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**PAGEANTS, PROCESSIONS AND PLAYS: REPRESENTATIONS OF
ROYAL AND STATE POWER AND THE COMMON AUDIENCE IN
EARLY MODERN ENGLAND**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

William Jarleth Leahy

Department of English, Brunel University

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Pageants, Processions and Plays: Representations of Royal and State Power and the Common Audience in Early Modern England

This thesis examines certain important aspects of theatrical practice in early modern England, as they were manifested in Shakespeare's history plays and pageant literature produced for Queen Elizabeth 1 on procession. This study regards the events marked by these two literary forms as discrete though related theatrical formations, and seeks to examine and question the ways in which Shakespearean criticism and pageant analysis regard both genres as aesthetically equivalent as well as being cultural forms both characterised and linked by their valorisation of state authority. This thesis asserts that such a conceptualisation simplifies the nature of the plays and the pageants as material events, as well as the literature produced for these events. Instead, it argues that a closer examination of the human context in which pageants, processions and plays occurred, and in which the literature for them was performed, enables the construction of an alternative viewpoint. A reprocessing of primary and secondary material while prioritising the fact that a large proportion of audiences who witnessed the pageants, processions and plays were comprised of the common people of early modern England, allows for different perceptions of these cultural events. The presence of these common people has traditionally been either ignored or undervalued and, through a close examination of contemporary records, this thesis proceeds to argue that, as they were the targets of official, dominant ideology, their presence was significant.

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PAGEANTS, PROCESSIONS AND PLAYS

To Christiane and Danny

INTRODUCTION

“TRIUMPHAL PROCESSIONS”

The subject areas examined in this thesis have been divided into two major categories. The first, pageant and procession literature has, to a great extent, traditionally been critically ignored. The second, Shakespeare's history plays, has been the subject of a massive and almost unquantifiable amount of critical investigation.¹ The aim of this current study is not to in any way identify this inequality of attention as unjustified and then seek to redress the perceived imbalance, but rather to survey and investigate these artefacts and events as

¹Until the 1980's, literary criticism in general was to a great extent geared to what was perceived to be "enduring" literature, rather than "occasional" literature such as pageants and court masques. Some of the important studies of procession literature include the following: John Nichols, The Progresses And Public Processions Of Queen Elizabeth 1, 3 Vols. (1823; New York: AMS Press, 1977); Robert Withington, English Pageantry: An Historical Outline, 2 Vols. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1918-1920); Sydney Anglo, Spectacle, Pageantry And Early Tudor Policy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); David M. Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642 (London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1971); Jean Wilson, Entertainments For Elizabeth 1 (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1980); Roy Strong, The Cult Of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture And Pageantry (Wallop: Thames and Hudson, 1977) and Splendour At Court (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1973). Large sections of the following are also devoted to processions: E. K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, 4 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923) 1: 106-148 and 4: 60-130; Glynn Wickham, Early English Stages 1300-1660, 4 Vols. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959) 1: 51-111 and 2: 206-244. The list of critical texts dealing with Shakespeare's history plays is too long to outline here in detail, but some of the major studies include the following: E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays (1944; London: Chatto and Windus, 1966); Lily B. Campbell, Shakespeare's 'Histories': Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy (1947; London: Methuen & Co, 1977); H. A. Kelly, Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970); John Wilders, The Lost Garden: A View of Shakespeare's English and Roman History Plays (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman & Littlefield, 1978); Phyllis Rackin, Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles (London: Routledge, 1991); Graham Holderness, Shakespeare Recycled: The Making of Historical Drama (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992); Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories (London: Routledge, 1997). It is also necessary to acknowledge the importance of two essays which appeared in the 1980s, Stephen Greenblatt's "Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion, Henry IV and Henry V," and Leonard Tennenhouse's "Strategies of State and Political Plays: A Midsummer Night's Dream, Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VIII," both of which are contained in Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore, eds., Political Shakespeare: Essays In Cultural Materialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985) 18-47 and 109-128 respectively. A plethora of single play studies also exists.

related theatrical discourses. The history plays of Shakespeare, that category of critical plenitude, are widely regarded to be amongst the greatest cultural productions in the English language, indeed in any language, and are the site of an ongoing ideological struggle within the institution of Literature, a struggle that continually witnesses political realignments and regroupings in the light of vacillating theoretical developments. Dramatic pageant literature produced for Elizabethan royal entries and royal progresses on the other hand has been, to a large extent, critically abandoned in the sense that it has often been seen to be mechanically constructed and thus of limited literary interest, and as wholly transparent in its ideological desire and therefore worthless as a site of potential political contestation.²

Pageant literature has therefore, along with the actual public events it sought to commemorate, traditionally been held to be an unproblematic example of the state displaying sovereign power to the marginalised and suitably impressed subject. In much the same way, Shakespeare's history plays have often been seen to underwrite monarchical and state authority in their celebrations of this same English absolutism, albeit it in more complex, deferred ways. The

²With the exception of the works listed above, analysis of processions and processional literature has never figured as part of mainstream Renaissance criticism. This situation has altered somewhat recently, mainly due to the importance given by the New Historicism to incidents of Elizabeth parading herself in public and the effects of these royal displays. See for example: Stephen Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare (1980; Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1984); Leonard Tennenhouse, Power On Display: The Politics Of Shakespeare's Genres (London: Methuen, 1986); Stephen Orgel, The Illusion Of Power: Political Theatre In The English Renaissance (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1975); Jonathan Goldberg, James I and the Politics of Literature (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983). All of these studies are heavily influenced by the work of Michel Foucault, particularly his theorisation of Renaissance public display in Discipline And Punish: The Birth Of The Prison (1975; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982).

notion of order has been perceived as their dominant coda, and Shakespeare himself as the Elizabethan state's chief cultural ideologue. That this is a position which is contested by any number of Renaissance critics is a sign of the centrality of Shakespearean studies within the literary institution, and signals the marginality of pageant literature in comparison.³

In this study, I wish to read both types of public event and their respective literatures in a way described by Walter Benjamin as one that attempts to "brush history against the grain,"⁴ as one that will try to ascertain whether, and in what ways, they produced and negotiated the ideological effects prescribed to them, and to question if they were successful in their perceived normative functions. That is to say, it takes seriously the claims made for both literary

³All of the studies of Shakespeare's history plays listed above generally hold such a position. However, this position has been problematised since the early 1980s and the position of Shakespeare in our society is now a contested one. Two particular collections of essays can be regarded as the foundational texts for this problematisation: John Drakakis, ed., Alternative Shakespeares (London: Routledge, 1985) and Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore, eds., Political Shakespeare: Essays In Cultural Materialism. The fact that this is a contested field is evident in the plethora of studies that take this problematisation as their starting point. See for example: Ivo Kamps, ed., Shakespeare Left and Right (London: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, 1991); Graham Holderness, ed., The Shakespeare Myth (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Harman, eds., Shakespeare and the Question of Theory (London: Methuen, 1985).

⁴Formulated in his seminal "Theses On The Philosophy Of History," Illuminations, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. and intro., Hannah Arendt (1970; London: Fontana Press, 1992) 245-255: 248. This formulation of historical practice by Benjamin has been highly influential since the 1970s, and can be regarded as one of the founding principles of a broadly Marxist approach to investigations of the past. Many of the essays in Alternative Shakespeares, Political Shakespeare and The Shakespeare Myth are influenced by Benjamin's dictum, as is the approach to Literature and History generally termed Cultural Materialism. The works of such critics as Terry Eagleton, Alan Sinfield, Jonathan Dollimore and Francis Barker among others all acknowledge a debt to Benjamin. See for example: Terry Eagleton, Walter Benjamin: Towards a Revolutionary Criticism (London: Verso, 1981); Alan Sinfield, Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1992); Jonathan Dollimore, Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries (Brighton: Harvester, 1984); Francis Barker, The Culture Of Violence: Essays on Tragedy and History (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

forms that they (overtly or covertly) functioned in the service of state power and conventional notions of order, and ponders whether they were then successful in fulfilling this function. More specifically, this thesis will subject both primary and secondary literature to Benjamin's further claim that all cultural artefacts that have been passed down to the present as such articulations of conventional order are participating in a "triumphal procession" which occludes other potential meanings. Benjamin believes that these "cultural treasures" must be viewed "with cautious detachment," in order for the process of their transmission through time to be analysed both rationally and adequately.⁵

That the two separate genres of Shakespearean historical drama and pageant literature project an identical ideological desire is unsurprising, given the fact that they have traditionally been regarded as commensurate with each other.

This commensurability has been seen to be unproblematic and evident, demonstrated by Andrew Cairncross, who writes with reference to Shakespeare's first tetralogy:

3Henry VI is much more than a pageant for the eye. It is part of a great all-embracing conception of a pageant in which England and man himself work out the expiation of an original crime [the removal from the throne of Richard II] towards the final reassertion of a divinely controlled universal order [the establishment of Henry VII as king].⁶

⁵Benjamin, "Theses On The Philosophy Of History," Illuminations 248.

⁶Andrew S Cairncross, ed., introduction, 3 Henry VI, by William Shakespeare, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen & Co, 1964) xiii-lxvi: lxvi.

Here, the play is read as no more than a pageant device in which the population/audience is instilled with a monolithic, normative message that reflects the dominant ideology. Given that traditionally, both pageant displays/processions and Shakespeare's history plays have been read as being equivalent in their ideological desire, it is a central aim of this thesis to apply the same reading model to both genres. That is to say, that as both forms of cultural event have been linked in this way it is possible to read both cultural forms according to the same methodology. Before outlining this methodology, it is necessary to trace the development of the process of verisimilitude that exists between these two literary forms, as well as the implications that arise from such a process. This will require a questioning of the direct link that has been made between these two discrete cultural phenomena, and show it to be responsible for interpretations of both pageant literature and the history plays which see them as little more than expressions of the same dominant ideology.

* * *

Elizabethan England was witness to many processions undertaken by the sovereign, who was keenly aware of their value as public relations exercises. A number of the country's major cities were host to royal entries in which the Queen and her court paraded through the streets, and the population of the countryside frequently had the opportunity to view the monarch on one of her many summer progresses to the houses of various noblemen. These royal entries and progresses were very well documented, many of the entertainments

which took place appearing in print soon after they were performed.⁷ Despite this profusion of celebratory texts, they were not gathered together in one collection until 220 years after her death, in John Nichols' The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth 1, published in 1823, and very much the founding text of the genre of processional pageant literature. Nichols gathered together not only all of the various pamphlets that described the entertainments performed for Elizabeth, but also many letters and documents which tell of each procession's preparation and realisation. It is therefore an essential source of primary material, though a collection of data rather than a critique, having little to say about the function of pageants and progresses, and few words too regarding the nature of Elizabeth's reign.⁸

⁷The documents relating to the movements of the Court and entertainments performed in the monarch's presence are various and dispersed, and include a number of dispatches from foreign ambassadors also collected in various editions of the Calendar of State Papers. These accounts are too numerous to list here in their entirety, as there are records referring to numerous examples for most years of Elizabeth's reign. However, important examples exist in Calendar Of State Papers & Manuscripts (Spanish) (1568-69) 50-51 and 611; Calendar Of State Papers (Venetian) (1558-1580) 12-16. Also important is Raphael Holinshed, Holinshed's Chronicles Of England, Scotland, and Ireland, 6 Vols. (London: J. Johnson, 1807) 4: 159-175. It is also worth noting the many references made to processions in J. G. Nichols, ed., The Diary Of Henry Machyn, Citizen And Merchant-Taylor Of London: From A.D. 1550 To A.D. 1563 (London: Camden Society, 1848). E. K. Chambers has collected together the vast majority of these documents and has formed a "Court Calendar" for the years 1558-1616 in The Elizabethan Stage 4: 75-130. The entertainments themselves were frequently published--often anonymously, sometimes under the name of the author--by the noble upon whose estate the entertainment was performed. See, for example, George Gascoigne, Princely Pleasures (London: J. H. Burn, 1821); John Lyly, The Complete Works of John Lyly, ed. R. Warwick Bond, 3 Vols. (1902; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973) 1:403-504; Nichols, Elizabeth 2: 136-178, 179-213, and 533-599.

⁸Whilst the seven volumes that comprise Nichols' examination of processions (as well as the three regarding Queen Elizabeth there are an additional four on the reign of James I) are exhaustive, it is worth noting that very little of the author himself comes through. That is to say, that Nichols adopts the role of compiler of the (invaluable) material he has gathered together. See also The Progresses And Public Processions Of James I, 4 Vols. (1828; New York, AMS Press, 1977).

Given the profusion of Renaissance literary criticism, it is surprising that studies which examine literature that was produced for processions and progresses as a discrete literary form are scarce, and even with the broadening of the area of research to include more exclusive forms of pageant literature such as court masques, tilts and tournaments, examples of analysis are not numerous. E. K. Chambers' The Elizabethan Stage and Glynne Wickham's Early English Stages 1300-1660, are two of the more comprehensive studies, both attempting in their own ways to analyse dramatic practice in its entirety within the temporal limits they set themselves. Chambers is the more interesting in terms of social and political contexts, and remains the only analyst to cast a critical eye over processional practice in the Elizabethan era. Wickham, whose area of investigation is broader in that he examines drama over a period of three and a half centuries, concentrates much more on the development of theatrical practice as an enclosed cultural form, and has much of interest to say in terms of a perceived emblematic tradition.⁹

The first examination of the public generation of pageantry as a discrete cultural form was Robert Withington's English Pageantry, which appeared in 1918. Withington traces the development of pageantry in its public form since its inception in folk custom, and its subsequent determining encounter with the royal entry. While he has little to say about the processions of Elizabeth 1, he

⁹Wickham outlines a continuum from the Roman triumphal processions to Renaissance processions, providing interesting insights into how embedded these public events were in the relationship between sovereign/ruler and subject; see for example 1: 51-63. I shall be examining this continuity in chapter one. A particularly interesting aspect of Wickham's research is his study of the traditions of pageant emblems (2: 206-236).

does illuminate the evolution of public pageantry that came to characterise

Elizabeth's reign. He writes:

During the centuries from Edward 1 to Elizabeth this kind of entertainment was developing in London under the stimulus of the 'royal entry.' Without the hampering tradition of folk-custom, and with the conscious planning of poets and engineers, pageantry developed rapidly, drawing from folk, from history, from romance, the Bible, saint's legend and the tournament....In 1432 Lydgate gave it allegory, and soon--as a result of history and allegory--we find personification. Symbolism is almost inseparable from it; and with the necessity of explaining symbolism, speech appeared.¹⁰

This is the stage it had reached by the time of Elizabeth's pre-coronation

"Recognition March" of 14th January, 1558, in which she became a central participant in the dramatic devices performed in her honour.

While Withington has much to say about the development of the royal entry, he does not consider, to any useful extent, royal progresses. This is true also of the next major work on public pageantry to appear, Sydney Anglo's Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy. The fact that this was published in 1969, over fifty years after Withington's study, further underlines the relative invisibility of pageantry as a literary genre and, as indicated in Anglo's title, as a politically vibrant cultural practice. Anglo's attention is given to the productions of pageantry that occurred in the reigns of Elizabeth's ancestors, with a final chapter that, to a great extent, merely chronicles her pre-coronation

¹⁰Withington 1: 84.

procession as it appears in Nichols' earlier work. Anglo does however choose the term "spectacle" in his description of royal entries, pre-empting Michel Foucault, whose formulation of the notion of the early modern period as a predominantly "spectacular" one has become so important in recent literary critical practice. Foucault was later to conclude that royal processions were occasions very much determined by the desire to demonstrate a spectacular display of sovereign power.¹¹

We enter what could be called the modern-era of public-pageant criticism with the appearance of David Bergeron's seminal English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642. Published in 1971, it is a work focused exclusively upon the royal entries and progresses of Elizabeth and James 1, as well as the Lord Mayor's Shows which took place within those dates. Bergeron defines his area of interest as "civic pageantry," which he says, "refers to entertainments that, like the public theatre of Shakespeare's time, were generally accessible to the public, as contrasted with the private theatres or the court masques."¹² This is reminiscent of the limits of John Nichols' founding text, a source which Bergeron frequently uses. His re-definition (or rather re-recognition) of these limits comes 150 years after Nichols' initial definition and, although his study is now a quarter of a century old, it remains the latest word on English civic pageantry. Jean Wilson's Entertainments For Elizabeth 1, which focuses

¹¹See particularly the first two chapters of Discipline And Punish, in which Foucault outlines the subject/sovereign relationship that he believes characterised early modern "spectacular" societies.

¹²Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 2.

mainly on a number of specific progress entertainments, and the various studies by Roy Strong, have added little to our knowledge of Elizabethan public pageantry.¹³ In fact, the only new or fresh evaluation of this processional practice has come from mainstream Renaissance literary studies and, more specifically, from the critical practice so popular in American departments of Literature, the New Historicism.¹⁴

Although the availability of analysis is therefore limited, there is a conventional perception of both the ideological thrust of processions, and their success in achieving their ideological aims. John Nichols regards them as part of Elizabeth's "plan of popularity,"¹⁵ while Christopher Haigh recognises them as "major public relations exercises."¹⁶ The fulfilment of the official purpose of these exercises is never doubted, Neville Williams, for example, regarding the processions as effective means of winning "the average subject's bonds of affection,"¹⁷ and Zillah Dovey declaring that they represented one of Elizabeth's "successful policies."¹⁸ Their perceived normative effect is clear and unproblematic for these critics, the processions, according to Bergeron,

¹³Jean Wilson, Entertainments For Elizabeth I; Roy Strong, The Cult Of Elizabeth and Splendour At Court. Each of these studies provides a conventional view of processions, and consequently adds little to Bergeron. Strong's Splendour At Court is however useful with regard to his examination of a perceived tradition of public processions.

¹⁴This treatment has however been brief: see Goldberg 32-33; Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets," 44, and Renaissance Self-Fashioning 166-7; Tennenhouse, Power On Display 102; Louis Montrose, "'Eliza, Queene of shepheardes,' and the Pastoral of Power," English Literary Renaissance 10.2. (Spring, 1980): 153-82.

¹⁵Nichols, Elizabeth I: xi.

¹⁶Haigh, Elizabeth I 147.

¹⁷Neville Williams, The Courts Of Europe: Politics, Patronage And Royalty 1400-1800, ed. A. G Dickens (London: Thames And Hudson, 1977) 147-167: 164.

¹⁸Zillah Dovey, An Elizabethan Progress: The Queen's Journey Into East Anglia, 1578 (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1996) 1.

“winning additional loyalty and support,”¹⁹ for Elizabeth. Traditionally, these same ideological effects are also attributed to Shakespearean historical drama.

While there are a number of direct examples of processions and pageantry in the history plays, most notably in Henry VIII, Shakespeare himself was one of the few major dramatists of the early modern period who did not write for the official state or civic pageant celebrations. During the reign of James I in particular, dramatists such as Thomas Middleton, John Webster and Thomas Dekker all produced such pageant texts, mostly, though not exclusively, for the annual Lord Mayor’s Show.²⁰ Ever since the foundation of the public theatres in Elizabethan London, the close connection between processional/pageant drama and the regular theatre has been recognised by most historical and literary critics, the majority of whom have particularly emphasised the affinity between the pageant form and Shakespeare’s history plays. Glynne Wickham, for example, believes that pageant discourse directly influenced the regular theatre, the former actually leading to “Shakespeare’s History plays with their thinly veiled sermons on government.”²¹ Indeed, he goes on to say that the pageant devices performed at Elizabeth’s pre-coronation procession provided

¹⁹Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 9.

²⁰See for example: Thomas Dekker, Troia-Nova Triumphans, The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker, ed. Fredson Bowers, 4 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961) 4: 97-113, and London’s Tempe 3: 225-249; Thomas Middleton, The Triumphs Of Truth (London: N. Okes, 1613) and The Triumphs Of Love And Antiquity (London: N. Okes, 1619); Thomas Heywood, Londons Ius Honorarium, The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood, 6 Vols. (London: John Pearson, 1874) 4: 269-281, and Londons Harbour of Health and Happiness 4: 285-300.

²¹Wickham 1: 63. The link which Wickham makes could not in fact be more direct, as he believes that part of Cranmer’s famous closing speech in Henry VIII (V. v. 48)--as well as Macbeth (IV. I. 86)--were in fact “borrowed” from Ben Jonson’s Genius Urbis, a pageant device written for the entry of James I into London in 1603. See 1: 74-75.

Shakespeare with “the governing theme of [his] subsequent history plays,”²² an opinion shared by David Bergeron who writes, in connection with the same procession:

Elizabeth is viewed as an important part of a ruling house which brought unity and peace to England, part of the ‘Tudor myth’ of history, a story and theme explored even more fully on the public stage decades later in Shakespeare’s history plays. Shakespeare could build on what had been stated in the pageant theatre in brief, emblematic terms.²³

This relationship has been regarded by many as more than a thematic one.

Alice Venezky, for example, in her Pageantry on the Shakespeare Stage, claims that the pageant device is a pervasive motif in most Elizabethan and Jacobean historical drama, not least because many of the dramatists worked in both theatrical forms.²⁴ Minoru Fujita, building on Venezky’s thesis, makes even further claims for the connection, his contention being that pageantry itself actually guided Shakespearean historical drama and, importantly, functioned in the plays in a comparable way to its functioning outside of the theatre, in a way that could be described as normative. His reading of Henry’s rejection of Falstaff in 2Henry IV is a case in point:

Falstaff’s evil doings have now become too manifest and must have made the audience far less sympathetic. When he is rejected, the congratulatory feeling largely due to the

²²Wickham 1: 72.

²³Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 17.

²⁴Alice S. Venezky, Pageantry On The Shakespearean Stage (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1951). The pervasive motif of which Venezky speaks is the conventional one in terms of the history plays: “Since all of these ideas [proper kingship, order, peace] which are treated later in the drama were first expressed in a similar medium in the street shows, it is safe to assume that the drama looked to the pageant for figures, symbols and devices with which to state these common themes” (110).

pageant-like spectacle of the splendid royal procession unfolds itself more openly in the purging of this now undesirable foul figure.²⁵

This idea of the normative effect of pageantry within the plays is as problematic as its similarly determined effects in the streets, and Fujita's thesis regarding this point is particularly questionable. This is clear when he says that the "foulness" of the clothes worn by Falstaff and the other common characters "must have been interpreted by the Shakespearean audience as a sign of their moral foulness or degradation, [and] which ... may be set as opposite to the moral integrity the new king has achieved."²⁶ Fujita stresses this by referring to the dramatic juxtaposition of Henry and the immediate appearance of the degraded Falstaff, believing the latter to articulate "a shocking contrast with the solemn, sumptuous beauty that King Henry and the royal procession as a whole has presented to the eyes of the audience."²⁷ In this thesis I seek to question such perceptions of the successful valorisation of nobility at the expense of common characters in Shakespeare's plays, as well as the perceived normative effect of processions, both on the stage and in the streets. Fujita's theorisation of a process of subjection through costume is a pertinent example of this perception, and is misfounded for two main reasons. Firstly, it is a fact that the majority of the audience of the play would have been dressed similarly to Falstaff and the other common characters, and would therefore probably not associate such clothing with "moral foulness or

²⁵Minoru Fujita, *Pageantry And Spectacle In Shakespeare* (Tokyo: Renaissance Institute, 1982) 93.

²⁶Fujita 92.

²⁷Fujita 88.

degradation.” Secondly, it should be remembered that the character of Falstaff was undoubtedly one of the most popular that Shakespeare created, and that he was particularly popular with the Elizabethan audience. Thus when Fujita talks about “the Shakespearean audience,” it is clear that he is in fact only referring to a section who were educated or financially secure, and who were therefore likely to identify with the nobility in the play.²⁸

This perception of the normative thrust of pageantry in Shakespearean drama is apparent in the collection of essays Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theatre.²⁹ Many of these essays focus upon different forms of pageantry and processions, from funerals to court masques, progresses to royal entries, and produce an overriding theory that Shakespeare, in order to give life to his perceived necessity for the presence of pageantry in his historical plays, represented it verbally, as splendour through spectacular language. Thus the plays--particularly those of the second tetralogy--are seen to be, to a large extent, defined by their need to verbally represent pageantry (due to the Elizabethan theatres’ material restrictions) and that, much like Fujita’s argument, this pageantry functioned in a way that sought to enhance royal power. The primary function of the plays is perceived as being one which instructs the audience (Fujita would say that the same work is done through spectacular costume). Thus there is felt to be a need to represent the normative

²⁸Fujita’s thesis is no doubt one attempt at trying to read the pageant signs in the Shakespearean theatre: “People saw a crown or other regalia on the Elizabethan pageant stage or on the regular stage ... [and] could readily apprehend an invisible idea of royalty” (10).

²⁹David M. Bergeron, ed., Pageantry In The Shakespearean Theatre (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1989).

aspects of pageantry; disorder/doubt defeated and destroyed by the emergence of the legitimate monarch, who subsequently restores (divine) order. In these readings, this task is achieved on stage verbally, due to the impossibility of staging actual spectacular events.

A dialectical and developmental relationship between civic pageantry and the public theatre in the early modern era is not a difficult concept to grasp and affirm, as David Bergeron confirms, writing that what “is alive and viable in the streets may have similar vitality in the Globe.”³⁰ However, the further perception of the passage of a normative significance from the pageant theatre, with its performances of simple historical and political moralities, to the regular drama (and to Shakespeare’s history plays in particular), denotes a definite blurring of the ideological boundaries of two interdependent but discrete dramatic forms. This blurring however represents conventional knowledge, and constitutes a process which it is a central aim of this thesis to examine and question. Such a reality is perhaps best demonstrated in Marion Wynne-Davies’s The Renaissance: From 1500-1660, part of the series of Bloomsbury’s Guides to English Literature, and thus effectively a text-book. The final part of Davies’s study provides an alphabetically ordered reference section in which, under the term “Pageant” the following--which I quote at length--is entered:

the traditions of the pageant are twofold: in one sense it is purely spectacle, but in another it may be a spectacle combined with the narrative of a

³⁰Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 162.

conflict, which is dramatic only because the conflict is seen as symbolic of human experience. This second sense of the pageant tradition is important for understanding Elizabethan history plays, especially those of Shakespeare. Thus, in Henry IV, Part 1 the modern audience is inclined to see the drama as a conflict for the identity of Prince Hal, who on the one hand is faced with the temptations of self-indulgence through Falstaff, and on the other with the task of winning 'honour' from Hotspur. Yet the audience is misled by this approach, since in I. ii. Prince Hal declares that he is in no danger of yielding to Falstaff, and his acquisition of honour is also foreknown through the historical fact of the battle of Agincourt; Hal is thus not the hero of an inner moral and an outer physical conflict, at least in the sense that there is the smallest uncertainty in the audience's mind about the outcome. On the other hand, Falstaff and Hotspur--the self-indulgent favourite and the self-centred politician--are dangers to which any nation is everlastingly exposed. Thus the dramatic interest of the play is not Hal but the nation, and the play is essentially the re-enactment of a conflict to which the nation is perpetually exposed--a dramatic pageant in the mystery and morality tradition.³¹

Davies makes a number of points in this extract, the most important for this thesis concerning the evident affinity--indeed equivalence--that is perceived to exist between pageant devices and Shakespeare's history plays. Davies indulges in a slippage whereby a definition of pageantry becomes an explanation of a discrete dramatic text. This is perhaps the clearest example (indulged in by all of the critics discussed above) of a blurring of genres/cultural events, and with worrying consequences. For if it is true that

³¹Marion Wynne-Davies, ed., The Renaissance: From 1500 to 1660 (London: Bloomsbury, 1992) 216.

the official strategy of royal entries and progresses was one of subjection through display, irrespective of whether this was successful or not, the implication seems to be that the strategy of Shakespearean historical drama was, more or less, the same.

This project of equivalence has been detected by Michael Bristol, who writes in this respect:

It has frequently been implied or suggested, that individual plays, and in the case of Shakespeare's 'tetralogies' whole cycles of plays, are organised in accordance with strategies similar to those of official pageantry. They consist of extended political anti-masques eventually routed by the appearance of a legitimate king.³²

Bristol is of course delineating the Tillyardian conceit of "order from disorder" that until very recently characterised so much criticism of the history plays, whereby all disorder appears only to be overcome by the norm of order itself, represented by the monarch as absolute and natural authority. As Catherine Belsey writes, referring to Tillyard's critical practice:

Behind the recurring rebellions which constitute the plots, in Shakespeare's mind, is the great Elizabethan ideal, which the dramatist must have shared with his contemporaries, degree cosmically endorsed by the Author of the great chain of being.³³

³²Michael D. Bristol, Carnival And Theatre: Plebeian Culture And The Structure Of Authority In Renaissance England (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1985) 198.

³³Catherine Belsey, "Making Histories Then and Now: Shakespeare from Richard II to Henry V," The Uses Of History: Marxism, Postmodernism And The Renaissance, eds. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margot Iveson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991) 24-46: 31.

Thus, not only each king represented, but Shakespeare himself routs disorder and, as in the pageants/processions, brings peace where there was war, harmony where there was strife. This perception demonstrates that a certain normative “energy” can be seen to “circulate” between these cultural practices and function in equivalent ways. Such is the foundational perception for the most influential modern critical approach to Shakespeare, a critical approach that has also brought renewed interest to early modern processions, the American New Historicism.³⁴

The New Historicists have tended to reproduce the Tillyardian notion of a monolithic cultural apparatus existent in early modern England, have regarded pageant devices and the drama as equivalent (coercive) practices, and have emphasised Shakespeare’s role as “the presiding genius of a popular, urban art form with the capacity to foster psychic mobility in the service of Elizabethan power.”³⁵ Although New Historicist critics such as Stephen Greenblatt, Leonard Tennenhouse, and Jonathan Goldberg are indebted to many social and

³⁴This notion of cultural energy circulating is a direct reference to Stephen Greenblatt’s essay “The Circulation Of Social Energy,” in his Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation Of Social Energy In Renaissance England (Oxford: Clarendon Paperbacks, 1988) 1-20. In this essay Greenblatt delineates his belief that all cultural artefacts of a given period are related, and from their juxtaposition certain compelling cultural laws can be ascertained. This is reminiscent of E. M. W. Tillyard’s construction of an “Elizabethan World Picture” in his book The Elizabethan World Picture (1943; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), with its notion of cultural adherence to certain governing, unifying universal laws in this period. Greenblatt’s determination of one such law--that subversion in the early modern theatre was produced by the State in order to strengthen itself--clearly resembles Tillyard’s perception of the great Elizabethan ideal of (conventional/monarchical/hierarchical) order. For further thoughts on the normative function of Renaissance/Shakespearean theatre, see Greenblatt’s Renaissance Self-Fashioning, Leonard Tennenhouse’s Power On Display, and Stephen Orgel’s The Illusion Of Power.

³⁵Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning 253.

cultural theorists and philosophers in their work, notably Clifford Geertz and, more problematically Louis Althusser and Jacques Derrida, it is the work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault which can be regarded as the primary source in the construction of their theoretical architecture. More specifically, it is in his conception of early modern societies as being “spectacular” in terms of the power relations between sovereign and subject, and of power continually exalting itself in such societies through the use of various techniques of visual display, that the New Historicists have found particularly enabling in their critical practice.³⁶ This concept of a normative aura surrounding forms of such visual display, coupled with the Geertzian concept of the “textuality of reality,” invited these literary critics to insert any form of public event into this category of display, the early modern theatre being a natural choice. Foucault himself regarded this theatre as a much more complex site of power relations, one which did not demonstrate the same spectacular characteristics as such practices as public executions. However, his conceptualisation of power in The History Of Sexuality, together with the Geertzian model of semiotics, beckoned such a theoretical move.³⁷

³⁶Foucault’s broadly functionalist definition of the nature of power in The History Of Sexuality: An Introduction (1976; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), can be regarded as particularly important in this latter respect: “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (p93). Greenblatt himself has rarely acknowledged his debt to Foucault other than in conversational asides: “the presence of Michel Foucault on the Berkeley campus for extended visits during the last five or six years of his life ... has helped to shape my own literary critical practice” (“Towards A Poetics Of Culture,” The New Historicism, ed. H. Aram Veenser (London: Routledge, 1989) 1-14: 1).

³⁷Foucault’s “soft” conceptualisation of power is that which appears in The History Of Sexuality, and contrasts importantly with his more theoretically rigorous conceptualisation in Discipline And Punish. Compare, for example, the quote from Foucault in the above with what he says in Discipline And Punish: “power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the ‘privilege’, acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions--an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of

Whilst Foucault regarded the theatre as a cultural practice that produced significantly different effects than those he termed spectacular, one public event that he did regard as possessing a similar spectacular nature to that of the public execution was the royal entry, particularly one which coincided with a unique celebration. In Discipline And Punish: The Birth Of The Prison, he writes: that the “public execution ... is a ceremonial by which a momentarily injured sovereignty is reconstituted,” and that it “belongs to a whole series of great rituals in which power is eclipsed and restored (coronation, entry of the king into a conquered city, the submission of rebellious subjects).”³⁸ As such, he continues, “it deploys before all eyes an invincible force,” as its “aim is ... to bring into play ... the dissymmetry between the subject ... and the all powerful sovereign....”³⁹ Determining the equivalence of a coronation and public execution outlines the type of society Foucault regards the early modern

those who are dominated” (26-27). While I will cover this subject in some detail in a later chapter, it is worth saying now that this formulation, in contrast to that in The History Of Sexuality, does allow for agency, as well as effective opposition. A clear and detailed exposition of the work of Clifford Geertz, an American cultural anthropologist, will be undertaken in chapter four. For now, it is worth stating that Geertz has, to a great extent, been responsible for the constitution of New Historicist methodology and theoretical paradigms. It is a particular essay by Geertz, “Thick Description: Towards An Interpretive Theory Of Culture,” The Interpretation Of Cultures (1973; London: Fontana, 1993) 3-30, that has been so influential. This essay has allowed for a New Historicist Geertzian critical output which substitutes textuality for reality and contingency for any notion of truth. For a more detailed and more compelling study of the relationship between Geertz and Greenblatt, see Francis Barker’s seminal “A Wilderness Of Tigers: Titus Andronicus, Anthropology and the Occlusion of Violence,” The Culture Of Violence 143-206. Various essays in the collection The New Historicism examine Greenblatt’s indebtedness to both Geertz and Foucault: see for example, “The Limits Of Local Knowledge,” by Vincent P Pecora 243-276, and Frank Lentricchia’s “Foucault’s Legacy--A New Historicism,” 231-242. For a consideration of the ideological implications of Geertz’s methodologies, see Edward Said’s essay “Representing the Colonised: Anthropology’s Interlocutors,” Critical Inquiry 15 (Winter 1989): 205-225.

³⁸Foucault, Discipline And Punish 48.

³⁹Foucault, Discipline And Punish 48-49.

one to have been, a society in which the absolute power of the sovereign was constituted through spectacular display, through the demonstration of the arbitrary nature of its force/violence, through its thorough “dissymmetry.”⁴⁰ The coronation procession functioned therefore in a way that underlined and reconstituted a power that “sought a renewal of its effect in the spectacle of its individual manifestations....”⁴¹ In such a scenario then, public executions and royal entries shared a function that could be said to be propagandist and, in early modern society the social hierarchy itself was constituted and preserved by the effectiveness of this propaganda. For the New Historicist critics, the early modern theatre must be added to Foucault’s list of propagandist public displays, headed by the history plays of Shakespeare.⁴²

According to Stephen Greenblatt, widely recognised as the founder of the New Historicism, Renaissance drama and indeed “all of literature ... takes its rightful place as part of a vast, interlocking system of repetitions, embracing homilies and hangings, royal progresses and rote learning.”⁴³ This immersion in the Weberian cultural analysis of Clifford Geertz in which all social practices become texts which have identical effects, was a significantly new theoretical development in the study of Renaissance drama when it first

⁴⁰Foucault, Discipline and Punish 57. The term “dissymmetry” can be regarded as a convenient rubric for Foucault’s “hard” conceptualisation of power (in this book) as a relationship rather than a negative force held by one side (the dominant) and not by the other (the oppressed). Here power is exercised rather than possessed, though there is no denial that one side has the ability to exercise more than the other.

⁴¹Foucault, Discipline and Punish 57.

⁴²See chapter seven below.

⁴³Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning 201.

appeared at the beginning of the 1980s. Such a conceptualisation of culture has enabled Greenblatt to ascertain that early modern theatrical practice was clearly propagandist, and that Shakespeare, particularly in his histories, was the chief exponent of this cultural form of propaganda.⁴⁴ Leonard Tennenhouse similarly holds that Shakespeare wrote to this end, and underlines the ethics of spectacle that moved dialectically between processions and Shakespeare's drama. In his study of Titus Andronicus he states that displaying "the monarch's body [in processions] was so essential to maintaining the power of the state that the aesthetics of such displays shaped the theatre which grew up during Elizabeth's reign."⁴⁵

Greenblatt's and Tennenhouse's association of royal entries and progresses with Shakespearean drama obviously echoes that previously recorded in the more technical examinations of the plays in search of specific examples of pageantry. They also adhere to that form of criticism's perception of the normative functioning of the plays. The histories are the target of particular attention in both schools, the one regarding them as a site of plenitude in terms of actual instances of (both visual and verbal) pageantry, the other believing that the pervasive motif of order is the basic principle upon which the plays themselves are founded. In Greenblatt's "Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority And Its Subversion, Henry IV and Henry V," and Tennenhouse's "Strategies Of State And Political Plays: A Midsummer Night's Dream, Henry

⁴⁴Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning 253.

⁴⁵Tennenhouse, Power On Display 106.

IV, Henry V, Henry VIII,”⁴⁶ this theatrical underwriting of state power in the history plays is foregrounded, disorder being regarded as present merely as the binary opposite of the dominant trope of order which necessarily, is always victorious, not least because of the compelling charisma and inviolable power of the monarch. These are plays, in this reading at least, that continually promote the Foucauldian notion of the dissymmetry between the sovereign and the subject, and demonstrate the impossibility of bridging this gap.⁴⁷

The tradition of public-pageant analysis is one that generally considers Renaissance processional practice as not only overtly propagandist and, in Foucauldian terms, spectacular, but also as having been successful in fulfilling its ideological aims. That is to say, that these processions have been analysed

⁴⁶Both essays appear in Political Shakespeare. This collection was the first that demonstrated the obvious differences between New Historicist and Cultural Materialist approaches to Shakespearean (and Renaissance) studies, articulated most clearly by the juxtaposition of essays from both schools. While there has been a tendency to equate the two approaches (perhaps in a large part due to all of the essays in the collection being included under the rubric “Cultural Materialism” by the editors), the two interpretative modes are fundamentally different, due mainly to the importance given to political commitment by one school (Cultural Materialism), and its lack in the other. This naturally informs the perception of the ideological status of the Elizabethan theatre and, more generally, of literature itself. While both modes of criticism have prioritised historical context, the (ideological) nature of this context historically perceived can, to a great extent, be regarded as their moment of divergence. An important examination of this divergence is Louis A. Montrose’s “Renaissance Literary Studies And The Subject Of History,” English Literary Renaissance 16: 1 (Winter 1986): 5-12. Also important is Richard Wilson’s introduction “Historicising New Historicism,” New Historicism And Renaissance Drama, eds. Richard Wilson and Richard Dutton (London: Routledge, 1992) 1-18, and Scott Wilson’s Cultural Materialism: Theory And Practice (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995). For the purposes of this current study, I regard New Historicism and Cultural Materialism as two separate schools of criticism.

⁴⁷This is most clearly demonstrated in Greenblatt’s final statement in his “Invisible Bullets,” essay on Henry IV and Henry V: “There is subversion, no end of subversion, only not for us” (Political Shakespeare 45). There is an unacknowledged debt here to Louis Althusser’s seminal essay “Ideology And Ideological State Apparatuses,” Essays On Ideology (1976; London: Verso, 1984) 1-60; albeit a debt that (again) employs a wholly “dark” reading of Althusser’s seemingly monolithic (and inescapable) constitution of ideology (later observable in the work of Foucault).

as functioning in an exemplary fashion, the populace being perceived as having submitted themselves to displays of hierarchy in which they form the lower level. In an Althusserian sense, these processions are interpreted as having successfully “hailed,” “subjected” and “interpellated” their common audience.⁴⁸ Simply put, this analysis has regarded these processions as having accomplished their ideologically normative task. The New Historicism agrees with such an analysis of Elizabethan processions, as (particularly) Greenblatt and Tennenhouse make clear. Furthermore, historicist criticism, whether of the new or old variety, regards Shakespearean drama as helping to preserve the social hierarchy, as demonstrating the same dissymmetry between the sovereign and subject that continually reconstituted the former’s power. Thus, the drama has a normative effect upon “the urban masses,”⁴⁹ an effect that encourages those masses “to accept the grotesque and cruelly unequal distribution of possessions,”⁵⁰ which characterised this contemporary social hierarchy, and that left them “absorbed by the instructive, delightful or terrible spectacles,” but aware too of “forbidden intervention.”⁵¹ In Althusserian terms, it left them subjected. Thus, as in the pageant analysis with which it is textually equivalent, Shakespearean drama is not only identified as propagandist and spectacular, it is regarded as having been successful in the fulfilling of its identical ideological trajectory.⁵²

⁴⁸Althusser 46-50. For Althusser all of these terms are interchangeable, and they define the ways in which individuals subject themselves to social processes that are not in their interests.

⁴⁹Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 253.

⁵⁰Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets” 40-41.

⁵¹Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets” 44.

⁵²Fredric Jameson is interesting in terms of how this notion of textuality is paradigmatically postmodern. He writes: “It is, of course, no accident that today, in full postmodernism, the

For all their talk of the relationship between subject and sovereign, and of the mutual love that circulated there, analysts of Elizabethan entries and progresses have examined these dramatic/political formations exclusively from a position of, or commensurate with, that of the culturally dominant. Those at whom these instances of propaganda were aimed are rarely included, or are merely regarded as Elizabeth's "most loving People."⁵³ This reality has arisen, to a great extent, because many of these scholars are immersed in a cult of Elizabeth 1, encouraging in them the conception of both panegyric and overt sycophancy as a social and cultural norm. The literary outpourings of a small group of poets and dramatists seeking patronage are, according to this reading, taken to represent the expression of a pervasive social reality, the reactions and behaviour of the whole contemporary population being collapsed into this condensed political truth.⁵⁴ In the same way, Greenblatt concentrates on the means of propaganda and its producers (whether conscious or unconscious) in

older language of the 'work'--the work of art, the masterwork--has everywhere been largely displaced by the rather different language of the 'text,' of texts and textuality--a language from which the achievement of organic or monumental form is strategically excluded. Everything can now be a text in that sense (daily life, the body, political representations), while objects that were formerly 'works' can now be reread as immense ensembles or systems of texts of various kinds, superimposed on each other by way of the various intertextualities, successions of fragments, or, yet again, sheer process (henceforth called textual production or textualisation). The autonomous work of art thereby--along with the old autonomous subject or ego--seems to have vanished, to have been volatilised" (Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic Of Late Capitalism (London: Verso, 1991) 77).

⁵³They are constantly referred to as such in the pamphlet produced to coincide with the pre-coronation procession, written by Richard Mulcaster, entitled The Passage Of Our Most Drad Sovereigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth Through The Citie Of London To Westminster The Daye Before Her Coronation, Nichols, Elizabeth 1: 38-60.

⁵⁴Roy Strong is perhaps the analyst most immersed in this cult: see for example, his book The Cult of Elizabeth. Other examples include: Roy Strong & Julia T. Oman, Elizabeth R (London: Secker & Warburg, 1971); J. E. Neale, Queen Elizabeth 1 (1934; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971); Frances Yates, Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).

a partial reading of the plays (and other cultural artefacts) that also regards the reception of that propaganda as wholly unproblematic. Thus, a very narrow and selective use of texts, read partially, (re)produces a socially and culturally dominant trope.

It would seem to be true then, that both pageant analysts and many Shakespearean critics concern themselves with notions of sovereign power, the representatives of this sovereign power, and the means through which this power was successfully promoted and the social hierarchy preserved. What they do not consider however, at least not in any active sense, is that other side of the equation which is of great importance to this thesis, the recipients of the message, the audience. More specifically, they do not consider those subjects who, it was felt, needed to be targeted, and who needed to be constantly reminded of the dissymmetry in their relation to the sovereign.⁵⁵ Naturally

⁵⁵An enormous amount of work has been done on the constitution and nature of the common people in early modern England, particularly regarding London. However, it is imperative to note that most of this work has been done by historians, and not by literary or cultural critics. Furthermore, most of these studies have not been used, to any great extent, by literary critics. It is generally true to say that traditional Shakespearean criticism and the New Historicism use historical evidence to underline the success of Elizabeth 1 and her government in all areas of early modern life, and do not deal with the reality of the lives of the common people in a sustained manner. The following studies by historians are particularly relevant: V. Pearl, "Change And Stability In Seventeenth Century London," London Journal 5: 1 (Spring 1979): 3-34, and "Social Policy In Early Modern London," History And Imagination: Essays In Honour Of H. R. Trevor-Roper, eds. H. Lloyd-Jones, B. Worden and V. Pearl (London: Duckworth, 1981) 115-31; Steve Rappaport, Worlds Within Worlds: Structures Of Life In Sixteenth-Century London (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Paul Slack, Poverty And Policy In Tudor And Stuart England (Harlow: Longman, 1988); Paul Clark and Paul Slack, introduction, Crisis And Order In English Towns, 1500-1700: Essays In Urban History, eds. Clark and Slack (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972) 1-55; Paul Clark and Paul Slack, English Towns In Transition 1500-1700 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976); A. L. Beier, "Vagrants And The Social Order In Elizabethan England," Past And Present 64 (August 1974): 3-29, and Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem In London 1560-1640 (London: Methuen, 1985); A. L. Beier and R Finlay, eds., London, 1500-1700: The Making Of The Metropolis (Harlow: Longman, 1986); Ian W Archer, The Pursuit Of Stability: Social

these subjects would be the poorer section of society, the potentially disruptive section, the ordinary or common people who constituted a substantial section of the audiences of both royal processions and Shakespearean drama. A formulation of the nature of the presence of the common people is however, important in any compelling analysis of these public events. If royal entries and progresses (and the New Historicist version of Shakespearean drama) are taken seriously as being instances of state propaganda, these common subjects, in their targeted reality, become a much greater (collective) subject of this propaganda. There was a perceived need by authority for such normative practices, and a clear perception of who needed to be targeted. This moment of dissymmetrical signification was forever renewed as, it seems, these people were felt to be so potentially disruptive by those who held power that they needed to be continually subjected.⁵⁶ What becomes clear in this light is that the question which traditional analysis has always failed to formulate is why, if Elizabeth was held in such high esteem and order was an essential part of the Elizabethan world picture, the state needed to continually attempt to (re)interpellate the masses?⁵⁷ Furthermore, the question that needs to be raised and posed to this traditional analysis is, given their nature as an important and

Relations In Elizabethan London (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Martin Holmes, Elizabethan London (London: Cassell, 1969).

⁵⁶In The Culture Of Violence (201-202), Francis Barker shows that such discipline took the form of actual physical violence, as well as representations of power. That is, representations of power, whether cultural or social, were part of a greater system of domination. They were not the overriding part of that system, as is claimed by the New Historicism.

⁵⁷And indeed, as Barker points out, exterminate them: "Means were available not so much to impress them with theatrical celebrations as to kill them" (The Culture of Violence 202).

defining presence at these public events, why have the common people been construed as marginal and wholly passive in both the streets and the theatre?⁵⁸

* * *

In the middle years of Elizabeth's reign, William Harrison, canon of Windsor, described the social structure of the country as it appeared to him, in his Description of England. He divided people into four classes; "gentlemen, citizens or burgesses, yeomen, and artificers or labourers."⁵⁹ Of this fourth category, who I shall call the ordinary or common people, he says that the "fourth and last sort of people in England are the day labourers, poor husbandmen, and some retailers (which have no free land), copyholders, and all artificers, as tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, brickmakers, masons, etc."⁶⁰ In their commentary on the collection of documents in which Harrison's account appears, Joel Hurstfield and Alan Smith have written, concerning this class:

The fourth category of the population included the great bulk of the Queen's subjects, from respectable tradesmen and husbandmen to paupers. During good times the more prosperous members of this underprivileged mass of the people lived reasonably well, but even they seldom had any reserves to fall back on in times of trouble, and the great and growing number of paupers had no possessions at all.⁶¹

⁵⁸The common audience is given very little presence in both traditional and New Historicist procession analysis.

⁵⁹William Harrison, A Description of England, reproduced (in part) in Elizabethan People: State And Society, eds. J. Hurstfield & A. G. R. Smith (London: Edward Arnold, 1972) 18.

⁶⁰Harrison 18.

⁶¹Hurstfield and Smith, introduction, Elizabethan People, 2-8: 2.

It is interesting that Harrison himself does not actually recognise the existence of paupers, and neither does he acknowledge the great numbers of vagrants, beggars, and discharged soldiers and sailors who were of great concern to the authorities. While Hurstfield and Smith do give some idea of the precariousness of ordinary people's lives in Elizabethan England, their definition also does not go far enough. Peter Burke's categorisation of "ordinary Londoners" is perhaps more useful in this context:

This large group of Londoners was of course neither socially nor culturally homogenous. It included not only shopkeepers and craftsmen (themselves divided into masters, journeymen and apprentices), but also servants, sailors, unskilled labourers, beggars and thieves; old and young, men and women, literate and illiterate.⁶²

This group comprises then the least wealthy of Elizabethan London, variously referred to at the time as "the vulgar", "the multitude", or "the mob".⁶³ For this study, this group--in all its heterogeneity--is defined as the common people, and constitutes that class or grouping of people at whom Elizabethan propaganda was aimed. This class, Harrison's identified fourth plus an unidentified fifth, were the targeted of these spectacular practices.

The basic question that arises from this movement towards the perception of the targeted subject (and which promotes the formulation of a connecting series of questions) is this: did these attempts at regulation through spectacular

⁶²Peter Burke, "Popular Culture in Seventeenth Century London," London Journal 3. 2. (November 1977): 143-162: 143.

⁶³Burke 143.

display actually work? That is to say, given Foucault's belief, which has become conventional knowledge, that royal processions such as coronations and progresses functioned in the service of reconstituting sovereign power, were they successful in their aim? Were the targeted subjects, the common people, subjected? Or can the uses to which Foucault's formulations have been put be regarded as false in their very premise? Are these uses, like traditional pageant analysis, merely partial views, ones that do not take into account the fact that the common people were unruly and dangerous, and continued to be so despite these spectacular efforts? Did the common people remain, in fact, unimpressed? And given the New Historicism's immersion in Foucauldian notions of power relations, the same series of questions can be asked of it, regarding both the belief in the effectiveness of royal entries and progresses, and the construction of the Shakespearean drama as a "primary expression of Renaissance power..."⁶⁴ For with the knowledge that the British monarch was executed in 1649, it is questionable that Renaissance drama, and in particular Shakespeare's history plays, can be said to have successfully produced effective "strategies for idealising power,"⁶⁵ which enabled it to continually reconstitute itself.

The New Historicist conception of Shakespeare's history plays underwriting state/royal power bears a marked resemblance to the Tillyardian thesis of them

⁶⁴Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets" 45.

⁶⁵Tennenhouse, "Strategies Of State" 125.

underwriting a shared and unproblematic notion of order.⁶⁶ Much as in the pageant analysis, the plays are regarded as didactic, as bearing a message that is wholly normative. This message is likewise prioritised, the audience being cast in the role of passive, unthinking consumers. In these analyses, this audience is mundane, is one-dimensional, is peripheral. This section of the population--the common people--which formed a large section of Shakespeare's audiences, is seen to be unproblematically instructed/interpellated. Most of all they are, in all senses, marginal. This marginality characterises their presence, defines their material reality, and has continued to do so, in a historical process that can be said to constitute, in Benjaminian terms, a "triumphal procession."

The marginal presence noted above has, to a great extent, been the most important focus of twentieth century theory, not least because of the discovery of the human body as the proposed site of transcendental meaning.⁶⁷ More specifically, it is rooted in the further revelations of Freud, and his naming of the unconscious. For, that is precisely what this presence is: the entity by which the central defines itself, that Other which is not the centre's binary opposite but, like the unconscious to the conscious, is rather the very condition upon which that centre is based. This presence is an Otherness that defines a boundary which has been forced to form a threshold of transgression. It is the

⁶⁶E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays and The Elizabethan World Picture.

⁶⁷This discovery is meant in those terms outlined by Foucault in The History Of Sexuality, in which the human body itself becomes (in modernity) the site of scientific investigation.

boundary which marks a meeting of conscious/unconscious, Subject/Other, light/dark, order/chaos, centre/margin. It is, for this study, the boundary between an overdetermined and hidden history, as it marks the site where traditional analysis has always become suddenly silent or, alternatively, over-emphatic.

The naming of the unconscious naturally suggests the work of the French literary critic Pierre Macherey, particularly A Theory Of Literary Production.⁶⁸ For Macherey, and in opposition to both traditional literary criticism and modern approaches such as the New Historicism, the task of the critic is not to seek any apparent unity in a work of literature, as this is an illusory task. The task of the critic is rather the determination of a “conflict of meaning,” a conflict which “reveals the inscription of an otherness in the work, through which it maintains a relationship with that which it is not, that which happens at its margins.”⁶⁹ Despite what the author might want to say consciously, any text is full of contradictions, silences and absences that emanate from the unconscious of both author and the society in which s/he writes--only certain things are allowed to be said, and only in certain ways--and this reality denies the possibility of any work existing as a unified, unproblematic whole. Any work is suffused with latent meaning, and “the latent is not another meaning which ultimately and miraculously dispels the first (manifest) meaning,” for

⁶⁸Pierre Macherey, A Theory of Literary Production (1978; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1989).

⁶⁹Macherey 79.

“meaning is in the relation between the implicit and the explicit.”⁷⁰ Macherey clarifies the nature of this relationship: “the explicit requires the implicit: for in order to say anything, there are other things which must not be said.”⁷¹ While this naturally beckons the work of Freud, Macherey immerses his own study in the presence of ideology. Terry Eagleton, reading Macherey, is thus able to write the following:

The text is, as it were, ideologically forbidden to say certain things; in trying to tell the truth in his own way, for example, the author finds himself forced to reveal the limits of the ideology within which he writes. He is forced to reveal its gaps and silences, what it is unable to articulate.⁷²

For Macherey, the critic’s task is to reveal these absences, these silences, and then to proceed in making them speak in order to reveal an ideological conflict.⁷³

The desire to “show a sort of splitting within the work” where “this division is its unconscious,”⁷⁴ can be regarded as pre-empting much of the work of Jacques Derrida, who has not only demonstrated the illusory nature of first principles, but also the fact that the first principles which we delude ourselves into believing do exist, and upon which we have built our thought/knowledge systems, are founded as much upon what they are not as upon what we

⁷⁰Macherey 87.

⁷¹Macherey 85.

⁷²Terry Eagleton, Marxism And Literary Criticism (London: Methuen, 1976) 35.

⁷³Macherey himself writes: “To explain the work is to show that, contrary to appearances, it is not independent, but bears in its material substance the imprint of a determinate absence which is also the principle of its identity” (79-80).

⁷⁴Macherey 94.

consider them to consist of/in.⁷⁵ They are, according to him, always shot through with the traces of what they have excluded, and indeed define themselves by that excluded opposite. Thus any one thing's identity is determined as much by what it is not as what it is, and is also traced with past and future identities of that thing.⁷⁶ Thus, outside is as much not-inside as it is outside, and the term itself has shifting, multiple meaning(s) determined by both its historical and potential uses. And this fact naturally has (ideological) implications:

Perhaps what is outside is also somehow inside, what is alien is also intimate--so that man [with woman as Other] needs to police the absolute frontier between the two realms as vigilantly as he does just because it may always be transgressed, has always been transgressed already, and is much less absolute than it appears.⁷⁷

In the text itself therefore, we see a constant flickering of meaning, a surplus that resembles Macherey's absences, a differing and deferring that mirrors his notion of the effects of the unconscious. We can detect a constant movement across the frontier that marks the division, a continual return of the repressed. Thus, if a certain Shakespeare play is studied, or indeed a procession/pageant,

⁷⁵See particularly Derrida's deconstructionist work in Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), and Writing And Difference, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

⁷⁶This in turn naturally echoes the work of Simone de Beauvoir and her recognition of the female Other. For her, Man himself is such a first principle, defined as much by the exclusion of Woman as by what it consists of/in itself. Man is an (ideological) product of a (patriarchal) thought system that excludes its defined opposite, and is thus shot through with the presence of that opposite. For de Beauvoir this exclusion is a banishment, a repression of that which Man needs in order to maintain his identity, the process by which he can set himself up as a founding principle. See the seminal The Second Sex, trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (1953; Harmondsworth: Penguin Modern Classics, 1987).

⁷⁷Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983) 133.

no inherent unity would be found there unless one were willed into existence, and which would however remain founded upon a false premise. For, in the work would be discovered that division, that unconscious “which is history, the play of history beyond its edges, encroaching on those edges....”⁷⁸

The illusory nature of the task that traditional criticism has set itself (the identification of unity) and that the New Historicism has sought (the discovery of unified cultural laws) suggests too the work of Jacques Lacan. The practices of these schools of criticism can be seen to reflect Lacan’s perception of the ability to achieve unity on the imaginary level. These schools continue to search for a final, single meaning that is no longer achievable in a world where language, an endless process of difference, disallows any meaning to be fully present. The turbulence of the symbolic world denies the possibility of monolithic meaning, and produces ambivalence. What we are attempting to signify is never completely true or genuine as, according to Lacan, the unconscious disallows the absolute knowledge of what our signifiers are actually signifying. In the symbolic world in which we exist, these signifiers can never represent truth fully, are always the subject of difference, and therefore contain those same traces of what they are not. Thus, it is never possible to say precisely what we mean.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Macherey 94.

⁷⁹See particularly Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977).

It is interesting that twentieth century theory has been so involved with such notions of de-centredness, and interesting too that much of it is expressed in terms of the spatial, in terms that suggest a topography.⁸⁰ This is clarified by Toril Moi in her study of the important theoretical works of the French critics Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, and is useful in this context. Moi formulates the existence of what is a theoretically demarcated landscape, a geography that prioritises centres and margins as representative and constitutive of a divided symbolic order. She writes:

If, as Cixous and Irigaray have shown, femininity is defined as lack, negativity, absence of meaning, irrationality, chaos, darkness--in short, as non-Being--Kristeva's emphasis on marginality allows us to view this repression of the feminine in terms of positionality rather than of essences.⁸¹

Such a theorisation is important for this current study, if we substitute the common people here for feminine/femininity as the lesser term. The dominant symbolic order defines the common people as this darkness and chaos, and positions them on the margins of order, construing "them as the limit or borderline of that order."⁸² They become the frontier between order and chaos, and "because of their very marginality they will also always seem to recede

⁸⁰“Thus we must go beyond the work and explain it, must say what it does not and could not say; just as the triangle remains silent over the sum of its angles” (Macherey 77; emphasis added).

⁸¹Toril Moi, Sexual Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory (London: Methuen, 1985) 166. Particularly relevant also are two extracts which appear in The Feminist Reader: Essays In Gender And The Politics Of Literary Criticism, eds. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (London: Macmillan, 1989): Helene Cixous, “Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways/Out/Forays” 101-116, and Julia Kristeva, “Women’s Time” 197-217. See also Luce Irigaray, The Sex Which Is Not One, trans. C. Porter (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985).

⁸²Moi 167.

into and merge with the chaos of the outside.”⁸³ When the common people are therefore seen as the limit of the symbolic order, they can be regarded as both inside and outside or as neither inside nor outside. This allows them to be either vilified as representing this darkness and chaos, or alternatively elevated as pure and innocent. Moi makes precisely this point when she says that in “the first instance the borderline is seen as part of the chaotic wilderness outside, and in the second it is seen as an inherent part of the inside: the part that protects and shields the symbolic order from the imaginary chaos.”⁸⁴

This is clearly demonstrable in terms of Elizabethan England where, depending upon circumstances, the common people were dismissed as “the rabble,” “the mob” or “the multitude,” or were venerated as the sovereign’s “most loving People.”⁸⁵ And if we allow for the fact that, as the mob or the rabble, the common people are “lack, negativity, absence of being, chaos and darkness,” then definition (in terms of who is allowed to define) is the important term. That is, the common people are defined as such by that group who deem themselves to be not these things--i.e. plenitude, positivity, being,

⁸³Moi 167. This substitution of the category common people for feminine/femininity is equivalent to Evelyn O’Callaghan’s substitution of the category black people in Moi’s formulation, demonstrating the presence of many groups positioned on the margins of the (dominant) symbolic order. See her Woman Version: Theoretical Approaches to West Indian Fiction by Women (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1993) 104-105 particularly. This substitution is possible precisely because Kristeva refuses to actually define femininity, considering it primarily as a position; one which is marginal to the dominant symbolic order. This being the case, it is possible to view the common people or black people in the same way, as being defined in terms of the relational, as a position; again, a marginal one in relation to the dominant.

⁸⁴Moi 167.

⁸⁵An important point being of course that they were not allowed/able to define themselves for/to themselves.

rationality, order and light. These are the dominant groups in society, whether they are those who constituted the material centre of Elizabethan processions, or those who have defined both these processions and Shakespearean drama as being examples of all these positive terms.

Under whatever name, the common people were clearly the frontier in terms of early modern culture, representing whatever they were made to represent. And they remain the frontier in traditional processional analysis, as well as in much Shakespearean criticism. This being the case, there is an urgent need to re-process these discourses, to read them against the grain, in a way that can be described as adhering to Foucault's notion of genealogy, being "an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, their carefully protected identities" (emphasis added).⁸⁶ And, all primary and secondary material concerning Elizabethan processions needs re-reading in the same way, to discover if "their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms."⁸⁷ There is little new evidence to be found that would reveal a dynamic opposed to conventional knowledge. What there is however, in those classic works on Elizabethan processions by John Nichols, Roy Strong, and E. K. Chambers, as well as in the primary source material--such as eye-witness accounts, the records which survive in official sources such as the various Calendar of State Papers and Acts of the Privy Council, and the pageant

⁸⁶Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," The Foucault Reader, ed. Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1987) 76-100: 78.

⁸⁷Foucault, "Nietzsche" 78.

literature produced for the processions--is a wealth of evidence that can be collated (for the first time), and used to present a different version of historical events. Similarly, Shakespeare's history plays can be read according to the same model, tracking evidences that are dispersed, scattered, isolated, existent in "documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times,"⁸⁸ searching for previously ignored realities.

As is evident from the preceding conceptualisation of the identified objects of analysis, a (Kristevan) methodological model of centres and margins is of importance in this study (the defined lesser term is nothing but a position), concerned as it is with what have been considered to be the effects of representations of forms of dominant discourses (central), upon a section of the population that was/is dominated (marginal). The unearthing of historically marginalised textual events is also of great importance. As such, the overriding methodological concept is one of topography, the focus being upon a materially, textually and ideologically divided landscape. The line which divides the two groups within this landscape is not always clearly definable, nor always static, demonstrating a reality of topographical instability. In chapter one the discussion of a particular painting will clarify this instability, and allow too the grafting of enabling theoretical and (additional) methodological parameters onto a material/textual object that has an important place in this defined topography. This discussion will focus upon

⁸⁸Foucault, "Nietzsche" 76.

the ways in which this artefact has traditionally been regarded as a monolithic cultural treasure, and how this status is founded upon the marginalisation of the presence of the common people evident in the painting. It will demonstrate to what extent concentration upon the central has distorted analysis. These same parameters will then be applied to a particular Elizabethan procession and a particular play (Shakespeare's Henry V) in rudimentary case studies that will, along with the painting, clarify both the methods and aims of the practice of re-processing. These three studies will also initiate the use and examination of certain terms that are of paramount importance in this thesis; the Foucauldian notions of dissymmetry and the spectacular, and the Althusserian formulation of interpellation/subjection.

Subsequently placed into this topographical area will be all of those textual materials mentioned above, materials which can be said to give a more complete analysis of the public events that were processions and history plays than could be achieved through the reading of the primary documents-- procession/pageant texts and the play-texts--alone. This topography will take the form of material and textual centres and margins, which will naturally produce ideological effects that can in turn be regarded as central and marginal. The material centre will read the event itself. After examining the nature of Elizabethan entries and progresses in general, it will attempt to render the material reality of Elizabeth 1's pre-coronation procession of 1558 by processing the human inventory that is likely to have comprised the

procession, the route it took, the materials used, and the individuals involved in its realisation. It will then attempt the same for her royal progress to Sir Henry Lee's Ditchley estate in 1592. The splendid and magnificent reality of these processions will be delineated, focusing upon the ideological aim of the state to demonstrate its inviolable centrality. The material margin on the other hand will seek evidence that could enable the construction of a tenable portrait of the common audience at a procession, bearing in mind that the spectacular effects of such a procession were aimed at them. Evidence of this sort is naturally scarce, as the reactions of the common people to such spectacles were very rarely processed in written form. However, it will be useful to analyse what is known about the nature and constitution of the common people at that time. Much evidence is available relating to the social and cultural conditions in which they lived, and it is possible to begin to picture the procession's audience through a reading of these records. Furthermore and importantly, this thesis will consider evidence that could be said to undermine the idea that the common people were successfully interpellated by these processions, evidence that suggests that they could have been, conversely, either indifferent or in opposition to them. This material margin and centre will form the substance of chapter two.

The textual centre will similarly read the official texts produced for the pre-coronation procession and the Ditchley progress, examining the language and symbolism used, and again reviewing them from a position of their official

ideological aims. The textual margin will look at these same texts and attempt to perceive the extent to which the process of subjectification is occurring, to see if it is “possible to trace the path which leads from the haunted work to that which haunts it.”⁸⁹ Allegory in these texts will be subjected to Walter Benjamin’s dictum regarding this literary mode: “Any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else.”⁹⁰ Thus the allegorical displays and performances that structured these processions will be read in terms of their official meaning, as well as in ways that could be said to be alternative or, indeed, oppositional. Primary evidence will also be introduced to articulate the ways in which allegory is in many instances “allegorised by reality.”⁹¹ The textual centre and margin will constitute the content of chapter three.

These examinations will of course suggest an ideological ambience regarding processions in general, and this will form chapter four. In this chapter the nature of contemporary negotiations of pageant and procession material will be investigated, considering to what extent their perceived normative effects are immersed in a pervasive modern cult of Elizabeth 1, and how this cult disfigures such analysis. This will involve a detailed look at the work of both traditional analysis and, particularly, at the more recent critical output of the

⁸⁹Macherey 94.

⁹⁰Walter Benjamin, The Origin Of German Tragic Drama, trans. John Osborne, intro. George Steiner (1977; London: Verso, 1990) 175.

⁹¹This statement appears in Julian Roberts, Walter Benjamin (London: Macmillan, 1982) 150. Roberts is paraphrasing Benjamin’s conclusions regarding the nature of allegory in The Origin of German Tragic Drama 232-3.

New Historicism. The philosophical and theoretical foundations of the New Historicism will be examined in order to determine precisely the ways in which it constructs early modern English society and the function of public processions in that society. Use of primary, theoretical and original material will demonstrate the ways in which the New Historicism has been captivated by the central/dominant. The same evidence will then be used in order to argue that the common people were not successfully subjected by these spectacular displays.

Shakespeare's history plays will then be immersed in the topographical model previously delineated, also defined in terms of the material and textual. Chapter five will attempt to delineate the material centre and margin by concentrating upon the constitution and nature of the common audience that was witness to Shakespeare's plays. Much work has previously been done on the constitution of this audience, and this thesis will demonstrate the ways in which, as in the processions, the social and cultural realities of this audience could have enabled them to have interpreted the plays in alternative ways to those that have generally been ascribed to them. Evidence of the ways in which the contemporary authorities were both aware of and fearful of these alternative possibilities will be important here.

Chapters six and seven will subject a number of Shakespeare's history plays to those textual and ideological parameters already established in my readings of

processions. That is to say, I will identify how the plays have been traditionally read, and subsequently determine the consequences of such traditional readings. I will then delineate my own perspectives, and establish the ideological consequences of my model of reading. Chapter six will concentrate upon twentieth century criticism and its readings of the history plays as parables of order, and will naturally regard Tillyard's Shakespeare's History Plays as the starting point of any modern conception of theory/criticism. In chapter seven, ideological centres and margins will be investigated through the examination of the work of the New Historicism. This will bring us up to date in the context of twentieth century readings, and will show how this school mirrors traditional criticism, seeking as it does parallel notions of unity and order. In all of these readings, disorder is merely a dramatic creation produced so that conventional order can reconstitute itself. My own readings of the plays in general will refuse this position, and look again both at the characters in the plays who are noble or royal, and at the representations of common people. I will look at the relations between the ruling elite and the ruled, and seek to perceive the nature of this relationship in the light of contemporary events. These readings concentrate upon the characters who have traditionally been regarded as central--English royalty and nobility--as well as those previously marginal figures; pressed soldiers, rebels and the poor. Evidence of the nature of the contemporary relationship between these two sections of the population will be used in order to demonstrate real difficulties and tensions.

Rather than attempting to review the entire genre of Shakespeare's histories--ten plays in all--I will examine four in detail. These will be the three parts of the Henry VI trilogy, as well as the final history play, Henry VIII. These have not been selected arbitrarily but for a number of relevant reasons. Firstly, the three parts of Henry VI represent Shakespeare's first dramatic productions, while Henry VIII stands as one of his last plays. My interest here is not to stylistically compare and contrast the work of an immature artist to that of a mature one, but rather to investigate if both plays--though very different--can be regarded as negotiating similar textual and ideological topographies. My contention is that, in traditional terms, both plays have been made to underwrite the perception of a monolithic and normative early modern idiom. I will subject these plays to different aspects of my own reading model in an attempt to question these traditional topographies. Secondly, very little work has been done on these four plays when compared to Shakespeare's other histories--with the exception of King John. So much work has appeared on the second tetralogy in particular that I feel it more worthwhile concentrating on those relatively neglected plays. Lastly, Henry VIII is particularly relevant to this current study in the sense that, although it was written during the reign of James 1 and is an examination of the rule of Henry, the play is infused with the presence of Elizabeth 1 and with the representation of pageants and processions. My own reading of the play will concentrate upon the way in which Anne Boleyn in particular is represented in the light of the fact that, for

a contemporary audience, the play is set in recent history. As well as an examination of the way in which she was perceived at the time of the play's performance, Shakespeare's dramatisation of her royal entry will also be investigated.

This thesis recognises a topographical shift in that, as the common people in processions become more central to those cultural practices than has been previously theorised (because of their targeted nature) so too do both the representations of the common people in the history plays and their common audience. The ways in which the noble figures are represented--as ambitious and cruel in Henry VI and as ambiguous and fickle in Henry VIII--compare less than favourably with the common figures. A further shift is recognised in the ways in which these two sections of the population have, in both literary and cultural forms, traditionally been interpreted. The nobility and aristocracy have been regarded as not only central, but as ethically and morally compelling. This thesis aims to question this fact, and questions the marginalisation of the common people--ethically and morally also--positing that such a marginalisation, with regard to both processions and Shakespearean drama, represents a material realisation of Walter Benjamin's theorisation of "triumphal processions."

CHAPTER ONE

THREE CASE STUDIES

In the following three examples it is my wish to demonstrate what happens to certain cultural treasures and critical readings of those treasures when they are subjected to the type of sceptical and topographical reading that I have outlined in the introduction. While clarifying my methodological and theoretical parameters, my intention is primarily to reveal the nature of the absences and silences that inform the triumphal processions which characterise the (historical) constitution and transmission of these cultural treasures. These treasures are represented here by a painting of Elizabeth 1 on procession, a contemporary report of her on progress, and an important scene from Shakespeare's Henry V. My desire is the disclosure of both the "haunted work," that which "haunts" it, and the agents of a process that, through the discovery of omnipresent unity, deny the presence of this haunting.¹

1. A Procession Picture

From my childhood, one picture has always summed up for me the Elizabethan age: the canvas attributed to Robert Peake called Queen Elizabeth going in Procession to Blackfriars in 1600.²

The picture that has played such a large part in the life of Sir Roy Strong (see Fig. 1) is an interesting artefact, not only because it depicts a procession that insinuates the material complexion of both royal entries and progresses, but

¹Macherey 94.

²Roy Strong, The Cult Of Elizabeth 17.

also because it seems to delineate for so many scholars of the Elizabethan period precisely the essences that allow the summing up of that age, that produces in a very real way its sensibilities.³ The picture as a text to be read can represent the material and textual realities of pageantry and Shakespearean drama, not because it produces identical effects to them, but because it produces similar ones through a related medium. It converses with those other cultural productions in the sense that it deals with related contemporary topics, and because it has, as will be shown in the investigation of its history, been made to converse with them. What the picture also represents and which is most important for this current study is what Walter Benjamin has theorised as an image of the past that “flashes up.”⁴ He writes:

The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognised and is never seen again....For every image of the past that is not recognised by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably....⁵

As such, to “articulate the past historically ... means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.”⁶ Such a materialist practice was integral to Benjamin’s desire to wrest history from a historicism that he believed constructed it as the “great story of the past,” and such a practice can

³This particular painting appears in the many studies of and about Elizabeth and, naturally, in many studies of pageants and progresses. See for example: Strong, The Cult Of Elizabeth; Roy Strong & Julia T Oman, Elizabeth R; Nichols, Elizabeth 1. Additionally, see the following: Alison Plowden, Elizabethan England: Life In An Age Of Adventure, Reader’s Digest Books (London: Reader’s Digest, 1993); Wallace MacCaffrey, Elizabeth 1 (London: Edward Arnold, 1993); Neville Williams, The Life and Times of Elizabeth 1, introd. Antonia Fraser (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972); Philippa Berry, Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

⁴Benjamin, “Theses,” Illuminations 247.

⁵Benjamin, “Theses,” Illuminations 247.

⁶Benjamin, “Theses,” Illuminations 247.

be used in order to re-read the painting now, treating it as a “concern of the present.”⁷ For the picture is the only existent painting of Elizabeth in procession, and must therefore be regarded as important evidence in any attempt at analysis of this public event. It is a condensed scenario, a microcosm of a material practice that mirrored the effects of the painting itself. Display is the painting’s central metaphor, one that it shared with that of pageantry. It is a moment flashing up, cutting through the centuries, claiming for itself a desired dignity, a dignity that has traditionally been granted it. Yet it displays itself self-consciously, aware of its secrets, uncomfortable that, even unseen, they are present. A sign of this uncertainty is the painting’s confused history, and the various attempts to uncover its origins. In order to reclaim the painting for the present, it is necessary to investigate these various attempts.

The picture is discussed at some length by John Nichols in his exhaustive study of Elizabethan pageants and progresses, where he attempts to ascertain its origin by considering everything that had been written about it up until his moment of writing in 1823. He eventually names the picture The Royal Procession of Queen Elizabeth to Visit Lord Hunsdon, though he seems far from happy with this decision. He writes:

It is much to be admired, that in this picture, so large and historical, there should be no date on it, nor arms, nor other insignia, unless the story was then so well known and remarkably public, that the Nobleman who caused it to be done, and to whose honour the ceremonial was performed,

⁷Benjamin, “Theses,” Illuminations 247.

might believe it would never be forgot in his family, or to posterity.⁸

This last is precisely what did happen, and is the source of Nichols' and all subsequent scholars' problems with regard to the picture's origins. Thus Nichols' conclusions regarding the picture are, as he freely admits, conjecture based upon previous research. In a move that attempts to enlighten his discussion but which conversely confuses it, Nichols reproduces a copy of an engraving that itself attempted to copy the original painting, the original being, according to him, the supposed work of Marc Gerrards.⁹ The engraving was done by George Vertue, the antiquarian, the copy of this engraving by one J. Bouvier, and this in turn was printed by P. Simonass.

Nichols' conjecture is in fact based upon the work of George Vertue, who wrote in 1740 that, in his opinion, the picture was indeed a representation of a procession at Hunsdon House, commissioned by Lord Hunsdon (the fourth Garter-Knight from the left), and painted by Marcus Gheeraerts (the Elder) in 1571. Vertue's investigations were nothing if not thorough, yet today all of his conclusions have been dismissed as incorrect. George Scharf, the first director of the National Portrait Gallery, published findings in the Archaeological Journal of 1866 stating that the picture is in fact a portrayal of the marriage of Lady Anne Russell to Henry Somerset, Lord Herbert, at Blackfriars on June 16th, 1600.¹⁰ These findings were based on research carried out by Vertue

⁸Nichols, Elizabeth 1: 283.

⁹Nichols, Elizabeth 1: 282.

¹⁰George Scharf, "Queen Elizabeth's Procession In A Litter To Celebrate The Marriage Of Anne Russell At Blackfriars, June 16th 1600," Archaeological Journal XXIII, (1866) 131-44.

himself, who unfortunately died before he could make these further conclusions public. These findings naturally pointed towards Edward Somerset (the central, foregrounded figure) as the person responsible for commissioning the painting. The problem with such a theory however, according to Roy Strong, who devotes a large section of his study of Elizabethan portraiture and pageantry to this picture,¹¹ is that Scharf, and indeed all subsequent commentators on the Procession picture, have wrongly identified the majority of the persons represented in it. Strong writes that the “Procession Picture is really one of the great visual mysteries of the Elizabethan age, and for nearly two hundred and forty years successive generations of scholars have tried to unravel its secret.”¹² He summarises in what ways these successive generations of scholars have erred in their attempts to unravel its secret, his intention being to pronounce his own verdict regarding the painting’s origin and depicted event.

Strong believes the defining error made by previous scholars to be a literal one, in that they all sought to find in the painting the depiction of a specific material event. All prior readings had tried to tie the painting to an actual historically verified procession, deeming it to be a celebratory snapshot of a real incident. Strong however states that the picture portrays neither Hunsdon nor Blackfriars, as they simply bear no resemblance to the landscape depicted. Thus the topography represented is not that which it had previously been held

¹¹Roy Strong, The Cult Of Elizabeth 17-55.

¹²Strong, The Cult Of Elizabeth 17.

to be. Likewise, the human topography. Strong insists that of the Garter-Knights pictured, only one, Lord Cumberland (third from left) was present at the wedding of 1600, and only Lord Hunsdon present at the 1571 procession. Furthermore, at both processions the Queen was carried in a litter, while in the picture Strong believes that she is being pushed along “on some sort of triumphal car with a chair of state upon it.”¹³ Such a car was used for the Victory Procession of 1588 to commemorate the defeat of the Spanish Armada. What Strong thus begins to make clear, is that all previous attempts to situate the painting have been wrong because they have been misconceived. For the painting is not the depiction of a specific material event, but rather an allegorical representation of the relationship and power of Queen Elizabeth and Edward Somerset, Fourth Earl Of Worcester.

Reading the picture in this way enables Strong to make certain compelling suggestions. He believes that the painting was indeed commissioned by the figure in the lower foreground, Edward Somerset, who became the Queen’s Master of the Horse in 1601, replacing the disgraced and executed Essex. Following a period of apprenticeship in the role while Essex languished in the Tower,¹⁴ Somerset was deemed to be a “man who clearly had an instinctive feeling for pageantry and ceremonial,”¹⁵ subsequently arranging many entries and pageants for James I and Henry, Prince of Wales. He was also the best tilter of his time. Strong uses this information as the instigation for an

¹³Strong, The Cult of Elizabeth 36.

¹⁴Essex was actually in the tower at the time of the wedding at which Somerset substituted as the Master of the Horse.

¹⁵Strong, The Cult of Elizabeth 40.

allegorical reading of the painting, stating that the top left of the picture depicts two buildings in landscapes at variance with one another. This impossible topography is of course not Blackfriars, and according to Strong, nor is it Hunsdon. In fact it is the juxtaposition of two discrete and distant country properties held by the Somerset family at the end of the reign of Elizabeth. The nearest is Chepstow Castle encircled by the River Wye, and the other is Raglan Castle; both in Monmouthshire. The top right of the picture is filled with another building which, Strong surmises, is in fact another property belonging to the Somerset family, the Worcester Lodge at Nonsuch Palace, Somerset being the Keeper of Nonsuch Great Park at the time. Each window of this house bears an occupant.

The impossibility of the topography, together with the prominence of the figure of Somerset and the presence of the combination of the Lords portrayed enables Strong to deduce that the picture is “something much more than an allusion to the celebrated marriage of 1600.”¹⁶ What the picture represents for Strong is an “historical device,” an allegorical celebration of “Worcester in his role as Queen’s favourite and master of ceremonies at the Elizabethan court.”¹⁷ In other words, it depicts the centrality of Edward Somerset in that institution of power, demonstrating his wholly pivotal position. And Strong would indeed seem to be correct in his deduction, not because of his detection, or his unravelling of the picture’s secrets, but more because the human topography

¹⁶Strong, The Cult of Elizabeth 46.

¹⁷Strong, The Cult of Elizabeth 46.

delineates a constellation of power that would be hard to miss (or mis-read).

The picture is clearly displaying its subject's power, his allure, his presence. It depicts his family, his property, his affluence, all in proximity to the highest authority, the absolute power, the sovereign.

While Somerset is therefore the subject of the painting, his subjectivity is all in relation to this highest authority, the Queen, who is the painting's greater subject. It is by his relation to the Queen that Somerset is defined, and displaying her allows him to display himself. Roy Strong agrees with this:

It is Worcester casting himself into his role as the successor of Essex escorting, not the reality of a seventy-year-old woman, but the idea--Eliza the sun, the moon, the pelican, the phoenix, the rainbow--fragile like a young girl in virgin white....¹⁸

It is apparent that Strong is correct in his perception that the picture portrays an idea of Elizabeth, or that it at least attempts to. Indeed for Strong the picture becomes a "visual statement on the Elizabethan state, on order, the order of the body politic which she animates."¹⁹ The picture thus begins to move outside of itself, and becomes an allegory of order, of discrete though interdependent loci of power, a pictorial display of power on display.²⁰ The Procession picture is in effect a part of the procession it is depicting, a part of the idea. It attempts to do what the material processions themselves attempted, namely demonstrate the presence of absolute power through total display. It is a display not merely of affluence, majesty, order, and hierarchy however. It is

¹⁸Strong, The Cult of Elizabeth 54.

¹⁹Strong, The Cult of Elizabeth 52.

²⁰After Leonard Tennenhouse's Power On Display.

also a display of distance and of possibility; of potential and arbitrary violence, of the dissymmetry Foucault believes is integral to such a ritual which “deploys before all eyes an invincible force,” and demonstrates “the unrestrained presence of the sovereign.”²¹ And, importantly, it is a display that is self-conscious, and that cannot quite bring itself to deny the presence of its necessity, the common people.

Roy Strong has done everything possible to identify those who appear in the Procession picture, and has also made great progress in determining the picture’s meaning. He enabled himself to do this by stating a thesis regarding this meaning and then posing himself elementary questions: “This is Gloriana in her sunset glory, the mistress of the set piece, of the calculated spectacular presentation of herself to her adoring subjects. But who are the other people and where are they going?”²² The body of his research is taken up in attempting to answer these questions comprehensively. However, his original thesis begs another question (indeed, a series of questions): Where are her adoring subjects? Where are the audience for this spectacular presentation? If this is, as Strong claims, Eliza Triumphans, where are all those sharing in this, acclaiming her, adoring her? Where are the common people who would line the route of such processions, even allegorical ones? Are they simply not present, deemed either unworthy or unnecessary? It is a question that George

²¹Foucault, Discipline and Punish 48-49.

²²Strong, The Cult of Elizabeth 17.

Vertue asked himself (in the belief that the procession depicted actually took place), and his answer was a very practical one:

The populace that was there to see this sight are prudently avoided, and not represented, that the most conspicuous part of it without crowd or incumbrance might be seen in the picture, as I presume this Nobleman had appointed and directed the painter.²³

However it would seem also to be a totally unsatisfactory answer, as he fails to account for a presence that is definitely there, even if it is not as clearly defined as the central figures. It is the presence of the common people which, when recognised, enables the formulation of a more sceptical reading of the Procession painting. In such a viewing the visual attention is not concentrated upon the two noble figures, but elsewhere; on the margins. It is worth re-examining the picture with a desire to account for this marginal presence.

If we allow our gaze to move away from and behind Elizabeth, her courtiers, and the main body of the procession, we meet a line of uniformed guards, many holding halberds, each wearing a ruff collar and dark tunic. These are the Queen's Gentlemen Pensioners, her personal bodyguards, of whom she had about fifty in 1600.²⁴ In the picture, these bodyguards form a solid line behind the Queen, though a number of them are standing slightly further back. There seem to be twelve who are forming a front line of defence, with twelve heads inserted between (discernible by their ruffs), filling out this initial line whilst

²³Nichols, *Elizabeth 1*: 289.

²⁴Strong writes: "J. Nevinson in his study of the costume of Gentlemen Pensioners ... print[s] the list of almost fifty Pensioners in service of Elizabeth at Michaelmas 1600" (*The Cult of Elizabeth* 37). Strong is referring to J. L. Nevinson, "Portraits of Gentlemen Pensioners before 1625," *Walpole Society* XXXIV (1958) 1-13.

at the same time constituting a further protective boundary. According to J. Nevinson, these twelve secondary heads “are portraits of the Pensioners who lined the route on the opposite side,”²⁵ sensibly transferred in order to allow the uncontaminated contemplation of the painting’s central figures. These individuals appear as stationary figures in the picture, though they would of course have walked along beside the Queen in an actual procession. And naturally, these individuals are armed. The numerous halberds that point into the air are not merely there for decoration, but signal what can be termed a limit of legitimisation, an area of topographical flux, where the material centre that is the procession begins to state its own limits, begins to immerse itself in its own centrality in opposition to something else, something that by necessity cannot be central. These weapons, held by the lower strata of the court (minor gentlemen), are the final essential elements or dissymmetrical signifiers of this magnificent spectacle, insisting as they do that the outer limits of magnificence are being reached.

According to Roy Strong, behind these Gentlemen Pensioners are the “ordinary citizens [who] press forward to gain a glimpse or, more comfortably, lean out of the windows of a house along the route.”²⁶ It would be easy, given the description “ordinary citizens” to think that these are in fact the “adoring

²⁵Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth* 37.

²⁶Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth* 17. Glynne Wickham writes about actual audience arrangements for pageant devices, but his observations are useful in this context in what could be termed a snapshot of a procession: “the people with ‘the best seats’ were those who occupied rooms in adjacent houses with windows over-looking the street....Positions of less vantage were the pavements and the roofs. The former, known as ‘standings’, were allotted to members of the Livery Companies. Those for whom no specific provision was made could scale the roofs ... or take back places on the pavements” (Wickham 1: 61).

subjects” he referred to earlier. However, Strong’s use of the term “citizen” is an unambiguous one, even when undermined by the use of the adjective “ordinary.” For a citizen in early modern England was not ordinary but was “next place to gentlemen ... free within the cities, and are of some likely substance to bear office in the same....”²⁷ These were the members of the Trade Guilds, organisations which formed the governments of cities, and who were responsible for the commercial life of these cities. They were respectable business people, merchants, and were furthermore responsible for the preparation and financing of the processional pageantry that occurred in royal entries. As the financiers of the procession, they can be regarded as very much part of it, of the display, of the power on show, constituting the inner limits of the boundary between centre and margin.

But, what of the common people? Strong is correct in identifying citizens in the Procession picture, and correct too in positioning them both behind the Gentlemen Pensioners, and in the windows (of what is probably Worcester Lodge). But what of the others, that perceptible eerie presence in the background? There, on the ground, mostly in shadows, there are many half-faces, even silhouettes; almost black faces. The furthest faces away, never full, sometimes almost indefinable. They have no red cheeks or hats or even, for that matter, complete materiality. They peek between heads, over ruffs, around halberds, staring with dark eyes. These, I suggest, are the common people.

²⁷Harrison 18.

Traditionally the picture has been regarded as unproblematically representing the radiating Queen, held high, surrounded by the splendour of her courtiers. It has been a congregation that has blinded with its brilliance. The gaze of the viewer has to be forcibly pulled away from the central attraction, away from the sheer spectacular nature of the reality depicted. It has been difficult however, as from Vertue to Strong, the Procession picture has been regarded as a dance of state:

Love created the universe and social order and he invented the dance. Dance cannot exist without music, and the idea of society as musically ordered, of political unity as musical harmony, of ritual and dance as physical expressions of such order are commonplaces of Renaissance thought.²⁸

Strong's thesis is founded on a conventional topography, a topography of unity, that beholds a central, dominant element and is awe-struck by it. His immersion in Elizabeth-cultism does not allow him to perceive that dark presence that lurks in the picture, threatening. Both he and the picture adore Elizabeth, adore the spectacle, but in those half-faces her Other invades the centre and states its presence. They become more central themselves, in a topographical inversion that is born from their being the target of what is materially central. These common people--the employed poor, the paupers, the ex-soldiers, the vagrants, the cutpurses, the whores--become another subject of the painting, become another focus, in their movement towards the centre.

²⁸Strong, The Cult of Elizabeth 53.

What Sir Roy Strong has unravelled therefore is a desire to transmit conventional knowledge, one which underwrites/constitutes a notion of power that is also conventional. His thesis as discourse joins with the picture and with Elizabethan royal entries and progresses as part of a triumphal procession that parades a dominant ideology. Strong effectively fixes meaning onto a cultural artefact that can then be passed down in a traditionalist manner. But, in the light of Benjamin's theories of triumphal processions and of images flashing up, the important point is not to name the picture, but to investigate this transmission.

This discussion of the Procession picture therefore demonstrates the effects and results of a re-reading of a cultural artefact that has been reproduced endlessly, in a process that is always seeking to glorify Elizabeth 1 and, by extension, the golden age she nostalgically represents. It articulates the triumphal procession detected by Benjamin, one in which such cultural treasures are carried along as "spoils."²⁹ This re-reading offers an alternative version of an historical process, but is perhaps not sufficient on its own. This reading which perceives a haunting common presence in the picture needs to be placed within a more general "hermeneutics of suspicion,"³⁰ in which the painting is subjected to various genealogical questionings. Not merely hard facts like, at the time the picture was painted, the Queen was seventy years of

²⁹Benjamin, "Theses," *Illuminations* 248.

³⁰"The 'hermeneutics of suspicion' ... assumes that the text is not, or not only, what it pretends to be, and therefore searches for underlying contradictions and conflicts as well as absences and silences in the text..." (Moi 75-76).

age, partly bald, fat, with blackened teeth, and a wig. But relevant peripheral facts, such as the village of Cuddington near Epsom in Surrey being demolished by Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, in order to build the palace of Nonsuch, a property in the care of the Earl of Somerset at the time the picture was painted. Anecdotal evidence too, such as the following, which deals with the actual wedding in Blackfriars that historians thought the picture depicted:

In 1600 she [Elizabeth] took part in the celebrations for the marriage of Henry Somerset to Anne Russell. The masque afterward represented eight muses in search of the ninth (Elizabeth) to dance with them to the music of Apollo. Mary Fitton begged the Queen to participate, and Elizabeth asking what she represented, was told 'Affection'. 'Affection', said the Queen, 'is false'. It was a sour comment--on the marriage of one of her Maids of Honour, to which as the reign progressed she became more and more violently opposed ... even on Mary Fitton herself, to be dismissed from the court the following year after the disclosure of her affair with the Earl of Pembroke.³¹

Lord Hunsdon, the Queen's cousin, and fourth from the left in the Procession picture, kept a "bawdy-house of Beasts" in Hoxton, a London suburb.³²

Sherbourne Castle, where the picture now hangs, was confiscated from Sir Walter Raleigh and given to its present owners, the Digby family (into whose hands the painting passed) by James I, Elizabeth's successor. All this is not "what gives the picture its hypnotic power across the centuries,"³³ but rather encourages the evaporation of the painting's (and Elizabeth's) aura, tainting it,

³¹Jean Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth 1* 13-14.

³²E. J. Burford, *London; The Synfulle Citie* (Brighton: Hale, 1989) 128.

³³Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth* 54.

making it and her more “approachable.”³⁴ It clarifies the nature and effect of the triumphal procession, and enables the perception of certain carefully protected identities. This same process can be enhanced and emphasised by a sceptical reading of an example of Elizabeth in public, an example that has traditionally been used to emphasise her aura, but one which suggests a wholly different meaning when read in its entirety.

2. A Royal Progress

During the summer months of her reign Elizabeth 1 embarked upon royal progresses through the English countryside, often culminating in prolonged theatrical displays on the estate of a particular member of the nobility upon whom the Queen had bestowed the privilege of a visit. Records concerning such tours are scarce, though it is enlightening to examine those that do exist.

In the summer of 1568 the Spanish Ambassador to England, Guzman de Silva, accompanied Queen Elizabeth on one of these progresses through the countryside, an event which he later reported back to the King of Spain. This report remains one of the few eye-witness accounts of the public face of such a progress, and naturally therefore is important evidence when attempting to perceive the nature of these processions. This is a fact recognised by Alison Plowden in her widely accessible study of Elizabethan England where, in her

³⁴Benjamin, “The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction,” *Illuminations* 236. Walter Benjamin formulated his theory of the aura in this seminal essay, in which he writes: “The definition of the aura as a ‘unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be’ represents nothing but the formulation of the cult value of the work of art in categories of space and time perception. Distance is the opposite of closeness. The essentially distant object is the unapproachable one. Unapproachability is indeed a major quality of the cult image” (*Illuminations* 211-244: 236-7).

discussion of processions, she quotes the Ambassador's report as describing what she calls a "typical scene":

She was received everywhere ... with great acclamations and signs of joy, as is customary in this country; whereat she was extremely pleased and told me so, giving me to understand how beloved she was by her subjects and how highly she esteemed this, together with the fact that they were peaceful and contented, whilst her neighbours on all sides are in such trouble. She attributed it all to God's miraculous goodness. She ordered her carriage sometimes to be taken where the crowd seemed thickest and stood up and thanked the people.³⁵

For Plowden this account certainly conjures up the atmosphere of progresses in general, where always "the Queen was assured of an enthusiastic welcome from the townspeople."³⁶ Here there is an evidently unproblematic unity between sovereign and people, she, like they, contented due to "God's miraculous goodness." In this piece of evidence, dated 10th July, 1568, we seem to behold the reality of a wholly popular Queen moving comfortably amongst her adoring subjects, confident of her place in their hearts and minds, aware of the effect that this accessibility is having. The theatricality of her actions is noticeable, as is her reported gratitude for the ability to meet her subjects in such a manner. In this scenario, Elizabeth is a glittering central figure, her presence containing no element of ambiguity or vulnerability, passing through the countryside of her England and, through Plowden's intercession, into our world as that most popular, semi-mythical creature,

³⁵Quoted in Plowden, *Elizabethan England* 53.

³⁶Plowden 53.

responsible for the vitality of a glorious golden age. Here there are no faces lurking in the shadows, only the reality of a triumphal procession.

A re-reading of that section of the Spanish Ambassador's report that Plowden has reproduced is worthwhile, to see if a re-figuring of the reported events is possible. Certainly Elizabeth's insistence on her popularity, on the esteem in which she is held by her subjects, is revealing, and insinuates perhaps her desire to reassure this foreign dignitary of the secure nature of her position politically, and more importantly religiously, as she was the head of a Protestant faith still in conflict with the Catholicism represented by the Spanish Ambassador, a conflict felt to be unresolved in her own country. A brief look at the Calendar of State Papers (Spanish), from which the above quotation has been culled, enables the construction of a rather different scenario than that elucidated for us by Plowden, and suggests the possibility of irony on the part of the Spanish Ambassador. For, significantly, Plowden has chosen to omit the opening two sentences of the Ambassador's report, which seem to contradict the Queen's confidence, and which read as follows:

The Queen arrived in this city on the 6th in good health and continued her progress which as I have said, will only be in the neighbourhood, as she is careful to keep near at hand when troubles and disturbances exist in adjacent countries. She came by the river as far as Reading, and thence through the country in a carriage, open on all sides, that she might be seen by the people, who flocked all along the roads as far as the duke of Norfolk's houses where she alighted. She was received... (emphasis added).³⁷

³⁷Calendar Of State Papers & Manuscripts (Spanish) (1568-79) 50-51. E. K Chambers believes that there has been a mistake in translation with regard to the location stated: "Vino por rio hasta Reder"; the translation 'Reading' ... is absurd; it might be Knight rider St" (The

Even bearing in mind that the following year saw the eruption of the Northern Rebellion and it is therefore understandable that the Queen should be discerning as to where she went on progress, it is surely important that the Ambassador juxtaposes her fears and her confidence--demonstrating contradiction--and equally important that Plowden recognises neither these fears nor this contradiction. While, at first sight, it would seem that it is the Ambassador who is guilty of such contradiction if he holds that the Queen is both universally popular and unpopular, he can only be regarded in this manner if he is not being ironic. For, how can Elizabeth restrict her movements within her own realm and at the same time seriously regret the fact that "her neighbours on all sides are in such trouble," whereas her own subjects are "peaceful and contented"? Plowden's intentions in her failure to report this contradiction (or irony) are probably less ambiguous than the Ambassador's, and would seem to suggest a certain partiality evident in a study that characterises Elizabethan England as "An Age of Adventure."³⁸ Such a partiality is further emphasised by the fact that, in those two omitted opening sentences, it is shown that Elizabeth was on her way to visit the Duke of Norfolk, in whose name (among others) the Catholic rebellion of the Northern Earls erupted in 1569, and who was subsequently executed in 1572 for his involvement in the Ridolfi Plot. The Catholic minority in England posed a very real threat to the rule (and life) of the Queen, and Norfolk himself

Elizabethan Stage 4: 84). Chambers believes that the Spanish Ambassador actually accompanied the Queen to Charterhouse.

³⁸The book is replete with examples of a certain glossing over of historical realities, not least in its chapter on "The New Found Lands," where the actualities of emergent colonialism is regarded as "adventure" rather than "conquest" (200-233).

actively attempted to overthrow her and replace her with a Catholic monarch in the person of her great rival, Mary, Queen of Scots--a plot that required (and received) the support of the Spanish.³⁹

Alison Plowden's book is part of the Reader's Digest Life In Britain series, and could therefore be regarded as popular rather than academic and thus unworthy of the consideration that it is being given here.⁴⁰ However, the kind of selective quotation in which Plowden indulges is not unique to such popular history, as is evidenced by the tendency for both historical and literary studies of every status to indulge itself likewise. If Plowden is taken as a starting point, the use to which this historical document is put can be determined in progressively scholarly studies that reproduce her practice. Neville Williams, for example, in a study that is less idealised and hagiographic than Plowden's, though is still highly accessible, quotes and omits precisely the same lines as Plowden, relating how the Ambassador "dwelt on the popularity these personal appearances engendered."⁴¹ Zillah Dovey does the same in her exhaustive study of an Elizabethan progress, adding that the Spanish Ambassador's despatch confirms the fact that progresses were "one of the Queen's major--

³⁹Haigh 47-65.

⁴⁰While the fact that Plowden's book is part of the Reader's Digest series Life In Britain, it is precisely because of its popularity that it is worth examining. In the London Borough of Hillingdon, where I presently live, this book is held by 11 of the Borough's 17 libraries. This being the case, not only is it the most common study of the Elizabethan era, it is, in many of the smaller libraries, the only work covering that historical period (often accompanied by one biography of the Queen herself). For many people it therefore represents their sole source of information regarding this period and, presented as it is as history, is read by the public generally as a work that can give them some kind of access to the real Elizabethan era. Its very pervasiveness is therefore, I would argue, the major reason for reading it sceptically.

⁴¹Neville Williams, "The Tudors," The Courts Of Europe 165.

and successful--policies.”⁴² Further up the academic ladder, Christopher Haigh, in his famous biography of Elizabeth that many scholars believe demystifies the Queen and injects a good deal of realism and common sense into the study of her relationships with all levels of the contemporary population, reproduces and omits the same lines, and states that the enthusiasm with which she was greeted “was the product of her own hard work and that of her propagandists.”⁴³ And Louis Montrose, one of the foremost practitioners of the New Historicism, does the same, mobilising the example as proof of the effectiveness of the Queen’s presence on progress in cementing her relationship to the various social groups which made up the audience, confirming his model of Elizabeth as the consummate “power-actor,” as the embodiment of a demonstration of Foucauldian dissymmetry.⁴⁴ Each of these studies is taken as a representative of the wide-ranging trend that marks the whole practice of the transmission of conventional knowledge.

What is clear from my own retrieval of (the Spanish Ambassador’s) documentation is that the Queen would seem to be articulating a great deal of anxiety in the presence of the Spanish Ambassador, an anxiety that would seem to have been well-founded in the light of subsequent events. The Queen’s words are indeed insecure, attempting to give credibility to a reality that even the Spanish Ambassador could see was contradictory. It is probably true that Elizabeth felt more threatened in the vicinity of both the Duke of

⁴²Dovey 1.

⁴³Haigh 151.

⁴⁴Montrose, “‘Eliza, Queene of shepheardes’,” *English Literary Renaissance* 153-182.

Norfolk and the Spanish Ambassador than would normally have been the case, but this threat was in no way unique. For throughout her entire reign the Queen felt safe and popular in certain parts of her realm, and not in others. This is reflected in the fact that the Queen's progresses were always restricted in scope, never venturing "further north than Stafford or further West than Bristol."⁴⁵ According to Jean Wilson, Elizabeth kept "to the parts of the country where there was little disaffection," the progresses being "propaganda for the faithful, not gestures of goodwill to the potentially hostile."⁴⁶ This at least recognises that the potentially hostile did exist, did pose a real threat to the Sovereign, and did dwell within the limits of her own domain.

The Queen it would seem, was wise to "remain in the neighbourhood," particularly in this period of her reign, and was wiser still to suspend progresses altogether during certain high-risk periods, such as 1580-91, and 1595-99. It is a wisdom that is not attested to in the work of many scholars who have reported upon this particular progress however. Much is omitted, such as the possibility of discontent, insecurity and, most significantly, contradiction. In these studies, the Spanish Ambassador joins the ordinary people of England in adoring the radiant sovereign of a peaceful, contented, unified land.

⁴⁵Jean Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth 1 143.

⁴⁶Jean Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth 1 143.

The common people “who flocked all along the roads” according to the Spanish Ambassador, are represented (in both his account and in the accounts of subsequent scholars) as a marginal conglomeration into which the Queen was driven in a “carriage open on all sides,” and thereby become reduced to mere vessels of adulation, instinctively celebrating the passing of the sovereign. In the rebellion that did take place in the north of the country the following year, many of their class were forced to fight (that is to say they were pressed) on behalf of both parties, and in the aftermath, on the side of the rebels, “some 600 men who had been sent by their villages to fight were hanged.”⁴⁷ One wonders if such a reality would indeed induce instinctive adulation. However, it is once again possible to discern that both in the fact that the progress in 1568 took place, to an extent, in order to “hail” these people, and in the fact that, to a large extent, their volatile nature restricted the Queen’s movements both at that moment and for the duration of her reign, there is a passing of their presence into a more central position. The progress itself becomes the site of a definite movement of the marginal towards the centre, the presence of the common audience needing to be recognised as, at the very least, important.

Plowden’s interpretation of events, like conventional readings of the Procession picture, underlines this reality in its construction of this presence as either acquiescent or invisible. As is clear from the Procession picture, the

⁴⁷Helen Hackett, Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I And The Cult Of The Virgin Mary (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995) 74-75.

Queen was always heavily protected, especially when travelling in an open carriage. And both the accessibility possible through the use of such an open carriage and its necessary protection, are elements of the nature of the progress as influenced by the presence of the common people (as well as, for example, foreign agents). Plowden's subject is these same common people, conjuring them up as the consumers of spectacle, and not as the (deferred) co-producers of such events. And therefore both her reading of this progress, and those of the many scholars who read it in the same fashion, contribute to it becoming one of those documents which are characterised by their carefully protected identities, which possess an "essence ... fabricated in a piecemeal fashion,"⁴⁸ and articulate a transmission of conventional, partial knowledge. The same process is evident in many cultural artefacts, not least the plays of Shakespeare.

3. A Shakespeare History Play

I will none of your money.⁴⁹

Thus ends the confrontation between the soldier Michael Williams on one side and King Henry V and Fluellen on the other in what is one of the most troubling encounters within the history plays of Shakespeare. It is troubling in a number of ways, not least in the fact that there is no hint of resolution in this final response of Williams, and no further indication that the King understands or empathises with this response. It is a moment that is difficult in the sense that it seems to articulate a scene of difference, conflict and disunity between

⁴⁸Foucault, "Nietzsche," *The Foucault Reader* 78.

⁴⁹William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, IV. viii. 69. All quotations are taken from the Arden edition of *Henry V*, ed. T. W. Craik (London: Routledge, 1996).

members of the same army. The confrontation erupts on the eve of the Battle of Agincourt, as Henry goes about the camp in disguise attempting, the Chorus informs us, to cheer his men in preparation for the following day's exertions. The unreliability of the Chorus has been noted in this respect,⁵⁰ his words immediately followed by scenes in which Henry argues with Pistol, Williams and Bates. Despite this, a case has frequently been made for the kindness of "the English king comforting his men the night before the battle,"⁵¹ usually comparing him to the pitiless French rulers who regard their soldiers as "superfluous lackeys and ... peasants."⁵² This juxtaposition forgets however to consider the fact that Henry also informs Williams that many of his own soldiers are criminals and murderers--who therefore deserve no better fate than to die, painfully, on the battlefield--and subsequently, in soliloquy, proceeds to call them fools, slaves, and beggars.⁵³ This occlusion of contradiction has been a part of a greater tendency to transmit the idea of Henry V as the perfect monarch, the unifying force in the drive towards English nation-statehood that

⁵⁰Indeed, such commentary has become paradigmatic in any critical study of the play today. See for example: John Wilders, The Lost Garden 11-12, and Alexander Leggatt, Shakespeare's Political Drama 123-5. In both of these studies it is possible to register a palpable discomfort with the King/Williams confrontation and the displacement of this discomfort onto the wholly rhetorical figure of the Chorus, allowing for a mild, playful and principally disengaged reading of events. More critical studies which examine both the ironic nature of the Chorus and the troubling confrontation of the King and Williams do exist however, and include the following: Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore, "History And Ideology: The Instance Of Henry V," Alternative Shakespeares 206-227; Chris Fitter, "A Tale Of Two Branaghs: Henry V, Ideology, And The Mekong Agincourt," Shakespeare Left And Right 259-275; Ralph Berry, Shakespeare and Social Class (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, Inc, 1988) 87-94; Annabel Patterson, Shakespeare and the Popular Voice (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) 71-92.

⁵¹Campbell, Shakespeare's 'Histories' 262. Any number of studies promote this view of Henry, including Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays 309-18; Irving Ribner, The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957) 182-192; John Wilders, The Lost Garden 58-63; Alexander Leggatt, Shakespeare's Political Drama 114-138. The two major cinematic films promote this same conceptualisation of the character of Henry: see Henry V, dir. Laurence Olivier, Two Cities Film, 1944, and Henry V, dir. Kenneth Branagh, Columbia Tristar, 1989.

⁵²Henry V, IV. ii. 25.

reached its zenith in the era in which the play itself was written, and which Shakespeare was celebrating.⁵⁴ This is reflected in those traditional studies which regarded the play as a national epic whose primary theme was the binary opposition of order and disorder, the former term always being prior, and the more recent manifestations of this same dynamic with the order/disorder dichotomy now replaced by that of containment/subversion. The conclusions reached in the latter are almost identical to the former, although the means to these ends appear more sophisticated.⁵⁵

The construction of the play as an effective example of propaganda which helped to underwrite the monarchy has been vigorously challenged, particularly over the last twenty years, and most effectively by the school of criticism broadly known as Cultural Materialism.⁵⁶ A number of studies have investigated, among other things, the confrontation between Henry and Williams, and have indeed found the King seriously wanting.⁵⁷ The sense of

⁵³Henry V, IV. i. 230-281.

⁵⁴This has been the case in those studies of the play that can be regarded as historicist, whether of the old or the new variety. The two ends of the spectrum are represented by the work of E. M. W. Tillyard, especially his *Shakespeare's History Plays*, and that of Stephen Greenblatt, in particular his essay "Invisible Bullets."

⁵⁵The older form of historicism, represented by Tillyard, reads the play as the routing of disorder by a God-given and natural order. Greenblatt, the founder of the New Historicism reads the play as deliberately producing subversion in order for it to be contained enabling the state to strengthen itself. Thus, subversion replaces disorder, and containment replaces order. For a detailed examination of the relationship between the two, see chapters six and seven below.

⁵⁶This critical approach was brought into being with the appearance of two major collections of essays in 1985. The first, *Alternative Shakespeares*, while not declaring itself to be of a Cultural Materialist approach, contained essays by scholars who were of such a mind, such as Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore, "History And Ideology: The Instance Of Henry V" 206-227. The second collection, *Political Shakespeare*, did declare itself to be an example of Cultural Materialism, though interestingly this statement immediately saw the distancing of the New Historicists featured in the collection from such a political (materialist) approach.

⁵⁷For example Sinfield and Dollimore's "History And Ideology." See also Chris Fitter's discussion of the confrontation (albeit in a different context) in his "A Tale Of Two Branaghs," and Annabel Patterson's discussion in *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*.

antagonism apparent in the confrontation has been remarked upon, and seen to register a definite moment of disquiet and disunity. Additionally, the force of the arguments put into the mouth of Williams, as well as the King's rather complacent responses, are held to demonstrate that this play is no simple valorisation of absolute monarchy. However, it is worth looking at the way in which the Henry/Williams exchange is perceived in a number of particularly important, widely available, and modern studies to see to what extent it has indeed been construed in terms of opposition and/or unity.

In his introduction to the BBC version of Henry V in 1979, John Wilders registers the fact that Shakespeare regarded the King "as less than ideal,"⁵⁸ the debate with Williams being one example of his ambiguous nature in this respect. Wilders believes that Williams' and Bates' concerns regarding the actual validity of Henry's invasion of France are "not really answered," and that the "plight of the ordinary soldier who goes unprepared to death is, however, something with which Henry will not concern himself..."⁵⁹ This latter is particularly revealing, and could enable the widening of focus here to include 1&2 Henry IV and how such a realisation casts grave doubts upon the notion, so important in traditional criticism, that these two plays are primarily concerned with the education of the future king, who spends so much time with the lower classes in order to make himself a more complete monarch, in touch with all sections of the population.⁶⁰ The fact that in Henry V the King

⁵⁸John Wilders, introduction, Henry V (London: BBC, 1979) 9-16: 12.

⁵⁹Wilders, Henry V 14.

⁶⁰Again, this is a conventional view held by, for example: Campbell, Shakespeare's 'Histories' 262; Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays 309-318; Ribner, The English History Play in the

seems to have little appetite for their worries and is unable to understand or empathise with them, bespeaks a King who has learned nothing from his time amongst the common people. This is clearly shown in his interaction with the common characters in the play, where he attempts to buy Williams' respect, enforces the execution of Bardolph, allows Falstaff to die, and encourages Pistol to fall back into a life of crime. Indeed, if Henry has learned anything, it is a contempt for the common people and their needs. Wilders does not register this however, and instead begins to backtrack when he writes that Williams and Bates are finally "satisfied"⁶¹ by Henry when he states: "Every subject's duty is the King's, but every subject's soul is his own."⁶² This seems rather harsh on Henry's part given that Williams and Bates were no doubt pressed into service. Wilders does not have anything to say regarding this fact, but leaves us instead with Williams' satisfaction ringing in our ears.⁶³

This recuperation of the common soldiers' anger and the discord it articulates between members of the same army is evident also in the recently overhauled and extended Arden Shakespeare King Henry V in which, in his exhaustive introduction, T. W. Craik informs us that in the same scene, Henry "convinces

Age of Shakespeare 182-192; Wilders, The Lost Garden 51-52; Leggatt, Shakespeare's Political Drama 114-138.

⁶¹Wilders, Henry V 14.

⁶²Henry V, IV. i. 175-177.

⁶³Chris Fitter has interestingly pointed out that in Kenneth Branagh's Henry V the scenes featuring Williams are simply not presented. These include "Henry's second argument to Williams, that many of the troops deserved their imminent deaths, as murderers, thieves, and pillagers," as well as "Henry's scheming deployment of Fluellen to quarrel with Williams ... along with Henry's buying off of Williams' criticisms with a gloveful of crowns..." ("A Tale Of Two Branaghs," Shakespeare Left and Right 268). Thus the King is shown in a heroic light, and contradiction/disunity is willed out of existence.

the soldiers,” after Shakespeare “allows him to be drawn into an argument.”⁶⁴ Craik’s conclusions are questionable in the sense that the soldiers are evidently not convinced--Williams promises to box Henry’s ears the next time they meet--and nor have they dragged Henry into an argument.⁶⁵ Not only are Henry’s motives for wandering around the camp in disguise suspect (and seriously put his ability as a commander of an army into question),⁶⁶ his uncharitable attitude seriously undermines his soldiers’ already low morale. In their first meeting, Williams explains to Henry the reasons for this low morale amongst the soldiers, detailing their main complaints. He says:

if the cause be not good, the King himself hath a heavy reckoning to make when all those legs and arms and heads chopped off in a battle shall join together at the latter day ... some swearing, some crying for a surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their children rawly left.⁶⁷

This reflects the reality of the common soldier’s lot in the army of Elizabeth, for whom, according to C. G. Cruickshank, “wars held only hardship and misery,” and who were “powerless to alleviate their suffering.”⁶⁸ Cruickshank details the various hardships under which the soldiers suffered, corruption of

⁶⁴T. W. Craik, introduction, *Henry V* 1-111: 49.

⁶⁵Craik’s belief that Shakespeare allows Henry to be drawn into an argument is an interesting turn of phrase, and demonstrates a certain discomfort with Henry’s behaviour. For Henry is not drawn into an argument but rather instigates one, after having argued with Pistol shortly before. Shakespeare does not allow this in any case, he plots it. Craik’s discomfort perhaps stems from the thought that Henry’s behaviour is intentionally plotted.

⁶⁶This point is eloquently investigated and affirmed in Nina Taunton’s (unpublished) paper “Aspects Of Watchfulness And Command In The 1590s Military Camp” (1997), which does indeed point to Henry’s serious shortcomings as an effective military leader. My thanks to her for allowing me to see this in its unfinished form.

⁶⁷*Henry V*, IV. i. 134-141.

⁶⁸C. G. Cruickshank, *Elizabeth’s Army* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966) 13. Also important in this context is Lindsay Boynton, *The Elizabethan Militia, 1558-1638* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

the upper ranks and the consequent non-payment of wages--Williams' "debts they owe"--being chief among them. This particular dramatised confrontation between the common soldier and his commander-in-chief is reminiscent of an actual confrontation which took place some years before the play was written. It is worth examining this real event in some detail in the current context.

In a letter preserved in the Calendar of State Papers (Foreign), Captain Peter Crips reports on an event which occurred during the Netherlands campaign, in the army camp in Utrecht, on 28th March, 1586. Captain Crips's explanation of the origins of a mutiny by the soldiers is worth reproducing here at length:

The Earl of Leicester going to Count Maurice to dinner, there came certain soldiers of Capt. Thomas Poole's company, and one A. T. in behalf of the rest, demanded their pay. His Excellency conferred with Sir John Norreys, who commanded me, Peter Crips, then marshal, to take and hang the said A. T., whom I carried to prison. Then all the soldiers in the town 'grew into arms,' broke open the prison, carried away the said A. T. and offered to shoot at me and my men, staying me by force while the prisoner was carried away.

At that instant, two companies of 'Welshmen' came into the town, by whose aid the prisoner was again committed to prison, with nine of the chief mutineers. Sir John then ordered every company to march severally to camp, and when they were ready, came to his own company, and finding one using mutinous words, struck him and hurt him in the arm and sent him to the marshal; and another being not ready, cut him on the head, 'who are both living without danger of death, except they be hanged ... but the report was that they were both dead.'

The companies then marched towards the camp, and being out of the town, those in the Marshalsea accused one Roger Greene of being 'one of the principal that brake up the prison.'

Whereupon Sir John sent Captain Roper to fetch him. Being sent back, I carried him and the rest before his Excellency, who gave order that Doctor Clarke and I should examine them; who giving information to his Excellency he gave me commission for the (hangin)g of three of them in the presence of the other seven....⁶⁹

This report refers to an event that took place thirteen years before the first performance of Henry V, but does in many ways articulate the same basic complaint voiced by Williams; the contempt in which the common soldiers are held by their military chiefs, and their inability to alleviate their situation.

When compared with this real example, it would seem that Williams in fact escaped quite lightly in his confrontation with Henry, in the sense that he was not despatched immediately. Despite that, Crips's letter attests to the very real problems that characterised the relationship between ordinary soldiers and their commanders and, given the fact that these soldiers were pressed, demonstrates a lack of military competence on the part of these commanders, Henry included.

The contempt in which the ordinary soldiers were held by their military superiors characterised the subsequent Irish campaign particularly, as is demonstrated by the following report held in the Calendar of State Papers (Ireland), for December 1596:

Of all the captains in Ireland, Sir Thomas North hath from the beginning kept a most miserable, unfurnished, naked, and hunger-starven band. Many of his soldiers died wretchedly and

⁶⁹CSP (Foreign) (Sept 1585-May 1586) 495. Cruickshank mentions this letter briefly, though he does not reproduce any of it nor does he, naturally, link it with any contemporary dramatic production.

woefully at Dublin; some whose feet and legs
rotted off for want of shoes....⁷⁰

This is a typical example of the condition of the ordinary soldiers in Ireland, and one of many that reports the possibility of their mutiny.⁷¹ According to Christopher Highley, such reports are significant in the sense that, against the “backdrop of these conditions ... the reiterated image in Henry V of an English army starving and sick in the field had an inescapable topical valence.”⁷² This is particularly the case given the fact that the Earl of Essex was so involved in the Irish campaign at the time the play was written, and indeed is referred to by the Chorus in the play itself.⁷³

These contemporary records thus shed much light upon the confrontation of King Henry and Williams, articulating a real tension in the relationship of military leaders and their soldiers as well as clarifying the reasons for this tension. The “topical valence” of the Henry/Williams scene is further underlined with the appearance of Fluellen, and his response to Williams’ refusal to accept the gloveful of crowns offered by Henry. Fluellen says:

It is with a good will. I can tell you, it will serve
you to mend your shoes. Come, wherefore
should you be so pashful? Your shoes is not so
good. ‘Tis a good shilling, I warrent you, or I
will change it.⁷⁴

⁷⁰CSP (Ireland) (1596-97) 195.

⁷¹“[T]he nakedness of the soldiers for want of clothes, and their poverty for lack of their lendings, to buy them food ... many of them show like prisoners, half-starved ... we look daily for some great mutiny and disbanding...” (CSP (Ireland) (1598-99) 357).

⁷²Christopher Highley, Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 139.

⁷³Henry V, V. o. 30-34. This is very much the foundation of Highley’s study of the play.

⁷⁴Henry V, IV. viii. 70-74.

The character of Fluellen can be seen, in his uncritical loyalty to Henry, as an example of the “Welshmen” that Captain Crips writes about and, in his recommendation that Williams accept the money in order to buy shoes, to be articulating a contemporary need of the soldiers whose “feet and legs rotted off...”⁷⁵ However, the importance of all of this for this current study, is the way in which (like Wilders) this confrontation of Henry and Williams has been read as one of resolution and unity. This, despite the fact that contemporary records demonstrate a real, unresolved conflict. A further look at T. W. Craik’s introduction to the Arden Henry V will underline this fact.

In Williams’ final unambiguous words in which he refuses to be bought by Henry’s gloveful of crowns--“I will none of your money”--there is a clear articulation of a deeply held desire to be treated with dignity. Fluellen’s response is pragmatic, but does not attempt to deal with the contempt with which Williams feels he has been treated. In a footnote to these words of Williams, Craik, enlisting the help of Gary Taylor, writes:

I will ... money Williams not unnaturally resents Fluellen’s advice as to his future conduct. Fluellen’s conciliatory reply, and the fact that ‘silence normally gives consent to a direction implied in the dialogue’ (Taylor), make it clear that Williams takes the shilling.⁷⁶

There are a number of points to make here. Firstly, Taylor’s belief that silence gives consent is questionable. For, it is certainly not clear in the text that Williams takes the shilling, and nothing implied in Williams’ words suggests

⁷⁵This point is raised in a footnote by Highley 150.

⁷⁶Craik, Henry V 328.

that he does anything other than reject Henry's offer. These are Williams' final words, and he does not appear again in the play. Secondly, Craik's belief that "all ends in harmony between him [the King], Williams and Fluellen,"⁷⁷ is also questionable. Given Williams last words, there is no evidence for such a supposition. Indeed, the only evidence suggests the opposite of this. Lastly and most importantly, given the nature of contemporary records, the fact that this conflict is not resolved seems to be a most compelling representation of reality. The articulation of the many hardships suffered by ordinary soldiers and put into the mouth of Michael Williams, reflects both an actual contemporary problem and a reality known to many of Shakespeare's audience.⁷⁸ Furthermore, and again in the light of the evidence, Williams is an individual who could use the money offered to him more than any other. Yet he apparently refuses it.

If Williams were to accept Henry's money he could, in a sense and despite his hardships, be said to have his price, like those who pressed him into service, and those who made illicit earnings from the military campaign in Ireland.⁷⁹

Williams does not appear to want the money however. Nor does he want to fight wars that seem to him to lack good cause, and which seem to promise

⁷⁷Craik, *Henry V* 53.

⁷⁸Shakespeare's audience was made up of all sections of the population, including disbanded soldiers. The constitution of this audience will be examined in detail in chapter five. A number of interesting studies regarding this subject are in existence, including the following: Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare's Audience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), and *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (New York: Macmillan, 1951); Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Ann Jennalie Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576-1642* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981); Martin Butler, "Appendix II," *Theatre and Crisis 1632-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 293-306.

⁷⁹See Cruickshank 17-40 and 143-158.

either a horrible death or maiming. Henry, it would seem, has little time or care for such matters, just as actual commanders in the Low Countries and in Ireland. The perception of harmony by Craik in this situation, like Wilders' of satisfaction, does not register the real disunity and disruption that the play articulates, nor the real conflict that existed at that time. And Taylor's belief that Williams takes the money adds to this occlusion of disunity. For it discredits Williams, valorises the King and, by extension justifies those practices he unleashes on the body and soul of Williams, and all of the other common soldiers.

Henry's contempt for the common people has previously been noted, most famously in Stephen Greenblatt's "Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion, Henry IV and Henry V."⁸⁰ While Greenblatt has very little to say about the Williams/Henry confrontation specifically, he does believe that the "play deftly registers every nuance of royal hypocrisy, ruthlessness, and bad faith,"⁸¹ demonstrated in the King's inability to empathise with "anxious, frightened troops sleeplessly await[ing] the dawn."⁸² Greenblatt goes on to say that this however does not undermine any positive representation of the king, for the play is "a celebration, a collective panegyric to 'This star of England', the charismatic leader who purges the commonwealth of its incorrigibles and forges the martial national State."⁸³

⁸⁰Political Shakespeare 18-47. A revised version appears in Greenblatt's Shakespearean Negotiations 21-65. It is to the former that I refer in the following.

⁸¹Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets" 42.

⁸²Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets" 43.

⁸³Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets" 42.

That is to say, that the subversive and negative aspects of Henry are immersed in a more persuasive context of praise and glorification, and that these (apparently) subversive aspects “serve paradoxically to intensify the power of the king and his war.”⁸⁴ Thus we are won over by Henry’s compelling presence, and in the confrontation between Williams and the King for example, “the very doubts that Shakespeare raises serve not to rob the king of his charisma but to heighten it....”⁸⁵

Greenblatt is most concerned to theorise the Elizabethan audience’s perception of a theatrical event such as Henry V, and to demonstrate their subjectification through such cultural events. He writes:

The audience’s tension ... enhances its attention; prodded by constant reminders of a gap between real and ideal, facts and values, the spectators are induced to make up the difference, to invest in the illusion of magnificence, to be dazzled by their own imaginary identification with the conqueror. The ideal king must be in large part the invention of the audience....⁸⁶

This assumes of course that all members of the audience would identify with the King, or wish to construct an imaginary ideal monarch. However, given the fact that Shakespeare’s audience comprised many members of the poorer classes in Elizabethan London (though not exclusively of these classes), it is possible that they would identify instead with characters such as Williams. Rather than have to in some way construct for themselves an ideal sovereign from that individual who appeared before them on stage, they would be able to

⁸⁴Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets” 43.

⁸⁵Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets” 43.

⁸⁶Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets” 43.

see the representation of matters that concerned their own lives in the words and actions of Williams.

Underlying Stephen Greenblatt's theorisation of the Elizabethan audience is the influence of the work of Michel Foucault, particularly his formulation of the spectacular nature of early modern societies in his Discipline And Punish.⁸⁷ This allows Greenblatt to perceive in the Elizabethan theatre those same qualities of spectacle that Foucault assigned to public executions. Thus, in Renaissance Self-Fashioning, Greenblatt felt able to write:

Each branding or hanging or disembowelling was theatrical in conception and performance, a repeatable admonitory drama enacted on a scaffold before a rapt audience....This idea of the 'notable spectacle,' ... extended quite naturally to the theatre itself...⁸⁸

Thus the theatrical experience, as a spectacular event, is regarded as employing and comprising identical qualities. One of these qualities is of course a normative one, in which the stage "is the expression of those rules that govern a properly ordered society and displays visibly the punishment ... that is meted out upon those who violate the rules."⁸⁹ One imagines then that in the confrontation between Williams and Henry the idea of a properly ordered society forbids identification with Williams, and the audience become "dazzled by their own imaginary identification with the conqueror."⁹⁰ This being the case, in "such a theatre-State there would be no social distinction

⁸⁷Particularly chapters one and two.

⁸⁸Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning 201.

⁸⁹Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning 253.

⁹⁰Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets" 43.

between the king and the spectator, the performer and the audience; all would be royal....”⁹¹ In a sense then the audience becomes Henry, no matter what his actions, because they have no other way of imagining themselves to be anything different. They cannot identify with Williams or with neither of the protagonists. They can only identify with the King.

To return to the particular work upon which Greenblatt has drawn in order to formulate his notion of the spectacular nature of early modern public execution/public theatre--Foucault’s Discipline and Punish--is to realise at once that the subversion that Greenblatt does not allow is actually written into Foucault’s theorisation, and forms an integral part of his conception of power as productive in a way that cannot be restricted. He writes:

the people, drawn to the spectacle intended to terrorise it, could express its rejection of the punitive power and sometimes revolt. Preventing an execution that was regarded as unjust ... obtaining his [the accused] pardon by force, possibly pursuing and assaulting the executioners ... abusing the judges ... all this formed part of the popular practices that invested, traversed and often overturned the ritual of the public execution.⁹²

Foucault’s research is founded in events in France in the 1750s, yet evidence exists of precisely such occurrences in Elizabethan London. The Acts of the Privy Council for 16th October, 1592, relates just such an episode in Holborn where an “execucion don of an offender that had killed an officier,” was witness to a riot by “dysorderlie persons.”⁹³ The report goes on to say that this

⁹¹Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets” 43.

⁹²Foucault, Discipline And Punish 59-60.

⁹³Acts of the Privy Council (1592) 242.

was no isolated event, and stresses “how manie of these dysorders have of late ben commytted in divers places of the cyttie of London...”⁹⁴ Given these facts is it not possible, in Greenblatt’s theorisation of the spectacular verisimilitude of the public execution and the public stage, that the audience which witnessed the Williams/Henry confrontation could identify with the former? Is it not possible that the theatre audience, like those at the public execution in Holborn and other London locations, could distance themselves from official ideology, resist “identification with the conqueror,” and perceive a very real distinction between “the king and the spectator.” Not in Greenblatt’s theorisation, where no subversion is possible, and the only option available is to “be royal.”

In the readings offered above a process of recuperation is evident. Disunity and disruption are either glossed over, or made to function in order to strengthen the dominant ideology. As in the Procession picture and the royal progress of 1568, analyses of Shakespeare’s play demonstrate a perceptible blindness, one induced by the light of cultural treasures transmitted from owner to owner in a triumphal procession. Such a process is evident in the historical transmission of the actual processions Elizabeth 1 undertook, and it is to an analysis of these that this thesis now turns.

⁹⁴Acts of the Privy Council (1592) 242.

CHAPTER TWO

“HER SPIRITUAL, MYSTICAL, TRANSFORMING POWER”

Traditional analyses of Elizabethan processions, whether of the entries into cities or of the rural progresses, have always regarded them as instances of the successful use of propaganda, the population at whom they were aimed being hailed in an Althusserian sense, causing them to identify with and accept a social structure that functioned to their detriment. In these analyses the common audience consumes the spectacle presented before it, and emerges convinced that the dissymmetry evident between the sovereign and the people is both justified and unbridgeable. In what follows, this thesis will explore contemporary documents regarding Elizabethan processions and their audiences with a view to problematising these traditional notions, the desire being to produce different, more sceptical conceptualisations of the material aspects of these events. This will require the exposition of traditional readings of the processions and their subsequent immersion in a critical landscape. Before doing this however, it is necessary to give a brief outline of the physical nature of the processions that celebrated Elizabeth.

1. “The centre of the centre”

Processional practice took three major forms in early modern England, each with its own discrete defining characteristics, but sharing much common ground materially, textually, and ideologically. The royal entry and the royal progress were defined by the determining presence of the sovereign, the

“centre of the centre,”¹ and form the two types of Elizabethan procession that will be the focus of this current study.² The processional form itself was not an innovation of the early modern period, but had its roots in the Roman triumphs which took place in order to celebrate the return of the victorious Roman army from a successful military campaign.³ This triumphal function was still important during Elizabeth’s reign, but such processions had, by that time, broadened their purpose as well as their originating occasion. The essential hypothesis of both types of Elizabethan procession can be regarded as synonymous however: their exhibition of power. As David Bergeron writes: “The theme that binds all the pageants, whether progress shows or royal entries, together is the celebration of Elizabeth’s power, her spiritual, mystical, transforming power.”⁴ The major contrast between them can be seen to be a geographical one, in the sense that royal entries were the urban manifestations of this desire to celebrate sovereign power, and royal progresses their primarily rural modes of representation. This was no small difference however and, as Bergeron goes on to say, resulted in the production of entertainments that reflected these particular locations: “in the Elizabethan era mythology and romance dominate in the progress entertainments while historical subjects and moral allegory abound in the royal entries.”⁵ The

¹This is the term used by Clifford Geertz (with reference to, among other royal figureheads, Elizabeth I) in his essay on monarchical charisma, “Centres, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power,” *Local Knowledge* (London: Fontana, 1993) 121-146.

²The third form, the annual Lord Mayor’s Pageant which took place every October 29th in London, demonstrates marked similarities to the royal pageants, the Lord Mayor merely replacing the sovereign as the centre around which the procession was built. For extensive examinations of these civic pageants, see Bergeron *English Civic Pageantry*, and F. W. Fairholt, *Lord Mayors’ Pageants*, 2 Vols. (London: Percy Society, 1843-1844).

³This is discussed in Wickham, particularly in 1:51-111.

⁴Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry* 11.

⁵Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry* 64.

progress thus witnessed the production of a primarily pastoral mode of representation, whilst the entry invoked a more spectacular and historically specific mode of address. The inhabitants of London were presented with two of these magnificent urban spectacles during Elizabeth's reign, the first to mark her ascendancy to the throne, and the second to commemorate victory over the Spanish in 1588. Many other cities were host to an Elizabethan royal entry, such as Coventry, Warwick, Bristol, and Norwich, but never on the scale reserved for these two unique occasions.

Elizabeth embarked upon royal progresses during the summer months of her reign, visiting the private estates of the nobility and gentry, always accompanied by a large part, or indeed the whole of her enormous court. These carefully plotted royal tours would proceed through the countryside, enabling the public to take advantage of the opportunity of having visual contact with the Queen. This visibility was seen to have positive propagandist value, the sovereign demonstrating her accessibility to the population. Once she had reached the private estate of a specially selected nobleman, entertainments in the form of celebratory pageants were often performed, the public again having the opportunity to view the Queen as spectators or even participants. This visual contemplation was one of the progresses' main functions, one which they shared with the royal entry.

The entry into a city had traditionally functioned as the most public of royal theatrical displays, always containing some element of triumph and,

after a military victory, being to a great extent constituted by a form of thanks-giving. As noted earlier, such a triumphal function defined the Roman notion of entry, and this purely processional form existed until the middle of the fourteenth century.⁶ Already the important events in a monarch's reign--coronation, accession, marriage, birth of children, death--were celebrated in such a processional manner, enabling the monarch "to manifest himself at his most magnificent in the sight of his subjects."⁷ The Roman triumphal form had thus been appropriated and extended to these important events in the life of the nation's ruler, and for specific reasons. "At the root of the matter," notes Glynne Wickham, "lies the delicate balance of relationships between ruler and subject in medieval Europe,"⁸ relationships that, due to a Christian world-view, necessarily modified the basic assumptions implicit in the Roman triumphs. Wickham believes this led to a desire "to imply acknowledgement by the subject that the particular ruler is the representative in their midst, chosen by God for their own good as a figurehead and arbiter of justice."⁹ Already inherent in these medieval processions was an allegorical leap, the monarch in procession representing something other than himself and embodying something greater than a mere barrier to foreign threat or invasion.

⁶Wickham lists a number of different types of processions characterised by this triumphal function: "the visit of a distinguished foreigner (the Emperor Otho in 1207), a royal wedding (Henry III to Eleanor of Provence in 1236), a coronation (Edward 1 in 1274) and a major military victory (Edward 1's defeat of the Scots at Falkirk in 1298)" (1: 53).

⁷Strong, *Splendour At Court* 21.

⁸Wickham 1: 52.

⁹Wickham 1: 52.

By the end of the fourteenth century, such urban processions saw the introduction of street pageant devices, organised by the trade guilds of the city and enabling a further process of allegorical subjectification through sovereign representation of itself as spiritual figurehead and as all virtue personified.¹⁰ The following two hundred years saw a continued evolution in these theatrical devices, in many senses culminating in the grandiose entry into London of James I for his coronation in 1604.¹¹ Already by the mid-sixteenth century however, the mixture of moral, religious, and historical allegory, with the monarch as the principal participant in his/her own glorification, can be seen to typify royal entries into cities. The pre-coronation procession of Elizabeth I that took place on 14th January, 1558, is a perfect example.

The procession which occurred the day before Elizabeth's coronation can be regarded as a typical royal entry of the period in that it "reflected the achievements of the present and reviewed those of the past while turning

¹⁰Wickham notes that the procession celebrating Edward I's defeat of the Scots in 1298 was the first that contained "theatrical attributes," but it was not until later that royal processions became defined by these attributes. The celebration of the birth of Edward III in 1313 prompted the building of a theatrical "gaily decorated" ship, and Richard II's coronation in 1377, saw the building of a stage which supported speaking actors (1: 50-54).

¹¹Roy Strong has traced this development in Renaissance Europe, through the entries which took place in Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to those in France such as Anne of Brittany's entry into Paris in 1486 to celebrate her marriage to Charles VIII, that of Charles V into Bruges in 1515, Henry II into Rouen in 1550, and that of Elizabeth of Valois into Toledo in 1560. He also traces the development in England, from the entry of Anne Boleyn on her marriage to Henry VIII in 1533, through Elizabeth's pre-coronation procession of 1558, to that of James I (*Splendour at Court* 19-77). For a more detailed examination of the entry of James I, see Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry* 65-89, and Goldberg *James* 33-54.

an optimistic eye to the future.”¹² Its production forms one of the two major London processions undertaken by Elizabeth, the other being more conventional (and therefore less allegorical) in its celebration of a military victory. The 1558 procession was in fact the final act in an event that was comprised of a number of processions through the city prior to the day of the actual coronation on 15th January. As well as stoking the fires of expectation in the capital’s population as the day approached, the procession witnessed the visible staking of a legitimate, Protestant claim to the recently vacated throne. Each procession within this aggregation attempted to fulfil just such a function, culminating in this final Recognition March through the very heart of the city. This was the grandest and most important of the processions, whereby in a number of pageant devices the sovereign authority was symbolically offered to Elizabeth (which she naturally accepted). In 1588 a structurally similar procession passed through the streets of the capital in commemoration of the defeat of the Spanish Armada, an occasion that required little pre-emptive stimulation, representing as it did the overwhelming of a dangerous foreign invader.

The cultural and ideological textures of a pre-coronation procession and that of a victory procession are naturally and importantly different, not least in the fact that the latter is less contrived and therefore need not seek

¹²Strong, *Splendour at Court* 23. Jean Wilson makes the same point: “Her coronation procession was unchanged in manner and general content from previous royal entries, consisting of allusions to the queen’s illustrious ancestors, and demonstrations of the nature of the political regime expected of Elizabeth” (*Entertainments For Elizabeth* 1 5).

to transmit its message in as allegorical a fashion as the former. In the pre-coronation procession, the nation addresses and is addressed by the impending monarch, a dialectic that negotiates and monitors notions of sovereign worthiness, suitability and competence, as well as those of subjectification. A victory procession on the other hand, witnesses a monarch who has already shown him/herself to be worthy, suitable and competent, and who can furthermore represent him/herself as the nation's saviour. This latter position is naturally less ambiguous and uncertain than the former, and does not require the extent of mythologising in order to convince the nation/populace of the appropriate nature of their taking a subject position.¹³ Such a reality is underlined by the fact that the pre-coronation procession saw the production of five elaborate pageant devices, whereas the Victory procession merely proceeded along the streets to St Paul's, where thanks were given to God. Despite these differences, it is important for my purposes here to recognise that the material formation of the two actual processions themselves were, in terms of the human topographical pattern, almost wholly identical. That is to say, that the topography of status delineated by the two processions is the same, and that the spectacular presence manifested through colour, configuration, affluence, and sheer size is shared by both. The two

¹³Elizabeth made many other entries into cities during her reign, but only these two in London, the capital, can be regarded as national in the sense that the sovereign was addressing herself to the whole of the nation. In the pre-coronation procession this address implied impending sovereignty (over the whole nation), and in the Victory procession it took the form of giving and taking thanks (to/from the whole nation) for victory over the Spanish. Other royal entries into such cities as Norwich, Coventry and Warwick were localised in nature, the desire being to induce local affection and loyalty. For a calendar of Elizabeth's entries, see Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage 4: 75-130.

examples of spectacle are therefore uniform in terms of this material presence.¹⁴

This topography has been preserved in the form of an official inventory, listing the participants of the Victory procession of 1588 (see Appendix 1), which demonstrates the grandeur and great size of the procession. The spectacular centrality of the procession's participants is clearly outlined, and bears witness to an impressive mobile presence through the streets of London. A similar reality is articulated in the inventory recording the details of the 1558 coronation preparations existent in the Records of the Lord Chamberlain.¹⁵ This document lists the vast amount of cloth that had to be ordered for the coronation, as well as listing the members of the household who needed to be present for the subsequent banquet and those required to attend the coronation itself. Page after page is given over to these lists, which describe a most elaborate demonstration of affluence.¹⁶

Such an impressive reality is also visible in the drawing that survives of Elizabeth's actual coronation procession itself--that referred to in the Lord

¹⁴This is not to deny the magnificence and presence of the numerous pageant devices. These no doubt, gave the pre-coronation procession an additional spectacular quality. Here, it is important to note that I am discussing the human content of the procession itself, in order to attempt to perceive its spectacular presence.

¹⁵Records of the Lord Chamberlain and other Offices of the Royal Household, and the Clerk of the Recognizances, Public Record Office, LC 2 4/3.

¹⁶While this would be a more pertinent source to use for an examination of the pre-coronation procession than the 1588 inventory--in temporal terms as well as in the fact that many of those participating in the pre-coronation procession would also have attended the coronation--the Lord Chamberlain at no point articulates who actually formed the coronation procession, nor how many: he simply states who should attend. As such, this document, though useful in this present context, is inferior as a source to that of the list of participants for the 1588 procession.

Chamberlain's document--and which took place on the 15th January, 1558 (see Fig. 2). Though much smaller than both the Victory and the pre-coronation processions, the pictorial evidence of this spectacular display does enable a further glimpse at the nature of Elizabethan processional practice. The drawing is believed to be the work of one of the Heralds present at the coronation,¹⁷ and represents the procession as it proceeded from Westminster Hall to the Abbey Church of St. Peter. The manuscript (MS 3320, Egerton, BM) delineates 338 people in all, 171 horses, 3 carriages, and the litter in which the Queen was transported. On each side of her are 17 Gentlemen Pensioners, and 14 footguards with drawn short-swords. The procession is stretched out over 28 pages, beginning with the Yeomen of the Guard leaving Westminster Hall, and ending with the preparations for the crowning of the Queen in the Abbey Church. The manuscript, like the 1588 inventory, enables the conceptualisation of the splendour of such an event. A closer inspection of the various descriptions of the pre-coronation procession encourages a similar perception of that particular spectacular display.

The pre-coronation procession of 1558 which "epitomises the chief characteristics to be found in all royal entries and represents a high achievement of this dramatic form,"¹⁸ was well-documented at the time both by educated observers and in authorised descriptions such as that

¹⁷L. E. Tanner, *The History Of The Coronation* (London: Pitkin, 1952) 55.

¹⁸Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry* 12.

credited to Richard Mulcaster.¹⁹ David Bergeron believes Mulcaster's document "is a marvellous piece of propaganda in addition to providing a record of the events."²⁰ While Mulcaster's pamphlet does indeed provide us with a precise record of the route taken and describes too the various pageant devices performed, the letters of the Venetian Ambassador to England of the time, Il Schifanoja, to the Castellan of Mantua, enable us to determine the approximate size of the procession. He estimated the number of horses preceding the Queen to be one thousand, a total which is not unimaginable when contemplating the human inventory of the 1588 procession.²¹ He goes on to write that the houses along the route were decorated in the Queen's honour, and that lining this route were "merchants and artisans of every trade ... in long black gowns lined with hoods of red and black cloth ... with all their ensigns, banners, and standards, which were innumerable, and made a very fine show."²² Each participant in the procession also displayed their symbols of office; keys, chains, pennants, and various uniforms of status and affluence. The Queen's ceremonial guards were all dressed in crimson silk, and there was also much satin, velvet, and fur in evidence. The Queen herself, he says, appeared in "an open litter, trimmed down to the ground with gold brocade,"²³ and that she was "dressed in a royal robe of very rich cloth of gold, with a double-raised stiff pile, and on her head over a coif of cloth of

¹⁹The Passage Of Our Most Drad Sovereigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth Through The Citie Of London To Westminster The Daye Before Her Coronacion London 1558-9: reproduced in full in Nichols, Elizabeth 1: 38-60.

²⁰Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 13.

²¹Calendar Of State Papers (Venetian) (1558-1580) 12.

²²CSP (Ven) (1558-1580) 12.

gold, beneath which was her hair, a plain gold crown without lace ... covered with jewels....”²⁴ There were pageant devices en route, from Fenchurch to Temple Bar, dramatic interludes on specially erected scaffolds, each taking place as the Queen reached them, who then proceeded further once each (interconnecting) interlude came to an end. These theatrical performances took the form of various allegorical representations of the impending Queen and her perceived functions:

Elizabeth’s descent was illustrated in a vast rose tree of the houses of York and Lancaster, there was a pageant in the form of Virtues defeating Vices, another celebrated the Queen’s devotion to the biblical beatitudes, another showed a withered and a flourishing landscape to typify a good and bad commonwealth and, finally, there was a vision of Elizabeth as Deborah, consulting with her estates for the good of her realm.²⁵

These shows were no doubt colourful and impressive, as well as propagandist. There was music, bells pealing, cannons intermittently firing, and the streets were lined with the Queen’s “most loving People,”²⁶ cheering without pause. These were the streets that constituted and traversed the heart of the city of London, the arterial link between the Tower and Westminster, through the commercial centre of the nation.

The procession itself, both in terms of content and form, was the responsibility of the Office of the Revels, and more specifically of Sir

²³CSP (Ven) (1558-1580) 12.

²⁴CSP (Ven) (1558-1580) 12.

²⁵Strong, *Splendour at Court* 25. The precise content and form of these pageant devices will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

²⁶They are described as such many times in Mulcaster’s pamphlet.

Thomas Cawarden, the Master of the Revels at the time of Elizabeth's coronation. This office was responsible for all aspects of court entertainment, including masques and tilts. It had been established in the previous century, and by the time of Elizabeth's Recognition March was well practised in the organisation of such massive spectacles. It was charged not merely to summon all of the participants of the procession, but also to prepare all of the costumes, horses, and necessary finery. The Office was answerable to the sovereign, and made sure that all of her wishes were carried out. It would ensure that the formation of the procession was correct, this being to a great extent hierarchically formalised by the time of Elizabeth, and guarantee that the suitable note was struck in terms of the procession's effects. This formal hierarchy is clearly evident in the 1588 inventory, building gradually as it does to its climax, the Queen surrounded by her bodyguards.

Adding to the splendour of the actual pre-coronation procession itself were five pageant devices specifically written for the occasion and acted out upon specially constructed stages. Along the streets streamers and banners hung and, in specially railed-off enclosures the members of the various City companies stood, dressed in their official uniforms:

well apparelled with many riche furies, and their livery whodes uppon their shoulders, in comely and semely maner, having before them sondry persones well apparelled in silkes and chaines of golde, as wyflers and garders of the sayd companies, beside a number of riche hanginges, as well of tapistrie, arras, clothes of golde, silver, velvet, damaske, sattin, and other silkes,

plentifullye hanged all the way as the Quenes
Highnes passed from the Towre through the
Citie.²⁷

That these members of the City companies should have such pride of place is not surprising, as they were responsible for financing the celebratory devices through which the procession passed. Furthermore, these men formed what was effectively the government of the City at the time and ran civic matters with a great deal of independence from the Crown. Twenty six Aldermen, each elected by the various Trade Guilds (for life), were charged with the management of a ward of the city, and they in turn annually elected one of their number to be the new Lord Mayor. These individuals represented a merchant oligarchy, and in the name of the Trade Guilds exercised a controlling influence upon the commercial life of the City. As the highest power in the City these Guilds, collectively known as the London Corporation, made the arrangements for such celebrations, financing the construction of the pageant stages and the decoration of the streets, as well as paying actors to participate in each of the pageant devices. For this particular procession they also paid for the streets to be gravelled.²⁸ The Aldermen formed part of the leading section of the procession, and the Lord Mayor proceeded in close proximity to the

²⁷Mulcaster 48. Michael Berlin has written of the (ideological) importance of such affluent display: "The outward appearance of the citizenry [i.e. the Members of the Livery Companies], their behaviour and dress in both ceremonial and everyday life, was considered as a prime means of maintaining the social order" ("Civic Ceremony in Early Modern London," Urban History Yearbook 1986 (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1986) 3-30: 23). The effects of such ceremonial display (as well as the effects of its everyday display) were therefore regarded as an essential part of any procession, and of the upholding of order itself.

²⁸This is perhaps too grand a term for what was actually done, as the Venetian Ambassador notes: "Owing to the deep mud caused by the foul weather and by the multitude of people and of horses, everyone had made preparation, by placing sand and gravel in front of their houses" (CSP (Ven) (1558-1580) 12).

Queen, demonstrating his position as first citizen, possessing power both in connection with and independent of the sovereign. This relationship between civic and royal authority was emphasised when, during the Recognition March Ralph Cholmley, the Recorder of the City, presented the Queen with 1000 marks in gold on behalf of the Trade Guilds. As a total event, the pre-coronation procession represents a material demonstration of dissymmetry, and forms a spectacular material centre. Just such a material entity is marked in the rural processional displays which the Queen and Court annually produced, the Royal Progresses.

Like the royal entries and pageants, summer progresses were not an Elizabethan innovation but rather had their roots in the Middle Ages. Elizabeth herself was an enthusiastic visitor who, according to Alison Plowden, “covered a lot of ground and actually slept in 241 different recorded places.”²⁹ With the exception of the years 1580-91 and 1595-99, when there were graver than usual fears for her safety, Elizabeth and her Court left the city in order to enjoy the country air. One of the major reasons for these royal tours was to escape the very real danger of the city, rank with the threat of the plague. This was no idle threat, as Paul Slack points out in his detailed study of plague epidemics; in 1563, for example, 24% of London’s population died because of the disease.³⁰ The death rate was particularly high in the capital, and concentrated also in the summer

²⁹Plowden, *Elizabethan England* 51.

³⁰Slack, *The Impact Of The Plague* 151.

months. Another practical reason for going on progress was the Queen's ability for shifting the enormous cost of keeping her Court onto one of her nobles, and thus alleviating the burden on her own coffers. This too was no small matter as Elizabeth observed the depletion of her treasury year by year, not least because of the continuing war with the Spanish. All costs for the entertainment and lodging of the Queen and her Court were borne by the host, and he would additionally be expected to present the sovereign with a symbol of his affection, usually in the form of expensive jewellery.

The overriding function of the progresses however was a political one, as it was for the royal entries. The parade that left London and wound its way through the countryside would not, in spectacular terms, be very different from that outlined in the Victory procession, and might indeed have been more impressive considering the sheer length of a procession which contained up to 400 carts and some 2400 pack-horses.³¹ The entire Court and all of its belongings often accompanied the Queen, forming a congregation that radiated affluence and power. A plan produced by Lord Burleigh in 1583 for his entertainment of Elizabeth at Theobalds describes a guest inventory, and indicates the scale of the task of having the Queen and her Court visit (see Appendix 2).³² Jean Wilson writes in the context of this inventory: "What Burleigh had to cater for was not just Elizabeth and her court, but that Court's

³¹Plowden, *Elizabethan England* 51.

³²This list interestingly mirrors that of the Victory procession, though it must be read as a cross-section rather than viewed in a linear fashion. When looked at in this way, it too builds to a climax around the presence of the Queen: see Nichols, *Elizabeth 2*: 400-404, and Jean Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth 1* 52-56.

servants, the servants' servants, the Queen's private kitchen staff, and the administrative staff that was necessary even when she was away from London...³³

While it is probable that Burleigh was anything but impressed by such a logistical and financial task, Elizabeth was aware of the propagandist rewards that were to be reaped from such a display of affluence and power, rewards founded in the effects that this perceived accessibility produced. En route to the various stately homes of the nobles and gentry to be visited she was visible to the common people, and indeed made herself so visible as this was a primary function of the progress. Not only was the Queen tying the bonds of loyalty between herself and various nobles, such as the Earl of Leicester (Kenilworth), Lord Norris (Rycote), Lord Montague (Cowdray), and the Earl of Hertford (Elevetham), she was cementing them between herself and the people who were in the service of those same nobles. Thus while the "give and take of gracious courtesies,"³⁴ took place within the house of a particular noble and confirmed "the bonds of personal affection and loyalty upon which much ... of Elizabeth's domestic statecraft so securely rested,"³⁵ these same bonds between Elizabeth and the majority of her rural subjects were seen to be tied both by this honourable exchange in aristocratic surroundings and by her presence on the path or highway. The splendour of the sovereign in this rural place,

³³Jean Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth 1* 56.

³⁴Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage 1*: 107.

³⁵Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage 1*: 107.

can be regarded as a major underlying mode of spectacular representation that was seen to be effective in terms of subjecting those at whom the display was aimed.

In these rural processions, civic authority is not as important as in their urban equivalent, and although all areas had some form of this authority, it did not play the determining role it did in London. One consequence of this was that, to a great extent, the space through which the procession was to pass was not prepared, other than having the royal Waymaker study the roads earlier in the year, having the area checked for cases of plague, and having the itinerary confirmed with the Queen's hosts. However, it is possible to perceive a positive propagandist effect created by the passing of the sovereign and the procession. That is to say, that as the progress made its way through the land--land which would, as they neared their destination, belong to the member of the aristocracy to be visited--it would invoke a process whereby it would contribute to the credibility of the prospective host and, simultaneously, siphon off a similar (local) legitimacy by its association with him. Just such a reality is apparent in the Ditchley Portrait of Elizabeth, painted in 1592 to commemorate the visit of the Queen to Sir Henry Lee, Master of the Armoury, at his stately home in Ditchley, Oxfordshire (see Fig. 3).³⁶ Elizabeth stands with her

³⁶This portrait, which hangs in the National Portrait Gallery, is a pervasive image of Elizabeth and, like the Procession picture, appears in the vast majority of studies of the Queen and the age, and indeed appears on the covers of many works of Elizabethan literary criticism: see Leonard Tennenhouse's *Power On Display* and Frances Yates's *Astraea: The Imperial Theme In The Sixteenth Century*, for example.

feet squarely in the county of Oxfordshire, the very centre of Sir Henry Lee's land. She towers above England, which itself seems to stretch over the earth, setting Ditchley, by her presence, at the centre of the world. In this scenario, Ditchley/Sir Henry Lee and Elizabeth feed off each other in a constitution of reciprocal legitimation. This mutual exchange is further exemplified as the Queen "symbolically banishes storms behind her and ushers in golden sunshine," bringing prosperity to that land where, in the entertainments that Sir Henry Lee provided, she symbolically "dispelled enchantments and thus awoke her host from a magical slumber."³⁷

Elizabeth's presence pulls Ditchley to the very centre where she "stands as an empress on the globe of the world,"³⁸ whilst Lee's land enables and supports such a global possibility.

Elizabeth and her Court visited many stately homes on their summer progresses and were entertained with pageant devices and masques on many of these visits.³⁹ Often the destination of the progress would be another city, such as Bristol, Norwich, Coventry, or Warwick, and in each the Queen would make a royal entry, though never on the scale of those which took place in London. These too had a foundation in propaganda, the Queen seeking the affection and thus loyalty of the inhabitants of these cities through the device of spectacle.

³⁷Roy Strong & Julia T Oman 76.

³⁸Strong, *The Cult Of Elizabeth* 154.

³⁹E. K. Chambers has collected together all of the visits and outings of the Queen, including her summer progresses and entries into cities (*The Elizabethan Stage* 4: 75-130). The reference to the Ditchley progress appears in the same volume (107).

However, whether in the city or in the country, on the streets or highways, there is always a cut-off point, a limit that is the interface of inclusion and exclusion. There is always a defining limit of those who display and those at whom the display is aimed. The immediate population is pulled toward the official centres in order to underwrite them, but can instead reject them. Furthermore, this official desire for underwriting is based on an exclusion that is a major defining element of the material centre. It is a process which is always a founding moment of the spectacular display itself, a condition of its very existence. It is a process discernible in contemporary documents dealing with these processions.

2. “To require the people to be silent”

Traditional readings of Elizabethan processions and entertainments, whether urban or rural, have taken their cue from the commissioned descriptions/pamphlets that appeared to coincide with the respective celebrations and, while initially admitting their propagandist nature, proceed to take them at face value as articulating a genuine exchange of mutual affection. That this practice is deeply conventional is evidenced by the fact that it is difficult to find any account of these texts that takes their ideological thrust seriously, and that consistently considers the implications that any reading of them must take into consideration. These conventional analyses are lacking in this respect, a defining repercussion of an evident slippage that occurs between the initial perception of propaganda and the final uncovering of an

unproblematic dialectic of love between sovereign and subjects. A closer examination of this process with regard to the pre-coronation procession and the Rycote and Ditchley entertainments will demonstrate this lack, and will enable also the articulation of the plethora of information that constitutes this lack.

The founding and inspirational text for conventional readings of Elizabeth's pre-coronation procession is Richard Mulcaster's The Passage Of Our Most Drad Sovereaign Lady Quene Elyzabeth Through The Citie Of London To Westminster The Daye Before Her Coronacion,⁴⁰ commissioned by the London Corporation in order to celebrate the occasion as well as to disseminate the message of the spectacle enacted in the streets of the capital. The existent record of Mulcaster's payment for his commission is interesting in many ways, not least in the fact that it is made clear that the Queen herself received a copy of his pamphlet:

Itm yt was orderyd and agreyd by the Court here this day that the Chamblyn shall geue vnto Rychard Mulcaster for his reward for makyng of the boke conteynyng and declaryng the historyes set furth in and by the Cyties pageaunte at the tyme of the Quenes highnes comyng thurrough the Cytye to her coronacon xls wch boke was geuyn vnto the Quenes grace.⁴¹

The pamphlet appeared nine days after the procession itself, and seems also to have been reprinted at some point later in the year,⁴² indicating its popularity.

⁴⁰Nichols, Elizabeth 1: 38-60.

⁴¹Corporation of London, Repertory (1558-1560) XIV: fol. 143.

⁴²Apart from the edition reprinted in Nichols and which shall be used exclusively in this study, another edition, printed by the same publisher (Richard Tottel) and with very few differences, exists as The Quenes Majesties Passage Through The Citie Of London To Westminster The

In the next chapter this pamphlet will be subjected to a close textual reading, including an examination of the description of the pageant devices performed for Elizabeth. For now, it is important only to record the tone of this text, in terms of the emphasis that Mulcaster puts upon the adoration and love shown by the procession's audience for their impending Queen, and to note also that subsequent analyses of this procession have uncritically accepted and drawn upon this emphasis.

Mulcaster's opening sentence records the entrance of the Queen into the city, "richely furnished," and "most honourably accompanied" by the splendour of "Gentlemen, Barons, and other the Nobilite of this Realme, as also with a notable trayne of goodly and beawtifull Ladies, richly appoynted."⁴³ This immediately communicates the spectacular nature of the event, a reality that Mulcaster demonstrates by his recording of the audience's response to the procession's entrance in his next sentence:

And entryng the Citie was of the People received marveylous entirely, as appeared by the assemblie, prayers, wishes, welcomminges, cryes, tender woordes, and all other signes, which argue a wonderfull earnest love of most obedient subjectes towarde theyr soveraigne.⁴⁴

Mulcaster makes it clear that this is not a love that travels in one direction, but insists on its mutual nature, the Queen demonstrating her love for the people "so that on eyther syde there was nothing but gladnes, nothing but prayer,

Day Before Her Coronacion, ed. James M. Osborn, introd. J. E. Neale (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960).

⁴³Mulcaster 38.

⁴⁴Mulcaster 38.

nothing but comfort.”⁴⁵ He continues in the same manner, perceiving the circulation of this mutual adoration:

The Quenes Majestie rejoysed marveilously to see that so exceedingly shewed toward her Grace, which all good Princes have ever desyred. I meane so earnest love of subjectes, so evidently declared even to her Grace’s owne person, being carried in the midst of them. The People again were wonderfully rauished with the louing answers and gestures of theyr Princesse, like to the which they had before tryed at her first comming to the Towre from Hatfield. This her Grace’s loving behaviour preconceived in the People’s heades upon these considerations was then throughly confirmed, and indede emplantad a wonderfull hope in them touchyng her woorthy Governement in the reste of her Reygne. For in all her passage, she did not only shew her most gracious love toward the people in generall, but also privately, if the baser personages had offered her Grace any flowers or such like as a signification of their good wyll, or moved to her any sute, she most gently, to the common rejoysing of all lookers on, and private comfort of the partie, staid her chariot, and heard theyr requestes. So that if a man shoulde say well, he could not better tearme the Citie of London that time, than a stage wherein was shewed the wonderfull spectacle, of a noble hearted Princesse toward her most loving People, and the People’s exceding comfort in beholding so worthy a Sovereaigne, and hearing so Prince like a voice ... could not but enflame her naturall, obedient, and most loving People.... Thus therefore the Quenes Majestie passed from the Towre till she came to Fanchurche, the People on eche side joyously beholdyng the viewe of so gracious a Ladye theyr Quene....⁴⁶

⁴⁵Mulcaster 38.

⁴⁶Mulcaster 38-39.

This account of an exchange of reciprocal love has been reproduced at some length in order to show how Mulcaster delineates for the reader an occasion characterised by its unproblematic and implicit acknowledgment of degree, indeed its effusive celebration of hierarchy. In this account, the Queen has already been successful in gaining the support and love of her subjects, has already won them over, is already the fulfilment of their desire to be justly and nobly ruled.

While this excerpt articulates both the skill with which Elizabeth presented herself publicly, and the sense in which this presentation took place in a “theatrical” setting,⁴⁷ it is Mulcaster’s construction of the nature of the audience that I wish to focus upon. The importance of such a study cannot be overstressed, as his delineation of this audience and its responses to the sovereign’s presence has been transmitted throughout history, being endlessly reproduced in a manner characterised by a focusing upon the dominant and dominating figure of Elizabeth herself and ignoring to a great extent the complexity of the procession’s possible contemporary audience.

This conventional reading of the procession began almost immediately, as is demonstrated by its coverage in Holinshed’s Chronicles, where it is evident

⁴⁷This perception of Elizabeth as actress in this situation, as well as the essentially theatrical setting represented by her presence in the city streets has been a favourite textual event of the New Historicism, for example in Greenblatt’s “To Fashion A Gentleman: Spenser And The Destruction Of The Bower Of Bliss,” (Renaissance Self Fashioning 157-192). This is a subject which is dealt with in detail in chapter four. The sense in which Elizabeth acted perfectly in the pre-coronation procession itself is perhaps best summed up by Bergeron’s definition of her as a (successful) “unscheduled actor” (English Civic Pageantry 15).

that Mulcaster's pamphlet has simply been reproduced word for word.⁴⁸ It begins:

At hir entring the citie, she was of the people
receiued maruellous intierlie, as appeared by the
assemblies, praiers, wishes, welcommings, cries,
tender words, and all other signes which argued
a wonderfull earnest love of most obedient
subiects towards their souereigne.⁴⁹

The text continues in this manner, mutual love obviously once more the overriding theme. Holinshed commissioned his Chronicle in 1570, and it finally appeared in 1577, and was for many years regarded as historically accurate and not as a work of propaganda. The propagandist nature of this work is underlined however by the fact that it merely reproduces Mulcaster's report. But it is important also in the way that, through this reproduction, it initiates the construction of a credibility around the truth-value of the events as produced by Mulcaster. That is to say, that an incremental integrity is apparent in the casting as "truth" of the initial "truth" of an earlier text, a reality that is visible in the further transmission of those "truths" to our own day.⁵⁰ In his influential study of The Reign Of Elizabeth 1558-1603, a part of The Oxford History Of England series, J. B. Black demonstrates precisely this process of transmission, whereby assumed knowledge is passed off as fact. Regarding the pre-coronation procession he writes: "From the first day of her arrival in the capital ... the young queen revelled in the enthusiastic loyalty of her

⁴⁸Raphael Holinshed, Chronicles Of England, Scotland, and Ireland, 6 Vols. (London: J. Johnson, 1807) 4: 159-175.

⁴⁹Holinshed 4: 159.

⁵⁰It is worth pointing out perhaps the importance to modern scholarship of Shakespeare's use of Holinshed in the sense that it is often the purpose of this scholarship to determine the ways in which Shakespeare vied away from "real" history as it was written in the Chronicles. This is a theme discussed at length by Graham Holderness in his Shakespeare Recycled 1-6.

subjects, feasting their eyes with equipages....The popular rejoicing reached a climax on the eve of the coronation....”⁵¹ This is typical of the sort of statement regarding the nature of the audience that has traditionally appeared in historical writings, as is clear from the influential works of J. B. Neale, E. C. Wilson, Frances Yates, and Roy Strong. This is further evidenced by that most highly regarded examination of processions to date, David Bergeron’s English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642 where, despite the disclaimer that Mulcaster’s pamphlet is indeed “a marvellous piece of propaganda” in which “Elizabeth is seen in an extremely favourable light,”⁵² he writes that from “Fenchurch to Temple Bar the sovereign has moved through the city amid the shouts and acclamations of London’s citizens.”⁵³ This demonstrates “a give-and-take ... an intimacy of reaction,” so that one “is impressed with how the elements of actor, audience, and honoured guest fuse into a single compound of entertainment....”⁵⁴ Thus Bergeron perceives the dominant theme of the event to have been one of unity, and he perceives with what success this has been achieved; to the extent that one can only be impressed.

Naturally enough, this kind of admiration reaches its peak in the more hagiographic, popularising studies of Elizabeth such as that previously looked at, Alison Plowden’s Elizabethan England: Life In An Age Of Adventure.

Here there is an attempt to bring the occasion to life, filling it with pathos and

⁵¹J. B. Black, The Reign Of Elizabeth 1558-1603, The Oxford History Of England (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959) 5-6.

⁵²Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 13.

⁵³Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 22.

⁵⁴Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 15.

melodrama: “It was a cold January day, with flurries of snow in the air and muddy underfoot, but no discomforts of cold or wet feet could dampen the enthusiasm of the Londoners as they waited to greet their Queen....”⁵⁵

Plowden grounds her observations in a historical context by then quoting from a “contemporary account,” the author of which (Mulcaster) she does not name, nor indicates had written this account on a commission. She continues: “Bells pealed, musicians played and everywhere the crowds cheered in ecstasy as they caught their first glimpse of the slim, red-headed young woman in her sumptuous robes....”⁵⁶ Much of the contemporary account is further referred to until the procession comes to an end: “And so, as the winter dusk closed in, borne along on a great warm emotional wavecrest of love and joy, England’s Elizabeth came home....”⁵⁷ As previously stated, Plowden’s study happens to be one of the most pervasive accounts of the pre-coronation procession, and is certainly one of the most accessible. It would indeed be possible to suggest that its status as popular history disqualifies its being taken seriously, and that its methodology and its aims do not require the attention to bibliographical detail that more scholarly studies do. The desire behind its use in this current study is however an attempt to outline the wide range that this conventional knowledge covers, the success which typifies the transmission of this field of evidence. And, with regard to Plowden’s absences, it is interesting to note that Stephen Greenblatt, when quoting from the very same source in an attempt to support his theory of Elizabeth as successful actress and processions as

⁵⁵Plowden 13.

⁵⁶Plowden 15.

⁵⁷Plowden 17.

successful sites for the subjectification of the population, informs us that it was written by “one observer.”⁵⁸ There is no mention in Greenblatt’s analysis, one of the most important modern academic studies of the period, of who this observer was, nor indeed of the status of his contemporary account.

The failure of Greenblatt and Plowden to state the ideological positioning of their source material is important in terms of a further, similar lack that is discernible. For while those scholars who acknowledge their use of Mulcaster further agree that they are drawing upon a text characterised by its function as propaganda, they immediately allow a slippage that enables them to accept much, if not all, of what it says as fact. Thus we can read Bergeron’s disclaimer about the pamphlet being “a marvellous piece of propaganda,” and then, within the same sentence, that it is “in addition ... a record of the events....”⁵⁹ This is perhaps acceptable in the sense that, naturally, there is little documentation of the event itself, and every record that exists needs to be read carefully. However, it is necessary to take it seriously not just as a record of events, but as propaganda also. For, despite the fact that evidence regarding the procession is scarce, there are two other eye-witness accounts of the event (one of which is extensive and highly detailed), that could be said to be more disinterested than Mulcaster’s in their observation of events. The authors of these accounts may have been somewhat disadvantaged in comparison to Mulcaster in that they were perhaps not privy to certain information and so

⁵⁸Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 168.

⁵⁹Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry* 13.

their observations are not as full as the official author's. At the same time, their observations would have been more objective. Whatever they consist of/in or lack however, they need to be taken seriously, and can be regarded, at the very least, as something other than propaganda.

It would be unfair to deny the fact that scholars do indeed draw upon these other eye-witness accounts in their analysis of the pre-coronation procession. Bergeron, for example, quotes liberally from the text of Il Schifanoja, the Venetian Ambassador who, as shown earlier, wrote a long report concerning the procession to the Castellan of Mantua, one which Bergeron quite rightly states is the "chief contemporary account in addition to the specially prepared quarto" written by Mulcaster.⁶⁰ Plowden and Clifford Geertz peruse it also and extract certain details regarding both the size and the splendour of the occasion,⁶¹ a move that typifies many studies of the procession. Particularly important for all of these studies is the Venetian Ambassador's estimation of the number of horses in the procession (and thus by extension the number of humans present), as well as his description of the splendid and rich appearance of the Queen. Important too is his description of the decoration of the streets, and of the positioning of the members of the Guilds in specially constructed wooden enclosures. This information is reproduced in most descriptions of

⁶⁰Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry* 13. The despatch written by the Venetian Ambassador is reproduced in the *Calendar Of State Papers (Venetian) (1558-1580)* 12-16. It is worth stating that neither the position of Mulcaster nor the Venetian Ambassador during the procession is indicated in their documents, and it is therefore difficult to give priority to either report on the grounds of superior accessibility to events.

⁶¹Plowden does not acknowledge this use, though its use is apparent in her description of "the splendid decoration of the streets" (15). Clifford Geertz does cite his Venetian source, and also that he found his information in the reproduction of some of the Italian's report in Bergeron (Geertz, "Charisma," *Local Knowledge* 125-126).

the procession, and tends to confirm the spectacular nature of the whole event, particularly when immersed in an analysis that uses the Mulcaster text descriptively. Occasionally, the third existent eye-witness account of the procession is used, though because it is rather brief (a mere two pages), and because much of what it reports is contained in the Venetian despatch, the relevant excerpt from Henry Machyn's Diary is often ignored.⁶² However, the mobilisation of these two eye-witness accounts in conjunction with Mulcaster's, brings us to an important point. For, these texts are always read in a parallel manner, that is to say, additionally. They are never read against each other, never set at odds, in terms which perceive them to be texts of differing status. They are all read as though they are interchangeable, and Mulcaster's text is never read sceptically in comparison, never read as propaganda. The importance of such a methodology becomes clear with regard to the nature of the common people/audience and their response to the coming of the Queen when it is realised that of the three accounts it is only Mulcaster who mentions the crowd at all. That is to say, that in both the Venetian account, and that of Machyn there is not a single mention of the presence that defines the content and tone of Mulcaster's report and that in many ways constitutes the ideological thrust of his whole project.⁶³ For

⁶²The Diary Of Henry Machyn 186-187.

⁶³It is worth mentioning here a related debate concerning varying interpretations of the events of the following day, at the coronation ceremony itself. This debate takes place in the pages of the journal English Historical Review, Vols. 22-25, written in the years 1907-1910. It concerns the conflicting accounts, one Spanish, one Italian, and one English regarding whether Elizabeth was present for the part of the coronation mass when the host was elevated (Protestants did not believe the bread to be the body of Christ--thus this was seen as a Catholic ritual), or whether she walked out at this point (returning only to be crowned). The debate is interesting in that it does precisely what has not been done with regard to the reports of the pre-coronation procession--i.e. the reading of the eye-witness accounts against each other. However the underlying reasons for the debate come down to a dubious nationalism, scholars

Mulcaster, this presence is a determining one, emphasising both the mutual love that circulated between population and sovereign, and the acceptance of a Foucauldian dissymmetry by the former. It defines for us a unified population, content in its certainty of a rigid, secure and natural hierarchy. And of course, as demonstrated, this presence fills the pages of analyses of this procession from Holinshed onwards, through the likes of Bergeron and Plowden, into the modern readings of the New Historicism. The presence of these “most obedient subjects” has in turn become a constitutive element of all of these studies of the nature of Elizabeth, of Elizabethan processions and further, of Elizabethan society itself.

The absence articulated by these two eye-witness accounts obviously needs to be considered and must be negotiated. What they fail to record is not proof that the audience described by Mulcaster was in fact absent. Perhaps they suggest rather something similar to what Glynne Wickham has observed with regard to medieval processions:

The starting point [of a ruler’s claim to rule] was the physical manifestation of the ruler’s person to the subjects assembled within the capital city. This could most conveniently be achieved by a procession through the streets which were lined for the occasion with beholders. I say ‘lined’ rather than ‘thronged’ because the fullest discipline that medieval civic administration could achieve was enforced on these occasions (emphasis added).⁶⁴

tending to side with the English account for no other apparent reason than the fact that it is English. This is perhaps due to the debate taking place in a jingoistic atmosphere in the years leading up to WW1. Needless to say, this English report also happens to be the most sympathetic to Elizabeth herself.

⁶⁴Wickham 1: 53.

Naturally the early modern period had a much more sophisticated system of communication (and coercion), but Wickham's observation is relevant. It should be remembered (though in the majority of studies it is not) that the decoration and gravelling of the streets, as well as the actual presence of the members of the Guilds had been ordered by the Lord Mayor. Thus the "City was at very great charge to express their love and joy,"⁶⁵ an order that the Guilds were careful to adhere to for, as contemporary evidence demonstrates, their failure to do so would have consequences: "Not failinge hereof, as you will answere the contraire at your peril."⁶⁶ As stated, most studies use the information concerning the presence of the Guilds, yet do so as a way of adding to the implicit agreement of all sections of Elizabethan London to play their part in the event, and also to help conjure up the sense of spontaneous celebration that characterised the procession. There is very rarely mention of the Guilds being ordered to follow certain instructions.

Returning to the theme of the common people as audience, perhaps they are absent in Machyn's and Il Schifanoia's accounts because they were, in fact, rather quiet, rather un-celebratory, as the crowd had apparently been in 1533 for the entry of Anne Boleyn.⁶⁷ Or perhaps because these recorders of the event, members of the higher orders of society, viewed the procession in such

⁶⁵Nichols, *Elizabeth 1*: 35.

⁶⁶Corporation of London, *Repertory (1558-1560)* XIV: fol. 104. The instructions were clear: "Item it was ordered that the Bachelors of the Mercers Company shall be permitted to stand at Conduit in Cheapside directly and against the Master of the same company on the furthest side of the street there at the Queen's coming to her Coronation."

⁶⁷R. Malcolm Smuts, "Public Ceremony And Royal Charisma: the English Royal Entry In London, 1485-1642," *The First Modern Society: Essays In English History In Honour Of Lawrence Stone*, eds. A. L. Beier, David Cannadine and James M. Rosenbaum (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 65-93: 76.

a way as to remain blind to the presence of the mob. Perhaps, in an experience similar to that outlined in the discussion of the Procession picture, the crowds of “adoring subjects” were simply not seen, or not recorded, because it was felt that they were not important. Whatever we wish to surmise regarding this absence, the reading of these documents in this way certainly problematises Mulcaster’s text, and contributes to a desire to read it sceptically. It adds to the need to read it as a propagandist text, especially in terms of what it actually makes out of the status of the audience. This is naturally important in the further terms of what has been made out of that presence which Mulcaster represents in such an emphatic manner. This is particularly apparent in certain sections of the procession where Elizabeth continually has difficulty in hearing and requests the crowd to be silent to enable her to hear what is being said (to her) at the pageant devices. Much has been made of this, not least in terms of how interested Elizabeth was in hearing the normative lessons that were being enacted, thus giving the impression of being a good and obedient sovereign, one who takes the views of her subjects into account. Her ability as an effective actress has also been stressed in this context, as has her skill in manipulating the crowd. Finally, the fact that there was so much cheering has been naturally interpreted as an indication of the love felt for her by her subjects. However, not only are the crowds absent in the other accounts of the procession, but there is also no mention of the Queen having to halt and quieten anybody, or having to send a messenger forward to request silence at each pageant device as she approached, as it appears in Mulcaster (and many subsequent studies):

And ere the Quenes Majestie came wythin
hearing of thys Pageaunt, she sent certaine, as
also at all the other Pageautes, to require the
People to be silent. For her Majestie was
disposed to heare all that shoulde be sayde unto
her.⁶⁸

The final section of Mulcaster's pamphlet is particularly interesting in this context, and reveals in its textual form the constructed nature of his undertaking. This section takes the form of an addendum or an appendix and is entitled "Certain notes of the Queenes Majesties great mercie, clemencie, and wisdom, used in this passage."⁶⁹ This appendix contains a number of examples of the Queen's interchanges with certain members of the crowd during the procession, and lists her responses to certain situations and comments she had overheard. Among other things, she cheers up a crying man, smiles at the mention of the name of her own father and confirms the authority of the city. These various examples attempt to personalise the Queen, to underline her caring nature, and to instil a sense of her integrity through communicating the nobility of her thought even when expressed spontaneously. The fact that they are tacked onto the end of the record of the procession induces the perception that they were in fact invented events. They appear almost as an afterthought, as though her humanity and approachability had not been made apparent enough in the main body of the text. These examples of the Queen's humanity/integrity have often been repeated, and much has also been made of them. Yet again however, none of these events are present in the other eye-witness accounts of the procession, neither in the

⁶⁸Mulcaster 44.

⁶⁹Mulcaster 58.

main texts nor in the form of appendices. This is another example of that absence noted above, but now with an added dimension. For stress should be laid upon the fact that the report of Il Schifanoia is a very full description of the procession and the pageants performed for the Queen. As such, it is relevant that, within the context of such a full description, certain defining moments and events (for Mulcaster) are absent. These moments and events are defining in the history of analysis of this procession and of this society, and need to be seen to have arisen from a document that has been “scratched over and recopied many times.”

Traditional analysis has relied upon Mulcaster’s pamphlet to initiate the construction of a defining relationship between sovereign and subjects that has developed into a greater delineation of the power relations of Elizabethan society as a whole. As stated earlier, spectacular display/ritual is regarded as the touchstone of the representation of the dissymmetrical nature of these power relations, the population being subjected by their contemplation of the arbitrary potency of the monarch. Foucault writes (with regard to public executions which, as stated earlier, he equates with such practices as royal entries) that in “the ceremonies of the public execution, the main character was the people, whose real and immediate presence was required for the performance.”⁷⁰ If it is therefore accepted that such rituals as royal entries did

⁷⁰He continues: “An execution that was known to be taking place, but which did so in secret, would scarcely have had any meaning” (Foucault, *Discipline And Punish* 57-58).

seek to interpellate/hail the population--their "main character"--then this main character would obviously need to be there in order to receive their lesson.

This discussion of the main character at the entry for Elizabeth suggests that their presence was not perhaps what it has traditionally been made out to be.

There is the possibility, that they were in fact, to a large extent, absent.

Conversely, there is the possibility that this main character was indeed present, but not in the way outlined by Mulcaster. That is to say, that there are other perspectives from which this presence can be observed to suggest a more realistic setting than that defined for us by those conventional readings of the relationship between Elizabeth and her subjects. If a crowd of common people was present at Elizabeth's pre-coronation procession, it is possible that they would not have received and celebrated the Queen in the manner claimed by Mulcaster, but in a much more sporadic, reluctant, attenuated way. That is to say, that given the harsh and arbitrary social conditions in which many people lived in London at that time, is it convincing to perceive the common response to a spectacular display as one of monolithic adoration? Is it tenable that this royal entry was successful in its ideological aim, was indeed somehow successful before it even displayed itself? It is worth examining the evidence that exists with regard to these social conditions in order to try to determine what this reaction is likely to have been, to see whether the common presence was in fact a reluctant and sceptical one.

3. "The insolence of the mob is extreme"

The social stability of the population in early-modern London is the site of an ongoing and controversial debate within the subject area of historical studies, a conflict that has witnessed the emergence of two major conceptions of the population that divide into camps which claim the ruling factor to be one of stability or, alternatively, instability. The camp which tends towards the perception of a guiding principle of stability is characterised by the studies of V. Pearl and Steve Rappaport, who take as their over-arching historical proof the fact that London did not witness any kind of major uprising in the Elizabethan period, demonstrating the reality of a well-governed City with each level of society accepting its hierarchical position and collectively working towards the greater good.⁷¹ These studies are characterised by their depiction of a city ruled by consensus, and continually set themselves up against prior studies that recognised a certain level of instability in the capital at the time. Such are the findings of A. L. Beier, Paul Slack and Peter Clark, scholars who tend to suggest that London sometimes lurched towards a significant popular rebellion, particularly in the troublesome final decade of Elizabeth's rule.⁷² While it should be noted that Pearl and Rappaport tend to overstate their case against this latter group of historians, in the sense that they believe that this group are drawing conclusions much more extreme than in

⁷¹See particularly: V. Pearl, "Change And Stability In Seventeenth Century London," London Journal 5: 3-34, and "Social Policy In Early Modern London," History And Imagination: Essays In Honour Of H. R. Trevor-Roper 115-31; and Steve Rappaport, Worlds Within Worlds.

⁷²See Slack, Poverty And Policy In Tudor And Stuart England; Paul Clark and Paul Slack, introduction, Crisis And Order In English Towns 1-55; Paul Clark and Paul Slack, English Towns In Transition 1500-1700; A. L. Beier, "Vagrants And The Social Order In Elizabethan England," Past And Present 64: 3-29 and Masterless Men; A. L. Beier and R. Finlay, eds., London, 1500-1700.

fact they actually do, rather than follow the logic of either of these courses it suits the purposes of this study to follow the trajectory set up by Ian Archer, in which he outlines a convincing case for the perception of potential instability by the governing classes of Elizabethan London, a perception that led them to attempt to counter subversive forces with a (confused) mixture of legislation and physical force.⁷³ Archer believes that the ruling elite came more and more to perceive a sense of crisis, and therefore felt the need to counter it. This accounts both for the apparent obsession of the authorities with regard to the passing of laws against such groups as vagrants, apprentices and disbanded soldiers and sailors (and indeed actors/playhouses) during this period, and for the fact that the vast numbers of individuals who suffered due to the social structure in the capital never joined in sufficient numbers to endanger that structure. Records for the latter part of Elizabeth's reign are much fuller than for the early part, and it is therefore also *important for this study to* acknowledge that to take an extreme position as to the reality of actual instability in this period would perhaps be foolhardy. A lack of evidence makes it impossible to generalise about such a matter. However, it is worth looking at the statistics that do exist in an attempt to both diversify and problematise the notion of the common people as having been successfully subjected in the way suggested by traditional criticism in the case of, for example, the pre-coronation procession. The aim of such a perusal is not to suggest that these individuals were forcibly held back at the procession in their attempt to harm the impending monarch. Rather it is to suggest that

⁷³Ian W. Archer, The Pursuit Of Stability.

conceptions of their presence as uncritical consumers of successful spectacle is more to do with normative (re)constructions of the reality of an overriding principle of unity than with any notion of historical accuracy. A brief examination of the several material factors that would have impacted upon the lives of the common people is necessary in order to ascertain what their experience of such spectacles is likely to have been.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of London during this period was its vast growth in population. According to statistics reproduced by Beier and Finlay, London “grew from a middling city of 120,000 in 1550, to 200,000 in 1600 [a 67% increase], 375,000 in 1650 [an 88% increase],”⁷⁴ a process that naturally caused problems regarding housing, employment, disease, and crime. Much of this growth was the direct result of the enclosure of land, as well as harvest failures and the laying-off of retainers and soldiers and sailors.⁷⁵ This being the case, the vast majority of migrants into London through the course of this period were poor, single, males who were often completely destitute. These groups added to the burgeoning population of urban poor, subject to the vagaries of London’s economic life, particularly the insecurity of its

⁷⁴Beier and Finlay, introduction, “The Significance Of The Metropolis,” London 1500-1700 2. These figures are based upon the various surviving parish registers for London.

⁷⁵This last point is clarified by Martin Holmes in his Elizabethan London: “there was no such thing, in Elizabeth’s time, as a national standing army. Soldiers volunteered, or were pressed, for a specific enterprise and disbanded at the end of it, and not all of them had either the opportunity or the desire to go back to honest civilian occupations” (93). For contemporary documentation of the pressing of men, see John Stow, Annales (London: Thomas Adams, 1615) 1299, 1303, and 1308; The Acts of the Privy Council (1597) 290, APC (1600-01) 94-95, APC (1592-93) 43-44 and 585, and APC (1601-1604) 27-28. For a broad discussion of the phenomena, see C. G. Cruickshank, Elizabeth’s Army and Lindsay Boynton, The Elizabethan Militia.

centralised cloth trade.⁷⁶ The suburbs especially witnessed a soaring rise in population, thus the emergence of pervasive poverty and vagrancy occurred amongst a population very much at the mercy of plague.

The early years of Elizabeth's reign witnessed a plague epidemic that seriously affected London's population. In 1563, for example, Paul Slack notes that nearly a quarter of the capital's populace was wiped out. Slack goes on to state that there was also a high recovery rate for plague--somewhere in the region of 40%--and that therefore in 1563, particularly in the summer months, perhaps as much as 40% of London's population was incapacitated.⁷⁷ It should be noted that 1563 also seems to have been one of the worst years for plague in Elizabeth's reign. However, even if we accept that perhaps only half of the figure quoted for population incapacitation could be applied to the year of the pre-coronation procession, it still presents us with the probability of there being a real crisis in terms of disease. And further, this possibility is emphasised if we also take into account the fact that, at the very moment of Elizabeth's coronation--the height of winter--England was in the middle of its worst ever influenza epidemic. Again according to Slack, this epidemic "produced the greatest mortality crisis of the whole period [1485-1665]"

⁷⁶See A. L. Beier, Masterless Men 20-27 and 91-2, and "Engine of Manufacture: the Trades of London," London: 1500-1700 141-167. Beier bases his figures for the decline in the cloth trade upon the occupational titles existent in the surviving parish burial registers.

⁷⁷Slack, London 1500-1700 62. Slack provides a much more detailed analysis of the plague and its effects in The Impact Of The Plague In Tudor And Stuart England, both with regard to London and the country as a whole. He actually shows figures for various years between 1563 and 1665, and clarifies that his statistics are based on records of burials and plague burials identified by the contemporary bills of mortality and collected by I Sutherland in A Summary Tabulation Of Annual Totals of Burials, Plague Deaths and Christenings in London Prior to 1666, a copy of which is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

between 1557 and 1559, when 11 per cent of the population of England may have died,”⁷⁸ a fact that witnessed “the worst demographic disaster in the country’s history in the whole period covered by parish registers.”⁷⁹ Needless to say, much like the plague, there was also no doubt a high recovery rate for influenza, the recorded death rate therefore not reflecting the true impact of the disease, nor indeed its pervasiveness. While it is certain that the impact of this epidemic, which was at its height at the time of Elizabeth’s entry into London in January 1558, was felt by the poorer classes to a much greater extent than by those better off, it should be stressed that this epidemic did not respect class and in “its later stages ... [it] seems to have affected the prosperous classes at least as much as the poor, as the will statistics suggest....”⁸⁰

That London’s social structure came under great pressure with this combination of migration and disease is borne out by a plethora of evidence demonstrating the rise of poverty and vagrancy during Elizabeth’s reign. A. L. Beier and Roger Finlay point out for example that between 1550 and 1598, censuses showed a 3-fold rise in the number of houses in need when the population rose by only a quarter, and show also that vagrancy increased “12-fold from 1560 to 1625, a period in which metropolitan population only quadrupled.”⁸¹ Although problems were greater in the 1590s, much of the legislation passed in the early years of Elizabeth’s reign demonstrates an

⁷⁸Paul Slack, Poverty And Policy In Tudor And Stuart England 48-49.

⁷⁹Slack, The Impact Of The Plague 71.

⁸⁰Slack, The Impact Of The Plague 72.

⁸¹Beier and Finlay, introduction, “The Significance Of The Metropolis,” London 1500-1700 18.

attempt by the authorities to deal with this problem of vagrancy. This included proposals to Parliament in 1559 which “contained swingeing attacks upon social mobility,”⁸² a process that was to eventually lead to the so-called “whipping campaign” of 1569-1572, whereby vagrants were encouraged to return to their home towns initially by the threat, and subsequently by the implementation of such a punishment. Beier is very probably overstating his case when he writes that there “was something like a state of war between the City authorities and the suburban vagrant,”⁸³ but contemporary evidence demonstrates the extent to which the authorities found it necessary to punish this social group.⁸⁴

It is possible, given this scenario, to imagine a large section of the audience (vagrants tended to spend winter in the cities) for the pre-coronation procession as consisting of individuals who were not constituted by their circumstances as “most loving People.” A significant number of people, whether migrant or indigenous, subject to hunger, poverty, bad housing, overcrowding, plague, influenza, and finding themselves criminalised because of this, would have typified the Londoners present as Elizabeth passed. A mass of poor individuals, often forced into criminal activity, for whom no laws existed that could alleviate their condition, but rather laws that could and

⁸²Beier, Masterless Men 156.

⁸³Beier, Masterless Men 43.

⁸⁴The most revealing sources in this context are the Bridewell Hospital Court Books, 1559-1660, in the Guildhall Library; J. C. Jeaffreson, ed., Middlesex County Records I: Indictments, Coroners' Inquests, Post-Mortem and Recognizances from 3 Edward VI to the End of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth (Middlesex: County Records Society, 1886); J. S. Cockburn, Calendar of Assize Records: Home Circuit Indictments, Elizabeth 1 and James 1 (London: HMSO, 1975-80).

would punish them for it, probably stood and witnessed the procession of absolute affluence and absolute inequality pass through the streets, and (we are told) were joyously overcome by the splendour of it all.

While no records exist that relate to any sort of disruption or disorder during Elizabeth's progress through the city, official processions were not always trouble free. Such an occasion is that recorded in the Calendar of State Papers (Venetian), with regard to the 1617 Lord Mayor's Show, The Triumphs Of Honour And Industry, written by Thomas Middleton.⁸⁵ In his despatch, Orazio Busino describes a scene of disorder:

the insolence of the mob is extreme. They cling behind the coaches and should the coachman use his whip, they jump down and pelt him with mud. In this way we saw them bedaub the smart livery of one coachman, who was obliged to put up with it. In these great uproars no sword is ever unsheathed, everything ends in kicks, fisty cuffs and muddy faces.⁸⁶

While this scene demonstrates the unruliness of the crowd at a spectacular procession, it would be unwise to make too much of it in the terms of this current study. Not only is it anecdotal, it took place some sixty years after the pre-coronation procession, and is also different in the fact that it is a civic rather than a royal entry. However, placed into the context of what has already been said regarding this common presence, it contributes to the problematisation of what has traditionally been held to characterise that presence. This is particularly the case given the specific hardships--plague and

⁸⁵Calendar Of State Papers (Venetian) (1617-1619) 60.

⁸⁶CSP (Ven) (1617-1619) 60.

influenza particularly--under which the audience for the 1558 procession suffered.

The problematisation of the success of this spectacular event in terms of its ideological aims is further emphasised when certain important allegorical figures present in the pre-coronation procession are examined. The final pageant device for example saw the Queen reach Temple Bar:

which was dressed fynelye with the two ymages of Gotmagot the Albione, and Corineus the Briton, two gyantes bigge in stature, furnished accordingly; which held in their handes, even above the gate, a table, wherin was written ... theeffect of all the Pageantes which the Citie before had erected....⁸⁷

The sheer size and appearance of these two figures of London mythical history contributed, it was believed, to the spectacular nature of the procession, indeed of every procession in London, belonging as they did to the Guildhall and representing both the authority and grandeur of the City government.⁸⁸ This is clear in the following excerpt from Lawrence Manley's recent study:

The discursive exchange in the later Tudor entries was reinforced by the strange reappearance of the ancient City palladia at the very limit of the City's jurisdiction at Temple Bar. Both Philip II and then Elizabeth were confronted at the Bar by twin giants--identified in Elizabeth's entry as 'Gotmagot' and 'Corineus'--the city palladia who had stood in apotropaic defiance at the initial entry of many earlier monarchs. Because these figures

⁸⁷Mulcaster 55.

⁸⁸See for example: F. W. Fairholt, Lord Mayors' Pageants and Gog And Magog: The Giants In Guildhall (London: John Camden Hotten, 1859); J. G. Nichols, London Pageants (London: J. B. Nichols & Son, 1831); George Unwin, The Gilds And Companies Of London (1908; London: Methuen, 1925); Shelia Williams, "The Lord Mayor's Show In Tudor And Stuart Times," The Guildhall Miscellany 10 (London: The Malone Society, 1959).

manifested the City's might and defiant spirit, their new role at Temple Bar was especially significant....It is as if in moving their position the City had found ... a new meaning in the strength of its giant representatives. As elsewhere in Europe, where the giant effigies of towns came to symbolise 'the imposition of culture and authority', the power of Gotmagot and Corineus now rested not so much in being 'grym of sight' as in drawing and inscribing powerful conclusions.⁸⁹

In terms of the pre-coronation procession, it can be surmised that these "powerful conclusions" would be drawn and that the audience would be subjected by the sight of these mythological giants. Not according to George Puttenham however, who in The Arte Of English Poesie (1589), referring to the presence of the giants in the Lord Mayor's Show, determines quite the opposite effect:

But generally the high stile is disgraced and made foolish and ridiculous by all wordes affected, counterfait, and puffed vp ... and can not be better resembled than to these midsommer pageants in London, where, to make the people wonder, are set forth great and vglie Gyants marching as if they were aliue, and armed at all points, but within they are stuffed full of browne paper and tow, which the shrewd boyes vnderpeering do guilefully discover and turne to a great derision... (emphasis added).⁹⁰

What Puttenham is articulating here of course is the failure of an intended effect, an example of unsuccessful hailing, that both evokes the existence in this ideological desire of its opposite effect and demonstrates the presence of

⁸⁹Lawrence Manley, Literature And Culture In Early Modern London (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 251.

⁹⁰George Puttenham, The Arte Of English Poesie 1589, "Chapter VI: 'Of the High, Low, and Meane Subiect,'" reproduced in Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. Gregory Smith, 2 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959) 1-193: 159.

scepticism on the part of the “shrewd boyes.”⁹¹ It shows the manifestation of a carnival spirit, an opposition to a central authority in terms of physicality and meaning, an antagonism that, if the likes of Dekker and Greene are to be believed in their insistence upon the fact that the Lord Mayor’s Show was the natural site for the operation of pickpockets and other criminals, is both defining and uncontroversial.⁹² Most of all, it contributes to the construction of an alternative presence constituting the audience of the pre-coronation procession.

This reading of the pre-coronation procession resembles that already performed on the Procession picture, and the questioning of the conceptualisation of the crowd both in terms of whether it was there at all and, if it was, what form it took, is similar to the sceptical fashion in which the picture was treated. The general hermeneutics of suspicion into which the picture was immersed and which produced a number of connecting difficulties

⁹¹This is a point noted by Michael Bristol in *Carnival and Theatre*, where he writes of the ambivalent nature of the giants, that they were “figures of awe but also figures of fun” (p66). He places Puttenham’s observation in a carnivalesque context: “By ‘underpeering’ and revealing the othersidedness of the giants imposing size and awe-inspiring power, the ‘shrewd boys’ complete the relationships of travesty. The giant is only an oversized straw man; the ugly monster also has a funny and familiar side. In this gesture exposing the ‘browne paper and tow’ underneath the imposture of the pageant giant, all social and cognitive distance is cancelled: the giant is able to ‘make the people wonder’, but that wonder does not exclude ‘great derision’ and homely familiarity” (66). It is also interesting to read in F. W. Fairholt’s account of the history of the two Guildhall giants *Gog and Magog: The Giants In Guildhall*, what he has to say about Shirley’s attitude to both the giants and the Lord Mayor’s Shows in general: “In Shirley’s *Contention For Honour And Riches*, 1633 (afterwards in his *Honoriam And Mammon*, 1652), he ridicules the annual Civic Pageants on Lord Mayor’s Day, and the citizen’s love of good cheer after them: ‘You march to Guildhall, with every man his spoon in his pocket, where you look upon the giants, and feed like Saracens’” (35).

⁹²Both of these examples are taken from Ann Jennalie Cook’s *The Privileged Playgoers Of Shakespeare’s London* where she refers to both Dekker’s and Greene’s attitudes towards pickpockets: “As Dekker pointed out, the cutpurse haunted the assemblies of the privileged—Paul’s, Westminster, Chancery Lane in term time, London Bridge, suits at the Star Chamber, the Lord Mayor’s oath taking....Greene agreed, saying ‘their chief walks in Paul’s, Westminster, the Exchange, plays, beargarden, running at tilt, the Lord Mayor’s day...’” (205).

can also be applied to the procession, with the result that, apart from the general problem of the crowd, a number of local problems also arise. These local difficulties could be said, both individually and collectively, to tarnish the aura of the procession as a successful spectacle. And again in the same way as with the picture, these local problems adhere themselves to a central and general problematic that then forms a dynamic which places in jeopardy received notions of what the pre-coronation procession has been made to mean.

One striking example emphasises the constructed nature of the procession's meaning and its contemporary setting in a society that was not monolithic but was rather divided in terms of social positionings/groupings. Whilst passing between two of the major pageant devices, Mulcaster informs us that the Queen "came againste the Great Conduite in Cheape, which was bewtifified with pictures and sentences accordingleye against her Graces coming thether."⁹³ David Bergeron reproduces Mulcaster's observation exactly, and informs us that in the Repertories of the Corporation of London there is a record that shows "payments to painters for decorating the Conduit in Cheapside...."⁹⁴ However, if we return to the precise record he quotes (Repertory XIV: fol. 103b), we find that he has missed something. For the record in fact reads as follows:

Itm for as much as the painters of this City did
utterly refuse to new paint and trim the Great
Conduit in Cheapside ... for the Queen Majesty's

⁹³Mulcaster 46.

⁹⁴Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 12.

coming to her Coronation for the sum of 20 marks... (emphasis added).⁹⁵

This return to the original records is reminiscent of that in the previous examination of a royal progress and its reproduction in conventional studies such as that by Alison Plowden. A wide ranging search through the various accounts of the pre-coronation procession has brought to light only one acknowledgement of this refusal by the painters, and that occurs in R. R. Sharpe's London And The Kingdom, which is effectively a history of the City read precisely from these original Repertories (and thus would be difficult to ignore). Even here, it is recorded as the "curious instance of a strike among painters" (emphasis added),⁹⁶ and no reason is given as to why the painters decided to strike, nor why Sharpe claims it to be curious. However, the painters strike meant that:

the surveyors of the city were instructed to cause the same to be covered with cloth of Arras having escutcheons of the queen's Arms finely made and set therein and the wardens of the Painters' Company were called upon to render assistance with advice and men for reasonable remuneration.⁹⁷

This final "reasonable remuneration" suggests the reason for the painters' refusal, and the wardens being called in shows that the Painters' Company was no doubt held responsible for the problem. The important point here however, is that Bergeron's failure to register this refusal, in a record to which he directly refers, is both troubling and confusing. This curious instance, of both

⁹⁵Corporation of London, Repertory (1558-1560) XIV: fol. 103b.

⁹⁶R. R. Sharpe, London And The Kingdom, 3 Vols. (London: Longman, Green and Co, 1894) 1:485

⁹⁷Sharpe 1: 485-486. Sharpe is merely reproducing the original record here.

the reality of the strike and its subsequent disappearance from contemporary accounts of the work of the painters themselves (let us not forget that Bergeron informs us that the records state that the painters were paid and thus there is no suspicion of strike/refusal--i.e. of non-payment), is a real and determining example of the carefully protected identities that Foucault's genealogical methodology attempts to scratch away. Furthermore, there is a similar problem with Mulcaster's description of the relevant pageant being "bewtified with pictures." If the instructions in the Repetories are to be believed, then there were no pictures, but rather a pageant stage "covered with cloth of Arras." Mulcaster's account is therefore undermined in this instance, the suspicion arising that he in fact did not witness this particular pageant device, but rather reported the event according to prior instructions he had received and which detailed what the stage should have looked like. And if it is the case that he did not see this particular pageant device, it is possible that he did not see some or all of the others. It is also possible that, whether he saw them or not, he did not report them accurately. That is to say, that his possible misreporting of this particular instance undermines his total endeavour. If nothing else, it arouses the suspicion of any modern reader as to the truth value of Mulcaster's observations. And, however the stage finally appeared, it can be certain that the striking Painters themselves, if they were present at the procession at all, certainly would not have been won over by it, and would not have been cheering the spectacle produced by the sovereign and the City.

Another possible local problem could have been caused by the Revels Office carrying out an express order of the Queen herself. This related to the fact that Elizabeth desired that her Gentlemen Pensioners should wear crimson silk for the procession, no doubt in an attempt to make the most impressive kind of show. This led the Privy Council to pass a specific act:

A letter to the Customers of London to staye all sylkes of the coulour of crymosyn as shall arryve within that Porte untyll the Quenes Majestie shall first have had her choyse towards the furnyture of her Coronacion, and to geve warning if any suche shall arryve there to the Lordes of the Counsell, and to kepe this matter secrete, etc.⁹⁸

Naturally this was an instruction that would have caused silk traders problems, and represents an instance of the Crown's purveyance policy whereby goods and services were requisitioned at the will of the crown, and for a price it determined itself.⁹⁹ While there are no records (to my knowledge) of complaint with regard to this particular instance, this policy of purveyance was the source of much annoyance among many levels of society. Here, this example merely adds to the possibility of a less than universal welcoming of the fact of the procession and its requirements, most resonant in the Privy Council's final instruction that this was a secret matter. A group of disgruntled silk traders was perhaps not present at the procession, but one can imagine that there were a number of disgruntled silk traders somewhere in England at the time.

⁹⁸Acts of the Privy Council, (1558-1570) 10. The requisitioning of this cloth is referred to in the aforementioned inventory for the coronation (Records of the Lord Chamberlain and other Offices of the Royal Household, and the Clerk of the Recognizances, Public Record Office, LC 2 4/3).

⁹⁹This was standard practice of the time. For more on purveyance see below.

This event also brings up the question of Elizabeth's spontaneity with regard to certain reported actions and responses during the procession, and certainly problematises the notion of her as an "unscheduled actor."¹⁰⁰ This notion has now been seriously compromised, not least by the sort of evidence provided by this act of purveyance. This led Bergeron for example, to drop the idea of Elizabeth as this unscheduled actor, and to suggest rather that, as part-patron, she was "no mere passive spectator or grateful recipient of the event."¹⁰¹ Helen Hackett believes that Elizabeth's responses at the pageant devices demonstrate that "she knew what was coming, either because she had been briefed in advance, or possibly even because she had had some influence in the content of the pageants."¹⁰² Needless to say, studies such as Alison Plowden's (written after Bergeron's new evidence) have failed to register such developments, and continue to (re)produce a reading of the behaviour of the Queen in a way reminiscent of Mulcaster. However, the revelation that Elizabeth was in fact a part-patron of the pageant devices compromises the Mulcaster pamphlet and its insistence on the Queen's spontaneity in terms of its reporting of actual events. For, as Hackett goes on to say, "the performance of the love between the Queen and her people was less spontaneous than the pamphleteer pretended," was more "an act of propaganda,"¹⁰³ and less than a reliable source of historical accuracy. And, although she says it in reference to

¹⁰⁰Bergeron English Civic Pageantry 15.

¹⁰¹Bergeron, "Elizabeth's Coronation Entry (1558): New Manuscript Evidence," English Literary Renaissance 8 (Winter 1978): 3-8: 3.

¹⁰²Hackett, Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen 48.

¹⁰³Hackett, Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen 48.

Mulcaster, Hackett could just as well be talking of Plowden when she writes that in “its very purporting to be merely a record of a spontaneous upwelling of love between the Queen and her subjects, the pamphlet performs a political function.”¹⁰⁴ One wonders to what extent this political function was served by Mulcaster, and whether it extended, as was earlier suggested, to inventing an audience of common people. Or at least constructing one whose presence was very different to that which finally appears in his pamphlet. If nothing else, it is possible that he mis-represents them.

At worst (for conventional readings of the procession) this audience simply was not present to be subjected. At best, they were rowdy, troublesome, and possibly unimpressed. And, as A. A. Bromham has shown, it was a section of the audience that, most probably, could not hear what was being said at the various instructive pageant devices.¹⁰⁵ From their position far back from the central procession, it is doubtful that the words of the actors performing the pageants could be heard. This purely visual experience of the moral allegories performed would enable the production of differing and alternative interpretations of these normative lessons (which shall be dealt with in detail in the next chapter), a possibility that has led Susan Frye to suggest that each device was posted in English and Latin in an attempt to control and supervise this possibility.¹⁰⁶ This ambiguity is also pertinent with regard to Elizabeth’s

¹⁰⁴Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen* 48.

¹⁰⁵A. A. Bromham, “Thomas Middleton’s *The Triumphs Of Truth*: City Politics in 1613,” *The Seventeenth Century* X: 1 (Spring, 1995): 1-25: 4.

¹⁰⁶Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition For Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 34.

rural processions, as can be demonstrated with reference to both a general overview of the progresses and, subsequently, to one specific, revealing example.

4. “A King may go a progress through the guts of a beggar”

Many of the entertainments produced and performed in honour of Elizabeth during her summer progresses, and which took place on the estates of various members of the nobility, have been preserved, and can in fact be said to form a discrete literary sub-genre that can be examined in the broader totality of celebratory literature for the Queen. The records of these entertainments differ from that written by Richard Mulcaster for the pre-coronation procession in the sense that they are literary rather than descriptive, the audience rarely therefore being mentioned. The presence of the common people on the actual estate of the Queen’s host, in the form of servants or retainers is not described, or is only acknowledged in their participation in the entertainment itself, acting the parts of certain mythological or pastoral figures. Their presence outside of the entertainment, and thus outside of the estate is not described, and it is therefore difficult to form a consistent picture of them, (possibly) lining the country road or lane as the procession passed through. The few references that do mention this presence in rural processions generally appear in the State Records, such as that of the Spanish Ambassador discussed in chapter one. The pervasiveness of this particular record in analyses of Elizabeth and Elizabethan processions testifies to the lack of descriptive evidence regarding the common audience at progresses, and the normative desire of the various

analyses is evident in their refusal to admit to this record's ambiguous detailing of the Queen/crowd relationship. Despite this lack of evidence however, progresses have traditionally been regarded as further examples of effective propaganda, as successful regulatory rituals. This success, as well as Elizabeth's deliberate propagation of such a policy of propaganda, is outlined by John Nichols, writing in 1823: "The plan of popularity which Elizabeth laid down from the beginning of her Reign is marked by no trait so strongly as her practice of making Progresses about her dominions."¹⁰⁷ This is echoed by Christopher Haigh when he writes that progresses "were major public relations exercises, with careful preparations for maximum impact,"¹⁰⁸ a chance, as Bergeron says, "to see and be seen," and "for winning additional loyalty and support."¹⁰⁹ While it was held for many years (and still is in a number of studies) that these propagandist efforts were directed at cementing relations between Elizabeth and her (powerful) nobles, modern scholars such as Haigh and Neville Williams believe that these progresses were in fact aimed at a much wider public. Williams, for example writes that "Nothing did so much to strengthen the average subject's bonds of affection to his sovereign as catching sight of her as she rode by with her train of followers, and Elizabeth's progresses became legendary."¹¹⁰ That these bonds of affection were strengthened by this public display of the monarch to her subjects in general is accepted unquestioningly where the progresses are regarded as "one of the

¹⁰⁷Nichols, *Elizabeth* 1: xi.

¹⁰⁸Haigh, *Elizabeth I* 147.

¹⁰⁹Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry* 9.

¹¹⁰Williams, "The Tudors," *The Courts Of Europe* 164. Haigh believes that although progresses were indeed an opportunity for Elizabeth to garner support from her nobles, they

Queen's major--and successful--policies,"¹¹¹ aimed at the people, who were suitably subjected in the process.¹¹² According to these readings (all of which are importantly based upon the despatch written by the Spanish Ambassador discussed earlier, and all of which fail, as Alison Plowden does, to refer to the first two sentences of that report), the rural audience of Elizabethan processions constituted a presence that replicates precisely that produced by Mulcaster for the pre-coronation procession, and which has been subsequently endlessly reproduced by generations of scholars. Here once again, Elizabethan spectacular propaganda is always successful.

Because of the difficulties that exist in examining the real presence of the common people at Elizabethan progresses, it is again worth returning to those records that have been preserved and that do indirectly refer to the possible presence that an audience of common people may have constituted. That is to say, that it is worth examining events and experiences in and around progresses that may have affected the lives of the ordinary people, and thus have coloured their consumption of such a cultural/spectacular occurrence.

"were also occasions ... to show herself to ordinary people as she crossed the countryside at a sedate pace" (Haigh, Elizabeth I 147).

¹¹¹Dovey 1. It should be noted that Dovey uses the same despatch from the Spanish Ambassador as Alison Plowden, and in the same way (i.e. minus the first two sentences) as evidence for this statement.

¹¹²Neville Williams, again using the same despatch, and once again in the same way writes that "country folk who came to gape and cheer as she went by knew they would be lucky if she passed their way again" ("The Tudors," The Courts Of Europe 165). Roy Strong has written about the need for such a propagandist ritual (though he would not call it such): "The Elizabethan monarchy did not only need powerful verbal and visual images to hold a divided people in loyalty; it also demanded the development of an elaborate ritual and ceremonial with which to frame and present the Queen to her subjects as the sacred virgin whose reign was ushering in a new golden age of peace and plenty. In order to achieve this, the apparatus of the formal progress through the countryside was deliberately developed" (The Cult Of Elizabeth 114).

Before proceeding to do so, it would also be interesting to briefly review aristocratic reactions/responses to the news that the Queen and (often) her entire court were to visit, in an attempt to discern whether the notion that the Queen was perhaps not as welcome a visitor as we have often been led to believe holds any truth.

As discussed in my introduction, the reality of the Queen and her court coming to visit was a prospect that many of her nobles considered with a good deal of trepidation. The exorbitant costs and enormous demands put upon any prospective host caused a certain amount of panic and discontent, summed up by the Bishop Hurd in his Dialogues Moral And Political, where he states that it “has been objected that these visits ... were calculated only to impoverish her wealthiest and best subjects, under colour of her high favours.”¹¹³ While this is probably overstating the case, evidence collected together by E. K. Chambers in the form of letters that passed between prospective hosts and the officials of the Lord Chamberlain’s office charged with arranging progresses demonstrate the anxiety felt by the hosts.¹¹⁴ As well as fears about the costs of entertaining the Queen, these letters show the use of a number of ploys to discourage her coming; overestimation of the current prevalence of plague in the vicinity of their estate, for example. The Marquis of Winchester was perhaps one of the most honest prospective hosts when he wrote bluntly that “the Queen’s stay would make ‘more charge than the constitution of Basing

¹¹³Bishop Hurd, Dialogues Moral And Political (1759) 193; quoted in Nichols, Elizabeth 1: xxiii-xxiv.

¹¹⁴Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage 1: 109-112.

[his country estate] may well bear'.¹¹⁵ It lends credibility to Bishop Hurd's feelings when it is realised that the Queen was not put off and, subsequently, as Nichols informs us, the "Marquis of Winchester was nearly ruined by the last Royal Visit at Basing...."¹¹⁶ Indeed, Lord Burleigh himself, builder of Theobalds, "always shuddered at the costs of a royal visit."¹¹⁷

The plethora of evidence collected by Chambers and H. Ellis suggests that the attitude of the nobility themselves to the Queen's progresses was often at best ambivalent, and at worst, if they were to be visited, oppositional.¹¹⁸ Lawrence Stone may also be guilty of overstating the case, but it is possible that many of the Queen's hosts, victims of having their estates denuded of deer and their houses plundered for crockery and cutlery viewed these visits in the following manner:

Erratic and destructive as a hurricane, summer after summer Elizabeth wandered about the English countryside bringing ruin in her train, while apprehensive noblemen abandoned their homes and fled at the mere rumour of her approach. As early as the 1570's the Earl of Bedford tried to divert Her Majesty from Chenies, and at the end of the reign we find Sir Henry Lee prophesying ruin on hearing that 'Her Majesty threatens a progress and her coming to my houses.'¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵Quoted in Williams, "The Tudors," The Courts Of Europe 165.

¹¹⁶Nichols, Elizabeth 1: xxxi.

¹¹⁷Williams, "The Tudors," The Courts Of Europe 164.

¹¹⁸H. Ellis, ed., Original Letters Illustrative of English History, 3 Vols. (London: Triphook & Lepard, 1824) 2: 265-267.

¹¹⁹Lawrence Stone, The Crisis Of The Aristocracy 1558-1641 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965) 453-454. Chambers sums up in amusing fashion the dilemma of the Elizabethan noble: "Contact with the great is not ordinarily, for the plain man, a bed of roses; and there is no reason to suppose that it was otherwise in the spacious times of Elizabeth. You probably got knighted, if you were not a knight already, which cost you some fees, and you received some sugared royal compliments on the excellence of your entertainment and the appropriateness of your 'devices'. But you had wrestled for a month with poulterers and with poets. You had

If the nobility could be said to have been somewhat reluctant to allow the Queen and the court to use their hospitality and their property, it is possible to say that the common people felt the same way about certain abuses of their own property. This is clear with regard to both Elizabeth's and her administration's widespread practice of purveyance, an example of which was the aforementioned requisitioning of crimson silk for use in the pre-coronation procession. Purveyance was a pervasive practice with regard to the summer progresses, the Queen's representatives using the system to compulsorily purchase provisions at low prices, and to rent carts at similarly cheap rates. Naturally enough, this system "was liable to cause considerable hardship and was extremely unpopular."¹²⁰ Chambers refers to this practice as "the abuses of purveyance,"¹²¹ which he says included "the impressment of vehicles by the royal cart-takers...."¹²² Lawrence Stone characteristically puts it even more bluntly, stating that the "400 to 600 carts" needed for the transport of the Court's belongings on progress were "forcibly impressed from a reluctant peasantry."¹²³ Nichols refers to this unhappy state of affairs also:

The abuses of the Purveyors of the Royal Household, in procuring, amongst other things, carriages for removing goods, provisions, and other things, which they took at their own prices, which were less than the real value, and

'avoided' your house, and made yourself uncomfortable in a neighbouring lodge. You had seen your trim gardens and terraces encamped upon by a locust-swarm of all the tag-rag and bobtail that follows a court" (Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage 1: 113).

¹²⁰Middlesex Standing Joint Committee, Middlesex In Shakespeare's Day: Exhibition Of Records From The Middlesex County Record Office At The Middlesex Guildhall, Westminster, (London: The Committee, 1964) 9.

¹²¹Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage 1: 117.

¹²²Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage 1: 117.

¹²³Stone 451.

sometimes even that money not paid, occasioned frequent complaints....¹²⁴

Nichols does in fact reproduce extracts from “an old book (kept in the chest) in the Church of Chalk,” which testify to this kind of non-payment for carriages in the year 1591, one Robert Rowswell failing to receive payment for his services on two occasions.¹²⁵ The Middlesex County Records for 1583 contain a petition from George Ashby, a Justice of the Peace, protesting at the frequency with which the people of Middlesex were subjected to purveyance and the supplying of carts for the Queen’s household in progress.¹²⁶ And while this compulsory taking of goods and carts was difficult enough for the peasantry to bear, the carts being required in order to collect the harvest, there is a further hardship that had to be borne and which was also the cause for much complaint. This was perhaps even more serious than the actual impressment of goods and vehicles, as the “household officers were accused of blackmailing owners of carts to avoid impressment,” as well as of “requisitioning superfluous provisions and reselling them at a profit.”¹²⁷ The reality of this practice as a source of disquiet is attested to in a letter drafted by the Privy Council and dated 12th August, 1565:

A letter to Sir Thomas Throckmorton and Sir Nicholas Pointz of thanks for theyr diligence used in serching owt of the disordres committed in that countrie by the servauntes of Thomas Russell, one of the Queen’s Majesties

¹²⁴Nichols, James 1: 43.

¹²⁵Nichols, Elizabeth 3: 37. The records for James 1’s reign are much fuller, and in his first volume dealing with James, Nichols reproduces pages of complaints regarding the abuse of the Crown’s purveyance policy: see Nichols, James 1: x-xvi.

¹²⁶Middlesex County Records, Microfilm. Acc. 312/565.

¹²⁷Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage 1: 117. There is a record from 1605 of the Venetian Ambassador complaining at the behaviour of James 1’s servants in this respect (Calendar of State Papers (Venetian) (1605) 265 and 285).

Purveyours, which matter the Lordes think very
necessarie shall be reformed and the offendours
punished to the example of other....¹²⁸

Common unhappiness thus arose from the extra hardships that were endured when carts were taken away, and from the additional problem of the Queen's representatives demanding money from the peasants in order for them to keep their own carts at such an important time of year.

The point being raised here of course is one regarding the possible attitudes of the common people/peasants to the Court on progress, given the practical effects its presence had on their everyday existence. This could mean that their carts were forcibly requisitioned and they received payment, or they were requisitioned without payment. It could mean that they could indeed keep their carts but to do so they had been blackmailed, or had been forced to sell their goods for low prices. Whichever it was, it is certain that a great number of the rural population would either have experienced or have heard of these injustices carried out by the Crown. Given these circumstances, it is questionable at least whether these people, direct victims of both official and unofficial Crown policy, would have had their bonds of affection strengthened as the sovereign, the embodiment of these injustices, passed along and they (perhaps unwillingly) lined the route. Here the policy that sought to "establish and maintain her personal popularity among her people,"¹²⁹ could have

¹²⁸ Acts of the Privy Council, (1558-1570) 241.

¹²⁹ Dovey 1.

conversely given rise to a good deal of disaffection, and could possibly have been unsuccessful.

Such behaviour by the Crown's representatives caused the rural population with whom they came into contact great hardship therefore, with their livelihoods threatened, and hunger a very real possible consequence. The passing of the Queen would have done little to alleviate such a possibility, and indeed her entourage brought with it another cause for anxiety, one that could be said to demonstrate anything but the glory and majesty of such a procession, and one very rarely noted by historians. Most procession analyses stress that one of the major reasons for Elizabeth and her court leaving the city and embarking upon a progress in the summer months was to escape the dangers of the plague, rife in the city at that time of year. However, the local population through which any progress passed, whether urban or rural, would probably have been aware of the fact that the individuals that comprised the spectacular procession could (and did) actually bring the plague with them. This is corroborated by the fact that in 1578, for example, both Bury St Edmunds and Norwich suffered their most severe outbreaks of plague after the Court (in progress) had left them. Indeed, the epidemic that Norwich witnessed wiped out almost one third of its population. Whether this was indeed the fault of the London-based Court or not, in Norfolk itself the outbreak was blamed on the progress.¹³⁰ Once again, the suggestion is that, at least from this date, and at least in this area, the coming of the Queen and her

¹³⁰Dovey 87.

entourage was, for the common people, perhaps not predominantly an encounter that strengthened the bonds of affection, but was rather an encounter with disease and death. Their passing prompted fear perhaps, rather than admiration and loyalty.

The possible lack of affection is apparent in a number of recorded instances between the Queen and her common subjects, where the latter's presence is not characterised by their loud cheering and ecstatic welcoming. John Nichols for example records an incident (unreferenced) that occurred in 1581 as Elizabeth rode out one evening towards Islington (then a country town), where she was "invironed with a number of begging rouges ... which gave the Queen much disturbance."¹³¹ While she came to no harm, the following day saw complaints made to both the Lord Mayor of London and to Fleetwood, the Recorder, which resulted in the arrest "that day [of] seventy-four rogues, whereof some were blind, and yet great usurers, and very rich. They were sent to Bridewell, and punished."¹³² Whether those arrested were the guilty parties is not mentioned, but as previously shown, being a beggar was, in itself, a punishable crime. The point being made here however is one with regard to the nature of the relationship between the Queen and these subjects of hers. Her presence does not seem to have induced feelings of awe and celebration in these beggars, and she does not seem to revel in their common presence. Rather than mutual love, this meeting at least is characterised by reciprocal

¹³¹Nichols, *Elizabeth 2*: 303.

¹³²Nichols, *Elizabeth 2*: 303.

suspicion and menace. The basis for the beggars' punishment was simply their encountering the Queen, their happening to be on the route chosen for her outing from Charterhouse.

A similar tone of mutual suspicion, perhaps even dislike is recorded in the Spanish Ambassador's report to Madrid whilst accompanying the Queen on the progress/entry through Norwich in 1578. Discussions of the Norwich visit usually end with Holinshed's description of Elizabeth's parting words from the city, which saw her claim that she would "never forget Norwich," and bid it farewell "with the water standing in hir eies."¹³³ The Ambassador however records something rather different:

When she entered Norwich the large crowds of people came out to receive her, and one company of children knelt as she passed and said, as usual, 'God save the Queen.' She turned to them and said, 'Speak up; I know you do not love me here.'¹³⁴

While this report needs to be treated with the same kind of scepticism as that discussed earlier with regard to the Spanish Ambassador's despatch of 1568 (in terms of religious and political opposition), it might once again suggest a failure in policy, and an evident distance and difficulty in the relationship between Elizabeth and the crowd. Like the incident near Islington, it conjures up a weakening rather than a strengthening of bonds between sovereign and subjects, an articulation of deeply problematic divisions.¹³⁵

¹³³Holinshed 4: 403.

¹³⁴Calendar Of State Papers (Spanish) (1568-79) 611.

¹³⁵Christopher Haigh lists a number of interesting rumours that spread through the English countryside regarding the true nature of Elizabeth's desire to go on progress, culminating in that which held that "the Queen only went on summer progresses to have her babies away from

The tension evident in the above examples in the relationship between the Queen and the people, and the latter's failure to be successfully interpellated by her spectacular presence is further corroborated by an incident at the Osterley residence of Sir Thomas Gresham in 1576, where this relationship evidently breaks down completely. The Middlesex County Records describe the incident:

Indictment of Joan Eyer and Mary Harrys, both of Heston, who pleaded guilty to breaking into the park at Osterley, while the Queen and many members of the Privy Council were in residence as guests of Sir Thomas Gresham.

They 'with force and arms and with spades, shovels, staves and hatchets then and there maliciously, diabolically and illegally tore up, pulled out and threw down and laid on the ground four rods of posts and pales of the same Thomas Gresham ... on the seventh day of May ... about the hour of two and three early in the morning ... the aforesaid Joan and Mary maliciously, diabolically and wickedly burnt and consumed with fire ... not only to the great disquiet and disturbance of the said lady the Queen ... but indeed in manifest contempt of the same lady the Queen and her laws, and to the no small damage of the same Thomas Gresham'.¹³⁶

On one level this event no doubt describes a certain popular discontentment with the fact that in 1565 Gresham received a royal licence to enclose 600 acres of his land, and that "the villagers may have used the Queen's visit as an occasion to make known their discontent."¹³⁷ However, what it also outlines, in the terms of this current study, and in combination with the previously

London" (Haigh, *Elizabeth 1* 156). These rumours were founded in the belief that the Queen was sexually insatiable.

¹³⁶Middlesex County Records, Micro. SR. 199/4.

¹³⁷Middlesex Standing Joint Committee 11.

described examples (of which it is the most extreme case), is the problematisation of the effectiveness of so-called spectacular rituals/presences, whereby all of those components that would constitute successful interpellation of the subject(s) seem to have failed to register. The extremity of the actions of Joan Eyer and Mary Harrys undoubtedly articulate desperation and discontent, a radical protest against enclosure, as well as one directed at the Queen. That is to say, it is a protest that mobilises the Queen's presence in order to make an oppositional statement rather than a supportive one. Above all, they describe a lack of subjection. Such a lack was to have its most serious articulation in Oxfordshire twenty years later.

In 1592, as part of her long summer progress in Oxfordshire, Elizabeth visited Lord and Lady Norris on their estate at Rycote, where she was greeted with a short, unelaborate welcoming performance/entertainment which saw her receive a number of expensive gifts from her hosts. As part of the same progress she visited Sir Henry Lee on one of his estates, Ditchley, the scene of a lengthier, more complex allegorical entertainment. These entertainments (which will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter) are typically pastoral, and are characterised by their portrayal of Elizabeth as the romantic object of desire, as the righter of all wrongs, and as being the embodiment of constancy in a universe defined by its opposite. Both of these houses were obvious destinations for Elizabeth in progress, the former being that of "her

closest and most trustworthy friends,”¹³⁸ whilst the latter was the home of her former Champion (retired in 1590), and organiser of her Accession Day Tilts. While it would be interesting to closely examine the precise nature of the relationships that existed between the Queen and these nobles, the interest of this present discussion lies elsewhere. For it is the impression made upon the servants and other employees of the Norrises and Lee by the presence of the Queen and her court in progress that I wish to investigate.

Jean Wilson, concerning herself with the (political) aims of progresses in general states that:

Elizabeth’s visits to great houses ... reinforced the power of the local magnate, enhancing his prestige in the eyes of his neighbours and dependants, and ensuring that should they be called upon to follow him on her service, they would do so more willingly for their belief that their master was high in the Queen’s favour, and might be in a position to prefer his adherents.¹³⁹

Within this group of dependants Wilson includes not only “the household servants, but the tenants ... and locals who wished to retain the favour of the

¹³⁸Jean Wilson *Entertainments for Elizabeth* 1 47. Wilson informs us that both “Lord Norris and his wife were tied to Elizabeth by long acquaintance and family loyalties. His father had been one of the young men executed with Anne Boleyn as her ‘lovers’; hers, Lord Williams of Tame, had shown kindness to Elizabeth when, as a state prisoner under her sister, she had visited Rycote....They entertained Elizabeth there on at least five occasions...” (51). Wilson proceeds to quote the report that states Lady Norris’s disappointment when the Earl of Leicester dissuaded the Queen from visiting in 1582, ostensibly because of insalubrious weather. This is an oft quoted record, used to underline the solid friendship of the two women, and is also frequently used to describe the desire that the English nobility in general felt at the time for the Queen to visit. As previously shown, the records tell a somewhat different story regarding this desire, and indeed, with reference to this particular record, Neville Williams believes that so “general was the wish to escape altogether from this honourable burden [a visit from the Queen] that few believed Lady Norris was in earnest about wanting the Queen to stay at Rycote” (Williams, “The Tudors,” *The Courts of Europe* 165).

¹³⁹Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth* 1 40.

land-owner.”¹⁴⁰ According to this reading the Queen’s visit would impress these dependants through their desire to remain loyal to their master, whose central position in terms of his relation to the Queen would ensure this loyalty. This echoes a widely held assumption regarding a similar normative dynamic apparent in royal entries where such spectacles “helped increase in onlookers a sense of the wealth, power and glory of the monarch--providing a focus of national unity among Englishmen....”¹⁴¹ These readings must naturally dismiss the previously discussed Osterley incident, or must regard it as an exception, the deed of vagabonds and criminals. Whatever status the incident is given however, it must be accepted that the individuals involved were not impressed in the ways suggested by Wilson (and traditional procession analysis), a reality that problematises this governing idea of the “loyalty through majesty” that she professes. This idea is further compromised by a closer look at the Rycote/Ditchley example.

A brief glance once again at the Ditchley Portrait (Fig. 3) clarifies the content and purpose of the progress visits of 1592, and demonstrates the negotiation of power relations between sovereign and noble suggested by Wilson. The Queen brings in fair weather and banishes storms, her feet planted firmly on Sir Henry Lee’s land, brought to the centre of the world by Elizabeth’s presence. This picture, like the Procession painting, can perhaps be regarded as interior propaganda,¹⁴² hanging as it did in the house of the pictured noble,

¹⁴⁰Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth I* 40.

¹⁴¹David Birt, *Elizabeth’s England* (Harlow: Longman, 1981) 41.

¹⁴²My thanks to A. A. Bromham for this observation.

consumed daily by servants and dependants. These paintings can perhaps be said to have fulfilled, on a more constant and permanent basis, what the progresses themselves attempted to achieve temporarily; an interpellative effect.

In 1596, four years after the Queen's progress visit, a number of Lord Norris's dependants and servants, led by Bartholomew Steere, a carpenter at Rycote, combined to lead what has been called both an uprising¹⁴³ and a rebellion,¹⁴⁴ and who, according to the Calendar of State Papers, proposed a quite different progress to that of Elizabeth:

Steere said that when they were up ... they would murder Mr Power, as also Mr Berry and his daughter, and spoil Rabone, the yeoman, Geo. Whilton, Sir Hen. Lee, Sir Wm. Spencer, Mr Frere, and Lord Norris, and then go to London....¹⁴⁵

This proposed progress was set off by the third consecutive harvest failure, the blame for which was laid upon the likes of Sir Henry Lee and Lord Norris, two of Oxfordshire's most aggressive enclosers. It seems that in the autumn of 1596, forty to sixty men went to Rycote to see Lord Norris and "petitioned [him] for some corn to relieve their distress, and for the putting down [of] enclosures."¹⁴⁶ Despite much remonstrance Norris failed to respond, and thus Steere began to plot his uprising. It is important to note that Steere "began to

¹⁴³John Walter, "A 'Rising Of The People'? The Oxfordshire Rising Of 1596," Past And Present 107 (May 1985) 90-143.

¹⁴⁴Roger B Manning, Village Revolts: Social Protest And Popular Disturbance In England 1509-1640 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 220-229.

¹⁴⁵Calendar of State Papers (Domestic) (1595-1597) 345.

¹⁴⁶CSP (Dom.) (1595-1597) 343.

organise the conspiracy while still in Lord Norris's employ,"¹⁴⁷ and under examination admitted that he "meant to have risen to help his poor friends, and other poor people who lived in misery."¹⁴⁸ He believed "that the servants of Lord Norris and other Oxfordshire gentry could be persuaded to join a rising because 'they were kept like dogges'."¹⁴⁹ Steere seems to have been right in his judgement, as "he subverted several of Lord Norris's servants and those of other gentry who visited Rycote."¹⁵⁰

Although this disorder took a material form, the uprising failed without any action being taken on the part of the rebels, and they were subsequently arrested and punished, a consequence that will be dealt with in the next chapter in terms of allegory and the textual margin. For now, I want to stress that the uprising, consisting as it did almost exclusively of the employees of Norris and other nobles, contradicts those notions expounded by traditional progress analysis (such as that by Jean Wilson above) with regard to the successful interpellation of these common people by the spectacular nurturing of loyalty to their master. These individuals were not captured in this way, were not impressed or subjected, but rather displayed a lack of loyalty and hatred for their masters and the social structure that ensured their continued hardship and poverty. Indeed, they were "ready to cut their master's throats."¹⁵¹

Furthermore, not only were they not hailed in this manner, they were punished

¹⁴⁷Manning, *Village Revolts* 221.

¹⁴⁸CSP (Dom.) (1595-1597) 343.

¹⁴⁹Manning, *Village Revolts* 221.

¹⁵⁰Manning, *Village Revolts* 221.

¹⁵¹CSP (Dom.) (1595-1597) 344.

by death for presuming to demonstrate the fact that they were not. Two of the participants, Richard Bradshaw and Robert Burton were hanged on Enslow Hill, convicted and sentenced by a number of landholders in Oxfordshire itself. The fate of the leader, Bartholomew Steere, is worth considering in greater detail.

Lord Norris “could not comprehend that Bartholomew Steere had begun planning the rebellion under his own roof,”¹⁵² and both he and Sir Henry Lee were no doubt surprised and alarmed to learn that they were two of the rebels’ main targets. The rebels had determined to deal with Lee at Ditchley, where he had become “notorious as a ‘great sheep-master’ and the man who had profited from selling villeins their freedom,”¹⁵³ and Rycote was to witness their final act before they marched to London. Norris’s reaction to his disbelief seems to have been a desire for revenge, and he took charge of the interrogation of Steere and his fellow rebels. Unable to extract any names from the prisoners however, Norris recommended that the rebels be tortured in order to extract information. The prisoners were then taken to various prisons in London by Sir Henry Norris, Lord Norris’s son and heir, and “were tortured and examined at Bridewell Prison by attorney-general Coke, solicitor-general Francis Bacon, and the recorder of London.”¹⁵⁴ By the second week of January, Coke had extracted a full confession from Steere, who he regarded as

¹⁵²Manning, Village Revolts 226. This seems to have been the case with all of the parties threatened: “Discovered all this to Mr Berry, examinante’s landlord ... and he hardly believed it...” (CSP (Dom.) (1595-1597) 344).

¹⁵³Quoted in Manning, Village Revolts 224.

¹⁵⁴Manning, Village Revolts 227.

the ringleader. And it is here, as demonstrated in the extended records of this entire process, existent in the Calendar Of State Papers, with this mention of the lengthy period of torture, that the name of Bartholomew Steere, servant and carpenter to Lord Norris, almost certainly present at the progress of 1592 which should have ensured his loyalty to both Master and Sovereign, simply disappears.¹⁵⁵ He was not executed on Enslow Hill (as Richard Wilson incorrectly claims), nor was he freed.¹⁵⁶ It is evident rather that he was simply tortured to death in the Bridewell, far from the Oxfordshire countryside, far from the lanes along which the progress of 1592 passed, allowing the Queen to show herself to ordinary people, including Steere. It seems that he was not subjected, was not hailed, and was tortured to death for not being so. He is a marginal figure in the story of royal progresses, one who has simply been written out of history.

The figure of Bartholomew Steere is important in any discussion of the spectacular effects of such rituals as royal progresses because he and his accomplices (along with the two women from Osterley) articulate both the ideological aims of these rituals, and their ineffectiveness. That is to say, that by remaining unimpressed, these individuals demonstrate both the urge to subject them, and the limits that any such process contains when manifested merely as/in ritual. Steere was effectively subjected to death, in the sense that the failure of the ritual of 1592 necessitated his total physical punishment. His

¹⁵⁵CSP (Dom) (1595-1597) 316-318.

¹⁵⁶Wilson, Will Power 81.

painful, secret death clarifies the fact that ritual alone was not enough, and that the process of material exclusion from the social and political centre required material practices that were more extreme than mere processions. For the material margin to remain marginal, the material centre needed to do more than simply display its magnificence. It needed to demonstrate its physical power. In these instances, the sovereign had, as Hamlet observes, to “go a progress through the guts of a beggar.”¹⁵⁷

That the common audiences for Elizabethan processions in general have been constructed as a monolithic, most loving Subject, effectively awe-struck by her presence in terms of its spectacular (i.e. normative) nature, and by processions themselves as allegories for (God-given) order, is perhaps not surprising given the fact that these royal and civic rituals have traditionally been viewed from the perspective of those in authority. Jean Wilson’s prestige-effect in relation to progresses is just one example of this. This being the case, when uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of such display is expressed, or when propagandist elements are admitted to, these take the form of discourses between authorities. That is to say, discourses between the ruler and the powerful ruled. This has recently been apparent in the plethora of (important) accounts of the problem of Elizabeth as an incoming Protestant, female, monarch; as a woman being both head of state and head of the church.¹⁵⁸ A rudimentary examination of the pageants performed for her pre-coronation

¹⁵⁷William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, IV. iii. 29-30.

¹⁵⁸See for example: Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994) 1-9, and Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* 22-55.

procession confirms a negotiation of these uncertainties, and demonstrates the attempt to found and make credible a particular iconography for the impending Queen. However, such recent studies underline the tensions between figures of authority in terms of powerful critiques of female monarchy, of the Protestant faith, and of Elizabeth's tenuous claim to the throne. The common people, powerless as they were, continue to be constructed as uniformly and successfully subjected in these and in more traditional critiques. Similarly, the literary texts of these events have been consumed in a manner that regards only those same figures of authority. This thesis argues that those texts can be read in the way that the material events themselves have been read in this chapter, and such readings comprise the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

“TYME HATH BROUGHT ME HETHER”

In the previous chapter, this thesis attempted to demonstrate the ambiguities and absences that are discernable in traditional conceptualisations of the constitution of early modern processional audiences. Further ambiguities were demonstrated regarding the same conceptualisations of the consciousness of these audiences in terms of their potential alliances. It was shown how consecutive readings of original documents have transmitted the notion of a monolithic audience response throughout history, and how such readings have been based upon a perceptibly partial reading. That is to say that the historical transmission of the monolithic nature of the audience response has been achieved by taking these documents at their word, despite the fact that they have been seen to be propagandist documents. This thesis has argued that a recognition of the propagandist nature of these documents opens them up to readings of an alternative kind, readings which find an articulation of ambiguities and anxieties that have been traditionally ignored or overlooked.

These same original documents describe at length the pageant devices and shows performed for the Queen on procession, both in the city and in the country. These pageants and shows have traditionally been seen as unproblematic celebrations of the Queen in the same way as the descriptions of the audiences, and have indeed been regarded as key devices in the interpellation of these audiences. That is to say, that traditional procession

analysis has read these allegorical pageants and shows as impressing the audiences to the extent that they unproblematically celebrate and support both the monarchy and the social hierarchy of which it is the pinnacle. Such analysis determines a process of successful normative display the splendour of which, much like the physical processions themselves, demonstrates dissymmetry and thus successfully hails the audience. The spectacular nature of these allegorical displays is regarded as contributing to this process of interpellation, and audiences have been monolithically construed as consumers of this successful normative moral lesson. It is an important argument of this thesis that such was not the case however. Rather this thesis will contend in the following chapter that, just as in conceptions of the audience itself, a close examination of these original documents demonstrates many ambiguities. This close reading will show that traditional perceptions of the effects of these pageants and shows have been based upon readings which have likewise ignored and overlooked certain crucial details and events. Furthermore, it will be argued that the sorts of monolithic readings of the allegorical displays that procession analysis has traditionally produced are mis-founded due to the fact that allegory itself inherently produces multiple meanings.

In what follows I shall examine the allegorical pageants and shows performed for Elizabeth at the London procession of 1558 and the Ditchley progress of 1592, utilising the same original documents as in the previous chapter. Initially I will explore Walter Benjamin's theories on the subject of allegory,

and demonstrate the inability of this form to control the transmission of its desired meanings. Allegory will be shown to be an unstable form in terms of the transmission of these desired meanings, and will be shown rather to beckon alternative interpretations.¹ I will then subject the pageants and shows performed for the Queen in 1558 and 1592 to this analysis of allegory. The thesis will argue that real events undermined the meanings the producers of the pageants wished to transmit, and that the same real events continue to undermine traditional readings based upon these original meanings. It will be shown that events closely related to the London procession and that at Ditchley compromise traditional concepts of the shows produced for the Queen, due to the fact that, in these cases, “Allegory is allegorised by reality.”²

* * *

In his Apology, Sir Philip Sidney made the case for clarity through allegory, valorising its use in poetry, and in turn valuing poetry all the more for such a use. Susan Frye outlines this process of mutual valorisation, stating that “his [Sidney’s] entire ethical defense of poetry rests on poetry’s ability to make clear through allegory a morality that philosophy teaches too abstractly and history, too particularly....”³ Sidney in fact articulates allegory’s paradoxical nature when he writes of poetry’s “dark conceits,” a paradox that has continued to concern those who have wished to attribute the same characteristic of clarity to allegory as Sidney himself. In a number of extensive studies of medieval and Renaissance allegory, Rosamund Tuve has,

¹Benjamin The Origin of German Tragic Drama 159-235.

²Julian Roberts, Walter Benjamin (London: Macmillan, 1982) 150.

³Frye, Elizabeth 1: The Competition for Representation 162.

following Sidney, attempted to demonstrate the ways in which allegory (particularly written/spoken allegory) clarifies meaning as, she believes, words are less ambiguous than objects, and thus “great allegories are usually the most concrete of all writings in texture.”⁴ While this connects with Sidney in the sense that there is an apparent desire to reject the assumption that allegory inherently produces more than a single meaning, and at the same time gestures toward the fact that it does, Tuve’s formulation of the stable nature of language has, in recent years particularly, become severely problematised. In fact, in 1928, almost forty years before Tuve wrote the above, Walter Benjamin had already taken the idea of the stability of language to task, writing in his Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels that the word itself, as part of the natural realm of objects “can be exploited for allegorical purposes.”⁵ Indeed, this work by Benjamin can be regarded as the touchstone for the problematisation of traditional views of allegory with his dictum regarding allegorical representation: “Any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else.”⁶

The majority of modern critics would no doubt agree with Angus Fletcher that ambiguity is inherent in a form that in “the simplest terms ... says one thing

⁴Rosamund Tuve, Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966) 29. See also her Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery: Renaissance Poetic and Twentieth-Century Critics (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1947).

⁵Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama 207.

⁶This is Osborne’s translation in Benjamin’s The Origin of German Tragic Drama 175. In his study of Benjamin’s life and work, Julian Roberts has translated the same sentence thus: “Every person, every thing, every relation can signify any other” (Roberts, Walter Benjamin 145). The main problem for the translators here is with the German adjective jede which is indeed more commonly translated as “every.” For the present discussion, both translations are sufficient, though I would personally prefer that of Roberts.

and means another.”⁷ Fletcher directly challenges Rosamund Tuve’s belief that “allegorists finally wish ‘full comprehension’,”⁸ believing in contrast that allegory

seems to aim at both clarity and obscurity together, each effect depending upon the other. Enigma, and not always decipherable enigma, appears to be allegory’s most cherished function, and who will doubt that confusion in the symbolism will aid this function?⁹

While both Tuve and Fletcher are concerned, to a great extent, with the intentions of the allegory’s creator, the former expresses doubts about the clarity of the form, and the latter at least hints at the inability of such a creator to control the meanings s/he intends. Benjamin, as shown above, goes much further, stating that clarity itself is impossible in allegory. He reiterates this by his reading of Hermann Cohen’s Ästhetik des reinen Gefühls, where the latter states:

The basic characteristic of allegory ... is ambiguity, multiplicity of meaning; allegory glor[ies] in richness of meaning. But the richness of this ambiguity is the richness of extravagance....Ambiguity is therefore always the opposite of clarity and unity of meaning.¹⁰

⁷Angus Fletcher, Allegory: The Theory Of A Symbolic Mode (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1964) 2.

⁸Fletcher, Allegory 72.

⁹Fletcher, Allegory 73.

¹⁰Hermann Cohen, Ästhetik des reinen Gefühls II (Berlin: System der Philosophie 3, 1912) 305, quoted in Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama 177. Sarah Kofman is interesting in this context of ambiguity when she writes that “While ambiguity, in an equivocal fashion, may equally well signal one meaning or another, ambivalence simultaneously asserts two opposed meanings, sense and non-sense; not love or death but love and death. The structure of ambivalence is the uncompromising structure of a two-faced Janus”: quoted in Scott Wilson, Cultural Materialism: Theory and Practice (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 107.

The instability inherent in allegorical representation as articulated by Cohen is apparent in a discussion by Helen Hackett that is pertinent to this current study. In her examination of the various allegorical images used in order to underwrite Elizabeth 1's power in the 1590s, Hackett concentrates upon the ways in which lunar symbolism was associated with the Queen. Hackett shows how official allegory attempted to associate Elizabeth with the positive lunar powers of self-renewal, of immutability, and "qualities of radiance, ethereality, mysticism and other-worldliness,"¹¹ as well as providing a general symbol of female power. But the moon is quintessentially an ambiguous symbol, being also associated with

the troubling changeability of the female body ...
brain-sickness (that is, lunacy), strange
behaviour in nature, darkness and night, the
occult, sinister female powers, and female
licentiousness.¹²

These associations naturally undermine the ideological desire of official allegory, and Hackett goes on to show how lunar imagery was directly used to articulate female inferiority, quoting Richard Mulcaster who, "in his educational treatise Positions, 1581, explained that girls' bodies were weaker, 'as of a moonish influence'."¹³ The ambiguity evident in such examples is founded on the fact that allegories that could be classed as official (that is, those with a didactic aim), "raise questions of value directly, by asserting certain propositions as good and others as bad."¹⁴ Naturally, in the above

¹¹Hackett, Virgin Mother 175.

¹²Hackett, Virgin Mother 182.

¹³Hackett, Virgin Mother 182.

¹⁴Fletcher, Allegory 306.

example, qualities such as self-renewal and immutability are being positively valued. However, though it is possible to attempt to direct the audience's perceptions of such valuation, it is the argument of this thesis that it is impossible to control them: what is being allegorically cast as a virtue may well be viewed as a vice by certain members of the audience, or may indeed be given neither of these moral evaluations.

Walter Benjamin was of the opinion that "Even great artists and exceptional theoreticians ... still assume that allegory is a conventional relationship between an illustrative image and its abstract meaning."¹⁵ For Benjamin, allegory was not just "a playful illustrative technique," but was rather "a form of expression, just as speech is expression, and, indeed, just as writing is."¹⁶ This being the case, allegory becomes as susceptible to the production of excess or surplus meanings as language itself in a post-structuralist universe. This is a point taken up and extended by modern critics influenced by Benjamin's ideas. Julian Roberts, in his examination of Benjamin's theory writes:

The power of allegory, the play of sense, lay in its ability to convert objects into signs. The natural world lay at its feet as an inexhaustible store of signs which could be endlessly combined and related at the whim of the allegorist.¹⁷

¹⁵Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama 162.

¹⁶Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama 162.

¹⁷Roberts, Walter Benjamin 145.

This mention of signs and their instability articulates an essentially post-structural assessment of language, one which is outlined by Susan Frye in her examination of the nature of allegory which, though cast in a wholly post-structuralist vocabulary, is to a great extent, a reiteration of Benjamin's ideas.¹⁸ Before examining the pre-coronation procession pageants with Benjamin's thesis in mind, it is worth exploring his ideas further in order to seek a way out of a dilemma that the formulation of the contingency of allegory seems to create. For if, as Benjamin seems to believe, an allegorical image can mean absolutely anything, is it not necessarily also true that such an image is characterised by total indeterminacy of meaning? And, if the meaning of images is indeterminate, what are the implications for allegory as a communicative mode of expression?

Benjamin's writings on the allegorical form stemmed from his study of German Baroque Tragedy (Trauerspiel). His study of this genre led him to recognise the inherent instability of allegory as a representational form, although it is important to note that he stopped short of saying that all meanings produced by allegory are contingent. For Benjamin believed that in allegory meanings were, in effect, constrained by reality, or more specifically, by history. In that sense Benjamin believed that though meaning was multiple, it was not limitless. In this formulation of meaning constrained by reality, as in much else, Benjamin was greatly influenced by Hegel's Phänomenologie

¹⁸Frye, Elizabeth 1: The Competition for Representation 16-19 and 33-36.

des Geistes, the study which saw the latter work out his idea of the dialectic.¹⁹

Julian Roberts quotes Hegel and demonstrates in what sense his work became important to Benjamin:

‘The true being of a man is his deed; for in it individuality is real’; and against the infinite transferability of the allegorical sign the deed ‘is this, and its being is not merely a sign, but the thing itself’.²⁰

Thus Benjamin can say that any particular thing, though it signifies, does not only signify, but is also that thing itself. And therefore, he argues, it is reality itself that settles allegory’s “infinity of meanings within which its superabundance of signification threatens to disappear,”²¹ the signs themselves signifying their allegorisation of something real, and thus revealing “the limit set upon allegorical contemplation.”²² The image that Benjamin uses to demonstrate his idea is that of the grave or the place of execution, wherein the “bleak confusion of Golgotha” is not “just a symbol of the desolation of human existence. In it transitoriness is not signified or allegorically represented, so much as, in its own significance, displayed as allegory. As the allegory of resurrection.”²³ There is a doubling back, a point where the allegory “turns in on itself,”²⁴ where the site of execution can represent an allegory of resurrection, and where the sign beckons a reading constrained by history. This representation of history, whether of actual historical characters,

¹⁹Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Phänomenologie des Geistes (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1973).

²⁰Roberts, Walter Benjamin 148.

²¹Roberts, Walter Benjamin 150.

²²Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama 232.

²³Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama 232.

²⁴Roberts, Walter Benjamin 150.

or mythological/moralistic ones, takes place in a reality that essentially turns these images in upon themselves in a way in which “Allegory is allegorised by reality,”²⁵ and what emerges is history. In the pre-coronation procession and the Ditchley entertainment, there are examples of such a process of allegory allegorised by reality, examples which when examined can be seen to have a catastrophic effect upon the desired meanings of the pageant devices/entertainments, as well as upon subsequent readings of these spectacular events. I shall apply Benjamin’s adage to the pageants of the pre-coronation procession in an attempt to scratch away at the surface of conventional interpretations of their meanings.

1. The Quene’s Passage

The overriding aim of the pre-coronation procession itself, as well as the pageants that structured it was the introduction of an ascendant Elizabeth in ways that could be deemed suitable iconographically. The number of allegorical devices presented to the impending Queen and audience were fundamentally part of a poetics of praise, as well as being attempts to link her with both historical and mythological figures in ways that would enhance her credibility as the new sovereign. Naturally this process was, to a great extent, defined by the fact that Elizabeth was a female head of Church and State, something that merely problematised her already rather tenuous claim to the throne.²⁶ Mulcaster’s pamphlet describing the pre-coronation procession

²⁵Roberts, Walter Benjamin 150.

²⁶Recent studies, such as those by Susan Frye, Helen Hackett, Philippa Berry and C. Levin have shown how gendered the pre-coronation procession was: see Frye, Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation 22-55; Hackett, Virgin Mother 41-49; Levin ‘The heart and

demonstrates this search for appropriate allegorical figures with which to connect Elizabeth, and shows the amount of care that was taken in this process. The first device which Elizabeth encountered as she entered the City was not an allegorical one however, consisting merely of a simple, welcoming oration. Mulcaster writes:

Nere unto Fanchurch was erected a scaffold
richely furnished, wherein stode a noyes of
instrumentes, and a chylde in costly apparell,
whiche was appoynted to welcome the Quenes
Majestie in the hole Cities behalfe.²⁷

Addressing Elizabeth, the child calls London “thy Town,” welcoming her with “blessing tonges,” which “praise thee to the sky; / Which wish to thee long lyfe....”²⁸ The four stanzas continue in their celebration of Elizabeth, whose person has “all untruthe driven out.”²⁹ Mulcaster immediately seizes the opportunity to underwrite the normative desire apparent in these verses when he observes: “At which wordes of the last line the hole People gave a great shout, wishing with one assent, as the chylde had said.”³⁰ The verses represent a conventional welcome to an entering monarch, and set the tone for the pageants that are to follow. Mulcaster himself sets exactly the same tone, in his own way, constructing as he does the monolithic reaction of the audience as being in accordance with the ideological desire of the child’s verses.

stomach of a king’ 1-9; Philippa Berry, Of Chastity And Power: Elizabethan Literature And The Unmarried Queen (London: Routledge, 1994)--an examination of the gendering of Elizabeth in contemporary literature. Jean Wilson also demonstrates this gendering process, though to a lesser extent than the authors already mentioned (Entertainments for Elizabeth 1 3-7).

²⁷Mulcaster 39.

²⁸Mulcaster 39.

²⁹Mulcaster 40.

³⁰Mulcaster 40.

The first thematic pageant of the procession followed this initial welcoming and, placed at the upper end of “Gracious Streate,”³¹ had the underwriting of the legitimacy of Elizabeth’s claim to the throne as its aim. Mulcaster again describes it in detail, saying that the stage “extended from thone syde of the streate to thother,” decorated with battlements “containing three portes, and over the middlemost was avauced severall stages in degrees.”³² This pageant, entitled “The uniting of the two Howses of Lancastre and Yorke”³³ presented, upon a lower stage, personages representing Henry VII and his wife Elizabeth. The former, from the House of Lancaster, was enclosed in a red rose, and the Queen, from the House of York, was enclosed in a white rose. Each of them was “Royally crowned, and decently apparailled as apperteineth to Princes, with Sceptours in their hands, and one vawt surmounting their heades, wherein aptly were placed two tables, eche containing the title of those two Princes.”³⁴ This marking ensured that the audience was aware of who were being represented in this display, and the description of their appearance demonstrates the desire to present a realistic simulation of these two historical figures. Furthermore, these two figures joined hands over the “ring of matrimonie,” and “Out of which two Roses sprang two branches gathered into one, which were directed upward to the second stage....”³⁵ Upon this higher platform two actors representing King Henry VIII and his Queen, Anne

³¹Mulcaster 40.

³²Mulcaster 41.

³³Mulcaster 42.

³⁴Mulcaster 41.

³⁵Mulcaster 41.

Boleyn, were placed, who were likewise dressed and decorated, and who also wore a sign upon which their names were written. From their seat yet another branch extended upward to the third and highest stage, upon which a figure representing Queen Elizabeth herself sat, “nowe our most dradde Sovereigne Ladie, crowned and apparalled as thother Prynces were.”³⁶ A verbal explanation of the entire pageant was given as Elizabeth reached it, in verse form once more, again recited by a child. As well as this vocal explanation, from which only Elizabeth and those very close to the stages would have benefited, “all emptie places ... were furnished with sentences concerning unitie,” and to make the final ideological point, “the hole Pageant [was] garnished with Redde Roses and White...”³⁷

The themes of unity and of legitimacy, both clearly negotiated in this pageant in terms of support for the idea of the Tudor myth view of history are underlined by the desire to control possible meanings suggested by this genealogical allegory through the posting of messages describing the intentions of the pageant devisers. And this is further emphasised in Mulcaster’s text itself, apparent in his emphatic concentration on its single meaning, betraying a desire to monitor and forbid the possibility of alternative meanings seeping through by a process of textual containment. Mulcaster represents a logical, rational progression when he writes:

Thys Pageant was grounded upon the Quenes
Majesties name. For like as the long warre

³⁶Mulcaster 41.

³⁷Mulcaster 41.

betwene the two Houses of Yorke and Lancastre then ended, when Elizabeth daughter to Edward the Fourth matched in marriage with Henry the Seventh, heyre to the Howse of Lancastre; so since that the Quenes Majesties name was Elizabeth, and forsomuch as she is the onelye heire of Henry the Eighth ... it was devised, that like as Elizabeth was the first occasion of concorde, so she, another Elizabeth, myght maintaine the same among her subjectes, so that unitie was the ende whereat the whole devise shotte, as the Quenes Majesties names moved the first grounde.³⁸

The genealogical link being made, the accession of the Queen is legitimised, as though peace and unity are signified by the very name Elizabeth. It would seem that this legitimising link is made by Mulcaster himself, by his reading of the symbols' connection between the two Elizabeths. As much as anything else, this pageant, through its valorisation of Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, underlined the legitimacy of Protestantism as well as signalling an emerging nationalism centred around the Tudor dynasty. Mulcaster's text registers these desired meanings when he notes that the verses explaining the pageant, in English and Latin, were again, "drawen in voide places ... all tending to one ende, that quietness might be mainteyned, and all dissention displaced," and this by "the Quenes Majestie, heire to agreement...."³⁹

Mulcaster describes the pageant of "The uniting of the two Howses of Lancastre and Yorke" in much detail, informing us of the genealogical links made both between the two houses, and between Henry VII and Elizabeth,

³⁸Mulcaster 42.

³⁹Mulcaster 43.

Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, and Elizabeth herself, the impending Queen. As already stated, the ideological desire of the pageant's creators is fairly clear, casting Elizabeth in terms of a legitimate heir to the throne, a throne that, from Henry VII through Henry VIII, represents national unity, peace and stability. At length Mulcaster valorises Henry VII's wife Elizabeth as having helped set this process in motion by joining the two warring houses of Lancaster and York together by marrying Henry, stating furthermore that the impending Queen Elizabeth would also maintain this as "unitie was the ende whereat the whole devise shotte...."⁴⁰ This process whereby the fate of the nation is regarded as being secure due to the fact that the impending monarch happens to have the same name as a previous monarch who is conceived to have been very able seems to be a rather tenuous foundation upon which to build notions of a continuance of peace and national unity. However, it is perhaps significant, as it would seem to be the only possible positive link to be made here. Furthermore, it is a connection based in the occlusion of a more obvious link, one made clear by examining the verses recited in Elizabeth's presence as she reached this pageant device:

The two Princes that sit under one cloth of state,
The Man in the Redde Rose, the Woman in the White,
Henry the VII. and Quene Elizabeth his Mate,
By ring of marriage as Man and Wife unite.

Both heires to both their bloodes, to Lancastre the Kyng,
The Queene to Yorke, in one the two Howses did knit;
Of whom as heire to both, Henry the Eighth did spring,
In whose seat, his true heire, thou Quene Elisabeth doth sit.

⁴⁰Mulcaster 42.

Therefore as civill warre, and fuede of blood did cease,
When these two Houses were united into one,
So now that jarrs shall stint, and quietnes encrease,
We trust, O noble Quene, thou wilt be cause alone.⁴¹

The absence is of course clear; of all those represented on the pageant stages, in the verses it is only the figure of Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth's mother, who is not mentioned. This is an absence noted by Susan Frye, who finds Mulcaster's document (and indeed all writing she describes as "authoritative writing"), in its attempt at unity, in fact "summons the very inconsistencies, anxieties, and doubts that it attempts to quash."⁴² For Frye, the staging of Anne Boleyn, coupled with her verbal absence, is an example of such inconsistency and anxiety, and demonstrates an enormous discomfort with having to include her representation at all. Boleyn is, in a sense, excluded in the same moment she is included. Her presence calls to mind that the event of 1558 was not in fact Elizabeth's first coronation procession, her mother having been six months pregnant with her on the occasion of her own coronation entry in 1533. Boleyn's allegorical presence at the 1558 procession could call to mind the fact that at her own entry she was celebrated, as Frye states "as Henry's fertile, chaste queen--and look what happened to her."⁴³ Her own procession in 1533 witnessed a silent response from its audience,⁴⁴ her celebration as a chaste, Protestant heroine coinciding with her being heavily pregnant. This was further compounded by the fact that Henry's first wife was still living and the

⁴¹Mulcaster 42-43.

⁴²Frye, *Elizabeth 1: The Competition for Representation* 33.

⁴³Frye, *Elizabeth 1: The Competition for Representation* 33. Helen Hackett also examines Anne Boleyn's procession in *Virgin Mother* 29-34.

⁴⁴See Smuts, "Public Ceremony," in *The First Modern Society* 75-76.

marriage between the two had not been sanctioned by the Pope.⁴⁵ Here Anne Boleyn was lauded as the bringer of a golden age, as virtue personified, as virginal yet fruitful; precisely those (contradictory) properties for which Elizabeth was being celebrated in her own procession. And perhaps what this genealogical tableau articulated more than anything else was the precise opposite of its ideological desire; the very tenuousness of Elizabeth's claim to the throne. Henry VIII's will of 1546 had denied Elizabeth's legitimacy, as had the Second Act of Succession of 1536. As this pageant demonstrated, her accession was built merely "on the marital history of her progenitors."⁴⁶ There is a sense that in fact this particular pageant could therefore have raised many doubts and anxieties in the contemporary audience, not least ones regarding religion, peace, unity, and stability. For whatever the pageant creators wanted the message to be, and whatever Mulcaster wanted his interpretation to mean, one thing is certain; the contemporary audience would have been aware of the real events surrounding Anne Boleyn, and would have been aware of her ambiguous status, both as an historical and an allegorical figure. It is possible that many in the audience would have viewed the message of this present pageant with a good deal of scepticism. This scepticism would have been supported by the fact that ideas of a golden age embodied in a new monarch had been seen before, 25 years previously, in the same streets, and had been seen to be misplaced (Anne did not last long as Queen in any case). This pageant's attempts to ensure that "quietnes might be mainteyned, and all

⁴⁵The significance of Anne Boleyn's coronation procession will be examined in the following chapter.

⁴⁶Frye, *Elizabeth 1: The Competition for Representation* 33.

dissention displaced,⁴⁷ may have prompted a reading based in real (past and) current events that would have produced, conversely, divisive meanings. This allegorical representation of Anne Boleyn could indeed, in Benjaminian fashion, have been allegorised by the reality of her life and death, producing meanings very different from the official meanings desired.

From here the Queen proceeded to the next pageant device, at the Conduit in Cornhill, where she found a child “representing her Majesties person, placed in a seate of Governement, supported by certyne vertues, which suppressed their contrarie vices under their feete....”⁴⁸ The Queen’s name and title were displayed, as was the name of the pageant, “The Seate of worthie Governance.”⁴⁹ The figure representing Elizabeth sat in a chair that was held by four “lively personages,” each of whom in turn represented a virtue, and each having “a table to expresse their effectes....”⁵⁰ These virtues were named Pure Religion, Love of Subjects, Wisdom, and Justice, and they

did treade their contrarie Vices under their feete;
that is to witte, Pure Religion did treade upon
Superstition and Ignoraunce; Love of Subjectes
did treade upon Rebellion and Insolencie;
Wisdome did treade upon Follie and Vaine
Glorie; Justice did treade upon Adulacion and
Bribery.⁵¹

Each of these, according to Mulcaster, had their name clearly displayed, and were also “aptly and properly apparelled,” so as to “expresse the same person

⁴⁷Mulcaster 43.

⁴⁸Mulcaster 44.

⁴⁹Mulcaster 44.

⁵⁰Mulcaster 44.

⁵¹Mulcaster 44.

that in title he represented.”⁵² Once again, every empty space was “furnished with proper sentences,” each “commendyng the seate supported by Vertues, and defacing the Vices....”⁵³ The verses spoken at this pageant cover the same ground generally, giving voice to the obvious allegorical meanings desired by the pageant devisers, to the effect that “Vertues shall maintayn thy throne, / And Vyce be kept down still....”⁵⁴ Naturally, the impending Queen is seen as the embodiment of all of these virtues, and thus the enemy to those vices. The use of these allegorical figures from the medieval morality plays also has an anti-Catholic effect here, vice being constructed as inherent in that confession, a further attempt to legitimise the Protestantism supplanting the Catholicism associated with Mary’s reign. While the drama of the pageant device, along with the spoken verses and the posted explanations clarify the ideological desire of this representation, Mulcaster ensures that the message is quite clear by informing us further:

The ground of thys Pageant was, that like as by Vertues (whych does aboundantly appere in her Grace) the Quenes Majestie was established in the seate of Governement; so she should sette fast in the same so long as she embraced Vertue....For if Vice once gotte up the head, it would put the seate of Governement in peryll of falling.⁵⁵

Here various virtues, physically represented though, as the pageant explanation tells us, embodied in Elizabeth, are shown to tread upon and defeat their opposing vices.

⁵²Mulcaster 45.

⁵³Mulcaster 45.

⁵⁴Mulcaster 45.

⁵⁵Mulcaster 46.

The work of Benjamin is again useful here, particularly in his mobilisation of Karl Giehlow's theories of Renaissance allegory. Giehlow writes that in such allegory, "one and the same object can just as easily signify a virtue as a vice, and therefore more or less anything."⁵⁶ While this does not state that a represented virtue can be read as a vice (or vice versa), it articulates the instability of such representations. When we read that "Pure Religion did treade upon Superstition and Ignoraunce,"⁵⁷ it is clear that the pageant creators and Mulcaster believe the virtue to be Protestantism and the vice Catholicism. However, in an atmosphere of religious ambiguity (Mary's reign had been rigidly Catholic), these directed readings are not the only possible ones. Indeed, in their valuation of one, and demonisation of the other, the pageant creators beckon ambiguous meanings. In the same way, members of an audience sceptical of the ways in which the elite represented both themselves and the naturalness of the social structure might well read that "Wisdome did treade upon Follie and Vaine Glorie"⁵⁸ wryly, wondering whether the impending monarch and the Court itself could be conceived of as the personifications of the represented virtue rather than the vices. And again, where "Justice did treade upon Adulacion and Bribery,"⁵⁹ many would perhaps

⁵⁶Karl Giehlow, *Die Hieroglyphenkunde des Humanismus in der Allegorie der Renaissance, besonders der Ehrenforte Kaisers Maximilian I. Ein Versuch*. (Vienna: Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses, XXXII, 1, 1915) 36; quoted in Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* 174. Terry Eagleton quotes this section of Giehlow also in *Walter Benjamin: or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* 20.

⁵⁷Mulcaster 44.

⁵⁸Mulcaster 44.

⁵⁹Mulcaster 44.

have regarded the Court as the embodiment of the represented vices rather than the virtue. The real, everyday experience of the common audience would possibly have allegorised these already unstable allegories, and produced meanings at variance with those desired and sanctioned by the centre.

Such a reality is again demonstrated (as it was in the previous chapter) with another look at the recording of the events of the pre-coronation procession by the Venetian Ambassador, Il Schifanoja. In a move that emphasises the instability of allegorical interpretation, the Venetian Ambassador reports that this particular pageant showed slightly different figures to those outlined by Mulcaster. According to the Ambassador, the vices presented were named “Ignorance, Superstition, Hypocrisy, Vain Glory, Simulation, Rebellion and Idolatry,” concluding that the general message of the pageant was “that hitherto religion had been misunderstood and misdirected, and that now it will proceed on a better footing.”⁶⁰ This exclusively religious interpretation of the device differs from Mulcaster’s political interpretation, thus concretely revealing allegory’s plenitude in terms of meanings.⁶¹ The Spanish Ambassador interprets the allegorical device in his own way and according to his own concerns. This plenitude is increased when it becomes clear that the Ambassador actually read the name of one of the vices--“Hypocrisy”--

⁶⁰CSP (Ven) (1558-1580) 13.

⁶¹David Bergeron’s reading of this pageant is conventional, although he does contrast the Venetian Ambassador’s interpretation to that of Mulcaster. Having said that, the contrast set up is allowed to remain purely formal, in the sense that Bergeron states that the former’s reading seems to be based more in recent English history. It does however admit to the possibility of different interpretations (Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry* 18).

differently to Mulcaster.⁶² Indeed, this fact has much wider implications for the notion of the instability of meanings produced by allegory. This becomes clear when the Ambassador's naming of "Hypocrisy" is set in the context of the "Truth/Tyme" pageant device which was performed later in the procession. For it is in this pageant that allegory is allegorised by reality to such an extent that all other pageants in the procession, and the procession itself, become contaminated by meanings that official desire had no wish to produce, and that indeed it sought to quash.

On her way to the "Truth/Tyme" pageant, at the Great Conduit in Cheape, Elizabeth encountered eight children dressed to represent "The eight Beautitudes expressed in the v chapter of the Gospel of St Matthew, applied to our Sovereigne Lady Quene Elizabeth,"⁶³ a title once again clearly displayed on the front of the pageant device. These were the eight Beatitudes of the Sermon of the Mount, and referred to Elizabeth thus:

Thou hast been viii times blest, O Quene of worthy fame,
By mekenes of thy spirite, when care did thee besette,
By mourning in thy griefe, by mildnes in thy blame,
By hunger and by thyrst, and justice couldst none gette.

By mercy shewed, not felt, by cleanes of thyne harte,
By seking peace alwayes, by persecucion wrong,
Therefore trust thou in God, since he hath helpt thy smart,
That as his promis is, so he will make thee strong.⁶⁴

⁶²There could no doubt be a problem with translation in this instance. However, what leads me to doubt this is that, of the vices named by Mulcaster, only "Bribery" both comes close, and does not appear on the Ambassador's list. Moreover, that being the case, I believe that "Bribery" does not translate as anything like "Hypocrisy." The two are simply not commensurate, but rather define very different vices.

⁶³Mulcaster 46.

⁶⁴Mulcaster 47.

Mulcaster notes that the message of the pageant was displayed upon every empty space near it, and once again, he interprets this message for us. He writes that, as applied to Elizabeth, the idea was that as she had always been virtuous “these blessings might fall upon her,” and that “if her Grace did continue in her goodnes ... she shoulde hope for the fruit of these promises due unto them that doe exercise themselves in the blessings....”⁶⁵

From there Elizabeth proceeded to the Little Conduit in Cheape, to the “Truth/Tyme” pageant which most analyses of the pre-coronation procession agree to be the most important. Jean Wilson calls it the “crucial show,”⁶⁶ David Bergeron the “dramatic climax,”⁶⁷ Sydney Anglo a “critical juncture,”⁶⁸ and Helen Hackett the pageant that generated the “greatest excitement.”⁶⁹ The perceived importance of this particular pageant device is predominantly due to the fact that Elizabeth made what is for many critics a crucial interjection in the proceedings that demonstrated her ability both as an actress and a wily political manipulator. Those critics mentioned above would certainly subscribe to the idea of Elizabeth possessing both of these characteristics, and her awareness of and skill in representing herself has been a particularly fruitful area of exploration for New Historicist criticism.⁷⁰ The crucial

⁶⁵Mulcaster 47.

⁶⁶Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth 1 6.

⁶⁷Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 21.

⁶⁸Anglo, Spectacle 351.

⁶⁹Helen Hackett, Virgin Mother 43.

⁷⁰I shall look at this in some detail in the next chapter, but for now it is sufficient to point out some of these works. Stephen Greenblatt’s Renaissance Self-Fashioning deals with this theme (particularly his chapter on Spenser), and more specifically on 165-169. Leonard Tennenhouse is also interested in Elizabeth as actress in his Power On Display 102-105 See

moment which has so impressed critics throughout the ages actually occurred before the allegorical display had begun. Mulcaster writes that as Elizabeth reached the pageant stages, she inquired what the pageant was meant to signify. On being told that it represented "Time," Elizabeth felt compelled to respond: "'Tyme?' quoth she, 'and Tyme hath brought me hether.'"⁷¹ The importance of this interjection, where Elizabeth associates herself with Time, is fully realised when it becomes clear that in the action that then proceeded to unfold upon the pageant stage, an allegorical figure representing Time brings forth a further allegorical figure, the latter representing Truth. Thus Elizabeth clearly associates herself directly with the embodiment of truth itself. While this may indeed demonstrate (as most critics would now accept) Elizabeth's awareness of what would be contained in this particular performance,⁷² for many of those same critics this represents a master-stroke in terms of self-representation. Thus Bergeron tells us that here "the queen rises triumphantly to the dramatic occasion,"⁷³ while Anglo believes she "played her part to perfection," demonstrating that she "was a true heir to her father in crowd-pleasing showmanship."⁷⁴ However, these plaudits are not based on Elizabeth associating herself with Truth alone, but upon a further piece of showmanship that occurred later in the action of the performance.

also Louis Montrose's "Eliza, Queene of shepheardes," in English Literary Renaissance, and Jonathan Goldberg's observations in his James 1 33-36.

⁷¹Mulcaster 48.

⁷²Bergeron, "Elizabeth's Coronation Entry," English Literary Renaissance 8; Hackett, Virgin Mother 48.

⁷³Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 20.

⁷⁴Anglo, Spectacle 351.

The pageant device itself was made up of the representation of two hills or mountains, the one on the north side being “cragged, barreyn, and stonye; in whiche was erected one tree, artificiallye made, all withered and deadde....”⁷⁵ Under the tree sat a mourning figure in rags, over whose head was written his name, “whiche was, ‘Ruinosa Respublica,’ ‘A decayed Commonweale.’”⁷⁶ Upon the tree hung sentences “expressing the causes of the decaye of a Common weale.”⁷⁷ The southern hill in contrast was “fayre, freshe, grene, and beawtifull, the grounde thereof full of flowers and beawtie,” upon which stood a healthy tree, and under whom stood an “uprighte” figure named “‘Respublica bene instituta,’ ‘A florishyng Commonweale.’”⁷⁸ Between the two hills stood a cave out of which, as the Queen arrived, “issued one personage, whose name was Tyme, apparaylled as an olde man, with a sythe in his hande ... leadinge a personage of lesser stature than himselfe,” namely “‘Teemporis filia,’ ‘The Daughter of Tyme.’”⁷⁹ These two figures then proceeded to the flourishing southern hill, the latter figure with her true name, “Veritas” (Truth) written upon her breast. In her hand she carried a book upon which was written “‘Verbum Veritas,’ ‘the Woorde of Trueth.’”⁸⁰ A child standing upon the southern hill interpreted the pageant in verse, to the effect that the barren hill represented Mary’s reign, and the flourishing hill, now that Father Time had brought forth his daughter Truth, that of Elizabeth. And furthermore, that this

⁷⁵Mulcaster 49.

⁷⁶Mulcaster 49.

⁷⁷Mulcaster 49.

⁷⁸Mulcaster 49-50.

⁷⁹Mulcaster 50.

⁸⁰Mulcaster 50.

truth is embodied in the Word of Truth, the English Bible. This was then passed to Elizabeth, her reaction upon receiving it being that further example of her ability to be acutely politically manipulative. For, “as soone as she had receyved the booke, [she] kissed it, and with both her handes held up the same, and so laid it upon her brest, with great thankes to the Citie therefore.”⁸¹ The dramatic nature of Elizabeth’s behaviour here underlines this political astuteness, demonstrating a commitment to Protestantism, as well as to a general concept of legitimacy. And, in this moment, she links those commitments both to the institution of her monarchy, and to the powerful civic authorities.

The importance of this particular pageant, where the allegorical figure of Time brings forth his daughter Truth, who embodies a flourishing commonwealth, and whose presence dispels a decaying one, was indicated by Mulcaster as a dramatic climax. Bergeron writes that Mulcaster

suggests that the meaning of this pageant is dependent on the previous ones, the queen having already been instructed about unity, the virtues which support the seat of government, and the blessings which accompany her.⁸²

The message of the pageant is quite clear: Elizabeth, the personification of truth, brought forth by Time, relying on virtue and the word of truth (the English Bible) will oversee the return to a flourishing nation and the banishment of the decaying commonwealth representing Mary’s rule. This is

⁸¹Mulcaster 51.

⁸²Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 21.

further underwritten by Elizabeth's identification of herself with the allegorical figure of Truth, and her dramatic clasping of the English Bible to her breast. Jean Wilson is correct in stating that by so doing Elizabeth "was making a political statement," in the form of a response "to London's invitation to be the Truth of Religion ... and transform the decayed Commonweal into a flourishing one."⁸³ For David Bergeron, this pageant witnesses a key moment in Elizabethan representation, when he states: "How striking and meaningful it must have been to the spectators to see Truth in visible union with their new sovereign..."⁸⁴ This was no doubt striking, but it should be remembered that the precise device of "Truth, the Daughter of Time" was one already associated very closely with Mary. The portrait of Mary, painted by Frans Huys in (approximately) 1554, now in the British Library, has this actual motto "Veritas Temporis Filia" inscribed underneath it.⁸⁵ No doubt the idea of the pageant devisers was to replace the Catholic Mary's association with this motto with the Protestant Elizabeth's. And indeed, if as seems likely given Elizabeth's performance at this pageant she helped formulate it, or at least knew what was coming, her desire was the same. However, that is not to say that replacement or even displacement was successfully achieved. It is very possible that the most noticeable element for any contemporary audience was the attempt to re/displace, the manipulation of image involved in the effort for positive associations. The aspect of both the Queen's actions and the pageant

⁸³Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth 1 6.

⁸⁴Bergeron, English Civic Pageantry 21.

⁸⁵The portrait with inscription is reproduced in Frye, Elizabeth 1: The Competition for Representation 44.

device itself in this respect is therefore, the demonstration of allegory as political expediency. And such expediency is likely to have been discernible to an audience familiar with Marian associations. For in true Benjaminian fashion, the representation of Elizabeth as “Truth,” beckons the possibility of Mary as “Truth.”

The quintessentially climactic moment for most pageant analysts comes when the allegorical figure of Truth hands Elizabeth the English Bible, which she proceeds to use with dramatic aplomb. According to Mulcaster, a child who had recited verses explaining this pageant had had the Bible and “reached his booke towards the Quenes Majestie, whiche, a little before, Trueth had let downe unto him from the hill; which by Sir John Parrat was received, and delivered unto the Quene.”⁸⁶ This is both an interesting and defining moment. In descriptions of the pre-coronation procession, the presence of “Sir John Parrat” is frequently omitted, or he is referred to merely as an unnamed “Gentleman” of the Queen.⁸⁷ When he is named, it is purely as a conduit between “Truth” and Elizabeth, a mechanical agent allowing the pageant message to be successfully accomplished. In J. G. Nichols’ study London Pageants, there is an interesting footnote in his (confused and misleading) description of this pageant. The footnote, appearing in connection with “Sir John Perrott” in the main body of text reads thus: “Who is supposed to have been a bastard brother to the Queen; he was afterwards Viceroy of Ireland”

⁸⁶Mulcaster 50.

⁸⁷Nichols and Bergeron mention him, Jean Wilson, Helen Hackett, Lawrence Manley, Alison Plowden, and Clifford Geertz do not.

(emphasis added).⁸⁸ That is to say then that the English Bible, “the Woorde of Trueth,”⁸⁹ was passed from Truth, an allegorical figure, to the impending sovereign, already both implicitly and explicitly identified with “Truth” by the real figure of her bastard half-brother, born out of wedlock, the actual embodiment of what was at the time considered to be vice itself. At the very centre of this valorisation of truth personified is a concrete representation of “Un-truth.”

The presence of the real in these allegorical circumstances is a defining moment, not least because it is not (only) a symbolic presence. According to Hiram Morgan, “Perrot is best known ... for who he may have been--the reputed son of Henry VIII....”⁹⁰ A contemporary audience would have been aware both of his ambiguous position in Court, and his ambiguous position as a bearer of Truth. Morgan stresses that “Perrot was popularly held to be his [Henry’s] son, being large in frame, choleric in temper, tyrannical in government and a lady’s man by inclination.”⁹¹ As proof, Morgan informs us that there exist a number of records that show he was the son of Henry, and he even floats the idea (which he finally rejects) that Perrot’s parentage (and thus

⁸⁸J. G. Nichols, London Pageants 56. At the time of the pre-coronation procession, Perrot held no particular office but was an important member of the (impending) Queen’s household. For more on this subject, see Simon Adams, “The Patronage of the Crown in Elizabethan Politics: the 1590s in perspective,” The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade, ed. John Guy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 20-45.

⁸⁹Mulcaster 50.

⁹⁰Hiram Morgan, “The Fall of Sir John Perrot,” The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade 109-125: 109.

⁹¹Morgan 109.

claim on the throne) may well have been the reason for his execution towards the end of Elizabeth's reign.⁹²

While the presence of Perrot thus compromises this particular dramatic climax and could be interpreted as producing exactly the opposite message for a contemporary audience as that desired, in this allegorisation of allegory by reality the hypocrisy of the ruling elite would be an understandable and relevant reading. Furthermore, such a reading produced in this allegorical moment undermines the whole project of ideological desire apparent in the procession. If we recall that, according to the Venetian Ambassador, one of the vices that Elizabeth was to crush underfoot was indeed "Hypocrisy," and that Mulcaster, in his official interpretation of the event did not delineate such a vice, there emerges a counter-force in terms of interpretation that problematises the official reading, indeed compromises it. Perrot's presence manifestly demonstrates the hypocrisy that the ruling elite in fact personified. In a Benjaminian sense, a vice summoned by official ideological desire in order that it could be enabled to identify itself against it and thus appear as personifying virtue, cannot be held in place, cannot be stabilised or controlled, and in fact crosses over into the centre and contaminates it.

Following the above pageant, Elizabeth moved to St Paul's Churchyard, where she heard an oration in Latin that regarded her accession as the spur towards a

⁹²Morgan 123. For contemporary statements regarding Perrot's parentage, see MS State Papers at the Public Record Office; SP 63/167: 6(1).

new Golden Age, and then onto the Conduit in Fleet Street, where the last extravagant performance took place. Here, upon a stage, stood a tree “beawtified with leaves as greene as arte could devise,” and next to which sat, dressed in Parliament robes and crowned as a Queen, a figure representing “Debora the judge and restorer of the house of Israel...”⁹³ This figure was accompanied by other actors, “two representing the Nobilitie, two the Clergie, and two the Comminaltye.”⁹⁴ A child once again explained the pageant in verse, its meaning being, according to Mulcaster, that Elizabeth, “might by this be put in remembrance to consult for the worthy government of her People,” with the added realisation that “God oftymes sent women nobly to rule among men; as Debora, whych governed Israell in peas the space of xl years....”⁹⁵ Utilising the sanction of Scripture, this pageant naturally attempts to associate Elizabeth with a successful female ruler and thereby attempt to underwrite the legitimacy of female rulership itself. The figure of Debora was a particularly useful one for the pageant devisers, as she had not been associated with the Catholic Mary, herself subject to similar iconographic associations.⁹⁶

Finally, at Temple Bar, all of the meanings of the allegorical devices Elizabeth had witnessed during the procession were posted on tables held in the hands of the City giants Gotmagot and Corineus, and a final oration, underlining the

⁹³Mulcaster 53.

⁹⁴Mulcaster 53.

⁹⁵Mulcaster 54.

⁹⁶See particularly Hackett, *Virgin Mother* 38-52 and Frye, *Elizabeth 1: The Competition for Representation* 22-55 for discussions of the necessity of such iconographic association.

need for the “maintenaunce of Trueth and rooting out of Errour”⁹⁷ was performed. Elizabeth then passed onto the Tower, and the procession reached its end. Mulcaster completes his description with an effusive emphasis upon the mutual feelings of love and respect that had passed between the Queen and her subjects, the latter having been convinced of “a sure hope for the rest of her gracious doinges hereafter.”⁹⁸ However, the reality of Anne Boleyn and Sir John Perrot haunt these allegorical devices. When notions of a Golden Age and the promise of female leadership are articulated, the fate of both Anne Boleyn and indeed Mary are once more summoned. When both the “maintenaunce of Trueth” and the “rooting out of Errour” are articulated, the presence of Perrot is likewise summoned. Indeed, the reality of Sir John Perrot particularly clarifies, to a great extent, a process where allegory is allegorised, where what haunts the haunted work is exposed and, in this instance, from the common audience’s perspective, may witness an “episode of high political life ... decline inadvertently into self-travesty.”⁹⁹ In this example, an alternative message is possible, indeed is beckoned and, for the creators of the pre-coronation procession, for its participants, and for those critics/analysts who regard it as the pinnacle of the royal entry form, allegory becomes allegorised by undesired but unavoidable historical realities.

The principle upon which traditional readings of the allegorical devices performed for Elizabeth in the pre-coronation procession is founded is one that

⁹⁷Mulcaster 57.

⁹⁸Mulcaster 58.

⁹⁹Bristol, Carnival and Theatre 70.

believes that these devices were successful in stating the evident meanings to which the allegories referred, as well as the fact that this meaning was both understood and accepted by the audience as a whole. This formulation in turn rests upon another assumption, that being that allegory itself is unproblematic in its ability to declare and deliver its message clearly, or that this meaning can at least be controlled and directed in ways desired by its creators. Yet the problem for these readings, one signalled already in the fact that the pageant devices in the pre-coronation procession were marked by a plenitude of notices placed in public view, stating the unambiguous meaning of each allegory,¹⁰⁰ is that allegory itself, as a form of representation, is inherently unstable in terms of its production of possible meanings. It is characterised by the fact that it always produces more than one meaning, no matter how much a single meaning is desired and emphasised by the creator of the allegory. Such a reality can be seen in the allegorical entertainments performed for Elizabeth at Ditchley in 1592.

2. The Ditchley Progress

If the iconography negotiated and mobilised at the pre-coronation procession can be said to have witnessed the attempted constitution of a female, Protestant and national saviour, the iconography typical of such entertainments as that at Ditchley, which took place towards the end of Elizabeth's reign in 1592, demonstrates the concentration much more upon a mythical, spiritual and personal saviour. This transformation is clear when the iconography

¹⁰⁰Frye, *Elizabeth 1: The Competition for Representation* 33-34.

mobilised throughout her reign is analysed, recent surveys from Helen Hackett and Philippa Berry detailing how this iconography adapted to Elizabeth's changing personal and political status throughout the duration of her reign.¹⁰¹ The imagery used in the pre-coronation procession is typical of its moment in that it underlines Elizabeth's marriageability and fertility, many of the verses recited emphasising the fact that she would (surely) soon marry wisely and beget a male heir. As her reign moved into its middle period, and uncertainty as to whether she would marry or not remained an important theme, an attempt at iconographic fusion of both virginity and fertility as positive necessities for good rulership became more common, a reality that saw many panegyrists uncomfortably balancing these two opposing virtues.¹⁰² As her reign proceeded, the failure of the Anjou courtship in 1578 saw the probability of her marrying and thus begetting an heir as unlikely, and this iconography moved into its final stage. This stage was greatly influenced by Spenser's Faerie Queene, where Elizabeth came to be represented as a mythical figure, as the embodiment of the fusion of all oppositions and contradictions. It is in this period of her reign that she essentially becomes associated with such figures as the Moon, Cynthia, Astraea, where she becomes immutable, divine, the

¹⁰¹Helen Hackett, Virgin Mother; Philippa Berry, Of Chastity.

¹⁰²The following represent some attempts at negotiating this paradox: Sir Philip Sidney, The Lady of May, The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. Albert Feuillert, 4 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) 2: 208-217; Edmund Spenser, "Aprill Eclogue," The Shepheardes Calendar, The Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. Rev. H. J. Todd, 8 Vols. (London: Rivington, Payne, Cadell, Davies & Evans, 1805) 1: 60-76; John Lyly, Euphues and his England, The Complete Works of John Lyly, ed. R. W. Bond, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1902) 2: 208-12.

embodiment of ethereality and timelessness. It was during this period that the Ditchley entertainment took place.

The personal nature of the Ditchley entertainment when compared to the pre-coronation procession naturally has much to do with its form and location, as well as with the fact that it occurred at this late point in Elizabeth's reign. At Ditchley she is an unquestioned figure of authority and mythical strength, all-knowing and all-powerful, a presence to whom no advice is offered as it was in the pre-coronation procession, and around whom there is no hint of religious or political anxiety. Precisely this kind of mythic presence is evident in the Ditchley Portrait (see Fig. 3), prompting Frances Yates to observe that the "Queen stands fairy-like and majestic; light streams from her, defeating the dark clouds in the sky...."¹⁰³ Along with the entertainment, the painting induces David Bergeron to write that her "charming power tames nature as well as men,"¹⁰⁴ all of which, he continues, "constitutes a grand compliment to the sovereign, no matter its overstatement."¹⁰⁵ But, given the evidence it is questionable that the population of Elizabethan Oxfordshire, the site of Ditchley, were charmed by these allegorical representations of the Queen. It is questionable that they believed in Elizabeth's positive influence and power over nature, that she would "defeat the dark clouds," and that she would right all wrongs. Indeed, it is clear that she did not right all wrongs for those individuals who, four years later came looking for Sir Henry Lee in order to

¹⁰³Yates, *Astraea* 106.

¹⁰⁴Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry* 63.

¹⁰⁵Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry* 63.

“spoil” him.¹⁰⁶ It is clear also that the actions of these individuals demonstrate that they were not convinced by what Roy Strong calls “that extraordinary mythology which sustained the Elizabethan world....”¹⁰⁷ This thesis claims that by inserting the reality of certain events that impinge upon the meaning of the Ditchley entertainment much of what has been claimed for it can be seen to be problematic. An understanding of the impact upon the entertainment of Elizabeth’s displeasure at Sir Henry Lee’s taking of a mistress, as well as an examination of the fate of the rebel Bartholomew Steere raises many questions. Returning to certain documents enables a reading of this progress which throws up similar effects to those of Anne Boleyn and Sir John Perrot in the pre-coronation procession, and poses questions founded in the ways in which allegory is allegorised by reality.

The entertainment which took place on Sir Henry Lee’s estate at Ditchley, Oxfordshire, formed part of the 1592 royal progress, which subsequently visited Lord Norris’s estate at Rycote. This latter visit witnessed a personal and very simple performed greeting (it cannot be said to be an entertainment in the usual sense),¹⁰⁸ in which Lord Norris and actors representing his sons and brother (all soldiers) underlined their devotion to the Queen through the

¹⁰⁶CSP (Dom.) (1595-1597) 345.

¹⁰⁷Strong, The Cult of Elizabeth 191.

¹⁰⁸In Entertainments for Elizabeth I Jean Wilson writes that what occurred at Rycote “is more in the nature of a divertissement arranged for a family friend than a lavish spectacular...” (52). Wilson reproduces the whole performance (47-52). Nichols also reproduces this entertainment in Elizabeth 3: 168-72. The original, written by Joseph Barnes, exists as Speeches delivered to her Majestie this last progresse, at the Right Honorable the Lady Russels, at Bissam, the Right Honorable the Lord Chandos at Sudley, at the Right Honorable the Lord Norris, at Ricote (Oxford: BM C33e7 (19), 1592).

medium of panegyric and by presenting her with expensive jewellery. The actors tell of how, on hearing of the Queen's intended visit, they had stopped everything in order to rush and be present when she arrived at Rycote. The speeches they made all stated that the ruling aspect of their lives was their affection for and duty towards her.¹⁰⁹ They regard their lives as soldiers as being defined by inconstancy, and the Queen's constancy enables them to overcome the uncertainty this entails and reassures them.

The theme of the triumph of constancy over inconstancy is also the ruling element of the Ditchley entertainment, hosted by Sir Henry Lee and written by Richard Edes.¹¹⁰ Lee had retired as the Queen's Champion of the Horse at the Accession Day Tilt of 1590, after experiencing a colourful career that saw him appointed Lieutenant of the Royal Manor at Woodstock in 1571, Master of the Leash in 1574, and Master of the Armoury in 1580. He is credited with originating the Accession Day Tilts at the start of Elizabeth's reign, and was certainly one of her favourites throughout her life.¹¹¹ Lee had entertained

¹⁰⁹Norris employed actors to represent his brother and sons (all soldiers) who, throughout the entertainment stress that the Queen's visit is of such importance that they stopped whatever they were doing in order to attend. The ambiguity of this however (which again represents an allegorisation of allegory by reality) lies in the fact that the relatives themselves did not attend, but rather used actors to articulate the fact that they had to attend.

¹¹⁰The text of the Ditchley entertainment is reproduced in Nichols, *Elizabeth 3*: 193-198, though the original documents he used have been lost. Chambers reproduces a combination of Nichols' text, sections of the *Petyt Manuscript* at the Inns of Court (Inner Temple Petyt MS 538/43), and the *Ferrers Manuscript*, a collection of ten pieces made by Henry Ferrers: see Chambers *The Elizabethan Stage 3* 404-407. The fullest account is reproduced in Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth 1* 126-142, the text that shall be used in the following.

¹¹¹He may well have been one of her favourites because Lee was never a threat to Elizabeth in an emotional sense. That is to say, that unlike Leicester, or most famously Essex, Lee never seems to have sought her affections in terms of possible marriage. For an excellent survey of his life and career see E. K. Chambers, *Sir Henry Lee: An Elizabethan Portrait* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936).

Elizabeth before on his estate at Woodstock, Oxfordshire in 1575. This particular entertainment had followed that of the Earl of Leicester's at Kenilworth, one of the most elaborate progress entertainments of Elizabeth's entire reign (along with the Earl of Hertford's Elvetham entertainment of 1591). Woodstock is interestingly regarded as articulating either a clear rejection of Leicester's amorous message to Elizabeth at the earlier Kenilworth or, conversely as a continuation of Leicester's chivalric display.¹¹² Ditchley itself, like the earlier Woodstock, is very much cast as a chivalric romance, Lee representing himself as the knight-turned-hermit, evidence of his importance (along with the Accession Day Tilts) in a revival of the notion of English chivalry. The influential Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry by Ramon Lull, the medieval Catalan philosopher, translated and printed by William Caxton, had appeared in 1485, and was "attributed ... to a hermit who was once a knight."¹¹³ The hermit is regarded as the ultimate chivalric figure in this context due to the fact that he represented a pastoral retreat from the vigorous actions of the knight in order to partake of an interior contemplation. His status as a chivalric persona is further valorised by the fact that he is also a figure from Arthurian romance, as personified by Sir Baudwin of Britayne in Malory's Morte d'Arthur, also printed by William Caxton in 1485. Thus, with this tradition to draw upon, as well as Lee's own inclination, it is no surprise

¹¹²Jean Wilson and Helen Hackett argue for Woodstock as a rejection of Leicester's advances, with Lee emphasising duty as the courtier's chief virtue with regard to his sovereign. Philippa Berry, on the other hand, sees it as a continuation of (gendered) chivalric content: see Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth I 119-120; Hackett, Virgin Mother 153-4; Berry, Of Chastity 100-108.

¹¹³Berry, Of Chastity 93. See also Frances Yates, Astraea 106.

that at Ditchley, “Elizabeth found herself taking part in a chivalric romance.”¹¹⁴

The romantic story to which Lee returned at Ditchley, having entertained Elizabeth with it at Woodstock seventeen years earlier, was one of two knights in conflict. Contareus and Loricus are the knights in question, and at the earlier Woodstock entertainment had, according to Berry, represented Lee and Leicester.¹¹⁵ Whereas at Woodstock a figure representing Hemes the hermit had begged the Queen to intervene in order to resolve this conflict (which she does), Loricus himself (i.e. Lee) is now, at Ditchley, the hermit. This hermit has fallen into a deep sleep, and Elizabeth as the “Lady-Errant, the righter of wrongs and dispeller of enchantment,”¹¹⁶ is requested to awaken him. This action took place on the second day of the entertainment, and it is worth briefly examining the first day’s entertainment in order to enable a more comprehensive analysis of the entire show.

As Elizabeth approached a grove on the estate, she was met by its guardian who informed her of the unhappiness she would meet if she were to enter. Enter she does however, into the realm of “Ladies” inconstant in their choice of lovers. These lovers are knights who are in the thrall of the ladies, tied to their inconstancy. There takes place a debate between allegorical figures representing “Constancy” and “Lightness” (i.e. Inconstancy), a debate which

¹¹⁴Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth 1* 120.

¹¹⁵Berry, *Of Chastity* 100.

¹¹⁶Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth 1* 123.

remains unresolved. It is in fact the appearance of Elizabeth that resolves their differences, Lightness suddenly seeing in the Queen the overriding virtue of Constancy. Elizabeth has set the ladies free from Inconstancy (and thus the knights also) before this realisation, and has thus resolved all difficulties. Lightness's change of heart occurs when she sees Elizabeth as the embodiment of "Semper eadem" ("Always the same"), which Jean Wilson informs us was "one of Elizabeth's favourite mottos, referring to her virginity, her triumph over time, and her unchangeability."¹¹⁷ The second day revolved around the awakening from a trance of the hermit Loricus (Lee), Elizabeth once more achieving this by her mere presence. Elizabeth is called "his heavenlye Mistres,"¹¹⁸ and is thanked by a page for the "suddaine recoverie of my distressed Maister," attributing to her supernatural powers whereby "your Majestie hath don a miracle, & it can not be denied...."¹¹⁹ For such a miracle, "Hereat Stellatus, his Chappelaine, besought him to blesse God onelie, for it was Gods spirite who recovered his spirites."¹²⁰ Loricus answers that, in a sense, Elizabeth is God when he says that "whosoever blesseth her, blesseth God in her...."¹²¹ The entertainment ends with Loricus bequeathing to the Queen "The Whole Mannor Of Love" (Ditchley) with its "Groves of humble service, / Meddowes of green thoughtes, / Pastures of feeding fancies," and so on.¹²²

¹¹⁷Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth I 169.

¹¹⁸Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth I 137.

¹¹⁹Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth I 140.

¹²⁰Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth I 141.

¹²¹Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth I 141.

¹²²Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth I 141.

The influence of Spenser's Faerie Queene is apparent in this entertainment, both in its construction of Elizabeth as an immortal and divine mythical presence, and in its uses of certain imagery--the actual naming of the Fairy Queen herself, the sleeping knight in the bower, and the tree-form of certain knights and ladies.¹²³ Late in her reign, Elizabeth is represented as a kind of Christ-like figure, whose mere presence righted all wrongs, subdued and obliterated the unvirtuous, and who can raise the comatose. Helen Hackett believes that this "quasi-religious veneration of Elizabeth was justified on the grounds that she was the instrument of God and the true earthly image of the divine purpose."¹²⁴ This would certainly seem to be the case, though Philippa Berry goes even further, arguing that the "figures of God and queen were implicitly fused"¹²⁵ in the chaplain's speech, evident in the emphasis upon Elizabeth's working of a miracle. However far this fusion is taken, it is clear that Elizabeth attains the level of some kind of divinity at least, embodied in her "more than humane wisdom," in her existence as a "Heavenlie Goddess."¹²⁶

This reference to Spenser is appropriate at this point, as it enables the perception of a certain rupture in the smooth surface of the relationship thus far outlined between Lee and Elizabeth. This rupture is based in the

¹²³Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth 1 123 and 167.

¹²⁴Hackett, Virgin Mother 154.

¹²⁵Berry, Of Chastity 108.

¹²⁶Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth 1 132.

ambiguous nature of the Queen herself, who according to George Steiner is “the Janus-faced composite of tyrant and martyr ... who incarnates the mystery of absolute will and of its victim.”¹²⁷ Elizabeth represents a taboo figure, “the unapproachable yet infinitely desirable object of courtly desire,”¹²⁸ and for Lee the object both of fear and attraction. Angus Fletcher has written in detail upon this subject, saying that the hero of allegories has what he calls, “daemoniac power,” in that s/he exists between the human and divine worlds, and has superhuman power with which to resolve things.¹²⁹ This is an ambiguous position to occupy in the sense that feelings of fear are based in the realisation of the dissymmetry of power, fear of a powerful individual who is free of the usual moral restraints. Conversely, there is an attraction toward a figure of unadulterated power, toward a strong, charismatic individual. The implications of this tyrant/martyr dichotomy are particularly relevant to the Ditchley entertainment in its being influenced by Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, a work which, according to Fletcher, “has a core of profound ambivalence.”¹³⁰ Indeed, the dichotomy is the determining foundation of meaning for Fletcher with regard to Spenser’s poem:

The taboo on Gloriana holds the poem together
 ... like a retreating glow of light around the deity,
 lambent in the distance, deadly when we

¹²⁷G. Steiner, introduction, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, by Walter Benjamin 16.

¹²⁸Fletcher, *Allegory* 272.

¹²⁹Fletcher, *Allegory* 333-341.

¹³⁰Fletcher, *Allegory* 273. Fletcher believes that “Spenserian ambivalence is not simple. We find it throughout the poem: Book I, the ambivalence resulting from the sense of sin, the archetypal Christian taboo; Book II, the ambivalence of appetite and will; Book III, the ambivalence of the fear of sexual impurity; Book IV, a continuation of Book III, centering, officially, on the conflict of loyalties, or conflicting friendships; Book V, the ambivalence ... between idea and law; Book VI, perhaps the least openly ambivalent of the six (though even here ... the final vision of Serena is a depiction of sparogmos, the ripping apart of the goddess)”(269).

approach it. While the taboo keeps the courtier
from his actual Queen ... it ineluctably draws
[him] ... into her embrace.¹³¹

The ambiguity of this embrace is important for Sir Henry Lee: life-giving, but also, possibly, life-taking. This is evidenced in the entertainment itself, as well as in certain Latin inscriptions which appear on the picture painted to coincide with it, the Ditchley Portrait. Each of the three inscriptions underlines the idea of the Sovereign's duality. On the left of the picture is written (in Latin), "She gives and does not expect"; on the bottom right (in Latin), "In giving back she increases"; and, perhaps most potent of the three, on the top right is written (in Latin), "She can but does not take revenge."¹³² This stresses both the Queen's ability to use arbitrary power, while at the same time emphasising her wisdom and understanding. It also demonstrates that Sir Henry Lee, who commissioned the painting, felt that the Queen had a reason to take revenge, a point that enables real events to enter and destabilise desired allegorical readings by allegorising them.

In his brief look at Elizabethan progresses, Lawrence Stone shows that there are a number of records of the nobility's displeasure upon hearing of a proposed visit by Elizabeth, and says that "at the end of the reign we find Sir Henry Lee prophesying ruin on hearing that 'Her Majesty threatens a progress and her coming to my houses.'"¹³³ Lee must be referring to the visit of Elizabeth to Ditchley, a fact that casts a different light upon the context of the

¹³¹Fletcher, *Allegory* 272.

¹³²The painting hangs in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

¹³³Stone 454.

chivalric romance that she witnessed upon her arrival. For Lee's comment is neither chivalrous nor is it romantic. However, his chagrin could well have been founded in the fact that he was well aware of Elizabeth's displeasure at his having taken a mistress upon his wife's death in 1590, a woman who from that date onward lived with him on the site of the 1592 courtly romance at Ditchley. This point is referred to by the art historians at the National Portrait Gallery, where the Ditchley Portrait hangs. They inform us that the theme of the painting itself is in fact forgiveness, due to Lee's taking of Anne Vavasour as his mistress, a theme articulated clearly in that Latin inscription, "She can but does not take revenge." Here indeed, is that taboo figure, the subject of feelings of fear and attraction. References to this problematic situation (for Lee), also appear in the text of the entertainment itself, particularly in the section called "The olde Knightes Tale," part of which reads:

But loe unhappie I was overtaken,
By fortune forst, a stranger ladies thrall,
Whom when I sawe, all former care forsaken,
To finde her out I lost my self and all,
Through which neglect of dutie 'gan my fall....¹³⁴

Lee seems to be repenting his sin here, albeit within the context of the "Inconstancie of ladies," who lead knights (including Lee) astray. Thus he has fallen into "a stranger ladies thrall," the consequences of which are clear:

With this the just revengefull Fayrie Queene,
As one that had conceived anger deepe,
And therefore ment to execute her teene,
Resolved to caste mee in a deadlie sleepe....¹³⁵

¹³⁴Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth 1* 131.

¹³⁵Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth 1* 131.

As in the painting, Lee seeks forgiveness, aware that he has aroused Elizabeth's anger.

The Queen often showed her displeasure at the relationships of her courtiers (Leicester and Essex are just two examples), and in this instance she would perhaps have been especially displeased given that Anne Vavasour's "reputation was already tarnished when she became Lee's mistress,"¹³⁶ due to the fact that in 1581, she had had an illegitimate son to the Earl of Oxford. The fact of this illegitimacy cannot help but remind us of the presence of Sir John Perrot in the pre-coronation procession, and here once again initiates a problematisation of traditional readings of the Ditchley text. For given that Lee balked at the whole idea of Elizabeth visiting in the first place, and then cast his text as an apology to her for his taking of a mistress (one with a tarnished reputation at that), in what sense can this entertainment be defined as a chivalric romance? Surely it is not simply, indeed not even chiefly, an articulation of courtly desire, and/or the valorisation of the qualities of a transcendent Queen. It is much more an attempt to escape displeasure and possible punishment by appeasing an angered monarch. Lee was not, like Loricus, awakened from the trance into which he had fallen (Vavasour), but indeed wished to remain in this "stranger ladies thrall." The Ditchley entertainment is primarily an attempt to placate Elizabeth's jealousy, and pre-

¹³⁶Chambers, *Sir Henry Lee* 151.

empt any use of her power against an individual who had little desire for her attention in any respect.

This mention of Loricus's (Lee's) falling into a trance is an opportune entry into a final examination of the allegorisation of the Ditchley allegory in the light of an historical reading. On the first day of the entertainment, 20th September, the Queen was led into a grove by a warder knight. He warns her however that she should perhaps remain outside and not enter:

presse not too far, unless you wish to see
the dolefull case of them that live in woe
& pittie wer it such a one as you
shold se the sight wold make your hart to rew.¹³⁷

The reason she should perhaps remain outside the grove and not have her eyes offended is, the knight explains, because it “yealdes nothings els but syghes & mornfull songes / of hopeless people by ther haples tryall....”¹³⁸ These “hopeless people” who dwell in this “more than most unhappie plase / the very seat of malcontentednes,”¹³⁹ are the “light harted” ladies and their “heavy harted” knights, ruled by inconstancy and despair. Naturally, the figures in this allegorical drama are the embodiments of a vice that the Queen, by her mere presence, shall (and does) dispel. The status of Anne Vavasour within this scenario, as such a “light harted” lady and thus the personification of the vice which the Queen defeats, is interesting enough in terms of allegorisation by reality. However, more interesting is the fact that the words of the warder

¹³⁷Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth 1* 126.

¹³⁸Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth 1* 126.

¹³⁹Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth 1* 126.

knight have a certain resonance in the context of the uprising that occurred in this vicinity four years later (an examination of which forms part of the previous chapter). For it is difficult, given the events of the uprising of 1596, not to regard these words as articulating the real inconstancy of the lives of the common people. The participants of the uprising were indeed “hopeless people,” full of “syghes & mornfull songes” who lived “in woe” and who wished to enter this very estate and “spoil ... Sir Hen. Lee [i.e. cut off his head]....”¹⁴⁰ Inconstancy ruled their lives due not to their inherent vice, but to the vicissitudes of life at the bottom of such a hierarchy. The hardship they daily encountered is apparent in the records of their interrogation at the hands of the authorities after the failure of their uprising.¹⁴¹

The very first sentence uttered in the “Examination, in answer to interrogatories, of Bartholomew Steere,”¹⁴² demonstrates the uncomfortable status of Lee’s allegorical offering to Elizabeth, as under torture in Bridewell, Steere’s fellow conspirators describe the reasons for their uprising. The first to answer questions regarding the uprising, Jas. Bradshaw, states that they “had threatened to pull down the hedges ... if they could not have remedy.”¹⁴³ He goes on to say that many people had “petitioned for some corn to relieve their distress, and for putting down enclosures....”¹⁴⁴ The other conspirators echo these concerns, a baker named William (surname not given), stating that “corn

¹⁴⁰CSP (Dom.) (1595-1597) 345.

¹⁴¹CSP (Dom.) (1595-1597) 342-345.

¹⁴²CSP (Dom.) (1595-1597) 342.

¹⁴³CSP (Dom.) (1595-1597) 342-343.

¹⁴⁴CSP (Dom.) (1595-1597) 343.

would not be cheaper until the hedges were thrown down....”¹⁴⁵ John Ibill tells of how Steere said “that there would be a rising of the people ... when they would pull down the enclosures, whereby the ways were stopped, and arable lands enclosed, and lay them open again....”¹⁴⁶ The common people involved in this particular example of discontentment therefore clearly equated enclosure with both poverty and hunger. And there would seem to be a great deal of sense in their belief, as not only was much of the enclosure of land undertaken by Lee (and Norris) illegal, the village of Ditchley had itself become a deserted village by 1596 as a direct consequence of Lee’s policy of enclosure of land in his possession.¹⁴⁷ The “great sheep-master” Lee had enclosed great areas of land around both Ditchley and Woodstock and had effectively contributed to the depopulation of the entire area.¹⁴⁸ Norris was also “loathed by the people,”¹⁴⁹ not least because his policy of enclosure was also the reason for local depopulation. The opposition of Steere and his co-conspirators was not enclosure per se however. Rather, it was, as far as the rural poor were concerned, the hunger and poverty which such enclosure produced and under which they had to suffer. Thus, Roger Symonds (under torture) reports Steere as telling of instances “when he went to market, [and] he commonly heard the poor people say that they were ready to famish for want of corn,” and that he knew of “a farmer who had 80 quarters of corn, and

¹⁴⁵CSP (Dom.) (1595-1597) 344.

¹⁴⁶CSP (Dom.) (1595-1597) 345.

¹⁴⁷K. J. Allison, The Deserted Villages of Oxfordshire (Leicester: Dept. of Eng. Local History Occasional Papers 17, 1965) 36-45.

¹⁴⁸Chambers, Sir Henry Lee 92-93: see also A. Ballard, Chronicles of the Royal Borough of Woodstock (Oxford: Alden & Co, 1896) 25-26.

¹⁴⁹Walter, “A Rising,” Past and Present 114

that poor men could not have a bushel under 4s.2d., and their want of 2d. was often the occasion of their not having any....”¹⁵⁰ Steere’s observations seem to comply with contemporary evidence, both local and national, which shows 1596 to have been a particularly hard year for the rural poor, and particularly in this part of Oxfordshire.¹⁵¹ The nature of this problem is perhaps best reflected in the rapidity of the government’s response to the uprising. For in late January of 1597 proceedings against seven enclosers named by the conspirators under torture were initiated,¹⁵² a process which eventually led to a much broader series of proceedings.¹⁵³

Lee (and Norris) were surprised by the rebellion that took place in 1596, shocked at the level of discontentment existent among their own employees on their own estates. The Ditchley allegory sees Loricus awaken from his sleep, but the Oxford uprising sees Lee, some years later, still asleep, still in a trance regarding the condition of the common people in his area and employ. And the constant refrain “Happie houre, happie daie, / That Eliza came this waie!”¹⁵⁴ recited at the end of the first day’s entertainment seems restricted to a summary of Lee’s attempt at appeasement and nothing else. Not only do these lines apparently contradict Lee’s actual feelings about the presence of Elizabeth on his estate, the whole tenor of the allegory contradicts reality. For

¹⁵⁰CSP (Dom.) (1595-1597) 344.

¹⁵¹See for example Acts of the Privy Council (1596-97) 88-9, 94-96 and 112-3; Walter “A Rising,” Past and Present 108-119.

¹⁵²CSP (Dom) (1595-1597) 98; Acts of the Privy Council (1596-1597) 437-8, 447-51 and 455.

¹⁵³Acts of the Privy Council (1596-1597) 483.

¹⁵⁴Wilson, Entertainments for Elizabeth I 136.

there is no evidence that Elizabeth righted wrongs in this instance, none that she embodied “Justice,” and none that, as is claimed in the Ditchley Portrait, she dispelled black clouds, brought in good weather and with it a Golden Age.

As John Walter writes in this regard:

Whatever the unresolved symbolism of the Ditchley portrait ... depicting Elizabeth standing on a map of England dispelling heavenly storms, events in north Oxfordshire in 1596 were to suggest that Ditchley was not a happy spot upon which to place Astraea’s feet.¹⁵⁵

From 1592 onwards Lee continued to sleep, until the uprising of 1596 made him aware of the suffering caused by three consecutive failed harvests, the opposite of the claims of both the Ditchley Portrait and of the Ditchley entertainment. The “syghes & mornfull songes” of the common people continued, but fell on the deaf ears of the sleeping Lee.

When Loricus is awoken by the Queen, he rewards her for resolving all of his troubles with the legacy of “The Whole Mannor of Love.” This includes:

Woodes of hie attemptes,
Groves of humble service,
Meddowes of greene thoughtes,
Pastures of feeding fancies,
Arable lande of large promisses,
Rivers of ebbing & flowing favours,
Gardens hedged about with private, for succorie,
& bordered with tyme; of greene nothing but
hartesease, drawn in the perfect forme of a true
lovers knott.
Orchards stored with the best fruit: Queene
Apples, Pome Royalls, & Sovereigne Peare.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵Walter, “A Rising,” *Past and Present* 90-91.

¹⁵⁶Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth 1* 141-142.

And so on. Elizabeth is bequeathed all of the natural richness that Lee's estate can offer, including all of its plentiful foods. Yet the sleeping Loricus/Lee does not only fail to notice that the common population lack these same very basic needs, but that they lack them, in 1596, not only due to the bad weather that prevailed since Elizabeth's visit, but because of his systematic programme of enclosure. And the products of this programme (indeed the very programme itself) are offered as reward to the Queen. However it is a prize won at the suffering of the entire rural population of the Oxford area. The Queen is symbolically provided with that which Bartholomew Steere and his followers felt they had to fight for, and for which they were subsequently killed.

The figure of the sleeping body of a fictional Loricus contrasts tellingly to the equally still but tortured and real body of Bartholomew Steere. The former is magically awoken by the powers of the Christ-like Queen, in a fantasy whereby he then recovers all of his faculties, including the ability to see clearly. The latter, in reality tortured to death by the real powers embodied in the Queen, has all of his faculties taken away, including of course, his sight. Blinded and anonymously buried, where it has remained, written out of the records, blind to history, the tortured body of Steere disappears from the official text and thus from official history. Yet by its corporeal reality and the reality of its textual disappearance, this body allegorises that official chivalric romance, that allegory of official culture and, by so doing, enters history at the

edge of the grave, producing in that vision, an “allegory of resurrection.”

What is more, this body and all that it stands for undermines the traditional notion, articulated by Roy Strong, that a “society is held together by the assumptions and images it carries in relation to the nature of power within its hierarchy.”¹⁵⁷ This thesis argues that it is precisely this idea of the hierarchy’s allegorical images of itself constituting that “extraordinary mythology which sustained the Elizabethan world” that has contributed to the real occlusion of Bartholomew Steere’s fate. Moreover, it has shown that such imagery cannot, in effect, sustain itself when immersed in the social realities surrounding it. It is clear therefore, that the belief in the power of Elizabethan symbol which Strong describes and which “held the hearts and minds of all its peoples,”¹⁵⁸ has profound ideological implications. It is these implications that this thesis shall now examine.

¹⁵⁷Strong, The Cult of Elizabeth 116.

¹⁵⁸Strong, The Cult of Elizabeth 116.

CHAPTER FOUR

“TROUBLES AND DISTURBANCES EXIST”

The methodology to which the various texts of Elizabethan processions have thus far been subjected, one that seeks to explain certain identified absences and omissions, naturally has definite and perceptible ideological repercussions. That is to say, that such an approach, attempting to indicate lapses and omissions in traditional criticism while at the same time displaying ways in which these lapses function in a wider social sense, necessarily works towards conclusions regarding both that critical practice and the object of its gaze (the processions) that problematise their theoretical trajectories.¹ However, it is important to emphasise that any critical practice that admits to its profoundly ideological nature is no more or less ideological in itself than a practice that either does not admit any ideological implications or that, alternatively, attempts to by-pass ideology altogether. A critical practice that seeks to be entirely formalist for example, will produce readings of texts every bit as ideologically resonant as one that adheres itself to a defined political commitment, the difference being merely that the former's ideological orientation is implicit, while the latter's is explicit. Traditional criticism of the sort thus far examined, in its identification of the naturalness of consensus and

¹The criticism to which I refer here is the tradition beginning with Mulcaster, *The Quene's Passage* (1558), through Holinshed, *Chronicles* (1577), Nichols, *Elizabeth* (1823), Withington, *English Pageantry* (1918-1920), Wickham, *Early English Stages* (1959) to Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry And Early Tudor Policy* (1969). It has continued to the present through Strong, *The Cult Of Elizabeth* (1977) and *Splendour At Court* (1973), Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642* (1971) and Wilson, *Entertainments For Elizabeth I* (1980).

harmony in Elizabethan processions as well as, generally, in Elizabethan society, can be seen to produce certain (implicit) ideological projections, ones that adhere to notions of order which effectively allow its opposite, disorder, no ontological status.² In this conception, disorder is a floating signifier, constructed merely to be denied by its opposite term and thus strengthen an identified pervasive order. This thesis believes that such a process of identification and ontological valuation has ideological repercussions. Furthermore, even if a critical practice does indeed acknowledge its ideological nature, the repercussions of its readings are not guaranteed to be what they claim to be. Thus while many New Historicist critics would regard themselves as being politically on-the-left, a certain critical projection can be identified in their practice whereby any commitment to a radical (or even liberal) politics is subsumed by a greater commitment to a radical textualism. They therefore find themselves pushing back all kinds of boundaries in formalist and theoretical terms, while producing readings that have ideological repercussions every bit as conservative as those of the practice they in fact wished to displace, the older form of historicism.³

²Bristol, Carnival and Theatre 9.

³There are a number of programmatic statements by New Historicist critics, most of which set themselves out against the older brand of historicism as practised by the likes of Tillyard. The most relevant ones to this current study are the following: Stephen Greenblatt, introduction, Renaissance Self-Fashioning 1-9; his introduction, The Forms of Power and the Power of Forms in the Renaissance, Genre 15.1-2 (Spring and Summer 1982): 3-6; his essay "The Circulation of Social Energy," Shakespearean Negotiations 1-20; and his "Towards a Poetics of Culture," The New Historicism 1-14. The same collection contains Louis A. Montrose's important essay in this respect, "Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture," 15-36. Montrose confronts similar issues in his "Renaissance Literary Studies and the Subject of History," English Literary Renaissance 16.1 (Winter 1986): 5-12, and in his "The Purpose of Playing: Reflections on a Shakespearean Anthropology," Helios 7 (1980): 51-74. For an excellent overview of the New Historicism in this regard, see Jean E. Howard, "The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies," English Literary Renaissance 16.1 (Winter 1986): 13-43.

In the following, this thesis wishes to examine how the New Historicism, as the most significant and influential modern school of criticism in Renaissance studies, deals specifically with Elizabethan processions. An attempt will be made to demonstrate how New Historicism's semiotic readings of the processions, while textually innovative, replicate the old historicism in terms of ideological trajectory. Such a trajectory will be revealed by examining how New Historicism reads both specific Elizabethan processions and the symbolic figure of Elizabeth herself according to this semiotic model of culture. Furthermore, an investigation of the New Historicist conceptualisation of the symbolic nature of power itself will underline this same ideological trajectory. Initially an attempt will be made to detect the sources of the New Historicism's methodological landscape, in order to understand their semiotic reading of culture. By examining the ways in which this school of criticism reads Elizabethan processions, their emphasis on the success of spectacular display through Elizabeth's embodiment of dissymmetry will be seen to be central to their analysis. I will then immerse these findings in an oppositional theoretical landscape, drawing out the ideological implications of the New Historicist project. This immersion will suggest ways of reading these same events and practices which could be said to emphasise a more historical approach, while at the same time clarifying certain lacks in New Historicist analyses. Such an examination is of great importance to this thesis, as it will display the status of New Historicism as the latest school to take up a position

in culture's triumphal processions, showing the ways in which it is the ideological inheritor of traditional criticism rather than its nemesis. By scratching away at the surface of this modern critical practice, a clear delineation of processions as normative displays which successfully interpellated their audiences can be perceived, in a conceptualisation of early modern English society that is defined by the notions of order and unity. Before undertaking this examination however, it is worth delineating the form of critical practice against which the New Historicism set itself, in order to form a clear perception of the ideological implications of this form of criticism.

* * *

The examination of the critical works regarding processions thus far undertaken has shown the similarities in their conception of Elizabethan England, a conception that consists of an agreed order and hierarchy throughout most of the reign. That is to say, that all of these analyses perceive the existence of a rigid social order based on an identifiable structural unity. Just such a social structure was theorised in 1943 by E. M. W. Tillyard in his important study, The Elizabethan World Picture, where his reading of the literature of the period allowed him to declare that in the Elizabethan age, "the conception of order is so taken for granted, so much part of the collective mind of the people, that it is hardly mentioned except in explicitly didactic passages."⁴ Tillyard's construction of monolithic concepts such as "the

⁴Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture 18. I shall discuss this reference to "didactic passages" in a later chapter (6) on Shakespeare's history plays.

collective mind” and “the people” bears the weight of a very definite ideological burden, one that originates in a conception of both culture and society which replicates that of the dominant forces in that society. Tillyard reads the literary output of the (in number very small) educated class in Elizabethan England, and not only regards it as reflecting and determining the values of the entire population, but takes this literature, including panegyric, at its word. For him, these works reflect an entire reality.

Tillyard grounds his conception of the social order in what he identifies as a Renaissance belief in cosmic order, one which governed all natural phenomena, including human institutions. This order is, he believes, most apparent in the overwhelming presence of disorder in Renaissance culture as a whole, and in Shakespeare’s history plays specifically. Generally, he perceives a disorder with little or no ontological status being produced or dramatised merely so it can be routed by a given, reconstituted order. Such a thesis naturally beckons the much later New Historicist work of Stephen Greenblatt, particularly his essay, “Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion, Henry IV and Henry V,”⁵ whereby subversion is summoned by state power in order to contain it and thus strengthen itself. The model of order that Tillyard conceives is also the same one taken to be displayed in traditional analyses of Elizabethan state processions, a model conceived of by the dominant forces in Elizabethan society and which defines their ideal social

⁵Greenblatt, Political Shakespeare 18-47.

structure based upon an imaginary notion of (real) consensus. In this sense, Tillyard's notion of ideal order is what Richard Wilson calls a "Platonised image of Elizabethan culture,"⁶ one that, as in a state procession, positively regarded an idealised hierarchy. Moreover, it is one that perceived the naturalness of such a hierarchy in the consciousness of every member of the Elizabethan population. As Jonathan Dollimore says, Tillyard regarded this "metaphysic of order" as a consolidating force, and as "socially cohesive in the positive sense of transcending sectional interests and articulating a genuinely shared culture and cosmology, characterised by harmony, stability and unity."⁷ This conception of harmony was based on readings of the cultural artefacts produced by the dominant sections of society, and instilled a belief in the real existence of the hierarchy valorised by them. As in processions, in this hierarchy the queen (after God) was the centre of meaning itself, through the court, the state machinery, and then into the realms of the common people whose values were assumed and imagined to be those of the dominant. Indeed, the sovereign herself is regarded as the resplendent centre of meaning, and the common people are seen to exist on the edges of meaning(lessness) itself, though convinced of the naturalness of their marginalised position.

This construction of the common people as being passive in the face of the naturalness of a hierarchical system of which they formed the base is a familiar one in the works of the procession analysts thus far studied, both in the

⁶Wilson, *Will Power* 6.

⁷Jonathan Dollimore, introduction, "Shakespeare, Cultural Materialism and the New Historicism," *Political Shakespeare* 10.

original documents and in those later analyses which utilise such original artefacts. Importantly, the marginalisation of the common people in these texts has quite clear ideological implications. Generally, the orientation of such work can be seen to be immersed in a view of culture and society from above. That is to say, these discourses are part of the Weltanschauung that goes to comprise the views of the dominant forces within society, forces which valorise order, unity, and stability, and underwrite the notion that such order is the natural condition of any society. Hence the marginalisation of any perceived forces of common disorder. The emergence of the New Historicism was hailed as a break with such a monolithic conception of society, steeped as it claimed it was, in the postmodern perception of disruption and disintegration. However, an examination of New Historicist analysis which deals with Elizabethan processions demonstrates their tendency to reproduce instead the model of power conceived by Tillyard at his time of writing in the 1940s.

1. “Royal glory and theatrical violence”

In their wide-ranging perusal of Renaissance experiences and events in search of “texts” with which to identify a certain “circulation” of cultural “energy” that allows for the “negotiation” of literary texts, New Historicist critics regard the royal entry and rural progress as spectacular events that successfully interpellated the Elizabethan population through magnificent display.⁸ In this

⁸The terminology used here is that of Stephen Greenblatt in his seminal “The Circulation Of Social Energy” (Shakespearean Negotiations 1-20), an essay that attempted to outline the theoretical and methodological parameters of his critical practice. Along with Greenblatt’s work in the above text and in his Renaissance Self-Fashioning, other New Historicist scholars

context, the figure of Queen Elizabeth, as the embodiment of Renaissance power, is a fascinating one for this school of criticism, a leader who according to Stephen Greenblatt, harnessed the power of myth itself in order to rule her realm absolutely. In his essay “To Fashion A Gentleman: Spenser And The Destruction Of The Bower Of Bliss,” Greenblatt writes that “Elizabeth’s exercise of power was closely bound up with her use of fictions,” that she “believed deeply ... in display, ceremony, and decorum, the whole theatrical apparatus of royal power,” and that she regarded “her identity as at least in part a persona ficta and her world as a theatre.”⁹ Leonard Tennenhouse believes that “Elizabeth Tudor knew the power of display,”¹⁰ and did so in “a system where the power of the monarch was immanent in the official symbols of the state.”¹¹ Tennenhouse would no doubt agree with Greenblatt when he suggests that Elizabeth was one of a “handful of arresting figures”¹² who demonstrate the process of self-fashioning in the Renaissance realising, as Thomas More did about himself, that personality was to a great extent, “a narrative fiction.”¹³ Consequently, according to Greenblatt, Elizabeth’s “whole public character was formed very early, then to be played and replayed with few changes for the next forty years,”¹⁴ much like, one assumes, a character or actor in the theatre. Indeed, he believes that “kingship always

include Leonard Tennenhouse’s Power on Display, Jonathan Goldberg’s James 1 and Stephen Orgel’s The Illusion Of Power.

⁹Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning 166-167.

¹⁰Tennenhouse, Power On Display 102.

¹¹Tennenhouse, Power On Display 105.

¹²Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning 31.

¹³Greenblatt, introduction, Renaissance Self-Fashioning 6.

¹⁴Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning 167.

involves fictions, theatricalism.”¹⁵ He attributes to Elizabeth a belief in the determining power of the dramatic, as even her “ordinary public appearances were theatrically impressive,”¹⁶ and in fact goes as far as to regard her as “a ruler whose power is constituted in theatrical celebrations of royal glory and theatrical violence visited upon the enemies of that glory.”¹⁷ The force of the dramatic is thus seen to be determining, as Greenblatt believes that it was indeed in the symbolic that Elizabeth’s real power lay rather than in material institutions of repression, stating that she was “a ruler without a standing army, without a highly developed bureaucracy, without an effective police force....”¹⁸ As such, Greenblatt believes that her power lay entirely in persuasive symbolism, reliant “upon its privileged visibility” for, just as “in a theatre, the audience must be powerfully engaged by this visible presence....”¹⁹ According to Greenblatt, this “privileged visibility” was manifested in precisely those royal processions and state pageants that form the subject of this current study, as well as in the body (politic) of the Queen herself.

Greenblatt’s is a paradigmatically postmodern methodology in which previously discrete cultural and social practices are collapsed together, with spectacular processions being placed in a context of equivalence with the (similarly spectacular) Renaissance theatre, as well as the spectacular public execution. He believes that “Royal power is manifested to its subjects as in a

¹⁵Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 167.

¹⁶Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 166.

¹⁷Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets” 44.

¹⁸Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets” 44.

¹⁹Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets” 44.

theatre, and the subjects are at once absorbed by the instructive, delightful, or terrible spectacles....”²⁰ While this construction of the subjects of royal power being instructed recalls Tillyard,²¹ it is in the naming of the “terrible spectacles” that we find reference to the public execution, and in the “delightful” that we find reference to the royal procession.

In terms of the nature of the New Historicist conception of the Renaissance theatre as an institution of power, its theorised equivalence to these other state institutions is necessarily important. However, it is interesting to find that, particularly in the case of royal processions, this school of criticism has in fact very little to say. Though these practices are regarded as successful in normative terms, very few New Historicist critics have actually written about, for example, Elizabethan processions. One major reason for this fact is that it is rather the person of Elizabeth herself in these processions, as the personification of Renaissance power, that has become the object of the New Historicist gaze. This comes as no surprise perhaps in a practice for whom (monolithic) power is such an important concept. For the New Historicists, Elizabeth 1 is the prime example of normative and successful royal power, Greenblatt referring to her as “the sole legitimate possessor of absolute charismatic authority.”²² Similarly, in the context of royal progresses, Louis Montrose believes that their success was due to the “charisma of Queen

²⁰Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets” 44.

²¹“[T]he conception of order is ... so much part of the collective mind of the people...” (Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture 18).

²²Greenblatt, “Shakespeare And The Exorcists,” Shakespearean Negotiations 94-128: 97.

Elizabeth,” figured in her ability to play the role that each section of society wanted her to represent.²³ And R. Malcolm Smuts examines royal processions in terms of Elizabeth’s “charismatic authority,” pondering whether the decline of the royal entry itself under the Stuarts was due to their lack of such authority, which worked to “weaken the royal charisma.”²⁴ The use of “charisma” and “charismatic authority” by these critics is important, as these terms are regarded as articulating the nature of Elizabethan power, embodied in the monarch, and realised through symbolic display. Although unacknowledged by Montrose and Greenblatt, this conception of charisma stems (as does much else in their work) from the writings of Clifford Geertz. Charisma is one aspect of Geertz’s semiotic conception of culture which has, to a great extent, been the conception that New Historicism has taken up and used in its analysis of early modern culture. It is worth investigating Geertz’s conception, as in it lie the implications such a semiotic definition of culture has, particularly with regard to the conclusions reached in New Historicist discussions of Elizabethan processions.

While the work of Michel Foucault could be said to have fixed and situated the New Historicist approach to the type of culture that existed in the early modern period in England,²⁵ it is Geertz, an American cultural anthropologist, who has been responsible for the constitution of the New Historicist methodology and theoretical paradigms in terms of a general cultural

²³Montrose, ““Eliza, Queene of shepherdes,”” *English Literary Renaissance* 180.

²⁴Smuts, “Public Ceremony,” *The First Public Society* 68.

²⁵These issues are dealt with in detail in the following.

analysis.²⁶ Geertz believes in a semiotic conception of culture, stating “that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs.”²⁷ According to this conceptualisation, reality is always grasped metaphorically, some thing always symbolising or signifying something else. As such, experience itself is regarded as existing in the realms of representation, a formulation which allows all cultural events to be construed as texts to be read. The synecdochic interpretive models Geertz establishes from this conceptualisation typify the work of the New Historicists, who follow his perception of culture as consisting of purely symbolic action in which “both particular cultures and the observers of these cultures are inevitably drawn to a metaphorical grasp of reality....”²⁸

The defining influence of Geertz is supported by the fact that the New Historicists have sought specific theoretical inspiration from him, the earlier mentioned concept of charisma being a case in point. The uses to which this concept is put enable Greenblatt, Smuts and Montrose to discover the material realisation of power through official symbolism, and to perceive the dynamic of a successfully interpellative cultural practice. The theme of Geertz’s essay on the subject of processions, “Centres, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power,”²⁹ is typical of these general interests,

²⁶For direct uses of Geertz’s theories in New Historicist work, see Smuts, “Public Ceremony,” *The First Public Society*, Goldberg, *James I*, and Greenblatt’s epilogue, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 255-257.

²⁷Geertz, “Thick Description,” *The Interpretation of Cultures* 5.

²⁸Greenblatt, introduction, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 4.

²⁹Geertz, “Charisma,” *Local Knowledge* 121-146.

concerned as it is with “the symbolic construction of authority.”³⁰ His central interest (charisma), is taken from Max Weber’s theorisation of authority in his Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, and is applied to certain identified absolute monarchs, Elizabeth I being among them.³¹ In the introduction to his essay, Geertz informs us that charisma is a term that originated in Christian theology and referred to the “God-given capacity to perform miracles,” and was later adapted by Weber “as a label for the I-Am-The-Man type of leadership...”³² Geertz uses this as a basis for a semiotic reading of early modern society whereby, in the pre-coronation procession, Elizabeth I acts as the inscription of the “connection between the symbolic value individuals possess and their relation to the active centres of the social order.”³³ This is an important focus for Geertz’s subsequent cultural semiotics, as he believes that these centres are “essentially concentrated loci of serious acts.”³⁴ It is these “serious acts,” cultural productions such as progresses and royal entries, that represent and maintain authority in a society. In this context Geertz writes that “At the political centre of any complexly organised society ... there is both a governing

³⁰Geertz, introduction, Local Knowledge 3-16: 5.

³¹Weber theorised three types of authority, the “traditional,” the “charismatic” and the “legal-rational” or “bureaucratic.” In Weberian terms, charismatic authority exists in the exceptional abilities of an individual which causes them to be followed, these exceptional abilities demonstrating their right to lead. This definition of charismatic authority demonstrates its dialectical nature—a ruler is seen to be competent by her subjects by the fact that she rules—as well as clarifying a certain identifiable functionalism. That is to say that, as Weber himself states, it “is recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is decisive for the validity of charisma”(359), so that charismatic authority is legitimised simply by those subject to it recognising its legitimacy: see Max Weber, The Theory Of Social And Economic Organisation, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, ed. Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947). This is in fact a translation of the first part of Weber’s Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft which in turn was published as the third part of his Grundriss der Sozialökonomik.

³²Geertz, introduction, Local Knowledge 13.

³³Geertz, “Charisma,” Local Knowledge 122.

³⁴Geertz, “Charisma,” Local Knowledge 122.

elite and a set of symbolic forms expressing the fact that it is in truth governing.”³⁵ These symbolic forms are all important for Geertz, for this governing elite “justify their existence and order their actions in terms of a collection of stories, ceremonies, insignia, formalities....”³⁶ These forms underpin what Geertz calls the “inherent sacredness of sovereign power,”³⁷ as well as ensuring the legitimacy of such power:

It is ... crowns and coronations ... that mark the centre as centre and give what goes on there its aura of being not merely important but in some odd fashion connected with the way the world is built.³⁸

Geertz regards the royal entry and progress generally, and the pre-coronation procession specifically in this manner, as part of a number of symbolic actions which “locate the society’s centre and affirm its connection with transcendent things....”³⁹

It is clear that in his immersion in semiotics, Geertz lacks any theorisation of the operation of coercion in the process of authority maintaining itself in Elizabethan England, as well as maintaining an obvious belief in the success of these symbolic actions. That is to say that, according to Geertz, power not only manifests itself through ritual and symbol, but that it maintains itself through them also. Such a belief is clear in his theorisation of Elizabethan power as it manifested itself in her pre-coronation procession:

³⁵Geertz, “Charisma,” Local Knowledge 124.

³⁶Geertz, “Charisma,” Local Knowledge 124.

³⁷Geertz, “Charisma,” Local Knowledge 123.

³⁸Geertz, “Charisma,” Local Knowledge 124.

³⁹Geertz, “Charisma,” Local Knowledge 125.

Elizabeth was Chastity, Wisdom, Peace, Perfect Beauty, and Pure Religion as well as queen ... and being queen she was these things. Her whole public life ... was transformed into a kind of philosophical masque in which everything stood for some vast idea and nothing took place unburdened with parable.⁴⁰

This naturally echoes Greenblatt's belief that in "the official spectacles and pageants, everything was calculated to enhance her transformation into an almost magical being, a creature of infinite beauty, wisdom and power."⁴¹ And while such perceptions do not contravene either theorist's insistence on the power of representations, they clearly articulate their immersion in an adherence to what Geertz terms "the inherent sacredness of central authority."⁴² In other words, it would seem that Geertz's theorisation of the charisma of Elizabeth 1, used significantly by the New Historicism, is none other than an alternative term for the cult of Elizabeth as it exists in traditional and present day analyses of her as a Platonic heroine.⁴³ Such analyses include those of her public processions.

⁴⁰Geertz, "Charisma," Local Knowledge 129.

⁴¹Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning 167.

⁴²Geertz, "Charisma," Local Knowledge 146.

⁴³This cult to which I refer is that which has emerged in the twentieth century particularly, rather than the panegyric circle that surrounded Elizabeth in her own lifetime. Traditional procession analysis, in its valorisation of the interpellative success of Elizabethan symbolic events, as well as in its readings of the panegyric of the likes of Richard Mulcaster and Sir Henry Lee as merely expressing personal feelings rather than as politically motivated (public and personal) propaganda, is part of a wider cultural grouping that comprises a modern cult of Elizabeth 1. The immersion in a form of historical reading that reproduces Tillyardian nostalgia, and the critical blindness induced by the bright aura of the monarch, has contributed to the belief in Elizabeth as a figure of ultimate glamour. This cult is based upon J. E Neale's initial biography of Elizabeth, is consolidated in the Tillyardian influences of E. C Wilson's England's Eliza (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1966), and Frances Yates's Astraea, and completed in many senses by Yates's pupil Roy Strong in his Splendour at Court and The Cult of Elizabeth. For all of these writers, Elizabeth is the embodiment of a lost golden age, a symbol of social unity, of political order, and the cynosure of the most civilised culture. For them, she is indeed a charismatic figure. Modern procession analysts such as Jean Wilson (in Entertainments for Elizabeth 1) and David Bergeron (in English Civic Pageantry) regard

This immersion in the belief in Elizabeth as the carrier of charismatic authority deforms the work of Geertz, and in an obvious way. For around the notion of charismatic authority Geertz builds his semiotic conceptualisation of Elizabethan power, believing that such power was sustained and strengthened by symbolic forms alone. The idea that Geertz is seduced by the notion of the exceptional personality of the charismatic leader as it relates to Elizabeth I would seem to bear more than a little truth. For in his reading of the pre-coronation procession, and of Elizabethan processions in general, Geertz regards Elizabeth as one who ruled due to the stories that she told her audience regarding the legitimacy of her rule. She transmitted these stories through the idiom of allegory, Geertz stating that it “was allegory that lent her magic, and allegory repeated that sustained it.”⁴⁴ Such a formulation not only remains blind to any alternative readings of the audiences’ reactions, but reads allegory generally as successfully conveying its desired and monolithic message. Furthermore, it regards Elizabethan society as unified and stable, and this due to the success of allegory’s ability to transmit this desired monolithic meaning. Finally, it regards Elizabeth herself as a stable entity, and representations of her as wholly and universally successful in the portrayal of her in positive terms. This thesis has demonstrated the questionable nature of each of the

Elizabeth in just such a light, the central point of a unified society, one that maintained this unity through symbolic rituals rather than (other) material practices. Such an immersion in a cult has deformed twentieth century processional analysis, resulting in readings of them that are partial and which occlude social, cultural and political complexities and realities. These analyses form a representation of an ideal order which comprises part of a dominant ideology.

⁴⁴Geertz, “Charisma,” Local Knowledge 129.

above assertions, particularly with regard to the pre-coronation procession.⁴⁵

Despite their problematic status however, each of these assertions has been adopted by the New Historicism.

The most concise transferral of Geertz's theory of the symbolics of power to Elizabethan society is that made by Greenblatt. In his statement that in Elizabethan England, "power is constituted in theatrical celebrations of royal glory,"⁴⁶ Greenblatt is referring to both the public theatre and processions/pageants. He is stating that Elizabethan power was constituted by/in symbolic forms alone, a formulation that again lacks any notion of a theory of coercion or force. Of the New Historicists, Greenblatt is not alone in such a theorisation of the nature of power, nor is he alone in relying upon Geertz to supply the dynamic for such a formulation. In his James 1 and the Politics of Literature, Jonathan Goldberg examines the royal entries of both Elizabeth and James through a use of Geertz's work.⁴⁷ Goldberg theorises these processions in terms of the "the symbolic dimensions of state power," which are, he continues, "real forces."⁴⁸ This theorisation of the symbolic nature of real power enables Goldberg to state that power itself, "is not brute force."⁴⁹ Thus, any notion of a coercive conception of power "is just that--a

⁴⁵See chapter three.

⁴⁶Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets" 44.

⁴⁷Goldberg, James 32-33. Goldberg uses another of Geertz's ethnographies; Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1980).

⁴⁸Goldberg, James 33.

⁴⁹Goldberg, James 33.

conception of power, not a natural fact nor inherent to it.”⁵⁰ Leonard Tennenhouse’s delineation of power is similar, stating that Elizabethan society was in the thrall of Elizabeth’s symbolic body, the display of this symbolic body being “so essential to maintaining the power of the state,” that Elizabeth needed to undertake progresses and processions as her body was identified “with English power in all its manifestations.”⁵¹

In one defining sense, the ideological problems of each of these New Historicist critics are located in an evident lack or partiality. That is to say, that the point which they constantly stress, that power is manifested in symbolic display, is not a controversial (nor indeed particularly profound) one. What is controversial, and ideologically problematic, is their belief that power is delineated and maintained by symbolic display alone. It is the pervasive failure to theorise coercion, or indeed to acknowledge the use and importance of force at all, that jeopardises their theoretical trajectories. Moreover, it is their parallel belief in the success of these displays in achieving their ideological aims that further problematises these trajectories. I shall return to the problematic nature of the implications of this immersion in a semiotic notion of culture presently. Before doing so, I wish to examine this notion of dissymmetrical success. The New Historicist readings of processions have regarded them as symbolic manifestations of power which were wholly successful (from that dominant culture’s point of view), by using the work of

⁵⁰Goldberg, James 33.

⁵¹Tennenhouse, Power on Display 105-106.

the French theorist, Michel Foucault. It is worth looking at this work in more detail.

The perceived equivalence of the royal entry and the public execution in spectacular terms, both displaying and re-enacting the dissymmetry of power in early modern society, has already been discussed in an earlier chapter.⁵² In this discussion, it was shown that Foucault believes that the “public execution ... belongs to a whole series of great rituals in which power is eclipsed and restored (coronation, entry of king into a conquered city...).”⁵³ Thus Foucault perceives the ritual of brutal, public torture to be a manifestation of the rule of the sovereign, as a stark display of the arbitrary power that (s)he could wield over subjects who have in some way disturbed or transgressed upon the limits of that power. This ritual of spectacular punishment signalled to the population the nature and extent of the sovereign power, and acted as a regulatory device in the reassertion of sovereignty itself. Foucault theorises that this practice of “exquisite torture” in fact can be said to characterise early modern society, in the sense that political intervention in everyday life was infrequent but dramatic. According to this theorisation, Foucault believes that royal processions represent such a political intervention, one which also attempted to function as such a regulatory device. New Historicists agree with this formulation, Greenblatt stating that the “idea of the ‘notable spectacle,’ the ‘theatre of God’s judgements,’ extended quite naturally to ... homilies and

⁵²See chapter one.

⁵³Foucault, Discipline and Punish 48.

hangings, royal progresses and rote learning.”⁵⁴ Following Foucault, the New Historicists see the necessity for the visibility of power use, the theatricality of the spectacle (whether execution or procession), being used to coerce the population. Where Foucault and the New Historicism differ however is in their perception of the effectiveness of these spectacular practices, in their ability to achieve the desired regulation through their visibility. In terms of ideological implications it is a defining difference.

As has already been demonstrated, the underlying principle upon which the New Historicism bases its readings of such spectacular practices as public execution and royal processions is that they were indeed effective in this interpellative sense, that they were successful in achieving their ideological aims. This is typified by Jonathan Goldberg’s reading of such practices of torture in the reign of Elizabeth:

It was one way in which the power of the monarch was displayed, inscribing itself on the body of the condemned. Those brought to trial and punishment became emblems of power, and their broken bodies testified to the overwhelming truth represented by the queen.⁵⁵

This New Historicist belief in the “truth” of the Queen as manifested through such rituals, already shown in the works of Greenblatt, Tennenhouse and Montrose, clearly indicates a perception of their undeniable success in terms of interpellative desire. Quite simply, the New Historicists hold that these

⁵⁴Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 201. This school of criticism has of course taken the further step (which Foucault himself refused to do) of equating the early modern theatre with such spectacular practices, the implications of which shall be explored in the next chapter.

⁵⁵Goldberg, *James* 2.

practices successfully hailed the population, causing them to accept the contemporary social hierarchy as evidently God-given and (thus) unchangeable. What such a perception clarifies however is a theoretical dynamic that sees Foucault's theories of early modern power taken up by the New Historicism in an identifiably partial manner, one that ignores essential elements of the theories which they have attempted to put to use. A closer look at Foucault's work on early modern public execution, bearing in mind its interpellative equivalence with royal processions, will enable a clearer delineation of this New Historicist partiality.

Foucault's notorious opening of his Discipline and Punish, in which he details the horrific public torture and (eventual) execution of the regicide Damiens, and upon which he builds his theory of early modern spectacular power, is an important moment for New Historicist criticism, and allows for the conceptual model of this power to be mobilised in the way typified by Goldberg above. Using the example of Damiens, the New Historicists continually valorise the interpellative effect that such a public display of dissymmetry embodies, finding in it, according to Scott Wilson, "the seamless ubiquity of Elizabethan theatrical and political 'power on display'."⁵⁶ This notion of the truth of the monarch, manifested in spectacular judgements like that of Damiens, or indeed in a royal entry is questionable however. For as Wilson goes on to say:

the odd thing about the opening to Discipline and Punish is that far from exhibiting the seamless, overwhelming truth of the monarch's

⁵⁶Wilson, Cultural Materialism 137.

power, the public execution of the regicide
Damiens is an appallingly botched affair. If
anything is exhibited here it is not the
omnipotent sovereignty of power, but its
disgusting ineptitude.⁵⁷

That is to say, that as an example of the effect of such a spectacular
interpellative display, this execution is unsuccessful. Rather than
demonstrating any overwhelming dissymmetry, this event delineates an
immense inefficiency in power's attempt to successfully reproduce itself.
Foucault describes the abortive attempts by the executioners to dispatch
Damiens, as well as the punishment he endured being perceived as far
outweighing his crime.⁵⁸ The representatives of the sovereign are seen
through their actions to demonstrate an inefficiency in the dissymmetrical
relationship itself, undermining the success of the ritual and thus undermining
its desired effects.

One important factor that needs to be taken into account is that Foucault
himself states that this sort of inefficiency was inherent in these practices, and
that they were indeed unsuccessful; that is why they were replaced by other
methods of control. Foucault theorises this at length in the opening two
chapters of Discipline and Punish, demonstrating that such spectacular events
did not (indeed could not) function in the ways that New Historicism claims
they did. In a conscious re-focusing of interest in this context Foucault writes
that in "the ceremonies of the public execution, the main character was the

⁵⁷Wilson, Cultural Materialism 138.

⁵⁸Foucault, Discipline and Punish 3-6.

people, whose real and immediate presence was required for the performance.”⁵⁹ Foucault draws his gaze away from the monarch, and begins instead to theorise the presence of those for whom the performance was taking place. The people were called to observe in order to valorise the “vengeance of the sovereign,”⁶⁰ to demonstrate their allegiance to him/her. However, what Foucault demonstrates most clearly is the ambiguous nature of this presence, manifested in both a carnivalesque atmosphere and occasional outbreaks of actual disorder. The summoning of this presence in order for it to underpin the sovereign power often saw, according to Foucault, a refusal of that power, whereby “the people, drawn to the spectacle intended to terrorise it, could express its rejection of the punitive power and sometimes revolt.”⁶¹ The immersion of the common people in a tradition of carnival frequently saw them act in ways opposite to those officially desired where “rules were inverted, authority mocked and criminals transformed into heroes.”⁶² Rather than the constant successful reactivation of the overwhelming truth of the sovereign and sovereign power which the New Historicists find in these rituals, Foucault finds the opposite:

It was evident that the great spectacle of punishment ran the risk of being rejected by the very people to whom it was addressed. In fact, the terror of the public execution created centres of illegality: on execution days, work stopped, the taverns were full, the authorities were abused....⁶³

⁵⁹Foucault, Discipline and Punish 57.

⁶⁰Foucault, Discipline and Punish 59.

⁶¹Foucault, Discipline and Punish 59.

⁶²Foucault, Discipline and Punish 61.

⁶³Foucault, Discipline and Punish 63.

Furthermore, rather than the sovereign power gaining from such an “uncertain festival in which violence was instantaneously reversible,”⁶⁴ it was the “solidarity of a whole section of the population ... that was likely to emerge with redoubled strength.”⁶⁵ The kind of dynamic being articulated here, in which the population summoned to underwrite their own subjectification to the existing hierarchical structure of society conversely rejects official ideological desire, evidently occurred also in Elizabethan London. As shown earlier, official records for 1592, tell of an “execucion don of an offender that had killed an officier,” which was witness to a riot by “dysorderlie persons,”⁶⁶ and stresses “how manie of these dysorders have of late been commytted in divers places of the cyttie of London....”⁶⁷

It can be assumed, given the real evidence for the rejection of official symbolic actions and events such as public executions, that a similar reading of the spectacular events of royal progresses and entries is possible. That is not to say that there were riots or that there was disorder. Rather it is to say that such spectacular displays were not defined by their monolithic demonstration of successful dissymmetry, but rather that the scepticism of a large section of the audience was likely in such processions. This is a reality emphasised by the reaction of the crowd during the procession which celebrated the accession of

⁶⁴Foucault, Discipline and Punish 63.

⁶⁵Foucault, Discipline and Punish 63. The importance of this cannot be underestimated, for as Foucault writes: “And it was the breaking up of this solidarity that was becoming the aim of penal and police repression”(63).

⁶⁶Acts of the Privy Council (1592) 242. See chapter one.

⁶⁷Acts of the Privy Council (1592) 242.

Anne Boleyn, where according to a witness present, just such scepticism was evident. In an account which only survives in a modern manuscript summary, the following appears:

During [her] coronation entry in 1533, the crowd stood mute. When a servant of the Queen exhorted the spectators to cheer he was told that 'no one could force the people's hearts, not even the King'.⁶⁸

In this case, the symbolic display of dissymmetry fails, and the audience are not hailed. That is to say, despite the claims of Geertz and the New Historicism, this "serious act" is not successful in its ideological desire. Indeed, as Sydney Anglo shows, the witness (writing in French) stresses that the crowd demonstrated their displeasure in many ways:

Despite the English custom of making obeisance before the King and Queen on their entry, and of crying 'Dieu gard le roy, Dieu gard la royne', there was nobody, says the observer, who greeted them in this way. And when one of the Queen's servants asked the Mayor to order the people to give the customary welcome, 'lequel luy respondit que ne seroit contraindre les cueurs de gens et que le roy mesme ne seroit que fere'. Moreover, the coincidence of the letters H. and A. interlaced, signifying Henry and Anne, painted everywhere as decoration, was seized upon everywhere derisively 'par interjection comique ha, ha, ha'--such was the slight esteem in which the new Queen was held by the populace.⁶⁹

Anglo points out that this witness was a foreigner--Chapuis, the imperial ambassador, writing to Charles V--and thus it is evidence which needs to be

⁶⁸Quoted in Smuts, "Public Ceremony," *The First Modern Society* 75-76.

⁶⁹Anglo 259.

read sceptically. However, even with this knowledge, it is clear that such evidence undermines conventional readings of royal processions and, to a great extent, severely problematises the New Historicist notion of the power of theatrical display. For, given their belief in the success of royal entries in achieving their ideological aims, they would surely find the audience reaction to Anne Boleyn's coronation procession puzzling.

The inherent ambiguity of these displays is further clarified if Foucault's comments regarding the physical ceremony of the execution are related to the pre-coronation procession. According to him, a "whole military machine surrounded the scaffold: cavalry ... archers, guardsmen, soldiers. This was intended ... to prevent any escape or show of force...."⁷⁰ Importantly however, it was also present "to prevent any outburst of sympathy or anger on the part of the people...."⁷¹ As in the pre-coronation and coronation processions for Elizabeth, the (more than merely symbolic) weapons were drawn, were held aloft, were clearly discernible in the hands of her bodyguards, aware of the threat of the procession's main character, the people. This is clear both in the Procession picture (Fig. 1), and in the Procession drawing (Fig. 2). In the latter, 17 Gentlemen Pensioners and 14 footguards stand in close proximity on either side of the Queen's carriage, each brandishing a weapon. The Queen is thus surrounded by 34 Gentlemen Pensioners with halberds, and 28 footguards

⁷⁰Foucault, Discipline and Punish 50.

⁷¹Foucault, Discipline and Punish 50.

with short-swords drawn. A total of 62 men and weapons therefore encircle and protect Elizabeth.

The defining difference between Foucault's reading of early modern spectacular displays is that which sees him calling them "ambiguous rituals,"⁷² whereas for the New Historicism these same events are always unambiguously successful in their official ideological desire. Foucault's theories become emptied out by the New Historicism, giving rise to identifiable ideological repercussions. Their partial readings render theories of transformation and ambiguity ineffectual in any terms other than ones which will produce interesting stories that make no claims for themselves other than semiotic ones. Such a process leaves the New Historicism in a quandary however, in the sense that in its belief in the success of these symbolic rituals it is unable, for example, to account for the actions of the audience at Anne Boleyn's coronation entry. Indeed, in the same way, it is unable to account for the execution of Charles 1 in 1649, unless it resorts to regarding it as a personal failure on the part of that particular monarch to mobilise an indefinable and ineffable quality entitled charisma. Its valorisation of this quality of charisma, along with its belief in the success of spectacular cultural events at the expense of any recognition of the existence of material forces of control in early modern England seriously compromise any perceptible theoretical landscape which the New Historicism has carved out for itself. An adherence to a belief

⁷²Foucault, Discipline and Punish 65.

in the omnipotence of symbolic forms lies at the foundation of its theoretical and methodological shortcomings, articulated in an essay by Louis Montrose on Elizabethan progresses, a brief look at which will enable such shortcomings to be displayed.

2. “Her greatness and their lowness”

In an essentially uncontroversial beginning to his essay “‘Eliza, Queene of shepheardes,’ and the Pastoral of Power,” Montrose states that the Renaissance pastoral form represented a “symbolic mediation of social relationships ... [which] are, intrinsically, relationships of power.”⁷³ Hence the title of his essay, the “Pastoral of Power,” which continues to find him stating that the progress entertainments themselves were precisely such mediations and negotiations. He regards this cultural exchange as a very knowing one, claiming that the “repertoire of pastoral form ... was exploited and elaborated by Elizabethan poets and politicians, by sycophants and ideologues, by the Queen herself.”⁷⁴ In order to enable the inclusion of the entire population in his equation (a crucial factor in the construction of his thesis), Montrose then seeks and finds the celebratory presence of the common people in this pastoral territory. The example he uses of Elizabeth on progress is precisely that of the report of the Spanish ambassador of 1568, examined earlier, and which has been the subject of misrepresentation throughout history.⁷⁵ It may be recalled that analyses of Elizabethan progresses to date have failed to reproduce the

⁷³Montrose, “‘Eliza, Queene of shepheardes,’” English Literary Renaissance 153.

⁷⁴Montrose, “‘Eliza, Queene of shepheardes,’” English Literary Renaissance 153.

⁷⁵See chapter one.

initial two sentences of the Ambassador's report in which the popularity of Elizabeth is questioned, proceeding rather to merely reproduce that part of the document that shows the common people unambiguously celebrating the Queen. This has seen these studies endlessly reproduce such evidence as the following: "She was received everywhere with great acclamations and signs of joy, as is customary..."⁷⁶ These same studies have failed to reproduce other evidence that immediately precedes these sentences: "her progress ... will only be in the neighbourhood, as she is careful to keep near at hand when troubles and disturbances exist..."⁷⁷ Montrose fails to reproduce these opening two sentences, enabling him to build his thesis upon a perception of the monolithic and celebratory presence of the common people. This presence is included in what Montrose regards as the demonstration of uninhibited celebration of the charismatic monarch by the entire population, and thus to his wider thesis concerning both progresses and pastoral in general.

In a typically Geertzian formulation, Montrose suggests that the "images and metaphors; conventions of person, place, and diction; and distinctive generic features and their combinations,"⁷⁸ together with the ability of the Queen as actress ensured the continuation of charismatic authority. That is to say, that the repertoire of pastoral form in conjunction with "Elizabeth [who] did not need to be provided with acting parts--she merely played herself,"⁷⁹ sustained

⁷⁶CSP (Spanish) (1568-1579) 51.

⁷⁷CSP (Spanish) (1568-1579) 50.

⁷⁸Montrose, "'Eliza, Queene of shepherdes,'" *English Literary Renaissance* 153.

⁷⁹Montrose, "'Eliza, Queene of shepherdes,'" *English Literary Renaissance* 170.

the Elizabethan social order itself. Montrose uses the Sudeley entertainment of 1592 to demonstrate the compelling nature of this (semiotic) reality:

in a context in which the commons were actually present as performers or as spectators, pageants like the one at Sudeley might fortify loyalty toward the crown among those whose relationship to the landlords who were their immediate and tangible superiors was one of endemic suspicion or resentment.... Thus the pastoral pageants at Sudeley and others like them might affirm a benign relationship of mutual interest between the Queen and the lowly, between the Queen and the great, and among them all.⁸⁰

In this playing off of one class against another in such a way, Montrose seems to be claiming that the progress entertainments in fact allegorised reality (in a reversal of Benjamin), and that order was secured and maintained through the mystification of social relationships. Needless to say, this mystification is regarded as having achieved its aims, in the sense that Montrose regards the progress entertainments as having suitably impressed the common people. In a thesis that resembles that of Geertz, and also those of Greenblatt and Tennenhouse, it would seem that real problems and inequalities are deferred and indeed resolved through symbolic actions. Montrose's evidence demonstrates the successful nature of such a symbolic practice in interpellative terms. The alternative thesis that has been expressed in this study believes that although this New Historicist proposition may well be compelling in terms of ideological desire, these symbolic actions were not successful in fulfilling this desire. Thus when Montrose states that the pageant entertainments functioned

⁸⁰Montrose, "Eliza, Queene of shepheardes," *English Literary Renaissance* 179.

“to transcend socio-economic stratification in ‘a beautiful relation between rich and poor,’”⁸¹ or that they asserted “a bond of reciprocal devotion and charity between lowly subjects and sovereign,” or indeed that they served to “confirm and preserve the delicate balance of interests between the crown and the political nation,”⁸² one can only wonder where his acknowledgement of the effects of purveyance, of plague, of poverty, of hunger, of enclosure, and indeed of aristocratic resistance to royal visits would fit into this semiotic picture.

What becomes apparent in the reading of Montrose and Greenblatt is that the dynamic of their theorisations point toward a Tillyardian notion of Elizabethan society and its cultural practices. This is clearly articulated by Montrose:

The ‘symbolic formation’ of pastoral provided an ideal meeting ground for Queen and subjects, a mediation of her greatness and their lowness; it fostered the illusion that she was approachable and knowable, loveable and loving, to lords and peasants, courtiers and citizens alike.⁸³

The defining characteristic of these cultural practices, as in Tillyard, is the valorisation of order and rank, an aim that, according to Montrose, although based on a partial reading of evidence, was successfully achieved. In the New Historicist reading, the sovereign is given a cult-like omniscience in this play of social relationships, the only individual truly wise to the operation of power. The wisdom of the sovereign is to be found in the borrowings of the Geertzian

⁸¹Montrose, “‘Eliza, Queene of shepheardes,’” English Literary Renaissance 179

⁸²Montrose, “‘Eliza, Queene of shepheardes,’” English Literary Renaissance 180.

⁸³Montrose, “‘Eliza, Queene of shepheardes,’” English Literary Renaissance 180.

formulation whereby the “charisma of Queen Elizabeth was not compromised but rather was enhanced by royal pastoral’s awesome intimacy.”⁸⁴ Montrose sees Elizabeth herself as “the cynosure of ... Elizabethan pastoralism,”⁸⁵ whereby she effectively rules her country through the symbolic underwriting of her power in the pastoral form. In this reading, the Queen successfully maintained her power through the strategic mobilisation of a literary form that demonstrated her greatness in contrast to her subjects’ lowness, and demonstrated further the naturalness of this hierarchy. As such, Montrose believes these “pastorals were minor masterpieces of a poetics of power,”⁸⁶ and from “every angle, the political dynamic was advantageous to Eliza, Queen of shepherds.”⁸⁷

The ideological repercussions of an immersion in analysis determined by Geertzian semiotics are certainly worrying in their inability to deal with material practices that are more than merely symbolic, as are those of a critical practice such as Montrose’s, which builds an enormous theory of both Elizabethan pastoral and the society that produced it on the evident misreading of a single document. This reading states that a monolithic common people were subject to cultural practices which effectively and successfully mystified their social status, and made them, against their interests, celebrate the structure of the hierarchy under which they suffered. Yet a consideration

⁸⁴Montrose, ““Eliza, Queene of shepheardes,”” *English Literary Renaissance* 180.

⁸⁵Montrose, ““Eliza, Queene of shepheardes,”” *English Literary Renaissance* 154.

⁸⁶Montrose, ““Eliza, Queene of shepheardes,”” *English Literary Renaissance* 180.

⁸⁷Montrose, ““Eliza, Queene of shepheardes,”” *English Literary Renaissance* 180.

of Montrose's methodology in reaching such a conclusion is enlightening. For these conclusions are built upon a partial reading of all of his influences and sources. Thus not only is there a worrying lack of scrutiny with regard to primary material (the Spanish Ambassador's report), but Montrose's understanding of early modern culture is defined by emptied-out theories of Foucault, and a denial of the real in favour of the exclusively semiotic. At this point it is necessary to consider evidence which questions the semiotic findings of Montrose, and indeed problematises the whole New Historicist methodology.

After its emergence in the early 1980s, and its elevation to a position of academic convention in the following decade, the New Historicism found itself the subject of an increasing amount of scrutiny in the 1990s.⁸⁸ While there were those who questioned its methodological and theoretical parameters, as well as its ideological trajectory, throughout its emergence, few critics have, to my knowledge, immersed specific New Historicist statements/conclusions in an empirical landscape in order to see if they bear any relation to existent historical records.⁸⁹ Vincent P. Pecora, in his essay

⁸⁸Such studies are too numerous to mention here, though almost any critical study that attempts to read the early modern period theoretically has to do so through the New Historicism.

⁸⁹Important essays appeared at the time of this emergence such as Jean E. Howard's "The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies," *English Literary Renaissance*. There are also a number of such essays in the collection *The New Historicism*, particularly the following: "The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction" by Joel Fineman, 49-76; "The Asylums of Antaeus: Women, War, and Madness--Is there a Feminist Fetishism?" by Jane Marcus, 132-151; "Co-optation" by Gerald Graff, 168-181; "The Limits of Local Knowledge" by Vincent P. Pecora, 243-276; "The New Historicism and other Old-fashioned Topics" by Brook Thomas, 182-203; and "Foucault's Legacy: A New Historicism?" by Frank Lentricchia, 231-242. Though collected in 1989, many of these essays initially appeared earlier.

“The Limits of Local Knowledge,” is one example of such an empirical study, placing Clifford Geertz’s conclusions regarding the presence and function of violence in modern Indonesian society into a factual backdrop of the military take-over of that country in the autumn of 1965. Consequently, Pecora finds Geertz’s semiotic reading of Indonesian culture severely wanting in terms of its political trajectory.⁹⁰ Another such study, and one which bears direct relevance to this thesis, is Francis Barker’s “A Wilderness of Tigers: Titus Andronicus, Anthropology and the Occlusion of Violence.”⁹¹ In this essay, Barker delineates the Geertz/Greenblatt critical approach regarding an exclusively semiotic interpretation of culture, and questions whether, when such an assertion is juxtaposed with a detailing of actual examples of material power at work in early modern England, it can remain anything other than an “aestheticisation of politics.”⁹² Centering around Greenblatt’s belief that Elizabethan power was symbolic rather than material, Barker takes execution as the manifestation of symbolic power and subjects it to a reading of the historical records regarding “death by hanging (and other related causes)”⁹³ in Elizabethan and Stuart England and Wales. After trawling through these records, Barker emerges with a startling series of statistics regarding early modern execution, which he suggests are, in all probability “radical

⁹⁰Pecora, “The Limits of Local Knowledge,” The New Historicism 243-276.

⁹¹Barker, The Culture of Violence 143-206. In this present chapter, and indeed in much of this thesis, I am much indebted to this particular essay, both in methodological and theoretical terms, as well as in its general ideological direction.

⁹²Barker, The Culture of Violence 200.

⁹³Barker, The Culture of Violence 169.

underestimations of the numbers of people actually put to death....”⁹⁴ He

writes:

estimated national totals for England and Wales ... are as follows: 24,147.4 men and women hanged; 516.21 pressed to death, and 11,440.52 dead in gaol; or, on average at least 371.5 were put to death by hanging, 7.94 were killed by the peine forte et dure and a further 176 probably died in gaol in each and every one of the 65 years of the reigns of Elizabeth and James.⁹⁵

In order that the reader should grasp the full significance of these figures,

Barker then scales them up to modern-day equivalents:

if a similar proportion of the present day population were put to death, at least 4,599.17 people on average would be executed as convicted felons each year, a further 98.29 would be pressed to death without plea, and 2,178.88 would die in gaol.⁹⁶

While it is not possible to do full justice to Barker’s methodology in arriving at such figures in this current study, it should be emphasised that, on the evidence presented, his results are utterly convincing. Prompted by the representation of the ease with which a common person is executed in Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus,⁹⁷ Barker explicates a cultural phenomenon--the widespread execution of common people in early modern England and Wales--founded in factual evidence. It is what he does with this evidence in relation to the New Historicism and Geertz that is most interesting however.

⁹⁴Barker, The Culture of Violence 179.

⁹⁵Barker, The Culture of Violence 178.

⁹⁶Barker, The Culture of Violence 178-179.

⁹⁷Barker, The Culture of Violence 165-168.

For Francis Barker, the “sense of the theatricality of power” theorised by Greenblatt very much “approximates to the view that if there was social control in early modern England, it was achieved by essentially benign social-- that is, ‘cultural’--means.”⁹⁸ While he does not wish to deny that power operates in this way, Barker wants to stress that it does not operate in this way alone. If Greenblatt believes (as he indeed seems to and as does Geertz) “that power is itself a metaphor,” he seems to further believe that it is “no more than a metaphor.”⁹⁹ And thus, as Barker goes on to stress, “a wholly appropriate attention to the power of representation can, it seems, easily topple over into figuring power as merely invested in the representational.”¹⁰⁰ Greenblatt’s thesis regarding the symbolics of Elizabethan power is contrasted to Barker’s “record of death by hanging,” which he goes on to say, “suggests there was an extensive, ruthless and effective coercive apparatus that was putting to death vast numbers of the people, overwhelmingly the low-born and the poor.”¹⁰¹ Clinching his argument in a forceful manner and taking the practitioners of cultural semiotics to task, Barker makes it clear that with regard to this large majority of the population, means “were available not so much to impress them with theatrical celebrations as to kill them.”¹⁰² If the fate of Bartholomew Steere is once more considered here, Barker’s thesis would seem to contain a good deal of credibility.

⁹⁸Barker, The Culture of Violence 200.

⁹⁹Barker, The Culture of Violence 200.

¹⁰⁰Barker, The Culture of Violence 200.

¹⁰¹Barker, The Culture of Violence 201.

¹⁰²Barker, The Culture of Violence 202.

It will be remembered that in 1596, a number of employees of Lord Norris and other Oxfordshire landholders attempted an uprising, in order to kill their employers and relieve their own hunger and poverty. These common men proclaimed “they would murder Mr Power, as also Mr Berry ... Sir Hen. Lee, Sir Wm. Spencer, Mr Frere, and Lord Norris, and then go to London,”¹⁰³ there to meet up with “the London apprentices [who] would join them.”¹⁰⁴ It will also be remembered that four years earlier, in 1592, Queen Elizabeth and her court had visited the Oxfordshire countryside on progress, and had indeed stayed with various of these landholders, including Lord Norris and Sir Henry Lee.¹⁰⁵ As employees of these landholders, each of the rebels is likely to have witnessed this progress, many of them, including Bartholomew Steere, also probably being present during the performance of entertainments produced for the Queen. If these facts are placed in the semiotic theorisations of Greenblatt, Montrose and Geertz, certain contradictions arise. For their belief that Elizabethan power was embodied in spectacular display alone, and their further belief that such display was effective, would not countenance uprisings by those at whom such display was aimed. That is to say, that Greenblatt, Montrose and Geertz would contend that Steere and his followers must, of necessity, have been interpellated by the symbolic resonance of the Queen and her progress procession. As such, the rebels could not have rebelled because of their recognition of dissymmetry, their recognition of and subjectification to Elizabeth’s charismatic authority. However, though their uprising was

¹⁰³CSP (Dom) (1595-1597) 345.

¹⁰⁴CSP (Dom) (1595-1597) 345.

¹⁰⁵See chapter three.

abortive, they did attempt to rebel, and they did, it would seem, remain unimpressed by the symbolism embodied in the Queen and her procession.

The rebels were subsequently captured, imprisoned, brought to London and tortured. Steere, it would seem, was tortured to death, while two other rebels, Richard Bradshaw and Robert Burton, were executed on Enslow Hill, the initial meeting place of the rebels.¹⁰⁶ The individuals responsible for their torture and execution were a number of Oxfordshire landholders, including Lord Norris, his son Sir Henry Norris, and William Frere.¹⁰⁷ Greenblatt's claim that Elizabeth was "a ruler whose power is constituted in theatrical celebrations of royal glory and theatrical violence visited upon the enemies of that glory,"¹⁰⁸ does not fit comfortably with this example of material violence however. In the case of Steere and his followers, the constitution of this symbolic power was ineffective, and the violence visited upon them was not merely theatrical but was real. As Barker clarifies, the means to impress and interpellate the common population were not merely symbolic, but existed also in material institutions of coercion.

Although Barker's essay is prompted by an analysis of Shakespearean theatre, his thesis is important for the conclusions it reaches regarding the nature of early modern power itself, and the place of other cultural practices within this

¹⁰⁶CSP (Dom) (1595-1597) 316-318.

¹⁰⁷CSP (Dom) (1595-1597) 342-345 and 316-318. See also Walter, "Rising," Past and Present 125-129 and Manning, Village Revolts 226-227.

¹⁰⁸Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets" 44.

society.¹⁰⁹ He writes, in a way that encourages the impression that he does not believe he is making a particularly profound point, that he has “tried to suggest that Elizabethan power certainly did not operate by theatrical spectacle, cultural display or circulation and exchange alone.”¹¹⁰ And yet Geertz, Greenblatt, Tennenhouse, Goldberg and Montrose suggest that early modern power functioned in precisely this way: through symbolic action alone. Barker’s point is that power functions through material as well as symbolic actions, and not in a material way through symbolic actions alone. The success of any spectacular cultural practice, such as the pre-coronation procession, lies in a combination of theatrical representations of potential violence and material representations of the threat of real violence. Barker regards the New Historicist immersion in cultural semiotics as an occlusion of real violence, their readings of the symbolic nature of power resulting in an occlusion of the material manifestations of that power, creating an ideological trajectory that celebrates the dominant culture.¹¹¹ The result of this immersion in cultural semiotics is the production of academic work that, though technically innovative, replicates the ideological paradigms of an older form of historicism. Thus the conclusions reached by New Historicists with regard to Elizabethan processions are essentially no different to those of the likes of J.

¹⁰⁹For both Barker and the New Historicists, Shakespearean theatre is the real focus of attention, the major site of contestation. This theatre’s relationship to early modern execution practices in terms of its normative functioning forms the basis of this contestation, and shall be dealt with in chapter seven.

¹¹⁰Barker, *The Culture of Violence* 203.

¹¹¹For an equally sceptical assessment of the New Historicism, though one which approaches it from an alternative ideological direction, see Brian Vickers, *Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993) 214-271.

Nichols, J. Neale, Roy Strong and David Bergeron. Similarly, the ideological trajectories of the New Historicism as a whole replicate a traditional form of processional analysis, blinded by the aura of Elizabeth, convinced of the power of allegory and display in achieving its ideological aims. For this is a critical practice that, like the older historicism's inability to countenance the real existence of real disorder/discontent, is founded in partiality. It attempts to explain the past using theoretical tools that are essentially incomplete. A more considered use of these tools, such as primary material, the theories of Foucault, the existence of material as well as symbolic practices, would enable a more complete explanation/negotiation of this past, and produce knowledge with a recognition of ambiguity, disunity and complexity. Knowledge that would admit, for example, that Elizabethan processions were complex cultural events, produced and received in a complex society that was constituted by more than its governing class. The history plays of Shakespeare were likewise complex, and it is to a consideration of these that this thesis now turns.

CHAPTER FIVE

“EVELL & DISORDERED PEOPLE”

In what has gone before, this thesis has attempted to demonstrate the effects of reading processional literature and analysis within the context of the audience at whom such theatrical displays were aimed. It has been shown that traditional conceptualisations of these displays have often failed to take into account the heterogeneous nature of audience responses. These accounts have thereby undervalued the potential for alternative and oppositional interpretations to those desired by the producers and participants of the processions. Moreover, it has been shown that these allegorical displays were inherently ambiguous in terms of possible meanings produced, and that they were never wholly successful in achieving their ideological aims. A concentration upon the audience has enabled this thesis to posit such a possibility.

It is a major argument of this thesis that the reading model applied to Elizabethan processions can also be used in the examination of Shakespeare's history plays. The fact that processional literature and the history plays of Shakespeare have traditionally been regarded as commensurate has already been demonstrated.¹ It was shown that the plays have been regarded as little more than a grand, nationalistic pageant: “3Henry VI is ... part of a great all-embracing conception of a pageant in which England and man himself work

¹See my introduction.

out the expiation of an original crime towards the final reassertion of a divinely controlled universal order.”² As in processional analysis, Cairncross here reads the play as little more than a device through which the audience is instilled with a monolithic, normative message that articulates the dominant ideology. It will be recalled that this perception of the affinity of the normative significance between the pageant theatre and the Shakespearean drama has been shown to represent a blurring of the ideological boundaries of discrete dramatic forms, and to constitute a process which it is a central aim of this thesis to examine and question. This blurring has been shown to define traditional analysis of the two cultural forms however, best demonstrated by reference to Marion Wynne-Davies’s definition of the term “Pageant”:

the pageant tradition is important for understanding Elizabethan history plays, especially those of Shakespeare. Thus ... Henry IV, Part I ... is essentially the re-enactment of a conflict to which the nation is perpetually exposed--a dramatic pageant in the mystery and morality tradition.³

Davies perceives equivalence existing between pageant devices and Shakespeare’s history plays, and a definition of pageantry becomes an explanation of a discrete dramatic text. The problem that arises with such a perception of verisimilitude is an important one for this thesis. For if it is true, as is claimed by both traditional criticism and the New Historicism, that the official strategy of royal entries and progresses was one of subjection through

²Cairncross, introduction, 3Henry VI lxvi.

³Wynne-Davies 216.

display, the suggestion is that the strategy of Shakespearean historical drama was the same.

The tradition of public-pageant analysis is one that generally considers Renaissance processional practice as not only overtly propagandist and, in Foucauldian terms, spectacular, but also as having been successful in fulfilling its ideological aims. That is to say, that these processions have been analysed as functioning in an exemplary fashion, the populace being perceived as having submitted themselves to displays of hierarchy in which they formed the lower level. This thesis has shown that this notion of success is problematic, and that it is conceivable that these processions did not achieve their ideologically normative task. Shakespearean drama has likewise been regarded as having had this normative effect upon “the urban masses,”⁴ an effect that in Althusserian terms, interpellated and subjected them. It is an important argument of this thesis that such concepts of subjection and success are equally problematic.

In the following, the same reading model that was applied to Elizabethan processions will be applied to four of Shakespeare’s history plays. Traditional readings of the three parts of Henry VI as well as Henry VIII will be read according to Walter Benjamin’s notion of triumphal processions, as cultural treasures that need to be analysed with “cautious detachment” and read

⁴Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning 253.

“against the grain.”⁵ However, before doing so it is important in order for legitimate meanings to be processed, to once more determine the material environment in which these plays were performed. As such, it is necessary to focus upon the audience for whom Shakespeare wrote. The purpose of such a focus is an attempt to delineate a presence that, much like the common audience at public processions, has traditionally been ignored, effaced or devalued in terms of their potential readings of the plays. By so doing, it will be possible to ascertain that the plays may not have produced and negotiated the ideological effects traditionally prescribed to them, and will question the notion of success in their perceived normative functions. An examination of contemporary records will enable such a delineation.

1. “The collective mind”

In my earlier discussion of the ideological repercussions of E. M. W. Tillyard’s view of early modern society and culture,⁶ it was shown that his conceptualisation of the Elizabethan social order reflected a Renaissance belief in cosmic order, most apparent in Shakespeare’s history plays. The model of order that Tillyard conceives is the same one taken to be displayed in traditional analyses of Elizabethan state processions, one that perceived the naturalness of a rigid, God-given hierarchy in the consciousness of every member of the Elizabethan population. Tillyard makes this point most clearly in The Elizabethan World Picture, where he writes that in this society the

⁵Benjamin, “Theses,” Illuminations 248.

⁶See chapter four.

notion of order is “so much part of the collective mind of the people, that it is hardly mentioned except in explicitly didactic passages.”⁷ Tillyard’s construction of monolithic concepts such as “the collective mind” and “the people” have been shown to be problematic in relation to the audiences at processions, and it is important in this present context to realise that the “didactic passages” to which he refers include Shakespeare’s history plays. This thesis contends that Tillyard’s influential concept of consensus is problematic given the constitution of audiences present at Shakespeare’s history plays.

A reading of contemporary documentation reveals the audience to have been diverse in terms of social class, any typical gathering at the amphitheatres consisting of both the affluent and the very poor.⁸ And what becomes immediately clear on examining these records is not any concept of consensus, but rather a delineation of the playhouse as a site of potential unrest, subversion and vice. These records, most of them written by the London authorities, demonstrate an overriding fear of outbreaks of disorder due to the volatile nature of a large majority of the playhouse audience. The following

⁷Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* 18.

⁸The constitution of the early modern audience has been a subject for much debate. This debate began with the perception of a typically artisan audience in Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare’s Audience* and *Shakespeare and the Rival Tradition*. Harbage’s findings were questioned in Ann Jennalie Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare’s London, 1576-1642*, who delineated instead a predominantly privileged audience consisting of gentlemen. Cook’s theories have in turn been severely undermined by Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London* and *The Shakespearean Stage: 1572-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Cook’s analysis has also been shown to be deficient in Martin Butler, “Appendix II,” *Theatre and Crisis 1632-1642*, and Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) 16-17.

letter from the Lord Mayor and the Aldermen to the Privy Council and dated July 28th, 1597, is a typical example:

Amonge other inconveniences it is not the least that they [the plays] give opportunity to the refuze sort of euill disposed & vngodly people, that are within and abowte this Cytie, to assemble themselves & to make their matches for all their lewd & vngodly practices; being as heartofore wee haue fownd by th' examination of divers apprentices & other seruantes whoe have confessed vnto vs that the said Staige playes were the very places of their Randevous appoynted by them to meete with such otheir as wear to ioigne with them in their designes & mutinus attemptes, beeing also the ordinarye places for maisterles men to come together....⁹

This was written in the hope of closing the amphitheatres down, as they were, according to the same letter, the sites of “many disorders,” and the meeting place for the “worse sort of such evell & disordered people.”¹⁰ There are a number of references in the Acts of the Privy Council to the playhouses inducing “lewde behaviour,”¹¹ and attracting “bad people” who commit “verie greate disorders.”¹² The Repertories of the Aldermen of the City record a desire to prevent performances of plays which go back to before the playhouses were built.¹³ In 1572, the Aldermen record the fact that, of the audiences for plays, “the greatest number are of the meanest sorte,”¹⁴ and in 1581 that the city authorities should “suffer no playes.”¹⁵

⁹Corporation of London, Remembrancia (1593-1609) ii: 171.

¹⁰Corporation of London, Remembrancia (1593-1609) ii: 171.

¹¹Acts of the Privy Council (1591-1592) 549.

¹²Acts of the Privy Council (1597) 313-314.

¹³See Corporation of London, Repertories (1549) XII: fol. 92; XII: 1 fol. 100 and fol. 162.

¹⁴Repertory (1570-1573) XVII: fol. 316.

¹⁵Repertory (1579-1583) XX: fol. 192.

That the authorities should want to control and indeed prevent disorder is understandable, but what these records demonstrate is the fact that the London playhouse was the site of an early modern ideological struggle, and was perceived to be an unstable site of meaning. The correspondence collected together in the Remembrancia from the year 1579 onwards is particularly useful in this respect, and is full of references to the playhouses as sites of potential and real disorder. Indeed, the fact that the playhouses and the plays themselves were so tightly controlled is testament to this perceived instability. Naturally, much of this control was related to the need for the alleviation of potential outbreaks of the plague and, when the plague was at its height, the playhouses were indeed closed down. The records however, do not merely demonstrate the actual control of the companies, the censorship of the plays, and the effective policing of real outbreaks of disorder. They continually demonstrate the perception of subversive institutions out of control in terms of their undermining of order. A letter from the Lord Mayor of London, addressed to John Whitgift, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and dated February 25th, 1592, is further evidence of this. The Lord Mayor writes:

by the daily and disorderlie exercise of a number of players & playeng houses erected within this Citie, the youth thearof is greatly corrupted & their manners infected with many euill & vngodly qualities ... the prentizes & seruants [are] withdrawen from their woorkes....To which places allso doe vsually resort great numbers of light & lewd disposed persons, as harlots, cutpurses, cuseners, pilferers, & such lyke, & thear, vnder the collour of resort to those places to hear the playes, devise diuers euill & vngodly

matches, confederacies, & conspiracies, which
... cannot bee prevented nor discovered, as
otherwise they might bee.¹⁶

The letter proceeds to request the closing of the playhouses for the sake of the preservation of good order. A letter sent by the Lord Mayor to Sir Francis Walsingham in 1583, describes “prophane spectacles at the Theatre and Curtaine and other like places, to which doe resorte great multitudes of the basist sort of people.”¹⁷ It is evident therefore that the problem for the authorities lay not primarily with the playhouse itself, nor chiefly with the plays. Their problem lay rather with the audience, and with the fact that this audience appeared to be both potentially subversive and impossible to control. And while such documents could be exaggerations on the part of the authorities to prevent large gatherings of potential subversives, it is worth emphasising that they demonstrate the perceived presence of a large and dangerous mob which did not share the social and political views of the authorities. That is to say, that such evidence reveals a lack of consensus, a rupture in any notion of a “collective mind of the people,” a whole section of the population whose social experience was seen to be at odds with those in power.

The playhouses were, according to the Lord Mayor, “the ordinary places of meeting for all vagrant persons & maisterles men,”¹⁸ the site for “the refuse sort of evill disposed & vngodly people ... to assemble together ... for all their

¹⁶Remembrancia (1579-1592) i: 635.

¹⁷Remembrancia (1579-1592) i: 538.

¹⁸Remembrancia (1593-1609) ii: 73.

lewd & vngodly practizes....”¹⁹ These were the people who represented the danger for the authorities, and which represent rupture in terms of a monolithic Elizabethan world picture. Included among these “base & refuse sort of people,” were “vagrant persons, Maisterles men, thieves, horse stealers, whoremongers, Coozeners, Conycatchers, contrivers of treason, and other idele and dangerous persons,” as well as “apprentices and other seruantes.”²⁰ If the definition of the common people with which this thesis has been working is recalled, certain parallels become apparent:

This large group of Londoners [the common people] ... included not only shopkeepers and craftsmen (themselves divided into masters, journeymen and apprentices), but also servants, sailors, unskilled labourers, beggars and thieves; old and young, men and women, literate and illiterate.²¹

As such, it is possible for this thesis to propose that the problematic presence at the playhouses as far as the authorities were concerned were sections of the common people.

2. “The main character”

The letters reproduced above demonstrate the defining presence of the common audience at the playhouse as the “main character”²² as far as the City

¹⁹Remembrancia (1593-1609) ii: 103.

²⁰Remembrancia (1593-1609) ii: 171.

²¹Burke, London Journal 143.

²²Foucault, Discipline and Punish 57. The use of this term to describe the early modern playhouse audience mirrors its use in the earlier chapter on processions. Mobilising it there, it was explained how it is a term taken from Foucault’s description of the audience at early modern executions, and how that social practice implied their centrality. It will be remembered that precisely the same was said of the procession audience, in the way that such a cultural practice in effect constituted this audience. While my own desire is not to say that the practices of execution and processions and that of playgoing are equivalent, I do wish to emphasise the determining presence of the audience in the playhouses.

authorities were concerned. Another contemporary phenomenon which saw the audience as the centre of debate was the religious and ideological conflict that raged regarding the nature of playgoing itself. Thomas Nashe, for example, was a great supporter of playgoing, as evidenced by his Pierce Penilesse of 1592. He writes:

There is a certaine waste of the people for whome there is no vse, but warre: and these men must haue some employment still to cut them off....To this effect, the policie of Playes is very necessary....For whereas the after-noone beeing the idlest time of the day; wherein men ... do wholly bestow themselues vpon pleasure, and that pleasure they deuide ... either into gameing, following of harlots, drinking, or seeing a Playe: is it not then better ... (... of the four extreames...) ... that they should betake them to the least, which is Playes?²³

Indeed, Nashe then articulates the whole point of his endeavour, saying “Nay, what if I prooue Playes to be no extreame; but a rare exercise of vertue?”²⁴

The terms in which Nashe states his argument prioritise the positive effect of plays upon their audience, making them more virtuous rather than more subversive. Here, the whole point of plays is their potential for edification.

In his view of plays and playgoing, Nashe was opposed by many, not all of whom were members of the City authorities. Philip Stubbes, the well-known Puritan, wrote the following in his 1583 tract, The Anatomie of Abuses:

Playes and Enterludes; where such wanton gestures, such bawdie speaches, such laughing and fleering, such kissing and bussing, such

²³Thomas Nashe, Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Diuell, The Works of Thomas Nashe, ed. R. B. McKerrow, 5 Vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958) I: 212-213.

²⁴Nashe I: 212.

clipping and culling, Suche winnckinge and glancinge of wanton eyes, and the like, is vsed....Then, these goodly pageants being done, euery mate sorts to his mate, euery one bringes another homeward ... and in their secret conclaues (couertly) they play the Sodomits, or worse.²⁵

Once more the concern with, in this case, the detrimental effects of playgoing is concentrated upon the audience who, Stubbes continues, are damned, for “that man who giueth money for the maintenance of them [plays] must needs incurre the damage of premunire, that is, eternall damnation....”²⁶ This debate was widespread in early modern London, gaining polemicists on both sides, such as Thomas Heywood in support of the playhouse, and Stephen Gosson against. In his Apology for Actors (1612), Heywood writes that plays “have made the ignorant more apprehensive, taught the unlearned the knowledge of many famous histories, instructed such as cannot reade.”²⁷ Stephen Gosson, writing in 1582, says that the London playhouses are “as full of secrete adulterie as they were in Rome,” and advises people not to visit them, as “the little thrift that followeth their greate gaine, is manifest token that God hath cursed it.”²⁸ Phyllis Rackin is correct when she says that this debate indicates the fact that the theatre “for which Shakespeare wrote had not yet acquired a clearly defined discursive position,”²⁹ and was embroiled in a religious,

²⁵Philip Stubbes, The Anatomie of Abuses, ed. F. J. Furnivall, 2 parts (London: Bungay, 1877-82) 1:144-145.

²⁶Stubbes 1: 145.

²⁷Thomas Heywood, An Apology for Actors (London: Nicholas Oakes, 1612) 3: F3.

²⁸Stephen Gosson, Playes Confuted in fiue Actions, Markets of Bawdrie: The Dramatic Criticism of Stephen Gosson, ed. Arthur Kinney, Salzburg Studies in English Literature (Salzburg: Universität Salzburg, 1974) 194-195.

²⁹Rackin, Stages of History 110.

ideological and legal conflict regarding this position. For this thesis however, the important point is the fact, particularly emphasised by Heywood's words, that it is a debate centred in and around the struggle for the minds of the audience, a large section of which was constituted by the common people.

In the light of the opinions of Nashe, Heywood, Stubbes, Gosson, and the various Lord Mayors, it is clear that the audience were regarded as suitable targets for ideological intervention, and that the plays, if they were to be performed at all, should have a didactically normative function. As such, it is clear that, even if certain sections of the audience did not constitute the unruly mob that many in authority claimed they did, they were regarded as suitable targets of ideological desire because of the ways in which they were perceived; ignorant, volatile and prone to vice. If it is accepted however, as it is for this study, that the audience of any theatrical performance in early modern London's amphitheatres was, like an entry audience, a representative cross-section of London's population, then what has previously been stated regarding this population as a whole, and as then applied to entries, holds true here. That is to say, that given the conditions in which a large proportion of London's population lived, it is clear that their resultant perceptions would have been brought to the plays as they were to the processions. The conclusion that this suggests with respect to Shakespeare's audience is that the playhouses were in effect a reflection of the material experience of an urban procession. That is to say, that the type of audience that was earlier

constructed for a London procession, such as Elizabeth's in 1558, would have been very similar, in terms of social and cultural experience, to that audience in the playhouse.

Tillyard sees consensus and order when he views the Elizabethan urban population, because he fails to regard the common people as the main character of theatrical performance. This thesis views the plays through this common presence, and with specific results. The audience for Shakespeare's plays was heterogeneous, and it is possible that large sections of Shakespeare's audience would have read the plays in ways different to those higher up the social hierarchy. Furthermore, it is possible that they read the plays very differently to the ways in which they have subsequently been read and transmitted to the present day. This proposition enables the perception that the common people in early modern London could possibly have read celebrations of nobility and monarchy, as represented in royal entries and the theatres, with a great deal of scepticism. This is a possibility not considered by Tillyard however, who states that all Elizabethans unproblematically celebrated representations of nobility and monarchy, particularly those in the history play.³⁰ His critical trajectory regards early modern drama as being positively didactic, as well as seeing the message being conveyed as a conventional one in the sense that it was successfully underwriting the (Tudor) monarchy. According to Tillyard, the message of the early modern drama is clear, and it is

³⁰Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* 157.

both normative and monolithic. However, even if this were the case, it is clear that large sections of the audience could have interpreted what they saw very differently. Moreover, it is most important to point out that in Shakespeare's history plays, traditionally regarded as the most normative of an essentially normative genre, the nobility and monarchy are, almost exclusively, represented as cruel, unjust, self-centred and, most crucially, untroubled by the lot of the common people. *In these plays, it is indeed difficult to find* characters from the nobility or monarchy who are represented sympathetically in such (class) terms, figures from the nobility who could be celebrated by a common audience. In the following chapter this thesis will examine specific plays in the light of this realisation, as well as in the light of contemporary evidence which demonstrates a perceptible lack of consensus.

CHAPTER SIX

“THE TEARES OF TEN THOUSAND SPECTATORS”

This thesis has argued that Shakespeare’s history plays have traditionally been regarded as having underwritten the Tudor monarchy in ways similar to the ideological dynamic of royal processions. Thus it was stated that the plays are often regarded as little more than extended pageants which demonstrate the routing of disorder and the establishment of legitimate authority.¹ With regard to processions, this has been shown to be a perception that ignores the heterogeneity of any contemporary audience, particularly those individuals who formed what has been defined as the common people. The same heterogeneity delineated the audiences for Shakespeare’s plays, and it is a major contention of this thesis that this same section of the audience has traditionally been ignored. In what follows therefore, this section of the audience will be prioritised as the main character, and the potential meanings which they could have produced from their experience of the plays examined. This will be achieved by investigating representations of the nobility and the common people in the Henry VI trilogy and Henry VIII, and the ways in which traditional criticism has interpreted these representations.² The analysis of the three parts of Henry VI will involve an examination of the ways in which

¹See introduction.

²Along with Tillyard, traditional criticism includes such texts as Felix E. Schelling, The English Chronicle Play (New York: Macmillan, 1902); Alfred H. Harbage, As They Liked it: An Essay on Shakespeare and Morality (New York: Macmillan, 1947); J. A. R. Marriott, English History in Shakespeare (London: Chapman & Hall, 1918); G. Wilson Knight, The Olive and the Sword (London: Oxford University Press, 1944); J. Dover Wilson, The Fortunes of Falstaff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943). See also Lily B Campbell, Shakespeare’s ‘Histories’; Irving Ribner, The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare; John Wilders, The Lost Garden; Alexander Leggatt, Shakespeare’s Political Drama.

traditional criticism has read the plays as defined by their providentialist nature, and thus as little more than political pageants which underwrite the Tudor monarchy. This notion will be problematised, most specifically by examining the presence of the common people in the plays, particularly in their appearance as ordinary soldiers. The analysis of Henry VIII will also examine traditional perceptions of its providentialist dynamic, and will juxtapose this with what this thesis regards as the problematic dramatisation of Anne Boleyn's coronation procession. Traditional readings of all four plays will be subjected to scrutiny based upon placing the plays in the context of contemporary events, in order to emphasise the fact that alternative meanings to those traditionally proposed were indeed possible. Before reading the plays themselves, it is necessary to investigate this notion of providentialist historiography by looking at the influential studies of the plays in the work of E. M. W. Tillyard.

In what is generally regarded as "the century's most influential study of the histories,"³ Tillyard formulated a picture of the Elizabethan world in which there was always "some sort of order or 'degree' on earth [with] ... its counterpoint in heaven."⁴ Tillyard found this structure of both Elizabethan society and the Elizabethan mind most eloquently expressed in Shakespeare's

³Edward Berry, "Twentieth-Century Shakespeare Criticism: the Histories," The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies, ed. Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 249-256: 250. For discussions about the importance of Tillyard's analysis, see also Dollimore and Sinfield, Alternative Shakespeares 206-207, and Holderness, Shakespeare Recycled 2-5.

⁴Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays 16.

history plays, not because Shakespeare was unique in terms of political economy, but because he “used the thought idiom of his age.”⁵ An essential element in this thought idiom perceived by Tillyard was that of providentialism, whereby the dethronement of Richard II thrust the English nation into the unnatural disorder of the Wars of the Roses, a disorder that was finally quelled by God’s representative on earth, Henry VII. Tillyard thus regarded the two historical tetralogies of Shakespeare as exemplary lessons in such providentialism, a lesson which he conceived as wholly conventional, indeed idiomatic, in Elizabethan terms. According to Graham Holderness, this is the view of history that Tillyard believed Shakespeare subscribed to:

The [history] plays are said to offer a unified historical narrative expressing a politically and morally orthodox monarchist philosophy of history, in which the Tudor dynasty is celebrated as a divinely sanctioned legitimate regime, automatically identifiable with political stability and the good of the commonwealth.⁶

According to Tillyard, providentialism was thus one element of the thought idiom of the Elizabethan age through which Shakespeare expressed himself, demonstrated in the clear and overriding message of his history plays: that the Wars of the Roses were England’s “systematic and prolonged punishment ... for the dethronement and murder of Richard II.”⁷ In this analytical scheme, the history plays are regarded as a pageant of England, and indeed of mankind, whereby original sin is committed, sin that is eventually redeemed with the defeat of Richard III and the accession of Henry VII. This providential view of

⁵Tillyard, Shakespeare’s History Plays 16.

⁶Holderness, Shakespeare Recycled 3.

⁷Wilders, The Lost Garden 68.

history is important for Tillyard in his reading of 1Henry VI, when stating that Joan of Arc had been sent by God in order to punish England for her wrongs:

What were the sins God sought to punish?
There had been a number, but the pre-eminent one was the murder of Richard II, the shedding of the blood of God's deputy on earth. Henry IV had been punished by an uneasy reign but had not fully expiated the crime; Henry V, for his piety, had been allowed a brilliant reign. But the curse was there; and first England suffers through Henry V's early death and secondly she is tried by the witchcraft of Joan.⁸

The action of 1Henry VI is therefore regarded as the consummation of England's descent due to the workings out of this inherited curse, a problem that is finally solved with the victory of Richmond at the end of Richard III. In this sense, the Henry VI trilogy is merely a means to an end, tracking and articulating, in the words of Andrew Cairncross, "the original sin of Henry IV to the grand redemption of the Tudors."⁹

The conflict between Lord Talbot and Joan of Arc in 1Henry VI is one of the crucial scenes for Tillyard's thesis regarding the punishment of England. For his wider thesis regarding the omnipresence of order and degree, Tillyard concentrates upon one particular episode from each of the Henry VI plays, each episode representing a microcosm of his larger ideas. Tillyard writes:

I noticed that in each part of Henry VI there was some positive, usually very formal or stylised

⁸Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays 171.

⁹Cairncross, introduction, 1Henry VI xli. As well as the providential theme, traditional criticism has emphasised the theme of patriotism. To a great extent, this has been subsumed by Tillyard's providentialism however. For a closer examination of this patriotic theme, see Schelling, The English Chronicle Play; Harbage, As They Liked it; Marriott, English History in Shakespeare; Wilson Knight, The Olive and the Sword; Dover Wilson, The Fortunes of Falstaff.

reference to the principle of order. In 1Henry VI there was the scene of Talbot doing homage to his king, in 2Henry VI the blameless conduct of Iden and his perfect contentment with his own station in life, in 3Henry VI Henry's pathetic longing for the precisely ordered life of a shepherd.¹⁰

I shall examine these scenes in some detail shortly, but before doing so it is necessary to shift emphasis onto the presence of the contemporary audience in order to question this notion of providential history.

The traditional criticism of analysts such as Tillyard, Campbell, Dover Wilson and Wilders, has never been reluctant to state the ideological effects of Shakespeare's plays upon his contemporary audience, effects that tend to adhere to the original line taken by Thomas Nashe with regard to 1Henry VI:

Nay, what if I prooue Playes to be ... but a rare exercise of vertue? First, for the subiect of them (for the most part) it is borrowed out of our English Chronicles, wherein our forefathers valiant acts (that haue line long buried in rustie brasse and worme-eaten bookes) are reuiued, and they themselues raised from the Graue of Obliuion, and brought to pleade their aged Honours in open presence: than which, what can be a sharper reproofe to these degenerate effeminate dayes of ours?

How would it haue ioyed braue Talbot (the terror of the French) to thinke that after he had lyne two hundred yeares in his Tombe, hee should triumphe againe on the Stage, and haue his bones newe embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least (at seuerall times) who, in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding?

I will defend it against any Collian, or clubfisted Vsurer of them all, there is no

¹⁰Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays 207.

immortalitie can be giuen a man on earth like
vnto Playes.¹¹

Like Nashe, traditional criticism reads the effects of Shakespeare's histories as above all, edifying. According to Tillyard, such a didactic function is demonstrated in 1Henry VI (III. iv. 1-27), where Lord Talbot pays homage to his king, and is rewarded with an important position in Henry's coronation procession.¹² Tillyard identifies this as crucial to the basic overriding principle governing the entire trilogy, stating that:

Any Elizabethan would have perceived that the scene was a deliberate setting up of an ideal norm. Every detail suggests an exact and orderly disposition. God, the king, the peers, the captives are ranged in their degrees (emphasis added).¹³

Tillyard regards the speeches of Talbot and Henry as possessing "pivotal meaning," and in its delineation of "due degrees,"¹⁴ articulates Shakespeare's version of order.¹⁵ Irving Ribner makes the same kind of intervention when he describes Jack Cade's seizure of power in 2Henry VI, whereby the "rule of Cade is carefully portrayed as a perversion of all that Elizabethans held sacred" (emphasis added).¹⁶ Ribner's reference to "Elizabethans" and Tillyard's to "Any Elizabethan," articulate a perception of Elizabethan society as monolithic, and of each and every member of that society, no matter their social and cultural background, as holding the same view of existence. What

¹¹Nashe 1: 212.

¹²This scene is examined in detail below.

¹³Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays 157.

¹⁴Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture 24.

¹⁵Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture 27.

¹⁶Ribner 113.

has already been stated concerning the heterogeneous nature of both the London population and the audiences that visited Shakespeare's plays has, I believe, severely undermined such a notion of homogeneous responses to all cultural events, plays included.¹⁷ It is therefore possible to propose the notion that whatever kind of play was performed for an audience at any one of the amphitheatres, it would have been witnessed, read, consumed, perceived and responded to in any number of ways according to an individual's social, cultural and religious position. It has been shown that even such a monolithic cultural event as a royal procession could be read and interpreted differently by the various components of its audience. This multivalence is even more in evidence in a cultural artefact of much greater ideological complexity such as a Shakespearean history play. The impact of this understanding of the heterogeneous nature of the audience is immediately felt in the traditional conceptualisation of providential history as articulated by the plays.

The defining foundational element of all traditional criticism in their treatment of the Henry VI trilogy is that the three plays represent a mere means to an end, a working through of disunity in order to finally achieve a heavenly-ordained, natural order. As such, the plays are read as individual pageant devices within a larger procession, in terms of their part-constitution of a greater whole, and not as essentially separate and discrete cultural artefacts. This is clear in the critical practice of Tillyard, whereby an extensive

¹⁷See chapters two and five.

elucidation of his philosophical and theoretical trajectories is necessary before it is possible to examine his actual readings of the plays both as discrete entities and as a trilogy. Only the individual plays' identity as means, as mere parts of a whole journey (from wrong to right, from sin to redemption), is contemplated by Tillyard. This is shown in his isolation of the significant episode in each play, and what that episode is made to represent. Thus in 1Henry VI Talbot is the embodiment of order, in 2Henry VI Cade is the embodiment of disorder, and in 3Henry VI Henry's soliloquy articulates what order should be. All of these episodes are only read in their relation to the larger notion of order, as scenes in a greater drama/pageant of providence. Such a perception is clarified by Cairncross, who believes that "Shakespeare's general purpose in these plays was ... to glorify ... and assert eternal providence and a scheme of salvation for England."¹⁸ The success of this project necessitates the prognosis that these plays only have meaning in the context of Shakespeare's two historical tetralogies taken as a whole, the three plays themselves being regarded as a mere bridge between the representation of two extremes of order. The dynamic of the whole is taken to demonstrate the working through of the monolithic notion of the Renaissance immersion in providentialism. This is, to a great extent, the way in which the plays are still read.¹⁹ However, an important rupture in this perception emerges if the eight

¹⁸Cairncross, introduction, 3 Henry VI l.

¹⁹Although it is true to say that the traditional valorisation of the theme of providentialism has, in recent years, been contested. Such contestation examines particularly conflicting notions of Renaissance historiography, and has been framed in terms of the uses to which Shakespeare put his sources. Holderness, Wilders and Ribner are useful in this context, though perhaps the most thorough study is that of H. A. Kelly, Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories.

plays that comprise the two tetralogies and the three plays that comprise Henry VI are considered as discrete cultural artefacts.

The plays comprising the first tetralogy, the three parts of Henry VI and Richard III, were written and produced, it is believed, sometime between the years 1589 and 1592.²⁰ The second tetralogy, comprising Richard II, the two parts of Henry IV, and Henry V, appeared, it is believed, during the years 1595-1599.²¹ It is important to note immediately the duration of time apparent here, the eight plays being produced over a period of up to ten years. As such, it is clear that Shakespeare's contemporary audience would have experienced great difficulty viewing this series of plays as expressing a coherent theme of the general working through of God's plan for England. That is to say, that for Tillyard's thesis regarding what "Any Elizabethan" would have found unproblematically evident in the plays (England's suffering and final redemption for the killing of Richard II), a number of material obstacles would have had to be overcome, given that such a dynamic is nowhere made explicit in any of the actual plays.

The obstacle to such a chronological reading of the plays which arises due to the fact that the plays appeared over a period of ten years is not the only one.

²⁰The precise dates of production are unknown, and though these years are the most likely to have witnessed the appearance of the four plays, they are not universally held to be accurate. The most thorough study of this subject has been undertaken by Cairncross, who believes that the three Henry VI plays appeared between late 1589 and mid-1591 (Cairncross, introduction, 3Henry VI xlv).

²¹These dates are equally controversial.

Another obvious obstacle to such an understanding is that the two tetralogies appeared in reverse order historically. The clear working through of providentialism in this context is in no way smooth and clearly marked. And a third obstacle derives from the fact that it is widely believed that 1Henry VI appeared after 2Henry VI and 3Henry VI.²² This being the case, Tillyard's vision takes much for granted. What is of most importance here however is not that the contemporary audience could not have made the links that Tillyard describes, or did not have the mental capability to subsequently imagine 1Henry VI into a position prior to 2Henry VI and 3Henry VI. The importance rather is that the contemporary audience viewed and experienced the plays as separate entities, as discrete and individual cultural artefacts, and produced meanings as they witnessed the plays. Tillyard's thesis therefore suffers from the fact that it imposes a unity upon the perception and reception of the history plays that is highly questionable. With regard to the Henry VI trilogy specifically, it is an imposed structural unity that is equally questionable in thematic terms.

Tillyard believed that Elizabethans would have celebrated the representations of nobility and monarchy in the history plays. He bases this proposition on his belief that generally all Elizabethans rejected Machiavelli's conception of a world governed by self-interest. Furthermore, he believes that Shakespeare specifically used Machiavelli's theories in order to demonstrate violent chaos,

²²Cairncross argues that the plays were written in sequence. His case is, as he admits, conjectural, and in making it he provides many examples of critics and historians who believe that the first part was indeed the last to appear (introduction, 1Henry VI xxviii-xxxviii).

represented merely to be defined as unnatural and therefore to be overturned.²³ Such a projection becomes questionable when immersed in readings of the Henry VI trilogy as individual plays, or at least as a discrete grouping of plays that are not attempting a providentialist historiography. If the plays are regarded as more than a mere means to an end, Machiavellian political economy can be seen to not only be an important influence (directly or indirectly), but rather as the defining element of the plays' Weltanschauung. Indeed, if the three Henry VI plays are removed from the traditional grouping of the two tetralogies and read firstly as separate plays, and secondly as a separate trilogy, the sheer force of the Machiavellian presence in the plays is revealed. From the bickering between the Duke of Gloucester and the Bishop of Winchester which opens 1Henry VI to the killing of Henry which closes 3Henry VI, and the constant realignment of the various nobles depending upon who currently enjoys most influence, the world of the plays is one dictated by the desire for power. Reading the plays in this way, without imposing upon them an historical dynamic conjured up by forcing them to adhere to plays written long after them (though set before them in historical terms)--Richard II to Henry V--and an historical resolution articulated in a play written and set after them--Richard III--we see that Shakespeare depicted an England riven by "Machiavellian chaos."²⁴ As Phyllis Rackin writes, the "characters who dominate the worlds of these plays act on the Machiavellian principle of self-interest, and they prevail because they live in a Machiavellian universe

²³Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays 28-30.

²⁴Rackin, Stages of History 65.

governed by force and fortune....”²⁵ This is a world driven by “Unreasoning fury,” where “anger, rage and hate abound; pride and ambition flourish; the lust for gold and power justifies murder.”²⁶ It is a world of disorder and disunity, of rivalry and dishonour. And, importantly in terms of the contemporary audience, it is a world brought to the edge of disaster by England’s ruling houses. It is worth examining this point in some detail, and I shall do so by looking at the three episodes identified by Tillyard as elucidating the providentialist desire of Shakespeare, using each of the scenes as an entry into an investigation of the depiction of both nobles and common soldiers in the three plays.

1. 1Henry VI--“Amongst the soldiers”

The meeting of Lord Talbot and King Henry outside the palace in Paris, Tillyard believes, shows that 1Henry VI, “though like the rest [of the history plays] mainly occupied with revolt and disorder and misfortune, finds place for a positive example of the virtue of degree.”²⁷ Through the character of Talbot, Tillyard states that Shakespeare is clearly and comprehensively “aware of order or degree.”²⁸ In this scene, Talbot pays homage and informs the king that all of his victories in battle belong to his sovereign:

My gracious Prince, and honourable peers,
Hearing of your arrival in this realm,
I have awhile given truce unto my wars
To do my duty to my sovereign:
In sign whereof, this arm, that hath reclaim’d
To your obedience fifty fortresses,

²⁵Rackin, Stages of History 71.

²⁶Cairncross, introduction, 3Henry VI liii.

²⁷Tillyard, Shakespeare’s History Plays 157.

²⁸Tillyard, Shakespeare’s History Plays 156.

Twelve cities, and seven walled towns of strength,
Beside five hundred prisoners of esteem,
Lest fall his sword before your Highness' feet;
And with submissive loyalty of heart
Ascribes the glory of his conquest got
First to my God, and next unto your Grace. [Kneels]²⁹

After ensuring that this is indeed Talbot who kneels before him Henry, in return, offers his knight a rightful place in his coronation as reward:

Welcome, brave captain and victorious lord!
When I was young, as yet I am not old,
I do remember how my father said
A stouter champion never handled sword.
Long since we were resolved of your truth,
Your faithful service, and your toil in war;
Yet never have you tasted our reward,
Or been requerdon'd with so much as thanks,
Because till now we never saw your face.
Therefore stand up; and for these good deserts
We here create you Earl of Shrewsbury;
And in our coronation take your place.³⁰

Tillyard relates this encounter to the famous speech on order and degree given by Ulysses in Troilus and Cressida (I. iii.), and states that in both speeches "Every detail suggests an exact and orderly disposition," and that in Talbot's, "God, the king, the peers, the captives are ranged in their degrees."³¹ Tillyard states his position with regard to this speech even more clearly in his study of The Elizabethan World Picture when he writes that the scene "is an example of the sort of thing that ought to happen in an orderly kingdom and it serves as a norm by which the many disorders in the same play are judged."³²

²⁹William Shakespeare, 1Henry VI, III. iv. 1-12. Quotations are taken from the Arden Shakespeare editions of Henry VI, all of which are edited by Andrew S. Cairncross.

³⁰1Henry VI, III. iv. 16-27.

³¹Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays 157. On page 156 Tillyard reproduces part of Ulysses' long speech, while on pages 18-19 of The Elizabethan World Picture he reproduces most of it. The importance of this speech to Tillyard's wider thesis cannot be underestimated.

³²Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture 24.

Tillyard makes a general statement about the contemporary audience, as well as about Elizabethan England as a whole when he writes that “Any Elizabethan would have perceived that th[is] scene was a deliberate setting up of an ideal norm.”³³ The mutual exchange between the two nobles is seen as a defining and emblematic moment in Shakespeare’s plays, elucidating a natural order acknowledged and supported by his audience and the wider society. The scene is a short one, barely forty-five lines in all, and this exchange is indeed its central element. However, this exchange is enclosed by two other elements that are much more typical of the play itself (and the trilogy as a whole) than the Talbot/Henry section.

The scene opens in Paris, and alongside Henry march Gloucester, Winchester, York, Suffolk, Somerset, Warwick and Exeter, as well as Vernon and Basset. Opposite them enter Talbot and his soldiers. Up until this moment in the play, all of the nobles who march with the king (with the exception of Exeter) have spent the entire play bickering and insulting each other, and have been involved in a Machiavellian power-play that constantly borders on the outbreak of violence. Indeed the play opens in such a manner, as “Over the corpse of Henry V, Gloucester and Winchester bicker like children,”³⁴ and then continue to do so for all of this and much of the next play (2Henry VI). Throughout the play York and his supporters demonstrate a determined lust for power, while

³³Tillyard, Shakespeare’s History Plays 157.

³⁴Leggatt 8.

Somerset and his followers meet York's last head-on, and likewise show no desire for compromise. This contest indeed leads to the eventual downfall and death of Talbot at the hands of the French, York and Somerset too ensconced in their competing interests to lend Talbot the necessary reinforcements. Thus the nobles present at Talbot's homage scene are embodiments of disorder and disunity, and it is Talbot's speech rather than the disruptive presence of these nobles that seems so out of place.

Such a reality is supported by another exchange that immediately follows that of Talbot and the King. All characters exit after Henry's invitation to Talbot to join the coronation, with the exception of York's man Vernon, and Somerset's man Basset. The two argue over the honour of their respective Lords, and soon come to blows. The fact that a scene of unity and order, as represented by Talbot's homage speech, is followed by one of rupture and violence is naturally governed, to a great extent, by Shakespeare's desire for dramatic effect. The juxtaposing of such peace and order with violence naturally underlines the abyss toward which England is slipping. The important point here however, is the atypical nature of the homage scene in the greater world envisaged in this play. When the play is viewed using the criteria of its uniqueness, of its existence as a discrete cultural entity, disorder and disunity can be seen to typify this world.

According to Alfred Harbage, 1Henry VI “is a play about the courage, prowess and assumed righteousness of the English.”³⁵ But a rudimentary examination of the English nobility sees them all, with the exception of Talbot and those who play a minor role, portrayed as violent, uncompromising Machiavellians vying for power under an inept king. In this sense, it is certainly questionable that a contemporary audience would view these characters as vessels leading (eventually) to the reign of Henry VII. For the action of the play describes not merely what Ralph Berry calls “a contention among nobles,” but rather one “about people who contend because they are noble.”³⁶ Furthermore, it becomes clear that “England is ... saddled with a quarrelsome and ungovernable aristocracy, with a bent for martial action at which their own divisions render them incompetent.”³⁷ The English nobility are represented as highly ignoble, as governed by an all-consuming self-interest. It is a representation that a common audience could certainly have perceived and could very possibly have endorsed. Such a possibility is emphasised when considered in the context of certain contemporary events.

While the homage scene clarifies the disruptive nature of the English nobility, it also mentions the fact that Talbot’s force of soldiers are present. This is not the first time that the ordinary soldiers have been mentioned in the play, and indeed their anger and disquiet is one of the initial problems the play articulates. At the very beginning a messenger from the field answers Exeter’s

³⁵Harbage, As They Liked It 153.

³⁶Ralph Berry, Shakespeare and Social Class 5.

³⁷Berry, Shakespeare and Social Class 5.

query as to what treachery has caused the loss of territory to the French with the following:

Mess. No treachery, but want of men and money.
Amongst the soldiers this is muttered--
That here you maintain several factions:
And whilst a field should be dispatch'd and fought,
You are disputing of your generals....³⁸

Here the ordinary soldiers demonstrate a clear perception of the situation with regard to the division between the nobles, and seem to understand that such factionalism will lead to the squandering of the fruits of earlier battles.

However, it is important that they also describe the need for money, as it is the first of many examples of the dire situation the ordinary soldiers constantly find themselves in throughout the play. Later in the same scene we are told that "The English army is grown weak and faint," and that "The Earl of Salisbury ... / ... hardly keeps his men from mutiny."³⁹ The French are aware of the plight of the opposition soldiers, Charles saying "the famish'd English, like pale ghosts, / Faintly beseige us one hour in a month,"⁴⁰ and La Pucelle telling Talbot to "Go, go, cheer up thy hunger-starved men."⁴¹ Indeed, the plight of the ordinary soldier is an issue that runs through the entire trilogy, and which in many ways signals a rupture in the Tillyardian notion of consensus. Furthermore, certain contemporary events which took place just before or around the time the play was performed (1589/90) bear a marked

³⁸ 1Henry VI, I. i. 68-73.

³⁹ 1Henry VI, I. i. 158-160.

⁴⁰ 1Henry VI, I. ii. 7-8.

⁴¹ 1Henry VI, I. v. 16.

similarity to what Shakespeare has written in this context, and which underline this perception of rupture.

The Journals in the London Guildhall record a series of events regarding the aftermath of the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, which led R. R. Sharpe to write the following:

It was well that the Spaniards suffered defeat at sea, for had they been able to effect a landing they would have made short work with the half-trained and dissatisfied soldiers in the camp at Tilbury, and London would have been at their mercy. Even the presence of Elizabeth herself, riding on horse back through the camp, as she did on 8th August, was but poor compensation to the soldiers for the want of victuals and wages. Many sold their armour and weapons to pay themselves....⁴²

These events relate to July and August of 1589, almost a year after the Armada, when soldiers and sailors pressed for service had been disbanded. The ex-soldiers and sailors converged on London, and attempted to sell their armour and weapons as, during their service they received little or no pay.⁴³ The Corporation of London denied these claims, saying that the soldiers “have most falsly and slanderously given out that they weare compelled to make sale of them [their weapons] for that they receaved noe pay, which is most untruely reported.”⁴⁴ The soldiers and sailors proceeded to cause a good deal of trouble

⁴²R. R. Sharpe, London and the Kingdom 1: 545. Throughout this work, Sharpe is effectively reproducing what stands in the Journals and Repertories of the Corporation of London.

⁴³These events are related in detail in the Acts of the Privy Council (1588-89) 416; 420-1; 453-4. And Acts of the Privy Council (1589-90) 47-8; 54-6. These events are dealt with below.

⁴⁴Corporation of London, Journals (1585-1590) 22: f. 202b.

at the London Royal Exchange and at their point of disembarkation in Maidstone, Kent.⁴⁵ Indeed, their behaviour got so out of hand that a Royal Proclamation demanded they be sent back immediately to the location of their original impressment.⁴⁶ The implications of this event will be dealt with in greater detail in the context of 2Henry VI, but for the moment it is important in that it seems to articulate precisely the types of hardship the common soldiers suffer in 1Henry VI. Not only do they endure hunger and poverty, there also seems to be a marked reluctance on the part of the authorities to take their claims seriously. If contemporary evidence is considered, Shakespeare seems to be articulating a common phenomenon. The desperate circumstances serving soldiers endured led to a more serious outbreak of dissatisfaction among English troops in Ostend at the same time (July-August, 1589), who due to poor victuals felt the need to write to the Queen personally. In their letter they stated that the “soldiers ... humbly represent to her Majesty that they have long ... been in great penury,” as they have been “lying upon straw, the better part scant that, much less fire, not so much as candle to answer the allarums....”⁴⁷ This situation led the soldiers to take drastic action, and it is noted that the Privy Council “had been informed ... of their mutiny and the imprisonment of the Governor, captains, and officers....”⁴⁸ In November of that year Sir John Norris met no resistance when he entered the garrison with his forces, and arrested the mutineers. The report for November 19th states

⁴⁵Corporation of London, *Journals (1585-1590)* 22: f. 312.

⁴⁶Corporation of London, *Journals (1585-1590)* 22: f. 316b. See also, *Acts of the Privy Council (1589-90)* 54-56.

⁴⁷*CSP (Foreign) (July-Dec 1588)* 166.

⁴⁸*CSP (For) (July-Dec 1588)* 166.

that “the prisoners [were] brought forth, and one of every company was executed, being in number nine. And upon Tuesday next following there was executed four more....”⁴⁹ A mutiny in Utrecht which took place in March of 1586, was caused by the non-payment of wages, the Earl of Leicester being confronted by “one A. T. in behalf of the rest, [who] demanded their pay.”⁵⁰ The actions of the soldiers in this case led to three of them being executed. A similar occurrence is reported in June of 1587 whereby, due to lack of pay a company of ordinary soldiers “levied in the city for service in the Low Countries ... mutinied against Captain Sampson....”⁵¹ There seems little doubt that the population of London would have been unaware of this mutiny, as the soldiers responsible, when captured, were “tied to carts and flogged through Cheapside to Tower Hill, then ... set upon a pillory, and each [had] ... one ear cut off.”⁵² It is possible that witnesses to these events formed part of the audience for the play.

A reading of 1Henry VI as a discrete cultural artefact enables its immersion in contemporary events and interpretation of its action that does not see it subsumed in a greater providentialist historical model. It enables the perception that a contemporary audience could have regarded the play as being defined by Lord Exeter himself when he states that “when envy breeds unkind

⁴⁹CSP (For) (July-Dec 1588) 322.

⁵⁰CSP (For) (Sept 1585-May 1586) 495. For an extended discussion of this event in the context of Henry V see chapter one.

⁵¹CSP (Dom) (1581-90) 415.

⁵²CSP (Dom) (1581-90) 415.

division: / There comes the ruin, there begins confusion,”⁵³ and this because of “This jarring discord of nobility.”⁵⁴ More importantly, it enables the perception that sections of the audience would not have found ideal order and degree articulated in this play, but rather its opposite. As such, the homage speech of Talbot that is so important for Tillyard is very much an isolated event in the context of the whole play, and it is questionable that this speech can be said to be representative either of Shakespeare’s personal views, or indeed of Elizabethan ideology generally. Given that 1Henry VI was performed in late-1589 or early-1590, it is quite possible that the events concerning the ordinary soldiers outlined above were applicable to the representations of the plight of the common soldiers articulated in the performance of the play. This is particularly resonant, as all of the mutinies and official responses to the mutinies occurred just before or around the time of the play’s performance. Furthermore, the resonance is heightened by the fact that both active and disbanded soldiers and sailors formed part of the common people inside and outside of the playhouses, and the playhouses themselves were sites for impressment.⁵⁵ It is quite possible therefore that a section of the contemporary audience which witnessed 1Henry VI, did not find God’s plan for the English nation articulated there. This is the sort of claim that traditional criticism has made on the play’s behalf however, a claim that has been extended to the Jack Cade/Alexander Iden episode in the second play in the trilogy.

⁵³1Henry VI, IV. i. 193-194.

⁵⁴1Henry VI, IV. i. 188.

⁵⁵See below.

2. 2Henry VI--“To make commotion”

For Tillyard, a “most explicit version” of the “great principle of degree,” is apparent “between the lawlessness of Jack Cade and the impeccable moderation and discipline of the Kentish squire, Iden....”⁵⁶ Where Cade and his rebels, who are the embodiment of disruption and disorder, would wish all “degree ... to be levelled away,” Iden in contrast, is “entirely content with his own station in the social hierarchy,”⁵⁷ a contentment that, Tillyard believes, Shakespeare himself shared. This commitment to order justifies Iden’s killing of the rebellious Cade, as well as Shakespeare’s delineation of Iden as a “symbolic character, beautifully contrasted with the realism of the rebels.”⁵⁸ Alexander Iden has been an important figure for traditional criticism, a reality most clearly articulated by Irving Ribner, who also notes the logical consequence of the Cade/Iden juxtaposition:

The order which Iden accepts and which Cade would destroy is what God’s providence has designed for man, and the lesson of history as ... Shakespeare sees it is that when such order is destroyed, God’s curse will plague England until it is restored.⁵⁹

Thus Ribner, as well as Tillyard, and in turn Shakespeare and God are aligned against Cade’s rebellion, “the very antithesis of God’s plan,”⁶⁰ and England’s misfortune is now placed squarely upon the shoulders of an individual who wishes to upset the belief in traditional and natural order and degree.

⁵⁶Tillyard, *Shakespeare’s History Plays* 159.

⁵⁷Tillyard, *Shakespeare’s History Plays* 159.

⁵⁸Tillyard, *Shakespeare’s History Plays* 159.

⁵⁹Ribner 108.

⁶⁰Ribner 112.

The interpretation of this second play (though it is likely to have been the first performed) that is favoured by traditional criticism is thus the providentialist one in which it “pictures the second stage in the country’s ruin, in the working out of the inherited curse.”⁶¹ For this school of criticism, Cade is the embodiment of this ruin, his desire being to overturn the order which “God’s providence has designed for man.”⁶² Cade is thus regarded as the embodiment of an ontologically fragile disorder that contrasts definitively with Iden’s acceptance of order. Such a reading however witnesses a transferral of the overwhelming disruption that the state finds itself in before Cade makes an appearance onto his shoulders, as he pursues his programme of rebellion. The disruption that precedes Cade is evident in the negative portrayal of the English nobility, a determining feature of this second play. Few, if any of the nobles emerge with dignity or honesty, each being either murderously ambitious, entirely ineffective, or random in their choice of allegiance. Before Cade even enters the fray, we have witnessed the entire loss of all French territories, the murder of Gloucester, the (attempted) use of witchcraft by and subsequent banishment of Gloucester’s wife, Suffolk and Warwick indulging in physical combat, Suffolk’s subsequent banishment, and the strange and fevered death of Winchester. This is an important point, as it undermines the notion of Cade as the embodiment of disorder and enables the realisation that he is in fact the result of disorder.

⁶¹Tillyard, *Shakespeare’s History Plays* 179.

⁶²Ribner 108.

The Cade/Iden garden scene is the most important scene in the play for Tillyard, Iden being regarded as a Shakespearean hero, vanquishing evil and restoring God's plan for England. Iden's "impeccable moderation and discipline" are admired, as is the fact that he is "entirely content" in contrast to Cade's "lawlessness."⁶³ While there is much truth in Tillyard's delineation of Iden's contentment, and in his contrast to Cade, it is also clear that he fails in any way to theorise power in his reading, to perceive that Iden is content because he has sufficient. And, by the same token, that Cade and his followers are not content because they do not have sufficient. Furthermore, there is no acknowledgment that Iden having sufficient is partly based upon the poor not having sufficient. Thus, while Iden is, for Tillyard, a "Kentish squire,"⁶⁴ for Cade he is "the lord of the soil," (IV. x. 24) soil upon which he has no business and his trespassing upon which enables Tillyard to sanction Cade's fate as well as Iden's actions. This failure to theorise power in the valorisation of Iden's contentment reveals Tillyard's lack of historical contextualisation, as clarified by Phyllis Rackin:

his [Shakespeare's] representation of the struggle between Cade and Iden focuses on an issue that produced real suffering and real social unrest in his own time: the conflict between the traditional right of the starving poor to be fed and the emergent ethos of private property that gave the rich an absolute right to enclose and defend their own land.⁶⁵

⁶³Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* 159.

⁶⁴Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* 159.

⁶⁵Rackin 215.

The uprising which occurred in Oxford in 1596 is a clear indication of this fact, whereby Bartholomew Steere and his followers regarded the practice of enclosure as the source of their poverty, which made them so desperate to seek violent remedy. Steere articulates this most clearly when he (reportedly) said that “they would pull down the enclosures, whereby the ways were stopped, and arable lands enclosed, and lay them open again....”⁶⁶ Furthermore, he is reported as saying that they would “knock down gentlemen, if they could not have remedy.”⁶⁷ Tillyard fails to take such contemporary evidence of the effects of enclosure into account, as he does in his reading of the demands Cade makes during his rebellion.

For traditional criticism the figure of Cade is “a perversion of all that Elizabethans held sacred.”⁶⁸ However, if close attention is paid to all of Cade’s reasons for rebelling, the idea of him as a figure of disorder is seriously problematised. His desire for affordable food whereby there will be “seven half-penny loaves sold for a penny,”⁶⁹ is natural enough and would no doubt have fallen on sympathetic ears in the contemporary audience, given particularly the economic conditions which prevailed in the 1590s.⁷⁰ His references to making it “felony to drink small beer,”⁷¹ would likewise have found much support. Such carnivalesque inversion would probably have been

⁶⁶CSP (Dom) (1595-1597) 345. See chapter two and three for discussions of Steere and the uprising in the context of Elizabethan processions.

⁶⁷CSP (Dom) (1595-1597) 343.

⁶⁸Ribner 113.

⁶⁹2Henry VI, IV. ii. 61-62.

⁷⁰See chapters two and three.

⁷¹2Henry VI, IV. ii. 64-5.

popular under such conditions, an inversion that foresees freedom and liberty, and sufficient means to live. Furthermore, his inverted claims of nobility and his knighting of himself⁷² demonstrate a deconstruction of aristocratic genealogy and empowering aristocratic ritual, thus demystifying the constructed and artificial nature of a political system based upon inheritance and the arbitrary distribution of privilege. And finally, his inversion of the law regarding the “benefit of clergy,” a law under which the common people suffered, would have met with a great deal of support.⁷³ It is Cade’s call for cheap food that I wish to examine further however, as there once again seems to be a contemporary resonance to many of the claims Shakespeare makes him articulate.

Earlier in the play, the Duke of York informs us that he has seduced Cade, “a headstrong Kentishman,” to “make commotion” against the King’s forces.⁷⁴ He has seen Cade fight with gusto in Ireland, and wishes him to do so in London. The fact that Cade is an ex-soldier clarifies the sorts of demands he makes in his rebellion, based as they are in a general context of common need. The desperate state of the ordinary soldiers in Ireland has already been discussed,⁷⁵ and Cade’s anger is hardly surprising given this desperation:

It grieveth us not a little to see the nakedness of
the soldiers for want of clothes and their poverty

⁷²2Henry VI, IV. ii. 112-115.

⁷³“Originally the *privelegium clericale* had exempted clerks in holy orders from criminal trial before secular judges, but eventually it was extended to all male felons who could establish their clerical status by showing themselves able to read the ‘neck verse’, traditionally the first or fourteenth verse of Psalm 51” (Barker, *The Culture of Violence* 187).

⁷⁴2Henry VI, III. i. 356-8.

⁷⁵See chapter one.

for lack of their lendings, to buy them food; both
which wants not only maketh many of them
show like prisoners, half starved for want of
cherishing, but also it dejecteth of them greatly
in heart, insomuch as we look daily for some
great mutiny and disbanding....⁷⁶

The report proceeds to state, in a way reminiscent of Cade's actions that "if any of these companies should break, and ... steal into England (which we cannot prevent), your lordships may judge what will be the danger of the realm...."⁷⁷ These events, so similar to those dramatised by Shakespeare, were being reported six or seven years after the performance of the play. Despite that fact, it is quite possible that the state of the troops in Ireland was common knowledge in London when the play was written. Indeed, contemporary events in and around London at the time the play was performed (1589/90), would possibly have made Cade's reference to the desire for cheap food all the more resonant, as is clarified by a series of reports in the Acts of the Privy Council.⁷⁸ According to these reports, disbanded soldiers and sailors caused disturbances at the Royal Exchange on the 20th July of that year.⁷⁹ The "disorderlie proceeding" of these "marryners and other lewd fellowes," was caused by the fact that they had not been paid, and the Lord Mayor was instructed that they were to be "apprehended and ... laied by the heeles...."⁸⁰ This deterrent was unsuccessful however, and the Privy Council reported that

⁷⁶CSP (Ireland) (1598-99) 357.

⁷⁷CSP (Ireland) (1598-99) 357.

⁷⁸Most of the following events which appear in the Acts of the Privy Council are also recorded in the Journals of the Corporation of London: see Journal 22: f. 202b, f. 312, f. 316b and f. 345b, and Journal 23: f. 79.

⁷⁹Acts of the Privy Council (1588-89) 416.

⁸⁰Acts of the Privy Council (1588-89) 416.

the “maryners and soldyers ... do remayn about the Cytye,” indulging in “contemptuous behavvour.”⁸¹ The authorities decided therefore that these “souldiours and mariners which do resorte in great numbers to the said Cytie,” were to be treated like “masterles men and vagrant persons,” and sent “home to their cuntries.”⁸² Despite these orders, the 16th August witnessed “great disorders comitted by the souldyours” in Maidstone, Kent, as well as the suppression of rioting mariners at the Royal Exchange.⁸³ On the 20th August, 1589, day and night watches were set up in order to discourage the soldiers from assembling, not least “bycause their Lordships are informed that some of the souldiers have of late offered violence to persons they have mett withall on the highe waye, and have taken money from them by force...”⁸⁴ A proclamation was passed stating that they were to be sent back to the county in which they were pressed in order to receive any payment owed to them.⁸⁵

The cause of this disruption was the non-payment of wages, and the resultant hunger and poverty the soldiers and sailors experienced. The fact that Cade was an ex-soldier and a Kentishman certainly resonates in the context of these contemporary disturbances where, the records state, these pressed men “demaund paie for their service.”⁸⁶ The fact that sailors were also involved is equally interesting, as in the play, *Walter Whitmore, a Master’s Mate* is seen

⁸¹ Acts of the Privy Council (1588-89) 420-421.

⁸² Acts of the Privy Council (1588-89) 453-454.

⁸³ Acts of the Privy Council (1589-90) 47-48.

⁸⁴ Acts of the Privy Council (1589-90) 54.

⁸⁵ Acts of the Privy Council (1589-90) 54-56.

⁸⁶ Acts of the Privy Council (1589-90) 57.

demanding “A thousand crowns” to spare the life of a captured gentleman.⁸⁷

In this scene, which immediately precedes that of Cade, Whitmore goes on to kill the Duke of Suffolk. Thus the contemporary combination of ex-soldiers and sailors rioting in London and Kent in late-1589 is most relevant, as it is widely believed that 2Henry VI was performed in early 1590. Cade’s call for an end to poverty and Whitmore’s ransoming of the gentleman’s life articulate a preoccupation with the hardships of the ordinary soldier and sailor which question notions of order and degree and, more especially, consensus.

The individuals causing so much trouble in and around London in late-1589 had been pressed into the armed forces and then essentially abandoned to their fate. This would be a relevant issue for a large section of the playhouse audience, given that a substantial proportion of them was made up of common males, and that they were the very people who would be pressed. Thus they could find themselves in the position of both the real and the fictional ordinary soldier.⁸⁸ The harsh treatment suffered by the real soldiers and sailors is articulated in Shakespeare’s play, and would quite possibly have resonated with members of the common audience. The articulation of the reality of the

⁸⁷2Henry VI, IV. i. 15.

⁸⁸Particularly as London provided the greatest number of pressed men by far (Cruikshank 291). The pressed were taken from the common people and, according to Cruickshank were of two sorts: “honest men taken away from steady employment ... and ... the unemployed, rogues, and vagabonds...” (26). See Cruickshank 25-29 for more on pressing.

soldiers' hardships could have been profound indeed, given the fact that the theatres themselves were used by the authorities in order to press men.⁸⁹

3. 3Henry VI--"Much is your sorrow"

For Tillyard, "the most effective statement of the principle of order," is that which appears in 3Henry VI, namely "Henry's pathetic soliloquy where he regrets that he was born a king and not a shepherd."⁹⁰ Henry's speech, given the background of the tableaux of a son who has killed his father, and a father who has killed his son demonstrates,⁹¹ Tillyard believes, "Henry's personal tragedy," and his "yearning for an ordered life" which, in the cosmic scheme of things represents "the great principle of degree."⁹² The soliloquy that shows Henry's desire for the ordered, simple life of a shepherd rather than a king takes place in an environment of chaos. For Tillyard this is the clearest rendition of his perception of an omnipresent Elizabethan ideology, of a providentialism expressed in the desire for natural unity and order that shall be gained once disorder is worked through. Tillyard is correct in his perception that this scene needs to be read dialectically when he states that "Henry's speech must be judged before th[e] background of chaos"⁹³ represented by the familial killings, although it is both the way he judges this speech and his

⁸⁹I. H. Jeayes, ed., The Letters of Philip Gawdy (London: J. B. Nichols & Sons, 1906.) 120-1. This particular letter refers to pressing at the playhouses in 1602 for the conflict in Flanders. This will be dealt with in detail below.

⁹⁰Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays 158. The lines to which he refers are 3Henry VI, II. v. 1-54.

⁹¹3Henry VI, II. v. 79-122.

⁹²Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays 159.

⁹³Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays 159.

conclusions regarding the status of this judgement that need to be examined more closely.

While it is not possible to determine Shakespeare's intentions in any given play, it is clear that the speech of Henry in this scene is meant to be read in the context of the speeches of the surviving father and son. The actions of these two characters occur as Henry speaks, and his speech is interspersed with theirs, setting up a dialogue of inner thoughts. This dialogue is important in many ways, not least because it outlines the extreme experiences of the participants, and the ways in which one level of society affects the lives (and deaths) of another. The status of the Father and Son has generally been seen to be important since Tillyard who, however, failed to comment upon the fact that these two characters inform us immediately that they were pressed. The Son who has killed his Father says:

O heavy times, begetting such events!
From London by the King was I press'd forth;
My father, being the Earl of Warwick's man,
Came on the part of York, press'd by his master.⁹⁴

The impressment of these two common men by their respective masters would seem to be the defining element of their personal tragedy, though it is clear that they are meant to symbolise much more than that. However, it is the failure of traditional criticism to prioritise this element that is troubling.

While, as stated, Tillyard fails to mention it at all, John Wilders believes that such impressment merely demonstrates that the common people were "not

⁹⁴Henry VI, II. v. 63-66.

exempt from politics.”⁹⁵ The important factor here is that Wilders says nothing else about this impressment, and proceeds to say that if anything, such a scene shows the “burdens which even Shakespeare’s humblest characters are compelled to endure ... [and] ... show the characters taking on problems created and handed on to them by their ancestors.”⁹⁶ Yet, this is a situation not created by their ancestors, but by the ancestors of the nobility. It is a situation that has arisen due to the ambition and greed of past and present members of the nobility rather than by the common people.

This particular scene articulates the dramatic convention of the monarch bemoaning his position and responsibility assuring, as Walter Benjamin ironically states, “the sympathetic public that nothing is more difficult than to rule, and that a wood-cutter sleeps much more soundly at night.”⁹⁷ It is interesting to once more immerse the scene in a likely contemporary reality, and ponder how an audience consisting of many common people would have responded to Henry’s various contemplations of his own situation compared to those pressed commoners who have killed their own nearest relatives. To the expressions of horror and sadness of the Father and Son, Henry responds:

Was ever king so griev’d for subjects’ woe?
Much is your sorrow; mine, ten times so much.⁹⁸

He continues:

Sad-hearted men, much overgone with care,
Here sits a king more woeful than you are.⁹⁹

⁹⁵Wilders, *The Lost Garden* 17.

⁹⁶Wilders, *The Lost Garden* 17.

⁹⁷Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* 123.

⁹⁸*Henry VI*, II. v. 111-112.

While this is indeed an example of conventional dramatic practice,¹⁰⁰ it is possible that Henry's bemoaning of his own misfortune would not have met with a great deal of sympathy from a substantial section of the audience, given the fact that they were potential victims of impressment. Such a reality is not only present in the words of the Son, but present too in the historical records.

The practice of impressment is widely recorded, though perhaps the most pertinent example for this current study is that attributed to Philip Gawdy which records the illegal impressment of individuals by the City authorities during a raid on certain playhouses in 1602. Gawdy writes:

Ther hath bene great pressing of late, and
straunge, as ever was knowen in England, only in
London, and my L. Mayor and the rest of the
Londiners have done so contrary to their
Instructions from the Lordes of the
councill....All the playe howses wer beset in one
daye and very many pressed from thence, so that
in all ther ar pressed ffowre thowsand besydes
fye hundred voluntaries, and all for
flaunders.¹⁰¹

While, once again, it would be misleading to base an entire thesis on such documentation, it is possible to theorise that a substantial proportion of the audience would have been highly sceptical of the King's complaints, and horrified by the consequences upon the common people of the nobility's practice of impressment. This is particularly apparent given the belief that the

⁹⁹Henry VI, II. v. 123-124.

¹⁰⁰The soliloquy of Henry V after his meeting with Williams being another case in point: Henry V, IV. i. 227-281.

¹⁰¹Jeayes, The Letters of Philip Gawdy 120-1.

play was performed in 1591, a year which witnessed a sharp rise in the number of men pressed, and particularly in London. The total for this year was 8,425 men, almost double that of the previous year and over three times that of the following year.¹⁰² According to Cruickshank, the number pressed in 1591 was not reached again until 1596, when mass impressment took place in order to provide troops for the campaign in Ireland.¹⁰³ Additionally, throughout the period Cruickshank examines (1585-1603), the number of men pressed in London was treble that of any other English county, and was six or seven times that of most other counties.¹⁰⁴

The basis of a common audience's scepticism in this regard would perhaps be that noted by Alexander Leggatt who states that while the nobility choose a destiny for themselves, the Father and Son "are crushed by a destiny imposed by others."¹⁰⁵ There are a number of contemporary accounts which demonstrate a common resistance to impressment, which particularly manifests itself in confrontation with the representatives of the state. This is shown in such events as those already noted whereby ordinary soldiers mutinied after confronting the Earl of Leicester in 1586 demanding their pay, as well as the mutiny which occurred at Ostend in 1587. But the evidence which most clearly demonstrates popular resistance to the practice of impressment is that which delineates the problem of desertion.¹⁰⁶ According

¹⁰²Cruickshank 291.

¹⁰³Cruickshank 291-292.

¹⁰⁴Cruickshank 292.

¹⁰⁵Leggatt 21.

¹⁰⁶See Cruickshank 165-173.

to Cruickshank, along with corruption, desertion was the greatest problem under which Elizabeth's army suffered, and a number of documents record the widespread nature of this offence.

Desertion by ordinary troops had long been a problem for the Elizabethan authorities, and evidence survives recording the constant need for vigilance on the part of these authorities in order to keep their troops in place. Most military campaigns during this period witnessed cases of mass desertion, such as in France in 1562,¹⁰⁷ in the Netherlands in 1585,¹⁰⁸ at Ostend in 1588,¹⁰⁹ in Cambridge in 1591¹¹⁰ and in France again in 1592.¹¹¹ The most extensive records however are those which detail recruitment for Ireland in the latter half of the 1590s, a brief examination of which enables the perception of an entirely unpopular practice as far as the common people were concerned.

A series of reports in the Acts of the Privy Council for 1599 and 1600 demonstrate the readiness of the troops to desert, as well as the help which they received from the local population in doing so successfully. On the 5th March, 1599, for example, the Mayor of Bristol received a letter from the Privy Council concerning troops gathered in his city for dispatch to Ireland. The letter tells of the "notable disorders of a great number of the soldiers, both

¹⁰⁷ CSP (Foreign) (Sept 1585-May 1586) 219.

¹⁰⁸ CSP (Foreign) (June 1586-June 1588) 2: 25. See also Acts of the Privy Council (1590) 189.

¹⁰⁹ Acts of the Privy Council (1588-89) 387.

¹¹⁰ CSP (Dom) (1591) 141.

¹¹¹ Acts of the Privy Council (1592) 309.

in running away and in making violent resistance against their commanders.”¹¹² The Council also informed Edward Gorges and Samuel Norton, the local Justices of the Peace, “to have special care to prevent the disorders and running away of soldiers,” and assumed “some fault of slackness and negligence, without the which it were impossible for so many to escape throughout the country....”¹¹³ Earlier in the year the great number of soldiers deserting from Ireland became a cause for concern, not least because “divers of these soldiers do give forth the very scandalous speeches to discourage others....”¹¹⁴ The authorities in this case were instructed that “in the mean season you shall see them impressed anew and detained...”¹¹⁵ Another series of letters relate the tale of a troop ship bound for Ireland from Bristol which, due to bad weather docked in Wales. This enabled many of the troops to desert and lose themselves in the Welsh countryside.¹¹⁶ Another event of significance occurred in Hampshire in 1600 when in a march from the town where they had been levied to another town, “more than a hundred men had escaped.”¹¹⁷ It was reported however that not a single deserter was captured, because “Villagers had given the escaped men sanctuary in their homes, and had helped to smuggle away both them and their equipment.”¹¹⁸ The fact that the common soldiers were aided by the common people in their criminal activity demonstrates a general rejection of what was considered an

¹¹² Acts of the Privy Council (1599-1600) 137.

¹¹³ Acts of the Privy Council (1599-1600) 139-140.

¹¹⁴ Acts of the Privy Council (1599-1600) 56.

¹¹⁵ Acts of the Privy Council (1599-1600) 56.

¹¹⁶ Acts of the Privy Council (1599-1600) 726-727, 760-761 and 787-788.

¹¹⁷ Cruickshank 63.

¹¹⁸ Cruickshank 63.

oppressive practice, the seriousness of which is underlined by the fact that the deserters would have proceeded to sell their weapons, a capital offence in itself.¹¹⁹ There are records of riots by soldiers at muster points themselves, further underlining the unpopularity of impressment.¹²⁰

Returning to the play, it is possible that Henry's bemoaning of his unfortunate situation, whereby, along with everything else he attempts to exonerate himself from any responsibility for the situation, is severely undermined by the fact that the common men in this scene were pressed into service which resulted in their killings. As such, the scene which is so important to Tillyard because of its "effective statement of the principle of order,"¹²¹ could have led to contemporary interpretations which perceived the disorder and disunity of a nation which practised impressment. If anything, the scene seems to produce a space in which a profound lack of consensus could be discernible to sections of the contemporary audience. Such a realisation is possible when this play and the other two parts of the trilogy are removed from their traditional providentialist position and read as discrete cultural entities. In such a model, they no longer resemble parts in a greater providentialist pageant of the Tudor monarchy, but stand rather as texts which articulate and negotiate contemporary concerns and events. Traditional criticism has placed Henry VIII in a similarly formulated providentialist historiography, yet it too can be

¹¹⁹For the selling of weapons see for example; CSP (Ireland) (1598-1599) 138. See also the proclamation of 20th August, 1589, concerning the disbanded soldiers who had gathered in London and Maidstone, Acts of the Privy Council (1589-1590) 54-56

¹²⁰CSP (Dom) (1598-1601) 403.

¹²¹Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays 158.

interpreted outside of this model and seen likewise, to be a text that is open to a reading based in contemporary realities.

4. Henry VIII--“The mere rankness of their joy”

The fact that, of all Shakespeare’s plays, Henry VIII has the greatest number of examples of represented pageantry naturally suggests it as a suitable object for analysis in this present study. As well as a dramatisation of the coronation entry of Anne Boleyn, the play frequently has its noble characters entering in a processional form, most notably for the scene containing Buckingham’s execution speech,¹²² that of Queen Katherine’s trial,¹²³ and finally for the christening of the baby Elizabeth.¹²⁴ Each of these processions is described in detail, and the play as a whole could be said to be formally structured around these visual spectacles.

Despite the fact that such an overt spectacular presence is in evidence in the play, it is interesting to discover that, of all Shakespeare’s history plays it has traditionally been the most neglected in critical terms. Until relatively recently the play has occupied a marginal position in analysis of the genre of historical drama, as well as in the Shakespearean canon itself. The lack of sustained critical analysis of the play, and thus its marginality, can be read as a demonstration of the seminal influence of Tillyard’s study of Shakespeare’s history plays, in that he found no place for it in his analysis of the genre.¹²⁵

¹²²Henry VIII, II. i. 53-136.

¹²³Henry VIII, II. iv.

¹²⁴Henry VIII, V. iv.

¹²⁵In Campbell, Shakespeare’s Histories’ (1947), the play is also omitted.

Interestingly, Tillyard also failed to find space for any analysis of the play in his study of Shakespeare's Last Plays.¹²⁶ The failure therefore to find a place for any analysis of a last, history play in either of these studies suggests an uneasiness with the play on Tillyard's part. He did however eventually write a short essay revealingly called "Why did Shakespeare write Henry VIII," a title which indicates his discomfort regarding the quality of his object of analysis.¹²⁷ This essay appeared twenty years after his two seminal works, by which time traditional criticism had turned its attention to the play, and had begun the attempt to position it within the Shakespearean canon.¹²⁸ The major problem for traditional criticism with regard to the play is the fact that it is dramatically disjointed. While this connects the play to the material nature of an actual procession, it remains, for Irving Ribner, a "poorly-connected series of episodes."¹²⁹ Rather than the episodic nature being regarded as a potential quality therefore, Ribner sees the problem as one of overall effect. He believes that "the weakness of Henry VIII results from its failure to embody an over-all consistent philosophical scheme such as makes cohesive unities out of all of Shakespeare's earlier histories...."¹³⁰

¹²⁶E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's Last Plays (London: Chatto & Windus, 1938).

¹²⁷E. M. W. Tillyard, "Why did Shakespeare write Henry VIII," Critical Quarterly 3:1 (Spring 1961): 22-27.

¹²⁸G. Wilson Knight, The Crown of Life: Essays in Interpretation of Shakespeare's Final Plays (1947; London: Methuen, 1985); Frank Kermode, "What is Shakespeare's Henry VIII About?" Durham University Journal 9 (1948): 48-55; Marjorie H Nicolson, "The Authorship of Henry the Eighth," PMLA 37 (1922): 484-502. Other important studies include Frances Yates, Shakespeare's Last Plays: A New Approach (London: Kegan & Paul, 1975) 65-84; Peter L. Rudnytsky, "Henry VIII and the Deconstruction of History," Shakespeare Survey 43 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 43-57; Howard Felperin, "Shakespeare's Henry VIII: History as Myth," Studies in English Literature 6 (1966): 225-46.

¹²⁹Ribner 291.

¹³⁰Ribner 290.

According to Tillyard the play represents a celebration of the establishment of Protestantism and is providentialist in the sense that Shakespeare's interest is to "glorify ... England under the Tudors."¹³¹ Camille Wells Slight is in general agreement with this and specifies the basis of such a dynamic as she writes that "the play represents Wolsey's defeat, Cranmer's vindication, and the replacement of Katherine by Anne as the founding of a Protestant dynasty."¹³² The play is thus interpreted providentially and is seen, in Wilson Knight's view, to "offer homage" to a glorious "vision of Elizabethan England,"¹³³ and furthermore, as Slight says, to interpret events "in the reign of Henry VIII as the legitimating origins of Stuart England."¹³⁴ This providentialism is perceived most especially in Anne Boleyn's coronation procession, Alexander Leggatt regarding the coronation "shows" as "in a general way 'images of order', signs of the power and majesty of the state."¹³⁵ Such an observation ties this display very closely to traditional analyses of the actual processions examined earlier. This is underlined by R. A. Foakes's description of "the gay coronation procession of Anne accompanied by the splendour of coronets, crowns, sceptres, and rich costumes," an event that "is reported in terms not of her satisfaction, but of the joy of the people."¹³⁶ This

¹³¹Tillyard, "Why did Shakespeare write Henry VIII," 24.

¹³²Camille Wells Slight, "The Politics of Conscience in All is True (or Henry VIII)," Shakespeare Survey 43 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 59-68: 60.

¹³³Wilson Knight, The Crown of Life 331.

¹³⁴Slight 59.

¹³⁵Leggatt 223.

¹³⁶R. A. Foakes, introduction, King Henry VIII, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1986) xv-lxvii: lii.

equation of spectacular display with the “joy of the people” is reminiscent of traditional analyses of actual processions, most especially that of Richard Mulcaster’s description of Elizabeth’s pre-coronation procession. In his text, it will be remembered that the Queen was continually met by her happy and cheering “most loving subjects.”¹³⁷ However, this notion of the audience response is problematised in the play, as it was in the procession, when important contemporary evidence is considered.

The central procession around which Henry VIII is structured is the coronation of “Anne Bullen” in IV. i., the stage directions for which are extraordinarily detailed in the context of the Shakespearean canon, and resemble the processions examined in the earlier section of this thesis. This is evidenced by their reproduction in full:

The Order of the Coronation.

1. A lively flourish of trumpets.
2. Then, two judges.
3. LORD CHANCELLOR, with purse and mace before him.
4. Choristers singing. Music.
5. MAYOR OF LONDON, bearing the mace. Then GARTER, in his coat of arms, and on his head he wore a gilt copper crown.
6. MARQUESS DORSET, bearing a scepter of gold, on his head a demi-coronal of gold. With him, the EARL OF SURREY, bearing the rod of silver with the dove, crowned with an earl’s coronet. Collars of Esses.
7. DUKE OF SUFFOLK, in his robe of Estate, his coronet on his head, bearing a long white wand, as High Steward. With him, the DUKE OF NORFOLK, with the rod of marshalship, a coronet on his head. Collars of Esses.
8. A canopy, born by four of the Cinque-ports, under it the QUEEN, in her robe; in her hair, richly adorned with pearl,

¹³⁷Mulcaster 39.

crowned. On each side her, the BISHOPS OF LONDON and WINCHESTER.

9. The old DUCHESS OF NORFOLK, in a coronal of gold, wrought with flowers, bearing the queen's train.

10. Certain ladies or countesses, with plain circlets of gold without flowers.

Exeunt, first passing over the stage in order and state, and then, a great flourish of trumpets.

As in real processions, the great of the land display themselves in all their splendour, solemnly and spectacularly. This display is particularly important for traditional criticism as it is seen to function dramatically, in the theatre, in the same way as real processions did in the streets; in a normative fashion. Indeed, though not the focus of this current study, there is a trend within such criticism which believes that Shakespeare actually wrote the play in response to a real royal celebration.¹³⁸ For traditional criticism, the success of this spectacular display is evident in the representations of the responses of the audience to the procession, particularly those of the common people.

According to "three Gentlemen" in IV .i., much of the crowd which attended the coronation procession was made up of commoners, the third Gentleman stating that he was "stifled / With the mere rankness of their joy."¹³⁹ He continues in this vein, saying that in her chair of state, Anne was "opposing

¹³⁸This is a theory put forward by Foakes and Yates in particular. The celebration in question was that for the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine on 14 February, 1613 (Foakes xxx, and Yates, *Shakespeare's Last Plays* 66). It is worth pointing out however that though this is generally accepted as fact by traditional criticism, Tillyard indicates that any evidence "is absent from the Chamber Accounts' list of the plays performed on the occasion" (Tillyard, "Why did Shakespeare write *Henry VIII*," 22).

¹³⁹*Henry VIII*, IV. i. 58.

freely / The beauty of her person to the people.”¹⁴⁰ He underlines also the fact that the crowd was large, for

... when the people
Had the full view ... such a noise arose
As the shrouds make at sea in a stiff tempest,
As loud, and to as many tunes.¹⁴¹

He continues his description of the nature of the crowd present when he reports that there were

Great-bellied women,
That had not half a week to go, like rams
In the old time of war, would shake the press
And make ‘em reel before ‘em.¹⁴²

Thus the joyous atmosphere that the impending Queen evokes reminds us again of that which Mulcaster reported during Elizabeth’s pre-coronation procession. Once again, the population are regarded as being interpellated, as being won over by the spectacular nature of this display. Though they are “rank,” these commoners are regarded as the “most loving People.” Anne Boleyn’s actual coronation procession evoked a somewhat different response from her audience however.

Rather than spectacular, it will be remembered that a witness to the coronation procession in 1533 found that “the event had been cold, meagre, uncomfortable, and dissatisfying to everybody.”¹⁴³ Sydney Anglo points out that this witness was a foreigner--Chapuis, the Spanish ambassador, writing

¹⁴⁰Henry VIII, IV. i. 67-68.

¹⁴¹Henry VIII, IV. i. 69-76.

¹⁴²Henry VIII, IV. i. 76-79.

¹⁴³Anglo 259.

(in French) to Emperor Charles V--and thus his evidence needs to be read sceptically. However, it is pertinent evidence, as the response of the crowd to the passing of Anne Boleyn was not as reported in the play:

During [her] coronation entry in 1533, the crowd stood mute. When a servant of the Queen exhorted the spectators to cheer he was told that 'no one could force the people's hearts, not even the King'.¹⁴⁴

Sydney Anglo reproduces the report of Chapuys, taken from an "account, surviving only in a modern manuscript summary," which he believes "gives a wonderfully jaundiced description of the whole affair."¹⁴⁵ He writes:

Despite the English custom of making obeisance before the King and Queen on their entry, and of crying 'Dieu gard le roy, Dieu gard la royne', there was nobody, says the observer, who greeted them in this way. And when one of the Queen's servants asked the Mayor to order the people to give the customary welcome, 'lequel luy respondit que ne seroit contraindre les cuoeurs de gens et que le roy mesme ne seroit que fere'. Moreover, the coincidence of the letters H. and A. interlaced, signifying Henry and Anne, painted everywhere as decoration, was seized upon derisively 'par interjection comique ha, ha, ha'--such was the slight esteem in which the new Queen was held by the populace. Anne's personal appearance, likewise, did not escape the writer's scourge. The litter in which she rode, he says, was so low that the ears of the last mule in the team showed above the back of the Queen's seat, so that she seemed to have two sharp horns, 'que plusieurs en rioient'. The crown, he continues, ill became her and made her look very ugly, the more so since, as he later points out, she was scrofulous--'une ecrouelle la rendoit monstreuse'.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴Smuts 75-76.

¹⁴⁵Anglo 259.

¹⁴⁶Anglo 259.

Part of the report appears in the Calendar of State Papers, where Chapuys states that “the number of the spectators ... was very considerable, but all looked so sad and dismal that the ceremony seemed to be a funeral rather than a pageant....”¹⁴⁷ In the context of the actual historical event, Shakespeare’s dramatic representation begins to read differently. Rather than being overwhelmed by the spectacular nature of the event, the crowd are seen to be “mute,” and “sad and dismal.” That is to say, that they found the procession of the impending Queen displeasing rather than joyous. Such a response could also have been evoked by Shakespeare’s representation of the procession, as is emphasised by evidence contemporary with the performance of the play.

In an oft quoted letter written in response to the burning down of the Globe theatre during a performance of Henry VIII, Sir Henry Wotton, poet and courtier, makes a controversial statement. The letter, dated 2nd July, 1613, reads as follows:

The Kings Players had a new play called All is true, representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII, which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to the matting of the stage; the Knights of the Order with their Georges and garters, the Guards with their embroidered coats, and the like: sufficient in truth within a while to make greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous. Now, King Henry making a masque at Cardinal Wolseys house, and certain chambers being shot off at his entry, some of the paper, or other stuff, wherewith one of them was stopped, did light on

¹⁴⁷CSP (Spanish) (1531-1533) 2: 700. This same excerpt appears in James Gairdner, ed., Letters and Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII (London: Longman & Co, 1882) 6: 244. The (brief) official version of the coronation according to the Corporation of London appears in Repertory 9: f. 1b.

the thatch, where being thought at first but an idle smoke, and their eyes more attentive to the show, it kindled inwardly, and ran round like a train, consuming within less then an hour the whole house to the very grounds.¹⁴⁸

The controversial statement to which I refer comes in the middle of the letter with Wotton's reference to "greatness" being made "ridiculous," a statement that seems to contradict an entire tradition of criticism of the play. A sign of the controversial nature of this statement as far as this critical approach is concerned is its appearance in the Arden edition of Henry VIII where, in his introduction, R. A. Foakes reproduces the letter minus this very sentence.¹⁴⁹ It is included (without comment) when the letter is reproduced in full in the appendices, but its absence in the more prominent introduction is interesting.¹⁵⁰ As previously stated, for traditional criticism the pageantry referred to by Wotton has been represented as both glorious in a visual sense and spectacular in a normative sense. However, at least as far as Wotton was concerned, such spectacular display upon the stage had precisely the opposite effect, one noticed by Scott Wilson, who regards it as "defamiliarising the symbolic robes with which the monarchs persuade us of their regality..."¹⁵¹ That is to say, that Wotton regards such a spectacular representation of monarchy as effectively demystifying the existing hierarchical structure, demonstrating it to be no more than the familiar clothed in splendour. As

¹⁴⁸Logan Pearsall Smith, The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton, 2 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907) 2: 32-33. The original letter is in Henry Wotton, Reliquiae Wottoniae (London: Marriot, Bedel & Garthwait, 1672) 425-6.

¹⁴⁹Foakes xxviii.

¹⁵⁰Foakes 180.

¹⁵¹Scott Wilson 128.

such, members of the aristocracy are perceived as mere ordinary mortals who cover their ordinariness with splendour in order to produce the impression of greatness and divinity. Magnificent display and costume are thus mobilised in a normative manner and according to Henry Wotton, not only fail in their ideological desire, but in fact work against this desire and destroy it. If Henry Wotton's claim is opened out to include those to whom such a spectacle made "greatness ridiculous," a different way of reading the entire play becomes possible, one at odds with traditional readings. If the question is therefore posed--ridiculous to whom?--and immersed in what has previously been determined regarding the constitution of the contemporary audience for such a performance, an interpretation arises that is based upon this demystification of hierarchy. In a movement that mirrors what was said regarding actual processions, the type of pageantry displayed in Shakespeare's dramatisation of Anne Boleyn's coronation procession, which Wotton found so disturbing, enables the production of alternative readings. For, if Wotton, a diplomat in the courts of both Elizabeth and James, could read these representations of greatness as ridiculous, then such an interpretation was, as Wilson continues, "available to anyone who watched it."¹⁵² Camille Wells Slight agrees, saying that the "play's theatrical display of royalty may serve to celebrate and support contemporary authority, but it may also ... 'make greatness very familiar, if not

¹⁵²Scott Wilson 128. Wilson has been useful to my interpretation up to this point, but it is here that I diverge from him in what he then goes on to say. Generally, he seems to believe that Wotton is "making a revolutionary statement" (128). Wilson bases this in the alternative title of the play--All is True--as used by Wotton, in the sense that Wotton is stating that this title refers to the "truth" of greatness being made ridiculous. This is a movement that I do not want to make as, if for no other reason, there seems no evidence for such a belief. A reading of the letter alone does also not, in my view, logically lead to such a conclusion.

ridiculous’.”¹⁵³ As such, the intrinsic ambiguity of allegory is once more emphasised, and can, by examining the report of the contemporary reception of Anne Boleyn’s actual procession, once again give rise to a dynamic whereby allegory is allegorised by reality. That is to say, that Wotton very possibly found greatness being made ridiculous in the play precisely because it was representing Anne Boleyn. If the audience for the actual procession is considered, Wotton’s discomfort becomes clearer, in the sense that he shared the displeasure of the 1533 audience. And if he shared it, it is quite possible that much of the audience for the play felt the same way.

The ambiguity that Anne Boleyn embodied is more clearly represented in the light of the historical fact of her own actual coronation. That is to say, that Wotton’s discomfort with Shakespeare’s representation of Anne Boleyn was due to the fact that she was an historical figure who, it is possible to say, did indeed make greatness familiar, if not ridiculous. The essential problem of Anne in the play is the same as that which defined her own actual coronation; she is being crowned queen when the queen is still alive, and is carrying an illegitimate, legitimate heir. This problem extends beyond her as an individual in both her actual coronation procession and its dramatisation by Shakespeare. For, the fact of her ambiguity infects greatness around her, and makes it ridiculous also. This is attested to by the realisation that “no one could force the people’s hearts, not even the King’.”¹⁵⁴ Thus, the spectacular nature of the

¹⁵³Slights 67.

¹⁵⁴Smuts 75-76.

procession is undermined, traditional notions of hierarchy and heredity are questioned and demystified, and all greatness is rendered familiar to a contemporary audience, if not ridiculous.

The interpretations of the Henry VI trilogy and that of Henry VIII produced above, ones which read representations of historical events in the light of actual events, enable a comparative reading that could embrace a sceptical negotiation of such representations for a contemporary audience. This thesis was able to do this by problematising traditional readings of the plays, and then, through the use of contemporary evidence, producing readings of its own. The modern historicist school of Shakespearean criticism does not attempt to read the plays in a providentialist manner, yet effectively produces interpretations which have the identical ideological repercussions as those of the old school of historicism examined in the above. This thesis will examine New Historicist readings of the plays in the next and final chapter, and attempt to demonstrate the ways in which they too efface the presence of the common people in the contemporary audience.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“IN TRIUMPH TO THE KING”

The juxtaposition of traditional criticism’s normative readings of Shakespeare’s history plays alongside the readings proposed by this thesis and based on specific material conditions and context, demonstrates the polyvalence of critical practice itself and, more specifically, delineates a conflicting ideological dynamic. As shown earlier with regard to Elizabethan processions and pageants, meanings of cultural practices are inherently multiple and unstable, and for any one normative reading there exist alternative readings.¹ Traditional critics produced their literary analyses at a time when multiplicity of possible meanings was not to any extent countenanced, and the judgements of their critical practice went largely unchallenged. Though the perception of the early modern period and its cultural artefacts as delineating a fractured rather than unified social reality began to emerge in the 1960s and 1970s in response to these traditional historical models, it was not until the appearance of the New Historicism in the 1980s that the older notion of monolithic early modern cultural production began to be questioned in a sustained manner. With their conceptualisation of discontinuity and disunity, and their insistence upon both the impossibility of historical objectivity and the failure of the grand narrative of History in explaining reality, the New Historicism set out to displace the old historicism

¹See chapter three.

and give a more compelling account of the nature of early modern English culture and society.²

In the following, this thesis will trace this process of displacement with a specific goal in mind. In an earlier chapter, the New Historicist conceptualisation of the cultural practice of Elizabethan processions was examined.³ Here, rather than give a descriptive summary of how the New Historicism conceives of the rest of Renaissance culture in its totality, this thesis will investigate their conceptualisation of early modern theatre and dramatic production, in order to discern the ideological implications of their critical trajectory. This investigation will require the negotiation of a number of areas that form their analytical practice, and entail a reiteration of the theorisation of early modern power undertaken by Foucault upon which so much New Historicist work draws. Once this theoretical groundwork has been laid, New Historicist readings of the specific history plays of Shakespeare that have been analysed in the previous chapter will then be examined. These readings will be immersed in the theoretical model established by this thesis, which will subject their findings to contemporary evidence in order to ascertain whether or not their conclusions are convincing.

²There are a number of programmatic statements by New Historicist critics, most of which set themselves out against the older brand of historicism as practised by the likes of Tillyard. See chapter four for a listing of these works.

³See chapter four.

In the earlier discussion of the ideological repercussions of Tillyard's view of early modern society and culture,⁴ it was shown that Tillyard's analysis reproduces the plays "as parables of political order,"⁵ with Shakespeare consciously creating instructive moral tales. Such a reality is evident in Tillyard's reading of the three Henry VI plays where, despite the overwhelming depiction of a violent and uncompromising English nobility, the plays are regarded as being defined by the author's desire to demonstrate their exception to the order that was taken for granted in Elizabethan England. Tillyard's critical practice, and that of traditional criticism in general, has been undermined in recent years, particularly with regard to the conclusions reached regarding the history plays. Developments in modern theory in particular have shown that Tillyard never questioned his own position in relation to his objects of study, and what was found in the chosen texts were, Richard Wilson believes, the set of moral values of the critic.⁶ Catherine Belsey is even more explicit, claiming that Tillyard "read a number of Renaissance plays to find a commitment to order, and discovered in consequence that most of the other plays of the period were also committed to order."⁷ This notion that Tillyard came to the texts with an already formed thesis into which they were to be made to fit is one that according to Holderness, typifies such traditional criticism in general, in that "Tillyard, Wilson Knight, and Dover Wilson all found in Shakespeare's history plays a ruling ideology of order because that is

⁴See chapter four

⁵Holderness, Shakespeare Recycled 21.

⁶Wilson, Will Power 7.

⁷Catherine Belsey, "Making Histories Then and Now," The Uses of History 25.

precisely what they wanted to find.”⁸ Above all, traditional criticism regarded the early modern theatre as being founded upon consensus, and the drama produced there (Shakespeare’s particularly) as being no more than “homilies against disobedience and rebellion.”⁹ The institution of the theatre itself was regarded as the site from which the political message was dispersed, that message being one that was for the common good rather than one that merely articulated the dominant ideology. In the theatre, as in early modern society in general, Tillyard did not see “struggle, social difference and cultural antagonism,”¹⁰ merely the successful reproduction of the dominant ideology.

The New Historicism problematised the monolithic notion of early modern ideology by concentrating upon struggle, rupture and discontinuity in early modern social and cultural practices. Their prioritisation of such dynamics was part of a wider desire to consciously displace the older historicism as practised by Tillyard. Ideology came to be replaced by the rubric of “power,” and the theatre came to be regarded as a site of social and political contestation rather than one of harmony. Jean Howard has written that traditional criticism was based on a number of assumptions which included the ideas “that history is knowable: that literature mirrors or at least by indirection reflects historical reality; and that historians and critics can see the facts of history objectively.”¹¹

Stephen Greenblatt, the founder and leading exponent of New Historicism

⁸Holderness, *Shakespeare Recycled* 22.

⁹Holderness, *Shakespeare Recycled* 30.

¹⁰Bristol, *Carnival and Theatre* 13.

¹¹Howard, “The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies,” 18.

thought, outlines these same assumptions before proceeding to delineate the need for a new critical practice:

The earlier historicism tends to be monological; that is, it is concerned with discovering a single political vision....This vision, most often presumed to be internally coherent and consistent ... has the status of an historical fact. It is not thought to be the product of the historian's interpretation, nor even of the particular interests of a given social group in conflict with other groups.¹²

Under pressure from new developments in cultural theory, specifically post-structuralist theory, these assumptions began to fragment and dissolve as the New Historicism began to insist upon the notion of histories rather than history, in the sense that the latter was merely a “contemporary activity of narrating or representing the past,” and that “historians reconstruct the past in the light of their own ideological preoccupations and constraints.”¹³ The New Historicists seized upon the work of a number of theorists in their reconstructions of the past, Michel Foucault's conception of early modern society being an example.¹⁴

In an earlier chapter, this thesis demonstrated the nature of the New Historicist theorisation of processions, which was shown to rely heavily on Foucault, particularly upon his belief in the equivalence in spectacular terms between the social and political functions of the early modern public execution and the

¹²Greenblatt, *The Forms of Power* 5.

¹³Holderness, *Shakespeare Recycled* 32.

¹⁴The importance of the work of Clifford Geertz to the New Historicism has already been examined in chapter four.

processional entry.¹⁵ Foucault's theorisation of the spectacular nature of such cultural events has also been defining for the New Historicist conceptualisation of the early modern theatre, whereby it is claimed that it too was a site for the strategic mobilisation of power in an attempt by the state to continually reproduce itself. In his essay "The Improvisation of Power," Greenblatt writes that:

The theatre is widely perceived in this period as the concrete manifestation of the histrionic quality of life, and, more specifically, of power-- the power of the prince who stands as an actor upon a stage before the eyes of the nation....¹⁶

The dynamic of Greenblatt's discursive movement here centres around the idea of this "concrete manifestation ... of power," to the extent that the theatre is seen to fulfil a normative function, a point which is made explicitly when Greenblatt writes that "the Elizabethan stage functions as one of the public uses of spectacle to impose normative ethical patterns on the urban masses."¹⁷ Greenblatt believes that the theatre was a place where political interventions were made, a site for the visible use of power and spectacular regulation, an institutional device for the coercion of the population. Leonard Tennenhouse echoes such a belief stating that both the public execution and the public theatre "sustained and testified to the monarch's power...."¹⁸ Primarily, the New Historicists theorise Renaissance theatre as spectacular theatre, and the

¹⁵See chapter four

¹⁶Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 253.

¹⁷Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 253.

¹⁸Tennenhouse, *Power On Display* 15.

ideology they see represented there closely resembles that perceived by Tillyard and traditional criticism.

Greenblatt describes the Renaissance theatre as a site where “actions that should have the effect of radically undermining authority turn out to be the props of that authority.”¹⁹ Resistance to power is shown to be a condition of that power, and is furthermore regarded as that upon which the actual dominant power is constructed. This is logical for Greenblatt as power is itself inescapable, is both omnipotent and omnipresent:

rebels and sceptics ... imagine themselves set in diametrical opposition to their society where in fact they have unwittingly accepted its crucial structural elements. For the crucial issue is not man's power to disobey, but the characteristic modes of desire and fear produced by a given society, and the rebellious heroes never depart from those modes.²⁰

Though this is formulated in reference to the anti-heroes of Marlowe, Greenblatt could be describing the rebel Jack Cade in this view of Renaissance drama. The driving force of this argument is that the Renaissance theatre, as a product of power itself, could only work in such a way as to strengthen that power whether subversively through any rebel's embracing of society's Other, or through Shakespeare's overt celebration of that power. According to Greenblatt, “Shakespeare's plays are centrally and repeatedly concerned with the production and containment of subversion and disorder,”²¹ and

¹⁹Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets” 39-40.

²⁰Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 209.

²¹Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets” 29.

Shakespeare himself “became the presiding genius of a popular, urban art form with the capacity to foster psychic mobility in the service of Elizabethan power.”²² Leonard Tennenhouse agrees with this perception of the playwright, stating that in his “account of Shakespeare’s drama ... stagecraft collaborates with statecraft in producing spectacles of power.”²³ These critics thus manage to demonstrate the orthodox nature of all modes of behaviour (even unorthodoxy), power and its opposite being regarded as mere functions in society and all possessors of power and their opponents being seen as unavoidably produced by power itself.

According to Foucault, the early modern period was characterised by an absolute sovereign power which enacted its will upon the body of an offender, and the spectacle of the public execution was the exemplary articulation of such a reality. Along with certain other social experiences, such as the coronation entry, this dissymmetry between sovereign and subject characterised the mode of power existent in that society. At no time does Foucault include the theatre as such a spectacular site. Despite the fact that he does not make such a move however, it seems quite reasonable to suggest that the site of spectacular punishment and that of the drama are similar, in that they are both essentially theatrical in nature. However, as was shown with regard to processions, because of their adherence to a semiotic approach to social practices, the New Historicism continually states that similar discursive

²²Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 253.

²³Tennenhouse, *Power On Display* 15.

practices are the same.²⁴ Yet while the two scaffolds/stages of the execution and of the drama are discursively similar, what takes place upon them is not the same social practice. Furthermore, and most importantly, the point that Foucault constantly stresses about the mode of power operation he terms spectacular is that it was an ineffective system of law enforcement even though it made royal power visible. As already demonstrated, such practices were characterised by their ambiguous nature, opposition to sovereign power being articulated in the very moment in which the population were being called upon to endorse this power.²⁵ New Historicism assumes however that the spectacular theatre was wholly effective in the transmission of its ideological message, evident in their brief critical negotiations of 2Henry VI and Henry VIII.²⁶

²⁴See chapter four.

²⁵See chapter four.

²⁶No complete New Historicist essay exists that analyses any of the Henry VI plays or indeed, Henry VIII. Greenblatt considers one moment in 2Henry VI in the final two pages of his twenty-nine page essay on the (theorised) disappearance of the genre of heroic commemoration, in "Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre, and the Representation of Rebellion," Representations 1: 1 (February 1983): 1-29. Stephen Orgel takes the title for his essay on representation from Henry VIII but only mentions the play in the final paragraph; "Making Greatness Familiar," The Forms of Power and the Power of Forms 41-48. And Leonard Tennenhouse, in an essay ostensibly about the Shakespearean history play, likewise allows only the two final pages of a twenty-nine page essay for a discussion of Henry VIII; "Rituals of State: History and the Elizabethan Strategies of Power," Power on Display 72-101 The absence of such critical work is an important reflection on New Historicist analyses, particularly given the fact that they have written often, and at length, on the two Henry IV plays and Henry V. Indeed, the essay of Tennenhouse mentioned above is primarily given over to these history plays and, in an earlier form, helped establish the New Historicist school of criticism. The importance of this is determining, as it appeared in the influential collection of essays entitled Political Shakespeare, alongside an essay by Greenblatt which also dealt with the same history plays. Tennenhouse's earlier essay was entitled "Strategies of State and Political Plays: A Midsummer Night's Dream, Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VIII," Political Shakespeare 109-128; Greenblatt's "Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion, Henry IV and Henry V," in the same volume, 18-47.

1. Henry VI--“thy most ungracious head”

In his essay “Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre, and the Representation of Rebellion,” Greenblatt’s main objective is to demonstrate ways in which the genre of heroic commemoration was surrendered by the aristocracy in the early modern period. His thesis regarding this genre articulates the notion that as power gradually transferred from the nobility to the emergent propertied (mercantile) class in Renaissance society, a major transformation took place in ideas concerned with codes of honour. The basic premise relies upon the perception that it was regarded as dishonourable for an aristocrat to be heroically commemorated for defeating any form of peasant rebellion, as this would contrive to connect the aristocrat concerned with those beneath him, thus tarnishing his honour. The aristocracy naturally wished to defeat all potential peasant rebellions, but did not wish to be directly associated with their victory over what were considered unworthy adversaries. The emergent propertied classes however, in contrast to the aristocracy, regarded any such defeat of peasants as both justified and worthy of overt celebration, and would display the blood of their defeated opponents as a “badge of honour.”²⁷ There is therefore, according to Greenblatt, a perceptible shift in notions of honour in this period.

²⁷Greenblatt, “Murdering Peasants” 25.

For Greenblatt the register of the transformation of the traditional notion of honour is the figure of Alexander Iden in 2Henry VI, the contented Kentish squire and representative of the emergent middle classes. More specifically, it is Iden's reaction to his killing of Jack Cade that signals this transformation, particularly in his decision, addressing himself to the dead Cade, to

...cut off thy most ungracious head;
Which I will bear in triumph to the King....²⁸

This moment in Shakespeare's play is immersed in an eclectic choice of resonant textual articulations in order for Greenblatt to uncover a generalised, early modern cultural law. Thus, an initial reading of some of Dürer's drawings for potential commemorative monuments (none of which were subsequently built) shows them demonstrating the aristocracy's desire to be absent from the celebration of peasant defeat, and a gradual process of the propertied classes taking on this overt commemoration is figured through a further reading of excerpts from Sidney's Arcadia and Spenser's Faerie Queene. Alexander Iden is the specific result of this transformation, and Shakespeare's dramatic practice its general destination:

The sword that Dürer had to depict without anyone to wield it becomes Iden's proudest possession; the deed that Sidney's heroes had to perform in disguise becomes a claim to distinction; and the blood that Spenser's knight did not wish to get on his hands becomes a badge of honour. The aristocrat has given way to the man of property, and heroic commemoration has been absorbed into a new genre, the history play.²⁹

²⁸2Henry VI, IV. x. 81-82.

²⁹Greenblatt, "Murdering Peasants" 25.

While this demonstrates Greenblatt's typically New Historicist methodology of eclecticism and discovery of an entire social and cultural phenomenon through a reading of a number of textual excerpts, it is his treatment of the Iden/Cade scene that is obviously of most interest here.

Greenblatt begins his description of the Cade scenes with a view of the rebellion that is reminiscent of traditional criticism, regarding it as "a grotesque and sinister force, the archetypal lower class revolt both in its motives and in its ludicrousness."³⁰ Cade and his followers are seen to be acting out of nothing more than mischievousness, and their motives, such as hunger, enclosure and desperation are regarded as ridiculous. The main problem for Greenblatt however, given the fact of this rebellion, is how Cade and his followers will be defeated by the nobility without these latter individuals being associated with this defeat and thus dishonoured. As Greenblatt writes: "How can such buffoons be put down without embarrassment to the victors?"³¹ This problem of not wishing to be associated with the defeat of such "buffoons" proved to be rather easy however, and "Shakespeare's solution is simple, effective, and, in its own way, elegant."³² This solution entails the creation of a man of property, Iden, who in contrast to the nobility "perceives Cade not as a social rebel but as a belligerent thief,"³³ and thus feels justified and indeed honoured in killing him. His justification

³⁰Greenblatt, "Murdering Peasants" 23.

³¹Greenblatt, "Murdering Peasants" 23.

³²Greenblatt, "Murdering Peasants" 24.

³³Greenblatt, "Murdering Peasants" 25.

lies in the fact of Cade's trespass, and his honour in the fact that he has defeated an opponent of the monarchical order. Iden will bear the rebel head in triumph to the King and both the propertied classes and the sovereign will benefit from the defeat of the peasant. Indeed, this is the precise reason for Shakespeare's creation of the theatrical character of Cade, in that the subversion the rebel embodies will be contained and conventional power will strengthen itself. Thus Greenblatt reformulates Foucault's theorisation of the dissymmetry displayed in the public execution and applies it to this early modern drama.

It is evident that in Greenblatt's reading Cade and his followers are the archetypal signifiers of disorder, the precise agents of anarchy they were for Tillyard and traditional criticism. These common people are seen to be foolish and grotesque, and regarded once more as the cause of all disorder rather than the result of an already existent and pervasive disorder caused by the English nobility. Cade is once more weighted down with a burden of responsibility, a burden that carries with it certain ideological implications. These implications naturally echo traditional criticism in their conception of the nature of the rebels' necessity. For Greenblatt these same characters are consciously created by Shakespeare precisely in order that they be repelled and defeated and power once more reconstitute itself. However, there is a sense in which Greenblatt's thesis is undermined by the scenes in 2Henry VI which precede that of the conflict between Cade and Iden. In IV. viii. Cade and his followers are

rebellious in Southwark when the aristocrats the Duke of Buckingham and Old Lord Clifford enter in order to parley with them. In his address, Buckingham makes Cade's followers three important sub-textual promises. Firstly, he wonders if Cade would be able to "conduct you through the heart of France, / And make the meanest of you earls and dukes?"³⁴ The implication is, of course, that King Henry would if they were to join his side. Secondly, he says that if they continue to follow Cade, in no time the French will be "lording it in London streets, / Crying 'Villiano!' unto all they meet."³⁵ If they follow Henry however, the implication is that not only would this be prevented, but they would gloriously recapture the lost territories in France. Thirdly, Buckingham reveals that "Henry hath money."³⁶ Importantly, all three promises are lies, and it is Buckingham's intention to trick the commoners in order to defuse the situation. This is clear from the very next scene (IV. ix.) in which we meet Cade's followers (who have been won over by these promises) as they are brought before the King and Queen with "halts around their necks." The King pardons them all, and they are dismissed. It is important to note the fact that, promised so much, these common men merely escape with their lives. However, more important in terms of Greenblatt's thesis is the fact that these common rebels are publicly confronted and defeated by a combination of the aristocracy and the monarchy. There is no sense in which these noble individuals appear to feel their honour tarnished by their defeat of Cade's followers, no sense in which they try to recruit a member of the

³⁴2Henry VI, IV. viii. 35-36.

³⁵2Henry VI, IV. viii. 45-46.

³⁶2Henry VI, IV. viii. 51.

mercantile class to celebrate their victory for them. The nobility in these scenes simply defeat their common adversaries and demonstrate their victory publicly.

Such a realisation certainly problematises Greenblatt's discovery of a cultural law in his reading of the Cade and Iden scene. This problematisation is emphasised by once again considering actual instances of rebellion and the ways in which the aristocracy of the time reacted. If the aftermath of the uprising of Bartholomew Steere and his followers in Oxfordshire in 1596 is examined, Greenblatt's thesis is seen to be questionable. For contemporary records show that the rebels were not only captured, imprisoned, and tortured by the aristocrat Lord Norris (and other Oxfordshire landholders), they were subsequently brought to London by his son, Sir Henry Norris.³⁷ Moreover, the rebels were publicly led to London, "their hands pinioned, and their legs bound under their horses' bellies."³⁸ Finally, two of the rebels, Richard Bradshaw and Robert Burton, were publicly executed on Enslow Hill, the initial meeting place for the uprising.³⁹ Once more, there is no sense in which the aristocracy were distancing themselves from what it considered to be unworthy adversaries. There is no sense in which they express the fact that their honour will suffer because of their association with this enemy. In this specific case therefore, it would seem that Greenblatt's thesis is unconvincing. This is particularly the case if the other two plays in the trilogy are considered. For

³⁷CSP (Dom) (1595-1597) 316-318.

³⁸CSP (Dom) (1595-1597) 316-318.

³⁹CSP (Dom) (1595-1597) 316-318.

there is no other instance in which an Alexander Iden appears, no other instance in which a middle-class character is created by Shakespeare in order for the aristocracy to retain their honour. Yet Greenblatt believes that in the symbolic representation of Iden, “heroic commemoration has been absorbed into ... the history play”⁴⁰ in general. This seems to be the only example however, and it is contradicted by many other examples as well as by actual events.

The main thrust of Greenblatt’s perception, the transformation in the genre of heroic commemoration, can be seen to be questionable given the evidence presented above. In a wider sense, Greenblatt’s interpretation of Foucault’s theorisation sees Shakespeare as the conscious agent of sovereign power who uses the early modern theatre to demonise the common people and, by showing that rebellion is useless, underwrite both state and sovereign power. In the case of 2Henry VI, Greenblatt sees Shakespeare creating an uncharismatic and grotesque rebel in order that sovereign power can reconstitute itself by enlisting the emergent middle-classes to reactivate Foucauldian dissymmetry. Thus Greenblatt explains a phenomenon in a cultural practice using a theory devised by Foucault to explain an entirely different cultural practice. And in doing so, any potential justification for the demands of the common people are occluded.

⁴⁰Greenblatt, “Murdering Peasants” 25.

In Greenblatt's reading, the terminology of the old historicism is displaced, but its ideological conception of Renaissance society and culture reproduced. To cast this conception of Renaissance theatre in the terminology of the old historicism sees Shakespeare the monarchist supporting conventional order through the representation of the defeat of disorder and the glorification of the (Tudor) monarchy. And as in the old historicism, there is no acknowledgement that sections of the contemporary audience could have found Cade's message both convincing and real, and the actions of both Iden and the majority of the nobility unjust. Such is evident in the fact that in Greenblatt's reading, we find a wholly normative Shakespeare overwhelmed by the social presence of the sovereign, writing plays in the monarchist idiom of his age. The belief that the early modern drama underwrites sovereign power closely resembles Tillyard's notion of it celebrating a divinely sanctioned Tudor dynasty. Furthermore, the perception that the drama always served only this purpose, also indicates a conception of early modern culture in general, and the theatre specifically, that is every bit as monolithic as Tillyard's "Elizabethan world picture." This picture that Tillyard believes was so taken for granted has not been displaced by Greenblatt but merely renamed under the rubric of "power." Power, more specifically, state power, has become the monolithic entity, the idiom of the age, the only available way of negotiating reality. Such a process is evident in Tennenhouse's brief reading of Henry VIII.

2. Henry VIII--“many extraordinary circumstances”

In his book Power on Display, Leonard Tennenhouse states that “Shakespeare[‘s] ... dramatic forms participated in the political life of Renaissance England,” and that during this period “political imperatives were also aesthetic imperatives.”⁴¹ There is therefore an immediate collapsing of two areas of human experience--politics and aesthetics--in which each becomes equivalent to the other. While stating quite bluntly that he draws upon Foucault’s notion of the early modern public execution and the scaffold upon which it took place, Tennenhouse proceeds to generalise Foucault’s specific theorisation whereby this scaffold becomes a scene of display and spectacle rather than mere spectacular execution. The repercussions of this are evident in the fact that this scene then becomes the representative of all events that take place in public, and Tennenhouse drops the use of the term “scaffold” and replaces it with that of the “stage.” And this stage, now regarded as being equivalent to the execution scaffold “both sustained and testified to the monarch’s power.”⁴² For Tennenhouse, Shakespeare’s plays quite clearly functioned in order “to idealise political authority.”⁴³

This conception of Shakespearean drama is specified in Tennenhouse’s analysis of the history plays which, he states, work to “authorise the state in characteristically Elizabethan ways.”⁴⁴ Tennenhouse’s main concern in his

⁴¹Tennenhouse, Power on Display 6.

⁴²Tennenhouse, Power on Display 15.

⁴³Tennenhouse, Power on Display 99.

⁴⁴Tennenhouse, Power on Display 72.

essay “Rituals of State: History and the Elizabethan Strategies of Power,” is to find a solution to the perceived riddle of “Shakespeare’s inability to write an Elizabethan chronicle play for a Jacobean audience,”⁴⁵ in a sense pondering Tillyard’s question “Why Did Shakespeare Write Henry VIII?”⁴⁶ Tennenhouse believes that Henry VIII is very different from Shakespeare’s earlier history plays and that this lies not in its generic difference, but in the way that power is represented. Accordingly, Shakespeare’s “political imperative [was] to display wealth and title.”⁴⁷ The reasons why Shakespeare should do this were because, under James, “political circumstances changed and ... the strategies for legitimising ... authority had to change accordingly.”⁴⁸ The shift between the Elizabethan chronicle history play typified by conflict, and the Jacobean romantic history play typified by harmony occurred therefore because, according to Tennenhouse, Shakespeare “developed strategies to authorise essentially the same fantasy of power that motivated his earlier dramas.”⁴⁹ As with Greenblatt, the conception of Shakespeare in Tennenhouse’s reading is that which sees him attempting to produce drama which would legitimate sovereign power.

According to Tennenhouse, in Henry VIII Shakespeare consciously “suppresses ... discontinuities and contradictions”⁵⁰ that were apparent in the

⁴⁵Tennenhouse, Power on Display 99.

⁴⁶See chapter six for a consideration of Tillyard’s essay.

⁴⁷Tennenhouse, Power on Display 99.

⁴⁸Tennenhouse, Power on Display 99.

⁴⁹Tennenhouse, Power on Display 100.

⁵⁰This is taken from Tennenhouse’s earlier version of the same essay in Political Shakespeare 109-128: 123.

earlier history plays. This in many ways mirrors traditional criticism's claim that the play represents a mature Shakespeare interested in romantic resolution, typified by similarities in this play to The Tempest and The Winter's Tale.⁵¹ It resembles traditional criticism in another way however, in that it fails to take the disruptive presence of the representation of Anne Boleyn into consideration, most particularly in the very moment in which Shakespeare decides to "display wealth and title." For it will be remembered that it was this display which Sir Henry Wotton found most disconcerting, this display which he felt was enough to "make greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous."⁵² That is to say, that it was the representation of power itself that disturbed Wotton, displayed "with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty..."⁵³ In contrast to Tennenhouse's thesis, Shakespeare's elaborate dramatisation of Anne Boleyn's coronation procession in Henry VIII seemed to produce "discontinuities and contradictions" in their representation of power rather than suppress them. This is particularly the case when a contemporary audience is considered and when, like Wotton, their possible readings of this dramatic representation of display are taken into account. Given the nature of the audience response to Anne Boleyn's actual coronation procession, Tennenhouse's theorisation seems questionable. There, according to Chapuys, it is possible to state that the crowd articulated the fact that greatness was indeed being made ridiculous: "par interjection comique ha, ha,

⁵¹This is the feeling of such studies as the following: G. Wilson Knight, The Crown of Life; Frances Yates, Shakespeare's Last Plays; R. A. Foakes, introduction, King Henry VIII; Irving Ribner, The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare; John Wilders, The Lost Garden; Alexander Leggatt, Shakespeare's Political Drama.

⁵²Logan Pearsall Smith, The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton 2: 33.

ha'--such was the slight esteem in which the new Queen was held by the populace."⁵⁴

It is difficult to examine New Historicist criticism of Henry VI and Henry VIII in great detail as it does not attempt to read the plays comprehensively. It is the claims being made for early modern theatrical practice that are more interesting in the present context however. A brief review of these claims in Tennenhouse's analysis of Shakespeare's history plays reveals that his conceptions of the early modern theatre, of the dramatic production it witnessed, and of its primary playwright are very similar to those of Greenblatt. Tennenhouse reads the theatre semiotically, and therefore as unproblematically spectacular. He perceives the success of the continual reactivation of sovereign power, despite the fact that history itself informs us of its failure. He also conceives of Shakespeare as a monarchist, the obedient agent of sovereign power whose sole purpose in writing drama was merely to underwrite this power. Finally, he reads the early modern theatre specifically, and its culture generally, monolithically, order and unity being its determinants, now described under the rubric "power." All of these constituent elements of his conception of early modern drama are apparent in his brief examination of Henry VIII. Once more the spirit of Tillyard is apparent, and once more the supposed displacement of this older methodology has failed to establish an alternative ideological landscape. Indeed, the

⁵³ Logan Pearsall Smith, The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton 2: 32.

⁵⁴ Anglo 259.

alternative reading proposed by this thesis demonstrates the incompleteness of Tennenhouse's theorisation, just as it did that of traditional criticism.

CONCLUSION

When traditional criticism approaches Shakespeare's history plays it finds a dynamic identical to that which it perceives for pageants and processions. Each is characterised by the naturalness of harmony and consensus, a dynamic that is founded upon the notion of agreed order. This dynamic claims that disorder is created merely so that conventional, monarchical order can rout it and thereby strengthen itself. When the New Historicism approaches the same pageants, processions and plays, it discovers the inescapability of state power and an artificially constructed disorder that is made to suffer defeat at the hands of conventional, monarchical power which thereby strengthens itself. The New Historicist commitment to radical theorisation and methodology promises much in terms of radical readings, yet they essentially replicate the ideologically conservative trajectory of the older historicism. The promised radicalism does not materialise.

To a great extent this duplication of ideological trajectory is to be expected given that both schools of historicism approach these cultural artefacts, as well as Elizabethan culture generally, from a similar perspective. Tillyard and traditional criticism read dominant early modern culture as all of Elizabethan culture, and analyse Shakespeare's plays through the presence of the figurehead of this dominant culture, the monarch. The New Historicism articulates this same cult of authority in their obsession with the all-encompassing and determinate cultural presence of the sovereign. The older

historicism prioritises the omnipresent monarch as the material reconstitution of God on earth. The New Historicism transfers Foucault's dissymmetrically resonant sovereign from the scaffold of the public execution to the street and the theatrical stage wholesale. In both instances, this sovereign is the register of all social, political, religious and cultural activity and works discursively to continually reproduce itself. Importantly, both schools believe, despite history, that this process of continual reproduction was successful. Ironically, it was Foucault himself who said that "History protects us from historicism...."¹ As demonstrated in the readings of the pageants, processions and plays undertaken by this thesis, a plethora of ambiguities and discontinuities are however articulated, each of which needs to be taken on its own terms rather than subsumed into some greater thesis of the implicit and invisible functions of the early modern theatre-state, the hidden agenda of Shakespeare and the pageant authors or the functionalist determination of a monolithic and unchanging power/order.

This thesis set out to demonstrate a process whereby certain identified cultural treasures have been transmitted to the present in a triumphal procession which constructs these treasures as always and unproblematically underwriting royal and state power. This process has been exposed by regarding these treasures with cautious detachment, and reading them against the grain. This methodology was enabled by drawing the critical gaze away from sovereign power and concentrating upon the reception of these cultural events by any

¹Michel Foucault, "Space, Power, Knowledge," *The Foucault Reader* 239-256: 250.

potential common audience.² Thus a perceptible shift in the critical focus is apparent, and the triumphal procession in which traditional criticism and the New Historicism have participated is revealed. This revelation demonstrates the ambiguities and discontinuities which become apparent and resonant when it is seen that both of these forms of analysis fail to consider the main character of the common people, so spellbound are they by the spectacular presence of the sovereign. A consideration of the common audience demonstrates the implications of the readings that continue to dominate the analysis of Shakespeare's plays and Elizabethan pageants and processions. In the consideration given to them here, it is clear that, despite all claims to the contrary, "the old brings in the new, which brings back the old."³ This is the nature of the triumphal procession.

²Another study which reads early modern cultural events through the (in this case female) audience is Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³Phillipe Ivornel, "Paris, Capital of the Popular Front or the Posthumous Life of the 19th Century," *New German Critique* 39 (Fall 1986): 61-84: 75.

ILLUSTRATIONS

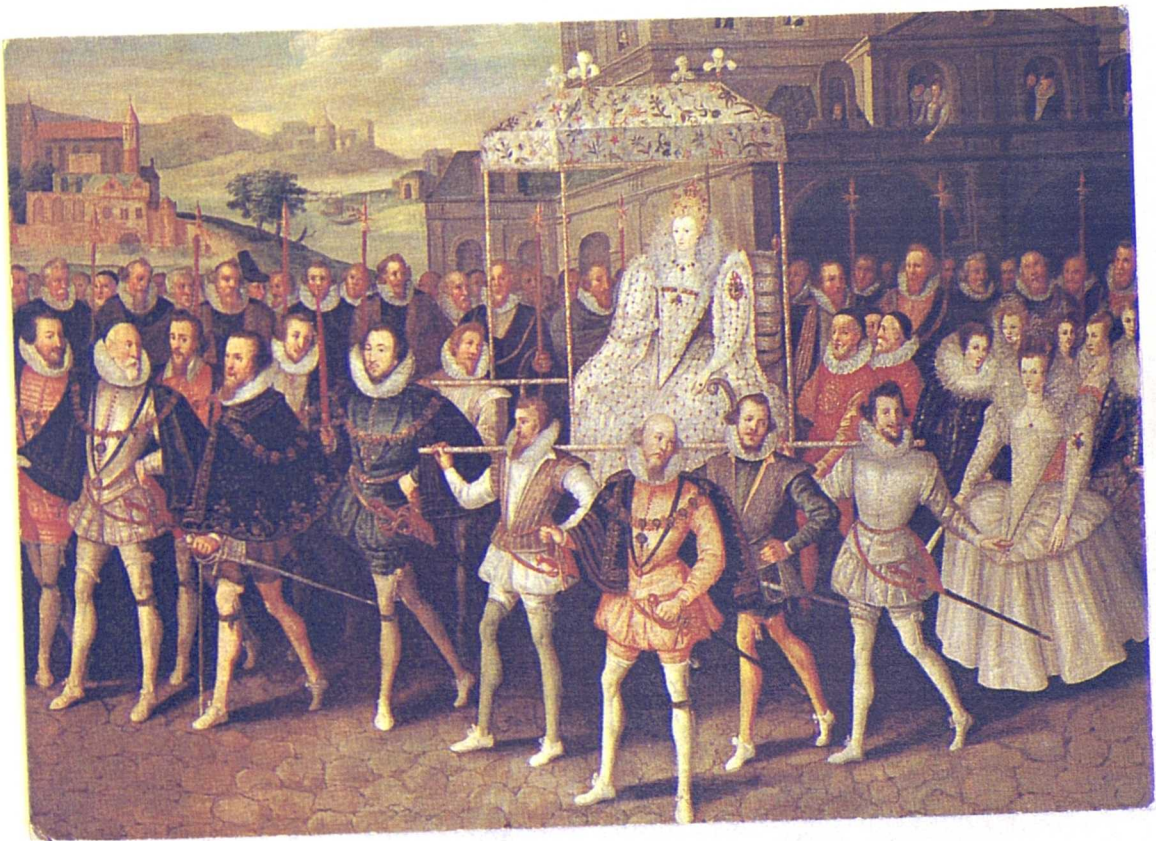


Fig. 1

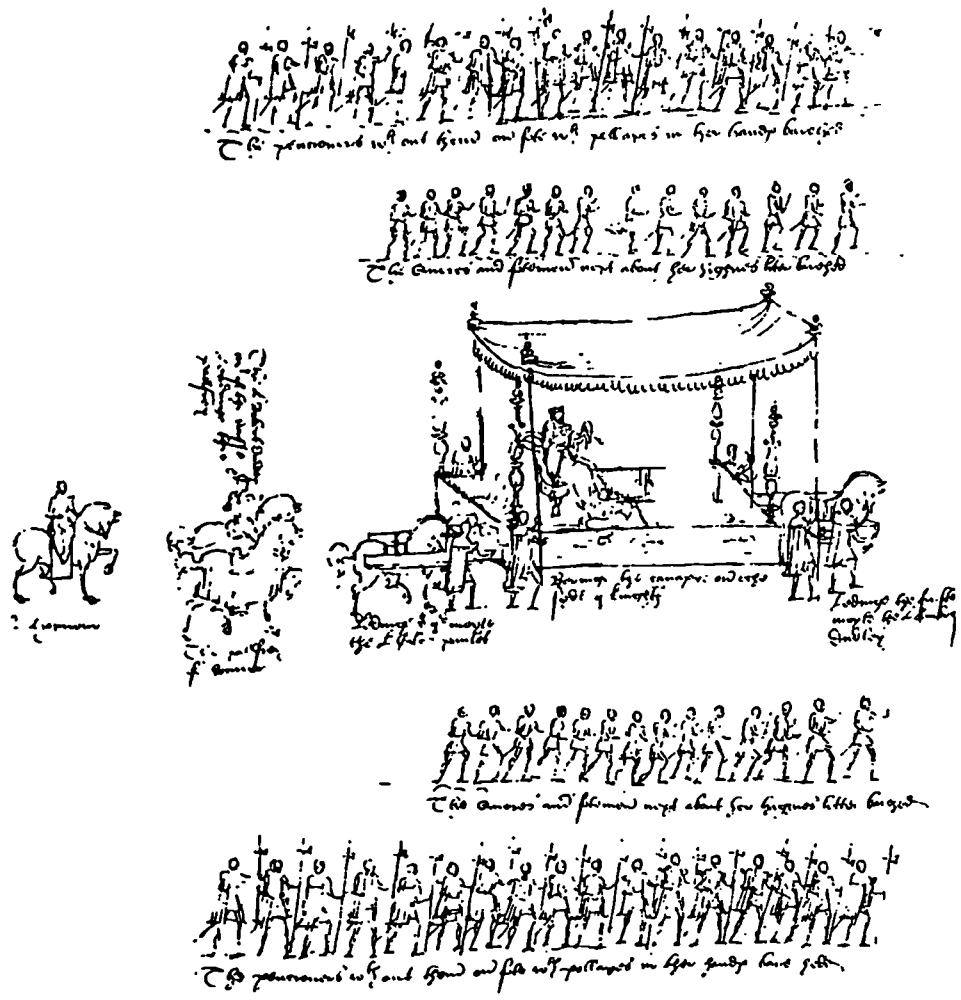


Fig. 2

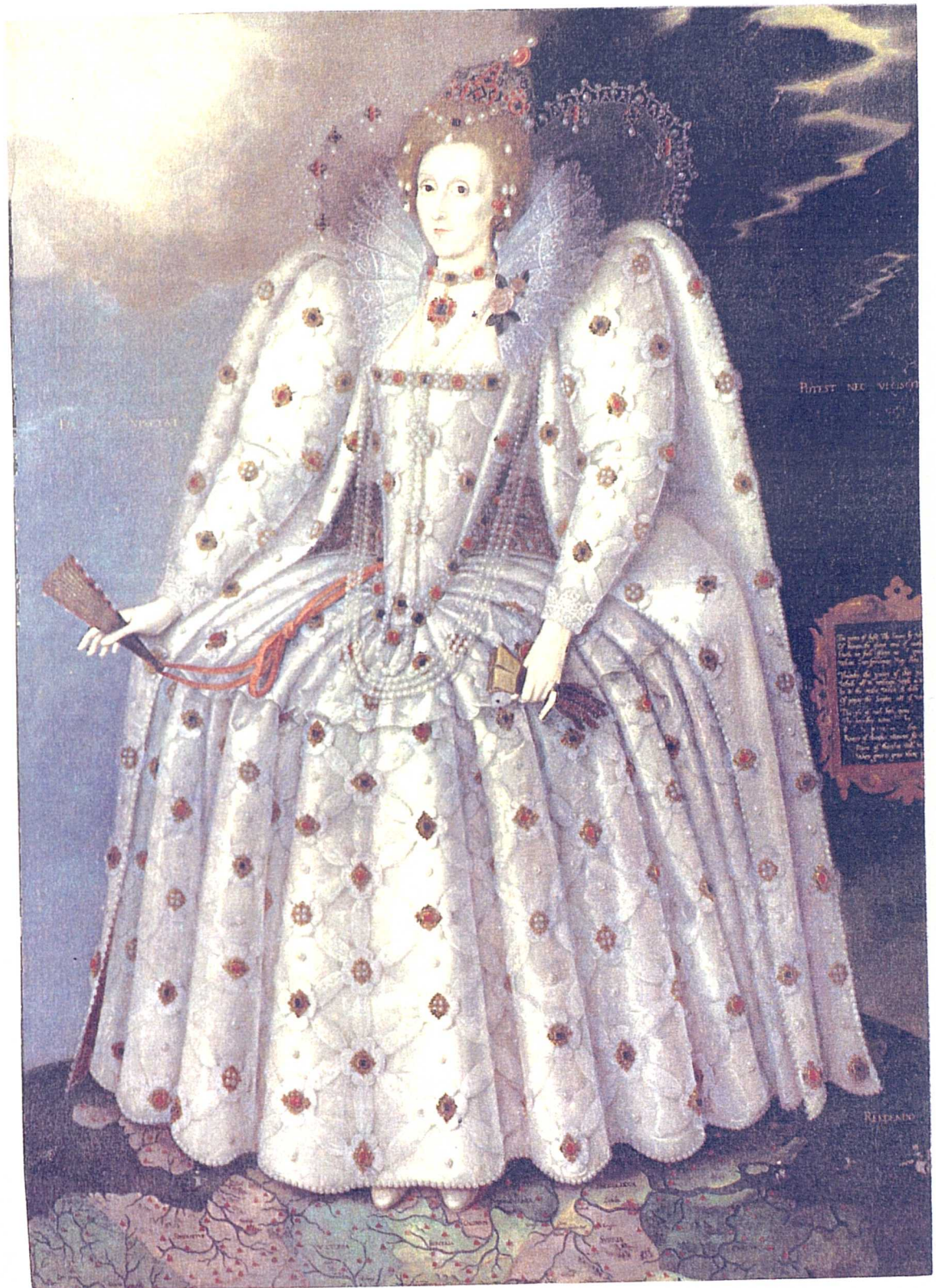


Fig. 3

APPENDICES

The Proceedings in State of the High and Mightye Prince ELIZABETH, by the Grace of God, Queene of England, Fraunce, and Irland, &c. from Somerset Place to St. Paul's Church in London, Anno 1588.

Messengers of the Chamber.

Gentlemen Harbingers.

Servauntes to Ambassadors.

Gentlemen, } her Maiesties servauntes.
Esquires, } Trumpetes.

Sewers of the Chambers.

Gentlemen Ushers.

The Six Clarke of the Chauncery.

Clarke of the Starre Chamber.

Clarke of the Signett.

Clarke of the Privye Seale.

Clarke of the Counsell.

The Queen's Chaplaines having dignities, as Deanes.

Maisters of the Chauncery.

Aldermen of London.

Knights Bachelers.

Knights Officers of the Admiralty.

Judges of the Admiralty.

The Deane of the Arches.

The Soliciter and Attorney Generall (*sed quære an hoc sit de jure*).

Sergeante at Lawe.

The Queene's Sergeantes. } (*quære de hoc*)

Barones of the Exchequer.

A Pursuivant } Judges of the Common Pleas. } A Pursuivant

of Armes. } Judges of the King's Bench. } of Armes.

The Lord Chief Baron, and the Lord Chief of the Common Pleas.

The Maister of the Roles, and the Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench.

The Queen's Doctor of Phisick.

The Maister of the Tents.

The Maister of the Revells.

The Lieutenant of the Ordinance.

The Lieutenant of the Tower.

The Maister of the Armoiry.

Knights that have bin Ambassadors.

Knights that have byn Deputies for Ireland.

A Pursuivant } The Maister of the Great Wardrobe. } A Pursuivant

of Armes. } The Maister of the Jewelle House. } of Armes.

Esquiers of the Bodye, and Gentlemen of the Privie Chamber.

Trumpetes.

The Queene's cloake and hat, borne by a Knight, or an Esquier.

Barones younger Sonnes.

Lancaster Herald. } Knights of the Bathe. } Yorke Herald.

Viscounts younger Sonnes.

Barons eldest Sonnes.

Earles younger Sonnes.

Viscounts eldest Sonnes.

Secretaries to her Majestie.

Knights of the Privye Counsell. } Richmond Herald.

Knights of the Garter.

The Principall Secretary.

Vice-chamberleine.

Comptroller and Thresorer of the Housholde.

Chester Herald. } Barons of the Parliament. } Windsor Herald.

Bishops.

The Lord Chamberleine of the House, and the Lord Admirall of England, bein

Barons.

Marquesses younger Sonnes.

Earles eldest Sonnes.

Viscounts.

Dukes younger Sonnes

Marquesses eldest Sonnes.

Norrey King of Armes.

Earles.

Dukes eldest Sonnes.

Marquesses.

Dukes.

Clarencieux King of Armes.

The Almoner. The Maister of Requests.

The Lord High Thresorer of England.

The Archbishop of Yorke.

The Lord Chauncelor of England.

The Archbishop of Canterbury.

The French Ambassador, accompanied with the Lord Buckhurst.

The Maior of London. } Garter principal King } A Gentleman Usher

of Armes. } of the Privie Chamber.

Sergeants at Armes. } The sword, borne by the Lord Marquis. } Sergeants

at Armes. } at Armes.

Gentlemen Pensioners, } The Queene's Majestie in her cha- } Gentlemen Pensioners,

Esquiers, for the riot, } ber Highnes' traine borne } Esquiers, for the

stable footmen. } by the Marchiones of Winchester. } stable footmen.

The Pallfrey of Honour, led by the Maister of the Horse.

The chief Lady of Honour.

All other Ladies of Honour.

The Captaine of the Guard.

Yeomen of the Guard.

Of the Roomes and Lodgings in the two Courts at Theobalds, 27 May, 1583.

Roomes and Lodgings in the first Court, beinge the Base Court.

The South side beneath.

The brewhouse.

The backhouse.

The laundrie.

A chamber for joynees from the steepe-foot Eastward.

A chamber next to that Westward from the steepe-foot Westward, Chamber.

Another chamber next thereto Westward.

The same syde above at one steere-head.

One chamber over the backhouse } For the Officers of the sellor and pantrye.

One other chamber next to that } For the Queene's Cookes.

Westward.

The same syde above at an other steere-head on the left-hand.

One chamber at the East end of } For Mr. Howard and Mr. Edward Norrice.

One other next to it Westward. } For the Clerk of the Kitchine.

One other next to the steere-head. } For the Squires of the Bodie.

And on the right-hand of the same steere-head.

One at the Steere-head. } For the Gentlemen Ushers.

One other with a chimney. } For my Lady of Lincolne.¹⁵⁷

The North syde beneath.

A longe roofe that served for the } For a common hall and a buttrye.

Joyners.

A little roome that serveth the } For the Groome Porter.

Paynter.

Another lardie longe roome that } One part for the wardrobe, another part for pallets for the Lords

serveth for a stoarehouse. } servants that lack lodgings.

The same syde above.

Four servanis chambers to be } For Mr. Farnham, Mr. Novell, distributed by the Usher. } Mr. Bowes, Mr. Bronkard, Mr. Goringe, &c.

Roomes and Lodgings in the Inner Court.

Beneath Southward.

At the entry of the gate.

In the corner, a chamber with a } The Porter's lodge.

bayc windowe towards the Base } . . .

Court, with an inner roome } The robes.

openinge towards the greate } . . .

garden.

Two roomes westward.

One chamber at the East end of } The presence chamber.

the chappell.

The chappell under the } . . .

withdrawinge-chamber.

The greate parlor under the } The Queen's great chamber.

privie chamber, with a wyne } . . .

cellor under it.

On the West syde.

The hall.

The pantrye.

The buttrye, with a buttrye for } . . .

bears under the hall.

A Winter parlor over the } . . .

surveying place, openinge Easte and West.

Under the ground Northward.

The kitchin, with bylinge-house } . . .

scullery, pastry, and larders.

Another kitchin and larder under } . . .

the ground.

The Steward's chamber at the } . . .

East end of the court.

The second stage in the inner } . . .

Over the gate, a gallery painted } . . .

with the Armes of the Noblemen } . . .

and Gentlemen of England in } . . .

Trees.

Southward.

A chamber, named the Lord } . . .

Admirall's chamber, with an inner } . . .

chamber openinge towards the } . . .

garden.

Another chamber, named the } . . .

Earle of Warwick's chamber, with } . . .

a pallett-chamber.

Another chamber, named the Lord } . . .

Kerpe's chamber, under the } . . .

Queen's bed-chamber.

Another roome, beinge the closet } . . .

over the chapel, and under the } . . .

withdrawinge-chamber.

Upon the same stage, returninge to } . . .

there arte,

One chamber, with a pallett- } . . .

chamber, named the . . . having } . . .

a steare downward towards the } . . .

East into a garden.

One chamber, with a pallett- } . . .

chamber, named the . . . having } . . .

a steare downward towards the East into } . . .

a garden.

One chamber in a lower next } . . .

under the Erle of Leicester's } . . .

chamber, with two pallett- } . . .

chambers.

And one other chamber, called } . . .

the Still House chamber.

The South syde, a third stage.

A Gallery for the Queen's Majestie.

At the South end in a tower one } . . .

chamber, with two } . . .

pallett-chambers.

At the East syde of the same } . . .

gallery, towards the Base Court, } . . .

in a garret two roomes.

At the North-west end of the } . . .

Two chambers, whereof one with } . . .

a chimney.

A bed-chamber in a turret.

An inner dynynge-chamber } . . .

over the closett.

A dynynge-chamber.

A fourth stage.

A chamber in the uppermost } . . .

part of the South-east turret.

A chamber in the turret, over } . . .

the Queen's bedchamber.

A chamber, with a pallett- } . . .

chamber over the privie chamber,

A gallery over the hall, with a } . . .

closett¹⁵⁹ warded with stone for } . . .

evidences.¹⁵⁹

The North syde of the said Inner Court.

In the second stage, beginninge at the North end of the painted } . . .

gallery.

A chamber over the Seward's } . . .

chamber, with an inner chamber } . . .

towards the privie garden, both } . . .

with chymnyes, and one pallett- } . . .

chamber.

A second chamber Westward, } . . .

with a pallett-chamber over the } . . .

privie kitchen.

A third chamber Westward, } . . .

named the Erle of Rutland's } . . .

chamber, with a pallett-chamber.

A fourth chamber, named the } . . .

Ladie Yea's chamber, with a } . . .

pallett-chamber and a labbye.

For the third stage.

A gallerie, named the suitors } . . .

gallerie, with a roome like a } . . .

squaire.

A chamber at the West end of the } . . .

gallery.

A chamber at the West end } . . .

thereof, with a pallett-chamber.

At the West end, and terminge } . . .

Southward towards the hall, two } . . .

lodgings.

For the fourth stage.

A single chamber in the turret, } . . .

over the East end of the suitor's } . . .

gallery.

Another single chamber in the } . . .

tower, at the West end of the } . . .

gallery.

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