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Reading the Road

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'I must abroad or perish!'

The Meta-theatre of the Road in Brome's, *A Jovial Crew*.'

All: Come away! Why do we stay?
We have no debt or rent to pay.
No bargains or accounts to make;
Nor land or lease to let or take;
Or, if we had, should that reward us,
When all the world's our own before us,
And where we pass, and make resort,
It is our kingdom and our court?
(*A Jovial Crew* II, i, 118.)ⁱ

These words valorising freedom are sung by the cheerful beggars who form an on-road community in *A Jovial Crew* by Richard Brome, and their attitude defines the spine of this play from 1641. It was the most popular of Richard Brome's repertoire, yet, as late as 1992, the script was pronounced 'unperformable' by Stephen Jeffreys, the writer who adapted the play by removing forty-five per cent of the original text for the first contemporary revival of the work for the Royal Shakespeare Company, in Stratford-Upon-Avon.ⁱⁱ But this chapter will argue and provide evidence for a contrasting view, namely that Richard Brome's play in its original completeness can be seen to offer a unique 'downstairs dramaturgy' on meta-theatrical terms and one that is well suited to revival. Brome tells the story of a young steward, Springlove, who is compelled to run away from his duties and join the beggars on the road every spring. 'Democratized dramaturgy' is a term I have adopted to reflect upon the dramaturgical tropes that Brome uses in his plays, especially this one, for downstairs characters such as servants and women (and, in this play, beggars) as his agents in the drama. They are the people pushing the plot along, and by their actions creating the narrative glue that holds the world of the drama together. If Shakespeare is 'upstairs', then Brome is 'downstairs',

perhaps hitherto consigned to the (ahem) broom cupboard. But the open road has neither up nor down and offers a level playing field. Nowhere is democratized dramaturgy more possible, likely or evident than on the road. Indeed, the phrase, the 'open road' speaks to the notion of democratization. Alexandra Walsham has traced how the religious struggles of the time 'had a spatial as well as temporal and moral dimension':

...village greens, market places, commons, meadows and fields - could hardly avoid becoming sites of contention themselves...Depending on one's perspective, these were arenas in which the common people relaxed and refreshed themselves from their labours or places in which they profaned the Lord's day and scandalized their neighbours. (Walsham 2011: 260-1).ⁱⁱⁱ

Richard Brome is not dealing with religion but his comedy touches on these concerns, especially in the creation of the fortune-teller Patrico and his apparently damaging astrological predictions. As the pursuer Sentwell describes the beggars, they have identities and personalities ascribed by living at large:

Hedge-birds, said you? Hedge-ladybirds, hedge-cavaliers, hedge-soldier, hedge-lawyer, hedge-fiddlers, hedge-poet, hedge-players, and a hedge-priest among 'em. (AJC V, i, 877).^{iv}

These once-respectable and now fallen-from-grace travellers form the community for Brome's meditation on movement within his own society and demonstrate the potential freedom to be found at the bottom of the stairs. Ania Loomba, in analysing another Brome play, *The Antipodes*, suggests his even-handedness by describing that in her view he

considers the interrelation of social and psychic space by locating the production of male and female fantasies in the different spaces occupied by men and women (Loomba 1989: 135).^v

Brome's road is a democratic space used by and common to all, and the perspective of *A Jovial Crew* flips between the privileged and enclosed space

of Master Oldrents' house, and events on the ramble. Anyone can use the road – cf. Oedipus and his natural and soon-to-be-dead father.^{vi} But I have no claim to mythologise the road as a democratised space; it is also, of course, a place for the demonstration and exercise of power. Characters in Brome's play taking to the road are soon disorientated. The democratising space of *A Jovial Crew* is the journey that entices its characters to emerge into the open air and take their chances in life. In Michel de Certeau's terms, they must learn to operate as 'poachers' whose playful tactics ensure their survival;

A practice of the order constructed by others redistributes its space: it creates at least a certain play in that order, a space for manoeuvres of unequal forces and for utopian points of reference... People have to make do with what they have.
(de Certeau 1988: 18).^{vii}

This 'making-do' forms the substance of the *A Jovial Crew* plot. As Joel Bonnemaïson suggests, 'there is nothing more cultural than the ways in which human beings endeavour to survive, for the methods they use always go beyond the sheer satisfaction of surviving *stricto sensu*'.(2005: 79).^{viii} Brome's interest in the early modern road is dramaturgically constructed to investigate more issues than mere survival, with a key focus on family, as I will discuss later in this chapter. Brome's 'downstairs dramaturgy' can be characterized by several key theatrical tropes, including an interest in presenting the wealthy and the not-so-wealthy in proximity and engagement with one another (for example, the beggars supported by the wealthy in *A Jovial Crew*.) The politics of staging this situation are interesting, as the laws against begging at the time reveal a stern intolerance for both begging and poverty, essentially enshrining into law a disapproval of free movement. ^{ix}

Seeing the 1992 adaptation of *A Jovial Crew* inspired Christopher Hill's bracketing together (once again, as so often in their critical history) of *A Jovial Crew* and *The Beggar's Opera*, through his consideration of expressions of seventeenth century liberty: 'it is worth asking ourselves seriously what late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century society looked like when seen from

below' (Hill 1996: 4).^x Hill's summation of *A Jovial Crew* focusses on the difficulty of the beggars' lives. He astutely recognizes the link that Brome continually makes in this play between the relative freedoms and limitations of both courtiers and beggars as they travel on the roads of early modern England. His invitation to invert the perspective traditional to analysis of a play such as *A Jovial Crew* frames my experience of directing the beggar scenes in a theatrical context, as these are the ultimate in 'downstairs' characters, even lower than servants.

I am the Program Coordinator of a Bachelor of Acting for Stage and Screen undergraduate degree at Federation University Australia in the regional city of Ballarat.^{xi} As an experienced director, it has been part of my role to direct classical plays with Third Year actors, and in the past, I have always programmed Shakespeare. Having been introduced to the plays in the Brome repertoire and finding them both individual and appealing, I have been staging Brome's work, including *The City Wit* (2007), *The Antipodes* (2008), *A Jovial Crew* (2013) and *Covent Garden Weeded* (2017) (re-titled for the local audience *Garden City Weeded*). At the time of writing, I am the director who has staged the largest repertoire of Brome plays, both in Australia and elsewhere. The important resource *Richard Brome Online* contains videoed rehearsal sequences with script in hand, that have been selected to illustrate editorial issues in the online edition. My fully-staged productions in Australia provide, therefore, a unique opportunity to engage with the complete dramaturgy of these works onstage, performed with the text largely uncut, by a complete cast. For my 2013 production of *A Jovial Crew* with Third Year graduating actors, in interpreting my early modern beggars as contemporary musicians and photographers living cheap on the road, I wished to connect their issues to my local audience.

A Brome project taking place in a regional Australian city may seem to some in the Northern Hemisphere a surprising location for such a revival. Brome and Ballarat have become entwined ever since Elizabeth Schafer and I first stood by Lake Wendouree in 2006 and discussed the mystery of the black swans appearing in Brome's 1638 play *The Antipodes*. As we watched the

same birds floating around in the Australian springtime, she captured my imagination by describing the research and practice that was going into the project that would become *Richard Brome Online* and invited me to read the plays. I consider Brome's *The Antipodes* a perfect play to reference Australia, and this the perfect place to stage Brome, given our white colonial beginnings, with our fruity vernacular, our tendency to vote for the underdog and our appreciation of a 'fair go'. Only the democratically-inclined Brome could have written *The Antipodes*, since he inverts the whole world to a 'downstairs' location. Like *A Jovial Crew*, *The Antipodes* is also a road play, but the journey is fictional, the road created by actor-servants of Lord Letoy inside his house. In this play, Lord Letoy takes his visitor/patient Peregrine to a fictional Anti-London. Thus, Brome is the first playwright to imagine Australia, so for me there is a logic in reproducing his work here. My vast practice-led research project at the Arts Academy in Ballarat has mounted four Brome plays across ten years.

Brome's democratized dramaturgy is revealed in characteristic ways, such as the many examples in the text of open, playful, extemporized action, where the playwright leaves room for a characteristic flourish from his actors. For example, some of the songs seem unfinished, and the text is peppered with vague directions such as *[Singing] Hey down, hey down a down, etc.* (AJC II, ii) that leaves scope for extemporised musical improvisation. R. W. Ingram is impressed by Brome's skill and suggests that *A Jovial Crew* 'is not a play with songs and music so much as a musical play.' (1976: 238).^{xii} Also open in style is the detailed psychological portrayal of servants, who provide plot development and revelation, especially in this play the steward Springlove who wants to go on the road, and the groom Randall who prefers his home. Brome's tendency is to portray the inner freedom and sexual character of women with relish and detail; for example, in the play there is a quartet of sisters and lovers, yet it is never specified which daughter belongs to which suitor, and they themselves suggest that their virtue may be suspect:

Rachel: Does he think us whores, trow, because sometimes we talk as

lightly as great ladies? I can swear safely for the virginity of one of us, so far as word and deed goes. Marry, thought's free.
Meriel: Which is that one of us, I pray? You or me?
(AJC II, i ,128-129.)

Women can go out on the road, and although they are preyed upon, they are also protected, and survive. Brome's women in *A Jovial Crew* act for themselves, where possible. Judge Clack's niece, Amy, who joins the sisters on the road, has run away from an undesirable marriage. In performance, much of the comedy here lay in the fear and caution of the clerk who steals her, Martin, whose attitude on the road contrasted with the fearless enthusiasm of Amy. The actor Rhys James took on a very mealy-mouthed and petulant delivery, which costume designer Melanie Liertz emphasised by giving him ridiculous yellow gloves and sunglasses. Grace Maddern as Amy used the stage boldly and led the way on the journey, appearing later in a leather jacket, thus 'toughening up' for the road. Even if they are living downstairs, Brome's women take advantage of the apparent freedom given to them by being lower in the foodchain. De Certeau, in writing about systems and the flexibility of subjection to them, as has defined these tactics as 'ways of using':

(he) creates for himself a space in which he can find *ways of using* the constraining order of the place or of the language. ...he establishes within it a degree of *plurality* and creativity. By an art of being in between, he draws unexpected results from his situation.
(1988: 30).

The beggar-crew using the road in *A Jovial Crew* are all on the run from city living, as evidenced by a begging soldier, poet and lawyer who are living creatively. My students related to the in-between nature of the characters, the blend of poverty and music in the play, and especially to running away from home and adopting a position of rejection of society's rules and values. Cave et al suggest of *A Jovial Crew* that the road offers both the characters and their audiences a lens to examine issues of freedom and bondage;

If [the play] has a unifying object for its relentless interrogating, it lies in traditional social relations as practised within Caroline communities (marriage, paternity, employment, land tenure and rental systems, justice, estate management) and the play encourages an investigative spirit in audiences by presenting all these incidences in contrast with the workings of a community that rejects all such inherited value-systems in the pursuit of personal liberty (beggardom) (Cave et al, 2010: 2.)^{xiii}

This 'investigative spirit' is evident in the way Brome ridicules those in power and temporarily elevates those who are down-trodden. Taking my cue from the songs sprinkled liberally through the play, I interpreted this liberty onstage as that form of the free living embodied by professional rock and pop musicians. My young actors took their research both from the seventeenth century, and online, in images from famous rock stars and the pages of *Rolling Stone* magazine (a very apt title, given the lives of the characters on the road!).

I also drew a conceptual link between our location and this play. The regional city of Ballarat is seen by some as the crucible for modern Australian democracy, because it is where a rebel uprising enshrined the rights of the common man against oppression. At Bakery Hill in 1854, rebel gold miners swore an oath by the Southern Cross constellation, an image that became their symbol, and refused to pay a government mining tax, leading to a bloody battle between soldiers and miners. They erected a barricade at Eureka Lead. Their rebel flag was sprinkled with the stars of the Southern Cross. The Eureka Rebellion in Ballarat is reputed to mark the beginning of an Australian democratic movement, as described here by Clare Wright:

The diggers lined up to throw their licences upon a bonfire – an act of communal defiance of the law...When committing their licences to the flames, the diggers swore to defend any unlicensed digger from arrest, with armed force if necessary (Wright 2013: 379).^{xiv}

A Museum of Democracy in Ballarat opened the month before we performed *A Jovial Crew*, and it is the site where the original Eureka flag hangs on display. The Eureka story is one well known to my actors.^{xv} The beggars of

Brome's play, arrested as vagrants and held in captivity, are forced to adopt the identity of travelling players, not just begging on the road, but begging favour by providing entertainment in a rich man's house in order to survive. The beggar-poet Scribble takes the lead in proposing themes, and his vision for his play sounds to me like an uncannily direct description of this most famous uprising in Australia:

Scribble: I would have the country, the city, and the court be at great variance for superiority. Then would I have Divinity and Law stretch their wide throats to appease and reconcile them. Then would I have the soldier cudgel them all together and overtop them all.
(AJC IV,ii, 813.)

As Rosemary Gaby has suggested, a moment of reality arrives in the centre of the entertainment. She celebrates what I believe is the democratic perspective of a play that does not settle for a single view of events: 'Brome's comedy makes us view the beggar's community from many different perspectives, thus encouraging us to question its significance.' (1994: 409).^{xvi}

Contextualising the politics of Scribble's play in rehearsal led the acting company to a shift of tone. Initially the actors described it as a '*Sesame Street* scene' and they reported feeling silly playing the action of catcalling and encouraging, until I suggested Scribble's call to arms related to our (then – current) Federal Australian election. This shift awakened the cast to the potential for radicalism in the original text. This part of Act Five Scene One was eventually staged as a boozy party, with band-leader Scribble inspiring his crew whilst balanced on the band's road case. The beggar crew of *A Jovial Crew* in some respects echoes the broad social mix of the Australian convict and gold-digging population. For the local population of Ballarat today, many are descendants of those early gold diggers and soldiers, thus viewed as important people, lauded as descendants of the stars of their time. So for my season of *A Jovial Crew* in 2013, I conceptualised the beggar crew as a starry rock band and showed them eking out an existence on the road, complete with instruments, road cases and photographers recording their every move. The 'road' in the Helen Macpherson Smith Theatre was an open

space with multiple entrances. The floor was painted with hippy-style flowers, creating a natural space for dancing and begging. This space was later criss-crossed with a red cloth, to form a chamber for Judge Clack's house and thus an inevitable barrier to free movement.

The 'road' in our thrust theatre was not characterised by signposts or scenic details, filled instead by the invisible diagonal lines running between the vomitories that determined the travellers' floor-path. Sometimes it was filled with the photographic and music equipment of the beggars' 'tour', and sometimes it was an open, democratic space. The interesting dramaturgical pattern in this play of the stage filling and then emptying is a characteristic of Brome's work that I have noted in staging the plays, such as Springlove's soliloquy in Act One being interrupted by the beggars' song and dance. (1,1,71-84). The dramaturgy of *A Jovial Crew* requires a lot of space, including, for Ballarat, an upper galley where the band played live for the beggars' celebrations. Stage directions are not always clear-cut in Brome. For example, Tim Fitzpatrick's spatial analysis of *A Jovial Crew*, a document I examined after the event of my production, is peppered with reflections on the action, such as 'Where has Patrico been? What does it mean that the beggars 'look out'? Are they still within or behind one of the doorways?' I shared Fitzpatrick's questions. I am sorry I missed this, for example:

Time lapse, change of location: here we have the four 'slumming it' as beggars, at an unspecified 'outwards' location ... Evidence of split-staging techniques: Springlove instructs men on begging (67) as the ladies plan their demeanour before conversing with the men. (Fitzpatrick 2011: 3.)^{xvii}

Fitzpatrick's suggestion that Vincent and Springlove are still onstage is clear, but Brome's textual action implies that the pursuing gentlemen characters are 'searching' the local area and thus need to cover some ground. This scene was hard to direct, especially dealing with the 'horses'! (We used razor-scooters). The 'road' is easy to portray on an open stage, due to the lack of scenic impingement. I took these visual questions into rehearsal, splitting the staging between upstage, where the sisters are recovering after a night on the

boards, and downstage, where their men are learning how to become beggars. They are outdoors, but not yet 'on the road', only 'rehearsing' for it. The stage may be seen to operate here as a meta-theatrical location for the lovers 'scripting' their relationship, with the steward Springlove 'directing' them in how to beg to the gentry. Their perambulations back and forth create the world: in de Certeau's words: 'It thus seems possible to give a preliminary definition of walking as a space of enunciation.' (1988: 98).

Brome's plays, as staged in Ballarat to date, have proven to be entertaining in good measure, with genuine comic strengths that have been celebrated by cross-generational and cross-class audiences. I have witnessed Brome's downstairs dramaturgy being well received by Ballarat audiences, many of whom are working class people, with their children the first to ever go to University. They have laughed broadly at the 350-year-old jokes and commented favourably on the quality and the tone of the works. Brome's writing was valued for this by the director of the only contemporary Shakespeare's Globe revival of *The Antipodes*, Gerard Freeman:

Brome created a world of antic humour and anarchic suspension of expectations that makes for a screwball comedy. The viewer is left wondering: who are the doctors and who the patients? ... His imagination, energy and theatrical suspense are unflagging. (Kastan and Proudfoot: 2000: viii).^{xviii}

I suggest that the glossing over of Brome's repertoire may constitute a significant omission to our understanding of the early modern canon because, as Hill suggests, it articulates a view of the world from below. I believe that it is here, downstairs in the kitchen and the cellar, or on the road, (or indeed, in our extreme 'downstairs' location, the Southern hemisphere) that the democratic tone of Brome's unique voice can be heard most resonantly. This early modern road trip has echoes of the contemporary 'road movie' that we are familiar with. Like many famous road movie heroes and heroines (think the boys in *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, *Thelma and Louise*, even Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*) Brome's characters leave their home to see the world and are changed by their on-road experiences.^{xix} Road movie characters may

be travelling the open road for a variety of reasons, as suggested by Murphy, Venkatasawmy, Simpson and Visosevic:

The impetus for this particular notion of 'journeying' is generally triggered by: the Escape *motive* — from country, from the city, the past, family, 'home', authority or enemies; the Quest *motive* — for people, places, 'home', objects or understanding of self. (2009: 75)^{xx,xxi}

In *A Jovial Crew*, Brome combines these suggested triggers of 'Escape' and 'Quest', using the device of the road trip to provide a new perspective on the nature of the early modern family: disobedient daughters, servants and lovers are under threat, (as usual in any road movie) from figures of power and authority, in this play symbolised by a judge. The road is *jovial* in this play because of its fellowship, expressed in the music that the beggars sing, and, as Randall the groom suggests, because of its capacity to nurture, a place to 'stroll and beg till their bellies be full, and then sleep till they be hungry.' (I,i,65) Brome appears to present a picture of the English highways and commons as places of freedom and meditation, perhaps even of sanity. Yet, the play changes its attitude constantly: as Tiffany Stern describes, even the title of the play may contain a double meaning:

'Jovial', the first word of the title, and a theme of the play throughout, is a loaded adjective. It derives from Jove, or Jupiter, king of the classical gods – and thunder. 'Jovial', then, might equally signify 'happy' or 'turbulent and ungovernable'...For Brome, joviality and distress were closely allied.(2014:6).^{xxii}

Begging with those whose lives are 'sweetened by delights such as we find by shifting place and air' (AJC I, i, 52.), is a life or death proposition for Springlove, whose analogy heads this chapter; namely that he 'must abroad or perish!' (AJC I,i,54.) His name underlines the literal nature of his attraction to the road: hearing the nightingale, he pleads: 'O sir, you hear I am called.' (AJC I,i,40). When the daughters of the household follow they inadvertently create havoc both at home and abroad. Rachel and Meriel push the boundaries, and likewise assert control over their own time, by taking to the road to discover freedom away from their father's household demands, and

this wish binds them to both their servant and the beggars on the road in short-lived democratic harmony, when mistresses and masterless men are brought into equal circumstances but their roles are inverted. Brome has a merry time in all his plays when he provides characters with inverted circumstances. The young lover Hilliard is at first full of admiration for the roving beggars' life:

Hilliard: Beggars! They are the only people can boast the benefit of a free state in the full enjoyment of liberty, mirth, and ease, having all things in common and nothing wanting of nature's whole provision within the reach of their desires. Who would have lost this sight of their revels?' (AJC II,i,120).

The runaways soon come to see that the outdoor life of freedom has less to recommend it than might be imagined:

Meriel: I am sorely surbated with hoofing already though, and so crupper-cramped with our hard lodging and so bumfiddled with the straw that —

Rachel: Think not on't. I am numbed i'the bum and shoulders too a little. And have found the difference between a hard floor with a little straw and a down bed with a quilt upon't. (AJC III, i, 380-381).

The road keeps changing its meaning; it is nominated to be a playground by the lovers; a battleground for the gentlemen seeking the runaways Amy and Martin; a temptation to freedom from responsibility for Springlove; a location for sexual congress with beggar-wenches for the young blade Oliver, and a threat to both civil and domestic harmony for the parent figures Judge Clack and Oldrents. Clack's niece has rejected the suitor chosen for her and run away with her uncle's clerk, Martin, who is threatened with hanging by his employer/uncle thus:

And you, in assisting her, furthering, and conveying her away, did not only infringe the law, in an unlawful departure from your master, but in a higher point; that is to say, top and topgallows high. I would ha' found a jury should ha' found it so. (AJC V,ii,860)

But Brome soon has the judge drunk on his own wine and the disaster is

comically averted.

Apart from two professional productions (and some student shows), I find it surprising that Brome has not found his theatrical champions in contemporary times.^{xxiii} In England, it is not possible to walk on a Richard Brome trail. William Shakespeare gives us, by comparison, the example of Bardolatry, and any road, public building, garden, outlook and theatre can use his identity or image, his face and meaning, symbolized and woven into the fabric of the landscape to create a giant literary pilgrimage site. As Terry Eagleton observes, 'Shakespeare is the quintessential commodity, at once ever-new and consolingly recognisable' (1988: 206).^{xxiv} By comparison, the Brome trail is very faint and does not have the same cultural meaning, despite his capacity to open the picture of the lot of the common man. Brome's reputation received favour from a seminal text by Martin Butler that shifted the view on his work:

The most striking thing about *A Jovial Crew*, then, is that it should be there, that at a major moment of crisis in English history a dramatist should evoke so completely the continuity, the particularity and the presence of English life, and Brome reinforces the effect theatrically...which makes the play read as if casting back to the very earliest days of the English stage (with its specially close relationship with the country) and taking stock of the whole great achievement of the English theatre too.
(Butler 1984: 275-6).^{xxv}

But since Butler renovated Brome's reputation, only *A Jovial Crew* and *The Antipodes* (in the *White and Red Season* at Shakespeare's Globe, 2000) have received fully professional productions. In England, when reviewing the reviews of the 1992 Royal Shakespeare Company production, I was intrigued to see that responses were split down the middle in their enthusiasm for the Jeffreys version or the original Brome, which was either known about or speculated upon. Apart from its chiascuro and autumnal prettiness, I noted many aspects of this well-acted and successful production that I could admire, especially a very strong energy and drive, with a running time of 172 minutes. Randall seemed to be the favourite of the audience, even though only one speech of his was written by Brome. Much of the play worked, but then, to

me, there would be longeurs, or else I was uncertain about how the characters had been interpreted. Frequently the play did not read as a comedy at all, especially in its humourless representation of the lord of the manor Oldrents, to the point where I began to wonder how Stafford-Clark saw the character. The Judge was genuinely frightening. This interpretation of his character was supported by an additional 'arrest' scene, which worked to underline the social divide between masters and their men as they trudged along the road to their judgement. This was not Brome's image of the free and redemptive road. The Act 2 beggar ritual in the barn contained an extended ecstatic dance (complete with female toplessness that I found unnecessary, a point emphasised by a couple of female critics), which reminded me of Caryl Churchill's play *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*. Given that Churchill's play was also developed by Stafford-Clark, I could feel a definitive desire in this version of *A Jovial Crew* for radical politics to be embraced and uplifted in an early British vision of Utopia.^{xxvi} The editors of *Richard Brome Online* have noted that this kind of adaptation has been a continual part of its stage history:

A Jovial Crew, or The Merry Beggars is the one play by Brome that has a sustained stage history which spans several centuries; however, the play has almost always been radically adapted by those producing and performing it. There seems to be something about *A Jovial Crew* that inspires theatre practitioners, but which does not quite fit their agendas, or their estimation of what their contemporary audiences want to see in the theatre.

(Critical Introduction 28).^{xxvii}

To me Richard Brome takes a radically different view. The play-within-a-play that the idealist (and satirical) poet Scribble describes is indeed radicalized and Utopian, but the eventual play performed by the lovers and their friends is a self-referential re-enactment of the daughters' story, bringing the adventure to a harmonious close. We do not witness them reject Scribble's plot, yet the play-titles they offer to Judge Clack all focus on fathers and daughters (so different to Jeffrey's 1992 choice for one daughter to stay on the road.) Martin White has investigated the way that Stephen Jeffreys' version of Brome's text 'sharpens up' the lyrics of the beggars' songs to underline their social position.^{xxviii} In fact, I see that Jeffreys *reverses* the playwright's perspective by portraying the misery of the beggars, rather than their cheerful joviality as

written by Brome. I believe that this dramaturgical choice tends to weaken the role of the beggars in the play, undermining the generosity of Oldrents and the centrality of the beggars' freedom and autonomy, the very qualities that justify Springlove's escape to the road, which is the action that sets the plot in motion. The beggars sing:

Enough is our feast, and for tomorrow
Let rich men care; we feel no sorrow.
No sorrow, no sorrow, no sorrow, no sorrow.
Let rich men care; we feel no sorrow.
(AJC I, i, 78)

This repetition of 'no sorrow' (so useful to my rock star production of the play) is instructive. Brome underlines the democratic autonomy of those who choose to ramble and to reject society. Oldrents asks Springlove 'Can there no means be found to preserve life in thee but wandering like a vagabond?' (AJC I, i, 47), and Springlove answers this question in his greeting of the beggars sheltering in the barn: 'You are a jovial crew, the only people whose happiness I admire.' (AJC I, i, 111). Brome presents happiness as a legitimate goal, whether sought by Amy rejecting her arranged marriage or Oldrents finally brought to an acknowledgement of an earlier transgression with a beggar-maid and surprised to be claiming the King of the Beggars as both his illegitimate son and legitimate heir. I think the 1992 production offered several misreadings of the actions at the end of the play, because it failed to focus on Brome's determination to bring the lost family of the play together. The daughters vote with their feet when they take to the road, but the road eventually takes them home again. The healing involved in claiming Springlove mirrors the mending of the travel-crazy Peregrine in *The Antipodes*. It is an open-ended and democratic shift: when Springlove is revealed to be Oldrent's unknown son, and thus the inheritor of the estate, everything may be inverted and re-aligned, but the beggars do not stop travelling.

It was challenging to conceive an Australian production, given that we are an infamous off-shoot of English culture and society that has developed its own colour and texture. But I concluded that the continual status play in Brome's

work, emphasizing the conflict between the classes, would have been understood in gold-rush crazy Ballarat. Even now, the city always harks back to its past to illuminate the present, and is, as such, a place where the remounting of historical drama should be able to find acceptance. Before departure from Australia to visit the Royal Shakespeare Company archives in Stratford-on-Avon for research into the 1992 production of the play, I held auditions and a first reading of *A Jovial Crew* with my student actors. They read the play quite well but stumbled repeatedly on unfamiliar words, as they accessed the text from *Richard Brome Online* on phones and iPads. There was frequent (attempted) singing, a visible lift in energy from the appearance of the beggars, pleasure at repetition and some of our eventual audience's favourite lines such as 'He is no snail, sir' (AJC IV, i, 614.) were immediately funny. They loved it, describing it as 'rad', 'fresh' and 'frantic'. They did not know how to perform this play but were prepared to believe that it could be played well, as we set about creating the mechanics and the poetics of a contemporary approach to the Brome canon in a rural Australian setting. It is certainly fair to say that Brome is unknown in Australia. Whenever I have told anyone here about my research into the plays of Richard Brome, I am asked to explain who he is, and, out of many, I have only met three people who can place him. The average theatregoer cannot call to mind specific quotes or images from the plays. I also started rehearsals in relative ignorance. When I staged my first Brome play *The City Wit* in 2007, I did not have the benefit of *Richard Brome Online*.

Through staging practice I have investigated the dramaturgical devices in these plays, mainly Brome's use of theatrical space and his consistent deployment of meta-theatricality, as especially indicative of a democratized dramaturgy that resists favouritism. A play-within-a-play is a repeated plot device that Brome uses boldly to bring events to a head. There is a wedding masque in *The City Wit* that leads to gender-shock in the unmasking of truth, and a musical masque at the end of *The Antipodes* that creates harmony, forgiveness and healing from madness. In these examples, characters become an inner audience, and watching the play through their responses shifts the perspective from the auditorium. I suggest that Brome sees the

theatre itself as a device for revelation to his audience. In staging these plays, I have also accepted the invitation issued by Brome's use of inversion to reveal his democratic inclination, whether this is viewed as the characters' status drops and ascents in *The City Wit* as they switch tactics; the creation of anti-London in *The Antipodes* where statuses are reversed; or the training of masters as beggars in *A Jovial Crew*. These actions have a dramaturgical purpose: as de Certeau has described, 'the space of a tactic is the space of the other.' (1988:37).

I have collaborated openly with the Brome actors and valued their insights built from their experience of the rehearsal room floor. I prefer to underscore Brome's characteristic balance by giving my actors freedom to interpret their roles in the rehearsal process: I give them 'space' to explore and draw conclusions rather than determining the result beforehand. For example, we found it extraordinary that the Patrico offers Master Oldrents his choice of virgins for entertainment in the original text. The Ballarat *A Jovial Crew* cast encouraged me to keep the offer of the doxies, but turn them into men for our female Oldrents; a Bromian inversion that seemed to make this action work properly. These games, experiments and reversals in interpretation have exposed a characteristic fluidity in Brome's writing and storytelling, or, in my terms, a democratically dramaturgic construction of Self and Other that has opened itself successfully to a feminist director's gaze.

Performative evidence thus suggests the form of Brome's democratized dramaturgy lives in this blended 'upstairs and 'downstairs' scenario, and on the open road; further, that the class meditation of these plays, whilst not documentary in nature, needs to be taken more seriously. There is a delicate trajectory that could be drawn between, firstly, the plot and characters of this play written on the brink of an English civil war, secondly, the young gold miners of an Australian rebellion, and, finally perhaps, our current questions about the rights and survival of asylum seekers. To a twenty-first century practitioner, the view of beggars who dance, eat, marry, give birth and sing together, seems compassionate and detailed, even as they struggle to be free. Together with women and servants, these allies in Brome's meta-

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theatrical scene feature within an imaginative and reflexive dramaturgy that could refresh Richard Brome's reputation as a dramatist if recognized as valuable. By providing new insights into a production of this play for the stage, and grounds for a reconsideration of the democratic form and reputation of the dramatist, I hope that I have successfully shared my enthusiasm for and relish of this early modern 'road movie'.

NOTES

ⁱ All quotes in this chapter from the plays of Richard Brome are taken from *Richard Brome Online* (<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, <06.10.17>), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4. Brome, R. *A Jovial Crew*, edited by Helen Ostovich, Modern Text, 2010. (last accessed 5 October 2017).

ⁱⁱ Jeffreys explains his dramaturgical decision in the introduction to *A Jovial Crew* by Richard Brome adapted by Stephen Jeffreys, Warner Chappell: London 1992: unnumbered page. For a stage history of *A Jovial Crew* see <https://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome/history.jsp> (last accessed 26 November 2017).

ⁱⁱⁱ Walsham, Alexandra (2011): *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland*, Oxford University Press.

^{iv} Brome, R. *A Jovial Crew*, edited by Helen Ostovich, Modern Text, 2010. (last accessed 1 December 2017).

^v Loomba, Ania (1989) *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

^{vi} Thanks to Dr. Rob Conkie for this suggestion.

^{vii} De Certeau, Michel [1984] (1988) translated by Steven F. Rendell: *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

^{viii} Bonnemaïson, Joel (2005): *Culture and Space: Conceiving a New Cultural Geography*; I.B.Tauris.

^{ix} For more on this, see the textual note to line 1.i.50 from editors Julie Sanders and Richard Cave, *Richard Brome Online*, <https://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome/viewTranscripts.jsp?play=JC&type=MOD&act=1> (last accessed 5 November 2017).

^x Hill, Christopher (1996): *Liberty Against the Law*, London: Allen Lane, Penguin Group.

^{xi} The cities of Ballarat (115 kms from Melbourne) and Bendigo (151 kms) are the two most well-known 'gold' towns in regional Victoria, their broad streets and gracious buildings established during the rush for gold that attracted many international citizens of the early 1800s. An example of this history is the setting for my site-specific production of *The Antipodes*. The Ballarat Mining Exchange in Lydiard Street, which was built in 1836, was the place where the gold prices were called, and gold was traded. In the twentieth century, it was re-used variably as an antiques emporium and a bus depot. It is currently administered by the City of Ballarat for community use, weddings

and functions. The Ballarat population is estimated at 157,485 at the time of writing.

^{xii} R. W. Ingram, 'The Musical Art of Richard Brome's Comedies' in *Renaissance Drama* New Series, Vol. 7, Drama and the Other Arts (1976), pp. 219-242.

^{xiii} Richard Brome Online, Critical Introduction to Brome, Richard, *A Jovial Crew*, Edited by R. Cave, et al, 2010. (last accessed 8 October 2017). See also

http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome/viewTranscripts.jsp?type=MOD&play=JC&act=1&video=JC_1_1 (last accessed 8 October 2017).

^{xiv} Wright, Clare. (2013) *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company.

^{xv} <http://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/lae/attractions/eureka-centre-home-of-the-eureka-flag.aspx> (last accessed 15 January 2019). The museum closed in 2018 and has since been re-named The Eureka Centre.

^{xvi} Gaby, Rosemary. "Of Vagabonds and Commonwealths: Beggars' Bush, a Jovial Crew, and the Sisters" in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* Vol. 34, No. 2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (Spring, 1994), pp. 401- 424.

^{xvii} Fitzpatrick, Tim (2011) *A Jovial Crew: Spatial Analyses of 80 Elizabethan and Jacobean plays*, University of Sydney, <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/7809>, (last accessed 7 October 2017).

^{xviii} Kastan, David Scott and Richard Proudfoot (eds) (2000) *The Antipodes by Richard Brome*, London and New York: Nick Hern Books.

^{xix} *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, film, written and directed by Stephan Elliott. Australia: Gramercy Pictures 1994. *Thelma and Louise*, film, written by Callie Khouri, directed by Ridley Scott. USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer 1991. *The Wizard of Oz*, film, screenplay by Noel Langley et al, directed by King Vidor et al. USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer 1939.

^{xx} Ffion Murphy et al (2001) From Sand to Bitumen, from Bushrangers to 'Bogans': Mapping the Australian road movie, *Journal of Australian Studies*, 25:70, 73-84, DOI: 10.1080/14443050109387708 (last accessed 7 October 2017).

^{xxii} Stern, Tiffany (ed) (2014) *A Jovial Crew* by Richard Brome, London: Arden Bloomsbury.

^{xxiii} See *Richard Brome Online* for a comprehensive stage history: <https://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome/history.jsp> (last accessed 5 November 2017).

^{xxiv} Holderness, Graham (ed) (1988) *The Shakespeare Myth*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

^{xxv} Butler, Martin. (1984) *Theatre and Crisis 1632-1642*, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

^{xxvi} *A Jovial Crew by Richard Brome*: Royal Shakespeare Company, Stratford Upon Avon, directed by Max Stafford-Clark 1992, DVD Archive, last accessed at the Shakespeare Institute RSC Archives, Stratford Upon Avon July 2013.

^{xxvii} *Richard Brome Online*, Critical Introduction to Brome, Richard, *A Jovial Crew*, Edited by R. Cave et al, 2010.

<https://www.dhi.ac.uk/brome/viewOriginal.jsp?play=JC&type=CRIT>

(last accessed 8 October 2017).

^{xxviii} White, Martin (1998) *Renaissance Drama in Action*, London: Routledge.