

PROTESTING INVERSIONS: Charivary as Folk Pageantry and Folk-Law

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Inversion and Subversion

It is hard to imagine a custom better qualified than charivary (the spelling will be excused shortly) for discussion under the heading of the world upside-down. In one form or another it bristles with inversions and reversals: cacophony instead of harmony; excrement instead of confetti; clothes worn back to front; the exposure of private parts; man as beast; man as woman; a woman beating a man; riding backwards. And those inversions are clearly intended to signify: it is theoretically possible that festive, even carnival, inversions may just be for fun, and not have any message which it is incumbent on contemporaries or modern scholars to interpret, but communication is fundamental to charivary. Yet to the student of popular inversions, charivary presents a unique challenge, for while it is attractive and in some quarters fashionable to read festive *inversion* as symbolic or potential *subversion*,¹ in charivary this equation is thwarted by a double symbolic negative: the inversions protest inversions which have already occurred (or are believed to have occurred) in the immediate socio-cultural environment. And it is these latter (those chronologically prior) inversions which now strike us as (for their time) subversive — for example a wife who dominates her husband, or a woman who exercises the right to sexual freedom conventionally conceded to men only. With as authentic a plebeian status as anything in the pages of Bakhtin,² charivary, in its most familiar forms, is functionally and ideologically reactionary, expressing and reimposing a conservative, patriarchal ideal of sexual and marital relationships. It deploys misrule in active support and defence of the status quo: ‘There is no better example than the *charivari* of how pre-modern societies used ritualised disruption to reinstate social norms rather than resist them’.³

Or rather such, duly simplified for introductory effect, is charivary’s ostensible qualification for inclusion in this volume, and in the wider debate, on the cultural and historical significance of the world upside-down. For as the editor of this collection has properly insisted, generalisations in this field are at best premature, and it cannot be asserted that inversion in a given cultural activity, like festival, or even in a given

type of custom, like charivary, is intrinsically, inevitably, invariably subversive, conservative, or indeed significant. It is necessary, in other words, to make distinctions, and to argue the case in specific instances.⁴

As a contribution to this end, what follows, while keeping a dutiful eye on inversions and their implications, is first and foremost an exercise in clarification, a making of distinctions designed to preclude generalisations. It will attempt an anatomy of a particular segment of customary behaviour, 'charivary', and in so doing both emphasise its diversity and place its diverse sub-traditions within a typology of custom. This will be undertaken in terms of both function (charivary as 'folk-law') and form (charivary as 'folk pageantry'). And since 'folk' is itself a somewhat artificial demarcation, links will also be made (or rather uncovered) with aspects of law and pageantry in more general terms, leading to the notion that the inversions which charivary *contains* may be less subversive than the inversion (of law and pageantry) charivary *is*.

Definition and Terminology

Charivary is here explicitly defined in terms of function: it is a customary performance which demonstrates the performers' disapproval of the personal behaviour of particular and specified members of the community. While doubtless provoking its own problems, this definition resolves, if brutally, some of the difficulties of the major alternative, which is to define charivary in terms of a feature of its performance, typically the 'rough music' produced by banging utensils, blowing horns, and shouting. This relegates function to a subsidiary (and optional) element, and other features of performance to the level of 'contaminations'.⁵ Such an approach has the disadvantage of excluding customary expressions of disapproval which do not encompass rough music, and conversely has to cope with performances of rough music with other than disapproving intent. By my definition, arbitrarily but logically, the latter are not charivaries, however similar they may seem. Rough music (like morris dancing) is not a custom in itself but rather a traditional activity which can feature in a variety of customs.

It should also be appreciated that mine is not so much a definition of a single custom as the demarcation of a segment of customary activity, to designate which I resuscitate the obsolete (and so available) English *charivary*. Most current terms are disqualified from this generic application in referring to specific, often local, traditions with particular features or aims, such as *charivari* (French, mainly protesting second marriages) or

skimmington (early modern English, mainly protesting dominant wives, and with a distinct visual symbolism). Others refer to merely one aspect of performance, or to a tradition in which this aspect is predominant, like the 'rough music' already touched on and the synonymous 'tin-canning' and *Katzenmusik*, or 'riding the stang'. German scholarship has precisely the right functional term in *Rügebbrauch*, 'castigation-custom',⁶ and *charivary* is here assigned the same function, leaving all those other terms available for deployment in their specific or local meanings.

My definition is most culpable in limiting the object of customary denunciation to aspects of personal behaviour (typically sexual and domestic relationships). There is no doubt that performances closely resembling those to be studied here were also deployed in condemning events and situations in the social and economic spheres as well as the personal: for example price increases, strike-breaking, and the abrogation of traditional rights, typically through enclosures.⁷ Relatively neglected, and straddling that vital boundary between folklore and social history, they emphatically merit closer attention, but have been reluctantly omitted from this study for reasons of space and to avoid complicating further an already complex picture. It is also uncertain to what degree these socio-economic charivaries are distinct traditions in their own right, or whether they are occasional and opportunistic displacements of the personal forms into new contexts,⁸ which suggests it would be wisest to establish a reliable notion of personal charivaries before exploring the social/economic varieties. Also for reasons of space, while the general framework for discussion established below is designed to be internationally applicable, the specific materials invoked in that discussion will be largely restricted to England, if with occasional appeal to French traditions.

Charivary as Custom

Translating the definition offered above into the terms of the typology and terminology of customs I have developed elsewhere,⁹ but with the reservations that immediately follow, charivary is a malevolent encounter-custom, with a predominantly occasional incidence.

It is 'occasional' to the degree that its incidence is geared to situations or events which themselves have a sporadic occurrence, rather than determined by calendar festivals or significant moments in the seasonal cycle of pastoral or agricultural activities. This is indeed most often the case, but there are also local traditions in which the actual performance of a charivary, while responding to a strictly occasional event or situation

(like a wedding, a family row, or the rumour of an illicit affair) is deferred to coincide with an up-coming calendar festival, typically Shrovetide/Carnival, when the performance and its reception can benefit from the festival's leisure, resources, and mood. This does not however make charivary an essentially carnival custom, or permit documenting alleged inversionary aspects of carnival by appeal to these features in charivary.¹⁰

There is a somewhat more awkward relationship between charivary and customs with a 'biographical' incidence, i.e. rites of passage marking transitions between phases in the life-cycle such as birth, coming of age, marriage, and death. A charivary is not significantly linked to the life-cycle of its performers (except to the degree it may be characteristic of the youth phase),¹¹ but one interesting and significant subcategory can be linked to a rite of passage of its victims, namely their wedding, of which the performers for some reason disapprove. This 'nuptial' charivary, as we shall designate it, is not a wedding custom on a par, say, with the bridal procession or the throwing of confetti since it is associated only with some, specifically qualified, weddings. In some communities, however, at some periods, *all* newlyweds on their wedding night were subjected to a performance of 'rough music' or the like outside their windows which closely resembles a charivary and was sometimes so called.¹² But as (often) money-gathering *quêtes*, lacking condemnatory purpose, these fail, at least by the criteria applied here, to qualify as such. That communities made such distinctions, but that the distinctions could be so fine as to cause confusion, is suggested by the case of the Isle of Wight butcher who in 1782 was serenaded in the more benign fashion (a 'marrow bone orchestra' of fellow-tradesmen) on his wedding night. His bride being an elderly but wealthy spinster, he mistook this traditional *quête* as a charivary and sent the visitors packing, whereupon they returned with the real thing: a display of ram's horns accompanied by rough music which eventually provoked him into firing on them, killing one and wounding two others.¹³

Charivaries invariably qualify as what I have termed Encounter Customs in the sense that they involve a deliberate and structured meeting and interaction between two distinct groups within a community, rather than being the business of a single group, like the members of a household, an institution, or a guild, assembled for some festival or celebration. This is complicated however by the fact that we have here *three* potential sets of participants and of permutations: the performers may express disapproval

directly to the offenders, or advertise the latter's offence (and the former's disapproval) to the public at large, or do both at the same time.

Customary encounters (within which I include much royal and civic pageantry as well as 'folk' customs) can be engineered for a variety of purposes, effectively synonymous with the motivation of the 'active' group which takes the initiative in the process. This motivation is often mixed, but with one aspect dominant, not infrequently exaction: i.e. the transference from the reactive to the active party of resources in the form of money, food, or provisions. Other motivations include the pursuit of convivial interaction, the one group seeking to engage the other in pastime (singing, dancing, games, and gambling) or the common partaking of refreshment, and intervention, that is to say the intent to influence the well-being of those encountered (say by conferring good health and happiness). As we may see, there can be elements of exaction, interaction (if mischievous rather than convivial), and intervention (if maleficent rather than beneficent) in some traditions of charivary, but as defined here it belongs essentially within a final category, the demonstrative encounters, in which the performers seek to express an attitude in relation to the target group, in this case disapproval and ill-will. As was complained of an unfortunate performer of a *charivari* in France in 1418, by the victim who was duly pardoned for slaying him, he 'performed the said *charivari* and row because of the hatred and malevolence (*hayne et malveillance*) he bore towards the said supplicant'.¹⁴ Charivary is an essentially malevolent encounter.

That being the case, a significant criterion for a typology of castigation customs is provided by the target of the disapproval, just what it is that the 'culprits' (who become the 'victims' of the charivary) have perpetrated to provoke the active group into engineering an encounter with them and/or the public. Even within the personal-relationships charivary to which this study is restricted, the provocative circumstances have been many and varied, but can by and large be resolved into the following three major categories of 'irregular' behaviour:

sexual irregularity

- e.g. fornication by unmarried people, particularly girls
sodomy

nuptial irregularity

- e.g. discrepancy between bride and groom in:
age

status/wealth
geography (marrying a 'foreigner')
second marriage for one of the parties
bride a spinster whose virginity is disputed

domestic irregularity

- e.g. wife dominant (shrew or scold)
wife neglects husband ('gadding'; drinking)
adultery
 by husband
 by wife (= husband a cuckold)
husband violent (wife-beater)
cohabitation (couple are not legally married)

References in what follows to 'sexual', 'nuptial', or 'domestic' charivary will thus be shorthand for charivaries prompted by circumstances within one or other of these groupings: respectively illicit sexual behaviour (uncomplicated by marital status); weddings between partners whose coming together is for some reason deemed irregular; an unsatisfactory condition in an established marriage.

The list is designed to be applicable to most of western Europe over the last six or so centuries,¹⁵ but by the same token not all the causes will have been operative at a given time and place. For example nuptial charivaris were very common in medieval France, the Council of Angers in 1448 complaining that they comprised a raucous noise of voices and implements produced outside the houses of newlyweds expressing disgust and disapproval (*detestationum et opprobrium*) at second marriages.¹⁶ These were distinct from the shaming parade of riding on an ass meted out to hen-pecked husbands, and it is symptomatic of the contemporary sense of distinctions that in a French incident in 1401 complaint was laid against performers of a nuptial charivari not for the visit to the house, but precisely because it was supplemented by parading the girl.¹⁷

In England, in contrast, charivaries against remarriages were extremely rare,¹⁸ and the dominant wife (i.e. a domestic rather than a nuptial situation) seems to have been the main target of demonstrations. As Andrew Marvell explained, in a late-seventeenth-century poem to be invoked shortly, it was:

A Punishment invented first to awe
Masculine Wives, transgressing Natures Law.

... when the brawny Female disobeys,
and beats the husband till for peace he prays. 377–80

It has also been remarked that English domestic charivaries showed a distinct (and encouraging) shift in the late nineteenth century away from targeting the shrew to the condemnation of husbands who beat their wives.¹⁹ That these were as elaborate, authentic, and virulent as charivaries against women is demonstrated by a late and therefore well-documented instance, a ‘Hussitting’ or ‘Tincanning’ from Berkshire in 1930, provoked by local dissatisfaction at the failure of the authorities to protect a battered wife from her violent husband. Sustained over several days, it comprised a parade through the town of effigies of the husband, his mother, and his sister (evidently considered accessories), accompanied by rough music, and at a number of stations the procession halted for the effigies to be whipped. The parade was also punctuated by house visits as the procession turned off for a display of the effigies and a burst of rough music at the homes of the three offenders. Finally, the three effigies were burnt on a bonfire, around which the performers danced, and sang insulting ditties about the persons condemned. This instance also has the advantage of providing a fairly full catalogue of the different forms of charivary (e.g. parade, visit, burning of effigies) to be reviewed shortly.²⁰

As this shift in targets suggests, charivary provides (or would have provided if more comprehensively recorded) a valuable window into popular as opposed to official mentalities, registering just what ‘little tradition’ standards and sensibilities were unwilling to tolerate, and documenting changes over time.²¹ It is under this heading that charivary in England in the early modern period might be taken as evidence of a deeply entrenched popular patriarchalism: like Petruchio, any man who loved a shrew would simply have to ‘tame’ her into at least an outward display of conventional wifely subservience if he were avoid public ridicule and if she were not to risk being dragged out of her house by a howling mob and subjected to a variety of indignities and physical violence. On the other hand it has been pointed out that in addition to the quantitative incompleteness of the record, charivary also has some qualitative imperfections as a register of popular thinking in the field of interpersonal relationships. For clearly not *all* shrewish wives or cuckolded husbands (nor all promiscuous girls, pregnant brides, adulterers, and sodomites) were in practice subjected to a charivary: other factors, social or psychological, must have triggered the occurrence, and it is these that provide the (as yet unread) key to popular mentalities:

The custom of 'riding skimmington' ... suggests widespread acceptance of the patriarchal ideal. These noisy, mocking demonstrations characteristically took place when a wife had beaten her husband, thus subverting the conventional ideal of 'right order' within the family. Yet close study of these customs suggests that equally they reflect the fact that the authoritarian ideal was much modified in everyday life. Skimmington rides stigmatised *extreme* violations of the patriarchal schema, but their psychology was more complex than that of a simple corrective response; rather, they represented a cathartic release of tensions arising from the continual conflict between the rôles conventionally ascribed to wives and husbands and the more flexible marital relationships which existed in actual practice.²²

Charivary as Folk Pageantry

An alternative typology (to that based on function) can be established for encounter customs in terms of the spatial patterns by which the encounters are achieved, although in the case of an often elaborate custom like charivary the typology more correctly applies to the individual movements and moments of which a single observance can be comprised. And in each case, without necessarily implying a historical relationship, it may be useful to see a given variety of charivary as an 'inversion' of another custom or form of pageantry with positive, rather than negative, aims.

The simplest spatial variant is the stationary encounter where performers and public, in the absence (one imagines) of the culprits, assemble at an agreed or traditional venue for a demonstrative act of a dramatic or ceremonial character. Under the former heading the assembly is the usual context for the scandal plays, re-enactments of the misdemeanours concerned, for example the farcical sketches of Basque tradition, of which a substantial corpus survives.²³ That England may once have had something similar is suggested by Archbishop Martin Parker's visitation articles for the Province of Canterbury in 1560 which ask parish wardens to report if any of their community be 'sowers of discord between neighbours' by a variety of means, including 'plays'.²⁴ It did happen: in Salisbury in 1614 a certain Alice Mustian was accused of erecting a stage on two barrels in her back yard and inviting people to watch a play concerning the adulterous liaison of her neighbours.²⁵ And in Shropshire in 1621 a group of men, with some experience of producing local drama,

performed on several occasions a jig, 'Fool's Fortune', impugning the sexual probity of the wife of the parson of Claverly. Another jig, 'Michael and Frances', from 1601, allegedly commenting on a liaison between a man of Hawnbly, Yorkshire, and his maidservant, was performed both by locals and a company of travelling players in the area.²⁶

The situation is basically analogous to that of a community summer festival, say a May Game, Whitsun ale or a village wake, with a condemnatory or satirical play replacing/inverting the customary celebratory one. There is the same inverse relationship between the charivary assembly around a bonfire (typically for the burning of effigies) and the celebratory bonfires of midsummer, or marking national victories or rejoicings.²⁷

There is a similar, if more complex, relationship to pageantry in the notorious 'mock groaning' (i.e. an imitation of a woman in labour) at Westonbirt (Gloucestershire) in 1716. Prompted by rumours that a George Andrews, the bailiff to an important local landlord, had committed sodomy with a young stranger, Walter Lingsey, and by the failure of the proper authorities to intervene, some local men organised what effectively amounted to an ad hoc 'ale', deploying the arrangements commonly used for the official Whitsun or 'church' ales, that is collecting money locally to supply drink and food and to employ a couple of musicians. Performers and audience (the event had been advertised locally) assembled under a tree close to the church (very likely the customary site for community festivals), and after some feasting and drinking the performance got under way, with Lingsey performing himself. The play (fortunately) did not mimic the 'crime', but offered a grotesque (indeed inversionary) scenario of its imaginary consequences, with Lingsey dressed as a woman and giving birth to a child, a straw doll dressed in baby clothes, attended by a midwife (another man dressed as a woman). After further refreshment the entire company repaired to the churchyard, where the 'child' was christened (after its putative father) 'George Buggarer' by a man dressed as a priest (a white apron around his shoulders), who also urged its godfathers to bring it up 'in the same Relligion or Profession'.²⁸

This is a 'mock' christening, but the temptation to label it a deliberate parody (or a subversive inversion) of Christian ritual should probably be resisted: this was precisely how the authorities chose to see it, attributing the performance an intent to subvert established religion which made prosecution easier.²⁹ While parody (or inversion) of religious rites is deliberate, explicit, and structural to the intentions of traditions like the

Feast of Fools and the Boy Bishop, in charivary the 'mock' element is more (as in 'mock' examinations) in the sense of imitation rather than parody, and essentially a means to another end. So for example when a woman and three men from Ramsey, Essex, in 1590 are reported to the church courts because they 'did christen a pig, being ready dressed to put on the spit, and called the pigs name Adam', we might suspect that while the prosecution was prompted by a perceived blasphemous act, the object of their satire was as likely a swinish neighbour called Adam as a church ceremony.³⁰ Likewise in the more celebrated case of the 1601 play at South Kyme, Lincolnshire, the mock dirge spoken by a priest for the Earl of Lincoln, calling on all the local whores to pray for his soul, was evidently aimed at the Earl rather than the church.³¹

More often (returning to the patterns of encounter), charivaries involve movement immediately prior to and after, or even during, the encounter, with variations determined by the movement of the participant groups relative to each other and to the landscape.

Least frequent (or least frequently noted) is the interception form in which the active group lie in wait for their mobile victims. It is largely restricted to charivaries questioning the virginity of a bride, the performers awaiting and intercepting a wedding procession. Here the charivary parallels the form but inverts the import of civic pageantry in which the progress of a Lord Mayor or monarch through a city was intercepted by stationary pageants offering declarations and demonstrations of loyalty, often with scenic, dramatic, and symbolic features. Here instead it is disapproval which is expressed, and the pictorial or symbolic exhibition is lewd or insulting, for example the buck's horn decorated with a wisp of hay together with a 'picture of a woman's privities' recorded at Catcombe (Wiltshire) in 1616, or the man 'with a great pair of horns upon his head' at Arlington (Sussex) in 1639.³² The circumstances are astutely chosen, in that the wedding procession is itself an encounter-custom, a parade by the households involved demonstrating to the community at large their wealth and standing, and the formation of a new household, which here is met by a demeaning counter-demonstration.

While, relatively speaking, an uncommon form, the interception of a bridal procession with an insulting demonstration is documented earlier than most, Aistulf King of the Lombards in 755 promulgating a law, 'Concerning those who throw dirty water on a wedding party'. The preamble notes that 'It has been made known to us that when a number of men walked along with a wedding party that was taking a bride to her

bridegroom certain perverse men threw down polluted and unclean water upon them', and that 'this evil has been committed in several places'.³³ The demonstration seems designed, as a recent commentator suggests, to demean the bridal party and cast doubt on the rightfulness of the marriage,³⁴ and the 'sullied water', perhaps an inversion of holy water, is also clearly an antecedent of the excrement thrown by demonstrators in later traditions.

The reverse of the interception, and the most usual spatial form of the charivary, is the parade, a demonstrative procession in which the identity of the offenders, the nature of their offence, and the disapproval of the performers, are made known to the community through whose space the active group moves. If the victims (culprits) themselves, as occasionally happens, are part of the parade, they will of course be recognised; more often they will be represented by effigies or surrogates and identified by placards and declamations. Specifying their offence may also involve a degree of drama, combined with symbolic display.

In being designed to demonstrate ill-will and disapproval, the parade-charivary effectively inverts the otherwise invariably celebratory processions of civic pageantry and folk custom, say a Royal Entry into a city, or the parade through the village of the decorated hock-cart, accompanied by music, carrying the last load of hay or corn from the field to the farmhouse. When deployed against married couples (either the newlyweds of a nuptial charivary or the shrew and cuckold of a domestic charivary) the parade may also be seen as a parodic inversion of their own wedding procession. Indeed in an opportunistic inversionary variation a man in West Ham, Essex, in 1602, effectively subverted an actual bridal procession by marching uninvited at its head bearing — probably in mockery of the conventional garland of gilded rosemary — a bough decorated with ropes' ends, nettles, and other weeds.³⁵ The symbolic import of the last two items is fairly clear; the ropes' ends (to judge by the plans of an enraged husband in *The Comedy of Errors*) may suggest that the wife will need beating.³⁶

The parade was the classic form of English charivaries from the sixteenth century until the early nineteenth, the 'riding' invariably aimed at the dominant wife, in which surrogates representing one or both of the offending couple were paraded through the community. Local and chronological variations can be registered mainly in terms of the vehicle used to convey them. One variant is characterised by parading surrogates on horse-back (the male figure invariably facing the tail), of which,

designated an 'antique show', there is a valuable and detailed description in the second part of Samuel Butler's mock epic, *Hudibras*, printed in 1664.³⁷ The participants undertake a symbolic display involving a good deal of inversion, specifically to comment on an unsatisfactory marital relationship; it is, says an observer:

... a Riding, us'd of Course,
 When the Grey Mare's the better Horse.
 When o're the Breeches greedy Women
 Fight, to extend their vast Dominion ...
 When Wives their Sexes shift, like Hares,
 And ride their Husbands, like Night-mares. 697-700; 705-6

Thus one of the figures in the parade displays 'proudly' a smock mounted on a staff, another a 'rampant' petticoat (the woman's domination), while a third carries aloft a gauntlet and spurs tied to the pommel of a sword 'held reverst the point turn'd downward' (the man's subservience) (620; 640; 634-36). The horns fixed to the head of this last figure's horse (633) suggest that the dominated husband was also a cuckold (compare 711-12: 'For when Men by their Wives are Cow'd, / Their Horns of course are understood'). Horns symbolic of cuckoldry are of course endemic in the period's literature, and there was a host of minor gestures involving the deployment of horns (throwing them into houses, fixing them over gates and doors) to the same end.³⁸

The centre-piece of the parade features figures representing the offending pair themselves, sitting back to back on the same horse, and in a manner involving multiple inversions: while the wife faces the front, the husband faces the horse's tail; he works at a spindle and distaff, she beats him whenever he stops (641-47). The distaff was of course the classic wifely implement: in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* the Host complains that his wife, regretting she has wedded 'a milksop', threatens, '... I wol have thy knyf, / And thou shalt have my distaf and go spynne!'; in *King Lear* Goneril, correspondingly dissatisfied with Albany, observes 'I must change arms at home and give the distaff / Into my husband's hands ...'³⁹ There will be a further inversionary element if, as often, the wife is really a man in women's clothes. The rough music of horns, kettles, saucepans, drums, and bagpipes produced by other participants in the procession (588-90; 615-16) is in this context probably designed both to draw attention to the demonstration and to provide an aural expression of disharmony (within the marriage concerned and between this household and the rest of the

community). There is doubtless a similar import to the mixture of grains and what can reasonably be surmised as dung ('that, which for good manners / Shall here be nameless') broadcast among the onlookers by another participant from panniers on his horse (627–32). Just as the rough music negates or parodies the harmony of the music of the wedding ceremony or wedding processions, so the filthy grains, far from equating to Bakhtin's 'gay filth' of an ancient folk tradition,⁴⁰ are a deliberate and conscious symbol negating and parodying the grains of wheat (ancestor of our rice and confetti) cast on the happy couple at their wedding.⁴¹ Finally, we are told,

... at fit Periods the whole Rout
Set up their throats, with clamorous shout. 657–58

Butler does not mention the 'skimmington' or ladle which in some areas gave this charivary variant its name, and with which the female figure beat the male: it is there however in William Hogarth's illustration of this scene in a later (1726) edition of *Hudibras*.⁴²

What is evidently an analogous tradition appears in Andrew Marvell's near contemporary (1667) depiction of a charivary in his poem, 'The Last Instructions to a Painter', which despite its allegorical import is clearly based on the event witnessed by Samuel Pepys at Greenwich in 1667 ('a great Riding there today for a man, the constable of the town, whose wife beat him').⁴³ When a wife beats her husband an enraged community

... does the next House invade,
Mounting the neighbour Couple on lean Jade.
The Distaff knocks, the Grains from Kettle fly,
And Boys and Girls in Troops run hooting by. 383–86

Here the distaff is presumably wielded by the 'wife' as a weapon to beat the 'husband'. The point has already been made that charivary ridings characteristically if not invariably parade surrogates for the culprits, but as Marvell implies this too seems to involve an element of coercion, inflicting this rôle on the neighbours (sometimes specified as living on the side in the direction of the church). There may be some implication of a secondary dereliction on the part of the neighbours for not intervening in the primary dereliction of the culprits at an earlier stage (perhaps a residue of the reciprocal responsibilities of the old frankpledge system).

A somewhat simpler form, dominant in northern England more recently, is the stang-riding, a perambulation of the community usually

provoked by domestic disharmony, in which a man is paraded on a couple of poles borne aloft by others, accompanied by rough music. The parade halts at a number of stations for the rider to explain that he is merely a surrogate for the real offenders, whose identities and faults are proclaimed in doggerel verse.⁴⁴ Something very similar, however, was common further south in the early modern period. For example at Wetherden, Suffolk, in 1604, a man rode the stang dressed in women's clothes after his neighbour, returning drunk from the alehouse, had been beaten out and reviled as 'dronken dogg dronken pisspott' by his wife. As elsewhere the parade was accompanied by rough music, and the stang-rider enlivened the occasion by beating spectators and declaiming a warning to wives not to beat their husbands. This instance is also useful in the statements of the performers (when cited before the Court of Star Chamber) on their precise intentions: on the one hand, as might be expected, they excuse themselves for merely indulging in an 'old country ceremony used in merriment upon such accidents', but also acknowledge the intention to ensure that 'not onley the woman which had offended might be shunned for her misdemeanors towards her husband but other women also by her shame might be admonished [not] to offend in like sort'.⁴⁵ It also confirms that as in later (Northern) tradition the parade through the street, designed to advertise disapproval to the community at large, was supplemented by the fourth and last category of encounter, a visit to the house of the offenders.

The house-visit, to which the parade was a necessary and publicising preliminary, was the classic form of the medieval French nuptial *charivari*, of which a valuable early account is provided in the *Roman de Fauvel*, or rather in the interpolation (in Book 2) by Raoul Chaillou de Prestain of c. 1316.⁴⁶ The text provides a detailed catalogue of the performers, their appearance, and their actions. Their clothing involves an element of both disguise and inversion:

Some have all back to front [*devant darriere*]
 Dressed and put on their clothes;
 Others for ornament
 Have put on large sacks and monks' cowls
 One could scarcely recognise them,
 They were so painted and deformed. 698-703

This effect would have been increased by the bearded masks they wore (741). Most participants were involved in producing rough music using kitchen utensils, bells, and percussion instruments (705-719), and all were

shouting and screaming (733–4; 765). This is all pretty standard, but this ‘rough band’ outdid most others by including a cart with a mechanical arrangement involving the clashing of wheels and iron rods to produce an even greater row (720–32). Inversionary actions by some of the performers included exposure of the posterior (735) and the throwing of excrement (739), as well as the smashing of windows and doors and throwing salt into wells (736–8).⁴⁷ The most striking figure in the procession however was the ‘huge giant’ who went in the front howling on an inordinately thin horse (747–9; 753–8), and who reminded the observer of the legendary figure Herlechin, leader of the wild hunt.⁴⁸

Recent English tradition (unexpectedly) can boast one of the most spectacular variants of the parade-plus-house-visit forms of charivary, the ‘Stag Hunt’ of the West Country. Here the parade takes the form of the pursuit around the streets of the community, by appropriately-guised huntsmen and ‘hounds’, of a beast-figure with painted face, shaggy gown, and antlers tied to its head. The visit takes a correspondingly dramatic form, with the beast duly hunted to the door of the offenders, where it is realistically slaughtered, spilling ox-blood from a concealed bladder onto the doorstep as a visible symbol of shame. In a variant deployed against more serious offenders (the source’s reticence suggests this may mean homosexuals) the culprit, having been dragged out of his house by this howling, dancing, disguised mob, is himself ‘hunted’ through the town, perhaps thrown into a pond when finally captured.⁴⁹

As this suggests, the nature of the encounter in the house-visit can vary. It will most often involve a lot of noise and a visual demonstration outside the house, which ideally the victims should see and hear, but this liminal encounter across the threshold can be supplemented by the penetration of the residence by the performers, followed by the physical harassment or the public shaming of the victim(s), making this a maleficent intervention in their condition as well as a malevolent demonstration of an attitude.

A terrifying glimpse of what it might be like to be the target of such a ‘direct action’ charivari is provided by the deposition of a husband and wife before Wiltshire Quarter Sessions in 1618.⁵⁰ Their house (in Quemerford) was approached by a substantial parade led by a drummer and comprising ‘three or fower hundred men, some like soldiers, armed wth peices and other weapons’, together with an outlandish figure:

... haveing a white night cap upon his head, two shininge hornes hanging by his eares, & counterfayte beard upon his chine made of

a deares taylor, a smocke upon the top of his garments, & he rode upon a red horse wth a paire of potts under him & in them some quantie of bruunge graines, wch he used to cast upon ye presse of people ... as he passed.

The striking thing is not so much his accoutrements as the fact that this figure, rather than surrogates or effigies representing the offenders, is the central feature in the parade, and this is presumably because the visit is evidently to be followed by another parade in which the culprits (or at least the offending wife) is to figure in person. For in this case the performers forcibly entered the house and dragged her out

into ye entrye, where being a wett hole, they threw her downe into it & trod upon hir & beried her filthy wth durt, & did beate hir blacke & blewe in many places wth an intent ... to have had hir ... out of their howse to ye horseman & to have sett hir up behind him to carry hir to Callne & there washe hir in the cuckinge stolle.

But whether preceded by a parade, or a direct, private encounter, the visit-charivary can be appreciated in its context as a very powerful inversion of the customary visits a household might expect to receive from its neighbours and the community in other, happier circumstances. For while the overwhelming majority of house-visit customs — mumming, wassailing, carolling — involve the exchange of good wishes, convivial pastime, and the sharing of refreshment, most re-affirming neighbourly goodwill and communal ties, a charivary, as we have seen, is essentially a bad-luck visit, expressing disapproval, disgust, the severing of good relations, and in some instances, the inflicting of humiliation and pain. It has plausibly been suggested that the nuptial charivary is effectively an inversion of wedding customs,⁵¹ the rough music which many see as its definitive feature a deliberate inversion of the music and song associated with normal, happy weddings.⁵² In medieval Italy the nuptial charivary of nocturnal rough music was effectively an extreme form of a range of serenades to which newly-weds might be subjected.⁵³ Against this background it could be argued that in becoming a good-natured if still raucous serenading of newlyweds by their neighbours and friends, the derivative American 'shivaree',⁵⁴ rather than (or rather as well as) drifting away from the true nuptial charivary, is actually reverting to the good-luck visit of which the latter is an inversion.

Charivary as Folk Law

Taken together at any one place and time the various traditions of charivary constitute a folk law, a virtually fully fledged but informal judicial system: or rather they constitute the informal segment of a folk judicial system, the remainder of which comprises however much of the official judicial system the folk accept, agree with, and participate in. For as a castigation-custom charivary is necessary only when there are discrepancies, when there is not an exact correspondence between folk and official law, when there are situations which the community feels require castigation, but which are not dealt with adequately by the institutionalised judicial system. The poem by Andrew Marvell quoted earlier put it quite clearly, 'the just Street' intervened on behalf of the downtrodden husband when no remedy was forthcoming from 'concern'd Jury' or 'partial Justice' (381–83).

The extent of the discrepancies between law and folk-law, and hence the incidence of charivary, will vary over place and time. David Underdown has suggested, for example, that in the early modern period in South West England official (manorial) control was weaker in the wood-pasture ('cheese') areas compared to the ('chalk') corn-lands, and was compensated for by a greater incidence of charivaries.⁵⁵ More often the discernible differences are chronological, with what seems in England to be a distinct increase in charivaries between the late medieval and modern periods reflecting a deepening discrepancy between law and folk law. For while there may be some justification in seeing the legal system, say from the eighteenth century onwards, as an instrument of oppression, protecting private wealth and property against customary rights, there is reason to believe that in earlier times, a broad segment of the community would have felt themselves in agreement with, and indeed as part of, a legal system which included manorial and other local courts in which fairly humble inhabitants could play a quite significant rôle.⁵⁶ Indeed a significant recent study seeks to establish popular attitudes to a variety of matters by appeal to the decisions of local and manorial courts, in which ordinary villagers were jurors, in much the same way as might feasibly be done (as suggested earlier here) with charivary itself.⁵⁷ As Martin Ingram suggests, in a substantial study of the ecclesiastical courts in England in the early modern period: 'at least up to 1640 it is realistic to regard most aspects of the church courts' work as in reasonable accord with the values of the wider society', and cites another historian (Houlbrooke) to the effect

that ‘the correction of fornicators, adulterers and other moral offenders by the church courts probably received a large measure of public support’.⁵⁸

And discrepancies between the two spheres can at least theoretically result from the movement of either, or both of them. If folk opinion is ahead of official opinion as expressed in the formal legal system (for example in condemning violent husbands), charivary takes on a radical thrust, and its inversionary symbolism is potentially subversive. But if the official system gets ahead of the folk, for example in giving priority to private property over communal rights, or in tolerating domestic disharmony, then the charivary, and its inversions, are reactionary. Discrepancy can also relate to the *form* of punishment, an earlier preference for public shaming persisting in charivary as the judicial system opted for less visible sanctions (fines and imprisonment).⁵⁹

The emergence of some varieties of charivary in England can therefore be seen as symptomatic of a growing discrepancy between folk law and official law, which in turn is probably a feature of that ‘withdrawal’ of the élite from the common culture or ‘little tradition’ in the early modern period.⁶⁰ And when this happens of course the discrepancy constituting what official law will tolerate but folk-law will not is balanced on the other side by a discrepancy constituting what folk-law tolerates but official law now condemns, including, ironically, a good deal of festive behaviour or the assertion of customary rights (and ultimately charivary itself).

This discrepancy theory may go some way to explaining the otherwise puzzling circumstance that there seem to be no recorded incidences of personal charivary in England — i.e. of folk demonstrations against sexual, nuptial, or domestic situations — before the sixteenth century, when there are suddenly quite a lot. This suggests a fairly close correspondence between popular and official attitudes to interpersonal relationships in the Middle Ages, after which discrepancies emerged because one or both of the systems moved. Since most English charivaries of the early modern period are directed against shrewish or adulterous wives, the likelihood is that to the extent that these were a problem in the Middle Ages they were dealt with satisfactorily by local (including manorial) or church courts. In the sixteenth century, and increasingly in the seventeenth, the local courts (under the pressure of the Common Law system) were falling into disuse, and the church courts were steadily weakened following the Reformation. Courts dealt firmly enough with scolds who were aggressive towards their neighbours,⁶¹ and adultery which achieved public notoriety, but otherwise seem largely to have ceased interfering in marital relationships,⁶² leaving a

gap which the unofficial, folk, system moved to fill in the form of the skimmington and other ridings. A contributory factor, or indeed an alternative explanation, may be provided by a shift in popular attitudes, if, as has been suggested, there was a growing 'moral panic' about the unruly woman in early modern culture.⁶³

It is possible, if with less confidence, to see the French nuptial *charivari* as similarly related to the opening of a gap between official law and folk law. In late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages second marriages were opposed by the church, and penance was imposed on those who entered into them. By the later Middle Ages the church still deplored second marriages as displaying an unseemly desire for continued sexual activity, but imposed no sanctions,⁶⁴ thereby falling out of step with popular opinion. *Charivaris* may have been the result, as a form of unofficially imposed penance replacing whatever penance was previously imposed officially, or a nuisance designed to exact the equivalent of the fine for which penance could formerly be commuted. As Allan Greer has suggested (speaking of derivative traditions in Canada, but with clear implications for France as well): 'The marital ideology of the charivari ... was not an anachronism and it was not essentially in contradiction with clerical views'.⁶⁵

These connections are reinforced by the notion discernible among participants and observers that charivary was indeed a form of law, and that it was performed with the acquiescence, or even at the behest, of the appropriate authorities. As late as the nineteenth century a 'ditty' sung during stang-riding to identify the culprits and specify their crime advises 'all you good neighbours' that 'this is our law',⁶⁶ and we have already seen an instance where a clearly informal charivary, in Wiltshire in 1618, nonetheless included the plan to duck the victim in the cucking stool, the official punishment for scolds.⁶⁷ A participant in a substantial skimmington from Somerset (Alhampton) in 1653 against an adulteress claimed it had been ordered by the justices: this was apparently a lie put about by the main initiator, but he was himself a local official (tithingman).⁶⁸ In another 1618 incident (at Burton on Trent) an active rôle was taken by the constable, perhaps the local official who would have been involved if it *were* an officially ordered punishment, the quasi-judicial tone of the whole business enhanced by putting the victims in the stocks.⁶⁹ The uncertainty will not have been lessened by the tendency of local courts themselves, particularly in the field of social regulation, to interfere in matters beyond their statutory authority.⁷⁰

And there was also some uncertainty in medieval France concerning the relationship between *charivari* and the law. Responding to the complaint of the victim of a nuptial *charivari* in 1478 the court at Toulouse took time to consider whether *charivari* was not in effect a custom with judicial validity rather than a nuisance and a misdemeanour: exceptionally, but significantly, the court decided that it was, leaving the plaintiff to disburse the largesse demanded by the performers to desist in their charivary.⁷¹

If charivary in general may be usefully seen as taking over the *function* of defunct official sanctions or punishments, in the specific case of the English ridings it may also inherit its *form*. Most medieval punishments for domestic or sexual transgressions, in secular or ecclesiastical jurisdictions, anticipated charivary in being of a public, shaming nature,⁷² and in many cases anticipated the riding form of charivary in having the offender paraded through the community, accompanied by a 'rough music' of basins.⁷³

Some punishments also anticipated charivary's use of explanatory symbolism. The diarist Henry Machyn, a keen observer of London street pageantry in the 1550s and 1560s, recorded many shaming punishments of this kind. Several are evidently for breaking the prohibition of selling or eating meat during Lent: on 21 March 1552 two young men rode on the same horse, one of them holding upright a spit with a roasted duck on it; on 21 February 1554 a man rode with his face towards the horse's tail with quarters of veal before and behind him, while before him was paraded a cooked pig on a pole; on 7 March 1554 the culprit (this time specifically a butcher) rode similarly, except that this time the meat was lamb and the pole displayed the uncooked carcass of a calf.⁷⁴ Traders who sell illegal wares or who give short measure are paraded with the goods in question decorating their person or the horse: in the two cases Machyn records the offenders come from one of the London prisons (and in one case the offender rides backwards).⁷⁵

Particularly interesting, because close to the world of *charivari*, are the punishments of sexual offenders, which also bear comparison to the form of charivaries:

[5 November 1557] rod through the city a man on horsebake, ys fase toward the horses tail, and a wrytyng on ys hed; and he had a fryse gown, and ys wyff leydyng the horse, and a paper on her head, for horwdom the wyche he lett ys wyff to [hore] to dyuers men.

[18 December 1559] dyd a woman ryd a-pone horse-back with a paper on her hed, for bawdere, with a basen ryngyng.

[22 March 1560] dyd ryd in a care, with a basen tynglyng afor, ij that that ... cam owtt of Southwarke, for the woman was bowd to a gyrl of xj yere olde, and browth her to a stranger.⁷⁶

These seem to go beyond the simple carting through the streets of whores and bawds, and in two of the cases the elaboration seems to have been prompted by exceptional circumstances: in the 1557 instance the wife leading the horse on which the husband rides looks like deliberate reversal (reinforced if his 'fryse gown' implies he was in woman's clothes), perhaps echoing the unnaturalness of a husband playing bawd to his wife.

These entries match closely what must be one of the most striking depictions of an early modern shaming punishment, a detail in Pieter Bruegel the Elder's allegorical 'Luxuria' of 1557.⁷⁷ A naked man, hands tied behind his back, and wearing a large hat with a notice attached to it (the writing doubtless specifying his fault), rides (facing the front) a monstrous beast covered in a blanket. (The picture systematically juxtaposes humans with monsters.) Behind him a figure with a bunch of twigs in each hand beats his back. In front of him marches a bag-piper, behind him a crowd of shouting, gesticulating figures, one of them leading two naked women, their hands likewise tied behind their backs. The number and gender of the culprits suggest the official punishment of two whores and their pimp rather than a charivary against a wedding or a cuckold and his wife.

The riding backwards characteristic of the skimmington often features in these official punishments, and was of course a widespread form of humiliation.⁷⁸ The flourishing of the distaff in the skimmington ride is anticipated by medieval shaming punishments in London for brawlers and scolds (*tenurere ou tensesse*, the context suggesting in relation to prostitution):

Item, if any man or woman shall be attainted of being a brawler or scold, let such person be taken unto the thew [pillory] with a distaff with flax ... in his or her hand, with minstrels, and be set thereon for a certain time ...⁷⁹

The reciting of 'ditties' at regular intervals to identify culprits and specify their fault is also anticipated (along with much else) in the proclamations which accompanied the parading of a mid-sixteenth-century chantry-priest,

caught *in flagrante* with the wife of a London draper, as described by John Stow:

He was on three market days conveyed through the high street and markets of the city, with a paper on his head, wherein was written his trespass. The first day he road in a carry, the second on a horse, his face to the horse tail, the third led between twain, and every day rung with basons, and proclamations made of his fact at every turning of the street ...⁸⁰

The apparent absence of medieval English personal charivaries may therefore be an optical illusion, in the sense that they existed, but were as yet a regular feature of the official judicial system, not folklore/folk-law. Conversely, the English riding charivaries may be direct continuations, under unofficial, 'folk' auspices, of the public, shaming punishments typical of the medieval legal system. There may indeed be evidence of this continuity in two instances of stang-riding recorded in Machyn's diary, in both of which a man, in the manner typical of the riding form of the charivary, was paraded through the streets as a surrogate for his brow-beaten neighbour (we have seen Marvell specify the surrogate rôle assigned to the neighbour). In March 1562 'one Trestram ... rode a-pon a collestayffe with a baskett of graynes be-for hym, bycause that on of hys neybur wyff brake her husband hed, and [Trestram] cast graynes on the pepull', and the next February another man was carried around by four others, accompanied by men playing a bagpipe, shawm, and drum, together with twenty torchbearers, 'because ys next neybors wyff ded bett here hosband'.⁸¹ Cause and basic structure of the performances are identical, but while the former matches exactly contemporary and later parade charivaries, the second, with its musicians and torchbearers, looks a little more institutional, and indeed of this instance Machyn remarks in passing, '*yt is ordered* that ys next naybor shall ryd a-bowtt the plase' (my italics), strongly implying that it did have some kind of judicial status.

There will, of course, be changes within this continuity. Official punishments shamed the offender by parading him or her through the community. There was certainly a good deal of discomfort or even pain involved, but (at least in contemporary opinion) the shame was a powerful, and even mortal, ingredient: Richard Hill records in his commonplace book in 1509 three London men paraded backwards on horses and pilloried, '& they died all within VII days after for sham'.⁸² Lacking official sanction and the acquiescence of the victim, charivary more often

represented them by surrogates or in effigy (or visited their homes), but sometimes the victim was paraded in person, the performance in consequence approximating even more to an earlier or contemporary official punishment. For example at Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, in 1618 a couple believed to be cohabiting were dragged out of bed by a crowd of people, many armed and disguised, and led through the streets 'with great noyce and with ringing of cow bells, basons, candlesticks, fryingpannes and with the sounde of a drumme'. All the while the crowd cried out 'a whore and a knave, a whore, a whore', and cast 'dourte and mier of the streets upon them'. They were eventually put in the stocks, then after further indignities dragged along by their feet and left lying in the street. The use of the stocks, a resource of the official judicial system, was undoubtedly facilitated by the participation of the constable, which in turn gives this instance, if only in the minds of the performers, an official quality perhaps justifying the violence to the victims.⁸³ Elsewhere at about this time, participants could actually disagree as to whether parading the culprit was a legitimate part of the proceedings.⁸⁴

This relationship to the law may help us to understand the paradox at the heart of charivary, and to pin down its real inversionary character. Its performers punish misdemeanours, and inflict punishments, that the authorities themselves might have punished and inflicted until recently, and which, in the view of many in the community, they still should. Sometimes the performers may have thought they were acting in an official capacity, or least with official approval. For all its symbolic inversions, there is strikingly little evidence that anyone other than its victims (and then perhaps more as a legal ploy) saw anything subversive about a charivary. The following, said of French nuptial *charivaris*, would apply equally well to personal charivaries as a whole:

... the *charivaris* simply never question the social, political or religious structure of the rural, urban, regional or national community ... this festivity is more conservative or traditionalist than revolutionary.⁸⁵

Yet the analogy or relationship to law enforcement is precisely what does make a charivary subversive. However loyal its purpose and however conservative the import of its inversions, a charivary is intrinsically a classic act of misrule in the sense that a group of people take it upon themselves, outside the official institutions, and without official sanction, to demonstrate public disapproval of and (to varying degrees) to punish

other members of the community for acts or circumstances of which they disapprove. The more they claim that this is 'law', the closer to the form of official punishments the performance is, the more explicit and emphatic is the usurpation of official powers. There is in other words a strong element of vigilantism in charivary, and a corresponding ambiguity in attitudes on all sides. Indeed we might understand charivary better if studies juxtaposed it less with the Wild Hunt or primeval cult practices and more with modern unofficial policing such as has occurred on the New York subway and which is, as this is being written, under active consideration by vulnerable ethnic communities in England. Enforcing the law can be as subversive as disobeying it.

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NOTES

1. For discussion see Peter Burke *Popular Culture in early modern Europe* (Temple Smith, London, 1978) chapter 7, 'The World of Carnival'; Natalie Zemon Davis *Society and Culture in early modern France* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987) chapter 5, 'Women on Top', especially 130–31; Michael Bristol *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (Methuen, New York, 1985) chapter 2, 'The Social Function of Festivity'; Anthony Gash 'Carnival against Lent: The Ambivalence of Medieval Drama' in *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History* edited David Aers (Harvester, Brighton, 1986) 74–98, especially 80–82.
2. Mikhail Bakhtin *Rabelais and his World* translated Hélène Iswolsky (MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1968; reprinted Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1984), invoked here as a classic statement on plebeian festive culture, with very little by way of documentation from or on plebeian culture.
3. Michael Camille *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1992) 145.
4. Chris Humphrey 'The Politics of Carnival: Towards a New Methodology for the Study of Medieval Misrule', paper presented to the 9th Colloquium of the Société Internationale pour l'Étude du Théâtre Médiéval, Odense, August 1998. See the revised version of this paper in the present volume.
5. See for example Roger Pinon 'Qu'est-ce qu'un charivari? Essai en vue d'une définition opératoire' in *Kontakte und Grenzen. Probleme der Volks-, Kultur- und Sozialforschung. Festschrift für Gerhard Heilfurth zum 60. Geburtstag* edited Ina-Maria Greverus and others (Otto Schwartz, Göttingen, 1969) 393–405.

6. Ernst Hinrichs 'Le charivari et les usages de réprimande en Allemagne: État et perspectives de la recherche' in *Le Charivari* edited J. Le Goff and J.-C. Schmitt (Mouton, Paris, 1981) 297–306, at 298 and note 5.
7. For some early English instances see David Underdown *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603–1660* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1985) 106–112. In the essay on 'Rough Music' in his *Customs in Common* (Merlin Press, London, 1991) chapter 8, Edward P. Thompson distinguishes these as 'public' charivaries; I have declined to adopt the term, as it would more appropriately be used of charivaries in which the performers advertised their disapproval to the public at large rather than merely visiting it upon the offenders in private.
8. For examples of the latter process see for example Allan Greer 'From Folklore to Revolution: Charivari and the Lower Canadian Rebellion of 1837' *Social History* 15 (1990) 25–43; Nicole Castan 'Contentieux social et utilisation variable du charivari à la fin de l'Ancien Régime en Languedoc' in *Le Charivari* edited Le Goff and Schmitt 297–306; Henri Rey-Flaud *Le Charivari: Les rituels fondamentaux de la sexualité* (Payot, Paris, 1985) 197–205.
9. Thomas Pettitt and Leif Søndergaard *Custom, Culture and Community in the Later Middle Ages: A Symposium* (Odense University Press, 1994) Introduction 9–16; Thomas Pettitt 'Customary Drama: Social and Spatial Patterning in Traditional Encounters' *Folk Music Journal* 7:1 (1995) 27–42.
10. Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World* sees charivary as 'related to carnival' (267), to which it transferred its 'main traits' (219): the inversions of charivary (such as transvestism) are accordingly invoked (411) to document the inversionary character of carnival.
11. Natalie Zemon Davis 'The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France' *Past and Present* 50 (1971) 41–75; for France in the late-medieval period see Claude Gauvard and Alan Goukalep 'Les conduits de bruit et leur signification à la fin du Moyen Âge' *Annales ESC* 29 (1974) 693–704, at 700–701.
12. George Ewert Evans *The Pattern Under the Plough* (Faber, London, 1966; reprinted 1971) chapter 11, 'The Rough Band', especially 118. For discussion of the intense and complex relationship between early French *charivaris* and other wedding customs see Roger Pinon 'Qu'est-ce qu'un charivari' 393–405; Christine Klapisch-Zuber 'La 'mattinata médiévale d'Italie' in *Le Charivari* edited Le Goff and Schmitt 149–163.
13. Cited in Bob Bushaway, review of *Le Charivari* edited Le Goff and Schmitt, in *Folklore* 94 (1983) 133–4.
14. Claude Gauvard and Alan Goukalep 'Les conduits de bruit et leur signification à la fin du moyen âge' *Annales ESC* 29 (1974) 693–704, at 698.

15. For a similar systematic list based on a comprehensive study of traditions in French-speaking Belgium, see Roger Pinon 'Qu'est-ce qu'un charivari? Essai en vue d'une définition opératoire' 398, note 14 (includes socio-economic causes). For detailed ethnographic studies of charivary traditions in Western Europe see *Le Charivari* edited Le Goff and Schmitt; for a readable and still useful survey, Violet Alford 'Rough Music or Charivari' *Folklore* 70 (1959) 505–518.
16. E.K. Chambers *The Mediaeval Stage* 2 vols (Oxford University Press, London, 1903; reprinted 1967) 1 153 note 2.
17. Gauvard and Gokalp 'Les conduits de bruit et leur signification à la fin du Moyen Age' 698.
18. For a late English example (Leeds, 1866) of a charivary against a second marriage (more precisely against a wedding following too rapidly after the death of a first wife) see *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth-Century England* edited R.D. Storch (Croom Helm, London, 1982) Introduction 9.
19. E.P. Thompson *Customs in Common* (Merlin, London, 1991; reprinted Penguin, London, 1993) chapter 8 'Rough Music' at 505–513. Charivaries against wife-beaters are not however without historical precedent in England, witness the extraordinary punishment meted out to a Berkshire clergyman in 1722: grabbed at his door by a man dressed as a woman, he was dragged into a nearby forest, tied to a tree, subjected to a mock trial, condemned to death and shot (the guns, however, fired over his head); see E.P. Thompson *Whigs and Hunters: The Origins of the Black Act* (Penguin, London, 1975; reprinted 1990) 71–2.
20. Graham Seal 'A "Hussitting" in Berkshire, 1930' *Folklore* 98 (1987) 91–4.
21. Charivaries have been effectively discussed as valuable insights into popular mentalities in a series of distinguished studies by English social historians, including M. Ingram 'Le charivari dans l'Angleterre du XVIe et du XVIIe siècle' in *Le Charivari* edited Le Goff and Schmitt 251–64, and 'Ridings, Rough Music and the "Reform of Popular Culture" in early modern England' *Past & Present* 105 (1984) 99–113; Edward P. Thompson 'Rough Music: le charivari anglais' *Annales ESC* 27 (1972) 285–312; "Rough Music" et charivari: quelques réflexions contemporaines' in *Le Charivari* edited Le Goff and Schmitt 273–83; *Customs in Common* chapter 8 'Rough Music'; 'Rough Music Reconsidered' *Folklore* 103 (1992) 3–26.
22. Martin Ingram *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570–1640* (Cambridge University Press, 1987) 144.
23. *Recueil des farces charivariques basques* edited Patri Urkizu (Éditions Izpegi, Baigorri, 1998); Julio Caro Baroja 'Le charivari en Espagne' in *Le Charivari* edited Le Goff and Schmitt 75–96, at 88.
24. *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Renaissance* edited W.H. Frere & W. McC. Kennedy, 3 vols (Longmans, Green, London, 1910) 3 84.

25. Martin Ingram 'Ridings, Rough Music and Mocking Rhymes in early modern England' in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* edited Barry Reay (Croom Helm, London, 1985) 166–97 at 166.
26. C.J. Sisson *Lost Plays of Shakespeare's Age* (Cambridge University Press, 1936; new impression Cass, London, 1970) 140–56; 129–40.
27. For the burning of effigies see for example Mrs. Gutch *Examples of Printed Folklore Concerning the North Riding of Yorkshire* (Folklore Society, London, 1901) 335–36; Ella Mary Leather *The Folklore of Herefordshire* (Jakeman and Carver, Hereford, 1912; reprinted EP Publishing, Wakefield, 1970) 160; Graham Seal 'A "Hussitting" in Berkshire, 1930' *Folklore* 98 (1987) 91–4.
28. David Rollinson 'Prophecy, Ideology and Popular Culture in a Gloucestershire Village 1660–1740' *Past and Present* 93 (1981) 70–97.
29. Rollinson 'Property, Ideology and Popular Culture' 94–5. A folk play of some kind at Kendal, Westmorland, in 1625 similarly provoked accusations of scoffing at religion; with some performers dressed in women's clothes and others in men's, and one (who denied he impersonated a devil) carrying a book, this may have been a mock groaning, or a kind of spoof Doomsday scene; see *REED: Cumberland Westmorland Gloucestershire* edited Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield (Toronto University Press, 1986) 201.
30. F.G. Emmison *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts* (Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, 1973) 142; for the notion this might be a 'mock' (i.e. parodic) baptism see Keith Thomas *Man and the Natural World* (Allen Lane, London, 1983; reprinted Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984) 47.
31. Norreys Jephson O'Connor *Godes Peace and the Queenes: Vicissitudes of a House, 1539–1615* (Oxford University Press, London, 1934) 115; see also C.L. Barber *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton University Press, 1959; reprinted 1972) chapter 3:1, 'Licence and Lèse Majesty in Lincolnshire'.
32. Martin Ingram 'Ridings, Rough Music and Mocking Rhymes in early modern England' 170.
33. *The Lombard Laws* translated Katherine Fischer Drew (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1973) 231 (title), 234 (text).
34. Paolo Squatriti *Water and Society in Early Medieval Italy, AD 400–1000* (Cambridge University Press, 1998) 35.
35. Emmison *Elizabethan Life* 155.
36. William Shakespeare *The Comedy of Errors* Act 4 Scene 1 lines 16–17, in *The Riverside Shakespeare* 2nd edition edited G. Blakemore Evans and others (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1997).
37. Samuel Butler *Hudibras* edited John Wilders (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1964) Part Two Canto 2 lines 585–712.

38. Underdown *Revel, Riot and Rebellion* 100–101; F.G. Emmison *Elizabethan Life* 54; Ingram *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage* 254.
39. *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* edited F.N. Robinson (2nd edition, Oxford University Press, London, 1966; reprinted 1968) *The Canterbury Tales* VII 1907–1912 (Prologue to the *Monk's Tale*); William Shakespeare *King Lear* 4.ii.17–18 in *The Riverside Shakespeare*. See also Frances M. Biscoglio “Unspun” Heroes: Iconography of the Spinning Woman in the Middle Ages’ *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 25 (1995) 163–84.
40. Bakhtin *Rabelais and his World* 147–8, and see 152.
41. For the latter see Keith Thomas *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1971; reprinted Penguin, London, 1973) 66; Claude Bremond and others *L'Exemplum* (Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental 40: Brepols, Turnhout, 1982) 97.
42. Hogarth: *The Complete Engravings* edited Joseph Burke and Colin Caldwell (Thames and Hudson, London, 1968) plate 103; see also plate 88 for a second, contemporary, version.
43. ‘The Last Instructions to a Painter’ in *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell* edited H.M. Margoliouth, 2 vols (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971) 1 376–89. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* edited R. Latham and W. Matthews 11 vols (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1974) 8 257, and note 2 for the connection with Marvell’s poem.
44. C.R.B. Barrett ‘Riding Skimmington and Riding the Stang’ *Journal of the British Archaeological Society* NS 1 (1895) 58–68; Mrs Gutch *Examples of Printed Folklore Concerning the North Riding of Yorkshire* (Folklore Society, London, 1901) 335–7.
45. Cited in Karen Newman ‘Renaissance Family Politics and Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*’ *ELR* 16 (1986) 86–100 at 86–87; Ingram ‘Ridings, Rough Music and the “Reform of Popular Culture”’ 93 reads ‘shamed’ for ‘shunned’. This form is also illustrated in a celebrated plaster panel at Montacute House, Somerset, from c. 1590; see Malcolm Jones ‘Folklore Motifs in Late Medieval Art 2: Sexist Satire and Popular Punishments’ *Folklore* 101 (1990) 69–87, at 78.
46. The interpolation is preserved in Paris BN MS fr. 146, which also contains the celebrated illustrations of the procession: *Le Roman de Fauvel par Gervais du Bus publié d’après tous les manuscrits connus* edited Arthur Langfors (SATF; Didot, Paris, 1914; reprinted Johnson Reprint, New York, 1968) Appendix, ‘Notice et Extraits de l’interpolation du Manuscrit E’ (text), lines 679–770, and see 135–38 (discussion); the translation cited is by the present writer.
47. For the smashing and the salt-throwing as traditional features of charivaries see Roger Pinon ‘Qu’est-ce qu’un charivari?’ 400–401. We are presumably to imagine the salt is thrown into the well of the house concerned, effectively making it uninhabitable.

48. The source of much 'mythological' discussion of the custom, see for example P. Fortier-Beaulieu 'Le Charivari dans le *Roman de Fauvel*' *Revue de folklore française et de folklore colonial* 11 (1940) 1–16; Rey-Flaud *Le Charivari* chapter 7 'Le Charivari de Fauvel'; Carlo Ginzburg 'Charivari, associations juvéniles, chasse sauvage' in *Le Charivari* edited Le Goff and Schmitt 131–140, at 133–36.
49. Theo Brown 'The "Stag" Hunt in Devon' *Folklore* 63 (1952) 104–109; 'A Further Note on the "Stag Hunt" in Devon' *Folklore* 90 (1979) 18–21.
50. B.H. Cunningham 'A "Skimmington" in 1618' *Folklore* 41 (1930) 288–90.
51. Roger Pinon 'Qu'est-ce qu'un charivari?' 404.
52. Claudie Marcel-Dubois 'Fêtes villageoises cérémoniels ou une musique et son contraire' *Fêtes de la Renaissance* 3 edited J. Jacquot & E. Konigson (Centre national de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris, 1975) 603–618 at 611–12.
53. Christine Klapisch-Zuber 'La "mattinata" médiévale d'Italie' in *Le Charivari* edited Le Goff and Schmitt 149–163.
54. Astutely, if to other ends, introduced into the charivary debate by Roger Pinon 'Qu'est-ce qu'un charivari?' 402–403.
55. David Underdown *Revel, Riot and Rebellion* 99–103.
56. On peasant — even villein — participation in local courts see Steven Justice *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1994) 56 (sheriff's court), and Barbara A. Hanawalt 'Of Good and Ill Repute': *Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (Oxford University Press, 1991) 2–3.
57. M.K. McIntosh *Controlling Misbehaviour in England, 1370–1600* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).
58. Martin Ingram *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England* 11; see also 30–31 for the (largely cooperative) relationship between communities and courts.
59. Peter Spierenburg *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression* (Cambridge University Press, 1984) places this development in the sixteenth century onwards.
60. Peter Burke *Popular Culture in early modern Europe* 270–80.
61. David Underdown 'The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in early modern England' in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* edited Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge University Press, 1985) 116–136.
62. Ingram *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage* 255–59 (adultery) and 180 (marital relationships), nonetheless listing a couple of instances (wife-beating and husband-scratching) that might have qualified for a charivari if not dealt with.
63. David Underdown *Revel, Riot and Rebellion* 7–40.

64. James A. Brundage *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (University of Chicago Press, 1987) 68–9; 142; 477–8; 514.
65. Allan Greer ‘From folklore to revolution’ 28; Greer cites and adjusts the suggestion of an organic link between *charivari* and church attitudes to second marriages by André Burguière in ‘Pratique du charivari et répression religieuse dans la France d’Ancien Régime’ in *Le Charivari* edited Le Goff and Schmitt 179–95, especially 190–91.
66. Mrs Gutch *Examples of Printed Folklore* 336–7.
67. B.H. Cunningham ‘A “Skimmington” in 1618’ 288–90.
68. Underdown *Revel, Riot and Rebellion* 264; Quaipe *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives* 200. For further instances see Violet Alford ‘Rough Music’ 505–518, at 507–8.
69. Joan R. Kent “Folk Justice” and Royal Justice in Early Seventeenth-Century England: A “Charivari” in the Midlands’ *Midland History* 8 (1983) 70–85; see also Joan R. Kent ‘The English Village Constable, 1580–1642: The Nature and Dilemmas of the Office’ *Journal of British Studies* 20 (1980–81) 26–49, at 38–9.
70. McIntosh *Controlling Misbehaviour* 37.
71. The case of Dame Aligonne de Toulouse (perhaps treated distinctively as she was, at the age of eighty or more, marrying for the fourth or fifth time), cited in Jean-Claude Margolin ‘Charivari et mariage ridicule au temps de la Renaissance’ in *Les Fêtes de la Renaissance* 3 edited Jacquot and Konigson 579–601, at 584.
72. On early English shaming punishments, mainly of scolds, whores, and adulteresses, see Lynda E. Boose ‘Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman’s Unruly Member’ *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1991) 179–213; Laura Lunger Knoppers ‘(En)gendering Shame: *Measure for Measure* and the Spectacles of Power’ *English Literary Renaissance* 23 (1993) 450–71; J.W. Spargo *Judicial Folklore in England Illustrated by the Cucking-Stool* (Duke University Press, Durham, N.C., 1944); David Underdown ‘The Taming of the Scold’ 116–136.
73. McIntosh *Controlling Misbehaviour in England* 114–116.
74. *The Diary of Henry Machyn* edited J.G. Nichols (Camden Society 42: 1848; reprinted Johnson Reprint Corporation, New York, 1968) 16, 56, 57. See also 168 (9 March, 1558).
75. *Machyn’s Diary* 211 (15 September, 1559: firewood); 253 (22 March, 1561: fish).
76. *Machyn’s Diary* 156, 220, 228. See also Hanawalt ‘Of Good and Ill Repute’ 24–8, ‘Marginalization of Public Offenders’, and for contemporary instances from other English towns see McIntosh *Controlling Misbehaviours* 72–3.
77. It survives both as the preliminary (reversed) drawing and the derivative engraving by Pieter van Heyden; see, respectively, Ludwig Münz *Bruegel, the*

- Drawings: Complete Edition* (Phaidon, London, 1961; reprinted 1968) plate 130; René van Bastelaer *Les Estampes de Peter Bruegel l'ancien* (G. van Oest, Bruxelles, 1908) plate 131.
78. Ruth Mellinkoff 'Riding Backwards: Theme of Humiliation and Symbol of Evil' *Viator* 4 (1973) 153–76; Malcolm Jones 'Folklore Motifs in Late Medieval Art 2: Sexist Satire and Popular Punishments' *Folklore* 101 (1990) 69–87.
 79. *Munimenta Gildhallae Londiniensis* 3 edited H.T. Riley (Longman, Brown, Green, London, 1862) 181, and see 179–82 for the parading in various ways of a variety of sexual offenders. For the Anglo-Norman original and discussion see Carter Revard 'The Tow on Absolon's Distaff and the Punishment of Lechers in Medieval London' *English Language Notes* 17 (1979–80) 168–70.
 80. John Stow *The Survey of London* [1603] edited H.B. Wheatley (Dent, London, 1987) 171.
 81. *Machyn's Diary* 278 and 301.
 82. *Songs, Carols, and other Miscellaneous Poems* edited R. Dyboski *EETS ES* 101 (1908) 155.
 83. Joan R. Kent "Folk Justice" 70–85, the quotations from the victims' petition to Star Chamber. For the parading of the victim in person in the later, northern stang-riding (tied to a wooden seat attached to two long poles) see *Lancashire Legends* edited J. Harland and T.T. Wilkinson (London, Routledge, 1873; reprinted EP Publishing, Wakefield, 1973) 174–5.
 84. *Quaife Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives* 200.
 85. Jean-Claude Margolin 'Charivari et mariage ridicule' 579–601, at 598 (my translation).