

Historical and Literary Contexts for the Skimmington: Impotence and Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*¹

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Introduction: Cuckoldry and Popular Culture

This chapter draws on historical and cultural sources to examine the skimmington or riding, an English variant of the European charivari. It interrogates the specifics of this social shaming ritual and its impact on print culture. Its primary focus is the lengthiest skimmington account, in the "authorized" second part of Samuel Butler's three-part burlesque poem *Hudibras*, first published in 1664.² The central pair of this mock-heroic Augustan poem are the Presbyterian antihero Sir Hudibras and his Sectarian Independent squire Ralpho (or Ralph), a humble tailor whose occult medical skills enabled him to diagnose magical impotence and other causes of cuckoldry.³ So obsessed was the early modern period with cuckoldry that, according to Douglas Bruster, "it is difficult to overestimate the predominance of cuckoldry in the popular drama of the period."⁴ No level of society was exempt, and increasingly, parallels were drawn between cheating and betrayal in the private marital sphere and public political arena, especially in the aftermath of the Civil War, when Butler confronts England's monarch with his court's incontinence:

Cuckolds so cow'rdly and so base,
Lascivious wives so void of grace.
[...] Such stars could surely never shine,
O Charles! round any throne but thine;
Thy great example prompts each spouse
To make a jest of marriage-vows.⁵

Skimmingtons target marital transgression, especially cuckoldry. Their performative highpoint is a proxy couple (or, more rarely, a single stand-in), chosen from among the shamed couple's nearest male neighbors, to enact the transgressing pair. Their aggressively theatrical neighborly contribution is,

I here suggest, informed by responses to perceived mismatches between canon law, civil legislation and peasant traditions relating to marital infertility and paternity issues. English common law protected the paternity and birthright of children born to husbands abroad; requiring husbands to prove themselves legal cuckolds in courts of law before being permitted to disinherit children born within wedlock. Butler's contribution to the controversy surrounding this legislation is typically sharp:

To give the cheats the eldest hand
 In foul play, by the laws o' th' land;
 For which so many a legal cuckold
 Has been run down in courts, and truckled.
 [...] 'Tis we [wives] that can dispose alone,
 Whether your heirs shall be your own,
 To whose integrity you must,
 In spite of all your caution, trust;
 And, 'less you fly beyond the seas,
 Can fit you with what heirs we please;
 And force you t'own 'em, though begotten
 By French valets, or Irish footmen.⁶

Brazenly turning common law to his advantage and proclaiming "Ile teach a Cuckold how to hide his horns," the pragmatic sailor hero of John Webster and William Rowley's early 17th-century play, *A cure for a cuckold* (first published only in 1661), successfully sues a wealthy childless merchant and his barren wife to win back custody of his wife's baby son, born shortly before his return from several years at sea.⁷

Potent husbands in childless marriages had the legal right to divorce their barren spouse, a right extended by canon law to the fertile wives of impotent men.⁸ The previously unrecognized relevance of certain ancient regulations and traditional rules, governing the rights and duties of members of peasant groups, is also significant in the context of the skimmington. The authoritative legal historian (and collector of folk and fairy tales) Jacob Grimm published several volumes of "wisdoms" transcribed from 17th- and 18th-century vernacular German dialect manuscripts, whose references to outmoded weaponry and concepts such as longbows and spears, or crop damage by bears, suggest much earlier origins. The extent, if any, of their legal status or use in early modern law courts, is unclear.⁹ Perhaps they are akin to the complex punishment rituals and other traditions practiced by early modern occupational groups such as game-keepers, miners or freemasons.¹⁰

Grimm's publications include four "wisdoms" exhorting impotent husbands to embrace the status of wittol, or compliant cuckold, and ensure an heir by requesting male neighbors to stand in for their marital duty. All elaborate on an impotent peasant farmer's right or duty to "call on his neighbors to help him with his wife's mortal peril" (*Hattering landfeste*), "take her to his neighbor" (*Bockumer landrecht*), "deliver his wife to someone capable of taking care of her needs" (*Wendhager bauernrecht*) or "ask his nearest neighbor to help his wife" (*Benker heidenrecht*).¹¹ If that doesn't work,

some advise the peasant to dress her in best or new clothes, fill her moneybag and send her to the nearest annual fair to sort out the problem herself, and, if that still doesn't solve it, to let her go to the devil, or even a thousand devils. Garbled overlaps between these ritualized stipulations suggest venerable oral transmission. Most instruct the impotent peasant to convey his wife, on his back, across his own boundary fence onto a neighbor's land, and exhort him to treat her gently, or not to be rough with her or hurt her in any way. According to the *Benker heidenrecht*, he must also carry her back home and provide her with a roast chicken and a jug of wine after her ordeal. Some authorities agree with Grimm in accepting these four "wisdoms" as a legitimate way of providing for an heir,¹² others classify them as ritual rape.¹³ Although practice of this very public custom is known to Grimm only from legend and fable, there is evidence of some early modern childless couples' more discreet involvement of male neighbors in their attempts to secure heirs, a practice supported by Martin Luther.¹⁴ From the 12th century onwards, canon law attempted to clarify the conundrum of whether binding marriage was established by consensual contract (the exchange of vows), or by a point of law (sexual consummation), and whether couples prevented by impotence from consummating their marriage could be regarded as legally married.¹⁵ Concerned to minimize divorce, and apparently attempting to replace both Catholic canon law and peasant "wisdoms," Luther's anti-Papist sermon of 1522 directly addresses the fertile wife of an impotent husband.¹⁶ Informing her that unconsummated childless marriages are not recognized by God, he advises her to seek her husband's explicit permission to provide him with an heir, by agreeing to be cheated by her "secret marriage" with his brother or closest relative.¹⁷

A Swiss visitor to London in 1599, the physician Thomas Platter the Younger, records the performative heart of the English skimmington not as the shamed couple, but their nearest neighbors:

In England ... women have much more freedom than in other places, and also know well how to make good use of it. They often go for walks or coach-rides extremely impressively dressed, and their husbands just have to put up with this, and are not permitted to punish them for it. Instead, wives often beat their husbands, and when one hears about this, the very nearest of their neighbors is placed on a cart and paraded around the whole town in order to make fun of the beaten man, while proclaiming that this is his punishment for not having come to the aid of his neighbor while his wife was beating him.¹⁸

This practice was also confirmed by a Frenchman living in London:

I have sometimes met in the Streets of *London* a Woman carrying a Figure of Straw representing a Man, crown'd with very ample Horns, preceded by a Drum, and follow'd by a Mob, making a most grating Noise with Tongs, Grid-irons, Frying-pans, and Saucepans: I ask'd what was the Meaning of all this; they told me, that a Woman had given her Husband a sound beating, for accusing her of making him a Cuckold, and that upon such Occasions some kind Neighbour of the *poor innocent injur'd Creature*¹⁹ generally perform'd this Ceremony.²⁰

This account highlights the centrality to the skimmington of horns, the ancient symbol of cuckoldry, of discordant noise and of mockery targeting the couple as a whole: in this case, the virago wife no less than her cuckolded husband.

Since Violet Alford's ground breaking article of 1959 on "Rough music or charivari," anthropologists and social historians such as Natalie Zemon Davis, Martin Ingram, EP Thompson and David Underdown have contributed greatly to our understanding of street theatre intended to shame couples who transgress sexual and social mores.²¹ They examine the mythic origins and history of European charivaris and English skimmingtons, their relationship to regional variants such as "riding the stang," wheel-barrowing, hussitting, ritual hunts or the Welsh *ceffyl pren*, and overlaps with diverse rituals and "rough music" at official civic punishments, unofficial land closure and other occasions for public riots. Some skimmingtons involved little more than the public taunting of quarrelling couples, as in the case of Mary Hall of Cameley. In 1616, when neighbors learned that she had beaten their blacksmith (her husband John), on the back with a frying pan, they "had one to Ryde upon mens shoulders by the name of Skymerton without any hurt don or misdemeanours otherwise at all."²² Although primarily, skimmingtons publicly shamed cuckolds or bawds, some mocked other types of antisocial transgressors. In 1691, one hundred Warwickshire villagers, led by a cross-dressed smith and a farmer crowned with a pair of horns, marched to the house of a local couple. Maligning them as a "cuckoldy dog" and a stealing "whore," they loudly broadcast the details of their petty thieving of timber and chickens.²³ Other skimmingtons, such as those staged as enclosure protests, targeted social rather than individual transgressions.

Hudibras

Interpretation of the domestic and political dimensions of Butler's skimmington account is necessarily informed by the convoluted book history of *Hudibras*. Dated 1663, the anonymously published first edition of Part I was an immediate bestseller. It was in the bookshops by December 26, 1662, when Samuel Pepys, hearing about "a new book of drollery in use, called *Hudebras*," rushed to buy it at the Temple. Pronouncing it "so silly ... that I am ashamed of it," he sold it on to a friend that same evening. However, determined to give this fashionable publication another go, he rebought it in February: "it being certainly some ill humour to be so against that which all the world cries up to be the example of wit; for which I am resolved once more to read him, and see whether I can find it or no."²⁴ Within a year, Part I was anonymously re-issued in five authorized and four pirated editions. Multiple editions of an "unauthorized" Part II (1663)²⁵ were followed by an entirely differently worded anonymous "authorized" Part II (1664), authenticated as Butler's by its later incorporation into all combined editions. Part III, also anonymous, followed in 1674. Pepys borrowed Part II²⁶ in November 1663: "to see if it be as good as the first, which the world cry so mightily up, though it hath not a

good liking in me, though I had tried by twice or three times reading to bring myself to think it witty." A fortnight later, he bought: "*Hudibras*, both parts, the book now in greatest fashion for drollery, though I cannot, I confess, see enough where the wit lies"; this even though Pepys's colleague Sir William Petty reckoned *Hudibras* among the "three books ... most esteemed and generally cried up for wit in the world," and the staunch "Parliament-man" Mr. Seymour quoted it "in a serious discourse."²⁷ By 1668, when Pepys and his wife invited Samuel Butler to dine at their house with the portraitist Samuel Cooper and others, they appreciated the company of the writer they now knew to be the author of *Hudibras*.²⁸ In August 1683, three years after Butler's death, and having finally been won over by his poem, Pepys "read over the first two books of *Hudibras*" while voyaging to Tangier on Navy business.²⁹

Although critics dismiss the 1663 "unauthorized" Part II as a derivative work of little literary merit by some unidentifiable hack, Butler's authorial involvement cannot be excluded. Passages openly attacking religious and political belief systems with powerful supporters would have discouraged any writer with pretensions to court patronage from admitting to its authorship during the 1660s. Published barely a year after the anonymous Part I, the unauthorized Part II refers knowingly to "Bütlero,"³⁰ and matches some of Butler's innovative literary quirks in ways that go beyond mere derivation or parody. Perhaps not coincidentally, *Hudibras* followed *Don Quixote* in inspiring an unauthorized sequel that both promoted and profited from the original work's commercial success.³¹

Magical Impotence

One pervasive leitmotif of *Hudibras* is the principle protagonist's virility. Although Sir Hudibras is a bachelor, his fear of impotence and cuckoldry is reflected in constant references to horns and tails (or lack thereof). The plot tracks his rambling quest to prove himself "no *Gelding*" in order to avoid the professed cure for folly and impotence (also featured in *Don Quixote*): being whipped with the dried penis of a bull.³² Impotence was closely associated with cuckoldry; the occult practice of magical impotence, thought to render a bridegroom impotent with his new wife but not with other women, was regarded as a major cause of cuckoldry. Magical impotence thus threatened newlyweds with childlessness, and other couples with cuckoldry's complex legal, moral and economic dangers. Its roots are ancient and transnational. On mainland Europe, magical impotence rituals were integral to a continuous tradition of domestic witchcraft.³³ In early modern England, by contrast, their popular practice was all but obsolete.

Magical impotence rituals entered Jacobean theatre culture through the influence of practices owing less to indigenous traditions than to classically inspired necromancy of the type then flourishing at European courts. This revival of interest was fueled by a high-profile court scandal surrounding

Frances Howard, daughter of Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk. In 1606, 13-year-old Frances married 14-year-old Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex; in 1613, she filed for annulment of her marriage. Her successful case rested on proving her virginity and Essex's magically-induced impotence to an ecclesiastical commission chaired by George Abbott, Archbishop of Canterbury, whose vehement rejection of witchcraft as a cause of impotence was over-ruled by King James I.³⁴ Howard's case greatly influenced plays such as Thomas Middleton's *The Witch* (c. 1616), in which the garrulous chief witch Hecate renders clients' unwanted lovers magically impotent by dispensing knotted charms.³⁵ Similar magical knots feature in the anti-masque of Ben Jonson's *Masque of Queenes*, performed at court in 1609. Referencing demonological tracts, classical authors and dictionaries, Jonson notes of his witches that "the vntying of their knots is, when they are going to some fatall businesse."³⁶

Magical impotence rituals involving knots were an ongoing occult practice in many European regions. Thomas Platter's account of them in Languedoc in 1598 is the earliest known detailed record of the performative sequence whereby occult practitioners enacted magical impotence rituals during the actual marriage ceremony of their intended victims. It notes that they involved knotting a point (a reinforced leather lace of the type used to lace up codpieces), during a specific part of the wedding ceremony itself.³⁷

Although central to European magical impotence, knots had evidently fallen into disuse in 17th-century England. While Jonson's chief witch alludes to knots on stage, her fellow witches pierce effigies, proclaiming: "With pictures full, of waxe, and of wooll / Their liuers I sticke, with needles quicke."³⁸ Jacobean occult practitioners and dramatists, evidently unfamiliar with continental magical impotence rituals, seem to have pieced together their details from classical literary sources and European demonological tracts.

Alluded to in *Masque of Queenes* and *The Witch*, magical impotence is central to Thomas Heywood and Richard Brome's play *Late Lancashire Witches* (1634), featuring a simple country couple. Before their wedding ceremony, a jealous local witch (and former lover of the bridegroom) presents him with a knotted codpiece point. This renders him impotent with his new wife. Eventually, after much grief, including their public shaming in a skimmington, the newlyweds realize that the knotted point is a bewitched "charme."³⁹ Only by burning this "Inchauntment" does the couple finally restore the husband's potency and their marital harmony. While *Late Lancashire Witches* could still serve up a plot dependent on codpiece points as late as 1634, such magic charms are noticeably absent from Thomas Shadwell's radically updated version of Heywood and Brome's play, *Lancashire-Witches* (1682).⁴⁰ Magical impotence is fleetingly alluded to, but there is no hint of the actual rituals to bring it about, either in the playtext itself, or even in Shadwell's copious learned references drawn from classical sources, Jacobean drama, and demonological tracts. English witches, it appears, dispensed with magical knots long before their continental counterparts.

Samuel Butler's description of the judiciary astrologer Sidrophel the Rosicrucian, who was consulted by Sir Hudibras concerning his impotence, represents one of the fullest literary accounts of early modern expectations of the professional practice of occult healers, which accorded a prominent role to the diagnosis and treatment of impotence and other infertility problems.⁴¹ In Canto II of the unauthorized Part II, this medical specialism is aggressively marketed by a flamboyant Catholic mountebank from Paris. Mounting his outdoor fairground stage, Monsieur Quack promotes the resurrective powers of his patent cure for impotence in comical broken English, drawing on a venerable literary tradition.⁴² Bawdily assisted by his mixed-gender troupe, Quack continues to vaunt his ability to cure—and cause—impotence even after his brutal arrest and capture by the outraged Sir Hudibras and Ralpho:⁴³

So on they amble to the place,
Where *Monsieur* spake with a boon grace;
Begar ["by God"] me kill you all, an den
Presan make you alive agen;
Wi dis me do all de gran Cure,
De Pock, de Scab. de Calenture;
Me make de Man strong, pour de Wench.
(Then riseth *Capon* from the Bench)
Look you me now, do you no see
Dead yesterday, now live day be,
Four boon, dey leap, dey dance, dey sing,
May foy, an do de toder ting:
Begar good Medicine do all dis.
Capon makes legs, and Wench doth kiss,
Take hands, and throw their legs about.
[...] Me be de Frenchman, profess Phissick,
Me cure de Pock, de Cough, de Tissick,
De Ish, de Gout, the Ash in bones,
And me begar can cut your Stones [i.e. castrate you].⁴⁴

Rehearsing key themes played out over the poem's three official Parts, the unauthorized Part II anticipates, as well as draws on, Butler's relentless satirical pitting of his Reform protagonists Hudibras and Ralpho against traditional customs such as the skimmington. Performative ceremonies of this type were reviled by hard-line Parliamentarians concerned to repress popular culture with perceived Papist roots.

Butler's Skimmington: Rough Music, Bad Smells and Cuckolds' Horns

In place of the quack troupe of the 1663 unauthorized version, the 1664 authorized edition of *Hudibras* Part II features a colorfully theatrical skimmington that made the poem's title into a byword. A Charing Cross wedding of 1737, for example, was disrupted by what the London press gleefully labelled a "Grand Hudibrastick Skimmington." Involving numerous

“Chairmen [drivers], and others of that Class,” it greatly disturbed the mismatched 70-plus-year-old groom and his teenage bride.⁴⁵ Literary precedents for the *Hudibras* skimmington can be found in plays such as *The Knave in Graine* (1640, attributed by some to John Day), or Heywood and Brome’s *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634), while it in turn directly inspired writers such as Andrew Marvell, Walter Scott and Edward William Davies, whose detailed fictional skimmington account is previously uncited in this context.⁴⁶ The practice was considered stageworthy well into the 18th century, as indicated by works such as *The Country-Wedding and Skimmington* (1729), a comic libretto attributed to Essex Hawker.⁴⁷

Like the charivari, the skimmington was habitually accompanied by a terrifying din and heavy-handed allusions to cuckoldry and impotence through the blowing, brandishing, or wearing of horns.⁴⁸ The cacophony incorporated mocking laughter, the raucous human voice and “rough music” which, like the demonic music of medieval stage devils, involved martial and rustic instruments such as horns, drums or bagpipes, and noisy makeshift use of women’s kitchen implements, such as skimming ladles and pots, pans or griddles. Infernal din contributes materially to the performative impact of stage skimmingtons. In Beaumont and Fletcher’s dramatic sequel to Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*, such din is created by a band of noisy women led by the widowed Petruchio’s new wife Maria. Rejecting female submission, they “fling main Potlids / like massie rocks, dart ladles, tossing Irons / and tongs like Thunderbolts.”⁴⁹ Other stage skimmingtons are announced by “a great Hubub and noise, a ringing of basons, a great many Boyes before,”⁵⁰ or by an onlooker enquiring: “Whats the matter now, is Hell broke loose?”⁵¹ The arrival of the *Hudibras* skimmington too, is heralded by the fear its commotion instils into Butler’s cowardly Sir Hudibras and Ralpho:

When both were parted on the sudden,
With hideous *Clamour*, and a loud one,
As if all sorts of *Noise* had been
Contracted into one loud *Din*:
Or that some Member [of Parliament] to be chosen [i.e. elected],
Had got the *Odds* above a *Thousand*;
And by the Greatness of his *Noise*,
Prov’d fittest for his *Country’s* Choice.
This strange surprisal put the *Knight*,
And wrathful *Squire* into a Fright.⁵²

Sir Hudibras and Ralpho’s fears were fully justified; but although some charivaris and skimmingtons had been known to lead to serious injury or death, no attempt at regulation had managed to stop this ancient custom. William Prynne’s Puritan anti-theatrical treatise of 1633 traces it back to at least 1404, the date of a canon law warning clergy to “be not present at, nor yet play in the play that is called Charevari, in which they use vizards in the shape of divels, and horrible things are there committed: which Play

wee prohibit not onely Clergy men, but generally all our subjects under paine of excommunication."⁵³ Two centuries after this prohibition, Thomas Platter documented unruly French "chalifary" groups of rowdy young bachelors, also disguised in devil masks. They continued to meet nightly to disturb the immediate neighborhood of newlywed couples of unequal age with intolerable smells and unsocial noises, disbanding only on receipt of a handsome bribe from the shamed couple:

each with his own instrument: one has an old kettle, another a pan, the third a drum, the fourth pipes, the fifth a spoon in a salt vat, the sixth a cowhorn and so on ... They start playing their instruments at around midnight, and each tries to shout, sing or play more horribly than the rest. This releases such a frightening noise and screaming, that no neighbors within twelve houses' distance are able to get any peace at all.⁵⁴

Platter's description recalls the noisy, smelly, riotous chaos graphically evoked by Butler, as do the historical records relating to a skimmington for the self-proclaimed married couple William and Margaret Cripple. Having set up house together in Burton-on-Trent in 1618, they were soon suspected of being unmarried, even brother and sister. In March 1618, around four hundred locals, many armed or disguised, dragged the newcomers out of their house and through the town to the stocks, "with greate noyce and with ringing of cow bells, basons, candlesticks, fryingpannes and with the sounde of a drumme," shouting "a whore and a knave, a whore, a whore."⁵⁵

William Hogarth's heroic print *Hudibras encounters the skimmington*⁵⁶ heightens the rustic riot's burlesque effect by innovatively borrowing the monumental scale traditionally reserved for the most respected category of art: history painting.⁵⁷ Directly travestyng the musical retinues of classical triumphs, its corpulent central hornblower's⁵⁸ massive musical horn draws attention both to the martial din and the motivating cuckoldry of Butler's skimmington, ruled over by the cuckold's horns:

And now the Cause of all their *Fear*,
By slow Degrees approach'd so near,
They might distinguish diff'rent Noise
Of *Horns*, and *Pans*, and *Dogs*, and *Boys*,
And *Kettle-Drums*, whose sullen *Dub*
Sounds like the hooping of a Tub.⁵⁹

Having likened the conventions of his skimmington to some corrupt local political election, Butler goes on to develop satirical parallels to Roman Triumphs:

But when the Sight appear'd in View,
They found it was an Antique Show,
A *Triumph*, that for Pomp and State,
Did proudest *Romans* emulate:
[...] Being mounted in their best Array,

Upon a *Carre*, and who but they?
 And follow'd with a World of Tall-Lads,
 That merry *Ditties* troll'd, and *Ballads*;
 Did ride with many a Good-morrow,
 Crying, *Hey for our Town*, through the *Burrough*.⁶⁰

These allusions to the important role of the raucous human voice (laughing, shouting, yelling or singing generic doggerel or scurrilous rhymes written for the occasion), are followed by further evocations of rough music.⁶¹

Next *Pan*, and *Kettles* of all Keys,
 From *Trebles* down to *double Base*.
 And after them, upon a *Nag*,
 That might pass for a forehand Stag,
 A *Cornet* rode, and on his Staff,
 A Smock display'd, did proudly wave:
 Then *Bagpipes* of the lowdest Drones,
 With snuffling broken winded tones.⁶²

This horned horse alludes to the rundown jade or nag ridden by the theatrical focal point of the skimmington's enactment of the battle of the sexes, the central proxy pair to whom attention is drawn by riotous cacophony.

Within and outside the context of rough music, horns habitually feature in documented skimmingtons. In that held in Quemerford near Calne in 1618, the mob that gathered to shame the local cutler Thomas Mills and his wife Agnes sounded "pipes & hornes ... & rames hornes & buckes hornes carried upon forkes were then and there lifted up and showen." On the morning of May 27, 1618, some dozen rowdy boys and men had been turned away from Quemerford by its womenfolk, who "understanding yt ye drumer & his company came thither for a Skimmington, they made towards the drumer & cutt a pt of his drum, whereupon he and his company departed towards Callne." At noon, a group of three or four hundred men from Calne, some armed, arrived with their proxy cuckold, identifiable by his characteristic night-shirt and horns: "a man riding upon a horse, haveing a white night cap upon his head, two shininge hornes hanging by his eares, & counterfayte beard upon his chine made of a deares tayle, a smocke upon the top of his garments."⁶³ Accusations of cuckoldry and aggressive allusions to horns cut deep. Horning was "an insult that could draw blood."⁶⁴ In August 1532, when around 80 rowdy men nightly roamed central Oxford, causing terror by randomly attacking pedestrians with stones or daggers and breaking into houses, but also by threatening them with cuckoldry: "if any one speaks to them out of the windows, they bid him go to bed, cuckold knave, or else come down, and his horns shall be knocked in again."⁶⁵

Butler's Skimmington: Pelting, Riding and the Battle of the Sexes

Another ritual integral to skimmingtons is mutual pelting. Sir Hudibras faces a barrage of eggs wielded by the *Hudibras* mob.⁶⁶ Julio, the cheating *Knave in graine*, is pelted with "Pippings, Carrets, or Turneps," while the mashed or spent brewers' grains traditionally used as pig feed or compost referred to in this play's title is confirmed as skimmington ammunition by Marvell.⁶⁷ *Hudibras* specifies a less salubrious mixture:

Next, one upon a Pair of *Panniers*,
Full fraught with that, which for good Manners
Shall here be nameless, mixt with *Grains*,
Which he dispend'd among the *Swains*,
And busily upon the Crowd,
At Random round about bestow'd.⁶⁸

John Locke identifies the unnamed ingredient in an aside directly following a reference to "the bespatterings of Mr *Edward's* Dunghil," noting that "*Skimmington* Rides in Triumph, driving all before him by the Ordures that he bestows on those that come in his way."⁶⁹

The previously cited skimmington records of 1618 also mention various ritual uses of dung and grain. In Burton-on-Trent, locals cast the "dourte and mier of the streets" on William and Margaret Cripple while dragging them from their own house to the market place and then on to the stocks, where they "did in moste indecent and shamfull mannor cast durte upon [... them] and pissed on their heads," before dragging them back into town "by the feete, their heads lying upon the grownde, through the dirty channells of the said streets."⁷⁰ As in Butler's literary account, the paraded proxy horseman of the 1618 Quemerford skimmington pelted the mob with grain: "he rode upon a red horse wth a paire of potts under him & in them some quantitye of bruinge graines, wch he used to cast upon ye presse of people, rushing over thicke upon him in ye way as he passed."⁷¹ Specialists, who sometimes view this grain as a malevolent inversion of the benign sprinkling of rice or confetti on newlyweds,⁷² rarely comment on a second use of grain in skimmingtons, occurring, for example, after the armed Quemerford crowd forcibly dragged Agnes Mills from the upper floor of her home. They flung her into her "wett hole":⁷³

trod upon hir & beried her filthily wth durt, & did beate hir blacke & blewe in many places with an intent ... to have had hir, viz, Agnes, 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 stoole, & if she would not be still & sitt quietly, then to stufte hir mouth wth greines.⁷⁴

The dual role of brewers' grains as both ammunition and force-fed fodder is confirmed in a highly politicized account of a riding allegedly staged at Smithfield Bar (a fortified border then controlling those entering the City of London from the East London district of Smithfield), in January 1650:

Where one that acted Sir *Thomas* a horse-back, with a *Ladle* in his hand, two Baskets of *Prides* Graines before him, and his *Doxie* riding with her face to the horse taylor behind; one of them flung a Ladle of Graines in our Commanders face: which he took to be a great affront to a Soldier ... which a Butcher's Boy perceiving, presently ... made him swallow his Graines and be thankful.⁷⁵

At their most typical, skimmingtons unite punishment and festival. Public processional street theatre mocking dominant wives and henpecked or cuckolded husbands enlisted a shamed couple's closest neighbors to reenact their transgressions with a satirical use of transvestite clothing and gendered household items. Some neighbors enthusiastically volunteered to play the role of proxy, with the aim of extracting maximum shame from the couple (and a generous tip or formal payment for their trouble), while others required coercion or refused to participate.⁷⁶ *Late Lancashire Witches* describes rowdy street theatre disrupted by the newlywed couple themselves, the bride Parnell and Lawrence, her bewitched and impotent husband. Far from allowing themselves to be drummed out, they unseat the proxy couple and proceed to beat the unfortunate pair with their own mock weapons.⁷⁷

Satirizing the political impotence of English foreign policy, the brief skimmington account in Andrew Marvell's poem "The last instructions to a painter," notes that when a London neighborhood learns of a local husband-beater: "the just Street does the next House invade / Mounting the Neighbour Couple on lean Jade."⁷⁸ In a diary entry of 22 February 1563, another Londoner, Henry Machyn, confirms those paraded as the nearest neighbors, not the shamed couple:

The xxij day of Feybruary, was Shroyff-munday, at Charyngcrosse ther was a man cared of iij men, and a-for hym a bagpype playng, a shame [=shawm] and a drum playhyng, and a xx lynkes bornyng a-bowtt hym, because ys next neybor(s) wyff ded bett [=beat] here hosband; ther-for yt (is) ordered that ys next naybor shall ryd a-bowtt the plase.⁷⁹

Margaret Cavendish argues for abolishing London's "Foolish ... Unjust and Unhandsome Custom" of the skimmington, which shames an "Innocent Person", ... "the next Neighbour" rather than the "Foolish Husband," who should be forced to "Ride in Disgrace, Scorn, and Pain" for allowing his wife to usurp his "Masculine Authority."⁸⁰ Knowingly or not, Cavendish betrays no awareness that near neighbors might enjoy heightened opportunities as cuckolders. One such is Julio, the eponymous hero of *The Knaave in Graine*. He smugly endures being paraded in a skimmington cart as the proxy of an elderly neighbor who bitterly hints that Julio cuckolded him: "Well he stands here but for a shew, and I am sure I suffered for it really and indeed."⁸¹

More often than being paraded in carts, single skimmington proxies were mounted on a horse backwards,⁸² or back to back if a couple, as in the Smithfield Bar account of 1650, featuring the couple's two nearest male neighbors raucously enacting the delinquents. One was cross-dressed as a virago, the other wore night clothes and carried domestic items (such as a

distaff or spinning wheel), thereby identifying him as an effeminate husband. In *Hudibras*, the proxy playing the henpecked husband is perched backwards, behind his domineering wife:

Then mounted on a Horned Horse,
 One bore a Gauntlet and Gilt Spurs,
 [...] Next after, on a raw-bon'd Steed,
 The Conqueror's Standard-bearer rid,
 And bore aloft before the Champion
 A Petticoat display'd, and rampant;
 Near whom the Amazon triumphant,
 Bestrid her Beast, and on the Rump on't
 Sat Face to Tail, and Bum to Bum,
 The Warrior whilom overcome;
 Arm'd with a Spindle and a Distaff,
 Which as he rode, she made him twist off.⁸³

The backward ride was practiced from the 8th century onwards as a geographically widespread shaming ritual meted out legally as well as informally to those facing sentences for crimes ranging from capital offences to petty social delinquencies.⁸⁴ A youthful eye-witness recollection of John Stow (c. 1525–1605) records both carting and backward riding as judicial punishments for cuckolders, in this case the Parish priest of St Michael's Church in Cornhill, London. Having been caught *in flagrante* by John Atwod, the local draper, with his wife:

the Priest being apprehended and committed, I saw his punishment to be thus: He was on three Market dayes conveyed thorow the high street and Markets of the Citie, with a paper on his head, wherein was written his trespasse. The first day hee rode in a Carry; the second, on a horse, his face to the horse taile; the third, led betwixt twaine, and every day rung with Basons, and proclamations made of his fact at every turning of the streets, and also before Iohn Atwods Stall, and the Church doore of his Service, where hee lost his Chantry of twenty Nobles the yeere, and was banished the Citie for ever.⁸⁵

Hudibras too, alludes to such judicial punishments, as when describing the ignominious journey to the stocks endured by Hudibras and Ralpho "mounted both upon their Horses / But with their Faces to the Arses," Butler compares backward riders to the spoils of Roman triumphs.⁸⁶

Such triumphs are again evoked when Sir Hudibras labels the skimmington a "prophane ... Show ... a Paganish Invention"; only to endure correction by his squire:

Quoth Ralpho, You mistake the matter;
 For, all th' Antiquity you smatter
 Is but a Riding, us'd of course,
 When the Grey Mare's the better Horse.
 When o'er the Breeches greedy Women
 Fight, to extend their vast Dominion.⁸⁷

Here Butler refers to “the battle for the breeches,” waged for household dominance by some marital couples, as depicted in popular prints such as one of 1628 showing a skimmington and a proxy “wife” wearing breeches.⁸⁸ Butler continues to subvert well-worn cultural references to the gender power struggle to his own purpose:

And in the Cause Impatient Grize!⁸⁹
 Has drubb'd her Husband, with *Bull's Pizzle*,
 And brought him under *Covert Baron*,
 To turn her *Vassal* with a *Murrain*;
 When Wives their Sexes shift, like *Hares*
 And ride their Husbands, like *Night-Mares*,
 And they in mortal *Battle* vanquish'd,
 Are of their *Charter* dis-enfranchis'd,
 And by the right of War, like *Gills*,
 Condemn'd to *Distaff*, *Horns*, and *Wheels*;
 For when Men by their Wives are cow'd,
 Their *Horns* of course are understood.⁹⁰

A less rowdy 18th-century stage skimmington features women celebrating their neighbor's victory in a domestic argument over her husband. As they process through the village, they too, sing a ballad referring to “the battle for the breeches”:

Good wives, pray learn
 Your Husbands Rage to quell:
 And follow this Example,
 Whenever they rebel.
 This man-like buxom Dame,
 The Breeches long has worn;
 Henceforth no more be tame,
 But valiant in your Turn.⁹¹

The currency of such gender reversals is confirmed by historical accounts. On June 18, 1607, within the framework of other protesting demonstrations, outraged men and women of Wells used the ritual framework of the typical skimmington ritual to ridicule unpopular city leaders. Their procession included the displaying of gendered items of clothing as triumphal trophies, a cross-dressed man with a spinning wheel and distaff, a man with a skimming ladle, and two men mounted on one horse throwing handfuls of grain from a basket.⁹²

Recognizing the power of performance and ceremony to build and bind communities and forge perceptions of norms, the early modern Church, the royal court, and city authorities all competed for their control. English religious reform, before and during the Commonwealth, had largely dismantled the Christian festive year that supported the fabric of Catholic European society, although historians such as Underdown caution against interpreting events such as the Wells disorders of 1607 as a straightforward clash between traditionalists and a Puritan minority determined to suppress

their May Games.⁹³ Sir Hudibras and Ralpho's clashes with traditionalist revelers are similarly deserving of nuanced interpretation.

Sir Hudibras roundly condemns the horrors of the traditional English village skimmington as an anti-feminist, Papist, "Dev'l's Procession":

'Tis Ethnique and Idolatrous,
From Heathenism deriv'd to us.
Does not the Whore of Babylon ride
Upon her horned Beast astride
[...] It is an Antichristian Opera,
Much us'd in Midnight times of Popery;
[...] To scandalize that Sex, for scolding,
To whom the Saints are so beholding.⁹⁴

His rousing oration in defense of "Women, who were our first Apostles" is rudely halted in mid-sentence by a volley of eggs and blows. Demonstrating yet again his cowardice and moral impotence, his face and beard "besmear'd with Orange-tawny Slime," and accompanied by Ralpho "smother'd with the Stink" of dung and grain, Hudibras beats "a brave Retreat" from the skimmington mob.⁹⁵

James Stokes identifies the early 17th century as a watershed "moment of great cultural change in which efforts to suppress most festive and performative elements of traditional culture coincided with an end to the acceptance of women in performance."⁹⁶ According to Stokes, the skimmington's turning of "punishment of women into a comic performance" parodies the medieval festive elevation of women to central performative roles, as May queens, processional leaders or suchlike. This important insight should not, however, obscure the fact that skimmingtons publicly humiliate weak husbands no less than dominant wives. They reflect gendered anxieties of a transitional period, when radically changing expectations of marriage and its duration (not least due to medical advances in childbed survival rates), increasingly undermined conventional views valuing the public duty of procreation above the private pleasures of companionship.

Conclusion

This essay focuses on Butler's *Hudibras* in the light of evolving cultural reflections of impotence, cuckoldry and the skimmington, with reference to legal and historical records, and literary and factual accounts by diarists and others, both domestic and foreign. The poem's skimmington account unites punitive and festive elements, including rough music, bad smells, cuckolds' horns and pelting with missiles such as eggs, grain and dung, to frame its central performative ritual, the cross-dressed theatrical reenactment of gender conflicts by two back-to-back, mounted proxy actors played by the couple's nearest male neighbors. Through this use of neighbors—innocent or not—as proxies for a transgressing couple, the skimmington lent itself to

Butler's favored themes of individual and collective social responsibility. As literary creation rather than sociological record, his *Hudibras* skimmington contributes to our understanding of the development of persistent cultural conventions and of the opaque relationship between literary texts and historical accounts. Creatively, and with varying degrees of accuracy in reflecting actual practice, Butler draws on and reinforces current cultural conventions. He brings together and illuminates numerous features typical of individual skimmingtons, including the subversion of judicial punishment, and the mockery of political festival, from Roman triumphs to 17th-century election celebrations.

By 1664, when the *Hudibras* skimmington was first published, witchcraft was no longer viewed as the primary cause of impotence, and traditional peasant "wisdoms," encouraging impotent husbands to cuckold themselves by attaining fatherhood through the help of their nearest neighbor, had been largely forgotten. However, such obsolete belief systems indelibly mark the performative practices of the European charivari and related marital shaming rituals. Dramatists and writers viewed magical impotence and skimmingtons as attractive vehicles for introducing into their works erotic energy, combining "the celebratory and the violent"⁹⁷ and colorful, exotic elements of occult ritual involving female characters, and systematically utilized them as vehicles for pointed social and political commentary. Although skimmingtons involving marital shaming are rare after 1800, they are historically documented until at least 1930,⁹⁸ and feature strikingly in 19th-century novels by Walter Scott, Edward William Davies and Thomas Hardy.

In *Hudibras*, Butler created a vehicle for political satire with much slippery layering of meaning. Although social historians recognize the documentary value of his skimmington account, they have not systematically contextualized it within changing cultural conventions. Suffused with references to the cuckold's horns, it directly develops questions of truth and justice within the context of Butler's sustained social critique.⁹⁹ Butler's primary motivation was political rather than domestic; he targeted the private battle between the sexes, but even more the political humiliations of Commonwealth and post-Commonwealth England, and the public hypocrisies of those who imposed them.¹⁰⁰ With numerous knowing nods to popular forms of contemporary print culture such as picaresque fiction, the mountebank's quack bill and the ballad sheet or jest book, *Hudibras* subverts classical texts and chivalric romances. Its skimmington account tellingly combines *Hudibras's* three mocking strands: style, subject and satire; heroicizing traditional, officially discouraged, "anti-processional" festival practices parodying self-promoting, self-serving Establishment ceremonial culture typified by the Roman triumph. Through his cowardly, hypocritical Hudibras and Ralph, his cheating charlatans, and the shaming rituals of his skimmington mob, Butler satirizes and criticizes Puritans, Catholics, royal and political elites, and the social folly and political impotence of post-Commonwealth England. His bleak pessimism infects all his targets. He satirizes the dishonest dealings of *Hudibras's* occult

protagonists, quacks and central pair, the private cheating of adulterers and their complicit cuckolds,¹⁰¹ and even more the shameless public cheating of the 17th-century “quacks of government,” the political and religious leaders who, in betraying and politically “cuckolding” those on both sides of the Civil War, attracted Butler’s sharpest ridicule.¹⁰² *Hudibras* marks a clear watershed in cultural representations of skimmingtons. After 1664, the description and depiction of skimmingtons in art or literature owe as much to Butler as to any folkloric authenticity.

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Notes

- 1 My thanks to Sara Matthews-Grieco for inviting me to join her RSA "Cuckolds" panels, to Eric Nicholson for connecting us, and to Pavel Drábek, my co-organizer for "Cuckolds II: Impotence and Cuckoldry in Literary Culture" (RSA 2011, panel 20521), our chair Natasha Korda, co-presenters Hannah Lavery and Joanne Rochester and auditors. Also, for research and conference funding, to The Open University (Arts Faculty FRC Award) and Herzog August Library (Visiting Fellowship, 2011). Except as otherwise noted, translations are mine.
- 2 Zachary Grey's edition, here referenced throughout as *Hudibras* I and *Hudibras* II, publishes the poem's three authorized parts in two volumes (Butler, Samuel (ed. Zachary Grey), *Hudibras in three parts ... with large annotations and a preface by Zachary Grey*, 2 vols. (London: C. Bathurst et al.), 1772 (I) and (London: Vernor et al.), 1806 (II)). Both volumes first published in Dublin in 1744. Butler's skimmington account concludes Canto III of Part II.
- 3 *Hudibras* I, 56–9, 63, 67: "Ralph ... cou'd foretel what'ever was / By Consequence to come to pass. / ... In Men, what gives or cures the Itch, / What makes them Cuckolds, poor or rich."
- 4 Bruster, Douglas, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 49.
- 5 Butler, Samuel, *The Posthumous Works of Mr Samuel Butler (author of "Hudibras") compleat in one volume* (London: R. Reily, 1730), 192.
- 6 *Hudibras* II, 163, 455–6.
- 7 Webster, John and William Rowley, *A Cure for a Cuckold. A Pleasant Comedy* (London: Francis Kirkman, 1661), II.i, IV.i (sigs. D^v, E4^v).
- 8 Grimm, Jacob (ed.), *Deutsche Rechts Alterthümer* (Göttingen: Dieterische Buchhandlung), 1828, 454. See also below, on divorce of Frances Howard.
- 9 Grimm, Jacob (ed.), *Weisthümer gesammelt von Jacob Grimm, dritter Theil* (Göttingen: Dieterische Buchhandlung, 1842). For this reference and invaluable information on Grimm's "wisdoms" and their legal context I thank Hiram Kümper.
- 10 Katritzky, M. A., *Healing, Performance and Ceremony in the Writings of three early modern physicians: Hippolytus Guarinonius and the brothers Felix and Thomas Platter* (Farnham, UK/Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 108, 302.
- 11 Grimm, *Alterthümer*, 444–5: "roipen dae sine *naebur* aen, dat sie inne sines wives lives noet helpen weren ... sie seinem *nachbar* bringen ... der frau an einen schaffen, der ihr ihre pflege thun kann ... bitten dar sinen negsten *nabern* dat er siner frauen helfe" (Grimm's italics; minor variants of the first three are republished in Grimm, *Weisthümer*, 48, 70, 311).
- 12 Rösener, Werner, *Bauern im Mittelalter* (München: Beck, 1985), 168, 190–91.
- 13 Kümper, Hiram, "'Man greiff manchmallen einer die brüst.' Sexualität und Gewalt in vormodernen Alltagsbeziehungen." Johannes Gießauf, Andrea Penz (eds). *Liebeslust und Ehefrust. Vom Sinn und Unsinn sich zu binden* (Vienna: Böhlau-Verlag, in press).
- 14 Grimm, *Alterthümer*, 444; Schnell, Rüdiger, *Sexualität und Emotionalität in der vormodernen Ehe* (Köln: Böhlau-Verlag, 2002), 219–20.
- 15 Gisela Drossbach, "Concordia nutrit amorem – Konrad von Megenberg und die Ehe." Edith Feistner (ed.), *Konrad von Megenberg (1309–1374): ein spätmittelalterlicher 'Enzyklopädist' im europäischen Kontext* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2011), 345–56, 345, 351–2.
- 16 In the broad sense of infertile.
- 17 Luther, Martin, "Vom ehelichen Leben, 1522." *Der sechste teil der Bücher des Ehrnwürdigen Herrn Doctoris Martini Lutheri* (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1553), sigs. 172r–184r, sigs. 173r–v: "Lieber Man ... Vergünne mir (das ich mit deinem bruder oder nehesten freund [literally: "friend" but here almost certainly used in the sense of "blood relative"] ein heimlich Ehe habe."

- 18 Platter the Younger, Thomas, *Thomas Platter d. J.: Beschreibung der Reisen durch Frankreich, Spanien, England und die Niederlande 1595–1600*, 2 vols., ed. Rut Keiser (Basel & Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1968), II, 814: “Unndt haben die weibsbilder ... in Engellandt viel mehr freyheit als ettwan an anderen orten, wissen sich auch deßen woll zegebrauchen, dann sie in kleideren überaus prächtig, mehrtheils müßig spatzieren gehen oder auf gutschen fahren, unndt mießen es die mannen ihnen gar woll lassen gefallen, dörfen ihnen deßwegen nichts arges zufügen, sonder es schlagen woll oft die weiber ihre männer, welches so man es erfahret, setzet man den aller nechsten seinen nachbauren auf einen karren unndt führet ihn dem geschlagenen zu spott durch die gantze statt mitt vermeldung, daß seye sein straff darumb, daß er nicht seinem nachbauren seye zuhülff kommen, als ihn sein frauw geschlagen.”
- 19 Confirmed as the wife (“la pauvre Calomniée”) in the original French edition of 1698.
- 20 Misson, M[onsieur], *M. Misson’s Memoirs and observations in his travels over England ... translated by Mr Ozell* (London: D. Browne et al., 1719), 129.
- 21 Alford, Violet, “Rough music or charivari,” *Folklore* 70 (1959): 505–18; Davis, Natalie Zemon, “The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-century France,” *Past & Present* 50 (1971): 41–75.
- 22 Stokes, James and Robert J. Alexander, *Records of Early English Drama [REED]: Somerset, including Bath*, 2 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), I, 69.
- 23 E. P. Thompson discusses this and similar cases (“Rough music reconsidered,” *Folklore* 103:1 [1992]: 3–26, 16); Davis indicates a similarly broad role for the French city charivari (66). Butler too refers to the skimmington as a vehicle for social or industrial protest: “So, in this mongrel state of ours, / The rabble are the supreme powers; / That hors’d us on their backs, to show us / A jadis trick at last, and throw us” (*Hudibras* II, 355).
- 24 Pepys, Samuel, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 11 vols., ed. William Matthews and Robert Latham (London, 1970–1983): December 26, 1662, February 6, 1663.
- 25 Anon, *Hudibras the second part* (London 1663). This text is known as the “unauthorized” Part II.
- 26 Probably Butler, Samuel, *Hudibras the second part by the Author of the first* (London 1664). This text, recognized as the “authorized” Part II, was licensed on November 5, 1663.
- 27 Pepys: November 28, 1663, December 10, 1663, January 27, 1664, October 11, 1665.
- 28 Pepys: July 19, 1668 (pace Marshall, Ashley, “The aims of Butler’s satire in ‘Hudibras,’” *Modern Philology* 105:4 [2008], 637–65, 638 n. 4).
- 29 Pepys, Samuel, *Pepys’s Later Diaries*, ed. C. S. Knighton (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 2006), 142, 188. The copyright of Part III was still separately owned in 1684, when an integrated two-part edition of all three parts was first published. A copy of the three-part 1689 edition is in Pepys’s Library.
- 30 Anon, *Hudibras the second part* (London 1663), 11–13. In the authorized Part II, Sidrophel informs Hudibras that his “Zany” assistant or “under conjurer” Hight Whachum, is the same French quack who robbed him in the unauthorized Part II: “He play’d the Saltinbancho’s part, / Transform’d t’ a Frenchman by my art; / he stole your cloak, and pick’d your pocket, / Chous’d and Caldes’d ye like a blockhead” (*Hudibras* II, 36–7, 93–4).
- 31 The authorized Hudibras’s deceptive patina of gentle tolerance is borrowed from medieval European traditions of folly literature. Miguel Cervantes, and even more the quirky discursiveness, mild satire and burlesque rhymes of Gayton’s commentary to his masterpiece, are major inspirations for Hudibras and its central pair. Gayton, Edmund, *Pleasant notes upon Don Quixot* (London: William Hunt, 1654). “Hudibras at Court” repeatedly refers to Ralph as “Sancho” and his horse as “Rosenante”; Butler’s essay “The Assembly-Man” comments “Sometimes, the assembler will venture at the original, and then (with the translator of *Don Quixot*) he mistakes sobs and sighs for eggs and collops” (*Posthumous works*, 7, 9, 232).
- 32 *Hudibras* I, 340–2, 349–54; *Hudibras* II, 72, 156. On the medical treatment of impotence and sympathetic magical practices such as this one see the essays by Meredith Ray and Laura Giannetti in this volume.
- 33 See the essay in this volume by Matteo Duni.
- 34 O’Connor, Marion, “The witch.” *Thomas Middleton the Collected Works*, Thomas Middleton, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1124–8, 1124; on this case, see also Katritzky (2012), 181–91.
- 35 Middleton, 1137: “Knit with these charmed and retentive knots, / Neither the man begets nor woman breeds, / No, nor performs the least desires of wedlock.”
- 36 Jonson, Ben, *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson* (London: W. Stansby, 1616), 952.

80 CUCKOLDRY, IMPOTENCE AND ADULTERY IN EUROPE (15TH–17TH CENTURY)

- 37 Platter I, 274–5; translation: Katritzky (2012), 176–7.
- 38 Jonson (1616), 947. Butler, too, refers to this classical practice: "Mould 'em as *Witches* do their Clay, / When they make *Pictures* to destroy? / And vex 'em into any Form / That fits their Purpose to do Harm?" (*Hudibras* I, 385–6).
- 39 Heywood, Thomas and Richard Brome, *The Late Lancashire Witches* (London: Benjamin Fisher, 1634), IV, V (sigs. H3^r, L^r).
- 40 Shadwell, Thomas, *The Lancashire-Witches and Tegue o Divelly the Irish Priest: a Comedy* (London: John Starkey, 1682).
- 41 *Hudibras* II, 11–50. Sidrophel is identified by the anonymous editor of *Dildoides* (Butler, Samuel, "Dildoides, a Burlesque Poem," with a key explaining several names and characters in *Hudibras*. Never before printed (London: J. Nutt, 1706, 13) as Sir Paul Neal FRS; by Zachary Grey as the Commonwealth astrologer William Lilly.
- 42 Such as Shakespeare's Dr Caius (*Merry Wives of Windsor*), Jonson's Vangoose (*The Masque of Augures*, London, 1622), or Edward Gayton's "French Doctor," 82. This tradition ultimately draws on the "merchant scene" of some European mystery plays, in which holy women, usually the Marys at the Sepulchre, encounter itinerant quacks selling herbs and spices, sometimes also pushing patent medicines, performing cures or claiming to "raise the dead," see Katritzky, M. A., *Women, Medicine and Theatre, 1500–1750: literary mountebanks and performing quacks* (Aldershot, UK: Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 33–43.
- 43 *Hudibras*'s method of dealing with this foreign strolling mountebank was heartily applauded as exemplary by the surgeon John Marten as late as 1711 (*A treatise of the venereal disease* [London: John Marten, 1711], 740–41).
- 44 Anon, *Hudibras the second part* (London 1663), canto II, 49–50, 78.
- 45 Anon, *Common Sense or The Englishman's Journal* (London), Saturday, April 16, 1737 (Issue 11).
- 46 Thompson documents suicides of 1736 and 1853 following rough music, 23 n. 46. Butler is acknowledged in both Walter Scott's and Edward William Davies's literary precedents for Thomas Hardy's skimmington. Davies's main protagonist, Betty Mumford, dies after a brief period of insanity brought on by the shock and shame of a "skymaton"; Hardy's skimmington leads within hours to the death of Lucetta and her unborn child. See: Scott, *Novels and romances of the author of Waverley*, vol. IV. *The Fortunes of Nigel* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1824), 294–9. Davies, *Frank Raleigh of Watercombe ... in three volumes* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1877), III, chapter 1; Hardy, *The life and death of the Mayor of Casterbridge: a story of a man of character* (New York: Harper, 1920, first published 1886), chapters 36–40.
- 47 Illustrated with a print based on Hogarth's hugely influential skimmington illustration from his "large" series of *Hudibras* engravings of February 1726 (see below, notes 56 and 57).
- 48 Ingram, Martin, "Ridings, rough music and the 'Reform of popular culture' in early modern England." *Past & Present* 105 (1984): 79–113, 86–7, 108.
- 49 Beaumont, Francis and John Fletcher, "The woman's prize," *Comedies and Tragedies* (London: Humphrey Robinson and Humphrey Moseley, 1647), II.v, 106.
- 50 D[ay?], J[ohn?], *The Knaive in Graine, new Vampt. A witty Comedy, Acted at the Fortune ... written by J. D. Gent* (London: John Nicholson, 1640), sig. L4^r.
- 51 Heywood and Brome, *Late Lancashire witches*, IV (sig. H.3^r).
- 52 *Hudibras* I, 402–3.
- 53 Prynne, William, *Histrio-Mastix: the Players Scourge, or, Actors Tragædie* (London: Michael Sparke, 1633), 600.
- 54 Platter, *Beschreibung* I, 275–6: "hatt yeder ein besonder instrument, der ein ein alten kessel, der ander ein pffannen, der dritt ein trommen, der viert ein pfeiffen, der fünft ein löfel im saltzfaß, der sechst ein kühhorn u.s.w. ... heben ihre instrument ettwan umb mitternacht an zeüben, understehet ye einer heßlicher zu schreyen, singen oder schlagen dann der ander, welches ein solch greülich getümmel unndt geschrey erweket, daß auch kein nachbaur biß in daß zwelfte hauß kein ruhe nit haben kan." On the closely related Italian public shaming rituals referred to by modern historians as house-scornings, see the essay in this volume by Jacqueline Marie Musacchio.
- 55 Kent, Joan R, "'Folk justice' and royal justice in early Seventeenth-century England: a 'Charivari' in the Midlands," *Midland History* 8 (1983): 70–85, 73.
- 56 Plate XII (the "large skimmington") of Hogarth's 12 "large" *Hudibras* engravings of February 1726 (preparatory drawing: Windsor Castle, Royal Library inv. RL 13464). This print's most

distinguished variant is Thomas Rowlandson's *Dr Syntax with the skimmington riders*, published as a colored aquatint by R Ackermann c. 1820 (Huntington Library, 132504, f. 153). An early visual representation of an English skimmington is the original plaster "skymmety" frieze, *in situ* over the fireplace of the Great Hall of Montacute House, Somerset (Ingram, plates 2–3). Finished in 1601, Montacute was inherited in 1614 by Sir Robert Phelips, recipient of a letter of 16 August 1634 by Nathaniel Tomkyns describing the original 1634 production of Heywood and Brome's *The Late Lancashire witches*, and noting its skimmington and magical impotence (Stokes and Alexander, 416).

- 57 Antal, F., "Hogarth and his Borrowings." *Art Bulletin* 29:1 (1947): 36–48, 38–9; Barlow, Jeremy, *The Enraged Musician: Hogarth's musical imagery* (Aldershot, UK/Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 60–83. Closely following the anonymously illustrated 1710 edition of *Hudibras*, the skimmington in Plate IX of Hogarth's "small" series of 17 etchings for the May 1726 edition of *Hudibras* observes the low-key conventions of genre composition (preparatory drawing: Windsor Castle, Royal Library inv. RL 13465).
- 58 Mockingly based on a faun in the Farnese Gallery's monumental *Procession of Bacchus and Ariadne* (Antal, 39). This fresco's artist, Annibale Carracci, had himself not dissimilarly subverted an earlier work (by his master Titian; see the essay by Francesca Alberti in this volume).
- 59 *Hudibras* I, 403–4.
- 60 *Hudibras* I, 404.
- 61 *Hudibras* I, 404–5: "First, He that led the *Cavalcate*, / Wore a Sowgelder's *Flagellate*, / On which he blew as strong a *Levet*, / As well-fee'd *Lawyer* on his *Breviate*; / When over one another's Heads / They charge (three Ranks at once) like *Sweads*." Sowgelders were unqualified veterinary surgeons on the lowest rung of the medical hierarchy, little more than itinerant beggars. As elsewhere in *Hudibras*, they customarily announced their arrival in a new location not with the delicate piping of a flageolet, but with that most unrespectable of instruments, a bellowing rustic horn (*Hudibras* I, 148, 341; *Hudibras* II, 40, 286).
- 62 *Hudibras* I, 405.
- 63 Cunnington, B. Howard, "A skimmington in 1618," *Folklore* 41.3 (1930): 287–90, 289. See also Ingram, 82; Brown, Pamela Allen, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep: Women, Drama and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 119.
- 64 Brown, 84.
- 65 "Henry VIII: August 1532, 16–31," *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 5: 1531–1532* (1880), 536–52, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/libezproxy.open.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=77491>, accessed: December 15, 2012.
- 66 *Hudibras* I, 409–10.
- 67 D[ay?], sig. Mr; Marvell, Andrew, et al., *The third part of the collection of poems on affairs of State* (London, 1689), 10: "Grains from Kettle fly."
- 68 *Hudibras* I, 405.
- 69 Locke, John, "Preface to the Reader," *A second vindication of the reasonableness of Christianity* (London: A. and J. Churchill and Edward Castle, 1697).
- 70 Kent, 73.
- 71 Cunnington, 289.
- 72 Pettitt, Tom, "Customary drama: social and spatial patterning in traditional encounters," *Folk Music Journal* 7:1 (1995): 27–42, 35; Underdown, David, "But the shows of their street: civic pageantry and charivari in a Somerset town, 1607," *Journal of British Studies* 50:1 (2011): 4–23, 15.
- 73 Various interpreted as a puddle, pond or outdoor water closet.
- 74 Cunnington, 290.
- 75 Crouch, John, *The Man in the Moon. Discovering a World of Knavery ... January 23 to Ian. 31* (Number 40), (London, 1650): 314.
- 76 In 1586, a participant complained of being short-changed "for his labour for riding" in Cambridge (Ingram, 102 n. 61).
- 77 Heywood and Brome, IV (sig. H4^r): "Enter drum (beating before) a Skimmington, and his wife on a horse; Divers country rusticks (as they passe) Par[nell]. pul[l]s Skimmington of[f] the horse: and Law[rence]. Skimmingtons wife: they beat [th]em. Drum beats alar[m]. horse comes away: The hoydens at first oppose the Gentlemen: who draw [their weapons]: the clownes [rustic peasants] vaile bonnet, make a ring Par. and Skim. fight."

82 CUCKOLDRY, IMPOTENCE AND ADULTERY IN EUROPE (15TH–17TH CENTURY)

- 78 In other words, the proxy couple rides a worn out horse. Marvell, 10.
- 79 Machyn, Henry, *The Diary of Henry Machyn: Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London (1550–1563)*, ed. J. G. Nichols (London, 1848): "Diary: 1563 (Jan–July)," 298–312. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45531>, accessed: December 3, 2012.
- 80 Cavendish, Margaret (Duchess of Newcastle), *Orations of divers sorts, accommodated to divers places* (London, 1662), 221–2; directly followed by "an oration against the liberty of women" and "an oration for the liberty of woman." Their passionately opposed arguments recall Sir Hudibras and his beloved widow Tomson's opposing gender perspectives to their concluding debate on marriage (Hudibras II, 419–50); Butler, *Posthumous works*, 311.
- 81 D[ay?], sigs. M^r, M².
- 82 Cavendish, 221: "the next Neighbour Rides through the City Disgracefully ... Striding upon a Horse with his Face towards the Tail, or Sitting astride upon a Staff."
- 83 *Hudibras* I, 406.
- 84 Mellinkoff, Ruth, "Riding backwards: theme of humiliation and symbol of evil," *Viator* 4 (1973): 153–76, 164–6.
- 85 Stow, John, *The survey of London* (London: Nicholas Bourn, 1633), 208.
- 86 *Hudibras* I, 253, 294 ("Bawds carted through the Crowd"); *Hudibras* II, 401 ("Cart-loads of bawds to prison sent").
- 87 *Hudibras* I, 410.
- 88 Jones, Malcolm, "The English broadside print c. 1550–c. 1650." *A new companion to English renaissance literature and culture volume 1*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 478–526, 482–3, 491.
- 89 Elsewhere, Butler compares "Patient Grisell" to Job (*Hudibras* I, 167).
- 90 *Hudibras* I, 410–11.
- 91 Hawker, Essex, *The Country-wedding and skimmington: a tragic-comi-pastoral-farcalic opera* (London: W. Trott), 1729, 21–2.
- 92 Underdown, 14–16.
- 93 Underdown, 19.
- 94 *Hudibras* I, 414–15.
- 95 *Hudibras* I, 419–22.
- 96 Stokes, James, "Women and performance in medieval and early modern Suffolk," *Early Theatre* 15:1 (2012), 27–43, 28, 35.
- 97 Doody, Margaret Anne, *The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 123.
- 98 Seal, Graham, "A 'Hussitting' in Berkshire, 1930," *Folklore* 98.1 (1987), 91–4. According to a footnote (referencing *Hudibras*), to the brief allusions to skimmingtons in Walter Scott's historical novel *Fortunes of Nigel* (set in the Jacobean era): "the Skimmington ... has been long discontinued in England" (94, 99).
- 99 *Hudibras* I, 383: "Why should not Conscience have Vacation, / As well as other Courts o' th' Nation? / Have equal Power to adjourn / Appoint Appearance and Return? / And make as nice Distinction serve / To split a Case; as those that carve / Invoking Cuckolds names, hit joints, / Why should not tricks as slight, do points?"
- 100 Marshall, 641, 665.
- 101 *Hudibras* II, 3: "Doubtless the pleasure is as great / Of being cheated as to cheat."
- 102 *Hudibras* II, 265.