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New Light on Henry Lanman, Owner of the Curtain

This note lays out new information on Henry Lanman, the owner or part-owner of the Curtain theatre in late-Elizabethan London. It shows that Lanman was a long-time servant of the courtier and politician Sir Christopher Hatton, a fact which helps to clarify a number of aspects of Lanman's life. It also discusses the Lanman family's strong association with Catholicism. Finally, it considers the possibility that Hatton acted as an informal protector of Lanman and his theatre.

The identity of Henry Lanman or Laneman, whom historians have believed was owner or part-owner of the Curtain theatre, has been largely mysterious.¹ As Lanman recounted in a 1592 lawsuit, seven years prior the owners of the Theatre had approached him to allow the Curtain to be an ‘esore’ (or as it is usually interpreted, an ‘easer’) to their house; historians have suggested that this arrangement meant that they would pool the profits of the two houses to insure against the possibility of failure on either side. This detail places Lanman as the owner or part-owner or controller of the Curtain for the period 1585–92, but whether he owned the theatre for a longer period remains unclear.²

The most thorough account yet presented of Henry Lanman is William Ingram’s in *The Business of Playing*. Ingram traces the key contours of Lanman’s life: born in 1538, Lanman was recorded as a yeoman of the guard between 1576 and 1604; he resided from at least 1577 to 1590 in the parish of St Andrew’s Holborn; he received a number of small royal grants as well as the office of keeper of the royal park at Greenwich, where he took up residence; and he died in 1606. By means of signatures, Ingram successfully establishes that the theatre owner and the yeoman of the guard were one and the same, but has been unable to round out our picture of Lanman more fully.³ In fact, one document cited by E.K. Chambers permits a slight alteration to Ingram’s account: government records show that Lanman was a yeoman of the guard as early as 1572.⁴

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However, one source from an unlikely archive, but which has been in print for many years, casts a good deal of new light on Lanman's life and his milieu. This is the account of Lanman's son, also named Henry, who in 1600 travelled to Rome and there took up residence in the English College, which was of course a Catholic seminary established to train exiled Englishmen for the priesthood. As was customary for entrants to the college, Lanman, Jr, was asked a series of questions about his origins, his life, and his spiritual autobiography. The statement he wrote in response was published (both in the original Latin and in English translation) in 1962 in a volume of similar documents by the Catholic Record Society as the *Responsa Scholarum of the English College, Rome*.⁵ Importantly, the document also reveals his father's close connection both to Roman Catholicism and to a major political figure of the day, Sir Christopher Hatton.

In his statement, Henry Lanman, Jr, relates that he was born on either 8 or 10 August 1573, at Westhorpe in Suffolk (about ten miles east of Bury St Edmunds), and that his father was born in the same place. His statement records several important points about the elder Henry: he was the youngest of three sons, and became a servant of Sir Christopher Hatton, being in his service for twenty-three years. Assuming this arrangement came to an end at the time of Hatton's death in November 1591 (and Lanman certainly attended Hatton's funeral), his service would have commenced in 1568.⁶ At that time, Hatton was a gentleman pensioner to Elizabeth I, one of forty in the band, but was beginning to emerge from the pack as a notable royal favourite; in effect this was close to the beginning of Hatton's political career.

Lanman, Jr, goes on to note that his father served Hatton for all that time, 'except for half a year when he served as one of the Queen's personal bodyguard, at her own request. She also told him that she would treat his service to Hatton as service to herself; he continued therefore to receive a pension from her throughout Hatton's life and even for most of the time since his death'.⁷ Thus Lanman, Sr, was in effect not a yeoman of the guard at all: he was the servant of one of Elizabeth's major favourites, but as a mark of royal favour to himself and his master he received a bonus royal salary.

The connection with Hatton helps to explain a number of other aspects of Lanman's life. The first is his residence in the parish of St Andrew's Holborn, which was the location of Ely Place, alias Hatton House, the episcopal residence which royal command famously prized out of the hands of the bishop of Ely for Hatton's use.⁸ Thus we have, as Ingram found, the baptism of several of Lanman's children (although not Henry, Jr, himself) in St Andrew's between 1577 and 1590, including Christopher in 1580, no doubt named for Hatton; in 1584 Elizabeth Lanman

was baptized 'in [the] *Bishop* of Ely Chappell', within Ely Place itself.⁹ Accounts in Hatton's archive also make clear that Lanman was much involved in the building works which Hatton carried out at Ely Place in the mid-1570s.¹⁰

The Hatton connection may also help explain Lanman's appointment as a royal official at Greenwich in 1593. Hatton himself had been keeper of Greenwich Park from 1580 to his death, and the subsequent grant to Lanman may have been a mark of the queen's regard for both Lanman and his former master.¹¹ Lanman was also associated with several of Hatton's other servants. He was appointed executor of the will of Thomas Laughter, another senior servant of Hatton's, and was involved in land transactions with others.¹²

Regrettably, Hatton's archive is mostly lost, so substantial further information about Lanman will not likely be forthcoming from that source. However, one surviving Hatton manuscript, a register of Hatton's land and financial documents, adds a further fragment of information about Lanman: in January 1592 (shortly after Hatton's death), one William Awder assigned to Lanman a patent from the bishop of Ely of 'the offices of kepinge of Ely house in Holborne, & of the Baylye of the saide House, and Collector of his Rentes in Holborne, fflets-treate, &c in the suburbs of London'.¹³ This detail again cements the picture of Lanman's association with Hatton's establishment at Ely Place, even shortly after his master's death.

The *Responsa Scholarum* also reveals that Lanman, Jr's, decision to convert to Catholicism was not a dramatic breach from his family's religion: the whole family had a distinct inclination towards Catholicism. Lanman, Jr, noted that his mother, Henry Lanman, Sr's, wife, 'lived as a Catholic for many years, but relapsed through fear when Hatton died'.¹⁴ The eldest of his four sisters, too, was a Catholic, married to one Berwick, who had converted to Catholicism. Lanham, Jr, recorded that his father and most of the rest of the family were 'schismatics'. This statement almost certainly does not mean that they were Protestants as such, since if that were the case they would have been described as 'heretics'.¹⁵ Instead, they were probably conformists or church papists, who privately held Catholic beliefs but attended church in order to stay out of trouble; evidently they did not refuse to have their children baptized in a Protestant church, as some very determined Catholics did.

The reference to Mrs Lanman (her Christian name is not given) living as a Catholic but conforming after Hatton's death is particularly interesting, demonstrating how a powerful patron afforded her more religious latitude than would otherwise be the case. Clearly, then, the family lived under Hatton's protection

with a mixture of conforming and more openly Catholic attitudes, until the disappearance of such an umbrella led them to adopt stricter conformity.

That said, Mrs Lanman's own family were definitely Protestant: Lanman, Jr, refers to these not as schismatics, but as heretics. The family came from Walsingham in Norfolk, and the document refers to two brothers, one of whom lived alone in Norfolk. The other was John Hayward (the *Responsa Scholarum* document spells it Haward). He was not the author of the *History of Henry IV*, but was instead a clergyman, who in 1593 became rector of St Mary Woolchurch Haw in the city of London, where Henry Lanman, Sr, was buried in 1606.¹⁶ According to Richard Bancroft, bishop of London (and long-time client of Hatton's), he was 'a man greatly then followed in the city'. Bancroft chose him to take on the extremely delicate task of preaching to an unsettled city at Paul's Cross on the Sunday after the second earl of Essex's rebellion in 1601; his performance was apparently satisfactory.¹⁷

Lanman, Sr, then, seems not to have been a dogmatic Catholic; the son records that when living with his uncle Roger Lanman near Northampton, he was educated by a 'distinguished Puritan' clergyman called Hooke.¹⁸ This was clearly a mixed family, which did not, perhaps, place faith ahead of all other considerations. The Lanmans would in this sense have been by no means unusual in Hatton's entourage. Hatton's circles included a great many Catholics, crypto-Catholics, or conservative Protestants, both within his own family, and in terms of servants, friends, and clients among the gentry and academic and artistic circles.¹⁹ Naturally the favour of a man as powerful as Hatton provided those in his circle with a degree of protection. Few men had greater ability to charm the queen than Hatton, so it would be a brave magistrate who chose to prosecute persons known to be under his protection. Catholics may have sought Hatton's patronage for precisely this reason; whether this was the case with Lanman is unclear. Lanman's apparent links with the Northampton area suggests a possible route by which he came into Hatton's service: Hatton's ancestral estate of Holdenby, which he extended into a vast palace, is just a few miles north-west of Northampton.

Clearly, although he grew up in circles sympathetic to Catholicism, Lanman, Jr, did not regard his upbringing as Catholic in the proper sense of the word. As he grew to adulthood, Lanman brought his son into Hatton's household for a year. Thereafter, Hatton placed him with one Hawley, clerk of petty bag (that is an official in chancery) and Middlesex justice of the peace, in the hope of making a career in chancery; unfortunately, Hatton and Hawley both then died. Lanham, Jr, moved on to the service of one of the most famously Catholic noblemen in England, Viscount Montague, and through discussion with people he met there,

converted to Catholicism, a move which ultimately led him to travel to Rome and record these details.²⁰

Lanman, Jr, makes no mention in his account of his life of his father's theatrical enterprises. Whether this means that the Curtain was of little importance in Lanman, Sr's, life is, however, probably more than we can safely infer from the brief document. A connection with the theatre may not have been something about which Lanman wished to boast to the authorities of the English College, and in any case, the son seems to have been living away from London for the relevant period. Nevertheless, Lanman, Sr's, role in Hatton's household suggests that his relationship with the Curtain was not his primary concern or career.

Can we learn anything from Lanman's place in Hatton's circle? Like most senior political figures at Elizabeth's court, Hatton was a cultured man, educated at Oxford and the Inns of Court. He was a major patron both of architecture and of literature, with a particular interest in Italian literature. As a young man at the Inns of Court, Hatton was active in the revels, and probably performed at court; indeed, such activity likely gained him his initial entree at court, and laid the foundation for his entire subsequent career.²¹ He also wrote one act of a play, *Gismond of Salerne*, presented before the queen, probably in 1568.²² Later in life, as vice-chamberlain of the royal household from 1577–87, he had some responsibility for organizing theatrical performances at court.

Unlike many leading Elizabethan political figures, however, Hatton had virtually no recorded involvement with professional playing. He never had his own company of players, probably because of the associated costs, but also perhaps because he never sought to cultivate a reputation among the country or the masses as a great magnate: he based his political status on a constituency of one, the queen herself, who maintained him in power until the end of his life. There is no clear sign that Hatton encouraged his servant Lanman in his enterprise: most likely this was simply an investment of Lanman's own. And yet, the highly incomplete nature of Hatton's archive means that large swathes of his activity are entirely lost. We can't know for certain, but Lanman's involvement in the Curtain may hint that Hatton had slightly more interest in professional playing than scholars have hitherto thought.

This association also raises the question of whether Lanman ever sought to make use of Hatton's influence within government and with the queen in the life of the Curtain. Did Lanman, or his partners, hope that Hatton would provide protection from either city or royal authorities? Quite possibly so, and indeed this may well have come to pass, in a well-known 1584 incident. In June 1584, the recorder of London, the hot Protestant William Fleetwood, reported that

Vpon Sonndaye my Lord [Mayor] sent ij Aldermen to the Court [ie Whitehall] for the suppressing and pulling downe of the Theatre and Curten All the Lords [lords of the privy council] agreed thereunto saving my Lord ^rChamberlen¹ and mr vychamberlain but weobteyned a *lettre* to supresse them all.²³

This report is itself worthy of comment: it is unusual to have direct evidence of divisions with the privy council, and still more so to have a record of how different individuals voted. The fact that the lord chamberlain and vice-chamberlain were opposed to the closure of the theatres has a number of interesting implications. These were respectively Charles, lord Howard of Effingham and Sir Christopher Hatton.²⁴ Both men were in religious terms quite conservative, having very little sympathy for puritanism and rather more for moderate Catholics. Further, they were responsible for overseeing court entertainments, not least theatrical performances. Finally, as we now know, the Curtain was at that time owned or controlled by a very long-standing servant of Hatton. As Fleetwood goes on to say, James Burbage initially assumed or hoped that *his* master, Lord Hunsdon, would protect him from this order:

Vpon the same night I sent for the quenes ^rplayers¹ and my Lord of Arundels his players and they all willinglie obeyed the Lords *lettres*/ The chiefest of her highnes players advised me to send for the owner of the Theatre [James Burbage] who \leftrightarrow was a stubburne fellow and to bynd hym [ie, make him sign a bond guaranteeing, presumably, that he would close the Theatre]/. I dyd so/ he sent me word that he was my Lord of hunsdens man and that he wold not come at me but he wold in the mornyng \leftrightarrow ride to my Lord/. then I sent the undersheriff for hym and he brought hym to me/ and at his comyng he stowted [ie, braved] me owt very hastie/ and in the end I shewed hym my Lord [Hunsdon's] his *masters* hand, and then he was more quiet/ but to die for it he wold not be bounde/ And then I mynding to send hym to prison he made sute that he might be bounde to appere at the [sessions of] Oier & determiner the *which* is tomorowe/ where he said that he was sure the Court wold not bynd hym being ^ra¹ Counselors man/ And so I have graunted his request/ where he shalbe sure to be bound or els to ys lyke to do worse.

We do not know the ultimate outcome of this confrontation, except inasmuch as the Theatre and the Curtain were not pulled down; could it be that Hatton also exercised his influence with the queen in the theatres' favour? It does not seem unlikely, for three reasons: Hatton (unlike Hunsdon) was on record opposing the move; his servant Lanman was probably closer and dearer to him than Burbage

was to Hunsdon, being a long-standing member of his household; and Hatton was more influential with the queen than was Hunsdon. Hatton's influence is often difficult to detect: unlike that of administrators such as Lord Burghley or Sir Francis Walsingham, it depended on Hatton's personal closeness to the queen and was typically mobilized behind the scenes, in his near-daily encounters with the queen in private, which of course produced no written record. This conjecture remains speculative, especially since we lack certainty that Lanham was involved with the Curtain at this point. We might even speculate that Lanman's powerful connections had some bearing in Burbage's decision to link his fortunes with Lanman a year later, in 1585. Nevertheless, further research may reveal other ways in which Hatton exercised a benign influence over the workings of the Curtain.

Notes

I am grateful to Dr Eva Griffith for advice on this note, and to the journal's two reviewers for their very constructive suggestions for revisions.

- 1 William Ingram's preferred spelling is 'Laneman', but since 'Lanman' appears to be more common in the documents I have used, as well as being the spelling used in Lanham's own signatures, I prefer the latter. William Ingram, *The Business of Playing: The Beginnings of the Adult Professional Theater in Elizabethan London* (Ithaca and London, 1992), <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501736766>.
- 2 Ibid, 219ff; Gabriel Egan, 'The Theatre in Shoreditch 1576–1599', in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Richard Dutton (Oxford, 2012), 180, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199697861.013.0011>. For the documents on which this analysis is based, see C.W. Wallace, 'The First London Theatre', *University Studies of the University of Nebraska*, vol. 13 (Lincoln NE, 1913), 148–50. Lanman appears to have leased land in the area as far back as 1582: T.E. Tomlins, 'Origin of the Curtain Theatre, and Mistakes Regarding It', *Shakespeare Society's Papers I* (London, 1844), 29–35, 30–1.
- 3 Ingram, *The Business of Playing*, 219ff.
- 4 British Library, Additional MS 5750, ff 110v–111r.
- 5 *The Responsa Scholarum of the English College, Rome. Part One: 1598–1621*, ed. Anthony Kenny, Catholic Record Society Publications vol. 54 (Newport, 1962), 84–9. All summary English translations from the original Latin are quoted from this volume, with the original Latin provided in notes. For a summary of the college's practice in taking such statements, see *ibid*, vii–viii, and for the questions that were asked, xii. While a personal statement of this kind should not automatically be assumed to

be entirely accurate, there is no obvious sign Lanman sought to sugar-coat his account; he did not conceal his family's lapses from strict resistance to the Elizabethan church, for example. Lanman's statement is also summarized with further information about Lanman, Jr, in *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus* vol. 1, ed. Henry Foley (London, 1877), 173–7. Cf. Michael C. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550–1640* (Cambridge, 2006), 202, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511496004>.

- 6 College of Arms, London, Dethick's Funerals, vol. 1, pt 2, f 281.
- 7 'Viginti tribus annis Hattono inservit, licet anni demidio dempto, per totum id tempus Reginae fuerit a satellitibus, qui ad suam personam sectando designati sunt: Sic enim voluit ipsa Regina quae e[st] ei promisit, quodcunque servitium Hattono impenderetur ab eo, sibi [tam g]ratum ac ratum fore, ac si sibi ipsi fuisset impensum. Sicque hac ratione ab onere se[r]viti[i]i solutus, percepto tamen Reginae stipendio hac immunitate vivente Hattono, atque eo etiam mortuo, praeter consuetudinem, usque nunc ut plurimum potitus est'. Kenny, *Responsa Scholarum*, 85, 88.
- 8 Eric St J. Brooks, *Sir Christopher Hatton: Queen Elizabeth's Favourite* (London, 1946), 145–52.
- 9 Ingram, *Business of Playing*, 220.
- 10 Northamptonshire Record Office, FH/D/G/1018 (12 June 1577).
- 11 Holkham Hall, Norfolk, MS F/LCJ1, f 135.
- 12 TNA PROB 11/11/422 (will of Thomas Laughter, 25 November 1602, where Lanman is described as 'one of the yomen of her maiesties chamber'). Essex Record Office, D/DMs/T7/11.
- 13 Holkham Hall, Norfolk, MS F/LCJ1, f 138v. The date of 'Anno Elizabethae xxxiiij' (1591–2) is somewhat blurred and could possibly read 'xxxiiij' but 'xxxiiij' is more likely. Lanman assigned the office on again to one Richard Owen in February 1594.
- 14 'Mater aliquando per multos annos Catholica vixerat, sed mortuo Hattono, prae timore relabens'. Kenny, *Responsa Scholarum*, 86, 88.
- 15 See Kenny, *Responsa Scholarum*, x.
- 16 Ingram, *Business of Playing*, 222.
- 17 Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire. Part XII* (London, 1910), 201.
- 18 Kenny, *Responsa Scholarum*, 87.
- 19 See Neil Younger, 'How Protestant was the Elizabethan Regime?', *English Historical Review* 133.564 (2018), 1068–9, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/cey273>. I provide much more detail on Hatton's Catholic associates in *Religion and Politics in Elizabethan England: The Life of Sir Christopher Hatton* (Manchester, forthcoming 2022).

- 20 Kenny, *Responsa Scholarum*, 84, 87; Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England*, 202.
- 21 Wallace T. MacCaffrey, 'Hatton, Sir Christopher (c. 1540–1591)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12605>.
- 22 It was published in a revised format in 1591 as *Tancred and Gismund*; see Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson, *British Drama, 1533–1642: A Catalogue*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 2012), 22–6, <https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780199265725.book.1>; Jane Kingsley-Smith, "'Gismond of Salerne": An Elizabethan and Cupidean Tragedy', *Yearbook of English Studies* 38.1/2 (2008), 199–215; Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London, 1977), 56–8.
- 23 British Library, Lansdowne MS 41, ff 34–5 (Fleetwood to Burghley, 18 June 1584).
- 24 Andrew Gurr misidentifies the vice-chamberlain as Lord Hunsdon in 'Privy Councilors as Theatre Patrons' in *Shakespeare and Theatrical Patronage in Early Modern England*, ed. Paul Whitfield White and Suzanne R. Westfall (Cambridge, 2006), 222.

