

Early Theatre

A Journal Associated with the Records of Early English Drama



An Edition of Jonson's Entertainment at Britain's Burse and a New Letter by Collier on Massinger in the Athenaeum (1857)

Marlin E. Blaine 

Volume 26, numéro 2, 2023

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1108250ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.12745/et.26.2.5265>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

McMaster University Library Press / Becker Associates

ISSN

1206-9078 (imprimé)

2293-7609 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Résumé de l'article

This article identifies two previously uncatalogued items that were published in the Athenaeum in November 1857, each of which is connected to the then-recent acquisition of the Conway Papers by the Public Record Office (now the National Archives). These include a printing of Jonson's Entertainment at Britain's Burse and a letter from John Payne Collier that seems to refer to Massinger's lost play Philenzo and Hippolyto. The former nuances the publication history of a work whose historical and dramatic importance recent scholarship demonstrates, while the latter offers evidence regarding Collier's claim that a manuscript of Massinger's play once lay among the Conway Papers.

Citer cet article

Blaine, M. (2023). An Edition of Jonson's Entertainment at Britain's Burse and a New Letter by Collier on Massinger in the Athenaeum (1857). *Early Theatre*, 26(2), 101–118. <https://doi.org/10.12745/et.26.2.5265>

Marlin E. Blaine

An Edition of Jonson's *Entertainment at Britain's Burse* and a New Letter by Collier on Massinger in the *Athenaeum* (1857)

This article identifies two previously uncatalogued items that were published in the Athenaeum in November 1857, each of which is connected to the then-recent acquisition of the Conway Papers by the Public Record Office (now the National Archives). These include a printing of Jonson's Entertainment at Britain's Burse and a letter from John Payne Collier that seems to refer to Massinger's lost play Philenzo and Hippolyto. The former nuances the publication history of a work whose historical and dramatic importance recent scholarship demonstrates, while the latter offers evidence regarding Collier's claim that a manuscript of Massinger's play once lay among the Conway Papers.

The acquisition by the Public Record Office (PRO), now known as the National Archives, of the rich archive known as the Conway Papers generated excitement in the world of English letters in 1857.¹ This trove of documents from the collections of the viscounts and earls of Conway had come into the hands of the politician and man of letters John Wilson Croker, who bequeathed them to the Public Record Office upon his death. Two early results of this acquisition that have gone unnoticed but that might be useful for scholars of early theatre to know of appeared in the *Athenaeum*, a weekly periodical that served as the Victorian equivalent of the *Times Literary Supplement* (TLS), publishing notices, reviews, and queries from leading intellectual and literary figures of the day. One of these items is an edition of the complete text of Ben Jonson's *Entertainment at Britain's Burse* by the historian Mary Anne Everett Green, though the work was not recognized at the time as Jonson's, with the result that it remained ignored until James Knowles rediscovered it in its anonymous manuscript, made the authorial attribution, and published it in the 1990s.² More than a historical curiosity, Green's text offers readings of the manuscript that help improve our understanding of

Marlin E. Blaine (mblaine@fullerton.edu) is a professor in the department of English, Comparative Literature, and Linguistics at California State University, Fullerton.

Jonson's work. The other item is an unsigned letter from John Payne Collier hitherto unnoticed by scholars and not included in bibliographies of his writings. This missive comprises a late salvo in his quarrel with Thomas Crofton Croker — who worked closely with John Wilson Croker but was unrelated to him — over Crofton Croker's 1849 edition of Philip Massinger's *Believe as You List*.³ The unacknowledged publication of Jonson's entertainment is a tale of a missed opportunity to explore a work that recent scholarship has shown to be valuable and interesting. Collier's letter, on the other hand, adds more matter to the saga of his feud with Crofton Croker and provides further, though confusing and possibly fraudulent, evidence regarding the manuscript of another Massinger play of which Collier claimed to have knowledge: the lost play *Philenzo and Hippolyta*, or, as he calls it, *Philenzo and Hippolyto*. Together, these items not only nuance our understanding of problems in the elusive histories of two works of Renaissance drama but also highlight potential opportunities for literary and theatrical historiographical research in venues such as the *Athenaeum* that have perhaps been under-utilized by scholars of early theatre.

The printing of *The Entertainment at Britain's Burse* in the 21 November 1857 issue of the *Athenaeum* is noteworthy because modern scholars had not seen the text of this work until Knowles published an edition of it in 1999. Indeed, before Knowles announced his attribution of the entertainment to Jonson in the *TLS* on 7 February 1997 (an announcement anticipated by an article in the *Times* six days earlier), scholars had known, only since 1957, that Jonson had written such a work.⁴ In that year, Lawrence Stone published his discovery of records of payments to the playwright for this entertainment celebrating the naming, on 11 April 1609, of Britain's Burse, a high-end 'shopping centre' that Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury and lord high treasurer was promoting as a venue for selling luxury goods from around the world.⁵ In addition to those records of payment, Cecil's papers from Hatfield House include a letter from his secretary Thomas Wilson outlining the production during its planning stages.⁶ We find general descriptions of the festivities in a diplomatic report by the Venetian ambassador Marc Antonio Correr and in Edmond Howes's continuation of John Stowe's *Annals*, though these documents provide only contextual information about the events of 11 April rather than any references to Jonson's entertainment.⁷ Until the rediscovery of the manuscript, however, no one could know what Jonson had actually written; meanwhile, as Knowles puts it, 'among the State Papers in the Public Record Office, a copy of what the calendar [ie, the *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic (CSPD)*] calls *The Key Keeper*, a "comic harangue of welcome" to James I, [had] lain unnoticed'.⁸

The Key Keeper is the title given in the *CSPD* for what is known today as *The Entertainment at Britain's Burse*: Green, who edited the volume of the *CSPD* quoted by Knowles, mistook the speech-heading of the character who delivers the prologue of the masque — a key-keeper or porter — for the title of the work.⁹ While Green recognized from internal evidence that the entertainment was connected to the festivities at Britain's Burse and indicated as much in her calendar entry, she did not identify this 'curious document' as a work by Jonson, nor could she be expected to have done so, since the Hatfield House records proving his authorship of it were unknown to her: the only record of the celebration at her disposal was Howes's account, which she cites, but it does not mention Jonson.¹⁰ Knowles has been justly credited for his detective work in identifying the entertainment as Jonson's work and bringing it to the attention of the scholarly community. It has been repeatedly, though incorrectly stated, however, that the entertainment was 'discovered', printed 'for the first time', or 'first pub[lished]' by Knowles in 1999.¹¹ In a remarkable feat of scholarship, Green had published it long before, very soon after the Conway Papers were bequeathed to the PRO. As she was preparing her entry for this 'harangue' in the *CSPD*, she posted a query in the 21 November 1857 issue of the *Athenaeum* briefly stating the provenance of its manuscript, surmising that its speeches were composed to celebrate Britain's Burse, and soliciting readers' responses either to 'confirm or contradict [her] conjecture'. To this end, she presented a complete modern-spelling edition of the text, which included emendations and some annotations.¹²

In its broad outlines, the edition that Green produced conforms to those produced by Knowles, though it differs in numerous particulars. We immediately notice that whereas Knowles retains the manuscript's presentation of the speeches of the Key Keeper and the Master as large blocks of text, Green divides them into paragraphs, highlighting transitions of thought. Where Green's text differs lexically from that of Knowles, we sometimes see her presenting readings that textual scholars should take seriously in the preparation of future editions. The most significant of these arises in a passage on various optical glasses that the Master offers for sale. In the Cambridge edition, Knowles has the merchant boast, 'But I am promised a glass shortly from a great master in the catoptrics, that I shall stand with o'th'top of Paul's, when the new spire is built, and set fire on a ship twenty leagues at sea in what line I will by parabolical fiction'. Green's text offers two substantive variants in this passage: 'Calopteric's' for 'catoptrics' and 'parabolical section' for 'parabolical fiction'.¹³ Knowles has perceptively identified the correct reading of 'catoptrics', which he glosses as 'the optics of reflection', where Green was misled by what appears to be an uncrossed *t* in the manuscript,

with the result that she reproduces a word that does not, in fact, exist (though she might have supposed that the Master had invented a pseudoscientific word as part of his mountebank-style flim-flam). Her reading of 'section' for 'fiction', however, is undoubtedly correct: 'parabolical section' is a technical term in the science of catoptrics that is associated with setting things on fire from a distance by using an optical glass. Book 17 of Giambattista della Porta's book of *Natural Magick*, first published in Latin in 1558, treats of 'experiments concerning Catoptrick-glasses' and includes a chapter titled 'Of a Parabolical Section, that is of all Glasses the most burning'. As della Porta explains, 'That is called a Parabolical Section, that more forcibly farther off, and in shorter time [ie, than a concave glass], will set matter on fire that is opposite to it', and he alludes to stories of ships being set ablaze by this means, just as the Master does.¹⁴ The reading of 'section' thus clearly applies here, whereas 'fiction' requires a bit of strain to fit to the context. Also in the passage on the glasses, as the Master describes a device that multiplies images, Green expands a scribal abbreviation differently and possibly more fluidly than Knowles, printing 'Your epicure buys them, too', where Knowles has 'Your epicure buys yonder, too!'.¹⁵ Her reading is plausible because the same scribe who wrote this word (identified by Knowles as 'Hand C') abbreviates *th* as *y* in each of the two succeeding lines in the manuscript and, moreover, the reading 'yonder' presents difficulty since there is no clear directional referent for it.¹⁶

A careful analysis of Green's text allows us to appreciate her perception of various other difficulties in the manuscript and admire, if not always to accept, her solutions. Where the manuscript reads 'the martiall aspecte of this cales beard together with the cloke bag slope and confyned to the chines of attornies, and brueers clearkes', Green retains 'slope', which Knowles emends to 'slops'.¹⁷ Either reading seems suitable to the context, since the singular 'slop' (or the variant 'slope') means a kind of jacket, while the plural form 'slops' designates a kind of breeches. The adjectival phrase 'cloak-bag' points to the latter meaning, however, because 'cloak-bag slops' were a specific cut of trousers, as Knowles explains.¹⁸ This passage also gives rise to divergent editorial choices regarding the manuscript's phrase 'and confined', which renders the sentence grammatically incoherent. Green proposes that the reading 'should probably be, "and doublet, made it confined"'.¹⁹ Knowles, on the other hand, follows Martin Butler's conjecture that 'and confined' is an error for 'was confined' that resulted from an eye-skip, since 'and' appears 'almost directly above' the offending phrase in the manuscript.²⁰ Knowles's emendation is more economical than Green's, but hers is not implausible. Elsewhere, Green seems to have felt that words had been inadvertently omitted and emended the text accordingly. Thus, she prints 'Sir, what do you lack?'

where the manuscript lacks 'do', and 'I will tell you, by the moving of his lips, what he speaks', where the manuscript lacks 'you'.²¹ In each of these instances, Green's additions bring the phrases into closer syntactical parallelism with sentences nearby. In another instance, however, her interpolation of 'shillings' to the Master's invitation to accept of wager of 'twenty to one' seems unnecessary.²² Green's refraining from emendation can at times have positive effects, as in her adoption of the manuscript's description of Hugh Offley, a tradesman and alderman, as the earl of 'Pancridge', which Knowles emends to 'Pancras'.²³ Green's choice retains a folksy, vernacular flavour appropriate to the Master's persona. 'Pancridge' is the form typically adopted in the comical honorific applied to Offley, which was used in the Finsbury archers' yearly processions, and Jonson adopted it elsewhere, often with humorous or even satiric intent.²⁴

Certain other discrepancies between Green's and Knowles's readings undoubtedly result from the hurried, often unclear handwriting of the manuscript, which bills of payment at Hatfield House suggest was composed by multiple hands in an overnight session.²⁵ Instances in which Green might have produced a preferable reading include her adoption of 'ears' where Knowles has 'ear', based on his reading of the manuscript text as 'eare', as indicated in the manuscript transcription he provides in the online edition, and 'Here' where Knowles has 'Higher'.²⁶ In the former case, the reference is to a china elephant, which would have two ears, and in the latter, 'Here' echoes the rhetorical structure of other sentences in which the Master points to various goods (eg 'Here be other mysteries' and 'Here is a book now' at lines 104 and 111). Elsewhere, we find Green apparently conjecturing 'Hanks of silk' in a phrase where the scribe has clumsily rewritten the first word in such a way that it is hard to decipher; Knowles has convincingly discerned that the proper reading is 'Flowers', spelled 'Flowrs' in the manuscript.²⁷ Still, Green has valiantly inferred a tenable reading where the manuscript is far from clear.²⁸ In sum, Green's edition of the entertainment is an admirable scholarly achievement, especially given the speed with which she worked: when *The Key Keeper* appeared in the *Athenaeum*, less than three and a half months had passed from Wilson Croker's death on 10 August 1857. Some of that time encompassed the transfer of the Conway Papers to the PRO, and some time had to have been spent sifting through the documents.²⁹ We will probably never know precisely when Green first encountered the manuscript of the entertainment but when she did, she very quickly identified its occasion and produced a highly readable text that, as I have argued, offers a number of valid readings of difficult passages. Green's name should thus join the list of women in Molly Yarn's recent book *Shakespeare's*

Lady Editors’ whose contributions to the study of Renaissance drama have not been properly acknowledged in the historiography of early modern theatre.³⁰

Knowledge of Green’s edition of *The Key Keeper* raises the question of why no one seems to have paid any attention to it. Her query about the entertainment elicited no replies (in the *Athenaeum*, at any rate) and no scholar appears to have made any further study of the manuscript before Knowles. Was the fact that Green was a woman offering the text to the public part of the reason it was ignored, like the contributions of so many of the women who figure in Yarn’s book? Perhaps — Green fought sexism throughout her career. On the other hand, she was a highly regarded historian praised by male contemporaries, such as David Masson, so her accomplishments in general were not entirely ignored.³¹ Whatever the case, we can only imagine how different the response might have been if Green had been able to identify Jonson as the author. Mark Vareschi has recently observed that ‘we may read attributed texts *because* they have been attributed — for what they have to tell us about their creator — rather than for the work they do, or did, in the world’.³² The failure of the anonymous work called *The Key Keeper* to elicit interest contrasts starkly with the excitement surrounding the same text when it became Jonson’s *Entertainment at Britain’s Burse* 140 years later — even allowing for the vast differences between the world of Victorian letters and today’s scholarly industry. Although contemporary scholars are indeed vigorously exploring what this work did ‘in the world’ socially, economically, and dramatically, we are doing so largely — probably even primarily — because the attribution to Jonson gave it value. The entertainment had been presented anonymously in 1857 and ignored, even though Green herself touted its importance by noting, ‘It contains much matter curiously illustrative of the domestic and social life of the period’.³³ But in our own time, Jonson’s cachet certainly helped bring attention to it: the *TLS* would certainly not have featured the entertainment had it remained anonymous. The attribution has allowed scholars to analyze the work within conceptual frameworks that a long tradition of Jonson criticism has erected. Critics have profitably put the entertainment into dialogue with *Volpone* and other works by Jonson in explorations of such topics as the early modern literary marketplace and cosmopolitanism, bearing out Green’s perception of the work’s social historical significance.³⁴

To be sure, anonymous works did receive attention by nineteenth-century scholars: John Nichols’s collections of the progresses of Elizabeth I and James I include many works of unknown authorship, for instance.³⁵ Undeniably, however if *The Key Keeper* had been attributed to Jonson in the *Athenaeum*, it would have generated more — or at least *some* — discussion in the wake of Green’s publication

of it: Tom Lockwood has demonstrated that, although Jonson's popularity during the Romantic and early Victorian eras had undoubtedly waned from that which he enjoyed during his own lifetime, his works continued to receive theatrical and critical attention.³⁶ William Gifford's edition of Jonson's works was reprinted many times after its appearance in 1816; in 1889, Algernon Charles Swinburne enthroned Jonson as king of the 'giants' of English literature, among whose ranks he included Dryden and Byron, though not among its 'gods', Shakespeare, Milton, and Shelley, with Shakespeare, unsurprisingly, reigning over the pantheon; and a year later, Henry Morley published a collection of Jonson's masques and entertainments.³⁷ The *Athenaeum's* readers evinced great eagerness for more knowledge of Jonson's life and writings when opportunities for it seemed to arise. Earlier in the same year that Green published *The Key Keeper*, the magazine's editor William Hepworth Dixon in an unsigned review of another of her volumes of the *CSPD* mused over what a letter from Jonson to Cecil suggested about the playwright's possible role as a government informer. In the 28 November 1857 issue, one week after Green's transcription and query appeared, John Payne Collier inquired in an anonymously published letter if any readers had knowledge of 'certain copies of verses' that he claimed the late Thomas Crofton Croker believed to be 'in the handwriting of Ben Jonson'.³⁸ Jonson's name clearly resonated in the *Athenaeum*.

The letter in which Collier asks about verses in Jonson's hand is the same one in which he raises questions about a Massinger manuscript among the Conway papers. This letter is not included in the massive bibliography of Collier's writings compiled by his biographers Arthur Freeman and Janet Ing Freeman and neither has it figured in critical discussions of a puzzling statement he made, in his edition of Philip Henslowe's diary, about a Massinger manuscript among the Conway Papers, nor in accounts of his relations with Crofton Croker. An indication of Collier's authorship of the letter appears in what is known as the 'marked copy' of *Athenaeum* issues, now housed in the City, University of London archives, in which the magazine's editors recorded the names of authors of anonymous contributions by means of handwritten notes in the margins: Collier's name is inscribed next to this letter.³⁹ It will be useful to quote this text at length because it is elliptical and vague in manner like much of Collier's writing:

A few years ago, the late Mr. Crofton Croker showed me a MS., which was of more interest than he at that time imagined, although he introduced it to my notice by stating, as the fact undoubtedly was, that it was an original and unpublished play by Massinger. The particular title it bore is of no consequence; but the name of Philip

Massinger was upon the cover, as Mr. C. Croker pointed out. He did not then know that the signature was the autograph of the dramatist, although the body of the performance was clearly the work of some scribe: it was corrected in various places by Massinger, and not only so; but, if my memory serves me, nearly all the stage directions had been inserted by the poet. I inquired from whence it came, my belief being (as it still is) that it was the copy of the play which had been sent to the Master of the Revels for approbation before performance. Mr. C. Croker informed me that it was one of the Conway Papers; and that it had been lent, or given, to him (I am not sure which) by the late Right Hon. J. W. Croker. I am anxious to know what has become of this MS.; because, when the drama was printed by one of the then existing literary Societies, the editor, I think, did not seem to be acquainted with the fact, that Massinger had himself contributed so much to show the authenticity of the piece. As a good deal has been lately said in the *Athenaeum* regarding the Conway Papers, perhaps some of its Correspondents may be able to state whether this drama has been found among them, or whether it was sold with the books of the late Mr. Crofton Croker.⁴⁰

Although Collier states that 'the particular title' of the play 'is of no consequence', his reference to its printing a few years earlier 'by one of the then existing literary Societies' clarifies that the 'title it bore' was *Believe as You List*, published in 1849 by Thomas Crofton Croker under the auspices of the Percy Society, which disbanded in 1852. That edition occasioned a bitter controversy between Crofton Croker and Collier, of which Freeman and Freeman have provided a thorough account.⁴¹ Soon after its publication, Collier published an anonymous review under the imprint of the Shakespeare Society that called into question Crofton Croker's editorial competence, proposed alternative readings of various passages, and suggested emendations of the manuscript's text, some of which have been validated by later editors.⁴² Crofton Croker counter-attacked by disparaging Collier's own paleographical abilities, alleging that his antagonist had proven unable to read Massinger's handwriting when shown the manuscript; it was in response to 'this evident incompetence', he asserted, that he decided to edit the play himself rather than allow Collier to do so.⁴³ The animus of the two combatants engulfed the leaders and memberships of both literary societies and Crofton Croker continued to complain about Collier's attacks for the next few years, lamenting in 1852 that the controversy had made him loath to present another edited work for the Percy Society's consideration.⁴⁴ The volume that he ultimately did present (the third book of William Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*) also received a harsh review by Collier.⁴⁵ Crofton Croker subsequently accused Collier of stealing a manuscript

from him.⁴⁶ In 1854, Crofton Croker's death seemingly brought an end to the feud. As the Freemans put it, 'On Collier's part — regarding T. Crofton Croker, Massinger, and the Percy Society — there was silence again'.⁴⁷

But in November 1857, Collier ruptured that silence in his letter to the *Athenaeum*, subtly rehearsing and amplifying the charges of scholarly deficiencies that he had made against Crofton Croker years earlier. Given the public nature of the controversy over *Believe as You List*, many contemporaries would have immediately known that Collier wrote this letter, particularly in light of its slighting references to Crofton Croker's editorial abilities: Collier still seems to have been looking to score points in his contest with a dead man. The most attentive readers might have been confused, however, by Collier's statement that the manuscript had formed part of the Conway Papers and that John Wilson Croker had given or lent it to Crofton Croker, whereas Crofton Croker had unambiguously stated in his introduction *Believe as You List* that he had received the manuscript of that play (now known as British Library, MS Egerton 2828) from Samuel Beltz of Fullham, who in turn had found it among documents that had belonged to his late brother, the Lancaster herald George Frederick Beltz.⁴⁸ Collier does admit to having a hazy recollection on some points, so perhaps he simply misremembered, though his habitual slipperiness makes any such conclusion tentative. His recollection that the manuscript bore Massinger's signature and corrections to the text, which was in the hand 'of some scribe', as well as his more diffident statements that 'nearly all the stage directions had been inserted by the poet', further suggest that he is recalling *Believe as You List*, as these details correspond closely with Crofton Croker's description of the manuscript in the preface to his edition, though modern scholarship disagrees with this assessment of the handwriting.⁴⁹ In addition, Collier's 'belief' that the manuscript 'was the copy of the play which had been sent to the Master of the Revels for approbation' also points to *Believe as You List*, the manuscript of which bears just such an approbation.

Collier's reference to the Conway Papers, on the other hand, recalls his claim in his 1845 edition of Henslowe's diary that a manuscript of *Philenzo and Hippolyto* lay somewhere in that archive. Scholarly consensus holds that such a play did exist and in the eighteenth century John Warburton included a Massinger play by that name in a list of manuscripts notoriously destroyed by his cook.⁵⁰ This work is surely identical to a play by Massinger titled *Philenzo and Hypollita* that the printer Humphrey Moseley entered in the Stationers' Register on 29 June 1660.⁵¹ Whether a manuscript of this play — under either name — also formed part of the Conway Papers has been a matter of scholarly debate, with doubts fueled in part by the fact that it was the notoriously unreliable Collier who stated that it

did.⁵² Collier himself speculated that the play lost in Warburton's kitchen may have been a revision of a work that Henslowe calls *Phillipo and Hewpolyto*, and F.G. Fleay and W.W. Greg later argued along similar lines.⁵³ Among his addenda and corrigenda to Henslowe's *Diary*, Collier adds with frustrating imprecision, 'We have been informed ... that Massinger's play of Philenzo and Hippolyto has been recovered in MS., having been found among the Conway Papers'.⁵⁴ No such manuscript has ever been located, however.

Explanations of this disappointing state of affairs have included Collier's possible confusion or an act of intentional deception on his part, although Daniel Starza Smith has recently suggested that the manuscript might have become separated from the archive at some point, as is known to have happened with other items. Smith further suggests that Collier's informant might have been John Wilson Croker — a reasonable inference given that the Conway Papers were in his possession in 1845.⁵⁵ Even more recently, however, Misha Teramura has convincingly argued that Collier's future antagonist Thomas Crofton Croker was likely to have been the party who alerted him to the existence of this manuscript. In his entry on *Philenzo and Hippolyta* in the online *Lost Plays Database*, Teramura speculates, 'It could be that the communication between Croker and Collier about the Massinger manuscript, which took place as Collier was finishing his edition of Henslowe's diary ... led Croker to mention the manuscript of "Philenzo and Hippolyto" in a collection with which he was familiar'.⁵⁶ Collier's 1857 query, which explicitly identifies Crofton Croker as his source for information about a manuscript from the Conway Papers, buttresses Teramura's hypothesis that it was he rather than Wilson Croker who had somehow led Collier to believe that there was a Massinger play in that collection. But if this is the case, Collier's claim in the letter that he had been shown such a manuscript well surpasses the statement in his edition of Henslowe that he has merely been 'informed' of it. Coming so long after his initial claim about the lost play and arising amid allusions to the events surrounding *Believe as You List*, Collier's claim to have seen any Massinger manuscript from the Conway Papers must be treated with healthy caution. Indeed, a desire to rehash his old resentment might have been the motive of the letter all along, with the story about having seen a Massinger manuscript from the Conway Papers being fabricated as a pretext to attack the memory of Crofton Croker. Collier was certainly capable of such duplicity. A self-conscious attempt to confuse the circumstances of the two manuscripts might also explain why he professes not to know the whereabouts of the copy he is describing. He might well have been aware that the manuscript of *Believe as You List* had been traded by James Orchard Halliwell only a few months earlier, in April 1857, to

the antiquarian Thomas Corser in exchange for 'a fragment of the first sixteen leaves of the first edition of Shakespeare's *Lucrece*'.⁵⁷ As the Freemans put it, the relationship between Collier and Halliwell was, through the years, 'reasonably warm, if warily so' — though this ambiguous characterization simultaneously provides reason for believing that Collier could have known of the exchange and for supposing that Halliwell kept the transaction a secret from him for reasons of professional rivalry.⁵⁸

The multiple ambiguities and apparent confusion in Collier's letter mean that it ultimately adds more confusion to discussions of a supposed manuscript of *Philenzo and Hippolyto* in the Conway Papers. Conversely, the discovery of Mary Anne Everett Green's publication of Jonson's entertainment demonstrates her clear-eyed perception of its value and her extraordinary diligence in sharing her discovery. In the one case, we might wonder how generations of scholars would have read *The Key Keeper* had it been recognized as Jonson's, while in the other, where we find Collier further muddying the waters, we remain left to ponder what degree of truth ever lay in his claims about Massinger's lost play: we might ask, borrowing Martin Wiggins's words on Collier's puzzling remark in his edition of Henslowe, if he was 'misinformed or (true to his reputation) mendaciously mischievous'?⁵⁹ The contrast between the characters and motives that drove two eminent and ingenious scholars whose impact on the world of letters is still felt to this day — the sincere, devoted Mary Anne Everett Green, posting a query in hopes of achieving confirmation of her (correct) scholarly assessment, and the petty, perverse Collier, writing at least in part to resurrect a grievance and simultaneously making other matters more obscure than they already were — is epitomized in the contributions that each made to the *Athenaeum* in late November 1857.

Finally, by way of a postscript, I would like to suggest that the discovery of these two documents published only one week apart raises the possibility that other valuable material for literary and theatrical history still lies unnoticed in the multitudinous volumes of the *Athenaeum* and similar publications. Indeed, I myself recently published an attribution study based on my discovery of overlooked information in another British periodical: the dramatist and entrepreneur Aaron Hill's early eighteenth-century newspaper the *British Apollo*. In this case, the late Hilton Kelliher's attribution of a popular and influential neo-Latin epigram to John Dryden had been met with hesitation among scholars because of the uncertain authority of the manuscript on which it was based. The periodical's attribution of the poem to Dryden offered persuasive confirmation of Kelliher's hypothesis.⁶⁰ How many further discoveries await among the many newspapers,

magazines, and digests that have channeled the energies, expertise, and knowledge of countless men and women of letters for centuries? As digitized versions of such publications become increasingly available in online venues such as Google Books, the HathiTrust Digital Library, and other platforms, they offer a highly accessible, easily searchable resource for scholars everywhere, including those who lack access to the great research libraries of the world. This is not to say that the *Athenaeum* has been completely neglected, of course: the Freemans' study of Collier, to take only one instance, mines its pages extensively. But the fact that a published work by Ben Jonson had been there and gone unacknowledged for over a century and a half is a stunning reminder that more remains for us to do with the *Athenaeum* and similar periodicals.

Notes

I wish to thank Misha Teramura for his thoughtful and provocative comments on an earlier draft of this article.

- 1 On the history of the Conway Papers, see Daniel Starza Smith, *John Donne and the Conway Papers: Patronage and Manuscript Circulation in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 2014), 133–70, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199679133.001.0001>
- 2 James Knowles, 'Cecil's Shopping Centre: The Rediscovery of a Ben Jonson Masque in Praise of Trade', *Times Literary Supplement* (7 February 1997), 14–15. The text of the entertainment that Knowles prepared for *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson (CEWBJ)*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, 7 vols (Cambridge, 2012), is now the standard edition. Knowles also described the manuscript (National Archives, SP 14/44/62*), discussed its provenance, and published his first edition of the text in 'Jonson's *Entertainment at Britain's Burse*', in *Re-presenting Ben Jonson: Text, History, Performance*, ed. Martin Butler (Houndmills, 1999), 117–51 and produced a separate edition of it three years later (*The Key Keeper* [Tunbridge Wells], 2002).
- 3 For the relationship between the two Crokers, see W.J. McCormack, 'Croker, Thomas Crofton', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)*, 2006, <https://doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780192683120.013.6741>.
- 4 Dayna Alberge, 'Rediscovered: Jonson's Play in Praise of Shopping', *Times* (1 February 1997), 5.
- 5 Lawrence Stone, 'Inigo Jones and the New Exchange', *Archaeological Journal* 114 (1957), 106–21; see also Scott McMillin, 'Jonson's Early Entertainments: New Information from Hatfield House', *Renaissance Drama* 1 (1968), 153–66. The relevant

- bills and accounts include Hatfield House, Bills 35/1a and Hatfield House, Accounts 160/1, ff 18, 33v, 42, 51. These documents are all cited from transcriptions in *CEWBJ Online* (Masque Archive, *Britain's Burse*, 2, 11, 10). The evocative term 'shopping-centre' comes from the title of Knowles's *TLS* article, cited above.
- 6 Thomas Wilson to Cecil, 31 March 1609, Hatfield House, Cecil Papers 195, f 168; *CEWBJ Online*, Masque Archive, *Britain's Burse*, 10.
 - 7 Archivio di Stato, Venetia, *VIII Inghilterra 1609*, *Marco Antonio Correr Amb., Senato III, Secreta*; John Stow and Edmond Howes, *The Annales, or a Generall Chronicle of England; or, a General Chronicle of England* (London, 1615), 895, both available in the *CEWBJ Online* Masque Archive, *Britain's Burse*, 13, 14.
 - 8 Knowles, 'Cecil's Shopping Centre', 14.
 - 9 Mary Anne Everett Green, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of James I, 1623–1625, with Addenda* (London, 1859), 541. Knowles explains the rationale for the now-current title in *CEWBJ* 3.357n. In early publications, such as the article in the *TLS* and his 2002 edition of the entertainment, he called it *The Key Keeper*, as Green had done. McMillin had called it *The Entertainment at Britain's Burse* when it was still a lost work ('Jonson's Early Entertainments', 159, 162, 165).
 - 10 Green, *CSPD 1623–625*, 541, and 'The Conway Papers', *Athenaeum*, no 1569 (21 November 1857), 1454. The Venetian ambassador's account was not entered into the calendars of State Papers until nearly half a century after Green published the entertainment (Horatio F. Brown, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice*, vol. 11, 1607–10 [London, 1904], 267–70).
 - 11 Numerous critics repeat David Baker's statement (*On Demand: Writing for the Market in Early Modern England* [Stanford, 2009], 94, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780804772907>) that Knowles discovered the manuscript. The claim that Knowles produced the first printing or publication has been made, for example, by Martin Butler, 'Introduction: From *Workes* to Texts', in Butler, *Re-Presenting Ben Jonson*, 12, and repeated in the 'Catalogue of Jonson Manuscripts', in *CEWBJ Online*, JnB 574.5, in Peter Beal's *Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts 1450–1700*, <https://ies.sas.ac.uk/research-projects/research-projects-archive/catalogue-english-literary-manuscripts-1450-1700-celm>, and by Anne-Marie Miller-Blaise, "'The Place of Show': Commodities and the Commerce of Gazes in Ben Jonson's *Entertainment at Britain's Burse*", *XVII–XVIII: Revue de la Société d'Études Anglo-Américaines des XVII^e et XVIII^e Siècles* 77 (2020), n 2, <https://doi.org/10.4000/1718.4713>.
 - 12 Green, 'The Conway Papers', 1454–55.
 - 13 Jonson, *Entertainment at Britain's Burse*, 145–8; Green, 'The Conway Papers', 1455. Digital images of National Archives, SP 14/44/62*, may be consulted, along with transcriptions, in the *CEWBJ Online* edition of the text, f 146r.

- 14 *Natural Magick by John Baptista Porta, a Neapolitane: In Twenty Books* (London, 1658; STC: P2982), 371–2, 375. Della Porta's book also describes other kinds of optic glasses hawked by the Master, such as those that multiply images and those that allow letters to be read at great distances. Della Porta's Latin text reads, 'Parabolica sectio dicitur, quae in maiori, minorique temporis spatio obiectam materiam accendit' (*Magiae Naturalis Libri XX* [Naples, 1589], 271).
- 15 Green, 'The Conway Papers', 1454; Jonson, *Entertainment at Britain's Burse*, in *CEWBJ*, 137–8; State Papers MS 14/44/62*, f 146r (*CEWBJ Online*).
- 16 On the different hands responsible for producing the manuscript, see Knowles's 'Textual Essay' on the entertainment in *CEWBJ Online*, 2.
- 17 State Papers MS 14/44/62*, f 146v (*CEWBJ Online*); Green, 'The Conway Papers', 1455; *Entertainment at Britain's Burse* (*CEWBJ*), 167. Knowles's emendation is not noted in the print edition but is discussed in his 'Textual Essay', *CEWBJ Online*, 5.
- 18 See C. Willett Cunningham and Phillis Cunningham, *Handbook of English Costume in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1955, 1963), 47–9, cited by Knowles, *Entertainment at Britain's Burse* (*CEWBJ*), 3.365n.
- 19 Green, 'The Conway Papers', 1455n.
- 20 Knowles, *The Entertainment at Britain's Burse*, in *CEWBJ*, 3.359n.
- 21 Green, 'The Conway Papers', 1454, 1455; Jonson, *Entertainment at Britain's Burse*, 59, 142; State Papers MS 14/44/62*, f 144v, f 146r.
- 22 Green, 'The Conway Papers', 1455; Jonson, *Entertainment at Britain's Burse*, 230; State Papers MS 14/44/62*, f 147r.
- 23 Green, 'The Conway Papers', 1455; Jonson, *Entertainment at Britain's Burse*, 164; State Papers MS 14/44/62*, f 146v.
- 24 See, e.g., *The Devil is an Ass* 2.1.64; 'To Inigo, Marquis Would-be: A Corollary' 20; *A Tale of a Tub* 2.1.104–6.
- 25 For the overnight writing session, see Hatfield House, *Bills 35/1a*, cited in *CEWBJ* online Masque Archive, *Britain's Burse*, 2. For detailed analyses of the handwriting of the manuscript, see Knowles, 'Jonson's *Entertainment at Britain's Burse*', 118–22, and Grace Ioppolo, *Dramatists and Their Manuscripts in the Age of Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and Heywood: Authorship, Authority, and the Playhouse* (London, 2006), 159–69, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203449424>.
- 26 Green, 'The Conway Papers', 1454; *Entertainment at Britain's Burse* (*CEWBJ*), 88, 127; State Papers MS 14/44/62*, f 144v, 146r.
- 27 Green, 'The Conway Papers', 1454; *Entertainment at Britain's Burse* (*CEWBJ*), 56; State Papers MS 14/44/62*, f 144v.ç
- 28 A full treatment of the differences between Green's and Knowles's editions is beyond the scope of this article. A few other noteworthy points of comparison, however,

- include Green's attempt to account for the confusing manner in which speech headings are presented at lines 141–2 of the Cambridge edition (f 146r of the manuscript), which Knowles did not recognize, either, in his 1999 version of the entertainment (201–2); her emendation of the manuscript's 'mellinge in the fornace' (f 144v) to 'melting in the furnace' (1454), apparently assuming that the second *l* was an uncrossed *t*; and her interpretation of the verbal phrase in the Master's hope to visit Paradise and 'bring of the birdes alive home' (f 147r) as 'bring off' (1455), where Knowles retains the manuscript's 'of' (228).
- 29 On Wilson Croker's death and the transfer of the Conway Papers to the PRO and British Museum, see Smith, *John Donne and the Conway Papers*, 146.
 - 30 Molly Yarn, *Shakespeare's 'Lady Editors': A New History of the Shakespearean Text* (Cambridge, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009000307>; see especially Yarn's discussion of women who contributed to the study of non-Shakespearean drama of the early modern period (72–8).
 - 31 Christine L. Krueger documents Green's reputation as well as her complaints about receiving less pay for her work than her male colleagues ('Green [*née* Wood], Mary Anne Everett', *ODNB*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780192683120.013.11395>).
 - 32 Mark Vareschi, *Everywhere and Nowhere: Anonymity and Mediation in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Minneapolis, 2018), 114, <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctv7vcswj>.
 - 33 Green, 'The Conway Papers', 1454.
 - 34 See, for example, Baker, *On Demand*, 93–120; Alison V. Scott, 'Marketing Luxury at the New Exchange', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 12.2 (September, 2006) 5.1–19, <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/12-2/scotluxu.htm>; see also Scott's discussion in *Literature and the Idea of Luxury in Early Modern England* (London, 2015), 160–73, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315592657>; and Weibin Chen, 'Ben Jonson, China, and the Cosmopolitan', *Renaissance Studies* 34 (2020), 475, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rest.12635>.
 - 35 John Nichols, *The Progresses, and Public Processions, of Queen Elizabeth*, 3 vols (London, 1788, 1805), and *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*, 3 vols (London, 1828).
 - 36 Tom Lockwood, *Ben Jonson in the Romantic Age* (Oxford, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199280780.001.0001>. The performance archive in the *CEWBJ Online*, on the other hand, lists only ten performances of Jonson's plays during Victoria's entire reign; on Jonson's popular reputation as a poet in the Victorian era, see Ian Donaldson, 'Jonson's Ode to Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morison', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 6 (1973), 139–52.
 - 37 Ben Jonson, *Works*, ed. William Gifford, 9 vols (London, 1816); Algernon Charles Swinburne, *A Study of Ben Jonson* (London, 1889), 3; Ben Jonson, *Masques and*

Entertainments, ed. Henry Morley (London, 1890). Lockwood extensively discusses the reception of Gifford's edition (*Ben Jonson in the Romantic Age*, 95–132).

- 38 [William Hepworth Dixon], review of *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of James I, 1603–1610*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London, 1857), *Athenaeum*, no. 1555 (15 August 1857), 1025; [John Payne Collier], unsigned letter in 'Our Weekly Gossip', *Athenaeum*, no. 1570 (28 November 1857), 1488. The 'marked copy' discussed below indicates Dixon's and Collier's authorship of these items. Smith's appendix of 'Literary Manuscripts in the Conway Papers' includes, in addition to portions of *The Entertainment at Britain's Burse*, an autograph copy of Jonson's verses to Sir Horace Vere included in British Library Add. MS 23,212, f 87r (*John Donne and the Conway Papers*, 319); perhaps these are the verses Collier had in mind.
- 39 No shelf-mark is given for this marked copy in the library's online catalogue; for information about access, see <https://libguides.city.ac.uk/archives/athenaeum>. I wish to thank subject librarian Andrew Medder of City, University of London, for assistance in identifying and procuring images of the relevant pages. Collier's biographers Arthur Freeman and Janet Ing Freeman did, incidentally, record his composition of another item in the same 'Weekly Gossip' section on the previous page (*John Payne Collier: Scholarship and Forgery in the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols [New Haven, 2004], 1378, <https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300133301>). This piece, separated from the letter by several entries by different authors (Dixon, the naturalist Edwin Lankester, and the German literature specialist Ferdinand Freiligrath) contains probably fraudulent claims relating to the notorious case of the Perkins Folio. Collier contributed frequently to the *Athenaeum* over the years, with more than two dozen documented entries in the 'Weekly Gossip' alone, many anonymous, so his multiple contributions to that section in the 28 November 1857 issue are not out of character.
- 40 [Collier], unsigned letter in 'Our Weekly Gossip', 1488.
- 41 Freeman and Freeman, *John Payne Collier*, 451–4.
- 42 [John Payne Collier], 'On Massinger's *Believe as You List*, a Newly Discovered Manuscript Tragedy, Printed by the Percy Society', *The Shakespeare Society's Papers* 4 (1849), 133–9. Philip Edwards and Colin Gibson cite Collier's emendations at 1.2.105 and 3.3.244 (*The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger*, 5 vols [Oxford, 1976]).
- 43 T. Crofton Croker, 'Statement Made to the Council of the Percy Society, 5th April, 1849', in *Remarks on an Article Inserted in the Papers of the Shakespeare Society* [London, 1849], 9.
- 44 T. Crofton Croker, ed., [William Browne], *Britannia's Pastorals: A Third Book, Now First Edited from the Original Manuscript Preserved in the Library of Salisbury Cathedral* (London, 1852), ii.

- 45 [John Payne Collier], Review of *Britannia's Pastorals: A Third Book*, *Athenaeum* no 1281 (15 May 1852), 538–9.
- 46 Neil C. Hultin and Warren U. Ober, 'John Payne Collier, Thomas Crofton Croker, and the Hoby Epitaph', *Neophilologus* 73 (1989), 142–9.
- 47 Freeman and Freeman, *John Payne Collier*, 454.
- 48 Philip Massinger, *Believe as You List*, ed. T. Crofton Croker (London, 1849), vi–ix.
- 49 Ibid, viii, x–xi. Most of the body of the play is now agreed to be in Massinger's hand, with paratexts and corrections made by Edward Knight, bookkeeper of Massinger's theatre company, the King's Men (Edwards and Gibson, *The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger*, 3.299).
- 50 For a critical analysis of Warburton's claims about the manuscripts lost in his kitchen, see W.W. Greg, 'The Bakings of Betsy', *The Library* 3rd series, 2.7 (1911), 225–59.
- 51 *Register of Entries of Copies: Liber F*, in *Literary Print Culture: The Stationers' Company Archive*, (Marlborough, 2022), 196, <http://www.literaryprintculture.amdigital.co.uk>. Martin Wiggins's authoritative catalogue of plays produced in Renaissance England adopts the title *Philenzo and Hippolyta*, as do many other scholars (Martin Wiggins, in association with Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1533–1642: A Catalogue*, 10 vols [Oxford, 2012–], 9, #2520; see also 3, #959, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oseo/instance.wiggins>). I have followed Collier in the interest of consistency between my analysis and his claims.
- 52 For a synopsis of the debate, see Misha Teramura, 'Philenzo and Hippolyta', in *Lost Plays Database*, ed. Roslyn L. Knutson, David McInnis, Matthew Steggle, and Misha Teramura, https://lostplays.folger.edu/Philenzo_and_Hippolyta, last modified 4 August 2022.
- 53 J. Payne Collier, ed., *The Diary of Philip Henslowe* (London, 1845), 55n; on extensions of Collier's suggestion by Fleay and Greg, see Teramura, 'Philipo and Hippolito', in *Lost Plays Database*, https://lostplays.folger.edu/Philipo_and_Hippolito, last modified 25 July 2010.
- 54 Collier, *The Diary of Philip Henslowe*, xxxi.
- 55 Smith, *John Donne and the Conway Papers*, 160–1.
- 56 Teramura, 'Philenzo and Hippolyta'.
- 57 Letter of James Orchard Halliwell, quoted in Philip Massinger, *Believe as You List*, ed. Charles Jasper Sisson (Oxford, 1927), ix.
- 58 Freeman and Freeman, *John Payne Collier*, 322.
- 59 Wiggins, *British Drama*, 3, #959.
- 60 Marlin E. Blaine, "'Juno Thunders with the Tongue': A Misogynistic Latin Epigram Attributed to Dryden and Its Afterlives", *Philological Quarterly* 101.1–2 (2022), 71–93; Hilton Kelliher, 'Dryden Attributions and Texts from Harley MS. 6054', *British*

Library Journal 25 (1999), 1–22. Paul Hammond and David Hopkins relegated the epigram to the index of poems excluded from their edition of Dryden's poems (*The Poems of John Dryden: Volume 5: 1697–1700* [London, 2005], 686).