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Master Brundyche of Brabant and Fifteenth-Century Anti-Flemish Sentiment

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The Fleming on the early modern English stage is often a figure both of contempt and concern: on the one hand, a drunken buffoon and, on the other, a dangerous alien whose greed may 'consum[e] the nation by mongrelizing the English race, corrupting native manners, and depleting the nation's wealth.'[1] This stereotype has been traced back to John Skelton's *Magnificence* (c.1515-23) which, though it does not stage a Flemish character, gestures towards some of these prejudices alongside a reference to 'a Fleming hight Hansy' (l. 328).[2] In fact, the origins of this dramatic type may perhaps be traced even further back in time, as the medieval Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* features a comical but potentially dangerous Fleming. Although the historical context of this late fifteenth-century East Anglian play was not identical to that of sixteenth-century England, late fifteenth-century East Anglia was also characterised by a difficult relationship with the Low Countries and its immigrants, and scholars generally agree that this character reflects contemporary anti-Flemish sentiment. The Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* is a play where dangerous outside influences are

[1] Peter Matthew McCluskey, *Representations of Flemish Immigrants on the Early Modern Stage* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2019), p. 40. I shall use the term 'Flemish', which is the one most commonly encountered in scholarship, to denote people from the Low Countries even though not all, or even most, of these would have been from Flanders and though some might not have spoken Flemish (or Dutch) but French (see also McCluskey, *Representations*, p. 3). The term was used in contemporary sources to refer to people from the Low Countries and even further afield, as it could include speakers of Low German dialects, alongside other labels, notably 'Doche' and 'Teutonic'; see also Joshua Thomas Ravenhill, 'The Experience of Aliens in Later Medieval London and the Negotiation of Belonging, 1400-1540', Ph.D. thesis (York, 2019), pp. 32-3.

[2] John Skelton, *Magnifence*, ed. by Paula Neuss (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1980). See also McCluskey, Representations, especially pp. 13-17.

paramount, and Master Brundyche (Brownditch) of Brabant seems to link these dangers explicitly to contemporary immigration from the Low Countries to East Anglia. However, the play also allows for an alternate reading that complicates this straightforward rejection of dangerous Flemings.

The Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* is the only Middle English play to stage a Flemish character, which makes it even more significant.[3] It is also the sole Middle English play to be set in near-contemporary Europe. The topic of the play to a large extent accounts for this unusual setting and cast: it is the only surviving Middle English play depicting a eucharistic miracle and Continental plays on eucharistic miracles often deal with reasonably local and recent events. The Middle French *Mistere de la Saincte Hostie* commemorated a eucharistic miracle which supposedly happened in Paris in 1290.[4] The Middle Dutch *Tspel van den heiligen sacramente vander Nyeuwervaert* was performed in Breda in 1500 to honour a local relic which had been brought to the city from nearby Niervaert about fifty years earlier. But the Croxton play is rather unusual in this regard because its setting is by no means local: the supposed miracle happened in Eraclea in Aragon in 1461. The setting of the story in a distant European locality and in the very recent past (the play is thought to date to the late fifteenth century) is therefore somewhat atypical. The oddities of the play do not stop there: unlike more typical anti-Semitic eucharistic miracles plays the main Jewish protagonist has no wife and children but four male accomplices; the Jews convert and are baptised at the end of the play whereas they are more usually executed; and no other surviving eucharistic miracle play features a doctor and his boy.

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[3] It survives in one sixteenth-century manuscript Dublin, Trinity College MS F.4.20, fols 338–56. The edition used is *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments,* ed. Norman Davis*,* EETS, Supplementary Text 1 (London, Oxford University Press, 1970).

[4] The text is probably from the fifteenth century, but survives in sixteenth-century copies.

The doctor is twice labelled as being from Brabant, e.g. 'Master Brundyche of Braban' (l. 566), in spoken speech; the link between this character and the Low Countries is clear. Like the majority of Flemings on the early modern stage, Brundyche is usually taken to be a comical figure and indeed some of the stereotypes that appear in later drama, notably drunkenness and lechery, occur here too. The stereotype of Flemings as drunken and promiscuous was well-established by the early to mid-fifteenth century.[5] The crier, Colle, praises Brundyche as being the most 'cunnyng' (l. 591) between Dover and Calais, which is both faint praise of his intelligence and sexual innuendo, playing on the French meaning of 'con' ('vagina').[6] There is further sexual innuendo in the interchange between the crier and the doctor, some of it again building on the use of 'cunning'. The doctor furthermore claims to have saved his last patient by giving her a 'drynke made full well | Wyth scamoly' (ll. 585-6), and scammony was used as an aphrodisiac. This rather bears out Colle's insinuations that Master Brundyche has sex with his female patients. And his search for his 'bowgett [bag] with drynk profytable' (l. 601) may refer to a medical potion but strongly suggests alcohol in light of Colle's references to his master's frequent visits to taverns; this suspicion is strengthened by that fact that the doctor seems greedily to drink from the bag (ll. 598-600). There are then important similarities between this Flemish stage character and many of those that featured on the early modern stage.

The other main theme of comedy in the Croxton play is the doctor's inability to cure his patients. This is not commonly found in early modern drama, but further serves to make the doctor a figure of ridicule. When the doctor first appears and assures Colle that the patient he has just tended will 'neuer fele anoyment' (l. 583), Colle immediately assumes she must

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[5] W. Mark Ormrod, Bart Lambert, and Jonathan Mackman, *Immigrant England, 1300-1550* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2019), p. 205.

[6] *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (1330-1500)*, CON, subst. masc. < http://zeus.atilf.fr/dmf/> [accessed 15 March 2023].

be dead. Colle's clear irreverence towards the doctor and his skill is evident throughout the passage. He praises Master Brundyche as

> […] þe most famous phesycyan
> Þat euer sawe vryne.
> He seeth as wele at noone as at nyght,
> And sumtyme by a candellyet
> Can gyff a judgyment aryght –
> As he þat hathe noon eyn. (535-40)

In his proclamation towards the end of the episode, calling for people with ailments and diseases to present themselves to the doctor, he promises (after a nice list of *bona fide* potential illnesses to be treated): 'Thowh a man were ryght hele, he cowd soone mak hym sek.' (l. 619).

There is, however, some scholarly debate as to whether the doctor's incompetence is real or merely the crier's assertion.[7] Colle makes the doctor out to be a ridiculous figure but he is not necessarily a reliable source of information and much of the doctor's speech seems to be entirely above board. Nonetheless, I would argue that the doctor's intelligence is called into question by his apparent oblivion to Colle's irreverence and double entendre throughout the passage and that, as such, he is a comical character. Moreover, there are strong suggestions that Master Brundyche is a quack: while uroscopy was the default diagnostic tool

[7] See, for example, Elisabeth Dutton, '*The Croxton Play of the Sacrament*', in Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, <10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199566471.013.0004> and Jillian Linster, 'The Physician and His Servant in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Early Theatre*, 20 (2017), 31-48.

of medieval medicine, it certainly seems superfluous to ask a patient for a sample of urine in order to diagnose or heal an amputation.[8]

Something else which this plays seems to have in common with some later drama is the almost superfluous nature of the Fleming's presence.[9] That is not to deny that the theme of healing is important in the play: Jonathas, the main Jewish protagonist, is grievously injured and needs healing. The play focuses on the spiritual nature of the problem and its solution. Jonathas and his fellow Jews are in dire need of spiritual healing (given their lack of belief in transubstantiation and the miraculous events happening before their very eyes) and Jesus comes to heal Jonathas. But there seems to be little emphasis on the contrast between bodily and spiritual healing. In fact, our doctor does not even attempt to cure the injured Jew. Colle advises Jonathas to consult Master Brundyche but the doctor and his boy are immediately chased away:

> COLL: Syr, ye know well yt can nott mysse;
> Men that be masters of scyens be profitable.
> In a pott yf yt please yow to pysse,
> He can tell yf yow be curable.
> [JONATHAS:] Avoyde, fealows, I loue not yowr bable!
> Brushe them hens bothe and that anon!
> Gyff them ther reward þat they were gone!

[8] It is in fact Colle who asks Jonathas for a urine sample but as his master is present, Master Brundyche has to bear some responsibility for his crier's engagement with the patient.

[9] McClusky, for instance, remarks on the incidental nature of the satire relating to Flemings in *Magnificence* (p. 17) and on Hans and Philip Fleming 'contributing nothing to advance the plot' in Ulpian Fulwell's *Like Will to Like* (p. 34).

Here shall þe iiij Jewys bett away þe leche and hys man. (ll. 646-52 plus stage direction)

A proper doctor who tried and failed to heal Jonathas would highlight the incomparable nature of spiritual healing compared to mere bodily healing but a quack who does not even attempt a healing barely does so.[10] As such, the physical versus spiritual doctor dichotomy – while still present – is not perhaps as strong an explanation for the inclusion of this scene as is sometimes suggested.[11]

The tenuous link between Brundyche and the rest of the play, as he disappears from the stage without in any way affecting any other character or the development of the plot, may suggest that he is included mainly to enable the playwright to stage a Flemish immigrant. It is also the interlude with Colle and the doctor which anchors the play in a local, East Anglian setting through the reference to 'Babwell Myll' (l. 621), which references a location just outside Bury St. Edmunds.[12] This episode is furthermore remarkable for its engagement with the audience – who are treated as potential patients of the doctor – thereby 'erasing the temporal and geographical distance between the imagined world of the stage and

[10] See also Linster, 'The Physician', 43.

[11] See, for example, Christina M. Fitzgerald, 'Performance Anxiety and the Passion in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 46 (2016), 315-37 (p. 324) and Heather Hill-Vásquez, '"The precious body of Crist that they treytyn in ther hondis": "Miraclis Pleyinge" and the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*', *Early Theatre*, 4 (2001), 53-72 (p. 65).

[12] Together with 'Croxton' in the opening banns specifying the performance details ('At Croxton on Monday yt shall be sen', l. 74), these are the only two references in the entire play to local places. Croxton is roughly fifteen miles north of Bury St. Edmunds. As Davis (*Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments*, ed., p. lxxxiv) points out, the Croxton reference simply demarcates the site of a performance which, as the play seems to have been a travelling one, does not tell us much about the provenance, whereas the Babwell reference contains an expectation that the audience members are acquainted with the location.

the real world of the audience'.[13] From far away exotic Spain we are explicitly redirected to contemporary East Anglia. The doctor episode therefore refocuses an important theme of the play, namely the danger of outside, corrupting influences, in an East Anglian context, where it was closely linked to trade with and immigration from the Low Countries.

The doctor is not the only character used to make this xenophobic point. In fact, the danger of foreigners is particularly made clear in the figure of the Jews, who are not native to Eraclea but are instead from 'Surrey' (Syria, l. 19) and come to Aragon to trade as well as to purchase a Eucharistic wafer and then test it. Moreover, it is not simply foreigners that represent evil influences, but also foreign travel. Aristorius, who will sell the eucharistic wafer to Jonathas, is very much a local merchant ('In Eraclea ys non suche, woso wyll vnderstond, | For off all Aragon I am most mighty of syluer and of gold', ll. 86-7) but he is emphatically associated with foreign travels through his opening speech which contains a long, boasting, alliterative (and largely alphabetic) list of places where he trades, from Saba in Yemen to the Faeroe Islands. The very form of the speech is suspect. Bombastic, boastful alliterative lists are the trademark of characters such as Herod and the devil in late medieval English drama. A little later in the Croxton play, Jonathas will list his amazing wealth of wares in a similar vein (e.g. 'Perlys precious grete plenté; | Of rubés ryche I have grete renown', ll. 169-70). Colle's list of diseases and ailments which Master Brundyche can supposedly (not) cure is less alliterative, but nevertheless ties back to these earlier boastful speeches by morally circumspect characters (e.g. 'Who hat þe canker, þe collyke, or þe laxe [diarrhea] | The tercyan [fever], þe quartan [fever], or þe brynning axs [fever]', ll. 612-3). Whereas in Colle's speech it is the empty, unprofitable use of medical terminology (as well

[13] Stephen Wright as quoted by Julie Orlemanski, *Symptomatic Subjects: Bodies, Medicine, and Causation in the Literature of Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), p. 107.

as some puns) that are circumspect and in Jonathas' speech the incredible wealth of goods and consumables, in Aristorius' speech it is the place names that further make this character less than moral. Associating with places like 'Braban' (l. 98), 'Dordrede' (l. 100), 'Gyldre' (l. 103), and 'Holond' (l. 104) in itself corrupts.

The intrusion of Master Brundyche of Brabant can be looked at in the same light; and unlike the story line of the Jews which is situated on the Iberian peninsula this episode explicitly concentrates that xenophobia in an East Anglian setting which makes it especially potent. Indeed, Gibson felt that the anti-Flemish prejudice in this play is more notable than the anti-Semitism.[14] This partly because the representation of the Jews in this play is perhaps less negative than in Continental plays with similar story lines. Furthermore, after the Expulsion of 1290 there were no Jews in England to suffer from the play's anti-Semitism whereas there were Flemish immigrants in East Anglia at this time who may have suffered discrimination or worse because of this play. Perhaps we need not judge which is worse but the portrayal of an alcoholic iterant quack may well have been fed by, and in turn have fed, anti-Flemish sentiment.

The mention of the doctor and his subsequent appearance, which occur about halfway through the play, is in fact not the first time the Low Countries have been associated with morally dubious characters. The prominent featuring of place names from the Low Countries in Aristorius' speech already highlights a level of concern about interactions with the Low Countries at the very beginning of the play, as we have seen. The exotic wares Jonathas trades in are also evidence of his indirect association with the Low Countries, as these often reached East Anglia via ports in the Low Countries.[15] Moreover, the name of the Jewish

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[14] Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 37.

[15] Dorothy Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping 1460-1540* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1947), p. 152.

protagonist, Jonathas, has been linked to a eucharistic miracle that supposedly happened in Brussels in 1370; according to the legend, the Jew who organised the theft and planned the profanation of the eucharistic wafers is called Jonathas.[16] Some other rather unusual features of the miracle story as staged in the Croxton play, namely the involvement of two merchants in the procurement of the wafer and the group of Jewish men involved in testing that wafer, are also more similar to the Brussels version than other versions of anti-Jewish host miracle stories.[17] Brussels is, of course, in Brabant; if there are indeed resonances of the Brussels 1370 miracle in the Croxton play, these would not only link the Jews with the Low Countries but also link Master Brundyche from Brabant and the Jews. The supposedly Syrian Jews, suspect and dangerous, therefore seem to be influenced by, and may in turn generate, anti-Flemish sentiment. The anti-Semitism of the play and the anti-Flemish sentiment are closely intertwined.[18]

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[16] Florence Elberta Barns, 'The Background and Sources of *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament*', Ph.D. Thesis, Chicago, 1926, p. 215. See also Luc Dequeker, 'Vrancke van der Stockt, Processie met het Allerheiligste (ca. 1450-60): de oudste voorstelling van het Brusselse Sacrament van Mirakel (1370)', *Trajecta: Tijdschrift voor de geschiedenis van het katholiek leven in de Nederlanden*, 3 (2005), 257-84, for a summary of the fifteenth-century versions of the legend (pp. 263-4).

[17] Barns, 'The Background', pp. 215-6. The English play is not a rendition of the Brussels legend, which features the theft of no fewer than sixteen wafers as well as Katherina, a former Jew who had converted to Christianity. Six Jewish men were executed in 1370 for these alleged offences, which is also unlike the more merciful ending of the Jews in the English play.

[18] The *Dutch Church Libel* (1593) likewise connects the Dutch and Jews: 'And like the Jews, you eate us up as bread.', see Sjoerd Levelt and Ad Putter, *North Sea Crossings: The Literary Heritage of Anglo-Dutch Relations 1066-1688* (Oxford, Bodleian Library Publishing, 2021), pp. 200-1. Jews were also often associated with medicine in the Middle Ages. Before the Expulsion, several Jews in East Anglia worked as medical professionals and even after the Expulsion of 1290 a few Jewish doctors worked in England, e.g. Henry IV engaged the foreign Jew Elias de Sabatto (Carole Rawcliffe, *Medicine and Society in Later Medieval England* (Sutton, Stroud, 1995), p. 112. All of this may further link the Flemish doctor with Jews.

Just as late medieval England was often virulently anti-Semitic, so it was at times characterised by strong anti-Flemish sentiment. Attacks and outbursts against aliens were usually underpinned by specific economic and/or political concerns and frustrations, and this is true for anti-Flemish sentiment as well. The massacre of Flemings in 1381 in London and certain places in East Anglia can be linked to the crown's refusal to absorb Flemish weavers into local guilds.[19] In 1435 the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, switched allegiance from England to France, which turned people from the Low Countries from allies into England's enemies. This change seems to have been felt almost immediately, and chronicles and other sources mention that various people who originated in the Duchy of Burgundy were murdered in England.[20] After Philip the Good's siege of Calais in 1436 a rumour spread in London that Dutch beer was poisoned with the result that several breweries belonging to people from Dutch-speaking areas were attacked. To rebut this rumour/danger, people from the Low Countries intent on staying in England were ordered to take an oath of fealty; around 2,000 people from Dutch-speaking areas took the oath.[21] In 1470, when Edward IV fled to the protection of the Duke of Burgundy, there were more attacks on Flemings by supporters of the anti-Burgundian Earl of Warwick.[22] The 1484 Common's petition, which complained that some Dutch and Flemish immigrants came to England only with an eye to financial gain, betrays predominantly economic concerns.[23]

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[19] Ormrod a.o., *Immigrant England*, p. 242.

[20] Ormrod a.o., *Immigrant England*, p. 243.

[21] Sylvia L. Thrupp, 'A Survey of the Alien Population of England in 1440', *Speculum*, 32 (1957), 262-73 (p. 265); Jessica Lutkin, 'England's Immigrants 1330-1550: A New Prosopographical Database', *Medieval Prosopography*, 32 (2017), 228-48 (p. 232); Ormrod a.o., *Immigrant England*, p. 243.

[22] Ormrod a.o., *Immigrant England*, p. 246.

[23] Thrupp, 'A Survey', p. 269.

We do not know the exact date of the composition and performance(s) of the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* and can therefore not situate it in relation to specific changes in the economy or on the international political scene; we need to read the doctor from Brabant against the general backdrop of anxiety about relations with and immigration from the Low Countries. Moreover, East Anglia had especially strong interests in trade with the Low Countries, which inevitably resulted in a level of competition and rivalry as well as the presence of Flemish aliens in this part of England, which makes an anti-Flemish stance in the play probable.

It is far from evident, however, that a doctor from Brabant was the most obvious target or type to stage in order to express such concern. Most recorded attacks against Flemings are against tradespeople and artisans that were seen to pose a danger to English livelihoods, as in 1468 when a London skinner proposed to cut off thumbs or hands of Flemish craftsmen in Southwark, thus rendering them incapable of working more, 'For that the Flemyngs there take away the living of English people'.[24] As scholars have noted, attacks against aliens can nearly always be linked back to political, but above all economic, concerns.[25] This would suggest that the most likely target/type to use to stage anti-Flemish sentiment would be a Fleming linked to a profession where there was significant enough Flemish involvement for these aliens to be seen as an economic threat. It is therefore necessary to explore not only the presence of immigrants from the Low Countries, and especially Brabant, in later fifteenth-century East Anglia but also the degree to which these were involved in medical professions. The *England's Immigrants 1330-1550, Resident Aliens in the Late Middle Ages* database can give us a sense of how typical, or not, Master Brundyche of Brabant's lodging near Babwell Mills may have been for a contemporary

[24] Ormrod, a.o., *Immigrant England*, p. 245.

[25] Ormsrod a.o., *Immigrant England*, pp. 249-50, 257.

audience, which in turn may lead us better to understand how and why a medical practitioner from Brabant might have become the target and/or expression of anti-Flemish sentiment in late fifteenth-century East Anglia.

The English attempts at recording and taxing aliens have left us with valuable sources about immigrant presence in late medieval England although the records (mainly alien subsidies and letters of denizens) used for the database are incomplete and give only a glimpse of the situation on the ground. Not many immigrants took out letters of denizens which, in return for a fee and an oath of allegiance to the crown, gave them the same rights as English subjects. The poll tax imposed on non-natives in England first came into effect in 1440 and the records for the 1440s seem to be the most complete. Unfortunately, given the probable date of our play, the subsidy records are much less fulsome in the later fifteenth century, with a gap from 1471 to 1483-4 when a last collection was imposed. But even for years when there was a tax collection, steep fluctuations in numbers suggest not all assessments were equally thorough. For example, nearly 500 people were assessed in Suffolk in 1440 but only 77 in 1442.[26] Some areas, such as the liberty of St. Edmunds, are not consistently assessed. This suggests that the abbey was somehow protecting its alien citizens by exemption or by denying officials access. Given that our play has been tentatively been linked with Bury St. Edmunds and certainly references its environment (as both Croxton and Babwell Priory are close to Bury St. Edmunds), this gap in the records is particularly to be regretted. Another issue with the data is the origin of the immigrants, which is sometimes noted in the records, but not always reliably so. For example, a clothmaker named Johst de Man working in Suffolk in 1483 is labelled as Italian despite the name very much suggesting

[26] <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/page/sources/alien-subsidies/east-anglia/suffolk> [accessed 22 November 2022 – this is the date for all references to the database]. Even if some of the aliens may have moved elsewhere or died in those intervening years, the discrepancy suggests uneven thoroughness.

an origin in the Low Countries.[27] And speakers of various Germanic languages were often lumped together, as Jacobus Denmark who paid subsidy in 1440 in Suffolk, is labelled 'Dutch'.[28] As a result, we need to be careful with the data and bear in mind the gaps.

Nevertheless, a picture, flawed and fragmented though it is, emerges. Norfolk and Suffolk are the most important counties for the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* as Croxton is in Norfolk and Babwell Mill was owned by the Benedictine abbey at Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk. There was undoubtedly immigration from the Low Countries into these two counties. In the records of the first collection of tax, 1440, the majority of immigrants in Suffolk are described as 'Dutch' which suggests a link to the Low Countries. In 1483 the vast majority of immigrants in Norfolk were from the Low Countries or Scotland.[29] Historical evidence therefore suggests that the presence of Flemish immigrants in East Anglia would have been a realistic detail. But how typical might a doctor from Brabant have been?

If we search for the key word 'Brabant' from 1440 to 1500 on the database, we get 305 entries, though not all of these people were necessarily from Brabant as the database lists the nationality as Flemish, Dutch, and even French for some of them.[30] But the vast majority do seem to be from the Duchy of Brabant. A significant proportion of these are based in Cambridgeshire (80); 45 live in Cambridge itself, the next biggest conglomeration is London with 40. We find people from Brabant in Suffolk (13) and Norfolk (10) as well, but these counties are the antepenultimate and penultimate in the list. Of the thirteen in Suffolk, none appear in Bury St. Edmunds (but recall that the records for Bury are especially poor). We find six servants, such as Michael Akerman from Antwerp who probably worked as a fuller

[27] 18105, <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/18105>.

[28] 14287, < https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/14287>.

[29] <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/page/sources/alien-subsidies/east-anglia/norfolk>.

[30] The southern part of Brabant was French speaking, which makes the label 'French' less incongruous.

given the name of his employer (John Fuller) in 1483[31]; one beerbrewer, namely Cornelius Berebrewer[32]; and the remainder are people with unspecified occupation. Most of the people with unspecified occupation are householders which suggests a certain economic and social status. In Norfolk we find Alice Hosedowyn, a female householder and beerseller[33], a servant-hatmaker, and a weaver, but we do not know the occupation of the remaining seven (four of which are householders).[34] Despite the smaller numbers in Norfolk and Suffolk, we can safely assume that people from Brabant were present in a variety of trades and with a range of social statuses.

However, medical professionals from Brabant do not seem to have been common. Searching under the key word 'medical' (which covers barber, physician, doctor of medicine, and surgeon) from 1440 to 1500 gives 67 entries. The individual entries vary quite a lot in the amount of information they contain. We know, for instance, that William Barber, a male living in Exeter, was a barber of Flemish origin and a householder who paid taxes in 1484.[35] But we have no idea where Deryk, a beerbrewer and surgeon ('surion') living in Lowestoft in Suffolk in 1483 came from, nor why he failed to pay even though he was assessed to pay 20s as the keeper of a brewhouse.[36] And we do not even know the name of the two Aragonese

[31] 18182, <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/18182>.

[32] 17618, <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/17618>.

[33] 13298, <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/13298>.

[34] The picture is somewhat clearer in Cambridgeshire where just over half are non-householders (46) and just under half (36) are listed as servants. Many of these immigrants were cordwainers, weavers, tailors, and shoemakers. <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/page/sources/alien-subsidies/east-anglia/cambridgeshire>.

[35] 59687, <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/59687>.

[36] 17813, <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/17813>. The fact that he is associated with beer brewing points towards a possible Flemish origin.

doctors of medicine who were based in Long Melford, Suffolk in 1483.[37] The presence of two medical doctors from Aragon reasonably close to the area mentioned in the Croxton play, which is ostensibly set in Aragon and features a medical professional is intriguing, especially given that it is 'highly unusual to find immigrants from the Iberian peninsula in medieval England'.[38] Three of the 67 entries for 'medical' are listed as 'Dutch' (all three helpfully have Ducheman or like as surname), and another three as 'Fleming'. None of these were based in East Anglia. There is also one Frisian and someone from Liège but, again, neither of these were again based in East Anglia. Of those with no place of origin, some appear to be Frisian (John Frise) and some French (John Fraunceys) but for most it is impossible to tell where they are from. Not a single entry has an obvious link with Brabant.[39]

Of the seven immigrant members of the medical profession that are listed under Suffolk, two are from Aragon, two from Picardy, one from France, and one from 'Almain' (Germany). This leaves only Deryk, the beerbrewer and surgeon, without a known place of origin. The status of these men varies quite widely from the two Picard servants of the barber John Wapon (Janyn[40] and Arnold[41]), to household barbers such as the German Augustine Barbour[42], to the Aragonese doctors of medicine.[43] None of the 67 medical immigrants are

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[37] 18209, <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/18209> and 18210. <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/18210>.

[38] Lutkin, 'England's Immigrants 1330-1550,' p. 241.

[39] It is perhaps worth noting that most people carrying the family name Braban and variations thereof were linen weavers and cloth merchants, see Patrick Hanks, Richard Coates and Peter McClure (eds) *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016) s.v. 'Braban', 'Brabin', 'Brabiner', 'Brabazon'.

[40] 18559, <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/18559>.

[41] 18558, <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/18558>.

[42] 18407, <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/18407>.

[43] 18209, <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/18209> and 18210, <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/18210>.

based in Norfolk. Of course, we must bear in mind the gaps and misinformation in the records – and certainly iterant immigrants like Master Brundyche would have been harder to pin down –, but nevertheless we cannot say that a strong picture of medical men from Brabant (or even the Low Countries more widely) working in East Anglia (or even in England more generally) emerges.

Which raises the question: why a doctor from Brabant specifically? Obviously Brundyche of Brabant has a nice alliterative ring to it. It has also been suggested that Brabant had a good medical reputation in late medieval England and that this further explains the origin of our doctor.[44] This is less convincing, at least partly because it is by no means certain that our doctor is indeed a reputable doctor (by medieval standards) rather than a womanising, alcoholic charlatan. Moreover, the evidence suggests that Brabant's medical reputation was lacklustre. It is doubtlessly true that Continental medical training was more highly regarded than English medical training, so having a doctor from the continent may have lent an extra *cachet*.[45] But not all places on the continent had a reputation for excellence in medical training. Although the university at Leuven (Louvain) had a medical faculty from the beginning, the international standing of the faculty does not appear to have been high.[46]

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[44] For example, Linster, 'The Physician', pp. 35-36.

[45] See, for example, C. H. Talbot, *Medicine in Medieval England* (London, Oldbourne, 1967), pp. 68-9, 205.

[46] C. H. Talbot and E. A. Hammond (eds), *The Medical Practitioners in Medieval England: A Biographical Register* (London, Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1965) only mentions two late fifteenth-century Scots who have (tentative) links with the University of Leuven: Michael Ker who probably studied in Leuven around 1480-1486 (pp. 215-6) and William Scheves, who became Archishop of St Andrews in 1478, from whom the main attraction of Leuven seems to be have been astrology (pp. 413-4). See also Linda Ehrsam Voigts, 'Fifteenth-Century English Banns Advertising the Services of an Itinerant Doctor', in Eliza Glaze and Brian K. Nance (eds), *Between Text and Patient: The Medical enterprise in Medieval & Early Modern Europe*, (Florence, Sismel, 2011), pp. 245-77 (pp. 272-3). She further cites a London-based doctor from Liège and the writings of John of

The doctor should instead have had an association with places such as Paris, Bologna, Montpellier, or Padua – not Brabant. This may well be a joke: our doctor (or at least his crier, as we will see) is too incompetent to even know that claiming to be from Brabant is underwhelming. The likelihood that our doctor is a quack presumably renders his supposed Continental origins extra humourous.

If the claim to be from the Continent is potentially an advertising strategy, it raises the possibility that the claim is false.[47] The label 'of Braban' (ll. 533, 566) is used twice by Colle, before the doctor appears, in his long speech to recruit patients for his master. Colle is a circumspect source of information who admits to having lied to his audience: 'I haue told all þis audiense – | And some lyes among.' (ll. 579-80). We should perhaps not take his word for it. Apart from these two references, there is nothing in the scene and stage directions to suggest a foreign origin of the doctor.

It is not clear to what extent a medieval dramatic script would reflect linguistic differences resulting from a non-native speaker speaking English. The Towneley *Second Shepherds' Play* features a sheep-stealing northerner who pretends to be from the south and uses southern English dialect features to do so. However, the Towneley manuscript is from the mid-sixteenth century and the date of the play is unknown; it is therefore possible that this evidence is too late to be relevant for our play. Some Dutch (e.g. 'rutterkin', 'rutter', ll. 747, 752), and more French, is used in John Skelton's *Magnificence* (c.1515-23), and probably to comic effect as some of it quite garbled, e.g. 'Say vous chaunter' for 'Savez vous chanter' ('Do you know how to sing', l. 750). But *Magnificence* is again quite late. Later Tudor plays

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Burgundy from Liège whose writings were known in England under the names 'John of Bordeaux' and 'John of Liège'. However, the prince-bishopric of Liège was never part of the Duchy of Brabant.

[47] Voigts, Fifteenth-Century English Banns', 271 is the only scholar to my knowledge to question the origin of the doctor: 'Master Brendyche/Brundyche of Braban, is a foreigner, or perhaps an Englishman who has something to gain by claiming to be from the Continent.'

feature a little more Dutch. For instance, we encounter a Vice character pretending not to be able to communicate in English with 'Ick en can ghene englishe spreken vorwaer' ('Truly, I don't speak English', l. 415) in *A new and mery Enterlude, called the Triall of Treasure* (probably 1565-7).[48] While they are too late to be conclusive, overall these instances point to English playwrights – though possibly all from the sixteenth century – exploiting the use of non-native vernaculars to enhance the comedy of their plays. It is possible that a pseudo-Dutch pronunciation was added in performance and is not reflected in the written text. But, generally speaking, medieval English plays tend to contain information about actions and the like in the spoken text and our play text is no exception. For example, when Jonathas runs around madly, this is highlighted in his speech as well as in the stage directions:

> And in woodnesse I gynne to wake!
>
> I renne, I lepe ouer þis lond.
>
> *Her he renneth wood, with þe Ost in hys hond.* (ll. 502-3 plus stage direction)

Nothing in Brundyche's speeches or in the stage directions suggests that he sounds – or tries to sound – foreign. It is curious that the playwright did not exploit this potential, given their obvious interest in linguistic showmanship as evidenced by the alliterative lists of Aristorius and Jonathas and the high-brow medical terms used by Colle as well as by the several puns and the different rhyme scheme of the doctor interlude. If Master Brundyche was indeed not characterised linguistically, it brings to the fore (whether intentionally or not) the fact that Master Brundyche is in fact native English, despite the label 'of Braban'.

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[48] William Wager, *A new and mery Enterlude, called the Triall of Treaure* (London, Thomas Purfoote, 1567; <http:collections.chadwyck.com> [accessed 2009]). It is interesting to note that these early examples of Dutch on the English stage are sometimes associated with an English character (even if they are allegorical, they are not depicted as being foreign) momentarily assuming foreign guise: some of these characters are not actually supposed to be from the Low Countries.

The claim that the doctor is from the Low Countries is potentially further undermined by the names used to label the figure in the speeches. While the speech headings consistently have 'Master Brundyche' – which is generally accepted to stand for 'Brownditch' –, in the speeches we encounter 'Mayster Brendyche of Braban' (l. 533), 'Master Brundyche of Braban' (l. 566), and 'Master Brentberecly' (l. 609).[49] The last one is intriguing as is does not represent merely a variant spelling and it seems improbable that it is a garbled rendition of Brundyche (which is moreover spelled well in the preceding speeches and in speech headings before and after this occurrence). 'Brentberecly' arguably sounds more English than Dutch.[50] Whereas Colle emphasises the foreign origin of the doctor through the pseudo-Dutch surname and the label of origin before the doctor appears on stage, in the doctor's presence there are no such claims to a foreign origin. The supposed doctor from Brabant appears to be English after all once he appears on stage.

In fact, we can call into question whether the name 'Brundyche' or 'Brownditch' can be seen as a good instance of belittling and stereotyping immigrants from the Low Countries. Some immigrants from the Low Countries did have the surname 'Dyke' or variations

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[49] The list of characters at the end of the play merely labels this character 'Magister phisicus'. Barns is the only scholar I have come across who addresses the very different version of the name at line 609, although I find her suggestion, namely that this particular speech is an interpolation and that 'it is not too unlikely that Brentberecky was a local physician near Croxton, who, for some reason or other, was given publicity in the interpolation in the English play when it was performed at Croxton.' (pp. 218-9) rather unlikely.

[50] Ravenhill (p. 196) notes that aliens sometimes had two names, with one fitting English naming patterns. As 'Brentberecly' does not seem to consist of an Anglicised version of 'Brundyche' or a professional label, the use of more English and foreign nomenclature by aliens is unlikely to explain the use of the two different names in this instance. I have not found the name Brentberecly in any other source, but perhaps the first part resembles the family name 'Brent' and the second part 'Barclay', which includes variants like Berkeley. Neither of these family names is particularly associated with East Anglia (Hanks a.o. (eds), *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names*, s.v. 'Brent', 'Barclay').

thereon, such as Hanys Dyker from Holland.[51] The *England's Immigrants 1330-1550* database lists only fourteen entries for 1440-1500 for Dyke* and Dyche*; not a single one of these people resided in East Anglia and only Hanys Dyker is specifically associated with the Low Countries. The name 'Brownditch' is not attested in the records. But names associated with dike or ditch are not predominantly linked with the Flemish in the Middle Ages, e.g. Robert Dyker seems to have been from Elgin in Scotland.[52] Moreover, scholars of the play do not seem to have noted that Brundish was a reasonably common family name in Suffolk and Norfolk, derived from the place name Brundish in Suffolk, with attestation from the late twelfth onwards.[53] There is therefore a strong possibility that, despite to label 'of Braban', we are dealing with a local Brundish not an alien 'Brownditch'.

This rather complicates the overall message of the play. The Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* evidently manifests anxiety about dangerous outside influences. The local merchant with international trade links, the foreigner merchants, and the foreign doctor all present dangerous corruptions. The danger of Master Brundyche for society, namely medical maltreatment, drunkenness, and sexual vices, are rather more mundane than the torture of the host, but they were presumably no less real, and in fact rather more likely to happen to a contemporary audience. The end of the play tries to circumscribe these dangerous foreign influences as Aristorius is forbidden from trading and the Jews are converted, baptised, and promptly leave the stage, thereby removing any lingering threat that they might represent. But this ending is not as neat as we might at first think. The iterant (and perhaps foreign) doctor is chased away by the Jews – not by the local populace – earlier in the play but he is never redeemed or formally expelled. This danger continues to lurk.

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[51] 57458, <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/person/57458>.

[52] Hanks a.o. (eds), *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names*, 'Dyker'; see also the entries for 'Dyke', 'Dicks', 'Dicker', 'Ditch', 'Ditcher'.

[53] Hanks a.o. (eds), *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names*, s.v. 'Brundish'.

Moreover, the ending calls into question the equation between internationalism and corruption. Both the reclaimed Aristorius who will 'go walke' (l. 977) and the recent converts who will 'walke by contré and cost' (l. 964) take up peripatetic, and presumably international, lives. Their future travels clearly serve as penance (ll. 965, 977) but also have the purpose of teaching and converting people: 'And to kep þe people owt of care | I wyll teache thys lesson to man and wyfe.' (ll. 974-5). This is fascinating for two reasons. Firstly, despite the fact that they are now all good Christians it nevertheless does not seem possible to integrate these reclaimed souls into the Eraclean setting. Not only do these characters need to leave and travel elsewhere, it also seems likely that the actors leave the stage: 'Now we take owr leave at lesse and mare' (l. 968) and 'Now take I my leave in thys place' (l. 976). As a result, the good Christian society of Eraclea at the end of the play is incredibly bare, consisting only of Episcopus and Presbiter. Without foreigners and international locals there is barely any society left. Secondly, the travels of Jonathas, Jason, Jasdon, Malchus, and Malchas, and of Aristorius are clearly positive having a penitential and even preacherly and missionary intent. Nevertheless, even if they are only to return to their home country (and it is not clear that this is the case), these men represent foreign influences which will try to bring about some change in their destination. While this impact would presumably have been deemed good by a Christian East Anglian audience, it still indicates that rejecting and dismissing foreigners and foreign influences is rather too simplistic.[54] In fact, the very

[54] East Anglia had a history of unbelief in transubstantiation, so perhaps not all audience members would have seen the promulgation of this miracle and its orthodox message as a force of good. For the presence of Lollards and doubts about transubstantiation in later medieval East Anglia, see John A. F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards, 1414-1520* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), esp. the chapter 'Eastern England'. The play has sometimes been seen as anti-Lollard propaganda to counter such unbelief, see, for example, Cecilia Cutts, 'The Croxton Play: An Anti-Lollard Piece', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 5:1 (1944), 45-60.

Croxton play is explicitly said to be foreign, being supposedly based on events which happened in Aragon ('Whych in Aragon was doon, þe sothe to saye, | In Eraclea', ll. 11-2) as well as a representation in Rome ('Thys marycle at Rome was presented, forsothe', l. 57), and it is certainly intended to influence its East Anglian spectators by confirming their faith in transubstantiation.

The corruption of the dangerous foreigners is in any case made easier in the play by fallible and even morally dubious locals who enable the visitors to Eraclea/East Anglia. Apart from the bishop who appears only at the end of the play, all representatives of the local population actively or unknowingly aid foreigners: Aristorius procures the eucharistic wafer for the Jews; Clericus facilitates the meeting between Aristorius and Jonathas and stands by as Aristorius steals the wafer from the church; Presbiter is too interested in feasting and drinking wine, which enables the theft of the eucharistic wafer; and the local crier Colle promotes (with lashings of humour) the (foreign) quack. The foreigners may be dangerous, but the locals can be dangerous and corrupting too. If the supposedly Flemish doctor is indeed English, this picture becomes even more pronounced.

The end of the play also subtly casts further doubt on the ease with which we can distinguish between local and foreign, which we have encountered in relation to the doctor who may well be an Englishman pretending to be foreign or whose crier may pretend he is foreign, at least. Aristorius claims 'Into my contré now wyll I fare' (l. 972) when he is about to leave the stage for the last time. At the beginning of the play he is explicitly linked to Eraclea (ll. 86-7) where all the events have happened, but now his 'contré' seems to be elsewhere. This may suggest he too is originally foreign, despite his claims about local status. The boundary between local and foreign is malleable and the ease with people may seem foreign/local despite not being so is disconcerting. All of this also applies to the play itself which is clearly an English composition despite its claims about being based on a Roman

representation and which is expressly set in a local East Anglian context despite depicting a Spanish miracle.

The inclusion of a doctor from Brabant in this peculiar play at first sight perfectly suits the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*'s ostensible purpose of highlighting the dangerous nature of foreign influences. The play's presentation of a Flemish character fits the historical, late-fifteenth-century East Anglian context of the play with immigration from the Low Countries and tensions due to rival trade claims of locals and immigrants in both nations. The comical portrayal of the quack/doctor may therefore reflect and feed contemporary anti-Flemish sentiment. It is moreover interesting to note the parallels with later stage representations of immigrants from the Low Countries; these parallels may point towards medieval roots for the Flemish stock character of early modern drama.

On closer inspection, however, the anti-Flemish reading of Master Brundyche becomes complicated. It is not clear that a doctor, rather than a merchant or tradesman, from Brabant, rather than the Low Countries more generally, would have been the most obvious choice for expressing and presumably encouraging anti-Flemish feeling. The surviving data recording alien presence in Suffolk and Norfolk suggests that a doctor from Brabant would have been a rarity, and as such have presented little competition to locals. Like the Syrian Jews, Master Brundyche seems to be a phantom menace rather than an actual threat to a contemporary East Anglian audience. In fact, it is not even certain that the doctor is, or claims to be, from Brabant. Instead the character helps to further muddle the initially clear image of dangerous outside influences than can be successfully averted by good Christian faith.

On close reading the play shows that dangerous influences can be internal as well as external in origin, that foreign and local cannot always be accurately distinguished, that not all external influences are corrupting and evil, and that not all corrupting influences or

presences can be successfully expelled. Moreover, the relatively bare stage at the close of the play points towards an understanding that internationalism is a large and integral part of local society. This more nuanced stance fits well with the scholarly reassessment of medieval anti-alien sentiment which is increasingly seen as being largely driven by internal economic concerns, or at times political concerns, rather than presenting wholesale xenophobia.[55] While at first sight, then, Master Brundyche of Brabant may seem straightforwardly to indicate the presence of a strong anti-Flemish sentiment in late medieval East Anglia, it is also possible to see this character very differently as enabling a reading of the play that gestures towards a more nuanced appreciation of international trade links and immigration, including with and from the Low Countries.

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[55] See, for instance, *Immigrant England*, pp. 254-61.

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