing: the dancing and banqueting hosted by the father of the prodigal son to celebrate his son’s return (Luke 15:25).

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61 Lowin, Conclusions vpon dances, sig. B2. Lowin also observes that in biblical times, dancing was used to celebrate a variety of holy occasions, from martial victories to weddings and “solemne feasts,” giving the daughters of Shiloh’s dancing on a holy day as evidence of the latter. (sig. B3v.)
62 Lowin, Conclusions vpon dances, sigs. B4-B4v.
63 Lowin, Conclusions vpon dances, sig. B1v.
64 Lowin, Conclusions vpon dances, sig. B1v.
65 Lowin, Conclusions vpon dances, sigs. B1v, C1.
As part of his commentary, Lowin offers some guidelines as to who should dance and with whom. These are shaped by some of the issues discussed in Chapter 2. He says that men and women are allowed to dance, but they must do so separately. He quotes Jeremiah 31 as evidence of men and women dancing in single-sex groups, “The Virgine shall rejoice in the Dance, and the yong men and the olde men together.”66 Arriving at a rather different conclusion than Juan Luis Vives, Lowin states that “the practise of Dancing is more becomming unto women, then unto men,” although he does not cite specific references for this contention.67

Lowin is similarly attuned to the ways in which social status can affect the appropriateness of dancing. It is only acceptable for those of lower status to dance alongside elites if those of higher status invite them to participate; “inferiours ought not to use it among the superiours, nor in the presence of them, except the superiours doe bidde or invite the inferiours to the same.”68 Lowin also gives three examples where higher status women lead lower status women in dancing.69

To complement his biblical commentary, Lowin includes a short section under indifferent dances entitled, “What sort of Dancing is more convenient for the health.” These observations offer a slight twist on judging the appropriateness of a dance. Lowin explains that:

Such Dances as do strongly stir the body, ought to be chosen of them, which have some obstructions in the ways of the Urine, or some other like impediment. And the contrary must be used of such persons, as doe perceive their own Brains to be weak, or the like infirmity to be in some other part. But to the others that Dancing is fitter, which exerciseth the body in a mean measure of agitation.70

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66 Lowin, Conclusions vpon dances, sig. C3v.
67 Lowin, Conclusions vpon dances, sig. D1.
68 Lowin, Conclusions vpon dances, sig. C4v.
69 i.e., Miriam, Jephthah’s daughter, and Judith.
70 Lowin, Conclusions vpon dances, sig. C2.
Because different dances impact the body in different ways, one must match the dance to the ailment in order to do help rather than harm.

John Lowin’s *Conclusions upon Dances* usefully focuses attention on the importance of context in assessing the acceptability of dancing. Since every instance of dancing occurs in some context, “indifferent” dances become either lawful or profane in practice. For a dance to be lawful, it must either be holy and motivated by celebrating God, or it must be done by men and women separately, led by members of the elite, and performed in a manner that suits each dancer’s physical strengths and weaknesses.

There are a handful of sermons and commentaries that, like John Lowin’s treatise, consider the various dance passages in the Bible altogether. In his section on the lawfulness of recreations in *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience* (1606), William Perkins provides this sort of comparative analysis. He begins the section by explaining that “All lawfull Recreation is onely in the use of things indifferent, which are in themselves neither commanded nor forbidden.” He acknowledges that Scripture commends the dancing of Moses, Miriam, and King David, among others. However, Perkins insists that

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72 William Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience distinguished into three bookees: the first whereof is revised and corrected in sundrie places, and the other two annexed. Taught and deliuered by M. W. Perkins in his holy-day lectures, carefully examined by his owne briefes, and now published together for the common good, by T. Pickering Bachelour of Diuiniteit* (Cambridge, 1606), p. 584. Perkins discusses plays and games of skill and chance in this section in addition to dancing.

73 Perkins writes, “We read indeed, of a kind of dauncing commended in Scripture, that Moses Aaron and Miriam used at the redde sea, Exod. 15. 20. And David before the Arke, 1. Sam. 18. And the daughters of Israel, when David gotte the victorie of Goliah, 2. Sam. 6. 14.” (Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, p. 587.)
this dancing “was of another kind” from contemporary dances.\textsuperscript{74} The lawful dancing in Scripture is prompted by “spirituall joy” and concludes with “praise and thanksgiving,” as opposed to “the dauncing used in these daies,” which is accompanied by “many lascivious gestures” and so “is no better, then the very bellowes of lust and uncleanes.”\textsuperscript{75} Moreover, while the above passages describe “single, men together, and women apart by themselves,” contemporary dances involve “the mixed dauncing men and weomen.”\textsuperscript{76}

However, it is not simply contemporary, mixed dancing that is problematic. Perkins also condemns the dancing of the daughter of Herodias before King Herod even though she was dancing by herself.\textsuperscript{77} Moreover, Perkins argues that passages such as Ecclesiastes 3:4 and Jeremiah 31:4 should be read as metaphorical rather than literal, “these places speake not of dauncing properly, but of rejoicing signified by dauncing.”\textsuperscript{78} He does not leave the reader with a definite conclusion about when dancing is or is not lawful. Nevertheless, Perkins does leave open the possibility that single-sex groups of men and women could dance lawfully provided that they were motivated by spiritual joy rather than wantonness.

One of the few clear condemnations of dancing comes from the puritan preacher, Henry Burton.\textsuperscript{79} Burton was also an adamant sabbatarian, opposed to any recreations and non-devotional activities on Sundays. In 1633, Charles I had reissued the Book of Sports

\textsuperscript{74} Perkins, \textit{The whole treatise of the cases of conscience}, p. 587.
\textsuperscript{75} Perkins, \textit{The whole treatise of the cases of conscience}, p. 587.
\textsuperscript{76} Perkins, \textit{The whole treatise of the cases of conscience}, p. 587.
\textsuperscript{77} \par Like most critics of dancing who mention Mark 6:22-24, Perkins does not speculate on or explain what made the young woman’s dancing wanton. He simply assumes it was lascivious because Herod responded to her performance so enthusiastically and appreciatively. Nor does he clarify how her dancing fails to undermine his argument that contemporary dancing was “of another kind” from biblical dancing.
\textsuperscript{78} Perkins, \textit{The whole treatise of the cases of conscience}, p. 588.
first published by his father. (See Introduction.) The Book of Sports clearly stated that
dancing and similar recreations should be allowed on Sundays after church services. In
response to Charles I and Archbishop Laud’s attempts to enforce the reading of the Book of
Sports in pulpits, Henry Burton expressed his outrage in *A divine tragedie lately acted, or A
collection of sundry memorable examples of Gods judgements upon Sabbath-breakers, and
other like libertines, in their unlawfull sports* (1636).

*The Divine Tragedie* catalogued the evidence of the dire consequences of Sunday
recreations. Many of Burton’s examples implicate dancing specifically: a fire breaks out
at a mill near Gloucester where a miller is hosting a Sunday evening dance; the day after
a man hosts an ale with dancing in the churchyard, his son gets killed in a fight; a young
woman near London who said she would dance on the Lord’s Day “so long as shee could
stand on her leggs,” danced for so long that “thereof within 2. or 3. dayes shee dyed.”
Burton also blames the latest bout of plague and a recent drought on God’s wrath at the
profanation condoned by the Book of Sports. In addition, in a sermon published the same
year, Burton argued that allowing Sunday dancing counteracted an earlier injunction, which
ambiguously prohibited unlawful exercises and pastimes, although it did not specify what
those pastimes were. Burton, however, claimed to know. “What are those?” he asked
rhetorically, answering:

By name, all *dancing, leaping, rebelling*, and such like, in termes condemned, by
Imperial Edicts, Decrees of Counsellors, writings of ancient Fathers, of all learned
Divines both Protestants and Papists, in all ages.  

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80 Henry Burton, *A divine tragedie lately acted, or A collection of sundry memorable examples of
According to Burton, the sinfulness and unlawfulness of Sunday dancing was so obvious that even papists had condemned it.

However, the question of dancing on Sunday was not as obvious as Burton claimed. The hundreds of prosecutions for dancing on Sundays and holy days often featured defendants who insisted they were engaging in time-honoured and sanctioned traditions and refused to accept that they were engaged in illicit behaviour. Moreover, while sabbatarian issues dominate dance records from ecclesiastical courts (see Chapter 1 and Appendix: Table 2), they do not feature prominently in printed sermons of the period.

While it is possible that this absence could be due to uneven record survival, it more likely indicates a certain reluctance by sermon authors to address the topic of Sunday dancing, at least in print. After 1618, and especially after 1633, there was always the possibility that the authorities could interpret the sermon as questioning the wisdom of the royal Book of Sports, as in the case of Gerard Prior in Chapter 4. Sermon writers may have found it more effective to address Sunday observance issues generally rather than focusing on particular contested activities such as dancing. Perhaps religious authors, knowing perfectly well that Scripture never explicitly or even implicitly condemns dancing on the Sabbath, realized the importance of convincing their audience that dancing was dangerous and morally suspect. Then it would be obvious that such an activity was inappropriate for the Lord’s Day. However, since Scripture gave fewer examples of wanton or inappropriate dancing then it did positive or neutral examples, sermon writers and religious commentators had to explain why the former counted more than the latter in discerning what sort of dancing was and was not permissible. The main strategy was to laud dance metaphorically but discourage it practically, arguing that the dances of the early modern
period were so different from those of biblical times, that Scriptural sanction of the latter did not apply to the former.

**Dance as Metaphor**

The majority of early modern sermon writers conceived of the permissibility of dancing as variable and contextual, and they cited many of the same biblical dance references as Thomas Wilson and John Lowin. In a sample of thirty sermons printed between 1550 and 1640, certain biblical passages were cited noticeably more than others. 

Luke 7:32 and 2 Samuel 6 were the most commonly referenced biblical passages that depict dancing in a positive light, while Mark 6 and Matthew 14 (the two passages that describe the dancing of the daughter of Herodias analysed above) were the most commonly cited passages that portray dancing negatively. Particularly when depicting dance positively, sermon writers used dance as a metaphor rather than as a physical practice or popular recreation.

One of the most common positive references was to Luke 7:32 “They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.”

Sermons that quote this passage include Thomas Becon on Matthew 11 in *A New Postil* (1566), and John Udall’s fourth sermon in *The Combate betwixt Christ and the Devill*

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83 The sermon sample was drawn from the over 170 printed sermons in the Early English Books Online (EEBO) database that mention dancing. Since only some of the texts in the EBBO database are searchable, there are likely many more relevant sermons in the collection. (See discussion of EEBO in Chapter 1.) To be included, authors had to refer to dance at least three times in one or more sermons. Since only one or two sermons in a collection tend to refer to dancing, I have counted sermon collections as a single sermon for purposes of the sample. To complement the sample, I also examined several expositions and other biblical commentaries, as well as the treatises featured in the second half of the chapter.

84 Luke 7:32, *King James Version (KJV).*
Both Becon and Udall interpret the children’s refusal to dance as a metaphor for refusing to be moved by or to embrace Christ’s message. Henry Smith also invokes Luke 7:32 in “The True Trial of the Spirites” (1593), but with an unflattering twist:

The bestes came to the arke to save themselves, and [yet] men will not come to the Church to save themselves: but wee may crie unto them as the Children did to their fellowes in the market; We have piped unto you and you would not daunce, wee have lamented unto you, and you woulde not mourne.

In “Quench not the spirit” (1595), Richard Greenham asserts that people must learn to mourn before they can dance, but once they have acknowledged their own sinfulness, then the good news of the Gospel will inspire them to dance with joy.

For they that by the preaching of John, learned to lament their sinnes, for their sinnes were pensive, nay rather their owne soules, they receyved Christ, they daunced and rejoyned to heare the joyfull tydings of the Gospel.

Thomas Playfere’s unconventional approach to the same lines from Luke in *A most excellent and heavenly sermon upon the 23. Chapter of the Gospell by Saint Luke* (1595) is less liberal. Playfere argues that “the voyce of a Preacher ought to be the voyce of a cryer, which should not pipe to make the people daunces, but mourne to make them weewe.”

Even metaphorically, Playfere is reluctant to sanction dancing.

One could argue, though, that Playfere is not referring to Luke exclusively or even at all in his text, but rather is commenting on Ecclesiastes 3:4 “A time to weep, and a time...” —

85 Thomas Becon, *A new Postil Conteinyng most Godly and learned sermons upon all the Sunday Gospelles, that be redde in the Church thorowout the yeare* (London, 1566), fol. 18; John Udall, *The combate betwixt Christ and the dewill Fourse sermons vpon the temptations of Christ in the wildrenes by Sathan, wherein are to be sene the subtle sleightes that the tempter vseth agaynst the children of God, and the meanes that God hath appointed to resiste him, sanctified to our vse in the example of our Sauiour Iesus Christ.* (London, 1588), sig. J8v.
87 Richard Greenham, *Two learned and godly sermons, preached by that reuerende and zelous man M. Richard Greenham* (London, 1595), sig. D2v.
88 Greenham, *Two learned and godly sermons*, sigs. D2v-D3r.
to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.”90 In fact, towards the end of the same sermon, he specifically invokes these lines:

There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance. Why art thou then so heavy, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? What man? pluck up a good heart, trust in God, think upon the honourable passion and gladsome resurrection of Christ.91

There is a time for dancing and rejoicing—when one thinks about Christ’s passion and resurrection.

Thomas Becon, John Udall, Henry Smith, and Richard Greenham, were all religious reformers with decidedly puritan inclinations.92 Becon was a Marian exile, Udall was imprisoned for his anti-episcopal writings, and Smith, the “silver-tongued preacher,” was heavily influenced by Richard Greenham, “an early advocate of strict sabbath observance.”93 Yet, in the above sermons, they all depict dancing as something natural and positive. Likewise, Thomas Playfere, who was decidedly Calvinist in addition to being a “mellifluous” preacher, reluctantly agrees that dancing was an appropriate response to the good news of the Gospel.94 Dancing is the type of activity one might use to express joy when contemplating God’s grace and mercy. While this sanction of dancing, however

90 Ecclesiastes 3:4. KJV.
91 Playfere, A most excellent and heavenly sermon, sig. G3v.
92 See the Introduction for my definition of puritan for the purposes of this dissertation.
qualified, might surprise those who assume puritans were completely and utterly opposed to dancing, even John Calvin referred to dancing metaphorically in positive, or at least neutral, terms.

Not only was Calvin one of the most important figures in early Protestantism, but his theological interpretations and writing became the greatest influence on English Protestants during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, far outweighing the influence of Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli. While many of the mentions of dancing in John Calvin’s sermons and commentaries are negative, Calvin repeatedly refers to the idea of “leading a dance” in contexts that are not entirely pejorative. In a sermon on the fifth chapter of Ephesians, Calvin says that people who are reluctant to contest those in authority rationalise that they are just waiting for someone else to lead the fight, “Let some other bodie leade the daunce, and I will willingly say, Amen too it.” He criticises those who are too complacent; it is the person who is willing to “leade the daunce” who deserves respect and should be emulated.

A number of English authors also referred to leading a dance. The Bishops’ Bible (1568) uses the phrase literally in the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah, “thou shalt take thy tabrettes agayne, and go forth with them that leade the daunce;” but most writers employ it metaphorically: For example, in an anti-Catholic treatise (1577), William Fulke

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97 Jeremiah 31:4. The Bishops’ Bible. Another example, discussed in Chapter 2, comes from Richard Brathwaite. Although he was generally opposed to gentlewomen dancing, he concedes that it is commendable “to lead a dance gracefully.” (Richard Brathwaite, The English gentlewoman,
complains of bishops that, “as in all other licentious life they wil lead the daunce.” In his anti-theatrical treatise *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579), Stephen Gosson writes, “my selfe will beginne too leade the daunce,” to describe taking the initiative in eschewing scurrilous plays. In a sermon on Saul and Samuel, Richard Rogers warns that heathens “leade the daunce” while the foolish and ignorant “daunce after their pipe” until God sheds light on their sins through the preaching of his word.

Fulke and Rogers invoke the metaphor of leading a dance to describe leading and following negatively, whereas Gosson uses leading in a positive context. In his sermon on the fourth chapter of Job, Calvin employs the metaphor in a manner similar to Gosson, that is, to denote a positive example of leadership. In advising preachers how to inspire their congregants to lead lives of holiness and faith, he enjoins, “Lette vs firste exhort our selves, and lette us always bee the firste in leading of the daunce.” Likewise, in a sermon on

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Deuteronomy 33, he writes, “But yet must the preachers of the worde leade the daunce, and consider themselves to bee double bounde, yea and more straitly.”

An earlier sermon in the same collection articulates the similar point that all people must attempt to “redresse mens misbehaviours” if they expect to escape God’s wrath, “when no man beginnes the daunce, but all men drawe backe, and every man sayes, What nowe?... Surely none of them all can exempt themselves from condemnation before God; when everie one of them speaketh so.” Calvin might see the recreational dancing of his contemporaries as “an enticement to whoredome” and “the cheefest mischeefe of all,” but he, along with many English puritan reformers, still finds value in dance as a metaphor.

Biblical passages represent only one of the types of dance references encountered in sermons. Dancing is commonly referred to as a metaphor for such diverse qualities as joy, folly, obedience, and the diabolical, and dance frequently serves as an example of a worldly distraction. We have already seen the theme of dancing for joy from Richard Greenham. Thomas Adams sums up the most common variation concisely in his The Happiness of the Church (1619): “We feast revel, daunce, sin, and sing like swannes the prognostickes of

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102 John Calvin, The sermons of M. Iohn Caluin vpon the fifth booke of Moses called Deuteronomie faithfully gathered word for word as he preached them in open pulpet; together with a preface of the ministers of the Church of Geneua, and an admonishment made by the deacons there, transl. Arthur Golding (London, 1583), p. 1202.

103 Calvin, The sermons of M. Iohn Caluin vpon the fifth booke of Moses called Deuteronomie, p. 550.

104 Calvin, Sermons of Master John Calvin, upon the booke of Job, p. 409. Calvin also invokes the metaphor of dancing after a pipe in several sermons. (See Calvin, Sermons of Master John Calvin, upon the booke of Job, pp. 130, 407; Calvin, The sermons of M. Iohn Caluin, vpon the Epistle of S. Paule too the Ephesians, fol. 187v; Calvin, The sermons of M. Iohn Caluin vpon the fifth booke of Moses called Deuteronomie, p. 664.) This is a more negative depiction in a certain sense, because Calvin criticises the dancers for being blind, passive followers, but it can also be seen as positive. He is not condemning dance; he simply implies that good Christians should be leaders of the dance, not followers.
our owne funerals.” That is, one may dance now with joy, but it is a false happiness: death comes without warning. In *The Magistrates Scripture* (1591), Henry Smith gives a more theatrical version of this idea:

> While they sing, play, and daunce, death comes againe, & strikes another, there he lies, they mourne him, and burie him as they did the former, and play againe: so one after another, till the plaiers bee vanished like the accusers which came before Christ, and Death is the last upon the stage.

Likewise, William Burton offers a few examples in his sermons of dancing representing false, temporal joys at the expense of happiness in the next world:

> Whatsoever the wicked do, yet when they daunce in this net, You must not judge, &c. they thinke themselves safe, like the foolish bird called the Ostrich, which putteth her head into a bush, and then thinketh that no body seeth her, though all her body be out of the bush.

The wicked may think themselves safe, but death lurks around every corner. Sinners may “send foorth their children like sheepe, and their sons daunce,” but without warning they may find that their time is up, and “Suddenly they go downe to the grave.”

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Dance as a Physical Practice

“Dance now, not as Herodias did, but as David did.”

The second most common biblical reference in the sermon sample was to the dancing of King David (2 Samuel 6:14 and 6:16). David’s dancing presented a definite challenge to religious reformers because it condoned actual, rather than metaphorical, dancing. One solution was that of William Leigh in “The soules solace against sorrow” (1602). Leigh juxtaposes King David’s playing music and dancing to honour God with the “unsanctified affections, and extravagant lusts” that music and dancing serve in early modern England. Similarly, Nicholas Byfield refers to 2 Samuel 6:16 to highlight problematic contemporary behaviour. In discussing the topic “the sinnes by which wives transgresse against this subjection to their husbands” in a sermon on the third chapter of Peter (1626), Byfield writes that wives are inclined towards, “Suspitious and base

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110 Thomas Playfere, *The whole sermons of that eloquent diuine, of famous memory; Thomas Playfere, Doctor in Diuinitie* (London, 1623), p. 112. Sometimes both the wife of King Herod and her daughter were called Herodias.

111 The two passages describing David’s dancing in Book 2 of Samuel are 6:14 “And David danced before the LORD with all his might;” and 6:16 “And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul’s daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.” (2 Samuel 6:14, 6:16. KJV.)


113 William Leigh and William Harrison, *Deaths advantage little regarded, and The soules solace against sorrow Preached in two funerall sermons at Childwal in Lancashire at the buriall of Mistris Katherin Brettergh the third of Iune. 1601. The one by William Harrison, one of the preachers appointed by her. Maiestie for the countie palatine of Lancaster, the other by William Leygh, Bachelor of Diuinitie, and pastor of Standish. Whereunto is annexed, the Christian life and godly death of the said gentlevwoman, with William Harrison* (London, 1602), p. 12.

114 Nicholas Byfield was a noted puritan preacher in Chester and Isleworth, Middlesex. He was a strong sabbatarian, and his exchanges with Edward Brerewood about sabbath observance were printed posthumously. (Bryan W. Ball, “Byfield, Nicholas (1578/9-1622),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4257.)
interpretations of the actions of their husbands; as when Michol so censured David for his dancing before the Arke.” Nicholas Byfield’s criticism is of suspicion and hostility by wives towards husbands, but he also, perhaps inadvertently, defends the propriety of dancing at the same time. Whereas Leigh condemns contemporary dance practices, Byfield implies that dancing is an activity that husbands should be able to engage in innocently and without fear of censure from their wives, even in seventeenth-century England.

Henry Smith and Thomas Playfere also allude to David’s dancing before the ark. Like Leigh and Byfield, Smith contrasts King David’s divinely inspired dancing with that of his contemporaries. However, the comparison he makes in a sermon on the Lord’s Supper is metaphorical:

All the delights of the godlie are like Davids daunce about the Arke; they are never merrie, but when they are dooing well; nor at peace, but when their praieres have overcome God, like Jacob.”

Thomas Playfere sees David’s dancing as a metaphor for the king’s boundless and irrepresible love for God, “So David did runne the way of Gods commaundements. Nay, no ordinary pace would serve him, but hee must needs daunce before the Arke. Yea, his feete could not hold him, but hee must needs have wings as a Dove.” Yet, there is a certain physicality to the dancing in his description. Playfere seems to have an image in his head of the King engaged in a dance in which the feet lift from the floor, perhaps in a jump, skip, hop, or flip in the air.

115 Nicholas Byfield, Sermons upon the ten first verses of the third chapter of the first Epistle of S. Peter (London, 1626), p. 15.
116 Smith, The sermons of Maister Henrie Smith, p. 149.
A number of sermons mention Ecclesiastes 3:4, in which King Solomon says that there is “A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.” Interestingly, many of these sermons decline to comment on the dancing at all; they only explicate the earlier parts about weeping, laughing, and mourning. There are also a few works that only quote and comment on the first half of the passage. On the other hand, in his fifth sermon on Ecclesiastes, George Gifford takes Ecclesiastes 3:4 as a jumping off point to discuss his views on the practice of dancing in general. He first observes that, “There be some which mainteine daunsing, & these be their words: Wee can prove by the Scripture [that] daunsing is allowed, there is a time (saith Solomon) to daunce.” Gifford acknowledges that this is true but says that it is also deceptive because, “There are more kindes of daunsing than one.” He discriminates between the chaste, joyful dancing sanctioned by the Bible and “such daunsing as is used now a daies,” which is “wanton

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118 Eccl. 3:4, KJV.
119 Playfere, A most excellent and heavenly sermon, sig. G3v; Arthur Hildersam, CVIII lectures vpon the fourth of Iohn Preached at Ashby-Delazouch in Leicester-shire (London, 1632), p. 434. This sort of passing reference without particular comment on dancing is also found in an anonymous translation of Martin Luther, An exposition of Salomons booke called Ecclesiastes or the preacher (London, 1573), fol. 52.
120 For example, feasting is the main focus of Henry Smith’s comments on Eccl. 3:4 in his sermon on the banquet of Job’s children. (Smith, The sermons of Maister Henrie Smith, pp. 1044-1046.)
121 George Gifford, a moderate puritan preacher based in Essex, “emerged during the 1580s as one of the most prolific and influential of godly writers.” This reputation, as well as several well-placed friends, protected him somewhat from the repercussions faced by other preachers with similar “moderate, evangelizing protestant” views. He also coined the phrase “church papist.” (Brett Usher, “Gifford, George (1547/8-1600),” in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10658.)
122 George Gifford, Eight sermons, vpon the first foure chapters, and part of the fift, of Ecclesiastes ([London], 1589), fol. 78v.
123 Gifford, Eight sermons, fol. 79.
dancing, by which men and women nourish and feede their fleshly lustes.”\textsuperscript{124} To say that the latter is also covered by Scripture is to “fouly abuse gods word.”\textsuperscript{125}

Gifford also has a ready response for dancers who argue, “we can doo it with a chast mind, onely for recreation, and in sober maner.”\textsuperscript{126} While he concedes that this is certainly preferable, and is “not to be so disalowed as the rest,” he points out that it is naive for dancers to assume that simply having pure motivations automatically prevents their dancing from having an ill effect. Because “every one is to have regard not onely of his owne chastitie, but also for the preservation of the chasitie of all other,” dancing is still problematic; it can serve as “a baite to stirre up, and kindle evill lustes” in those who see it.\textsuperscript{127} Therefore, in order to dance lawfully, not only must dancers be sure that their own reasons for dancing are modest and reverent, but they must also ensure that their audience will respond in a similarly responsible manner. This is certainly a challenging, if not impossible, demand.

Nevertheless, Gifford holds more tolerant views than many of his peers. He expresses grave reservations about the ability of both participants and viewers to avoid being overcome by lust, but he does not actually forbid dancing for his contemporaries. He is content to conclude with the caveat, “therefore take heed how thou daunce.”\textsuperscript{128} While “a time to dance” can easily be metaphorical, Gifford prefers to reflect on the implications of the passage as a literal, if qualified, statement sanctioning dance as a practice.

Thomas Becon and Nicholas Byfield complain about a topic relevant to avoiding lust in their sermons: women’s attire for dancing. Becon refers to the vanity of “maydens

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{124} Gifford, \textit{Eight sermons}, fol. 79.
  \item \textsuperscript{125} Gifford, \textit{Eight sermons}, fol. 79.
  \item \textsuperscript{126} Gifford, \textit{Eight sermons}, fol. 79.
  \item \textsuperscript{127} Gifford, \textit{Eight sermons}, fols. 79-79v.
  \item \textsuperscript{128} Gifford, \textit{Eight sermons}, fol. 79v.
\end{itemize}
…decked to daunce.”129 Byfield bemoans the vanity of churchgoing men and women in a sermon on the third chapter of Paul. The church, he reminds his audience, is “no dancing schoole, nor wedding house, nor yet any play-house, that you should come hither in these histrionicall and strumpet-like attire”130

Another harsh assessment made in sermons was that dance was inappropriate for particular groups or types of people, that it was ungodly, or that it was defiling. While there are not a large numbers of such sermons, some in this sample are particularly interesting, because they specifically name dance types. In “The ix. Sermon made by Maister Doctor Latymer” (1562), Hugh Latimer complains that the clergy are better qualified to be morris dancers than preachers:

Here were a good place to speake againste our cleargye menne, whiche goe so gallauntlye nowe adayes. I heare saye, that somme of theym weare veluette shooes, … such felowes are more meete to daunce the morrice daunce, then to bee admitted to preach. I praye God amende suche worldelye felowes, for they bee not meete to be preachers.”131

Latimer does not advocate morris dancing, at least not for preachers, but he shows a familiarity with the form, and by his complaint, indicates that at least some clergymen were known to dance.132 However, Latimer considers morris dancing to be the type of worldly, secular activity from which clergymen should be abstaining.

Thomas Adams’s sermons offer more examples of specific dances and of clerical knowledge of dancing. Adams mentions, among others, the measures and the volta.133 In

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129 Becon, A new postil, fol. 118v.
130 Byfield, Sermons upon the ten first verses, p. 59.
131 Latimer, 27 sermons, fol. 148.
132 The morris was an energetic, aerobic dance, and morris dancers were known for their drunkenness and fighting as much as for their bells, handkerchiefs, and sticks. (See Chapter 1.)
133 On the risqué volta and the solemn measures, see Chapter 1. Adams also mentions the carole, a medieval line or circle dance, in The devills banquet (p. 140) and in The happines of the church. See Robert Mullally, The Carole: A Study of a Medieval Dance (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).
The Gallants Burden (1612), Adams says of sinners, “they sing to Viols, daunce to Measures: their Heades ake not, Much lesse their Consciences” but he warns that this is a false security, “the present indulgence, gives sufficient argument of future woes.” Here the measures might refer to any dance and serves as a symbol of the sinner’s naive blindness. Yet, in “The Sinners Passing-Bell, or Phisicke from Heaven” (1614), Adams refers to the measures more positively and specifically when he calls for mercy and the Gospel for those that “will daunce the Measures of obedience.” Since the measures were performed by couples arranged hierarchically by rank or status, dancing choreographed, predetermined steps, it is an apt metaphor for obedience.

In a different sermon published in that same year, however, Adams elides the very real differences between the measures and the volta. He refers to Luke 7:32 in his sermon but then lumps the sober measures and the wanton volta, or levolto, together:

Christ saith to us, as once to the Jewes; Wee have piped unto you, the sweet tunes of the Gospell, but ye would not daunce in obedience: time will come, you shall runne after us, as the Hinde on the barren Mountaines: but then you may daunce without a Pipe, and leape Levoltos in Hell, that have daunced the Devils Measures on Earth.

Unlike most preachers, Adams goes to the trouble of naming specific dances. Indeed, in 1619, he again refers to the volta in a sermon to invoke foolish merriness that lives for the moment and cannot see its own imminent death, “The last pace is a Levalto; Be merry: When hee hath got junkets in his belly, and wines in his braine, what should he doe, but leape, dance, revell, be merry, be mad!”

134 Adams, The gallants burden (London, 1612), fol. 5v.
137 Adams, The Happiness of the Church, pp. 310-311.
Chapter 3: Dancing References in Religious Texts

Thomas Adams’ sermons offer an important caveat. While it is tempting for dance historians to want to seize on any details referring to a specific dance for which choreographies exist, this is dangerous territory. An author might name a specific dance for reasons that are inconsistent or contradictory. The sermons of Thomas Adams suggest that he was familiar enough with these dances to link the measures with orderly obedience and the volta with temporal indulgence. However, if it furthered the argument of the moment, he was quite prepared to malign the sober, solemn measures alongside the wanton lavolta.

The linking of dancing and obedience predates Thomas Adams. William Burton asks in “The Rowsing of the Sluggard” (1595), “How long wilt thou sleepe O Sluggard? How long shall God daunce attendance upon thee?” Here it is God who is the dancer, forced by human stubbornness and iniquity to wait for human enlightenment. Calvin makes a similar reference in his fifteenth sermon on the third chapter of Deuteronomy, “Shoulde God bee faine to daunce attendance at all houres, to doe the thinges that our imagination hath dreamed or doted upon?” These are twists on the more common reference to people dancing attendance on God or their human superiors.

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138 William Burton, 7. sermons Published at the request of diuers godlie and well affected (London, 1595), fol. 142r.
139 Calvin, The sermons of M. John Caluin vpon the fifth booke of Moses called Deuteronomie, p. 87.
140 Calvin, The sermons of M. John Caluin vpon the fifth booke of Moses called Deuteronomie, p. 1228; Robert Humpston, A sermon preached at Reyfham in the countie of Norff. the 22. of September, an. Do. 1588 (London, 1589), p. 18; Miles Smith, Sermons of the Right Reuerend Father in God Miles Smith, late Lord Bishop of Glocester (London, 1632), p. 243. Robert Humpston attended Oxford and served a rector of Barrow, Cheshire before becoming Bishop of Down and Connor in Ireland, where he worked to establish a Calvinist-leaning branch of the Church of Ireland at Ulster. (Mihail Dafydd Evans, “Humston [Humpston], Robert (d. 1606),” in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14168.) Miles Smith also attended Oxford and held posts in Herefordshire and Worcestershire and at Exeter Cathedral before becoming Bishop of Gloucester. A noted scholar, he was one of the translators of the King James Bible. His puritan inclinations, however, caused friction with William Laud. (See John Workman case study in Chapter 4.) (John Tiller, “Smith, Miles (d. 1624),” in Oxford Dictionary of National
There are also a number of references to people being compelled to dance or to follow in a dance upon hearing piping, like the rats compelled to follow the Pied Piper. A translation of a sermon by Rudolf Gwalther published in 1572 assures:

Heere may we take singular consolation, considering we see that wicked men, and such as daunce after the worldes pipe, are subject unto the commaundement of God, so that he hath full power and aucthoritie both upon their bodies and minds.\(^{141}\)

According to Gwalther, who was Zwingli’s son-in-law and had close personal ties to several English Protestant reformers, the wicked are controlled by God just as dancers must follow the music of the pipe.\(^{142}\)

Thomas Adams tells a counter story in “The Sinners Passing-Bell. or A Complaint from Heaven for Mans Sinnes”:

*Herodotus* hath a tale of the Piper, that comming to the Riuier side, began to play to the fishes, to see if they would daunce: when they were little affected with his musicke, he tooke his Net, and throwing it among them, caught some: which were no sooner cast on the dry ground, but they fell a leaping: to whom the Piper merrily replied, that since they had erst scorned his Musicke, they should now daunce without a Pipe.\(^{143}\)

Adams argues that if you will not dance obediently to the pipes, again referring to Luke, then you will be forced to dance without music. This is a confusing message; Adams contradicts other interpretations of Luke where piping naturally elicits dancing, making it a display of obedience. Then he gives the aforementioned threat about dancing the volta in Hell if one has danced the measures on earth. In other words, metaphorically you must

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dance; but if you dance in reality, you will be damned. However, Adams is almost alone in making such overt attacks against dancing, and as has just been demonstrated, even these are tempered by positive metaphorical references. Moreover, Adam’s combination of references to specific dances and violent disapproval of dancing is more typical of anti-dance treatises than sermons.

Two Dialogues Against Dancing

Mary Pennino-Baskerville, Alessandro Arcangeli, Ann Wagner, and other scholars have written about the anti-dance treatises of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, and many other authors, such as Jonas Barish and Tanya Pollard, who have examined anti-theatrical literature, have noted the anti-dance component in these works.144 The following section complements these more general studies by focusing on how two late sixteenth-century treatises, Christopher Fetherston’s A Dialogue Agaynst Light, Lewde, and Lascivious Dauncing (1582) and Philip Stubbes’ The Anatomie of Abuses (1583), by using the dialogue form, acknowledge and address pro-dance arguments while still railing against the horrors of dancing and ultimately condemning it.

Christopher Fetherston likely attended Queen’s College, Oxford, and received his B.A. on 3 February 1584.145 By 1613, this same Christopher Fetherston had become the Vicar of Appleby St. Michael, Westmoreland, and by 1616 was the Rector of Bentham.

Yorkshire.\textsuperscript{146} There is some disagreement as to whether this is the same Christopher Fetherston who wrote \textit{A Dialogue Agaynst Light, Lewde, and Lascivious Dauncing}, but if it is, it means that Fetherston published his anti-dance treatise while still an undergraduate student. It is more certain that the author of the treatise was the same Fetherston who subsequently published several translations of John Calvin’s commentaries and other religious writings.\textsuperscript{147}

\textit{A Dialogue Agaynst Light, Lewde, and Lascivious Dauncing} is a conversation between a youth (Juvenis) and his vicar (Minister). The setting is Ubique, or Everywhere, “the broadest parshe” in Ailgna, Fetherston’s stand-in for England.\textsuperscript{148} Minister says that the people of Ubique enjoy health of body but not of soul, thanks to their dancing habit. Fetherston implies that dancing harms a person’s spirit long before it has any visible, adverse effects on the body.

Minister bemoans the current state of affairs in Ailgna. God has favoured Ailgna above all other countries; yet its inhabitants dishonour God the most through their “lewde and wicked” behaviour.\textsuperscript{149} He gives a litany of complaints including blaspheming regularly, magistrates who neglect to punish wrongdoers, and abuses of the Sabbath. The people of Ailgna have their priorities askew, or as Minister puts it, “Our fasting is tourned into feasting, our mourning into mumming, our praying into playing, our almes deedes into all misdeedes.”\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{146} Foster, \textit{Alumni Oxonienses}, vol. 2, p. 494.
\textsuperscript{148} Fetherston, \textit{A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing}, sig. A1v.
\textsuperscript{149} Fetherston, \textit{A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing}, sig. A2v.
\textsuperscript{150} Fetherston, \textit{A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing}, sig. A5r.
Juvenis offers several defences of dancing, which Minister defeats by a combination of logic and sophistry. To Juvenis’ claim that dancing is a good recreation, Minster responds that a recreation should refresh the body and mind. Dancing, rather than “refreshing the body,” instead “makes the same more wearie.” It can also cause various ailments, including agues, shakes, heaviness, sleepiness, and sluggishness. He adds that since “the temperature of the minde, doeth folow the temperature of the body,” dancing must make the mind sluggish and sleepy, as well. Therefore, since it refreshes neither the mind nor the body, dancing is not a defensible recreation.

Another of Juvenis’ arguments is that dancing is a long-standing tradition: “Dauncing hath been used in your fathers time, and in your fathers fathers time, and will bee used when you are both dead and rotten.” Minister responds that just because dancing is traditional does not make it good, “Many unjust and wicked things do come to passe through custome.” Minister is similarly unmoved by Juvenis’ contention that dancing is a good way to meet a potential wife, since one would not want to wed the kind of woman one meets at a dance. Neither does the fact that many churchwardens allow dancing on Sundays, as long as it is not during service time, convince Minister, “It is no sufficient excuse for us when we doe evill, to saye the multitude doeth so.” He contends that dancing is vain and licentious and so to dance on Sundays is profanation, even if one’s churchwardens permit it.

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151 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sigs. A7v., B1r.
156 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. C1v. Regarding the complications faced by churchwardens who presented or failed to present Sunday dancers, see Chapter 5.
Juvenis finally plays his strongest card: Scripture permits dancing, “David daunced, & he was an holy man, therefore why may not we also daunce?”157 Minister concedes that King David danced, but he asserts that the dancing of David, Miriam, and others mentioned in Scripture was quite different from contemporary dancing: “Their daunces were sage & sober, but yours are light & lacivious: their daunces were milde and moderate, but yours wilde and wanton.”158 He argues that biblical and contemporary dances differ in both motivation and movement style, “Their daunces were a moderate motion of the bodie, whiche served to set foorth and expresse the joyes of the minde, but you in your daunces do friske and fling like wilde coltes.”159 Minister concludes that biblical sanction does not transfer to contemporary dances, because “your daunces are in no point liken unto theirs.”160 Along those same lines, Minister observes that in the Bible people dance to express their thanks to God, but in modern times they dance for more nefarious purposes:

For they daunced because they had received great blessinges at the handes of the Lorde, and because they would set forth his prayse: but you dance because you have obteyned your wicked purposes, and because you will entise others to naughtines.161

Minster does not explain what he means by enticing others to naughtiness, but he presumably refers to illicit sexual relations.

Minister explains that one of the reasons that contemporary dances are more lascivious than biblical dances is because in Scripture, “They made no mixture of sexes in

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157 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sigs. D3v-D4r.
158 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sigs. D4r-D4v.
159 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. D4v.
160 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. D4v. As in the examples above, Minister does not explain where the dancing of the daughter of Herodias fits if one divides dancing into chaste biblical dances and wanton modern dances.
161 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. D6r.
their daunces, but the men daunced by them selves, and the women by themselves." In their own day, Minister claims, “you in your daunces must have women.” In reality, this was not necessarily the case. There is ample evidence of men and women dancing solo and in single-sex groups. (See Chapter 1.) However, in Fetherston’s depiction, the supremacy of mixed dancing is treated as a fact. Juvenis gives credence to the assertion by mocking the idea that men would want to dance without women: “You would have men daunce alone without women, there would be a wise pece of worke, how can wee daunce so?” Minister counters that Juvenis reveals his licentious agenda by his scorn for single-sex dancing, “By this you betraye your selfe, what you do seeke for in dauncing, even to lay baites for those with whom you do daunce.” Juvenis is forced to concede that, “Perhaps you sayd truer there then you were aware off.”

The youth’s appeals for dancing at May games fall equally flat. Minister is particularly offended by morris dancing at May festivities, which provides an excuse for men to cross-dress, dance naked in nets, and commit other “abominable sinnes.” The cross-dressed Maid Marions or “maymarrions” who often danced alongside morris dancers

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162 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. D4v.
163 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. D4v.
164 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. D6r.
165 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. D6r.
166 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. D6r.
167 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sigs. D7r-D7v. For more on cross-dressing, see Stephen Orgel, Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare’s England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and John Forrest, The History of Morris Dancing 1458-1750 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999). Between 1528 and 1650, dancing naked in a net is mentioned in at least ten sermons and biblical commentaries by the likes of William Tyndale, John Foxe, William Fulke, and William Prynne. They all use dancing naked in a net as a metaphor for blindness to one’s own predicament. Garbed in the net, the dancer thinks he is invisible or cannot see his own nakedness. Fetherston’s treatise, in which Minister says he has heard that morris dancers dance naked in nets, is the only example I have found where this is described as an actual, physical dance rather than a metaphor.
violated the injunction against men wearing women’s clothes in Deuteronomy 22:5. Moreover, he has heard that young women who go maying in the woods at night time come home pregnant, “of tenne maidens which went to fet[ch] May, and nine of them came home with childe.” Minister concludes that May games are even worse than regular dances.

Towards the end of the dialogue, Minister confesses that he was once an avid dancer. However, he has since repented “the lewdnes of my former life.” To Juvenis’ query, “Is dauncing worse nowe then it was when you did use it?” Minister responds in the negative. Dancing was always sinful, he simply did not realize it at the time: “It was as evill then as it is nowe, but yet it did not please God so to open mine eyes then, as he hath done nowe, that I might see mine owne follie.” Through this exchange, Fetherston reminds the reader that dancing is not always clearly, visibly sinful. Only those whose eyes have been opened by God can see the true evil of dancing.

The treatise concludes with Juvenis’ sudden conversion. He exclaims, “Oh howe am I nowe altered from my former estate, oh what a suddaine change do I feele in my self, even in a moment.” Juvenis expresses regret about his former indulgences, “I am sory that ever I led my life so lewdly,” and resolves to attend sermons instead of going dancing. Minister applauds this resolution and assures Juvenis that he will discover more spiritually fulfilling joys than dancing in his new life. While conversion can happen in a

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168 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. D7r.
169 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. D7v.
170 While such claims are common, there is little evidence to support them. Only a few church court cases mention dancing as a factor in bastardy, fornication, or adultery presentments. See Chapter 1.
171 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. D8v.
172 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. D8v.
173 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. E4r.
174 Fetherston, A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing, sig. E4r.
moment, Juvenis’ change of heart happens so abruptly and suddenly that it can seem more humorous than convincing, at least to the modern reader. Having previously defended his views enthusiastically and intelligently, it is difficult to believe that Juvenis would relinquish them so easily. It makes it feel like Fetherston got to the end of his list of points to discuss, and having nothing more to say, simply ended the dialogue as quickly as possible.

Although *A Dialogue Agaynst Light, Lewde, and Lascivious Dauncing* is definitely an anti-dance treatise, Fetherston makes a decided effort to present his opponents’ views fairly and in detail before he shows their weaknesses. He acknowledges the appeal of dancing, especially to youth; that dancing appears to be a recreation that refreshes mind and body; that dances seem to be good places to meet a potential spouse; that tradition and custom allow dancing in a variety of circumstances, that many churchwardens do not object to dancing on Sundays; and even that dancing appears in Scripture.

Through the mouthpiece of Minister, Fetherston shows how tradition has given a veneer of respectability and acceptability to dancing that masks its true sinfulness. This is largely the result of his contemporaries’ overlooking or ignoring the differences between the kind of dancing described in the Bible and the type of dancing done in the sixteenth century. Biblical dancing was motivated by the desire to praise God, movements were moderate and subdued, and men and women danced separately. Contemporary dancing, on the other hand, was motivated by lust and vanity, movements were wild and unrestrained, and men and women danced together. These distinctions made contemporary dancing so “unlike” biblical dancing that the sanction the latter received had no bearing on the former.
Juvenis’ scornful reaction to the idea of men dancing apart from women emphasises Fetherston’s conviction that in early modern England, young men are incapable of, or at least entirely lacking in the desire to, dance in a sober, moderate, and reverent manner. As the archival records discussed in Chapter 1 demonstrate, there were many young men who were happy to dance by themselves or in single-sex groups. Morris dancing, which Fetherston alludes to when he criticises crossed-dressed Maid Marions, was a dance for a group of men.\textsuperscript{175} It is unclear why Fetherston, possibly a young man himself at the time of writing, did not acknowledge this option. Perhaps he believed that young men danced together only when they lacked the opportunity to dance with women. When women were present, men would want to dance with them and entice them to naughtiness. Regardless, Christopher Fetherston’s worries about the adverse effects of dancing on the body and spirit, especially dancing’s ability to inspire lust and lead to illicit sexual liaisons, were concerns he shared with the author of a similar religious treatise, Philip Stubbes.

Philip Stubbes was born in Cheshire around 1555 and died around 1610, most likely in London.\textsuperscript{176} He published a number of religious and moral works, including a biography of his wife, who died at age nineteen from postnatal complications.\textsuperscript{177} Stubbes was very concerned about encouraging moral behaviour and correcting abuses, but he was

\textsuperscript{175} There are some scattered references to women dancing the morris—most notably in William Kemp, *Kemps nine daies wonder, performed in a daunce from London to Norwich* (London, 1600) and the poem “Old Meg of Herefordshire” (1609), STC: 12032, sigs. A3-C3v, quoted in David N. Klausner, ed., *Records of Early English Drama: Herefordshire/Worcestershire* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 125-136—but the women’s participation in these morris dances is always described as surprising and atypical. See also Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing*, pp. 239-240.


\textsuperscript{177} Walsham, “Stubbes, Philip.”
a conforming puritan, not a separatist: “He staunchly defended the established church and the office of bishop and sharply reproved ‘precisians’ and separatists.”¹⁷⁸ In his writings, he draws on a wide range of sources to bolster his arguments, citing Continental humanists as well as church fathers and biblical passages to support his denunciations of dancing.

In The Anatomie of Abuses, Stubbes uses the dialogue form to interrogate and ultimately condemn the morality of certain behaviours and activities. Spudeus, an ingenuous youth, asks leading questions, which set up Philoponus, a dour old man, for lengthy and often vitriolic responses. As in Christopher Fetherston’s dialogue, the setting of The Anatomie of Abuses is a fictional island called Ailgna. On the other hand, while Fetherston devotes the bulk of his treatise to the topic of dance, Stubbes’ work addresses a wide range of pastimes and popular recreations, including dicing, May games, wakes, and football. However, the vehemence of his comments about dancing, as well as the pro- and anti-dance arguments he puts forth, justify examining these passages in detail.

In The Anatomie of Abuses, Stubbes famously describes dancing as, “an introduction to whordom, a preparative to wantonnes, a provoqueative to uncleanes, & an introite to al kind of lewdenes.”¹⁷⁹ However, in the preface, he describes dance in more moderate terms. He acknowledges that the Bible and various church fathers have approved of dancing, and he insists that it is not the activity, in general, but only “the Abuses thereof” that he condemns.¹⁸⁰ (See Introduction.) Indeed, he assures the reader that he only wants to highlight and correct what he sees as the decline from the dancing described in the Bible to the practices of his own day.

¹⁷⁸ Walsham, “Stubbes, Philip.”
¹⁸⁰ Stubbes, The anatomie of abuses, Preface.
This conciliatory tone is soon lost when Stubbes starts cataloguing examples of contemporary malpractice. Dance, he writes, is abused by:

- being used upon the Sabbath day, from morning until night, in public assemblies and frequencies of People, Men & women together, with piping, fluting, drumming, and such like enticements to wantonness & sin, together with their leapings, skippings, & other unchaste gestures, not a few. Being used, or rather abused in this sort, I utterly discommend it.\(^{181}\)

The list seems to acquire a life of its own, and Stubbes ends the passage with the words, “I utterly discommend it.” Yet, he counters this condemnation straightaway, again qualifying his stance:

- But upon the other side, being used in a man’s private-chamber, or house for his Godly solace, and recreation in the fear of GOD, or otherwise abroad with respect had to the time, place and persons, it is in no respect to be disallowed.\(^{182}\)

Dancing in a private setting, for personal solace, or in response to divine inspiration is permitted, and other opportunities for dancing may exist, as long as the dancers are sensitive to the contextual details of time, place, and person. Throughout the preface, Stubbes vacillates between allowing dancing under certain circumstances and inveighing against its abuse.\(^{183}\)

At the beginning of the section on dancing, Spudeus says, “I have heard it said, that dauncing is both a recreation for the minde, & also an exercape for the body, very holesome, and not only that, but also, a meane wherby love is acquired.”\(^{184}\) In his responses, Philoponus initially acknowledges the potential benefits of dancing, but then he gives numerous counterexamples that overshadow his initial allowances. Regarding the


\(^{183}\) His contemporaries also may have found Stubbes’ equivocation perplexing. This preface only appears in the first of the many printings.

\(^{184}\) Stubbes, *The anatomie of abuses*, Book I, sig. M8r.
question of whether dance should be considered a good exercise, he gives several examples of dance-induced injuries:

And whereas they conclude, it is a wholesome exercise for the body, the contrary is most true, for I have known divers, by the immoderate use thereof, have in short time become decrepit and lame, so remaining to their dying day. Some have broke their legs with skipping, leaping, turning and vaulting, and some have come by one hurt, some by another but never any came from thence without some part of his mind broken and lame, such a wholesome exercise it is.  

Moderate dancing might be healthy, but Philoponus sticks to his argument that the abuses and potential dangers outweigh the benefits. Improved agility is not worth a broken leg.

Philoponus concedes that dancing can be an acceptable recreation in certain circumstances, “I will not much denie, but being used in a meane, in tyme and place conveniente, it is a certen solace to the minds of such as take pleasure in such vanities.”

The dancer must attend to contextual details, dancing in a manner appropriate to the venue and audience, and only at certain times of day. Stubbes still considers dancing a vanity, but he does permit it in this passage. However, he immediately follows this concession with the caveat that since “man’s nature” tends towards sin, “he hath no need of allurements & allections to sin (as dauncing is) but rather of restraints & inhibitions from the same.”

To Spudeus’ contention that dancing plays an important role in courtship, Philoponus responds that the kind of love induced by dancing is:

Truly a lustful love, a venereal loove, a concupiscencious, bawdy & bestial love, such as proceedeth from the stinking pump and loathsome sink of carnal affection and fleshly appetite, and not such as distilleth from the bowels of the hart ingenerate by the spirit of God.

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As dancing is easily abused, it follows that love inspired by dancing would be even more corruptible. Stubbes also describes the offensive behaviour in a good deal more detail than most dance critics:

For what clipping, what culling, what kissing and bussing, what smouching & slaberering one of another, what filthie groping and uncleane handling is not practised every wher in these dauncings? yea the very deed and action it selfe, which I will not name for offending chast eares, shall be portrayed and shewed foorth in their bawdy gestures of one to another.  

Stubbes, through the character of Philoponus, decries the lewd and bawdy aspects of dancing, specifically the kissing, groping, and sexually suggestive moves that, according to the author, occur at most dances. This passage is quite similar to Vives’ description in *The Instruction of a Christen Women*, quoted above, in which he writes that dancing is full of “unclenly handlynges, gropynge, and kyssyngis.” Of course, as discussed previously in this chapter and in preceding chapters, there were only a handful of dances that called for kissing, only one or two dances that involved more physical contact than holding hands, and no choreographies whatsoever that specified groping. However, since authors like Stubbes and Vives are absolutely convinced of dancing’s lasciviousness, this handful of dances easily overshadows other dance types and comes to typify their conception of what dancing is.

Spudeus asks about the sanction of dancing suggested by biblical dance references. This defence is less compelling than in other treatises, because Spudeus does not distinguish between the positive and negative passages. He lists the Israelites dancing before the Golden Calf and the daughter of Herodias dancing before King Herod alongside...
David dancing before the Ark and Solomon’s “time to daunce.” Philoponus responds with the now familiar explanation that the dancing in Scripture was so different from that of contemporary practice that the former could not serve as a precedent for the latter. Biblical dancing was prompted by “joye of hart” and praise of God, not wantonness. Men and women did not dance together, “as is now used to be doon,” but separately. Dancing did not “stirre up filthie lust in them selves” but was done “for nicenes onely.”

As previously noted, such assertions were common, but they were not unproblematic. There might not be any explicit descriptions of men and women dancing together in Scripture, but there are also no prohibitions against mixed dancing.

Stubbes via Philoponus also notes that the Israelites only danced in order to celebrate a momentous occasion. Unlike his contemporaries, the Israelites did not make “a common practise of it, or a daylie occupation as it were,” nor did they set up dancing schools, nor did they dance on the Sabboth day. That the Israelites did not have dancing schools is likely true. The assertion that they did not dance regularly, however, is much harder to defend. No passage states that the Israelites danced daily, but no passage says that they did not. Furthermore, Bible stories generally focus on the unusual not the quotidian, because the former is more interesting and more instructive than the latter. Indeed, the only thing we definitely do know about the Israelites’ dancing is that they did dance to express spiritual joy and to celebrate military triumphs. Nevertheless, not only Stubbes, but also Christopher Fetherston and many other treatise writers make this same point.

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In *The Anatomie of Abuses*, Philip Stubbes allows occasional, moderate dancing by small, sex-segregated groups of men and women, in the privacy of their own homes, not on holy days, and avoiding the most vigorous steps. At the end of the chapter on dancing, he reiterates that it is only “the manifold abuses” of dancing that he condemns, which includes dancing in most other circumstances. Unfortunately, he finds that abuses are rampant and “every where used to ye great dishonor of God, and corruption of good maners.” Because most dancers have carnal and not godly thoughts in their heads when dancing, dancing is just too inflammatory and too lust-inducing to even attempt to reform its practice. Philoponus concludes that dancing “nourisheth a world of wickednes and sinne” and thus “is not a thing wherein a Christian Man’s heart may take any comfort.”

**Defenses of Dancing**

While the views of Christopher Fetherston and Philip Stubbes regarding dancing were not unusual, they were certainly not universal. The issue and reissue of the Book of Sports met with praise as well as condemnation. Peter Heylyn dedicated *The History of the Sabbath* (1636) to Charles I in thanks for his care “to suppress those Rigours, which some, in maintenance of their Sabbath Doctrines, had pressed upon this Church, in these latter days.” Heylyn explains that it was not dancing, in general, but only immodest

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dancing that was condemned by the Romans, the church fathers, and others throughout history.\textsuperscript{200} Regarding Saint Augustine’s rebuke of dancers, Heylyn writes, “note, not \textit{dancing simply}, but \textit{lascivious dancing}; and dancing \textit{all day} long without respect to pious and religious duties; are by him disliked.”\textsuperscript{201} Since it was only “common women” or prostitutes who danced in such a manner, there was no conflict between the church fathers’ condemnation of lascivious dancing and the Book of Sports’ allowance of Sunday dancing; ordinary women were not “so lewdly given” and would be unlikely to dance inappropriately.\textsuperscript{202}

Moreover, Heylyn points out that historically in England wanton dancing had never been sanctioned, not on any day of the week, while modest dancing had been permissible any time that it was not explicitly forbidden, such as during divine service time:

\textit{They which dance on any of the holy dayes, either to stirre themselves, or others, unto carnall lysts, commit mortall sinne; and so they doe, saith hee, in case they doe it any day. But it is otherwise, if they dance upon honest causes, and no naughty purpose; and that the persons be not by law restrained.}\textsuperscript{203}

Heylyn concludes that King James’ and King Charles’ declaration in defence of Sunday and holy day sports was not only lawful, but followed the precedents set by the church fathers and numerous theologians. Those who argued otherwise, who said, “Dancing on the Lords day, was an unlawfull Pastime,” were “either not rightly understanding, or wilfully mistaking the intent and the meaning” of the declaration.\textsuperscript{204}

\textsuperscript{200} Heylyn, \textit{The history of the Sabbath}, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{201} Heylyn, \textit{The history of the Sabbath}, p. 107. This distinction was made by Saints Basil and Chrysostom, as well. (pp. 86-87.)
\textsuperscript{202} Heylyn, \textit{The history of the Sabbath}, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{203} Heylyn, \textit{The history of the Sabbath}, p. 234. This passage is from Heylyn’s summary of the doctrinal position of John de Burgo, the Chancellour of Cambridge under Henry VI.
\textsuperscript{204} Heylyn, \textit{The history of the Sabbath}, p. 268.
Heylyn used another more insidious weapon in defence of sabbath recreations. He translated into English and had published a 1622 Latin lecture by John Prideaux on sabbatarianism.²⁰⁵ Heylyn added a preface to the work that made it seem as if Prideaux was defending the newly reissued Book of Sports. The preface of *The Doctrine of the Sabbath* (1634) asserts that, “On the Lords day all *Recreations* whatsoever are to be allowed, which honestly may *refresh* the *spirits*, and encrease *mutual love* and *neighbourhood* amongst us.”²⁰⁶ Therefore, wakes, feasts, dancing, and “all other Pastimes, not by *Law prohibited*, which either exercise the *body*, or revive the *minds*” should be permitted.²⁰⁷ To forbid them is to try to convert the Christian Lord’s Day into the Jewish Sabbath.²⁰⁸ Heylyn likely printed the translation of Prideaux’s lecture “to embarrass the professor with puritanical supporters,” since he had more recently opposed the royal declaration’s sanction of Sunday sports.²⁰⁹

On the other hand, Edmund Reeve’s *The Communion Booke Catechisme Expounded* (1635) defends the Book of Sports explicitly. The book’s subtitle reads: *In speciall there is demonstrated, that his most excellent Majesties declaration to his subjects, concerning lawfull sports to be used, doth tend unto a very great encrease of*

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²⁰⁵ Heylyn and Prideaux had a long history of antagonism. (Milton, “Heylyn, Peter.”) Prideaux was an opponent of Laud and Arminianism, though a supporter of episcopacy, and he only shared some puritan views. He was regius professor of divinity at Oxford for many years and was elevated to the bishopric of Worcester in 1641. However, his support of the king soon cost him the position. (A. J. Hegarty, “Prideaux, John (1578-1650),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22785.)


²⁰⁹ Hegarty, “Prideaux, John.”
true godlinesse throughout the whole kingdome.210 Reeve contends that feasts encourage “generall fellowship” more than whoredom or drunkenness, and he praises the king for restoring Whitsun feasts and wakes.211 He offers biblical support for dancing, noting that King David danced before the Lord, and that the prodigal son’s return was celebrated by dancing. He concludes that not only will the king’s support of Sunday sports not undermine religious observance, but it will actually increase it.212

That there were provincial clergymen who shared the Peter Heylyn and Edmund Reeve’s approval of dancing on Sundays is suggested by the long commentary on James I’s Book Sports written by Christopher Windle. In 1618, the vicar of Bisley in Gloucestershire, whose relations with his parishioners are further discussed in Chapter 4, sent James I a Latin commentary in defence of the recently issued Book of Sports.213 He also sent a letter of petition and a thanksgiving for the king’s return from the northern provinces bundled together in a small volume entitled “A Book, for a Buck, with a Parke or, for a good Bishopricke or, for a fair Benefice at least.”214

210 This work was answered in William Prynne, A quench-coale. Or a briefe disquisition and inquirie, in what place of the church the Lord-table ought to be situated (Amsterdam, 1637).
212 Reeve, The communion booke catechisme expounded, p. 104.
213 The author of this treatise is likely the Christopher Windel who graduated from Oxford with a B.A. on 17 Feb., 1579/80. (Foster, Alumni Oxonienses, vol. 4, pp. 1654-1674.)
214 Windle, who was imprisoned in a Gloucester jail at the time for debts of unknown origin, likely sent these writings to James I in order to increase his chances of receiving a royal pardon for his debts. However, Windle’s defence of Sunday dancing in a sermon several years earlier indicates that his almost fanatical support of dancing and the king’s declaration are genuine. (Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield, eds., Records of Early English Drama: Cumberland, Westmorland, Gloucestershire (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), p. 365.)
Windle's commentary is both complimentary and complementary. He applauds James I's support of Sunday recreations enthusiastically, offers biblical passages to bolster the king’s arguments, and augments these with his own justifications for Sunday and festive dancing. He begins his commentary with an anecdote about the reactions of an anonymous clergyman of Gloucestershire to the Book of Sports. Windle explains that, upon reading the declaration for the first time, this cleric spoke to him, nearly overcome with fear and worry about the likely consequences of the king's declaration:

How troubled he was and sobbing!—said that he was extremely afraid, frightened, and terrified on his own behalf lest this permission, freedom, and lenient grant might make, produce, and bring forth on every side much pain, condemnation, prejudice, and loss for many ministers of the church.\footnote{215 Douglas and Greenfield, \textit{REED: Gloucestershire}, p. 402. The original commentary is in the British Library (BL: Royal Ms. 12 A. LXX, pp. 5-21.) All of the quotations here are from the English translation by Abigail Young included alongside the transcription of the Latin original in Douglas and Greenfield, \textit{REED: Gloucestershire}, pp. 402-419. For ease of reading, I have silently removed parentheses around conjunctions added by the translator.}

The clergyman continues with a concise, if somewhat exaggerated, summary of the central argument of those who oppose the king’s declaration:

We are ordered to be mindful that we keep and observe the Sabbath in a holy way; we ought to keep holy not simply part, but all, of the Sabbath. But to play, jest, laugh, dance, and refresh the spirit by physical activity is to violate, pollute, profane, and contaminate the Sabbath, if even an iota of the twenty-four hours of that day were taken away from holiness and sanctity.\footnote{216 Douglas and Greenfield, \textit{REED: Gloucestershire}, p. 402.}

Indeed, the question at the heart of the Book of Sports controversies was whether or not one could satisfactorily “keep and observe the Sabbath in a holy way” simply by attending the requisite church services or whether it demanded every “iota of the twenty-four hours of that day.” Windle provides this scenario to suggest a typical response of country vicar to the Book of Sports, especially one with sabbatarian or puritan inclinations.
Windle then uses his narrator to respond to and allay the Gloucestershire clergyman’s fears, and in so doing, tries to address the complaints of all critics of the king’s declaration. First, he gives a standard response, similar to Peter Heylyn’s response discussed previously: the fearful clergyman has described a Judaic, not a Christian, interpretation of the sabbath. Second, Windle presents a more original argument: dancing is a manifestation of joy, and therefore the sabbath is the ideal time for dancing. Finally, Windle questions whether it is even possible to observe holy days adequately without dancing and similar recreations. Windle transitions rapidly from arguing that dance on the sabbath is permissible, to it as appropriate, to it as necessary. As Christopher Marsh observes, “Windle’s central and most interesting argument was that many of the celebratory physical activities traditionally conducted on Sundays and holy days were, in God’s eyes, an aspect of worship rather than its very antithesis.” Indeed, by asserting that dancing is an appropriate and natural means for Christian youth to “show their joy, happiness, and exultation in the Lord and their great and singular gratitude toward God,” Windle essentially redefines dancing as a physical embodiment of prayer itself.

As previously discussed in the Introduction and above, for most sabbatarians, there was little desire to adopt a Jewish interpretation of the sabbath, and there was little support

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219 Douglas and Greenfield, *REED: Gloucestershire*, p. 404. The author of an anonymous treatise offers a similar interpretation of the Israelites use of “outward manners or fashions” in religious ceremonies to better express their devotion to God. They “joyned there withall some outwarde gestures, to witnes that, which was within.” (Anon., *A Treatise of daunses wherin it is shewed, that they are as it were accessories and dependants (or things annexed) to whoredome, where also by the way is touched and proued, that playes are ioyned and knit togeather in a rancke or rowe with them* (London, 1581) sig. B7v.)
for moving the Christian sabbath day to Saturday. Still, English sabbatarians discouraged working on the sabbath, although not as strictly as in Judaism. As Windle put it, Christians considered it perfectly acceptable to “cook meals, and prepare them to be eaten by others; to treat the sick; to urinate; to muck out (stalls); to pull oxen, sheep, or asses from wells” and to perform other banal but necessary tasks on the sabbath. He then points out that many of these activities are not just mundane but base, which leads him to conclude that opposing dancing because it is baser than singing hymns or praying is not convincing. Dancing is more noble and elevated than permitted activities such as cooking or urinating.

Second, Windle contends that dancing is a manifestation of joy. Dancers “leap, dance, and exult before God from an excess of joy” in God's glory. Windle acknowledges the scepticism of his opponents who envision, “Lustful youths leading round dances with unrestrained girls, just like he-goats mounting wanton she-goats,” but he dismisses such fears by assuring the reader that the king’s declaration only advocates chaste, moderate dances that enable Christian youth to “represent and show their joy, happiness, and exultation in the Lord.” He attempts to support this contention with the circular argument that a king as wise as James I would hardly permit, let alone prescribe, licentious dancing; therefore, dancing on the sabbath must not be licentious because the king permits it. More persuasive is his observation that rejoicing is a more logical response than mourning to the promise of eternal salvation.

223 Douglas and Greenfield, *REED: Gloucestershire*, p. 404. Gosson also mentions round dances in *The schoole of abuse*; those who agree with each other, “ought ... to daunce the same Rounde” (fol. 27v.)
Indeed, Windle’s view of the sabbath as a day dedicated to joyful celebration of God’s goodness and the assurance of salvation makes holy days the ideal time for dancing:

No day or time whatever has been more befitting or appropriate for round dances, dances, physical actions, jests, and liberal ways of rejoicing than Sabbaths, Sundays, holidays, feast days, and Lord's Days.  

Similarly, he argues that dancing and amusements are appropriate, not just at weddings, but also at burials and funerals, because celebrating at these moments reminds the participants of God's promise of eternal salvation and thus helps them “affirm, confirm, and establish celestial joys.”

Moreover, holy days are the only time available to commoners who labour during the week. Goatherds, cooks, and cobblers are not able to “refresh themselves on the other days of the week” with “mild sports and recreations.” Windle contends that since they are enjoined to rest from their labours on the sabbath (Deuteronomy 5:14-15), they should be able to refresh themselves with recreations. Furthermore, for “the mob and the common people” who may not understand or relate to more elevated forms of ecclesiastical praise and ceremony, dancing is one of the most natural, intuitive, “fitting and appropriate” means of rejoicing.

This perspective leads Windle to question whether it is even possible to adequately observe holy days without dancing and similar recreations:

Indeed, Sabbaths and solemn feasts have been so appropriate to such things that they could neither be observed and spent properly without these (activities) nor should any such days ever be spent wholly without these observations.

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228 Douglas and Greenfield, *REED: Gloucestershire*, p. 413.
Arguing that dancing should be mandatory for celebrating holy days is an extreme position, to say the least, and would have given more moderate defenders of dancing as well as puritan reformers pause. However, Windle also supports his approbation of dancing with more familiar arguments, including a discussion of biblical dance references.

In his commentary, Windle cites Miriam dancing and playing instruments to celebrate the escape from Egypt and notes passages in Exodus and the letter to the Corinthians where dancing is associated with idolatry.\(^{231}\) He emphasizes that it was not the dancing itself but the situation in which it occurred that was problematic in the latter examples. In the case of the Golden Calf, dancing was condemned, “by reason of bad usage and wrong application, with respect to that idolatry,” not because dancing itself was idolatrous.\(^{232}\) He notes that dancing “must be introduced, offered, and presented in appropriate places at suitable times,” and that “it is not the right use but a most depraved abuse which is treated as a fault, condemned, and abhorred.”\(^{233}\) This interpretation enables him to explain away the Bible's other seemingly negative dance references, such as the dancing of Salome in Matthew 14:6 discussed above.\(^{234}\)

Like the aforementioned clergymen in this chapter and the educators in Chapter 2, Windle agrees that dancing and recreations, “should happen only in proper and suitable places, at proper and suitable times, and without either hindrance or neglect of divine worship.”\(^{235}\) Moreover, he acknowledges that it can be difficult to assess the contexts that decide whether dancing is appropriate or not. Therefore, he encourages “diligently teaching

\(^{231}\) Douglas and Greenfield, REED: Gloucestershire, p. 406. He also quips that since the Israelites were not allowed to light fires on the sabbath, dancing provided a good alternative strategy for keeping warm. (p. 407.)


\(^{233}\) Douglas and Greenfield, REED: Gloucestershire, pp. 405, 407.

\(^{234}\) Douglas and Greenfield, REED: Gloucestershire, p. 407.

\(^{235}\) Douglas and Greenfield, REED: Gloucestershire, p. 415.
what things are necessary for right use.” Otherwise, “things which are right and suitable will surely be irrecoverably ruined gradually together with things which are imperfect, unnecessary, and intolerable.” He adds that puritans would be more helpful if they would help develop “a doctrine of the right practice of those very activities” rather than trying to suppress morally “indifferent” ones. Though some people think “May games, Whitsun ales, morris dances, various ritual dances, many jests” and assorted games are “forms of devil worship” or “dead idols,” they “need not be, cannot be” as long as youth are taught about what dances and recreations are appropriate to what contexts.

Lastly, Windle expands on the idea in the Book of Sports that dancing is preferable to the other activities available. When youths are forbidden “these more humane exercises and liberal and ingenious amusements,” such as dancing, he writes, they are more likely to end up frequenting taverns, “gulping at alehouses,” and getting into brawls and quarrels. Even worse, “many foul fornications” result, including “base rapes, execrable adulteries, horrible incests, abominable whorings.” By allowing dancing and other recreations on Sundays one provides a structured, supervised activity for young men and women to do together, which actually prevents people from sinning. Here again, Windle takes the cautious allowance of dancing found in the Book of Sports and transforms it into a panegyric. At the same time he turns the most common qualm about dancing on its head. Not only is dancing not inherently wanton in Windle’s perspective, but he argues that dancing can actually save communities from “foul fornications” and sexual sins.

239 Douglas and Greenfield, REED: Gloucestershire, p. 413.
240 Douglas and Greenfield, REED: Gloucestershire, p. 413.
Conclusion

In his collection of commonplaces and notes on moral themes, the composer and early Protestant writer John Marbeck sums up the position of most religious commentators regarding dance, “As it is lawfull to sing, and we use singing to give thankes unto God ... so also by a moderate dauncing, we maie testifie the joie and mirth of the minde.” He explains that there is a precedent for sanctioning reverent and moderate dancing in the Bible:

For David publikelie daunced before the Arke of the Lorde, and the Maidens with daunces and songs, celebrated his victorie against Goliah. Maria also sister of Moses when Pharo was overerthrown and slaine, led daunces with other women, & sung a song of victorie. Wherefore seeing holie men and chaft women used daunces, we cannot saye that of their owne nature they be vicious.

Nevertheless, he cannot simply approve dancing, because the style and context of the dancing in Scripture varies significantly from contemporary practices:

But as it is used in these daies that men should daunce mingled together with women, ought not to be suffered, because that those things are nourishments and provokers of wantonnesse & lusts. Maria the sister of Moses daunced not with young men, but apart by hir selfe among women. Neither David daunced with women: and maidens which celebrated his victorie daunced among themselves, and not with men.

Marbeck is only prepared to condone dancing based on the precedent of biblical dancing if the dancing in question shares the same characteristics: It must be motivated by the desire to express joy and thankfulness to God, and it must not encourage lasciviousness.

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John Marbeck’s perspective is representative of the views on dancing held by sermon authors, biblical commentators, and treatise writers in early modern England. Several patterns can be observed in the works examined in this chapter. The vast majority were written by puritan clergymen, who disapproved of some if not most types of dancing. Yet, these men depict dancing positively as well as negatively. Positive characterizations of dancing almost always involve metaphorical references, usually as a symbol for rejoicing or celebration. Even mentions of King David or Miriam’s dancing in Scripture downplay the physical movements in favour of depicting dancing as a symbol of joy.

Negative characterizations of dancing are split between the symbolic and the concrete. There are instances of actual dancing being directly discouraged in sermons, especially in the seventeenth century, but these are much less common than might be expected. Dancing is given as an example of a frivolous, if not irreverent activity in many cases, but there are also examples where it is linked with obedience and the maintenance of hierarchies. Dancing is most frequently referred to generically, but Thomas Adams is an example of a clergyman who names specific dance types in his sermons. Although this suggests substantial familiarity with the dances mentioned, Adams uses this knowledge to more specifically denounce dance in general. Perhaps he, like Fetherston’s Minister, was an avid dancer in his youth. Finally, we see that not only do preachers with similar backgrounds describe dance differently, but that the same author, for example Thomas Playfere or Henry Smith, may refer to dance positively in one context and negatively in another, sometimes within the same sermon. English authors could look to the likes of John Calvin for a precedent for this kind of mixed message.
One of the challenges for religious commentators on dancing was that there were no choreographic descriptions in the Bible. Scripture gives no indication of dance steps or style. Therefore, the claim that biblical dancing was “milde and moderate” compared to contemporary dancing was entirely conjectural.\textsuperscript{244} The contention that contemporary dances were “wilde and wanton” was equally problematic. Although the majority of early modern choreographies were for mixed-gender couples, contact between the dancers was minimal, usually just holding hands. Philip Stubbes’ claim that kissing and “filthy groping” were “practised every wher in these dauncings” was at best a wild exaggeration, if not a complete fabrication.\textsuperscript{245} The main opportunity mixed dancing afforded men and women was the chance to converse together.

Nevertheless, many religious reformers argue that it was safer to avoid all potential temptations to sin. English puritans could find precedents for this view among prominent humanist scholars, such as Erasmus and Vives, as well as Protestant reformers such as Calvin. The evidence from sermons, biblical commentaries, and moral treatises suggests that what decided an author’s position on dancing was not based on the inherent properties of the dance. Rather, it was based on whether or not the author believed that individuals were capable of judging the appropriateness of dancing in a specific context and exercising self-control within that context. This distinction was not relegated to religious writers. Chapter 2 investigated how educators, conduct writers, and dancing masters addressed these same issues of context, judgement, and self-control in their writings.

At the same time, because dancing was a popular and well-established pastime, these disagreements were more than academic. Residing in a parish with a pro- or anti-

\textsuperscript{244} Fetherston, \textit{A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dauncing}, sigs. D4v.
\textsuperscript{245} Stubbes, \textit{The anatomie of abuses}, Book I, sigs. M8r-M8v.
dance incumbent had a significant impact on parishioners’ leisure options and festive practices. Few critics of dancing were content to sit by while their neighbours profaned the Sabbath and incurred God’s wrath. Clergymen railed against dancing from the pulpit and in print. Lay people elected anti-dance churchwardens who presented dancers in the church courts. Churchwardens who refused to present dancers were themselves presented for negligence. Defenders of dancing responded on occasion through writings, but primarily by continuing to host and participate in dance events, or by turning a blind eye to those who did. A few defended dancing as a time-honoured tradition that encouraged neighbourliness and social harmony and accused reformers of being dangerous innovators who had no respect for tradition. In communities where tensions were already running high due to religious dissension or local politics, disagreement about dancing could be the straw that broke the camel’s back. Chapters 4 and 5 present a number of case studies in which clashing views about dancing generated, reflected, and exacerbated local conflicts.
Chapter Four
Clerical Responses to Parochial Dancing

The records of dancing in early modern England, especially prosecutions for dancing, are temporally sporadic and geographically scattered. Yet, many sources allude to regular dancing in places for which there are only one or two prosecutions. What distinguished the dancing that led to presentments and prosecutions from the dancing that went unremarked? This dissertation contends that there needed to be a “perfect storm” for a dance event to be prosecuted.

Generally, community structures designed to dispel tensions and resolve emerging conflicts among parishioners discouraged antagonists from seeking resolution through fisticuffs or in the courts. Methods to resolve conflict included the intervention of friends and clergy, with the “symbolic restoration of harmony” often manifested by dining or drinking together. 1 Arbitration or mediation was encouraged, as well, even after a suit had been brought in court. For an historical court record of dancing to be generated, certain components had to have been present that caused the failure of informal conflict resolution.

There also had to be underlying tensions or feuding within the local community that prevented successful conflict resolution. A history of or ongoing antagonism between parochial clergy and parishioners or between clergymen and their superiors increased the likelihood that a dance event would be seen as part of a larger issue and become implicated

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in a court case or complaint. There was usually a trigger that set off the storm, as well.

Dancing or something that happened at a dance event could serve as a catalyst for tempers to boil over, or it could be an unrelated or unknown occurrence. Regardless, it was only when tensions increased to the point that parishioners were no longer able to tolerate differences of opinion privately that dance entered the historical record.

Several records of particular interest that depict the intersections of religion and revelry revolve around members of the clergy and dancing. Clerical attitudes towards dancing varied widely across England, but they were also widely divergent among clergymen who lived and preached within the same areas. This was particularly true regarding the issue of dancing on Sundays and holy days. Moreover, the variety of clerical opinions was matched by the variety of views of parishioners. This combination frequently led to situations where part of the congregation supported the parish minister’s views. While this caused uncomfortable conflicts for those involved, the subsequent church court cases give the historian a rich source base.

Before 1618, there was no national policy regarding dancing on holy days. Local policy was shaped in several ways. Bishops developed rules for the diocese, which they disseminated and enforced through visitations; justices of the peace passed orders pertaining to recreations at quarter sessions or assizes; or the parish’s incumbent, churchwardens, or leading members of the congregation decided what Sunday pastimes were permitted. The publication of James I’s Declaration to His Subjects, Concerning Lawfull Sports (1618), or the Book of Sports as it became known, provided a national policy on sports and recreations.² (See the Introduction.) Dancing was one of several

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² James I, The Kings Maiesties declaration to his subiects, concerning lawfull sports to be vsed (London: Bonham Norton and John Bill, 1618).
recreations now approved by royal proclamation as allowed on Sunday and holy days after
Evening Prayer for those who had attended divine services in their own parish. Clergymen
who had previously condemned Sunday dancing had to change their stance or risk
ecclesiastical discipline, while those who had previously defended dancing in spite of
complaints from their parishioners were vindicated. In the cases of Christopher Windle and
Gerard Prior, the existing records cover the periods both before and after the 1618 Book of
Sports, revealing some of the ways in which the royal proclamation influenced local dance
practices, perceptions of those practices, and relations between clergymen and their pro-
and anti-dance parishioners.

This chapter focuses on four clergymen who became embroiled in local
controversies in which dancing played a central role. All served in parishes in
Glouces tershire and Worcestershire within twenty-five miles of Gloucester. (See Figure 1.)
However, although Bisley, Mathon, and Eldersfield are within a few miles of each other,
their agrarian setting and economies were quite different. In the early seventeenth century,
Bisley was a small cloth town; Mathon a small village supported by orchards and pasture;
and Eldersfield a medium-sized farming village. In other words, the clergymen discussed
in this chapter ministered to very different congregations.

3 “Bisley: Introduction,” in Bisley and Longtree Hundreds, ed. by N.M. Herbert and R. B. Pugh,
vol. 11 of A History of the County of Gloucester, Victoria History of the Counties of England
(Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Historical Research, 1976), pp. 4-11,
history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42860; “Parishes: Eldersfield,” in A History of the County of
Chapter 4: Clerical Responses to Parochial Dancing

Figure 1: Case Study Locations: Bisley, Mathon, Eldersfield, and Gloucester. Map courtesy of Christopher E. Wilmer, 2012.

The viewpoints on dancing of these four clergymen run the gamut from enthusiastic support to unequivocal condemnation. Christopher Windle of Bisley aroused the ire of his parishioners by defending Sunday dancing. Edward Reese of Mathon petitioned his bishop to forgive his parishioners for dancing on Sunday. Gerard Prior of Eldersfield was prosecuted for his disapproval of Sunday dancing. John Workman of Gloucester was censured for his refusal to sanction Sunday dancing. While they occurred in different settings and under diverse circumstances, each of these cases involved parishioners, ecclesiastical administration, and local authorities, as well as the clerics themselves. The

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4 Mathon is now in Herefordshire but it was in Worcestershire until 1897. Likewise Mathon was in the Diocese of Worcester originally, but transferred to the Diocese of Hereford in 1906.
surviving documents pertaining to these cases therefore help to illuminate the kinds of underlying antagonisms that created the “perfect storm” environment that enabled dancing to cause such controversy and contention in local communities. The following case studies draw on documents examined in the Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, and Herefordshire Record Offices and the National Archives, as well as records excerpted in the Records of Early English Drama collections and secondary literature.

**The Region**

Gloucestershire has three distinct topographical areas: the southern agricultural region from Bristol to Tewkesbury known as the Severn Vale was an important cloth-producing district and also known for its dairying; the Cotswold Hills east of the Severn River featured sheep and corn husbandry and “nucleated villages, common fields, and spacious downland commons,” as well as a small amount of clothmaking; the Forest of Dean in the southwest was a pasture-farming district with scattered villages and supplemental industries including iron smelting and timber production.5

Gloucester, the central town in Gloucestershire, lies on the Severn River. By the end of the sixteenth century, Gloucester had become, in many aspects, a centre for Protestant reform. From 1598, St. Michael’s Church hosted a city lectureship, and by the 1630s, Gloucester had several weekly lectures, all catering to the town’s more puritanical

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residents. Around the end of the sixteenth century, the city magistrates also launched “a godly reformation of manners with an emphasis on the sanctity of the sabbath and a determined campaign against drunkenness and alehouses.”

Dancing was part of a variety of traditional community festivities: civic watches on St. Peter’s and Midsummer eves, the feast following the Midsummer watch, guild feasts, abbots of misrule, morality plays, and various popular games and rituals. However, in Gloucester, most of these festivities faded away or were abolished between 1560 and 1640. They were supplanted by rituals dedicated to civic leadership such as mayoral election day ceremonies and the magisterial procession to the courts, which did not include dancing, as far as we know.

However, as the following cases demonstrate, the anti-dance views held by clergymen in Gloucester were not necessarily shared by the clergy or laity in the surrounding area.

Worcestershire was a relatively prosperous county in the early modern period. The Severn River, which runs through Worcestershire, facilitated transport of goods to Bristol and into Shropshire. The land in the south and east was rich and arable and had a larger population than the north and west, which was wooded, hilly, and mostly used for cattle

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9 Litzenberger, The English Reformation and the Laity, pp. 139-142. Also see tabulation of dance records for Gloucestershire in the Appendix. For regulations and licensing of alehouses, drunkenness, and other matters related to dancing and general merrymaking, see Chapter 6: Economic Regulation of Willcox, Gloucestershire, pp. 134-178.
Worcester, which lies on the border between these two areas, was “remarkably well-placed as a market for the exchange of goods between those regions.” The religious and political landscape was more complicated. At the end of the sixteenth century, about half of the population of Worcestershire were still practicing Catholics.

Christopher Windle, Vicar of Bisley

In 1618, Christopher Windle, the vicar of Bisley, Gloucestershire, sent James I a lengthy Latin tribute to and defence of the king’s newly issued Declaration to His Subjects, Concerning Lawfull Sports, or the Book of Sports, as it was commonly called. As discussed in Chapter 3, Windle’s commentary applauds the king’s support of Sunday recreations, offers biblical passages to bolster the declaration’s arguments, and augments these with his own justifications for Sunday and festive dancing. However, the treatise was not Windle’s first defense of dancing. Several years earlier he had vigorously defended dancing from the pulpit.

Bisley village lies at the crossing of the roads between Painswick to Cirencester and Chalford to Birdlip on a plateau among gently rolling hills and wooded valleys. The records for Bisley in the early seventeenth century are discontinuous, but in 1610 the parish’s population would presumably have been somewhere between the 112 families

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12 Klausner, REED: Herefordshire/Worcestershire, p. 298.
recorded in 1563 and the 300 households noted in 1650.¹⁴ Like most of the Cotswold region, the local economy was based on corn, sheep husbandry, and the cloth industry.¹⁵ The professions of Bisley men listed in Men and Armour for 1608 name sixty-two people engaged in cloth-related jobs, including “41 weavers, 18 tuckers, a dyer, a clothier, and a millwright,” versus the fifty-two men with agricultural jobs and twenty-one men working in other trades.”¹⁶ Bisley also had several taverns and alehouses in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century.¹⁷ The parish church, All Saints, was a prominent and sizeable edifice that could house a substantial congregation, with a large nave, two aisles, and a tower and spire that were easily visible from the surrounding countryside.¹⁸ (See Figure 2.)

![Figure 2: All Saints Church in Bisley. ©Alison Avery, 2008.¹⁹](image-url)

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The vicar was entitled to a share in each of the Bisley rectory’s two portions, but apparently the details were controversial. Christopher Windle was involved in at least ten separate tithe cases between 1595 and 1621.\textsuperscript{20}

Christopher Windle was ordained in 1582 and instituted as vicar of Bisley in 1588, where he served until his resignation in 1625.\textsuperscript{21} He may be the Christopher Windel who received a B.A. from Oxford in 1579/80.\textsuperscript{22} Certainly, he was better educated than many parish incumbents, as his lengthy Latin commentary on the Book of Sports, discussed in Chapter 3, attests. As vicar, Christopher Windle owned sixteen acres of land with eight tenements and received various tithes, but his finances seem to have been an ongoing issue.\textsuperscript{23} Not only was he frequently embroiled in tithe cases with his parishioners, but he was also imprisoned for debt.\textsuperscript{24}

In May 1610, seven weeks after Easter during Whitsuntide, Christopher Windle created a scandal. In the course of a sermon, the vicar asserted that, “pipeinge & Daunceinge at a Maye poule; & keepinge of Somerale was as lawfull to be u*sed & kepte by the people as it was lawfull for them to here the word of god sincerely preached.”\textsuperscript{25} Claiming that dancing was as appropriate an activity for a holy day as hearing a sermon

\textsuperscript{21} WRO, B 716.093-BA.2648/10(i), Episcopal Register, 1582; GRO: GDR 27A, General Act Book, 1570-1630; PRO: E331 Glouc/11, Returns to First Fruits Office.
\textsuperscript{22} Joseph Foster, ed., \textit{Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500-1714: Their Parentage, Birthplace, and Year of Birth, with a Record of their Degrees} (Oxford: Parker and Co., 1891-1892), vol. 4, pp. 1654-1672. However, he is described as a “preacher & no graduate” in a 1593 list of clergy, but 1594 and 1612 entries refer to him as having an M.A. (LPL, CM XII/8 (Clergy list); GRO: GDR 73, 115.)
\textsuperscript{25} Douglas and Greenfield, \textit{REED: Gloucestershire}, p. 285, Gloucester Diocese Consistory Court Deposition Books, 1610-1611, GRO: GDR 114, fol. 4 (21 May). It is not clear from the depositions whether the offending sermon was preached on Whit Sunday or Whit Monday. William Hopton reports the first but Garrett Band the second.
certainly caught the attention of Windle’s parishioners, some of whom believed that this assertion was, in fact, “very contrary to the worde of Allmightye god.” Moreover, that same week “there was a maye pole sett upp neare unto the parish church of Bieslye & pipeing & Daunceinge at the same pole by the youth of the parish,” and one witness had heard that not only had the churchwardens consented to the maypole and attendant festivities, but that also “the appointment & abettinge” of them had been encouraged by the vicar. Windle's support of dance was further publicized that same week when his son served as the lord of the maypole for Bisley’s Whitsun ale and other festivities.

Setting up a maypole was a popular spring ritual, especially for parish youth, and revelers often danced by or around it. Ales were also common at Whitsuntide, or Pentecost, the celebration of the Holy Spirit’s descent upon Christ’s disciples. Of course, putting up maypoles and hosting ales could be contentious, especially in communities with a mix of festive traditionalists like Christopher Windle and more godly, puritanical parishioners. Some of the latter in Bisley strongly objected to Windle’s general advocacy

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29 Hutton, Stations of the Sun, pp. 244-261; Hutton, The Rise and Fall of Merry England, Chapters 3 and 4.
of dancing and traditional festivities, as well as his sermons, and almost exactly a year later, the matter came before the Gloucester consistory court.31

One tucker and three yeoman, ranging in age from thirty-two to sixty, gave depositions about the Windle case. They were a mix of long-term residents and newcomers: Garrett Band had lived in Bisley for five years, William Hopton had lived in Bisley until moving to Berkley a few months prior, John Clissold had lived his entire life in Bisley, and Christopher Bidmeade had lived in Bisley for four years.

Of the four depositions, that of Garrett Band, a forty-four-year-old tucker or cloth-finisher, presents Christopher Windle in the most negative light. Band strongly objects to Windle’s pro-dance stance and dislikes his sermons, in general. Band states that Windle had, “preached before the congregacion most pro[p]hanely & erroniously” in defending dancing, and that he commonly resorted to “phantasicall & idle speeches in his sermons.”32 Although he is an artisan and would certainly not have attained a degree, Band considers himself sufficiently qualified to critique the content of Windle’s sermons.33

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31 When Windle gave his sermons in May 1610, Henry Parry was Bishop of Gloucester (holding the post from June 1607 to July 1610, when he was translated to the bishopric of Worcester). Parry was Calvinist in his theology, so he would likely have looked askance on Windle’s pro-dance preaching. (William Richardson, “Parry, Henry (1561-1616),” in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21416.) However, Parry was gone by the time the case came before the consistory court, and the new bishop, Giles Thomson, was not consecrated until after the depositions had been heard, on 9 June 1611, and died the following year without ever visiting his new diocese. (Kenneth Fincham, “Tomson, Giles (1553-1612),” in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/70133.) In the meantime, Windle’s case was promoted by Richard Hall as an office case. I have been unable to identify Hall at this point.

In contrast, the thirty-two-year-old yeoman William Hopton’s statement simply confirms that the vicar’s Whitsuntide sermon had affirmed the lawfulness of piping and dancing at a maypole, and he had heard that Windle had “caused his sonne to be Lord of the same pole.”34 He reports that he had heard that the churchwardens had consented to the maypole and the dancing, but he does not editorialize about the morality of the churchwardens or Windle's actions. It is not clear whether Hopton’s recent moving from Bisley to Berkley, about fifteen miles away, bears any relevance to the case. It is possible that someone no longer living in Bisley might have been more willing to confirm Band’s version of events and risk angering the vicar. Regardless, Hopton supports Band’s contentions, implicating Windle, but his deposition lacks the vehemence and outraged tone of Band’s statement.

Both of the men who had been Bisley’s churchwardens in May of 1610 at the time of the contested sermons also gave depositions. John Clissold, a fifty-year-old yeoman, deposed that Vicar Windle had a maypole set up and maintained with piping and dancing “without the consent” of the two churchwardens and “against the goodwill of the honest and reliligouse despoused people of the same parish.”35 He called this as “a prophane action” that was “not thought fitt for a [man] of his callinge & profession.”36 Moreover, Clissold stated that some of the parishioners “reproved” the vicar for his profane actions, but rather than desisting, as they requested, he publicly defended dancing in the aforementioned sermon.37 The other churchwarden, however, the sixty-year-old yeoman Christopher Bidmeade, simply confirmed that there had been a maypole set up with piping and dancing

during Whitsuntide. He denied knowing who was responsible for the action or if Windle defended dancing as lawful in a sermon or otherwise. 38 Bidmeade does not defend Windle outright, but like Hopton above, he avoids passing judgement on the vicar, merely responding to the articles in question.

These depositions indicate some disagreement in the parish as to whether or not Windle's support of maypoles and dancing was appropriate or deserved official censure. On the one hand, Garrett Band and John Clissold were clearly offended by the vicar’s actions, as were other members of the congregation. On the other hand, a substantial number of Windle's parishioners must have participated in the dancing and festivities to warrant contesting or defending the practice. After all, if Windle and his son had been the only people interested in having a maypole, it is unlikely that their dancing around one would have elicited anything other than laughter or mockery. 39 It is also worth noting that there is never any suggestion that the dancing that occurred around the maypole at Bisley was the least bit disorderly or licentious. Opponents of dancing were quick to call attention to such instances, and the absence of complaints is a good indication that the dancing itself was orderly and unobjectionable. 40

Finally, there is the question of why a year passed between the maypole dancing and offending sermons and when the matter came before the court. While it is possible that the delay was due to logistics, such as bureaucratic inefficiency resulting from the Bishop

38 Douglas and Greenfield, REED: Gloucestershire, pp. 285-286, quoting GRO: GDR 114, fol. 4. 39 It is worth noting that the depositions do not indicate that Christopher Windle himself danced, only that he supported dancing. However, it is likely that his son’s duties as Lord of the May (or Maypole) would have included dancing. 40 See, for example, the 1617 petition of William Jeffreys, constable of Longdon, Worcestershire. (Quarter Sessions Records 110:29/67, quoted in Klausner, REED: Herefordshire/Worcestershire, pp. 382-382.)
of Gloucester’s seat having been vacant since July 1610, it is more likely that there was an unknown trigger in 1611 that motivated Band to seek retribution against the vicar.

There is also a possibility that the retroactive attack on Windle was a response to Robert Dover’s preparations for what became known as Dover’s Olympick Games or the Cotswold Games in nearby Chipping Campden.\(^{41}\) The games featured a variety of sporting events and competitions, including dancing, and were viewed by contemporaries, as well as by posterity, as “a conscious protest against the puritanism of the age.”\(^{42}\) F. D. A. Burns has pointed out that Dover likely “became involved with a traditional Cotswold Whit festivity and revitalized it with his own distinctive form of entertainment.”\(^{43}\) The maypole dancing and Whitsun celebrations at Bisley represent this tradition.

A small volume of poetry, *Annalia Dubrensia* (1636), immortalised the Dover Games with laudatory verses from the likes of Ben Jonson, Michael Drayton, and Thomas Heywood, among others.\(^{44}\) The frontispiece from the volume includes three women dancing, accompanied by bagpipes. (See Figure 3.)

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\(^{43}\) Burns, “Dover, Robert.”

Figure 3: Detail from frontispiece of Michael Drayton et al., *Annalia Dubrensia* (London, 1636).

The Cotswold Games were held on the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of Whitsun week, from 1612 to 1644, were revived at the Restoration and held until 1852, and have been held annually since 1966, with 2012 being marked by special 400th anniversary celebrations.\(^{45}\)

Thus, the Cotswold Games were held later in the same week as Bisley’s Whitsun festivities in earlier years.

There are no surviving records of who attended the Cotswold Games or helped Robert Dover with the logistics, other than the courtier and poet Endymion Porter of the Porter family of Campden.\(^{46}\) However, it is hard not to imagine Christopher Windle attending and taking an active interest in, if not an active role in, the organisation and

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\(^{46}\) Whitfield, *A History of Chipping Campden*, p. 95. Through Porter, Dover received hats, ruffs, and other clothes of the king’s, which he wore while officiating the games.
promotion of Dover’s Olympick Games. Windle’s pro-dance sermon in 1610 did not represent the views of all of his congregants, but the success of the Cotswold Games in nearby Chipping Campden demonstrates that Windle was certainly not alone in his appreciation and advocacy of Whitsun festivities.

Edward Reese, Curate of Mathon

Whereas Christopher Windle supported dance openly and adamantly, Edward Reese, the curate of Mathon, was comparatively indifferent about dancing. However, when members of his congregation were accused of dancing on a holy day by someone outside of the congregation, Reese petitioned the Bishop of Worcester to halt the case against them.47

Mathon is in the hundred of Pershore near the Herefordshire/Worcestershire border.48 (See Figure 1 above.) Parish lands featured a mix of orchards and agriculture.49 The parish church, St. John Baptist, is a simple twelfth-century nave church with no aisles and a fifteenth-century tower, sufficient to serve the needs of Mathon’s small congregation. (See Figure 4.) The Dean and Chapter of Westminster has had the gift of the rectory and advowson since 1542. Thus, as curate, Edward Reese would have received a small stipend while the income from tithes would have gone to Westminster.50

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47 Petition to Bishop John Thornborough, WRO: Ref. 795.02, BA 2302, parcel 2, single sheet 374, in Consistory Court Papers, 1623-1624. Formerly in St. Helen’s Record Office (SHRO), SHRO: BA 2302/2(414), single sheet (July). St. Helen’s Record Office has closed and its holdings, including Mathon’s records, are now in the Worcester Record Office (WRO) or the Herefordshire Record Office (HRO). Reese’s petition is quoted in Klausner, REED: Herefordshire/ Worcestershire, pp. 384-385.
48 Originally Mathon was in the Diocese of Worcester, but in the late nineteenth century the parish was divided in two—West Malvern in Worcestershire and Mathon Rural in Herefordshire—with the town assigned to Herefordshire. (‘Parishes: Mathon,” in A History of the County of Worcester, vol. 4, pp. 139-143, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42869.)
49 “Parishes: Mathon,” pp. 139-143.
50 “Parishes: Mathon,” pp. 139-143.
There are a few scattered records that may refer to the Mathon curate. There was an Edward Reece of the right age who attended Oriel College, Oxford. The militia lists in *Men & Armour for Gloucestershire in 1608* include an entry for “Edward Reese schoolmaster. 1. ca.” in The Hundred of Botlowe, Dymocke. At any rate, Reese had arrived in Mathon by 1614, since he is named as either curate or minister in the Bishops’

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52 There is a listing for a “Reece, Edward, of co. Hereford, pleb. Oriel Coll., matric. 26 June, 1601, aged 17; B.A. 8 May, 1605, as Reese.” (Joseph Foster, ed., *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500-1714: Their Parentage, Birthplace, and Year of Birth, with a Record of their Degrees* (Oxford: Parker and Co., 1891-1892), vol 3, p. 1243.)
53 Smyth, *Men & Armour*, p. 1, 58. Militiamen were assigned weapons based on their physical stature. Reese bore a caliver (ca.), a light shoulder-fired gun, indicating he was short of stature. The “1.” signifies that he was a young man in his twenties. While I have not found any other evidence of an Edward Reese in Gloucestershire, it is not implausible that Reese might have been a schoolmaster in Gloucestershire a few years before becoming the curate at Mathon.
Chapter 4: Clerical Responses to Parochial Dancing

Transcripts of the Mathon parish register from 1614 to 1632.\textsuperscript{54} By 1634 Reese had died or left Mathon, since the curate named in the Bishops’ Transcripts is Thomas Smyth.\textsuperscript{55}

In 1624, in his petition to John Thornborough, Bishop of Worcester, Reese asks the bishop to drop all charges against some of his younger parishioners who were charged with dancing on the Sabbath day before divine service; “Whereas divers yong people of our parish of Mathon are summoned unto your Lordshipps Consistory Court at Worcester, there to appeare the Nineth day of this instant moneth of July, for daunceinge uppon the Sabbath day before Eveninge prayer.”\textsuperscript{56} Reese explains that, in general, the Mathon youth were “verie orderly and carefull,” and though they did dance on the Sabbath and during Whitsuntide, they always attended church as required, “beinge conforme in comeinge to devine service upon those daies wherein they daunce.”\textsuperscript{57} Their only fault in this particular case was that they danced before Evening Prayer instead of after it, as the Book of Sports required. Either Reese did not realize that dancing before Evening Prayer was forbidden or he did not see this as problematic. He contends that the Mathon youth were careful in “takeinge noe further libertie then is by the Kings Majestie allowed for their recreations

\textsuperscript{54} WRO: B 736-BA.2006 boxes 11-59, 62, Bishops' Transcripts. Reese is mentioned in 1614, 1615 and 1616 when Henry Parry was Bishop of Worcester (1610-1616), and in 1617, 1618, 1620-1624, and 1626-1632 during John Thornborough’s bishopric (1617-1641). (Rosemary Lockie transcribed this list in 2007; it is available at http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/HEF/Mathon/Vicars.html.) In most of these entries Reese calls himself curate, but in the 1617, 1618, and 1621 entries he refers to himself as minister. These terms seem to be used interchangeably in Mathon. In 1634 Thomas Smyth, his predecessor, refers to himself as curate, but in 1636 he signs the parish register as minister. (WRO: B 736-BA.2006 boxes 11-59, 62, Bishops' Transcripts.)

\textsuperscript{55} WRO: B 736-BA.2006 boxes 11-59, 62, Bishops' Transcripts. The Mathon parish register records that “Edw: Reese Curat” was buried in 1631. (HRO: MX 114, Parish Register of Mathon.) However, the HRO’s register is a late, perhaps Victorian, copy of the original register, which has gone missing, and is of questionable accuracy. If the \textit{Alumni Oxonienses} entry is for the same Edward Reese, then the curate would have been forty-eight years old in 1632.

\textsuperscript{56} WRO: Ref. 795.02, BA 2302, parcel 2, single sheet 374.

\textsuperscript{57} WRO: Ref. 795.02, BA 2302, parcel 2, single sheet 374.
upon the Sabbath day.” Bishop Thornborough, who has been described by Brett Usher as an “Elizabethan Calvinist,” actively fought recusancy and asks whether the churchyard has been “prophaned” by dancing in some of his later visitation articles of enquiry. However, at least one of his sons bet on tennis matches, and the bishop had himself been a “raffish” youth. It was not unreasonable for Reese to expect the bishop to be sympathetic to his petition.

Reese’s comments provide some contextual details about the dancing, as well. It was specifically young people who danced. In one instance, on Whit Monday, they danced before Evening Prayer, but otherwise they only danced after prayer time on Sundays and holy days. The curate depicts them as well-behaved young people who always attended divine service regardless of their recreational activities. Moreover, their dance movements and style were unobjectionable; Reese describes them as “behaveinge themselves moderately.” As Chapters 1 and 3 discuss, dancing was often considered the province of (and a problem particular to) youth, but the curate’s description reveals that as long as their movements were orderly and modest, young people’s dancing was not considered inherently problematic.

58 WRO: Ref. 795.02, BA 2302, parcel 2, single sheet 374.
60 Tragically, in 1612, one of Thornborough’s sons committed suicide “apparently terrified of admitting to his stepmother that he had lost money at tennis.” (Usher, “Thornborough, John.”)
61 WRO: Ref. 795.02, BA 2302, parcel 2, single sheet 374.
The petition also implies that Edward Reese held certain views about dancing. It is unlikely that Reese would have gone to the trouble of petitioning the bishop on behalf of his parishioners had he been actively opposed to dancing on Sundays and holy days. Therefore, the very existence of this petition suggests that the Mathon curate was either favourably disposed or neutral towards his parishioners’ dancing. Reese was also aware of at least some of the legal restrictions on dancing on Sundays and holy days in the Book of Sports. (See Introduction.) He is careful to confirm that the accused had attended divine service on the days that they danced in accordance with the law, noting “the Kings Majestie allowed for their recreations upon the Sabbath day.”

Likewise, Reese observes that other parishes in the Diocese of Worcester permit dancing and requests that his parishioners receive “such Lawfull libertie as the moste parte of the parishes hav within your Lordshipps diocesse, for their recreations.”

At the same time, while Reese supports the Sunday recreations allowed by the king, he does not condone dancing unconditionally. Although the Book of Sports does not specify that sanctioned dancing must be of a certain type, Reese clearly interprets the legislation as only permitting decorous, orderly dancing. He declares that he would inform on his parishioners himself and would “doe my best endaevour to cause them to be punished for an example to others” if the parish youth danced at the wrong time or in such a manner

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62 WRO: Ref. 795.02, BA 2302, parcel 2, single sheet 374.
63 WRO: Ref. 795.02, BA 2302, parcel 2, single sheet 374. While dancing rarely generated records unless someone deemed it objectionable, prosecutions for dancing on the sabbath or during festivals such as Whitsuntide indicate dancing was common in the Diocese of Worcester. Examples include Bewdley in 1615-1616, Bradley in 1617/1618, Broadwas in 1624, Crowle in 1611, Grafton Flyford in 1615/1616, Longdon in 1615-1617, Ribbesford in 1616, and Worcester in 1607. (Klausner, REED: Herefordshire/Worcestershire, pp. 363-451.)
64 WRO: Ref. 795.02, BA 2302, parcel 2, single sheet 374.
that “shall offend.” While he does not specify what offensive dancing entailed, it would likely include dancing that was immodest or disorderly. (See Chapter 2.)

Another petition by Edward Reese suggests that he took his pastoral duties seriously. There is a 1620 petition to the Justices of the Peace asking them to allow “Nicholas Taylor a very poor man who has lost his house and goods by fire” to collect alms. Edward Reese, minister, has his signature first, followed by twenty-eight others, including two gentlemen and both churchwardens. (See Figure 5.)

![Excerpt of signatures from petition on behalf of Nicholas Taylor.](figure5.png)

Figure 5: Excerpt of signatures from petition on behalf of Nicholas Taylor. ©Emily Winerock, 2006.

Reese’s name appearing first on a petition to help a poor parishioner in hard times implies that the Mathon curate was an active shepherd for his flock. Defending his youthful parishioners from a charge of illicit dancing would be in character. At the same time, Reese was capable of testifying against his parishioners when necessary. In 1628, he agreed to

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65 WRO: Ref. 795.02, BA 2302, parcel 2, single sheet 374.
66 WRO: BA1/31/122 (9 January 1620). The date is 1619 in the old style.
67 This may suggest Reese’s standing in the community as higher than the gentlemen or his name might simply be first if he is the originator or author of the petition.
68 WRO: BA1/31/122 (9 January 1620).
give evidence against a criminally inclined parishioner at quarter sessions.\textsuperscript{69} This supports the sincerity of Reese’s claim to the Bishop that if the Mathon youth were to dance in an inappropriate manner he would “cause them to be punished” himself.

However, Edward Reese petitions Bishop Thornborough not only to request a discharge for his young, dancing parishioners, but also to make accusations. Reese suggests that the apparitor (an ecclesiastical messenger) made up the charges: “I doe conjecture that this complaint was grounded upon no just foundation.”\textsuperscript{70} Moreover, in so doing, the apparitor usurped the authority of the bishop. The apparitor told Reese that in charging the Mathon youth, the apparitor was following the instructions of the bishop, Master Chancellor, and Mr. Warmstrey. The Warmestrys were a prominent family in Worcester, and William Warmestry (to whom this record refers), was registrar of the diocese, as his ancestors had been since 1544.\textsuperscript{71} However, Reese was clearly sceptical about the veracity of this claim, “I thinke it was his informacion onely, and that he did usurpe your Lordshipps authority,” and therefore he makes sure to inform the bishop that the apparitor was acting, perhaps presumptuously, in his name.\textsuperscript{72} Reese also stresses his own moral superiority, describing himself as “willinge to assist my parishioners in anie thinge that is just, honest and Lawfull,” implying that the apparitor’s motivations and actions might be unjust, dishonest, and unlawful.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{69} WRO: BA1/54/31 (1628). For other transgressions of William Vobe including theft of grass, see also BA1/54/30 (1628); BA1/22/11(2) (1615); BA1/22/12 (1615).


\textsuperscript{72} WRO: Ref. 795.02, BA 2302, parcel 2, single sheet 374.

\textsuperscript{73} WRO: Ref. 795.02, BA 2302, parcel 2, single sheet 374.
Reese does not name the apparitor in his petition. This may have been because he assumed the bishop would know to whom he referred, but it makes it difficult for the historian to ascertain whether or not Reese and the apparitor had been party to disagreements previously.\(^74\) Since apparitors who were unable to deliver summonses to individuals would pass them on to the curate to read at service time, Reese and the apparitor would have been known to each other prior to this incident.\(^75\) Therefore, while it is tempting to ascribe anti-dance views to the apparitor, which motivate him to pursue the dancing youth of Mathon, there might have been other factors or mitigating circumstances. It was not uncommon for apparitors to be accused of overstepping the duties of their office, especially when bringing presentments before the consistory court on their own initiative rather than waiting for the parish’s churchwardens or incumbent to do so at the next episcopal visitation.\(^76\) Since apparitors earned their income from fees for delivering summonses and other documents, they had a strong incentive to fabricate or exaggerate transgressions.\(^77\)

Edward Reese exemplifies clergymen who were happy to defend the right of their parishioners to dance, provided that they did so in a lawful and orderly manner. Reese’s petition provides evidence of dancing practices in Mathon and diverse attitudes towards those practices. However, Reese also uses his petition to Bishop Thornborough to make accusations of misconduct and bias. It is unclear whether Reese uses the dancing case as an excuse to accuse the apparitor of underhanded dealings out of genuine concern that the

\(^{74}\) For example, in Gloucester, there was one general-apparitor for the diocese, but several apparitors for who served the rural deaneries and peculiar jurisdictions. (Price, “Elizabethan Apparitors in the Diocese of Gloucester”: 37.)


\(^{77}\) Price, “Elizabethan Apparitors in the Diocese of Gloucester”: 45.
apparitor was usurping episcopal authority or simply to encourage Bishop Thornborough to look on dancing case more favourably.

In addition, Reese’s petition suggests that disagreements over the acceptability of dancing on Sundays and holy days did not always originate within the parish but could come from outside. This example of dancing in Mathon, therefore, occurred in a very different context than the dancing in Bisley, Gloucestershire, discussed above. Finally, Reese’s petition gives concrete evidence of one of the ways in which a disagreement over dancing could be addressed so that it did not end up as a prosecution in the consistory court. Thus, Edward Reese’s petition makes visible not only dance practices that occurred outside of the historical record, but how those practices were negotiated outside of or alongside the courts.

Gerard Prior, Vicar of Eldersfield

The case of Gerard Prior, vicar of Eldersfield in Worcestershire, provides an example of a clergyman who spoke against dancing and was initially punished but later exonerated. Dancing was only one component of the case, but focusing on this aspect provides the modern observer with a strand to follow through the tangle of parochial conflicts and alliances that helped shape this case.

Eldersfield is a small town in the lowlands of the Severn Valley in the southernmost part of Worcestershire, approximately halfway between Worcester and Gloucester. (See Figure 1 above.) A farming village, the parish church, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, is
of middle size, with a nave and one aisle.  

(See Figure 6.) Eldersfield’s parish church likely housed a congregation smaller than Bisley’s but larger than Mathon’s.

![Figure 6: St. John the Baptist’s Church in Eldersfield. ©Roland Merrick, 2010.](image)

The earliest record that likely refers to Gerard Prior is the appointment of Jerardus Prior as Schoolmaster of Milksham, Wiltshire, by the dean of Salisbury in 1599. There is no record of Prior attending either Cambridge or Oxford, so this might be a different Gerard Prior, but it is not implausible that a vicar would have spent his younger years as a schoolmaster. Regardless, Gerard Prior was instituted as “Vicar of Elderfeild” in 1607 when Gervase Babington was Bishop of Worcester. (See Chapter 3.) The lay patron, Anna Child, was the widow of Florice Child, the previous vicar.

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78 “Parishes: Eldersfield,” in A History of the County of Worcester, vol. 4, pp. 76-83, British History Online, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42860. The church has seen some renovations, but the chancel arch dates from the twelfth century, the tower from the fourteenth century, and the chapel and font are from the fifteenth century.


80 W&SRO: D5/9/1 (Subscription Book), 13/11/1599.

81 The 1613-1624 entries name Gerard or Gerardus Prior as Vicar. The Eldersfield parish registers prior to 1718 have not survived, but entries in the Bishops Transcripts for the Diocese of Worcester, which contain copies of parish register entries, confirm Prior's position as Eldersfield's vicar.

82 WRO, b 716.093-BA.2648/10(i), Episcopal Register.
In the summer of 1619, Gerard Prior came to the attention of his superiors. In June of 1619, several inhabitants of Eldersfield in Worcestershire reported to Justice of the Peace Leonard Jeffries that a year earlier their vicar had spoken “some lewde and ingminious words” against the King. Walter Underhill and Thomas Bruton reported that Vicar Prior “often times in his sermons inveyeth against dancinge uppon the Sabbath day,” calling it “a prophane sporte,” and that the vicar had also prayed that God “turne the Kinges harte from profanes.”

Leonard Jeffries responded promptly to the accusations against the vicar of Eldersfield. He bound Prior over to appear at the next assizes, examined Eldersfield inhabitants about the accusations, and rode to Worcester to present the examinations to the Lord Bishop of Worcester, John Thornborough. (See above.) Jeffries collected examinations from a cross-section of Eldersfield residents: two gentlemen (Walter Underhill, who had prompted the investigation, and Thomas Blont), five yeoman, five husbandman (including Thomas Burton, the other initial accuser), and a plough maker, a labourer, a weaver, and a tailor. Bishop Thornborough summoned Prior to Worcester within five days, and when Prior came, he and two other Eldersfield residents were examined under oath. The bishop, feeling that the evidence presented by Jeffries and the

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83 SP14/110/39 in Calendar of State Papers Domestic: James I (1611-1618) (CSPD), Vol. 9. Earl’s Croome, where Jeffries resided, is about ten miles from Eldersfield.
84 Consistory Court Presentment, WRO: Ref. 795.02, BA 2302, parcel 2, single sheet. Formerly in St. Helen’s Record Office (SHRO), SHRO: BA 2302/2(374), single sheet, quoted in Klausner, REED: Herefordshire/Worcestershire, p. 371. Klausner suggests a date of 1624, but letters in the CSPD indicate the initial incident was in 1618 and the accusations made in 1619. Walter Underhill, a gentleman, served as churchwarden of Eldersfield in 1613 and 1629. (WRO: B 736-BA.2006, Bishops Transcripts, 1611-1640, Eldersfield.) Thomas Bruton or Burton could be related to the Birtons who owned the manor of Birton’s House in Eldersfield in the late sixteenth century. (“Parishes: Eldersfield.”)
85 SP14/110/39, CSPD. The occupation of one examinee, Michael Bosley, is unspecified, although Prior presented him for practicing surgery without a license. (SP14/110/28)
testimony of the Eldersfield residents were sufficient proof of wrongdoing, suspended Prior from his position and income, and the case was referred to the assizes.  

Yet, Bishop Thornborough had reservations about the case. In a letter to Archbishop of Canterbury George Abbot, he notes that Prior's accusers “had concealed the matter against him more then a yeere,” and that they seemed “some what displeased, & malitious at him for presentinge some of them.” Moreover, these parishioners readily admitted that Prior, in general, dutifully prayed for the king, and although he denied saying them, Prior had repeatedly offered to recall any offending words from the pulpit, if that would “give satisfaction to those of his parishe, which were by him offended.”

In addition to his letter, Bishop Thornborough sent the archbishop two petitions requesting Prior's restoration to his post. The first petition is signed by thirteen clergymen from parishes in the Diocese of Worcester. They write that Gerard Prior has previously shown himself to be “a worthy modest & judicious preacher,” adding that despite his tribulations, Vicar Prior continues to pray for the King’s continued reign “affectionatly and in a most loyall manner.” The petition also mentions the malicious intentions of Prior’s adversaries and suggests that they are “enemies of the Ministry” more generally. The petitioners entreat the bishop to revoke Prior’s suspension, claiming that if the bishop knew Prior better, he would have known that the accusations could not be true, “if your

86 SP14/110/27, Cspd.
87 SP14/110/27, Cspd.
88 SP14/110/27, Cspd. Bishop Thornborough also notes that he had originally intended to seek punishment for Jonas Roades of Herefordshire, not for Prior. Roades had given a controversial and “indiscreete” sermon at Eldersfield as a visiting preacher. Prior had convincingly shown he did not know Roades was going to give such a sermon and did not agree with Roades’ words. The archbishop comments that, ironically, Roades’ comments were along the same lines as, but actually worse than, those of which Prior was accused. While he does not say so directly, the bishop implies that if he is going to punish anyone, he would rather it was Jonas Roades than Gerard Prior.
89 SP14/110/27, Cspd.
90 SP14/110/27, Cspd.
Lordshippe knew him as well as wee doe, wee should not need to sue.”^91 The dozen or so clergymen who signed the petition in support of Prior held posts in parishes in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire in the general vicinity of Eldersfield.^92 (See Figure 7.)

![Figure 7: Parishes of the Clergy who Petition on Gerard Prior’s Behalf. Map courtesy of Christopher E. Wilmer, 2011.](image)

The second attachment which Bishop Thornborough sent on to Archbishop Abbot is a petition from Gerard Prior's parishioners. The petition contrasts the small number of people who have accused Prior with the large number who support him and wish him to be

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^91 SP14/110/27.1, CSPD.

^92 The order of the names on the petition does not match up with any logical geographical order, which makes it unlikely that someone carried the petition from parish to parish to get the signatures. Rather, it is more plausible that the petition was passed around to be signed at a meeting of some sort, possibly, but not necessarily, called for this purpose.
reinstated. The petition asserts that the accusations are only “upon the informacon of some few p[er]sons in our parish,” and like most of the documents in Prior’s support, describe the accusers as being “malitiously” motivated.\textsuperscript{93} The petition notes that the accusers had not made any mention of offensive words for nearly a year and give no reason for the delay. The accusers had only spoken up after they were presented by the vicar and punished by the archdeacon for “drunkennesse and other misdemeanours.”\textsuperscript{94} The accusations against the vicar should be discounted because they are motivated by the desire for vengeance.

Moreover, the petition questions the evidence against Prior collected by the justice of the peace. The parishioners deny that Gerard Prior spoke against dancing or criticized the king’s support of Sunday recreations, “to our rememberaunce we never heard him in his prayer to invey agaynst daunceing or to utter those wordes as is pretended agaynst him.”\textsuperscript{95} The petition adds the detail that the vicar is a poor man, and therefore suspension from his maintenance is a harsh punishment. Finally, the petitioners request the restoration of the vicar in part for his sake, “being a man everie way well deserveing,” and in part for their sake, “that we and ours may agayne injoy the comforte of his ministry.”\textsuperscript{96} The sixty-eight signatories—all Eldersfield inhabitants and including six gentlemen, the local constable, and eight widows—demonstrate that Prior has significant support in the parish, including from local elites and the principal members of the parish.

However, Prior’s support was hardly universal nor uncontroversial; the Eldersfield gentry were apparently divided in their view of the vicar. Two of the men examined by Jeffries who confirmed the initial accusations were also gentlemen, including Walter

\textsuperscript{93} SP14/110/27.II, CSPD.
\textsuperscript{94} SP14/110/27.II, CSPD.
\textsuperscript{95} SP14/110/27.II, CSPD.
\textsuperscript{96} SP14/110/27.II, CSPD.
Underhill, who brought the initial complaint. Furthermore, Thomas Delamare, lord of the manor of Hardwick, actively agitated against the vicar, including prompting (or possibly paying) William Rumney to write a petition to Sir Robert Naunton, the Secretary of State, denigrating Prior and opposing attempts to reinstate him. Rumney’s petition reiterates that the vicar did “lately rayle against all sporte and pastimes which his Majestie of late allowed” in a “contemptuous & disloyall manner,” and that the vicar had prayed that “god would turne the kings hart from prophanes.”97 Rumney describes Prior as “beinge rich and haveinge greate friends,” which directly contradicts the claim in the aforementioned petition by the other parishioners.98 He also refers to “manie other foule misdeameanors” committed by the vicar, but he does not describe them or provide further evidence.99

Rumney is likely referring to a series of articles or complaints presented by his parishioners against Prior, which indicate an even deeper rift between the vicar and many of his congregation.100 The document lists twenty-eight articles of objection by Eldersfield parishioners objecting to “irreverent and immoral acts.”101 These articles can be grouped roughly into two types of complaints: ecclesiastical and social. The first type includes complaints about Prior's sermons, catechising, and Communion, but the ecclesiastical topic that dominates the articles is the surplice. Four different articles refer to the vicar not

97 SP14/110/44, CSPD.
98 SP14/110/44, CSPD.
99 SP14/110/44, CSPD.
100 SP 14/71/88, CSPD. The articles are undated, but the Calendar of State Papers, Domestic gives their approximate date as 1612 based on the document's internal dates. Walter Underhill reported that Gerard Prior had given objectionable sermons on the 12th and 19th of January 1611 (1612 by the modern calendar). However, the final article refers to youth being allowed to engage in Sunday recreations “accordinge to his majesties pleasure.” This could be a reference to the Book of Sports, which was issued in May of 1618. If the final article does, indeed, refer to the king's declaration on sports, then the twenty-eight articles may belong to the 1619 case discussed above. Another possibility is that the majority of the twenty-eight articles were written in 1612, but someone added to or amended them after May of 1618.
101 Description of “Articles exhibited against Gerard Prior”, c1612, SP 14/71/88, CSPD.
wearing or hiding his surplice. Not wearing the surplice was common among puritan-leaning clergy and suggests that the underlying point of contention was that Prior was too puritanical for more traditional members of the congregation. The social, or neighbourly, offenses are fewer, but they are more varied in topic. They include the accusation that Prior and his dog kill, maim, and frighten neighbours' geese, that Prior is a liar and sower of discord, and that he kissed a married woman other than his wife.

The remainder of the articles can be described as both ecclesiastical and social offences. Five articles involve Prior calling people names or verbally abusing them — usually from the pulpit, three address problems with seating in the church, two involve the behaviour of the vicar's wife at church, and two refer to statements by the vicar that are definitely arrogant, but debatably irreverent. There are also several accusations that could be described as abuses of office, where Prior uses his position as vicar to more effectively impose upon, threaten, or prosecute others. Finally, there is the last article in which the parishioners complain that Prior arranged for a musician hired by “the youth of the parish” to be waylaid and detained by the constable on his (the musician’s) way to divine service:

the bell beinge touled wherat they all came to prayer, and the musition puttinge up his instrument, was mett comeinge to prayer by the constable and up by the heeles & fetched away agaynst the end of prayers, all by the persuasion & wordinge of that puritane minister.

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103 SP 14/71/88, CSPD.

104 SP 14/71/88, CSPD.
Presumably, the youth had hired a musician to play for their dancing after divine service, but Prior, “that puritane minister” as his accusers call him, disapproved of this pastime enough to go to significant lengths to prevent it.

The articles against Gerard Prior are noteworthy for the pettiness of their complaints. There are a few legitimate objections to unorthodox use of (or lack of use of) the surplice, catechisms, and reading of the canons. However, most of the parishioners’ complaints are about annoying or mildly inappropriate behaviour such as name-calling, chasing geese, being uppity and self-righteous, taking criticism poorly, and kissing women other than one's wife. These might be objectionable behaviours, especially for a clergyman who was supposed to bring people together not so with dissension, but they were hardly criminal. In fact, some of the accusations, like forgetting to finish with the Lord's Prayer one time, are mean-spirited nitpicking. Regardless, the articles against Gerard Prior prove that the appropriateness of Sunday dancing was only one of many topics on which Prior and his parishioners disagreed. Moreover, it was not only religious topics that caused dissension. The articles object to Prior’s sermon style, his dog, even his wife. Prior, likewise, objects to the behaviour of his parishioners both within and outside of the church.

Not surprisingly, several of the same names from the 1612 articles also appear in the 1619 examinations (e.g., William Clarke, Walter Underhill, Michael Bosley, William Nutt, William Rumney); these are likely the core members of what one might call the anti-Prior faction. If the 1612 date is correct, the articles prove that Prior and a significant portion of his congregation already had a long history of antagonism by the time of the anti-dance incident in 1619. If they originated later on, they nevertheless show the breadth of the hostility between Prior and some of his parishioners.

105 SP 14/71/88, CSPD.
Nevertheless, one cannot simply divide Eldersfield into clear-cut pro- and anti-Prior factions. Several parishioners who signed the articles of objection against Prior also signed the petition of support for the vicar in 1619. This suggests that some parishioners may have had criticisms of Prior, but they still thought he should be restored to his post. Perhaps they were uncomfortable with the seriousness and severity of the official response, which may have seemed a disproportionate punishment.¹⁰⁶

Prior’s parishioners were not the only people willing to support him. On 23 August 1619, the same day that Bishop Thornborough sent his letter and the petitions to Archbishop Abbot, the bishop's colleague, William Swaddon, the Archdeacon of Worcester, sent a letter of support for Gerard Prior to Sir Julius Caesar, Master of the Rolls, and a member of the Privy Council. In this letter, Archdeacon Swaddon vouches for Prior's character, having known the vicar for eight or nine years.¹⁰⁷ It is not surprising that he would have been sympathetic to Prior’s disapproval of dancing, since the archdeacon himself was hardly a proponent of the pastime, at least not on church property. His Articles of Enquiry for 1615 asked if the churchyard had been “prophaned” by dancing, gaming, or other secular activities.¹⁰⁸

The archdeacon also gives details about Prior's accusers. He names seven men who had been presented by the vicar at the archdeacon's visitation after Easter earlier that year (1619). The men were punished for drunkenness, incontinence, defamation, not receiving communion, and practicing surgery without a license. The aforementioned William

¹⁰⁶ SP 14/71/88, CSPD.
Chapter 4: Clerical Responses to Parochial Dancing

Runney and the gentleman Thomas Delamare, who was behind his letter to the Secretary of State, were among those Swaddon lists, and all but one of the others were among those examined by JP Jeffries who confirmed the recent accusations against Prior. In addition, Swaddon reports that since these men were punished, Prior had become the victim of various vengeful acts, including being the subject of libels, having his cattle hurt, and receiving threats. Archdeacon Swaddon believes that the accusation of treasonous words spoken at a sermon thirteen months earlier is simply an escalation of these malicious and vengeful attacks.

Having given a strong defence for Prior, Swaddon goes on to request that the accusers be punished. He argues that if the words they accuse Prior of saying were indeed “worthy to be complayned of unto ye kinge or his counsell” then they are at fault for not reporting them earlier and should be punished accordingly.\textsuperscript{109} Swaddon's letter also says in no uncertain terms that until Prior had presented these men earlier in 1619, Prior had “never in my tyme [been] complained of, ether to my L[ord] Byshop or to me.”\textsuperscript{110} Swaddon had been the recently deceased Queen Anna's chaplain.\textsuperscript{111} As a person known at Court and to the Privy Council, Swaddon's support would have strengthened Prior's defence.

Aid also came from Sir William Throckmorton, the Justice of the Peace in nearby Corse Lawn Chase, who addressed a letter of support for Gerard Prior to the Archbishop of Canterbury just a few days later.\textsuperscript{112} Throckmorton explains in his letter that he has known

\begin{footnotes}
\item[109] SP14/110/28, \textit{CSPD}.
\item[110] SP14/110/28, \textit{CSPD}.
\item[111] Fincham, “Swaddon, William.” The attachment to Swaddon's letter is much better known. Along with his letter to Sir Caesar, he had “inclosed a copy of ye verses I made at my majesties funeral.” (\textit{In obitum serenissimae principis, Annae}, SP14/110/28.I, \textit{CSPD}.)
\item[112] Although it is in Gloucestershire, Corse Lawn Chase is less than three miles from Eldersfield.
\end{footnotes}
Gerard Prior for a long time, and Prior had asked him to write to the archbishop. The letter mentions that Prior was going to appear before the archbishop and the Privy Council shortly thereafter, which helps explain the frenzy of letters regarding the case in the final weeks of August. Throckmorton is sceptical about the veracity of the charges against the vicar, saying that Prior is “unlikelie to bee the more guiltie of that crime which hee is accused of.” This is for two reasons: One, because Throckmorton knows Prior to be “a painefull good preacher, a man of very honest conversation, and a conformable minister to the governement of the church of England in all points,” and two, because he, too, has heard about “a company of profane and riottous people” in Eldersfield who are “violently opposed” to Prior’s attempts to reform their behaviour. Throckmorton’s description of the situation matches that of the other letters already examined, except for one point. While Archdeacon Swaddon emphasizes that he had not heard of any complaints between the vicar and his congregation until the year prior, Throckmorton writes of his “longe acquaintance” with the disagreements between Prior and some of his flock. It may have been the case that Throckmorton, in his capacity as a justice of the peace, might have handled secular charges against Prior, which would explain Archdeacon Swaddon’s ignorance of them.

113 SP14/110/29, CSPD.
114 SP14/110/29, CSPD.
115 SP14/110/29, CSPD.
116 SP14/110/29, CSPD.
117 SP14/110/29, CSPD.
118 Both the accounts of Swaddon and Throckmorton state that the accusations against Prior are malicious and for revenge. Yet, there is something deliciously ironic about this letter. Its author, William Throckmorton, is almost definitely the same William Throckmorton who, many years before, had supposedly been corrupted by John Wilmott, the dancing rector of Tortworth discussed in Chapter 5. Both William and his father, Sir Thomas Throckmorton, were infamous for their violent tempers, and at least at the time of the Wilmott case, William Throckmorton had been part of “a company of profane and riottous people” himself. (Jan Broadway, “Throckmorton family (per. c.1500-1682),” in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online ed., ed. Lawrence
The accusations against Gerard Prior appear to have been resolved around 16 September 1619. Archbishop Abbot wrote his recommendation at the bottom of Prior’s petition to the Privy Council: Lord Bishop of Worcester John Thornborough should release Prior from his suspension. Moreover, the vicar should be compensated for his court expenses by William Rumney and the others who had accused him of treasonous words. There is no evidence that Bishop Thornborough or the Council disagreed with this recommendation (which also accorded with the legal opinion of the attorney general and solicitor general).

The details of Prior’s later career are a little muddled, but he seems to have resigned his position at Eldersfield in the late 1620s and become vicar in Sandhurst, Gloucestershire in 1628. The reason for Prior’s resignation is unclear, but given his difficult relationship with some of his parishioners, including gentlemen such as Walter Underhill and Thomas Delamare, it is probable that he might have sought a post in a less hostile work environment. In Sandhurst, Prior would have been subject to the oversight of the conservative Bishop of Gloucester Godfrey Goodman, but happily for a puritan such as Prior, “The cryptoCatholic [sic] Godfrey Goodman ... was paradoxically on good terms with the puritan aldermen; the two sides united in their hostility to Laud (after 1633

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119 SP14/110/63.
120 SP14/110/45. Henry Yelverton was the attorney general and Thomas Coventrye was the solicitor general at the time.
121 There is a vacancy record for “Gerardus Prior, Vicar of Eldersfeilde” for 13 March 1628 with resignation listed as the reason for the vacancy, but there are also appointment records for Ricardus Cole as Preacher of Esfeild on 17 May 1626 and 12 April 1627, and the Bishops Transcripts for Worcester show Richard Cole as Elderfield’s Minister from 1626-1637. (WRO: B 716.093-BA.2648(ii) (Episcopal Register); LPL, Abbot's Register II (Register); William Good, “Eldersfield, Worcestershire: Parish Register Transcripts” at Ancestry.com, http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~wrag44/eldersfield/eldersfield.htm, fn. 21; G.B.R., B 9/2; Trans. B.G.A.S. xxiv. pp. 299, 302.)
archbishop of Canterbury).”

Prior was almost definitely in Sandhurst for a number of years, since the curate of St. Nicholas in Gloucester, John Allibond, in a satirical letter to Peter Heylyn, prebendary of Westminster and chaplain in ordinary to Charles I, mentions “Prior, of Sandhurst, an ordinary law-driver, and strongly puritanical” in 1640 in a list of “deprived, silenced, or puritanically affected men.” Apparently, Gerrard Prior continued to attract attention for his religious views in his new location.

In reflecting on the case of Gerard Prior, it is worth noting the timing of Prior’s controversial comments. All agreed that he initially spoke about dancing in June of 1618. In June of 1618, such words were newly problematic, since the Book of Sports had just been published on 24 May 1618. Although the May 24th declaration called for the bishop of the diocese, in this case John Thornborough, Bishop of Worcester, to publish the declaration in the parish churches and inform circuit judges and JPs, this would take some time. In June 1618, clergymen in small villages like Eldersfield might not yet have a copy. By June of 1619, however, when Jefferies made his examinations, the Book of Sports might still be controversial, but it was now firmly established. Conforming clergymen had to reconcile themselves to allowing dancing and other recreations on Sundays and holy days. Perhaps Prior had spoken rashly in June of 1618 about the rumoured permission for dancing, but by 1619 he seems to have reconciled himself to the king’s position on Sunday.

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122 Herbert, “Early Modern Gloucester (to 1640): Religious and cultural life.”
123 “Sandhurst” in The Victoria History of the County of Gloucester, William Page (ed.), (1907), vol. 2, p. 35; “CCCCIV: The Gloucestershire Elections of 1640” in Gloucestershire Notes and Queries, Rev. Beaver H. Blacker (ed.), (1881), vol. 1, p. 413. The letter, written 24 March 1639/40, is in the State Papers as Vol. 448, No. 79. The letter refers to upcoming elections for members of Parliament, where apparently there had been a bit of an upset and more competition than usual, due, according to Allibond, to the efforts of local puritanical clergymen. In addition to Prior, Allibond also mentions John Workman, “Workman, the younger, a man likewise suspended and deprived of a cure that he had.”
124 i.e., around St. Peter’s tide twelve months prior in late June.
sports and dancing. His 1619 petition and the various letters written by his supporters describe his repeated offers to approve dancing on the Sabbath from the pulpit.

At the same time, it seems safe to conclude that Gerard Prior was opposed to dancing on Sundays. He never denies that he had been opposed to Sunday dancing before King James issued the Book of Sports. Nor does he ever say that he has changed his mind on the matter. What Prior does make clear is that his desire to be a loyal and devoted servant to the king trumps his dislike of dancing on the Sabbath. The publication of the Book of Sports provided some of Prior’s disgruntled parishioners with the perfect opportunity to strike back at him for his attempts to reform their drinking habits and other sinful behaviours. However, the charges turned out to be inflated if not entirely fabricated, and eventually Prior was vindicated.

Nevertheless, this case illuminates several matters. It indicates how the Book of Sports made it highly problematic for clergymen to oppose Sunday dancing on moral, religious, or even practical grounds and provided fodder for parishioners trying to resist the reforming measures of England’s more puritanical clergy and community members.

Primarily, though, the case of Gerard Prior demonstrates how dancing could serve as a lightning rod for other tensions and divisions within a parish. If Gerard Prior had not antagonised so many of his parishioners, it is unlikely that they would have gone to such lengths to prosecute him for a few rash words spoken against dancing.

**John Workman, City Lecturer of Gloucester**

Like Gerard Prior, John Workman was a clergyman who publicly denounced dancing in his sermons and lectures. Workman’s antagonism towards dance served as a supporting example of his anti-authoritarian, non-conformist, puritan views and
exacerbated his censure by Archbishop William Laud. Unlike Prior, however, John
Workman was unapologetic when charged in the church court, and his punishment was
much harsher as a result.

According to J. N. Langston’s short biography of John Workman in the
Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society (1945), Workman
was born around 1590 in Gloucestershire. He matriculated at St. Alban’s Hall, Oxford 3
June 1608, received his B.A. 27 May 1611, and his M.A. 8 July 1614.125 Langston
supposes that John Workman was ordained priest in 1617; however, the register of the
Bishop of Oxford, John Bridges, includes a notice of John Workman’s ordination as
deacon at Dorchester’s parish church on 20 March 1614, and a notice of his ordination as a
priest at the same church on 9 September 1614—in other words almost immediately after
acquiring the M.A.126 Regardless, Workman began preaching in Gloucester in early 1619.
He was appointed 6 March 1619 by the Common Council of Gloucester to fill the public
lectureship that had been set up a few months prior.127 The lectureship paid the substantial
annual stipend of £20 and entailed preaching every Thursday or Friday morning at nine
o’clock at St. Michael’s Church and every Sunday afternoon alternating between St.
Nicholas’ and St. Michael’s.128 (See Figure 8.) Both St. Nicholas’ and St. Michael’s were

125 J. N. Langston, “John Workman, Puritan Lecturer,” in Transactions of the Bristol and
Gloucestershire Archaeological Society vol. 66 (1945), pp. 221-222.
126 Langston, “John Workman, Puritan Lecturer,” p. 222; OCRO: Oxf. Dioc. Papers c.264, 5,
Episcopal Register.
127 Langston, “John Workman, Puritan Lecturer,” p. 220. Money for a preacher had been donated as
early as 1615, but apparently it took a promising candidate such as Workman to motivate the
Council sufficiently to actually establish the position.
128 Langston, “John Workman, Puritan Lecturer,” p. 221. The article contradicts itself about whether
the weekday lecture was on Thursday or Friday morning.
large churches, serving wealthy parishes. Moreover, their lofty towers and prominent locations in the city centre, made them civic as well as spiritual landmarks.

Figure 8: Left: St. Michael’s Tower at Gloucester Cross, Gloucester. ©David Champion, 2011. Right: St. Nicholas’ Church on Westgate Street, Gloucester. ©Philip Halling.

Interestingly, in the sixteenth century, the parish of St. Michael’s was noteworthy for its “compatible worshipping community” and quick conformity, having “steered a steady course of responsible stewardship through the series of major religious alterations which


130 The St. Michael’s Tower photo is available at http://www.gloucestercivictrust.org.uk/gloucester-civic-trust/. Used with permission of the photographer who is also Director of the Gloucester Civic Trust. The St. Nicholas’ Church photo is available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:_geograph.org.uk_-_1432164.jpg. It is copyrighted by Philip Halling and licensed for reuse under a Creative Commons Licence.
characterised the middle of the sixteenth century.”^\textsuperscript{131}\ By the early seventeenth century, however, the parish had become a hotbed of reform.

Apparently, the Gloucester Common Council liked Workman’s reform-minded preaching. In 1622, they presented him to the incumbency of St. Nicholas’ Church, while allowing him to retain the city lectureship and its accompanying stipend.\textsuperscript{132} Langston comments that Workman’s appointment would have been uncontroversial, since the current Bishop of Gloucester was Miles Smith, “a stiff Calvinist and a great favourer of the Puritans.”^\textsuperscript{133} Smith was a noted scholar, who had worked as one of the Old Testament translators for James I’s English Bible.\textsuperscript{134} More importantly, he had an ongoing dispute with William Laud originating from when Laud was the Dean of Gloucester and Smith was the Bishop.\textsuperscript{135} If Smith was a supporter of Workman’s, it is not unlikely that Laud would have extended his antagonism to the like-minded lecturer. Bishop Smith’s successor, the aforementioned traditionalist Godfrey Goodman, was also less favourably disposed towards reform-minded preachers.\textsuperscript{136} Bishop Goodman soon found fault with Workman’s sermons and “took action against him,” leading to Workman’s suspension and removal from St. Nicholas’ in 1627.\textsuperscript{137}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{131} Litzenberger, The English Reformation and the Laity, p. 19.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Langston, “John Workman, Puritan Lecturer,” p. 222.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Langston, “John Workman, Puritan Lecturer,” p. 222.
\item \textsuperscript{135} Tiller, “Smith, Miles.” When King James instructed Laud to make repairs to Gloucester Cathedral in 1616, Laud “extended his remit to include liturgical reordering,” including moving the location of the communion table, all without consulting or informing Bishop Smith until after the fact.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Langston, “John Workman, Puritan Lecturer,” p. 223.
\end{itemize}
However, soon after, on 20 July 1627, the Gloucester Common Council resolved that John Workman, in consideration of his “painful teaching and exemplary living” and his eight years of satisfactory service, should remain the city’s lecturer in spite of his suspension, and in 1630, the Council confirmed his stipend for the next three years.\textsuperscript{138} However, in 1633, Bishop Goodman opened an investigation of Workman for “the scandalous matter of some of his sermons.”\textsuperscript{139} Workman admitted making these statements, but he failed to bring the bishop his sermon notes as requested, and eventually the bishop suspended him from preaching entirely. The council reacted vigorously, resolving to pay Workman his annual allowance regardless of “whether he preach or no,” but this bravado did not impress the new Archbishop, William Laud.\textsuperscript{140} Not only was Workman tried before the High Commission Court, censured as “a schismatical lecturer,” and deprived of his lectureship, but the council was taken to task, as well. The mayor and other council members had to appear before the House of Lords and the High Commission Court, and Gloucester’s representatives had to petition certain notables and pay various fines. The Council was also forced to reverse its resolution to support Workman financially.\textsuperscript{141}

However, the conflict was not entirely resolved even then, because when Workman, now unemployed, tried to open a small private school, Archbishop Laud “intervened and inhibited him,” as he also did when Workman tried to practice medicine instead.\textsuperscript{142} In his defence at his trial, Laud explained that his persistent “persecution” of Workman was the result of Workman’s refusal to leave Gloucester. Laud said that Workman had “made such
a faction in Gloucester that the Commission thought it not fit to continue him there, but he refused to leave the town where he had made his party.”

Workman’s last years are poorly documented. He fell ill at some point in the late 1630s, and on 13 December 1640, the Council gave him his old salary of £20, “in regard of his long weakness and sickness.” He died soon after, on 12 January 1641. His gravestone describes him as “that pious, worthy divine, Mr John Workman, once minister of this parish,” while his burial entry in the parish register identifies him as “Mr John Workman, minister, for sometyme preacher to ye Citye.”

None of John Workman’s lectures or sermons survives, but Workman’s opposition to dancing, especially women and men dancing together on Sundays, is confirmed by William Prynne in his account of the trial of Archbishop Laud, *Canterburies Doome* (1646). Prynne refers to Laud’s “tyrannicall sentence and proceedings” against John Workman and argues that Laud’s prosecution of Workman for the latter’s opposition to “lacivious mixt dancing, especially on the Lords day” was one of the many reprehensible actions committed by the Archbishop of Canterbury that warranted prosecution. Prynne acknowledges that Workman had used “some harsh expressions” against dancing in his sermon but says the preacher’s words should not have been controversial, since Workman was only quoting the sentiments of others, including “Bishop Babington in his exposition upon the seventh Commandement.” (See Chapter 3.) Other records confirm that Laud

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143 Langston, “John Workman, Puritan Lecturer,” p. 231.
144 Langston, “John Workman, Puritan Lecturer,” p. 231.
147 Prynne, *Canterburies doome*, p. 103. Gervase Babington was the Bishop of Worcester from 1597 till his death in 1610. (John S. Macauley, “Babington, Gervase (1549/50-1610),” in *Oxford
had prosecuted Workman for speaking against dancing on the Sabbath. According to depositions made before the High Commission Court during Laud’s trial, Workman had said in a public sermon that “how many paces a man made in dancing so many paces he made to hell.” 148 Since dancing, even mixed dancing of men and women together on Sundays, had been sanctioned by the Book of Sports in 1618, and the reissue in 1633 had further cemented the royal position, to speak against dancing was to invite official censure. Nevertheless, Prynne makes it clear in his account that the main charge against Laud is his “tyrannicall sentence and proceedings” against Workman for preaching against images in churches. 149 That the archbishop had also censured Workman for his “harsh expressions against lacivious mixt dancing, especially on the Lords day” and for the order in which he had prayed for various foreign potentates relative to the king were components of the charges against Laud, but “were no inducements to it.” 150 Why then do Laud’s accusers mention dancing at all?

The clerical perspectives discussed in Chapter 3 indicate that a number of puritans had something akin to a perverse fascination with dancing. They imagined its sinful wantonness in such vivid detail that it seems to have coloured their perception of any actual dancing that they might have encountered. Quite possibly Garrett Band of Bisley, the apparitor that presented the youth of Mathon for dancing, Gerard Prior, and most definitely John Workman, shared this perception and felt compelled to convince the foolish and foolhardy to turn back from the precipice of sin and damnation before it was too late.


149 Prynne, _Canterburies doome_, p. 103.
150 Prynne, _Canterburies doome_, p. 103.
As discussed above, Gerard Prior of Eldersfield, when accused of similar statements, had gone to great lengths to reconcile himself to his superiors. He wrote obsequious petitions, marshalled secular and ecclesiastical support, and although he denied having made any anti-dance statements in the first place, offered to recant them anyway from the pulpit if that would give “satisfaction.” It appears that his desire to conform and comply made a favourable impression. Archdeacon Swaddon wrote a strong letter of support, Archbishop Abbot found him innocent of his charges, and Bishop Thornborough, having had qualms about suspending him in the first place, agreed to reinstate him.

John Workman’s different response to the accusations likely influenced the different outcome of this case. Workman acknowledged making anti-dance statements, never complied with repeated requests for his sermon notes (saying that he had lost them), refused to leave Gloucester, and was never reconciled to either his bishop or to Archbishop Laud. He was never reinstated, and he never found another position. At his death, he was simply remembered as the man who had been at one time a minister and preacher in Gloucester.

Yet, while John Workman may have had a contentious relationship with his superiors, he was clearly beloved by many of the citizens of Gloucester, including the town’s leaders who sat in the Common Council. Workman also had supporters beyond Gloucestershire, such as the parliamentarian Sir Robert Harley and William Prynne, who sought justice in his name even after his death.151 Gerard Prior, on the other hand, may have had the support of area clergymen and his superiors, both secular and ecclesiastic, but it appears that he was never able to overcome the factionalism within his congregation.

Unlike John Workman, who remained in Gloucester until his death and whose widow the Gloucester Council agreed to support, Gerard Prior eventually resigned from his post in Eldersfield and took up a position in Gloucestershire. In Gloucestershire, Prior seems to have had a better relationship with his parishioners; he remained in this post until his death. 

In moving to a Gloucestershire parish, Prior put himself under the supervision of the same bishop who could not forgive Workman. Yet, there is no evidence that Prior was ever at odds with Bishop Thornborough, even though Prior and Workman likely held similar personal views on dancing. What this suggests is that what mattered most to many bishops was not whether a clergyman personally held dissenting views on topics like Sunday dancing, but whether he was willing to outwardly conform and comply with the requests of his superiors. Conversely, such obsequiousness might have made for smooth relations within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but it did not garner the respect of puritan or radical parishioners, nor did it put one on the short list of puritan heroes and martyrs.

Conclusion

The case studies in this chapter examine the diverse perspectives on dancing held by four clergymen in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. These men lived within a short distance of each other within roughly the same time frame; they may have even been acquainted. Yet, they held extremely different views about dancing, in general, and dancing on Sundays and holy days, in particular. Christopher Windle of Bisley was an avid supporter and defender of dancing; Edward Reese of Mathon a moderate, qualified supporter; Gerard Prior of Eldersfield disapproved of Sunday dancing but prioritised

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152 Langston, “John Workman, Puritan Lecturer,” p. 231.
conforming to royal and episcopal wishes; and John Workman refused to recant his sermons even when his stance cost him his job and put him at odds with the king.

These four cases indicate that both dancing practices and attitudes towards religious reform were very much decided by local dynamics. Even when national, royal declarations like the Book of Sports applied to dancing, local religious politics decided the extent to which the legislation was adopted, amended, or ignored. Likewise, the local context decided whether or not rule-breakers were prosecuted and punished. Clergymen could initiate and instigate, but they needed the support of their superiors and their parishioners to effectively implement or resist change. Finally, contention over dancing nearly always occurred as a result of, or at least alongside, other local controversies. All of these case studies can be considered perfect storms, with dance serving as a lightening rod or trigger.

Because parochial clergy were at the centre of local religious politics, their views on dancing had a substantial impact on the dancing practices of their parishes. This chapter has focused on the role played by clergymen in creating and intervening in local conflicts involving dance. Chapter 5 also examines parochial conflicts and tensions about dancing but with a different focal point: the beliefs and actions of the dancers themselves.
Chapter Five
Dancers as Political Actors on the Parochial Stage

There were many sources of conflict in early modern England, from tithes to tippling, and differences in religious belief and observance increased local tensions. Yet, there were likely many instances of dancing that occurred without objection or comment, and some parishes likely suppressed dancing without resistance. One needed both committed dancers and committed objectors to dancing for a conflict to arise that was serious enough to attract official attention and thus enter the historical record. Even then, as Chapter 4 demonstrates, dancing tended to be a component rather than the main focus of local controversies. (See Appendix, Table 1.) Even in records, such as prosecutions for dancing on Sunday, where dancing is the primary issue, pre-existing antagonisms or additional subjects of disagreement between the parties increased the likelihood of presentment. (See the Mathon case study in Chapter 4.) Finally, there was usually some particular incident that set off the “perfect storm.” In parishes where tensions ran high, it was not difficult to trigger a conflict. However, even relatively harmonious communities could be spurred to action by a sufficiently dramatic or shocking incident.

1 Brief references to dancing by the Lancashire gentleman Nicholas Assheton in his journal, payments to dancing instructors, and purchases of special dancing shoes and garments in the household accounts of elite families suggest that dancing was common, although elite dancers rarely appear in the court records that form the main source base for this study. See Nicholas Assheton, The journal of Nicholas Assheton, of Downham, ed. Francis Robert Raines (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1848), vol. 14; Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield, eds., Records of Early English Drama: Cumberland/ Westmorland/ Gloucestershire (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 135-136, 138, quoting Howard of Naworth Household Books, DDPD: Howard C706, Bk 1, fols. 10, 23; Bk 2, fol. 62; Bk 3, fol. 20v. Also see Ronald Hutton, The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); John Forrest, The History of Morris Dancing, 1458-1750 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
This chapter explores three case studies in which “perfect storm” conditions led to prosecution for dancing. The first of the studies considers how the many local conflicts in which John Wilmot of Tortworth, Gloucestershire, was embroiled both prompted him to dance and shaped his superior’s response. The second study looks at two different instances of controversial dancing in the churchyard of Dundry, Somerset. In Dundry, religious beliefs about dancing became entangled with legal battles between the rector and the parish over ownership and access to the churchyard. The final case study investigates a morris dance at Clee St. Margaret, Shropshire, in which the dancers used a communion cloth as a flag for their dance. This case shows how “perfect storm” conditions could occur in a generally peaceable community. The rapid rate of religious change in early modern England did not just create conflict between those with differing beliefs. It also caused genuine confusion and uncertainty, which, as the Clee St. Margaret morris dancers discovered, could lead to false assumptions, critical misunderstandings, and accidental profanation.

Considered together, these case studies show that dancing was a common and familiar part of parochial celebrations. They demonstrate how the context in which dancing occurred shaped the reception of the dance. These studies provide concrete details of ways in which dancers could change the meaning of a dance or its acceptability by altering its usual context. In the cases of John Wilmot and the Dundry churchyard dancers, the subversive alteration appears to have been intentional. In the case of the Clee St. Margaret morris dancers, however, it was likely accidental.
Studying Knavery: John Wilmot and the Cushion Dance

In Tortworth, Gloucestershire, in 1602, John Wilmot led the cushion dance at the celebrations following a wedding. John Wilmot was the parish rector, and he was already in trouble with the Bishop of Gloucester and the lord of Tortworth manor for a litany of transgressions. That the cushion dance was a kissing dance only made matters worse. The incident is inherently interesting to the dance historian because two depositions in the resulting consistory court case provide the earliest known choreographic description of the cushion dance. However, surviving records also allow for the reconstruction of the political context in which Wilmot’s dance occurred. Examining the dance in context makes it clear that Wilmot’s choice of the cushion dance was intentionally provocative.

Tortworth is a rural parish in south Gloucestershire. It did not have a main village in the sixteenth century, but the manor house was next to the parish church.² (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: St. Leonard’s Church in Tortworth, Gloucestershire.³ Bird’s Eye View of Tortworth Church and Vicinity.⁴

Although most of St. Leonard’s was dramatically altered in the nineteenth century, the current church retains the nave and the same foundation as the original church. Its moderate size suggests that Tortworth did not have a particularly large congregation in the early seventeenth century. It did, however, have a church house. While the Tortworth church house does not survive, it was likely similar to the well-preserved late fifteenth-century church house in Devon. (See Figure 2.)

**Figure 2:** Late fifteenth-century church house in South Tawton, Devon.

Church houses hosted a variety of parochial events, including weddings and church ales. They were usually located near if not next-door to the church. Having the church house and

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5 Plaster, “Tortworth.”
6 Although many parishes had church houses in the early modern period, there are very few remaining outside of Devon and the West Country. (Cowley, *The Church Houses*, p. 15.)
7 Image and information available at: http://www.thechurchhouse.org.uk.
the manor house adjacent to the parish church would have reinforced the parish church as
the social and political, as well as the spiritual, centre of a rural parish.

From 1568 to his death in 1607, Sir Thomas Throckmorton was the lord of the
manor of Tortworth and the patron of the rectory. He had the right to nominate the
incumbent, and it was he who selected John Wilmot for the position of parish rector in
1592. Sir Thomas was a prominent member of the Gloucestershire gentry. He was a
justice of the peace, twice sheriff, a member of parliament, and sat on the council of the
Marches in Wales. He also possessed “an overbearing and bellicose nature and exploited
his official positions in his personal feuds.” A contemporary described him as a
“powerful and plotinge gent.”

Some time before the 1602 cushion dance, Sir Thomas Throckmorton and John
Wilmot appear to have had a disagreement. The issue was likely Sir Thomas’ son, William.
Seven articles of objection against Wilmot compiled by Bishop of Gloucester Thomas
Ravis include the complaint that he had “persuaded Mr William Throckmorton then but
younge to be a gamester assuringe him that he should winne as much monie as he played
for if he would follow your advise.” The articles go on to describe a variety of
problematic behaviours, including public drunkenness, gambling, and attending plays.

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9 Jan Broadway, “Throckmorton family (per. c.1500-1682),” in Oxford Dictionary of National
http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/72341
10 An Abstract of the Original Presentations, Resignations &c. belonging to Rectories, Vicarages,
and Other Ecclesiastical Preferments in the Diocese of Gloucester now extant in the Registers
Office. To the Time of Bishop Benson’s Consecration, 19 Jan. 1734/5, GRO: GDR 1B, p. 44.
11 Broadway, “Throckmorton family.”
12 Broadway, “Throckmorton family,” quoting John Smyth of Nibley from J. Smyth, The
13 Articles Objected, GRO: B4/1/2642, fol. [1v]. The undated articles of objection would have been
written between 1604, when Thomas Ravis became bishop, and 1607, when Sir Thomas
Throckmorton died. A year later, William Throckmorton sold the manor at Tortworth. (Broadway,
“Throckmorton family.”)
There is little information about Wilmot prior to his arrival in Tortworth. A 1593 clergy list classifies John Wilmot as a “preacher & no graduate,” and he does not appear in the matriculation lists of either Cambridge or Oxford. Regardless, once in Tortworth, he led an active and colourful life. The aforementioned articles include the accusations that he “used much and most greavous swearinges,” that he was given to “excessive drinkinge and frequentinge off alehouses and tavernes,” and that he “played att tables in alehouses for monie and ale.” Article 2 includes a list of a half dozen towns in which Wilmot had “ben drunken in publique places.” (See Figure 3.)

![Diagram of map showing locations in which John Wilmot was reported to have been publicly drunk. Map courtesy of Christopher E. Wilmer, 2011.](image)

**Figure 3:** Locations in which John Wilmot was reported to have been publically drunk. Map courtesy of Christopher E. Wilmer, 2011.

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14 LPL, CM XII/8 (Clergy list). Confusingly, in a 1619 clergy list he is recorded as having an MA. Perhaps Wilmot simply claimed the status. (GRO: GDR 115.)

15 Articles Objected, GRO: B4/1/2642, fol. [1]. Tables is similar to backgammon.
Wilmot’s drunken antics extended well beyond the occasional night on the town. In a particularly dramatic incident that occurred at a play performance in Gloucester, “you throughge immoderate drinkinge had so far forgott your self that you offred to present your self uppon the stage and would have acted a part amongst the players iff you had not ben dissuaded and detayned by some that stoode by.” Some might have thought it inappropriate for a rector to attend a play at all, but even the most permissive bishop could hardly condone an inebriate rector trying to climb onto the stage in the middle of the play. Wilmot also claimed to have studied magical charms that would help one win money at cards, dice, and tables, as well as win the hearts of women.

In addition, the articles note that John Wilmot had failed to amend his behaviour and satisfy his congregation as requested. Wilmot had been told to give a sermon at Tortworth on 10 April 1603 condemning dancing, play watching, playing tables and dice, and frequenting taverns. However, not only did he not give the sermon as instructed, he actually gave a sermon that said the very opposite and attacked his critics from the pulpit.

The reason for the content of the requested sermon is also given in the articles. John Wilmot had danced the cushion dance at a marriage celebration:

...being in an alehouse in the parish of Tortworth aforesaid where happened to be a mariage, in the presence of all the people then mett together you affirmed that seeinge [as] the Lord Bishop of Gloucester had then suspende you from preachinge you would studie your ould knaveries againe. and then in the said alehouse you tooke a quishon in your hand and dauncinge the quishon daunce before all the people (as they terme it) exposed your self to publique dirision.

16 Articles Objected, GRO: B4/1/2642, fol. [1r].
17 Articles Objected, GRO: B4/1/2642, fol. [1v].
18 Articles Objected, GRO: B4/1/2642, fol. [1r].
The bishop asserts that by dancing the cushion dance “before all the people,” Wilmot had exposed himself to “publique dirision.” Wilmot’s dancing not only reflects poorly on his dignity and discretion, but his actions, “without annie cause or regard of your ... callinge” also undermine ecclesiastical authority. Unless John Wilmot regularly danced the cushion dance at weddings in Tortworth, this accusation refers to an incident that occurred in 1602, before Thomas Ravis became the bishop of Gloucester.

The Gloucester Diocese Consistory Court Deposition Books contain two witness statements that describe John Wilmot dancing the cushion dance in 1602. William Lawrence, a thirty-two-year-old husbandman who had lived in Tortworth for twelve years, reported that:

...upon the sunday before St. Thomas day last past at a wedding and in the Church howse of Tortworth after Candellighting this deponent did see mr wylmott articulate amongst divers others of his parishioners dance and lay a Cushion on the ground and kneele downe uppon it and kysse a woman that then daunced with him, as all the rest that then daunced with him (being v. or vj. or more) also did, and ymedyatly after, this deponent did heare the said mr wylmott say thus in effecte viz. Bycause my Lord Byshopp of Gloucester will not gev lea ve to preach, I will studdy noe more on my booke and noe I will studdy knavery.

Lawrence provides a substantial amount of detail about both the dance and its context in this brief description. The incident occurred on a Sunday evening; it was held in the Tortworth church house; and the dancing was part of the celebrations for a wedding. Giles Daunt, a gentleman of forty-six from the nearby parish of Ozleworth, confirms this

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19 Articles Objected, GRO: B4/1/2642, fol. [1r].
20 Articles Objected, GRO: B4/1/2642, fol. [1v].
21 The main differences are that the dance is described as taking place in an alehouse rather than the church house, and Wilmot is described as taking the cushion in his hand rather than on his shoulder. However, the reference to Wilmot’s declaration that since the Bishop of Gloucester had suspended him, he would “study” his old bad habits or “knaveries” again suggests that this is just another version of the 1602 cushion dance described by William Lawrence and Giles Daunt.
description and adds a few additional details in his deposition: The festivities started around 7 pm or 8 pm, and there was a mix of people from Tortworth and from outside the parish present.23

The depositions provide choreographic details about the cushion dance, as well. Daunt clarifies that Wilmot did not just perform the dance, but led it. Lawrence specifies that five or six other men joined Wilmot in the dance. Daunt was one of those dancers. He explains that the person leading the dance carried a cushion on his shoulder, then “kneed downe as the order of the dawnce is,” and kissed his partner—in Wilmot’s case, “one goodwife Hickes.”24 Then each of the other dancers did the same, presumably kneeling on the same cushion and kissing the same woman, although this is not entirely clear from the descriptions. It is also unclear as to what happened next. One possibility is that one of the other dancers now led the dance, picking a new woman to kiss. Another option is that the woman who was kissed got the cushion, and joined by several women, led the next section of the dance, this time selecting a man to kiss. Finally, both men report Wilmot’s reason for dancing as openly anti-authoritarian, “nowe the Bishop hath suspended me from preacheinge I will practise and studdye all kna

23 GRO: GDR 89, fol. [106v] (13 October), quoted in Douglas and Greenfield, REED: Gloucestershire, p. 343. Daunt was a man of some means, as evidenced by two of his servants appearing on the muster list for the parishes of Nuton Bagpath and Ozleworth. (John Smyth, comp., Men & Armour for Gloucestershire in 1608 (Gloucester: A. Sutton, 1980), p. 171.)

24 GRO: GDR 89, fol. [106v] (13 October), quoted in Douglas and Greenfield, REED: Gloucestershire, p. 343. This could be Joan, wife of the fuller William Hickes of Avening, who leased a Throckmorton property, with Wilmot as a witness. (GRO: D2957/311/1.)

25 GRO: GDR 89, fol. [106v] (13 October), quoted in Douglas and Greenfield, REED: Gloucestershire, p. 343. There are four other depositions for this court case, Wayt and Howell v. Wylmott, but they do not refer to Mr. Wilmot’s dancing. The deponents are a tucker, two fullers, and an elderly yeoman. (Smyth, Men & Armour, p. 189.) We also know a little about those who brought the case against Wilmot. William Howell was a middle-aged weaver with military experience. (Smyth, Men & Armour, p. 189.) There was a John Wayt who was Wilmot’s opponent in a tithe contestation in 1601-1602. (GRO: B4/3/1468.)
There was some precedent for men and women alternating leading in this kind of social mixer. (See Chapter 2.) In the French dancing manual *Orchésographie* of 1589 and in Italian dancing manuals by Cesare Negri and Fabritio Caroso in the early 1600s, in dances such as “Branle de la Torche” and “Ballo del Fiore,” a man starts with a torch or flower, selects a woman with whom to dance, they dance briefly, he hands her the torch or flower, she chooses a new partner, and the dance repeats. Similarly, in the seventh edition of John Playford’s *The Dancing Master* (1686) there are directions for “Joan Sanderson, or The Cushion Dance,” which is described as “A Round Dance.” In this version, which includes a song, the men and women alternate leading the dance and selecting whom to kiss. The Tortworth record makes no mention of women leading the dance and choosing men to kiss, so that may not be part of this version of the dance.

Another issue that is not explicitly addressed in the Tortworth description is the role of the cushion. Is it only for the man or for both the man and the woman to kneel upon? Who kneels on the cushion affects what gets kissed, which in turn influences how intimate or sexually explicit the dance is as a whole. If both the man and woman kneel on the cushion together and kiss, it is likely that they would kiss each other on the lips, cheek,

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27 John Playford, “Joan Sanderson, or The Cushion-Dance, a Round Dance” in *The Dancing-Master, or, Directions for Dancing Country Dances with the Tunes to each Dance for the Treble-Violin* (London, 1686), p. 208. Christopher Marsh sees a “striking resemblance” between the cushion dance by John Wilmot in 1602 and the choreography for “Joan Sanderson, or The Cushion-Dance” in *The Dancing Master* (1686). (Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 385.) However, although both are kissing dances that use a cushion as a prop, there are a number of differences, including the ratio of men to women, use of a chair, and specifying a song to accompany the dance. More importantly, dance styles had shifted considerably during the intervening decades, from Italian-influenced late Renaissance to French-influenced Baroque, so even if the figures stayed the same, the steps and styling would have changed noticeably.
face, etc. If the woman was seated when approached in the dance and remained seated, however, then only the man would kneel on the cushion. In such a case, the man might only kiss the woman’s hand, since it would be awkward to reach anything else while kneeling, and if he were not kneeling he would not need the titular cushion. The Tortworth depositions can be read either way, although the fact that Wilmot was prosecuted for leading the cushion dance suggests that the more presumably scandalous option of kissing on the lips was what occurred in Tortworth. Nevertheless, since none of the other dancers who also kissed Mrs. Hickes were prosecuted, perhaps the kissing was not particularly scandalous after all. Adding to the confusion, the 1686 Playford version of the cushion dance, for example, mentions a chair, while the 1698 version does not.28

Moreover, there is an emblem in a Dutch emblem book by Johannis de Brunes, first published in 1624, that may very well depict a cushion dance. (See Figure 4.) In this image, a gentleman holding what is most likely a cushion on his back or shoulder, bows in front of a seated lady. He doffs his hat with his other hand, clarifying that he is indeed bowing and not a hunchback. (All of the other men in the picture are wearing their hats.) The accompanying text gives a short history of kissing and compares good and depraved types, arguing that one can “savor this temporary life” without necessarily losing oneself to “sinful wickedness.” The discussion of kissing in the explanation of the emblem adds further support for the contention that the image is of the cushion dance, a kissing dance.29

(See Appendix, Figure 1.)

29 I am indebted to Bert Roest for his translation of the emblem text, which is provided in the Appendix.
Figure 4: Emblem IV. Johannis de Brunes, Emblemata (Amsterdam, 1624).

The other men and women in the room, also seated, either watch this encounter or converse. They could be country gentry, wealthy merchants, or Dutch burghers—the picture depicts a variety of courtly clothing styles from the early seventeenth century. Many of these characteristics match the Tortworth cushion dance description, but many questions remain including what were the steps and footwork of the dance, its length, amount of improvisation, and musical accompaniment. Later sources can provide some answers, including musical scores, but not without raising new questions.³⁰

While the choreographic details only allow for a highly speculative reconstruction of the cushion dance, we can glean a great deal about the context of the dance from the Tortworth accounts. Participants included both men and women from a range of social ranks. Some resided in Tortworth, while others lived in nearby parishes. The dancing occurred as part of the festivities accompanying a wedding. The wedding was likely held earlier in the day at service time, but the timing of the cushion dance is definite. Giles Daunt arrived at the party around 7 or 8 o’clock in the evening, and the cushion dance occurred shortly thereafter. Both Lawrence and Daunt note that the dance occurred on the Sunday before St. Thomas’s Day. The location is also definite. The dance took place inside, in the church house. Since there was no mention of anyone going to fetch one, the church house apparently contained among its furnishings an appropriate cushion and all other props needed for the dance.

The Bishop of Gloucester in 1602 was Godfrey Goldsborough. A middle-of-the-road clergymen associated with John Whitgift, Bishop Goldsborough was known as a disciplinarian for his attempts to reform the Glouchestershire clergy. His attempts to discipline John Wilmot, however, do not appear to have been particularly effective. When Thomas Ravis became bishop in 1604, he inherited the problem of John Wilmot and the conflict between Wilmot and Sir Thomas Throockmorton. The aforementioned articles of

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31 While the depositions were taken on 13 October 1602, which St. Thomas’s day was celebrated in Tortworth remains ambiguous. REED editors Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield suggest that the depositions refer to the feast day of St. Thomas the Apostle on 21 December. Douglas and Greenfield, REED: Gloucestershire, p. 539.

32 Presumably the church house had cushions since the depositions imply that the leading of the cushion dance was a spontaneous rather than a premeditated gesture.

objection state that Bishop Ravis wrote them “at the promotion of Thomas Throckmorton.”

Nevertheless, eventually John Wilmot was restored to preaching and even seems to have settled down. According to the Tortworth parish register, Wilmot was already a married man and the father of two or three children (all legitimate) by the time of the cushion dance incident, which might have made his kissing Goodwife Hickes during the cushion dance more reprehensible. Yet his relationship with his wife, Joan, seems to have been a positive one, since he named her as his sole executrix in his will.

He also seems to have been reconciled to his supervising bishops despite his misbehaviour. At his death in 1619, the burial entry in the parish register names him as the parish rector, and his successor was nominated due to his death according to the book of presentations for the diocese, so Wilmot was not demoted or forced to resign from his post at Tortworth. Both his and his wife’s wills are extant and indicate that by the time Wilmot passed away, he was well off enough to leave several beds, canopies and linens, money, and books to his heirs. Moreover, it is likely that the William Wilmotte who matriculated at Christ College Oxford in 1617 at age nineteen and was listed as the son of a clergyman from Gloucestershire was the same son William to whom John Wilmot left all of his books in his will dated just two years later. In other words, dancing in public might be considered inappropriate for a clergyman, but dancing, drunkenness, and the other

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34 Articles Objected, GRO: B4/1/2642, fol. [1].
35 Tortworth Parish Register, GRO: C.M.B. 1582-1619.
36 John Wilmot’s Will, GRO: Wills 1629/150.
objectionable activities in which Wilmot engaged were not so abhorrent as to prevent his restoration once he, presumably, had given up his riotous ways.

The appropriateness of engaging in recreations like dancing on Sundays and holidays was a contested and controversial subject in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England, and disagreements between godly reformers and traditionalists generated hundreds of church court prosecutions. The Tortworth cushion dance took place on a Sunday in the church house, at a religiously sanctioned life cycle celebration, and was led by the parish rector. Based solely on the depositions, one might assume that the reason John Wilmot ended up in court was due to underlying religious conflicts over the proper manner of celebrating the Sabbath. As the Dundry cases will explore, the location of dancing could trigger an adverse reaction from more reform-minded parishioners.

Yet, the accusations made by Bishop Ravis in the articles of objections suggest a different interpretation. While Sunday dancing would have been problematic on principle for a handful of parishioners, what Wilmot’s congregation and superiors primarily objected to was his lack of judgement. He either could not judge what behaviours were appropriate for a clergyman at a wedding reception or he sought to mock and subvert them. The cushion dance was not a forbidden dance. The deponent Giles Daunt did not object to dancing it when he was invited to join the dance. In fact, it must have been an established piece of the local dance repertoire, otherwise Wilmot would not have been able to call for a cushion dance and have five or six other men spontaneously join in. Moreover, kissing dances might have been mildly titillating, but the amount of sexual contact was regulated by the watchful, multi-generational audience and the structure of the dance itself. The
transgression was that Wilmot, the parish rector, led the cushion dance “before all the people,” and in so doing opened himself up to “publique dirision.”

Clergymen were held to stricter behavioural standards than their parishioners. Kissing parishioners other than one’s wife showed a serious lack of judgement and respect for propriety ... and authority. All three cushion dance descriptions (Lawrence and Daunt’s depositions and Article 3 of the objections) contain John Wilmot’s avowal to “study knavery” to protest his suspension from preaching. This shocking declaration obviously made an impression on all who heard it, and the Bishops of Gloucester could hardly sit by when their authority was so openly insulted. Moreover, it was not uncommon for dancing that was permissible for lay folk to be considered inappropriate for a clergyman. In 1610, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield Richard Neile’s visitation articles included dancing in a list of “unseemely” activities that showed a parson, vicar, or curate to be of “evill example of life.”

It appears that Wilmot deliberately chose to dance what he, too, considered an inappropriate dance for the situation as a protest against the bishop and the parishioners who had complained about his various disorderly actions. The cushion dance may have had sexual overtones, but it was John Wilmot’s openly disruptive and aggressive attitude that

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40 Articles Objected, GRO: B4/1/2642, fol. [1r]. Bishop Ravis’ outrage about the public nature of Wilmot’s dancing parallels Castiglione’s distinction between dances which are acceptable to perform in public and those that were only permitted in private. (Baldassare Castiglione, The Courtier of Count Baldassarre Castilio translated by Sir Thomas Hoby (Il Libro del Cortegiano, 1528; London: 1561), p. 97.) This distinction is discussed further in Chapter 2.

roused his bishop and his parishioners' ire. This study confirms that regardless of whether kissing dances were as wanton as anti-dance writers claimed, certain contexts could make an otherwise innocuous dance inappropriate. Finally, this case demonstrates how both John Willmot, by leading the cushion dance as a protest against suspension from preaching, and Sir Thomas Throckmorton, by subsequently promoting accusations against and prosecution of Wilmot for dancing, repurposed a festive pastime to forward their personal agendas.

The Churchyard Controversies at Dundry, Somerset

Two generations of dancers in a Somerset village also faced prosecution in the church courts as a consequence of using dance as a form of protest. However, whereas in Tortworth, Gloucestershire, it was the official position of the dancer, a clergyman, that made participation in a dance unacceptable, in Dundry, Somerset, it was the location of the dancing that was controversial.

In the summer of 1621, three men were presented for playing sports and dancing in the Dundry churchyard on Sundays. (See Figure 5.) Two other men, musicians, were each presented for “plaing uppon his instrument to those that usuallie daunce in the churchyard theare.”

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We only know a little bit about the defendants. One of the dancers, Edward Ward or Wade, is described as a tailor, but the professions of John Brocke and Arthur Payton are not given. Richard Hulvord and Richard Adelie are cited for providing music for the dancers, but it is not clear whether they were professional musicians or amateurs. Nor do we know what instruments they played, although fiddles, drums, or pipe and tabor are most likely. (See Chapter 1.) They were all residents of Dundry, a small village overlooking Bristol. Dundry was a dependent chapel of Chew Magna parish. (See Figure 6.)

That only three dancers, all men, were presented raises a few questions. What were they dancing? Although there are a handful of choreographies for three dancers in the dance manuals from this period, the vast majority of choreographies are for one or more male-female couples. However, it was not uncommon for men to take turns showing off their jumps, kicks, and turns, each trying to “out dance” the other in informal contests.

Figure 5: St. Michael’s Church at Dundry. ©David Orlović, 2004. Used with permission.

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44 For example, “branle de le hay” can be danced with three dancers of any gender. (Arbeau, *Orchesography*, pp. 169-171.) Also see Table 1 in Chapter 2.
dance contest of this type might only have three dancers, even if there were many more parishioners watching and commenting on the proceedings. It is also possible that there were many people dancing, but for unknown reasons they were not prosecuted.

Figure 6: Map of Somerset with Dundry and Chew Magna. Map courtesy of Christopher E. Wilmer, 2011.

The case was *ex officio*, prosecuted by the bishop or “lord’s office” (as opposed to an “instance” or “ex parte” case between individuals). However, William King, one of the two Dundry churchwardens, was probably behind the presentments. Not only was presenting transgressors part of the churchwarden’s job, but King was also apparently

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45 See Chapters 1 and 2 for an explanation and examples of all-male dance competitions. There are three contestants in the galliard dance-off in *The Old Law*, discussed in Chapter 2.
embroiled in an ongoing conflict with at least one of the defendants. Prior to presenting them for dancing in June, the churchwarden had asked John Brocke and his companions to leave off playing “of fives” and cudgels in the churchyard on St. Mark’s Day (April 25). In response to this request, John Brocke had retorted that the churchwarden “will not suffer us but the whiles you cutt youre neighbors throates.” This seems like a rather disproportionately virulent response to being asked to stop playing a game. The key to the mystery likely lies in the detail that John Brocke was chastised not by both churchwardens but by only one. The other churchwarden at Dundry that year, it turns out, was William Brocke, John Brocke’s father. This suggests that the complaints against John Brocke and his friends may have been part of a conflict between the two Dundry churchwardens.

Churchwardens served as intermediaries between the congregation and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Two were appointed annually and disagreements between them could inspire or reflect divisions within the parish at large. In response to visitation articles, churchwardens were responsible for presenting those parishioners who engaged in illicit recreations, including dancing. However, this was difficult to do because the distinctions between lawful and unlawful dancing were inconsistent and contested. Throughout the period, the acceptability of dancing in the churchyard was ambiguous, and prior to 1618, the lawfulness of dancing on Sundays and holy days outside of service times was similarly controversial. Further complicating matters was the fact that churchwardens were responsible for organizing most of the large-scale dance events at the parochial level, hiring

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46 Stokes, *REED: Somerset*, vol. 1, pp. 104-105, quoting SRO: D/D/Cd 81, fols. 176-7v. These presentments, which are found in the Ex Officio Act Book 1621-1622, record evidence from the 2 October 1621 proceedings, and there are other records regarding this case in the 1620 act book.
49 See the Introduction for discussion of churchwarden selection and the process of presentment.
50 See the discussion of the Book of Sports in the Introduction.
morris dancers to perform at Whitsun festivities, and arranging for musicians to accompany social dancing at church ales. (See Chapter 1.) Thus, churchwardens might be charged with presenting those who danced at events they had organized or approved.

In addition, churchwardens had to balance the requirements of their office with pressure from their neighbours.51 On the one hand, Sunday dancers did not appreciate being presented to the church courts for what they considered to be a minor transgression. On the other hand, puritan-leaning parishioners might themselves present churchwardens who turned a blind eye to Sunday dancing; they could not sit by while parochial officers permitted the profanation of the Sabbath. (See Chapter 3.) Disagreements between the two churchwardens or between the parochial incumbent and the churchwardens over what constituted unlawful dancing could cause or exacerbate conflicts in the parish. Both of these situations can be found in Dundry.

The precise details of the conflict between the Brockes and the Kings remain ambiguous. It is not clear to what John Brocke refers when he says to King, “you will not suffer us but the whiles you cutt youre neighbors throates,” but he seems to be accusing King of hypocrisy.52 Brocke expresses outrage that King would complain about young men engaging in comparatively innocuous recreations in the churchyard when King is involved in at least metaphorically cutting his neighbours’ throats.53 There is also some uncertainty about what is cause and what is effect. King obviously disagrees with the younger Brocke about the proper use of the churchyard, but that might also be one of the sources of tension between the two churchwardens.

53 “Throat-cutting” presumably refers to some sort of uncharitable behaviour towards one’s neighbours such as seeking legal action against their persons or property.
One of the most perplexing mysteries of this case is why it exists at all. Provided that all the men had attended morning and evening prayers that day, and there is nothing to suggest that they did not, then their activities should have been covered by the Book of Sports, the royal declaration in 1618 that gave official sanction to recreations on Sundays as long as they occurred after Evening Prayer. (See Introduction.) The surviving records do not make clear what transgression the men were actually accused of committing, but since John Brocke was initially ordered to do penance, and Arthur Payton and Edward Ward were called back to the court for another hearing, the bishop’s court obviously considered them possibly guilty of something. Nevertheless, in the end the young men were discharged “without anie charg unto them” and “paid noe fees for the said busines.” This suggests that unlike most church court prosecutions for dancing, the problem was not the time but the location. Visitation articles suggest that many ecclesiastical authorities considered the churchyard an exclusively sacred space. They asked about dancing in the church and churchyard and required that dancers in these spaces be presented at the episcopal visitation. (See Chapter 1.) Nevertheless, the churchyard was a long-established site for recreations in many parishes. This lack of consensus on acceptable uses of the churchyard could become a source of parochial conflict. Indeed, fifteen years later there was another prosecution for dancing in the churchyard at Dundry where the location of the event was clearly at the heart of dissension within the parish.

On May Day, 1 May 1634, Simon Cotton, the curate of Dundry chapel, who lived near the church, noticed that Arthur Payton, William Weeke, William Horte, and “others of

54 Stokes, _REED: Somerset_, vol. 1, pp. 100, 105, quoting SRO: D/D/Ca 222, fol. 9 and D/D/Cd 81, fol. 177v.
55 Interestingly, there are no specific inquiries about dancing in visitation articles for the Diocese of Bath and Wells. They ask about wakes, but they do not ask directly about dancing.
the Inhabitants of Dundrie aforesaid of the younger sorte” were putting up a maypole in the Dundry churchyard. 56 He hurried out to the men and “thincking itt not see[mly] to have a maypole soe neere placed unto the church,” asked them to put up it someplace else.57 The young man digging the hole for the maypole halted, but then Arthur Payton “came & tooke upp the toole & began to [proc]eede in digging.”58 At the same time, Payton said to the curate “in scoffinge manner” that “the vicar did sue for trees” in the churchyard and now they would give him one more.59 Payton “went on in digging” and “would not desist” and the maypole was raised in the churchyard. Afterwards, “in the said churchyard & neere the said Maypole” Payton and Weeke “leaped, daunced, and wantonlie behaved themselves.”60

The following year the maypole revellers found themselves in court. In one of the several depositions from parish elders, Thomas Loscomb, a sixty-five-year-old husbandman from Chew Magna, explained that the Dundry churchyard was divided into two parts, both enclosed by walls. There was an inner yard right next to the church and an outer yard, which was also known as the church hay.61 The young men had put up the maypole in the outer churchyard, which had long been used for secular uses including sports, fairs, and dancing. Loscomb deposed that he had “heeretofore knowne daunceing in

the north parte of the said Churchyard without the Inner & within the outer wall there” and other games were played there, as well. 62 It is possible that the northern part of the churchyard, which is used as a graveyard in more recent times, was the original church hay. 63 (See Figure 7.)

![Figure 7: Bird’s Eye View of Dundry Church and Churchyard. The church and tower are at the bottom left. The northern churchyard are at the centre and top. Google Maps screen clipping, 2011.](image)

There is currently a low wall separating the graveyard from the southern churchyard nearest the church itself, but it is not clear whether this wall is in the same place as that described by Thomas Loscomb. (See Figure 8.)

63 If so, Cotton may have exaggerated how close the maypole was to the tower, or it might have been at the very edge of the hay by the church.
That the outer churchyard or hay had traditionally been used for sports and recreations is confirmed by William Brocke, a sixty-four-year-old husbandman and former churchwarden of Dundry. William Brocke was also the father of John Brocke, one of the dancers from the 1621 case. The elder Brocke asserts, “since his tyme of remembrance he hath seene & observed severall May poles to be sett upp & placed in the said plott of grownd and alsoe in the same grownd dawncing, kissing bulbayting, Coyting bowling, shooting att Butts Cudgell playing & heads broken theare, and other sportes and recreations used had & donne.” Indeed, Brocke himself “in his youthe & sinth hath severall tymes used & byn an actor in some of the recreations or sportes aforementioned,” reiterating that such pastimes “hath byn from tyme to tyme commonlie knowne in dundrie & other laces &

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In other words, not only was there a precedent for setting up maypoles and having dancing and sports in the church hay at Dundry, but this was also the common practice of the nearby parishes. The annual fair on St. Giles’ Day also took place in the church hay.

Furthermore, Brocke states that until Mr. Fabian became the vicar at Chew Magna, these activities had taken place “without contradiction or denyall.” He acknowledges the 1621 case against dancing in the church hay but stresses that his son and the other young men were eventually exonerated and “paid noe fees for the said business.” It was not dancing in the outer churchyard that broke with tradition, but Vicar Fabian and Curate Cotton’s disapproval of it. However, the acceptability of sports in the churchyard was only one aspect of this case. Another component was the ownership of the churchyard.

John Fabian became the vicar of Chew Magna in 1628 and appointed Simon Cotton as the curate at Dundry. One of Fabian’s enterprises was to improve the finances of his post, and he pursued this goal by claiming that both the inner and the outer churchyards at Dundry belonged to the vicar at Chew Magna. Specifically, Fabian claimed the wood from the trees in the outer churchyard as belonging to the vicar, not to the parish at large, and in 1632, Fabian sued William King, John Brocke, John Wade, and Edward Wade for pruning trees in the outer churchyard and keeping the timber. In 1633, the High Commission Court ruled in Fabian’s favour, and the men were fined the sizeable penalty of £10 each.

69 Stokes, REED: Somerset, vol. 2, p. 900 n 101-102. Fabian was appointed by William Laud, then Bishop of Bath and Wells.
editor James Stokes speculates that the reissue of the Book of Sports in 1633 “seems to have given fresh heart to the maypolers,” and we again find young men dancing in the church hay in 1634. Apparently the 1635 court case in response dragged on for several years, since in 1636, in response to a petition from Fabian, William Laud, now Archbishop of Canterbury, recommended a quick resolution to the 1636 case. It was decided in Fabian’s favour.

However, the repercussions of the case continued. The court expenses and other costs charged to the three young 1634 dancers were prohibitive and not been fully paid by 1640 when their fellow parishioners petitioned the House of Lords on their behalf.71 In addition, when in 1643 Vicar Fabian died, ownership of the church hay and its trees remained with the parish incumbent.72

The maypole controversy in Dundry was not just about religious observance. It was also a result of antagonism towards the vicar caused by his claims on and appropriation of the trees and hay in the outer churchyard. Interestingly, most of the men sued by Fabian in 1632 are familiar from the 1621 dance case. John Brocke and Edward Wade (Ward) are most likely two of the three 1621 dancers, and William King is the churchwarden who chastised them for dancing in the churchyard. Arthur Payton, one of the 1634 maypole dancers, was either the third dancer from the 1621 case or a near relation. By the 1630s, however, Brocke and King were on the same side of the debate about the proper use of the church hay. King might not have approved of dancing in the churchyard, but he apparently preferred it to the vicar’s usurpation of ownership of the trees and church hay.

As a result of Fabian’s suit for the church hay, resentment against the vicar of Chew Magna was widespread in the parish. Indeed, Arthur Payton makes it very clear that setting up the maypole at Dundry was a direct and intentional protest against the ruling in Fabian’s favour. When the curate’s requests that they put the maypole elsewhere, Payton responds by saying “in scoffinge manner” that “the vicar did sue for trees” in the churchyard and now they would give him one more. Through depositions in their defence, the maypolers asserted that the churchyard ought to retain its traditional role as a site for festivity and recreations. At the same time, they implied that a maypole, now just “one more” tree, belonged in the church hay, just like the trees claimed by the vicar.

The reissue of the Book of Sports in 1633 had confirmed the acceptability of dancing and festive revelry. However, the royal declaration did not address the related issue of lawful spaces for dancing and other recreations. In the Dundry case, we see how the sanctity of the churchyard was just as contested in 1634 as in 1621. Dancing in the churchyard hay was doubly problematic. Not only was it the area being claimed by the vicar and curate as exclusively for the church’s, i.e., their use, but they were also claiming it as a sacred space and thus off limits for recreations. That the defendants saw this as a double usurpation is suggested by the depositions in their support. William Brocke, for example, emphasised the long tradition of using the outer churchyard for sports and recreations. He also stated that no one was buried in this part of the churchyard, only in the inner courtyard and in the chapel itself. This provided additional support for why the church hay should not be considered hallowed ground.

Chapter 5: Dancers as Political Actors on the Parochial Stage

David Underdown sees the older men’s depositions as largely ineffectual, because they do not prove a continuous tradition of maypoles in the church hay, although he does note the ongoing hosting of the St. Giles’ Day fair.\(^75\) The fair, Brocke states, had been held annually in the churchyard since “tyme surpassing the memorie of man,” until Fabian objected\(^76\). Moreover, even if the church hay had not been used regularly for maypoles and dancing, it had definitely been the location of secular recreations “from tyme to tyme” for as long as anyone could remember.\(^77\) This meant that that the church hay had always been accessible to everyone, and it had not previously been considered an exclusively sacred space. The depositions of the older men, in this respect, effectively countered the vicar and curate’s claims. The defendants called on tradition by having parish elders—the local authorities on parochial traditions—defend their dancing.

However, it was not enough. As Margaret Stieg discusses in *Laud’s Laboratory* (1982), Archbishop Laud intervened personally on Fabian’s behalf, asking William Piers, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, to look into matters. Bishop Piers confirmed a much earlier bishop’s ruling that the Dundry church hay belonged to the vicar of Chew Magna.\(^78\) We know that Archbishop Laud was not opposed to dancing, because he had been instrumental in pushing Charles I to reissue the Book of Sports shortly beforehand, in 1633. (See Introduction.) However, when the desires of dancers conflicted with the attempts of clergymen to accrue greater financial support for their posts, Archbishop Laud sided with

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the pecuniary interests of the clergy. While the 1621 churchyard dancers escaped repercussions, the 1634 maypole dancers were not so lucky.

**The Shropshire Communion Cloth Incident**

Whereas the most controversial aspect of the dancing at Dundry, Somerset, was its location, the issue that brought the morris dancers of Clee St. Margaret and Abdon, Shropshire, to the attention of the church court was their use of a ritual object in their dances. In May of 1619, Nicholas Millichap of Clee St. Margaret in Shropshire “borrowed” the communion cloth from nearby Abdon church, and on two consecutive days used it as the flag in a Whitsun morris dance. Not everyone appreciated this innovation, however, and later that year, Nicholas Millichap and the rest of the morris dancers found themselves in the consistory church court, accused of profanation. This seems like such an outrageously sacrilegious act that it is difficult to comprehend how the morris dancers could have even conceived of such a plan, let alone have followed it through. That the morris dancers did follow through, dancing with the communion cloth as their flag during the festivities on Whit Monday and Whit Tuesday, calls into question modern-day preconceptions, and possibly misconceptions, about dance, ritual objects, and festive traditions in early modern England. In addition, the timing of the communion cloth incident, in 1619, makes it a good case study for considering how James I’s nationwide publication of the Book of Sports in 1618 may have created confusion about the importance and acceptability of festive recreations like morris dancing.

The bulk of the evidence about the communion cloth incident comes from the Acts of Office for the Archdeaconry of Hereford and the Archdeaconry of Ludlow. These contain citations and depositions, or witness statements, for the Abdon churchwardens and
parish rector, as well as for Nicholas Millichap and the other morris dancers, who came from a cluster of nearby villages.\textsuperscript{79} From these records, the following details emerge.

Sometime in early May of 1619, a group of morris dancers, who were going to be performing at Clee St. Margaret for Whitsun later that month, discovered that their plan to borrow a flag from Ludlow, the nearest large town, had fallen through.\textsuperscript{80} They came up with the idea to use the communion cloth from nearby Abdon parish church, instead. One of the dancers, John Barrett, was sent over to Abdon to ask Isaac Dewse and Francis Weaver for permission to borrow the cloth to use in the dance.\textsuperscript{81} It is unclear why Barrett approached these two men—perhaps because they were village leaders or had donated the cloth. At any rate, they did not give their consent to borrow the communion cloth, but rather than give an absolute refusal, they suggested that Barrett ask the churchwardens for permission.\textsuperscript{82} Barrett did not ask Isaac Evans, one of the churchwardens who testified in the case, since Evans testified that he had only heard after the fact about the communion cloth being used as a flag, but Barrett may have approached Edward Millichap, the other churchwarden at the time, who did not testify.\textsuperscript{83} This is somewhat confusing in the court records, because Edward Millichap was a common name in this region, and there appear to

\textsuperscript{79} Where the original record is in Latin, I have quoted the English translations given in Alan Somerset, ed., \textit{Records of Early English Drama: Shropshire} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 2 vols. The parish register for Clee St. Margaret has not survived, but the Abdon parish register and the Clergy of the Church of England Database provide supplementary biographical information.


\textsuperscript{83} Somerset, \textit{REED: Shropshire}, vol. 1, p. 40, quoting HRO: box 24, vol. 90, fols. 378v-379 (12 Oct. 1619). While most churchwardens served for one year, the parish register shows that in Abdon the custom was to serve two years at a time, with the two churchwardens having overlapping terms.
be two different people with the name associated with the court case: the Abdon churchwarden and the Stoke St. Milborough flag-bearer.

Either way, Barrett was unsuccessful in obtaining the cloth, and so on Friday, May 14th, Nicholas Millichap, another of the morris dancers, went to Abdon and asked John Tasker, the parish rector at Abdon, if he could borrow the communion cloth. According to Tasker’s testimony, Millichap did not explain why he wanted to borrow the cloth. (Millichap may have learned from Barrett’s experience that saying why they wanted the cloth might lower their chances of approval.) To strengthen his case, Millichap told Rector Tasker that the morris dancers “had the goodwill” of Edward Millichap, Isaac Dewse, and Francis Weaver. As mentioned previously, it is uncertain if Edward Millichap, one of the churchwardens, was asked for approval, but Isaac Dewse and Francis Weaver definitely had not given their consent. Nicholas Millichap, therefore, lied, or at least stretched the truth, when he told Rector Tasker that Dewse and Weaver had agreed to a borrowing arrangement. Yet, the falsehood seems to have worked. The rector gave his consent to borrowing the cloth or at least said that he “would not be against it.” The following day, Saturday, May 15th, Nicholas Millichap returned to the rector’s house with Thomas Chelmicke, one of the morris dancers from Abdon. The rector was not home, but the rector’s wife gave them the church keys, Thomas Chelmicke fetched the communion cloth.

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84 Somerset, *REED: Shropshire*, vol. 1, p. 42, quoting HRO: box 36, vol. 136, fol. 6 (1619/1620). Isaac Evans was churchwarden along with Edward Millichap during both the initial incident in 1619, as well as in the following year when he and the new churchwarden, John Meole/Meele, presented the morris dancers to the archdeaconry court. (*The Registers of Abdon*, transcribed by Mr. T. R. Horton, and edited by Rev. W. G. D. Fletcher (Shropshire Parish Register Society, 1932), pp. 3-12; Somerset, *REED: Shropshire*, vol. 1, p. 41, quoting HRO: box 36, vol. 136, fol. 131v.)


from the church, and Nicholas Millichap took it to Clee St. Margaret. The rector’s mother-in-law and maidservant were additional witnesses to this exchange.

The next day, Sunday, was Whit Sunday, or Pentecost. On the following day, Whit Monday, and again on Whit Tuesday, the morris dancers performed at Clee St. Margaret, using the communion cloth as their flag. It was carried by Edward Millichap of Stoke St. Milborough, their flag-bearer. There are no descriptions of the morris dancing that occurred on Whit Monday and Whit Tuesday at Clee St. Margaret, but the depositions of the participants and witnesses and the Abdon parish register offer some insights about the dancers and allow for speculations about the dancing.

There were ten dancers, as well as six men who played costumed characters, two men who carried props, and one musician, a drummer. The large number of dancers would have allowed for elaborate choreographies or for a long, continuous performance since groups of four or six dancers could alternate sets. The dancing likely took place outside—perhaps in the churchyard of St. Margaret’s, the parish church at Clee St. Margaret. (See Figures 9.)

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The accompanying characters would have helped make space for the dancers, tease and joke with the crowd, and solicit donations. The fool, and most likely the hobbyhorse, also danced. All of the dancers, and most likely the other performers, lived within a few miles of each other, which would have facilitated rehearsals.\textsuperscript{91} (See Figure 10.)

\textbf{Figure 9:} Clee St. Margaret Parish Church and Churchyard, 2006. Photo by Emily Winerock.

\textsuperscript{91} Five of the dancers lived in Clee St. Margaret parish, two of the dancers and the friar were from Abdon, two of the dancers and the flag-bearer were from the Heath in Stoke St. Milborough, and one dancer was from Munslow. Except for the friar, the parishes of the costumed characters are unknown.
The occupations, ages, and marital status of the participants are only available for a handful of the participants. One of the dancers and the lord’s shepherd were servants. The others were likely husbandmen (farmers), since all the aforementioned parishes except Munslow were primarily agricultural and only had small villages or hamlets. Abdon, for example, mustered ten men in 1539 and had around eleven houses in 1642. There is no mention in the court depositions of the performers’ ages and marital status, but the two men who were servants and John Chelmicke of Abdon were likely young men, as the rest may have been, and would have been unmarried at the time of the communion cloth incident.

Moreover, morris dancing may have helped their romantic prospects. John Chelmicke’s daughter was born in February of 1620, approximately nine months after the Whitsun morris dance, but only three months after he and Elizabeth Child were married in Abdon. Likewise, at the 23 May 1620 court proceedings, Adam Wilding, the drummer, was cited for “inconstancy” with his future wife, as well as for participating in the morris performance.

The story continues in October of 1619, five months later. Nicholas Millichap, Thomas Chelmicke, and the Abdon churchwardens were cited to appear before the consistory court at Ludlow to explain their actions. Over the next year and a half, Millichap and Chelmicke, the parish rector, John Tasker, and the rest of the dancers appeared before the court. Although three different judges heard the nineteen deponents, the punishments were consistent. The churchwardens, the parish rector, the drummer, and a few of the dancers who claimed to have only heard about the communion cloth being used as the flag after the fact were dismissed with a warning. The rest of the participants either knew in advance or realized at the performance that the flag was a communion cloth, but they danced with it anyway. They were assigned penance. On the 16th of January 1620/1621, the last of the dancers appeared before the court, and the case was closed.

That there would be morris dances at Clee St. Margaret during the Whitsun holidays was not surprising. Morris dances were a common component of Whitsun ales and

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celebrations for much of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century in England. However, the Clee St. Margaret morris group was unusually large compared with other morris groups, with ten dancers instead of the usual four or six, and a half dozen accompanying characters. These included all of the typical characters except a devil or a Maid Marian. (See Chapter 1.) The court depositions specify a sword-bearer, a flag-bearer, a friar, a hobbyhorse, a fool, and a less common character, the lord’s shepherd, in addition to the dancers and drummer (who would have played both drum and fife or pipe). The flag-bearer, Edward Millichap of Stoke St. Millborough, would have been the person carrying the communion cloth.

Yet, having a flag and flag-bearer was itself unusual. The extant images of morris dancing from the period depict dancers with ribbons, handkerchiefs, bells, sticks, swords, and other props, but no flags. The only flag or flag-bearer mentioned in the entirety of John Forrest’s authoritative *The History of Morris Dancing* is in a morris dance presented by a tailors’ guild in Wolverhampton near Birmingham in July of 1652. This dance was notable for the large number of dancers (ten) and the array of accompanying characters. Perhaps flags were only used for particularly spectacular performances.

Alternatively, or perhaps additionally, using a flag in a morris dance could be a local or regional tradition. Wolverhampton is less than thirty miles from Clee St. Margaret. Moreover, there is another reference to a flag in a morris dance in Shropshire that John Forrest missed. In May of 1619, the very same month as the communion cloth incident,

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96 Hutton, “May Games and Whitsun Ales” and “Morris and Marian,” in *Stations of the Sun*, pp. 244-276.
97 Seven—Thomas Chelmicke, William Millichap, Walter Pugh, William Amaund, Nicholas Millichap, Nicholas Tudge, and Joseph Tedstill—are described as dancers. Two others—John Chelmicke and John Barrett—do not have their role in the dance specified. For simplicity, I have assumed that they are also dancers.
there was a morris dance through the streets of Shrewsbury, just over twenty miles from Clee St. Margaret.  

(See Figure 11.)

![Map of Shropshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, and Shrewsbury](image)

**Figure 11**: Morris Dance Performances with Flags and Flag-bearers—Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton, and Clee St. Margaret. Map courtesy of Christopher E. Wilmer, 2011.

The morris dancers and their companions, while trying to clear more space for their dancing, got into an affray with spectators in the street. This brought them into the town court, generating a record of the incident in the borough court book. Of particular interest here is William Cock’s deposition, which says that one of the morris dancers, “did strick him uppon the head with the staffe that did beare the flagg donne about x a clock uppon

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This accusation reveals that not only did the Shrewsbury morris dance also have a flag and flag-bearer, but that the flag was attached to a staff, presumably of wood. Perhaps the Clee St. Margaret morris dancers attached the Abdon communion cloth to a staff to turn it into a flag, as well. Moreover, like the Wolverhampton dance, the Shrewsbury morris was quite a big production, with at least ten performers. If Nicholas Millichap, John Barrett, and Thomas Chelmicke were committed to making their Whitsun morris dances as splendid and spectacular as possible, and if using flags was typical for large morris dance performances in the region, this might explain why they went to such lengths to acquire a beautiful flag for their dance.

Likewise, one can speculate about why the dancers wanted to use a communion cloth for the flag instead of using a regular table carpet or another piece of cloth. Perhaps the communion table carpet was more beautiful than the other cloths to which the dancers had access. The Victoria & Albert Museum has table carpets in its collection, although none are described as communion carpets. (See Figure 12.)

Figure 12: Table Carpet, England, 1603. Victoria & Albert Museum.

The status of church linens was in flux at this time. After England’s break with the Catholic Church, in order to emphasize that the celebration of the Eucharist was a Protestant commemorative ceremony rather than a Catholic sacrifice, the Church renamed the communion altar a communion table and changed its position from a north-south orientation or “altarwise” against the east wall of the church, to an east-west orientation in the chancel. Previously, an elaborate frontal adorned the communion altar, but since it only covered one “front,” it was no longer useful once the communion table sat in the chancel instead of against a wall. Instead, the communion table was covered by a cloth known as a communion carpet. These changes met with resistance, but by the time of this incident in 1619, the practice would have been well established, since the 1604 canons clearly specify that the communion table was to remain in the chancel in an east-west orientation.101 Moreover, the depositions refer repeatedly to the borrowed flag as a carpet, not a frontal. John Barrett’s deposition states, “the said carpet was usually laid on the communion table of Abdon at the time of the communion.”102 That the morris dancers borrowed the table carpet rather than a frontal or the fair linen cloth should be beyond dispute, but the dancers’ perception of the cloth is more ambiguous. Might the morris dancers have considered the communion carpet that covered a communion table less sacred than a frontal that adorned a communion altar?

These speculations lead to another unanswerable question: Why did Nicholas Millichap decide to borrow a communion cloth from Abdon instead of from his own parish and the festival’s host, Clee St. Margaret? One possibility is that Millichap tried to do just

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that but was refused; another possibility is that the Abdon cloth was more beautiful or somehow better suited to serving as a flag. For example, a silk communion cloth would catch the breeze much better than a velvet one. While table carpets could be plain, they could also be quite elaborate. Churchwardens’ accounts in the provinces as well as in London record donations of velvet and damask table carpets in green, red, or purple, fringed or embroidered with gold, and sometimes donated as a set with a matching cloth for the pulpit.\footnote{Fincham and Tyacke, \textit{Altars Restored}, pp. 104-106.} A smaller, poorer parish might have a beautiful communion cloth if it had adopted the common, economical strategy under Elizabeth I of turning sumptuous, but no longer needed, priestly vestments into communion table carpets.\footnote{Fincham and Tyacke, \textit{Altars Restored}, p. 63.}

Another possibility is that Nicholas Millichap was relying on nepotism. According to the Abdon parish register, John Tasker had married Joan Millichap of Abdon in 1614, just a few months after he became Abdon’s rector.\footnote{The Registers of Abdon, p. 3; “Tasker, Johannes,” in \textit{Clergy of the Church of England Database, 1540-1835}, http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk, quoting LPL, Abbot's Register, vol. 1 (Register).} The register does not go back far enough to determine how Joan Millichap and Nicholas Millichap were related, but it is likely that they were at least cousins. Being related to the rector’s wife might have improved Nicholas Millichap’s chances of borrowing the communion cloth from Abdon. Nicholas Millichap could also have been related to the Edward Millichap, who was one of the Abdon churchwardens in May of 1619. However, at this point, there is too little evidence to privilege any of these possibilities.

On the other hand, there is enough evidence to dispute the interpretations of other commentators. Alan Somerset muses in the introduction to \textit{Records of Early English Drama: Shropshire}, “One can only wonder how the parishioners of Abdon celebrated
morning service on Pentecost, lacking the communion table carpet required by canon law.¹⁰⁶ While technically the 1604 canons required parishes to outfit their communion tables with carpets, cloths, and vessels, it was not until the 1630s that bishops tried to ensure that communion tables had particular fittings.¹⁰⁷ Circa 1619, it would not have been a problem if Rector Tasker had failed to use a table carpet for communion or had used a different, perhaps less beautiful, carpet than usual, especially since the rector still would have had the fine linen cloth for the communion table. It seems unlikely that Rector John Tasker would have given permission to Nicholas Millichap to borrow the communion carpet for any reason if the rector had thought he would incur official wrath or censure for its absence on Whit Sunday.

Alan Somerset also claims that the morris dancers “invited trouble (or at least, must have known that they could not escape it) when they cheekily borrowed the communion table carpet from Abdon parish church and used it as the flag in their dance.”¹⁰⁸ In The History of Morris Dancing, John Forrest makes a similar comment, describing the communion cloth incident as a “blatant and general case of morris dancers defying the church through sacrilege,” and concluding that “The whole smacks of a huge country prank perpetrated by a few but enjoyed by many, until their actions (inevitably) came to the notice of church authorities.”¹⁰⁹

Morris dancers could certainly be playful and disorderly. Indeed, Nicholas Reynolds, who played the friar in the Abdon morris dance, had been presented a few years earlier when he lived in Wheathill parish for tossing a hat and harassing a churchwarden

¹⁰⁷ Fincham and Tyacke, Altars Restored, p. 119.
¹⁰⁹ Forrest, The History of Morris Dancing, p. 207.
during divine service time. However, such contentions fail to take into account the fact that the Abdon morris dancers went to some trouble to get permission to borrow the communion cloth. If using the communion cloth as the flag was part of a “huge country prank,” it makes no sense that Nicholas Millichap and John Barrett would have given away the joke in advance by letting the guardians of the communion cloth know they wanted to borrow it. Likewise, if the dancers thought that they were committing blatant sacrilege, why would they bother trying to get approval to borrow the cloth in the first place? Moreover, since the communion cloth would be very visible as the flag in the dance, and it was likely to be recognized, why would Nicholas Millichap leave out the reason why he wanted the communion cloth when asking permission of Rector Tasker? And why would he lie about having permission from Francis Weaver and Isaac Dewse? The most plausible answer is that Millichap thought that it was so important to have the communion cloth as the flag for the dance that it was worth the risk of getting in trouble for lying or borrowing it under false pretences.

But how could Nicholas Millichap and the other morris dancers who were in on the plan hold such a view? Why did Francis Weaver and Isaac Dewse refer them to the churchwardens for permission instead of simply telling them “no” and that theirs was a sacrilegious request? One possibility is that in May of 1619 borrowing a communion cloth to adorn a Whitsun morris dance was not an obviously sacrilegious request. In 1619, the position of dance in relationship to religious festivals and the church was very much in flux due to James I’s issuance of the Book of Sports the year before.

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Throughout the sixteenth century, churchwardens’ accounts record payments to morris dancers for entertaining at church ales, festivals, and fundraisers, and some churches even owned the ornate and expensive morris coats and the special strips of bells worn by morris dancers. If the church supplied the morris dance coats and bells, it is not such a stretch to look to the church to provide the flag, as well. Unfortunately, no churchwardens’ accounts survive for either Clee St. Margaret or Abdon, so there is no way to know if they ever owned morris attire.

During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Protestant reform movements in England increasingly targeted the symbiotic relationship between the Church and dance. Some episcopal visitation articles, like the 1584 Articles of Enquiry of Bishop William Overton of the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, asked if ministers or churchwardens had allowed:

...anye Lordes of Misrule or Sommer Lords or Ladies, or any disguised persons, or Morise dancers, or others, at Christmas, or any time in sommer to come unreverently pyping, dauncing, or playing in church or churchyarde. 

These articles required parishioners, churchwardens, or clergy to present, i.e., to submit to the consistory court, the names of morris dancers for dancing in the church or churchyard, at least if their dances were considered “unreverent.” Other visitation articles, such as the 1610 Articles of Enquiry of Bishop Richard Neile of the Diocese of Coventry and

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111 For example, the St. Columba the Virgin churchwardens’ accounts for St. Columb Major, Cornwall, include six morris coats and twenty dancing bells among the parish’s goods in 1590-1591. Cornwall Record Office, CRO: P/36/8/1, fol. 24v, quoted in Rosalind Conklin Hays et al., eds, *Records of Early English Drama: Dorset/Cornwall* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 508-509.

Lichfield, restrict their inquiries to morris dancing that occurred, “in the time of common prayer.”

The Book of Sports is particularly relevant to the communion cloth incident, because it specifically allowed “Whitson Ales and Morris-dances.” As Ronald Hutton points out in *Stations of the Sun*, since the reign of Edward VI, recreations like ales and dances had had an uncertain status. Sometimes bishops and archdeacons attacked them through visitation articles. Sometimes it was local clergy or parishioners who raised objections. But the Book of Sports offered legal protection and moral sanction for church-hosted celebrations. At the same time, the Book of Sports was disseminated and enforced by bishops, so morris dancers and other would-be recreators only benefited from the legislation, at least initially, if their bishops supported it.

In 1619, Francis Godwin was the Bishop of Hereford, the diocese of which Abdon and Clee St. Margaret were a part. He was fairly new to the post, having become Bishop of Hereford just two years prior. Bishop Godwin was a religious moderate better known for his antiquarian and fiction writings than for his episcopal activities. His predecessor, Robert Bennett, who had held the post from 1603 until his death in 1617, had godly, reforming inclinations. Bishop Bennett’s setting up of lecturers and other reform activities make it unlikely that he was a supporter of church-sponsored dancing. Nevertheless, whereas the bishops of the neighbouring diocese of Coventry and Lichfield specifically condemned morris dancing in their 1584 and 1610 visitation articles, neither Bishop Godwin nor Bishop Bennett ever attempted to suppress morris dancing through visitation articles. The

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115 Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, p. 249.
Diocese of Hereford lacked the history of antagonism towards morris dancing found in some of its neighbouring dioceses.

Moreover, Francis Godwin’s biographer, D. R. Woolf, notes that while Bishop Godwin continued Bishop Bennett’s support of preaching and lecturers, Godwin was “one of the very few prelates actively engaged in enforcing James I's Book of Sports in 1618.”

The communion cloth court case provides some confirmation of the bishop’s views. When Nicholas Millichap and Rector John Tasker travelled to Hereford to testify, their evidence was heard by the lord vicar general, the Bishop’s surrogate, in his private rooms. The vicar general dismissed the rector without penalty, and although Millichap appears to have been the ringleader in the incident, the vicar general assigned him the same penance that the other morris dancers received from the lower court. In addition, although Millichap did not certify his penance for more than five months, there were no further citations or summonses. Assuming the vicar general was acting on behalf of the bishop, this suggests that Bishop Godwin did not consider the communion cloth case an urgent or serious matter.

It is more likely that a warning or a day of penance would be considered sufficient punishment for “profanation,” if the bishop and vicar general considered the cause to be doctrinal confusion and misunderstanding rather than sacrilegious intent.

The Bishop of Hereford’s support for the Book of Sports allows a more nuanced understanding of the communion cloth incident. His support set an example of tolerance, if not encouragement, of lawful recreations for the whole diocese. When Francis Weaver and Isaac Dewse were trying to decide whether or not to give permission to lend the communion cloth for the Whitsun morris dance, they had to take into account the recently

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affirmed status of morris dance and Whitsun festivities and their bishop’s support of that status. The result seems to have been confusion. They were not comfortable giving their consent, but they were also not comfortable simply saying “no.” Instead they tried to pass on the responsibility for the decision. This uncertainty about doctrine would have been communicated to the morris dancers making the inquiry. Yet, the morris dancers had little reason to think this was because their request was sacrilegious. It was the court officials who later labelled the incident as profanation, not the churchwardens, the parish rector, or the morris dancers themselves. When they encountered resistance to their plan for borrowing the communion cloth, the Clee St. Margaret morris dancers might have assumed it was due to concern about the care and safety of an expensive, valuable cloth, or because there was confusion about who had the power and jurisdiction to grant the request.

While to most modern-day observers borrowing the communion cloth to use as the flag in a morris dance has seemed an extraordinary act of audacity and irreverence, Nicholas Millichap and his fellow morris dancers appear to have had a rather different perspective. Their repeated efforts to get permission to borrow the cloth, even if under false pretences, indicate the importance they gave to having the communion cloth for their flag, their desire to borrow it officially, and their assumption that this was a reasonable request. It is likely that Clee St. Margaret parish church hired Millichap and his fellow morris dancers to provide the traditional entertainment for the Whitsun holidays. If so, when they found themselves in need of a flag for their dance, it need not be overt disobedience and irreverence that caused them to look to the Church to provide such a cloth. Indeed, the Church, as their employer, would be a logical source to turn to for props for the performance, and employment by a neighbouring church might have granted the dancers,
and their request, greater legitimacy in Abdon. Alternatively, the morris dancers may have been invited by a secular group of leading laymen.\(^\text{117}\) Still another possibility is that the Whitsun morris dance at Clee St. Margaret was a longstanding annual tradition that required no particular invitation. As an established part of local traditions, it could have gone on for years without comment until this particular incident brought it to the attention of the court.

Regardless of who invited the dancers to Clee St. Margaret, the publication of the Book of Sports the year before offered official and moral validity for their performance, since it specifically sanctioned morris dancing and Whitsun festivities. Plus, the Book of Sports had received the support of the local bishop. Therefore, it is plausible that not only did Nicholas Millichap not think that using the communion cloth was profanation, but also that the Abdon church officials found the request peculiar and without precedent, but not sacrilegious. In fact, it is even possible that the morris dancers wanted to borrow the communion cloth for reverent reasons. Even though morris dancing had no innate religious significance, its long association with Whitsun, the most important holiday after Easter, may have given it a solemnity and legitimacy that Nicholas Millichap and his fellow dancers took seriously and wished to honour. Perhaps, in May of 1619, as the Whitsun holidays approached and the dancers scrambled to find a replacement flag, their commitment to upholding the tradition of a magnificent morris dance for Whitsun prevented them from realizing the potential sacrilege they were committing by appropriating a ritual object for a different, more controversial, ritual.

\(^\text{117}\) For example, the bailiffs’ accounts for nearby Ludlow record a payment of sixteen pence for “the drinking of the dauncers” and for pastimes on May Day, at Whitsuntide, and other entertainments in 1556-1557. Somerset, \textit{REED: Shropshire}, vol. 1, p. 81, quoting SRO: LB 8/1/45, fol. 39.
Conclusion

Only a small portion of the dancing that likely occurred during this time period is visible to historians. Most of the extant dance records for the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are prosecutions for dancing on Sundays, and these are scattered across England. Moreover, individual parishes rarely have more than one or two records of dancing. Since some of these records refer to dancing as a regular occurrence in that parish, this raises the question of why some dance events led to court cases or presentments while others did not.

Through close examination of three case studies, this chapter contends that there had to be a confluence of several factors in order for a dance occasion to generate enough antagonism to lead to a presentment or prosecution. In Tortworth, both parishioners and bishops were united in their disapprobation of the scandalous dancing, drinking, and mischief-making of the parish rector. What made the dancing scandalous was that the rector danced the cushion dance, a kissing dance, and he did so publicly and on church property on a Sunday. However, it was only in combination with other transgressions that the rector’s dancing caused such outrage. He danced the cushion dance when he was already suspended from preaching, at odds with his patron, and had ignored prior requests that he reform his behaviour. Finally, by asserting that he would now study knavery instead of pursuing learning, he challenged the authority of the bishop. It would have been impossible for the bishop to suffer such an affront without a response.

In Dundry, two different prosecutions for dancing are linked by shared participants and the same contested space, the outer churchyard, but distinguished by contextual details. In one case, there seems to be dissent between the churchwardens about the merit and
appropriateness of dancing in the churchyard or hay. In the other case, the dancing is part of a protest by parishioners against what they see as the usurpation of the church hay and its resources by the vicar and curate. In both cases, however, it is the combination of dancing in a controversial location with pre-existing conflicts that leads to prosecuting “those that usuallie daunce in the churchyward.”

In Abdon and Clee St. Margaret, confusion about the sanctity of a ritual object combined with local authorities’ reluctance to take responsibility for making decisions led to a scenario that was deemed profanation in retrospect. Yet, although they did not actively or intentionally challenge authority or have sacrilegious intents, the willingness of the morris dancers to prevaricate in order to get the communion cloth, combined with their use of it in a knowingly controversial activity, makes it difficult to see their “borrowing” of the cloth as entirely innocent or naive. Moreover, although it is not clear who presented the churchwardens for not presenting the morris dancers initially, what is clear is that someone did, probably someone who really did think that the dancers had committed an egregious act. That the incident was presented at all indicates confusion or disagreement about whether or not the use of the communion cloth in a Whitsun morris dance was profanation.

Dancing itself was not illegal in early modern England, and it was only one component of the various conflicts and incidents discussed in this chapter. However, the ways in which dancing was used and perceived are noteworthy. John Wilmot and the Dundry youths repurposed a symbol of harmonious festivity in order to challenge and antagonise figures of authority. The Shropshire morris dancers repurposed a ritual object as a banner of traditional festivity. In Dundry, the Book of Sports drove a wedge between puritans reformers and festive traditionalists, making the two sides feel further apart and

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thus less able to resolve disagreements peaceably and informally. This created the kind of tense situation that could quickly degenerate into dissension, conflict, and even violence. Finally, the case of the Shropshire morris dance shows how differing ideas about the importance and sanction of dancing could create tensions in otherwise peaceable communities.
Conclusion

The motions of the dance may be fleeting and ephemeral, but the hundreds of references to dancing contained in the Records of Early English Drama (REED) collections amply refute the assumption that the history of dance is neither accessible nor relevant to modern scholars.¹ This dissertation joins the small but growing number of scholarly works that examine late Renaissance and early modern dances as both identifiable movement patterns that can be better understood through careful reconstruction and as embodied cultural practices that impacted and were impacted by historically specific religious, political, and cultural dynamics.²

England might not have had a military war of religion within its borders in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but it experienced a number of cultural battles. This dissertation investigates one of the less well-known battlefronts: the dance floor.³ An array of sources—including conduct manuals, anti-dance treatises, plays, sermons, and court

¹ Excerpts from the REED collections provide the foundation for the quantitative overview of dance practices in Chapter 1 and the case studies in Chapters 4 and 5. Many of these case studies, which explore some of the most interesting dance-related excerpts from the REED collections, are discussed briefly by Christopher Marsh in Music and Society in Early Modern England (2010). I have looked at records for all types of dancing in order to provide a broader, more inclusive picture of English dance practices and to help contextualise single-dance studies that have utilised REED records, such as Forrest’s history of morris dancing; Ian Payne’s The Almain in Britain, c.1549-c.1675: A Dance Manual from Manuscript Sources (2003); and Robert Mullally’s The Carole: A Study of a Medieval Dance (2011).


³ The term “dance floor” is anachronistic. The first usage recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) is from 1874. Designated spaces for dancing existed somewhat earlier, but not as early as the period under examination. Dance events are referred to as “balls” as early as 1571, but “ballroom” is not found in the OED until c.1719, and “dance hall” does not appear until 1845. I use the term “dance floor” here simply to describe a space used at some point for dancing. Thus, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one could find temporary, de facto dance floors in alehouses, village greens, private homes, churchyards, and even churches and chapels.
Conclusion

records—indicates that several different conceptions of dance coexisted uneasily in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England. Some proponents saw dancing as the embodiment of the harmonious movement of the cosmos and a tool for acquiring grace, improving self-control, and displaying nobility. Others, including “festive traditionalists,” considered dancing to be a natural, biblically sanctioned form of celebration that fostered neighbourliness, improved physical agility, and provided a harmless outlet for youthful energy. Most opponents were convinced that dance was an indulgence of the vain, idle, and lascivious that led to illicit sexual liaisons and eternal damnation. A subset, including puritan reformers, were particularly mortified by dancing on Sundays and holy days, which they saw as profanation of the sabbath.

However, it is important not to overlook the fact that those whom we might classify as proponents or opponents shared similar concerns. As Chapter 2 demonstrates, both advocates and critics acknowledged that dancing could be disorderly or controlled, wanton or modest, awkward or graceful. They also agreed that dancing was inherently a “thing indifferent,” in which the context in which it occurred decided its acceptability. Moreover, the majority of commentators, both defenders and critics, would have been familiar with the same courtly and country dances. How, then, could their perceptions of these choreographies be so different?

This study suggests that there were three components of a dance’s context that influenced whether it was deemed appropriate or inappropriate. The first component was dancers’ performance and styling choices. Did the dancers move in a way that matched their social rank and gender? Were movements modest, self-controlled, and skillful? Did dancers choose a dance appropriate to the circumstances? The second factor was the circumstantial details, which included whether the dance was in a private or public location, whether or not it occurred on a Sunday or holy day, whether the dancers were young or old, single or mixed
gender, sober or drunk, etc. Finally, the perception and assessment of a dance within its context was influenced by the eye of the beholder. Pre-existing assumptions and beliefs shaped how both spectators and participants perceived and interpreted dances. Individuals, such as religious reformers, who held particularly strong convictions about what dance signified were often unable to see accurately the movements before them and had difficulty catching the sometimes subtle styling strategies taught by instructors to distinguish proper and improper dancing.

Both proponents and opponents of dancing acknowledged the difficulty of exercising good judgment on the dance floor. Where they disagreed was where to draw the boundary between licit and unlawful dancing. The evidence from sermons, biblical commentaries, and moral treatises suggests that what decided an author’s underlying assumptions about dancing was whether or not the author believed that individuals were capable of judging the appropriateness of dancing in specific situations and exercising self-control within that context. In addition, beholders who held different religious convictions interpreted certain circumstantial details differently. If a puritan reformer and a festive traditionalist saw the same group of women performing a sober, modest branle in their home on a Sunday evening, the former would likely judge it as an inappropriate, irreverent dance while the latter might find it perfectly acceptable or even praiseworthy. For puritan reformers, nearly all of whom subscribed to the sabbatarian view that the sabbath should be solely dedicated to reverence not to both reverence and recreation, dancing was never acceptable on a Sunday, no matter how admirable and unobjectionable the dancers’ motions.

In “The Historiography of Puritanism,” Peter Lake writes, “To review the historiography of Puritanism is to review the history of early modern England.” Conversely,

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one cannot study the history of early modern England without also studying England’s puritans, anti-puritans, and those who got caught and caught up in the conflicts between them. Puritans strove to reform every aspect of their own and their neighbours’ lives in their attempt to turn England into a harmonious network of orderly, sober, and, above all, godly communities. Their neighbours did not always appreciate these efforts and sometimes resisted them vigorously, pointing out that many of the practices in question had the sanction of tradition and custom.

This study highlights conflicts over dancing between puritan reformers and those I have termed “festive traditionalists.” Festive traditionalists objected to puritan efforts to purge the church of its traditional ceremonies, rituals, and festivities, which the reformers saw as dangerously seductive vestiges of Catholicism. While some festive traditionalists were indeed Catholic, most were Protestants who approved of the Elizabethan Settlement and a reasonably reformed liturgy. However, they felt that the puritan hostility toward and attempts to suppress traditional festivities, such as church ales, maypoles, and Whitsun morris dances, was unreasonable, unnecessary, and actively weakened the ties that bound the parochial community together.

This conflict manifested itself throughout early modern society. Chapter 3 looks at puritan reformers’ attacks on dancing in sermons and anti-dance treatises, as well as their interpretations of biblical references to dancing, most of which were positive. Reformers argued that while dancing could be positive and reverent in theory, in practice, it was wanton and disorderly, because contemporary dances were performed by male-female couples rather than by the single-sex groups described in Scripture. They further contended that contemporary dancing was so different from biblical dancing that Scripture’s general

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5 I have coined this term to describe a motley group of men and women whose inclusion derives, not from shared religious or political convictions, but from having similar responses to the same threat.
sanction of the latter did not extend to the former. While Chapters 1 and 2 confirm that the majority of early modern choreographies were for male-female couples, they also show that men and women danced regularly and willingly in single-sex groups. Thus, the anti-dance works examined in Chapter 3 misrepresented contemporary dance practices by treating one of the types of dancing as if it were the only type. At the same time, defenders of dancing glossed over the existence and appeal of the handful of genuinely lascivious dances, such as kissing dances, like the cushion dance, and the volta. Also, most of the known defenses of dancing are not stand-alone pieces but sections of more general works advocating courtly arts for young gentlemen or defending the Stuart kings’ policies on Sunday sports.

Theologically, dance might be considered morally neutral, but as a physical, embodied practice, every occasion of dancing occurred in a particular context that made it either acceptable or immoral. This meant that disagreements over the significance of dancing were not simply academic. Religious reformers strove to suppress dancing traditions that they believed imperiled their and their communities’ salvation. Proponents of dancing resisted these efforts by continuing to dance. Yet, even when royal declarations like the Book of Sports addressed dancing practices nationally, local religious politics decided the extent to which regulations and injunctions were adopted, amended, or ignored.

While the hundreds of prosecutions for dancing on Sundays and holy days include records from across England, it is rare for there to be more than one or two presentments of dancers in any one parish. This is particularly surprising given that some of these records refer to dancing as a regular occurrence in that parish. Why would some dance events led to court cases or presentments while others did not?

This dissertation argues that there had to be a “perfect storm” or a confluence of factors in order for a dance occasion to generate enough antagonism to lead to a presentment or prosecution. The requisite factors included dancers, opponents of dancing, and a violation
of a law, order, declaration, or custom that triggered a conflict, although there could be uncertainty or controversy about whether or not the accused violation was legitimate. In addition, in almost every case, there had been pre-existing tensions and antagonisms in the community that quickly escalated into conflict and prevented a peaceful, private resolution.

Chapters 4 and 5 investigate several case cases of parochial religio-cultural disagreements involving dancing. These studies support the hypothesis that dancing was embedded in local traditions in many parishes and that a low level of anti-dance sentiment was also common. However, conflicts involving dance rarely entered the court system unless they became entangled with other parochial issues such as contested land ownership, suits over tithes, and power struggles within and between the secular and ecclesiastical branches of the government. These cases also provide specific examples of how dancers controlled, or at least attempted to control, the ways in which their dancing was interpreted by making notable or controversial performance choices.

This work’s composite methodology of choreographic interpretation, quantitative analysis, and case studies has facilitated delineating the often overlooked nuances of early English dancing. Simple footwork and floor patterns belied the difficulty of interpreting them. This difficulty arose from how these dances shifted meaning depending on the context in which they occurred. While this is always true to some extent when interpreting any dance, it was particularly true in Tudor and early Stuart England. A rapid succession of changes in religious doctrine and rituals caused general confusion about the sanctity and acceptability of traditional festivities. Puritan reformers targeted Sunday pastimes, in general, and Sunday dancing, in particular, from the pulpit and through the courts. The Stuart monarchs intervened in the debate through the Book of Sports, providing overt but conditional support for Sunday dancing and recreations. This created a situation where many individuals knowingly and
openly disagreed with their neighbours about whether or not a given dance in a given situation should be sanctioned or judged unlawful.

Historians, such as Patrick Collinson, David Underdown, and Ronald Hutton, have noted, debated, and illuminated the conflicts over festivity and revelry between puritan reformers and festive traditionalists. However, they have not addressed one of the unique aspects of this conflict. Unlike most moral controversies over dancing, such as those over the waltz, the Lindy hop, and the grind, this debate on dance was not prompted by the creation or sudden rise in popularity of a new “dangerous” dance. While the time frame of this study encompassed the gradual shift in dance styles in England from what dance historians have categorised as the late Renaissance to the early Baroque, this choreographic development does not appear to have had any impact on the debate about dance’s appropriateness, even though early Baroque dances were more constrained, more controlled, and less intimate than late Renaissance dances. Rather, this conflict seems to have been so focused on disagreements over how to assess the contexts in which dancing occurred—especially if the dancers were male-female couples, if they danced on Sunday, or if they danced in the churchyard—that the actual dance performed made little difference.

Festive and celebratory dancing were well-entrenched in local customs and traditions in the beginning of the sixteenth century. However, by the late sixteenth century, puritan reformers had been able to gain some ground against customary dance practices by tapping into an equally ancient tradition of discomfort about dancing. James I’s defense of sports in

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1617 and 1618, and Charles I’s reissue in 1633 brought brief reprieves, but, eventually, the puritan reformers successfully and permanently severed the symbiotic relationship between dancing and the Church of England. On the other hand, the reformers lost the battles against mixed dancing and dancing in general. Mixed dancing continued throughout the English Civil War; John Playford published his best-selling dance instruction manual, *The English Dancing Master* (1651), during the puritan-led Rump Parliament during the Commonwealth; and male-female couples remain the predominant combination of dancers for social dancing in most Western cultures to this day.

Typically, cultural perspectives on dancing change slowly over time in response to gradual transformations in dance music, styles, and aesthetics, while conflicts over dancing are restricted to variations on the perennial rift between what older and younger generations’ consider to be appropriate or admirable dancing. However, the debates and battles over dancing in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England are unusual, because they were caused by religious upheaval and dissension rather than by generational conflict or resistance to choreographic innovation. This caused perspectives to change rapidly enough to generate contemporary comment and resistance, providing documentation of a cultural shift that generally goes unrecorded.

That changes in national religious politics would have such a dramatic and invasive impact on the general populace, exacerbating local conflicts and altering how people spent their leisure time, serves as a useful reminder, not just of the pervasiveness of religion in the early modern period, but of the always current, disruptive potential of religious reform.
Appendix

The Centrality of Dance in Selected Records of Early English Drama Collections

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<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other Records</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bath and Wells (Somerset)</td>
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<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
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</table>

**Table 1:** The centrality of dance in ecclesiastical prosecutions, secular prosecutions, and other records (e.g., petitions, account books, visitation articles, journals, etc.), classified by diocese, from the Records of Early English Drama (REED) collections for Somerset, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Cheshire, and Lancashire.

* Includes a record from Llanyblodwell, Shropshire in the diocese of St. Asaph.

Key:

Main focus = dance is primary subject and reason for existence of the record.
One component = dance is one of several activities mentioned in record.
Tangential = dancing or a dancer is mentioned in passing as an incidental detail, such as when a suspect for a murder happens to give his alibi as dancing in an alehouse.
The Centrality of Dance in Sabbatarian Records of Early English Drama Records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Main focus</th>
<th>One component</th>
<th>Tangential</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ecclesiastical Prosecutions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bath and Wells (Somerset)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lichfield (Shropshire)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td><strong>53</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| **Secular Prosecutions** |            |               |            |
| Combined dioceses*       | 8          | 15            | 2          |
| **Total:**               | **8**      | **15**        | **2**      |

| **Other Records**        |            |               |            |
| Combined dioceses*       | 8          | 11            | 0          |
| **Total:**               | **8**      | **11**        | **0**      |

**Table 2:** The centrality of dance in ecclesiastical prosecutions, secular prosecutions, and other records (e.g., petitions, account books, visitation articles, journals, etc.) pertaining to the sabbath, holy days, and the Book of Sports, from the Records of Early English Drama (REED) collections for Somerset, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Cheshire, and Lancashire.


**Key:**
- **Main focus** = dance is primary subject and reason for existence of the record.
- **One component** = dance is one of several activities mentioned in record.
- **Tangential** = dancing or a dancer is mentioned in passing as an incidental detail, such as morris dancers getting into a fight after a Whitsuntide performance.
The Cushion Dance as Depicted in a Dutch Emblem Book

Note: The emblem text is accompanied by an explanatory text in which the author permits men and women to enjoy temporal pleasures, but only if they do so modestly, in moderation, and within the context of an honest and proper marriage. The commentary continues with a brief history of kissing followed by an analysis of the different types of kisses and which are good and which lascivious and depraved.

Translation of Emblem Text
by Bert Roest, 2011

You say, you are carrying a burden (of love), and therefore you are asking around, Who can carry it in your place for you. Anyone can see what you are driving at: a devilish mouthplay Or should I say an intimate leaking of the tongue. But are you not afraid how that will load him with The sad weight of sin, those deeds drawing towards hell In which you are entangled. Don’t you wish to be free of that? Then: Kiss the Son of God, believe, and evade his wrath.

Figure 1: Emblem IV. Johannis de Brunes, Emblemata (Amsterdam, 1624).¹

¹ The whole Emblemata is available at http://www.archive.org/stream/iohannisemblemat00brun.
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