

The Uses of Pageantry: Pageantry as Production Style in
Revivals of Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy on the
English Stage in the Twentieth Century

by

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SUMMARY

An Introductory chapter justifies the study of staged pageantry in terms of related research and acknowledges the aptness of the pageantic mode for the second tetralogy before glancing at pageantry within the contemporary social context.

A brief survey of pageantry in Shakespearean productions from the Restoration to 1900 provides an historical context for the thesis which shows that 'pictorial' pageantry, though vilified and much reduced in scale compared with Victorian literalism, proved resilient even in the face of the New Stagecraft and cinematic realism.

From the 1950s the intellectualisation of Shakespeare production which accompanied the emergence of the university-educated 'director', however, harnessed spectacle in the service of an interpretative vision that demanded of audiences a capacity for analogical thinking akin to the 'cognitive eye' of Shakespeare's own audiences.

In an era of social flux and intellectual anxiety pageantry has provided a stable vocabulary for interrogating monarchical and political ideologies together with the vocabulary for the examination of the ritual basis of the human condition. Subsequently practitioners have utilised the meta-theatrical concept of pageantry and in a society increasingly defined through the visual emblem have sought to reach beyond 'image' towards understanding, thereby reaffirming the need to take theatrical pageantry seriously.

For my parents

Lawrence ('Arthur') Roland

and

Julia ('Julie') Elizabeth

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The Uses of Pageantry: Pageantry as production style in revivals of Shakespeare's second tetralogy on the English stage in the twentieth century.

By way of introduction

(i) Reasoning the need

It is full of pageantry, of shining armour and of banners; and today pageantry is something to which we are instinctively unsympathetic.

Thus Harold Hobson described Terry Hands's production of *Henry V* in 1975. In short, he felt it was a play to which "the temper of the time is altogether hostile".¹

Such hostility has frequently to be understood as an extreme response to past excesses, a feverish reaction to post-Tree syndrome. Thus Robert Brustein had expressed dismay that John Barton's revival of *Richard II* in 1973 should proceed "against a background of extravagant ceremony that sometimes threatens to obscure it":² two years later he was still haunted by Barton's "sumptuous, physical production" which, he asserted, marked a retreat towards a style "left over from a previous age".³

Nevertheless, such hostility is itself misleading in a century whose prevailing tone has generally been one of indifference. Peter Hall, it seems, in his quatercentenary production of *Henry V* for the Royal Shakespeare Company chose a "deliberately downbeat" production which avoided the "superfluous pageantry" often associated with the play⁴ and this sense of the

'superfluous' nature of this aspect of staging has underpinned much of the critical comment on the subject. When referred to at all it has either been glanced at in terms of its 'colourful pageantry' or 'real Plantagenet splendour' or scornfully dismissed out of hand. Philip Hope-Wallace, for example, reviewing Michael Benthall's revival of *Richard II* at the Old Vic in 1955, observed: "The general coming and going with banners aswirl call for no special comment".⁵

Herbert Farjeon at least offered an explanation when he complained of "a Grand Parade of Old Vic students" in preliminary business which opened Henry Cass's revival of *Richard II* in 1934: "This tendency should be curbed at once. It inevitably leads to cuts".⁶ Farjeon's conclusion is a fair one, given the history of staged pageantry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and yet over fifty years later Peter Holland, writing of the Royal Shakespeare Company's revival of *Troilus and Cressida* in 1990 still found it worthwhile to express relief that the Prologue was not preceded by "the sort of grand procession with which so many directors feel obliged to begin a play...".⁷

Holland's remark is an undeniable testimony to the tenacity of the pageantic mode on the stage in view of so sustained a critical assault during the century. Yet no substantial study has hitherto been undertaken of the part played by pageantry in recent production history.

This is the more surprising given the serious attention already paid to other aspects of the subject.

Scholars of the canon have written extensively of the textual importance of pageantry and have examined its theatrical dimension within the prevailing cultural, social and political milieu.⁸ⁿ The broader historical context of medieval and Renaissance pageantry has been even more extensively explored⁹ⁿ while anthropologists as well as social and political historians have found the subject revealing in what David Cannadine has called "the study of power".¹⁰ Each discipline has its own preoccupations and methods, of course, yet collectively they play their part in "raising our ceremonial consciousness":¹¹ⁿ

...no approach which defines power narrowly and ignores spectacle and pageantry can possibly claim to be comprehensive. Politics and ceremonial are not separate subjects, the one serious, the other superficial. Ritual is not the mask of force, but is itself a type of power.¹²

The political dimension of Shakespeare's history plays is obvious as is their "familiar insistence on human government as an endless contest for power".¹³ The 'dramaturgy of power', therefore, demonstrates the need to "take pageantry seriously"¹⁴ on the stage no less than in the study and it is against this background that the present research is undertaken.

(ii) The Scope of the Subject

Before turning to consider the scope of the term 'pageantry' itself something needs to be said concerning the choice of the second tetralogy as the textual basis for this study. By and large, in fact, it will be concerned with just

two of the plays, *Richard II* and *Henry V*, both of which have an established pageantic performance tradition though each has justified such an approach in its own distinct way.

Gordon Crosse observed that "to a play like *Richard II* the manner in which it is staged is of more than usual importance"¹⁵ and at first sight the most appropriate manner would appear to be that of ostentatious display; the very texture of the play seems to demand it. Phyllis Rackin has spoken of Richard as embodying a "static, picturesque, ceremonial world";¹⁶ "*Richard II* is nothing if not a ceremonial play", says Jeremy Brien in a review of Barry Kyle's Stratford production in 1986;¹⁷ Sir John Gielgud identifies 'ceremony' and the strong ritualistic character of many episodes in the drama as being necessary ingredients for the success of the early scenes of the play;¹⁸ while Arthur Colby Sprague observes that "today *Richard II* has many admirers" and concedes that "for some of them its appeal is that of ritual and romance: the trial of arms in the first act and the ceremonial deposition of a king in the fourth; the spreading banners and the flung-down gages...".¹⁹

In *Richard II* 'ceremony' may be seen as focusing upon the performance or implicit existence of the solemn ritual of coronation which bestows symbolic significance upon both the human subject and the artifacts of ceremony which thereafter possess a permanent residual significance which elevates both to representative importance. Andrew Gurr believes that the 'state' or royal throne, for

instance, may well have stood, raised, centre stage throughout the play "as the focal point to which all stage action relates". He points out:

The symbolic, iconic potency of this source of authority was enormous for Elizabethans.... The throne or seat of justice was the visible emblem of power.... It is not merely a seat of justice but a symbol of the higher elevation, nearer heaven, that was believed...to be natural to a king.²⁰

In this play even when display is at its most ostentatious and, ostensibly, superficial - as, for instance, during Charles Kean's notorious interpolated 'Historical Episode' illustrating York's speech describing Bolingbroke's triumphal entry into London - it inevitably suggests dramatic ironies, prompting reflections upon 'the divinity doth hedge a king' and upon the ceremony which makes him one.

The term 'pageantry', of course, also carries the suggestion of gorgeous processions, of show without substance. This definition often seems more appropriate when discussing *Henry V* since instances of display on stage have for much of the play's history rarely carried any significance beyond an intention visually to impress with a crudely emotional appeal devoid of intellectual justification, treating the play as "an excuse for parades around the stage, and spectacle".²¹

This is undoubtedly less true of productions staged in more recent times, and closer study of the stage history of the play over the last thirty years, say, reveals a less strident, more thoughtful approach corresponding to

what has been described as a certain "moral queasiness"²² towards *Henry V* among today's audiences. Nevertheless, the person of Henry has long occupied a unique place in the public imagination, particularly at moments of heightened national consciousness and the play which bears his name has provided a focal point at times of commemoration or celebration: an inspiration in times of war; a stimulant in periods of self-doubt. When words such as 'commemorate', 'tradition', 'heritage' and 'tribute' abound in the press; at such times of national consciousness the second *Henriad* in general - and *Henry V* in particular - has often been required to mark the occasion and express the mood of the nation.

At the time of the coronation in 1937, for instance, the *News Chronicle* remarked that "*Henry V* is evidently regarded as a sort of theatrical National Anthem, suitable for Coronation days"²³ while the *Evening Standard* described it as "the inevitable choice for occasions of this kind".²⁴ⁿ

As a national epic the plays have also represented a rallying cry in more sombre times, carrying "a special message of courage to the English in times of gathering darkness, fear and falling empires".²⁵ In 1900, for example, the Boer War gave rise to productions of *Henry V* by Frank Benson and then by Lewis Waller. *The Times* responded with enthusiasm: "The causes underlying the present popularity of this trumpet-call to patriotism are sufficiently obvious.... The appeal of the play to our martial ardour and to our

racial pride is irresistible".²⁶ When Benson again revived the play during the first winter of World War I *The Times* again applauded it as a splendid expression of 'the English spirit'. It thrilled that Benson "felt himself to be not merely playing the stage-part, but delivering a solemn message" and urged that "everyone should see it, not merely for its own artistic sake, but as a masterpiece of the literature of war".²⁷

Those two instances of 'merely' sum up in many respects the dilemma facing anyone attempting an analytical assessment of *Henry V* in performance. With almost any other play in the canon it would be possible to judge its production on 'artistic' grounds alone. But *Henry V* contains an extra dimension which is seen as both responding to and contributing towards the tenor of the times. J.T.Grein, reviewing Lewis Waller's production of the play at the Lyceum Theatre in 1905, was frankly exhilarated. *Henry V*, he said. "affects the hearer as a regiment of soldiers does when it marches through the streets with jubilating brass". particularly at a time when "never was patriotism more manifest".²⁸ In 1900 the *Illustrated London News* regarded it as "the happiest of ideas" that "at this hour of national excitement and patriotic fervour" Benson should "inaugurate his Lyceum season with a revival of that great epic of English Chauvinism".²⁹

David Nancarrow observes that "considering the earlier history of the production of *Henry V* in relationship to British conflicts it is somewhat surprising that there

were only two major revivals during World War II".³⁰ Of course. Olivier's film in 1945 more than compensated for the theatrical dearth and the period was marked by a number of government-sponsored theatrical pageants remarkable for the adulatory tone adopted towards the Soviet Union as Britain's ally.³¹ⁿ

Henry V has, in fact, generally been a reliable thermometer to gauge the severity of the nation's war fever. In 1938 Lewis Casson's production proved by his own admission "'a financial disaster'"³² partly because "the rather hysterical relief after Chamberlain's return from Munich with his sad little scrap of paper made any sort of war-play or sabre-rattling a complete anathema".³³ After all, "what did a nation cheering Chamberlain's useless scrap of Munich stationery want of a King who urged them to stiffen their sinews and summon up their blood?".³⁴

It is interesting that even in 1951, Festival of Britain year, Byam Shaw was sufficiently self-conscious of contemporary patriotism to justify its presence in his production by an appeal to Shakespeare's own time: in the programme of the Royal Court Theatre, Liverpool, he wrote, "'at the time when Shakespeare wrote it, a tremendous wave of national feeling was sweeping over the country. In order to re-interpret the intention of the author, it seemed essential to capture that spirit'".³⁵

If this has the ring almost of an apology, however, at Stratford Anthony Quayle's presentation of the second tetralogy, described as "Stratford's contribution to

the Festival of Britain" was less inhibited.³⁶ The Festival had been "planned by the Attlee government as a demonstration of Britain's post-war recovery" and at Stratford the cycle was adapted so that "the shadow of the Wars of the Roses" was not allowed to fall over "a model to which post-war Britons might aspire - an England united, after victory over a continental foe, under the benevolent rule of Henry V".³⁷ Thus, presented in a tone of "sentimental patriotism", the cycle was a suitable celebration of British achievement.³⁸

Of course, the play's detractors will say that the ready acceptance of the desirability of spectacle in this work arises largely from the fact that it has very little else to offer; that it is merely, as John Masefield described it, "'a chronicle or procession...eked out with soldiers' squabbles".³⁹ *The Athenaeum*, expressing impatience with certain aspects of Bridges-Adams's production at the Strand Theatre in 1920 said, rather wearily, "we are inclined to think that he [Shakespeare] simply meant to write a superb patriotic pageant for commercial purposes".⁴⁰ *The Times* expressed the opinion that *Henry V* is "so much a pageant of general action and so little a drama of individual thought that it must flow strongly or stagnate"⁴¹ while the *News Chronicle*, also reviewing Harcourt Williams's production at the Old Vic, describes the play as "nothing but a pageant with bursts of poetry and streaks of humour".⁴² In 1934 the *Birmingham Evening Despatch* dismissed it as "a faked chronicle - not a play - and as such commands

interest only as a spectacle",⁴³ and while the *Birmingham Gazette* was prepared to acknowledge its universal significance "for anyone who loves any plot of ground" it was equally dismissive of its dramatic qualities: "*Henry V* is not a play. A pageant - yes; a procession - of course; but a play, never".⁴⁴

It is an attitude summed up neatly by the *Yorkshire Post* reviewing Stanley Bell's production that had transferred from the Hippodrome Theatre, Manchester, to the Alhambra, London, in January 1934: "Intellectually *Henry V* is one of the barest things which Shakespeare wrote, and leaves much empty space for trumpets, tapestries, fluttering pennants, armour and gorgeous robes"⁴⁵ and 'Eric', writing for *Punch* of the same production's "flourish of trumpets and great spread of pageantry" was of the opinion that "if this play ought ever to be seen on the stage, which I personally doubt, there seems something to be said for such a mode of presentation".⁴⁶

At first sight the two parts of *Henry IV* may appear to contain little that is overtly ceremonial - apart from the coronation procession of Henry V at the end of *Part Two* - and yet one should not overlook the part played by both the context and the incidence of stage combat. Vernon's tribute to Hal and to his army in in *Part One* [IV.1.97-110]⁴⁷ is an emblem of a military ideal that owes much to a type of visual imagery by which the neo-medievalism implicit in the contemporary cult of the chivalric legend of King Arthur was made manifest.

Indeed. *Part One*. "though it contains no ceremony of knighthood, presents the making of a knight" in which Hal, before becoming king, must first demonstrate the chivalric virtues.⁴⁸

The Battle of Shrewsbury is the only example of on-stage fighting in the second tetralogy but it is worth remembering that "all swordfighting in Shakespeare's plays would have been spectacular in presentation";⁴⁹

The combat sequences...when presented on the stage by actors who wore armour covered by colourful gowns bearing heraldic insignia, and who were skilled at fencing, thereby combining spectacular and realistic action with dramatic dialogue...would do much to create the atmosphere of England's heroic past reborn in a manner that the Accession Day Tilts...and the royal entertainments, which were not unified dramatic works, could not approach.⁵⁰

Such resonances will inevitably be less potent for a modern audience and yet when the *Henriad* has been performed as a cycle of plays projecting a coherent historical vision the two parts of *Henry IV* may contribute to an overall ceremonial ethos in ways more significant and revealing than when presented in isolation.

(iii) Towards a definition

In 1856 Charles Kean expressed the hope that the "united accessories of painting, music, and architecture, in conjunction with the rapid movement and multiplied life which belong to the stage alone" would be regarded as "less an exhibition of pageantry appealing to the eye, than an illustration of history addressed to the understanding".⁵¹ Of course, his use of the term 'pageantry' - in which he

includes the full panoply of scenic design as well as the more obviously 'legitimate' areas of musical setting and staging - is more embracing than will be usual here, and audiences no longer expect their Shakespeare to deliver illustrated history, but his distinction between 'understanding' and the merely visually diverting is a useful one and will be central in establishing the terms of reference which will define our subject.

There are obvious differences between the medieval 'pageant' and the general use of the term 'pageantry'. Nevertheless their common heritage will allow a measure of comparison. Robert Withington has stated the difficulties in any attempt at precise definition of the term 'pageant'. He dismisses as "not worth while"⁵² any consideration of the etymologies of the word and points out that the term has been "loosely used in late years" and that "since it has not, for a long time, been used exactly, it cannot be exactly defined".⁵³ Its derivative, 'pageantry', David Bergeron confesses, is a "multifaceted, sometimes elusive idea that has several different meanings".⁵⁴

Of the four elements which Withington identifies as the constituent parts of the pageant he regards "the allegory or symbolism or history which the living characters bring" as much the most important and these he terms the 'soul' because it is this which appeals to the intellect of the spectator.⁵⁵

Of course, Shakespeare was able to take the 'emblematic eye' which perceived and interpreted pageantic

symbolism very largely for granted in his own audience:

Certainly everyone had some knowledge of the language of picture, and...society depended on nonverbal signs more exclusively there and then, than here and now.... In that culture, elaborate and formal pageantry was commonplace. Clothing, embroidery, colors, jewels, imprese and badges all had their meanings, several, codified and frequently obscure....⁵⁶

In an intensely hierarchical society such as Shakespeare's "ceremony was omnipresent...because it gave overt form to the social roles through which members of that society found their place and identity"⁵⁷ and since the approved political order at the time the plays were written was not only hierarchical but also monarchical, accordingly,

the visual presentation of the norm...employs (a) the vertical and centrifugal relationships of persons on stage and (b) the traditional emblems of monarchical power, such as the crown or garland, the sceptre, the purse, the mace, the staff of office, and the "state" or throne itself.⁵⁸

Any attempt to examine the use of pageantry in a group of Shakespeare's English history plays, therefore, will inevitably focus largely upon the ceremonial attendant upon the figure of the king. Barbara Palmer, using the term in its Elizabethan sense, asserts that "pageantry is the symbol of kingship",⁵⁹ a symbol which she perceives essentially in terms of conscious public display; spectacle 'calculated' and with a 'purpose': "to entertain, to impress, to appease, to reassure, to reaffirm a belief or commitment, sacred or secular".⁶⁰ In Shakespeare's day popular ceremonies celebrating a sovereign or foreign ambassador or Lord Mayor provided the chief spectacle in the lives of the people who filled the public playhouses and for

these theatregoers "one of the chief attractions...was clearly its pageantry...: its ability to mime the spectacle of courts and aristocratic enterprises...".⁶¹

The representation of ceremonial on stage - at least in this country - has no doubt lost much of its political potency when compared with a time when "to mime the monarch was a potentially revolutionary act".⁶² Nevertheless, 'pageantry' is something which we still associate with "special State or Civic functions, with processions and decorated streets, with flags and uniforms, with heraldic blazon and livery, with a sense of occasion...".⁶³ The symbolic properties of pageantry, too, both portable and static, "the parade of crowns and coronets, of gold keys, sticks, white wands and black rods; of ermine and lawn, maces and wigs"⁶⁴ remain powerful signifiers. Such artifacts, whether carried in procession or not, possess a permanent residual significance both actual and potential: they remain even now emblems, tokens, accoutrements to the "secular magic of monarchy"⁶⁵ as well as being symbols of the divine sanction for his rule. As such, they will contribute much to the pageantic context which is the subject of this study.

Also less potent today but none the less relevant for our purposes will be the incidence of gestural ceremony. David Bevington has observed:

The ceremonious gestures through which social roles are affirmed take on an extraordinary centrality in Shakespeare's presentational language of the theater. Kneeling, embracing, clasping of hands, bowing, removing the hat, assuming a proper place at table, deferring to

others in going through a doorway - all are part of a rich vocabulary expressing contractual obligation, obedience, homage, submission, fealty, petition, hospitality, parental authority, royal prerogative.⁶⁶

Andrew Gurr laments that we cannot 'repossess' the force of iconic rituals that dominated the staging of Shakespeare's history plays:

The iconography of hats...is as far gone as the collective awe for crowns and thrones.... That iconic potency is not our only loss. Even if there were modern directors who read their subtexts well enough to register when to supply thrones and crown and willing to instruct their actors in the rituals of respect for kings, we should not come much closer to the mental constructs or 'mindsets'...for which Shakespeare prepared his texts that require the minds of men in company to open. Audiences would have to acquire such mindsets collectively too, and audiences are less biddable than actors or even directors.⁶⁷

Producers and directors of Shakespeare's plays in the present century have been faced with something of a dilemma. Shakespeare and his contemporaries could represent the 'scene of state', "a visualization of existing order" which begins and ends almost every English history play,⁶⁸ in token form only since it was a scene "so familiar and so readily understood that a mere token representation will convey the entire meaning",⁶⁹ particularly since "all the physical symbols of theatrical kingship were invested with a great deal of reverence which was enhanced because the same visual symbols represented God the Father...".⁷⁰ Clearly any attempt by a producer to 'enhance' this token display in order to compensate for the waning of such understanding and reverence in modern times would inevitably result in charges of nineteenth century revisionism.

Nevertheless, whilst conceding the impossibility of re-creating in a modern audience the mental construct for which Shakespeare was writing it will nevertheless be the contention of this thesis that in the second half of the twentieth century directors have frequently exploited residual aspects of the emblematic tradition remaining in the collective consciousness as a basis for both reawakening and, indeed, reinventing the 'emblematic eye' of the audience in a context that has usually been production-specific but which has also depended upon multi-production cross-referencing for full understanding. However unevenly and imperfectly, therefore, the modern audience is expected to bring into the theatre a familiarity with the language of ceremony similar in kind - if not of degree - to that which obtained in Shakespeare's day.

(iv) The contemporary context

The experience of pageantry of the people who make up those audiences in the second half of the twentieth century is at once more extensive and less intense than in Shakespeare's time. The monarch and members of the extended royal family are not infrequent visitors to the nation's towns and cities but such visits - an official car and an entourage of bodyguards - can hardly be equated with the royal progresses of old.

The century has witnessed numerous events calling for high ceremonial⁷¹ⁿ and in the second half of the century these, as well as the state opening of parliament

(since 1958) have all been very much "essays in television ritual".⁷² The most remarkable instance of media pageantry, of course, was the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales in September, 1997, "the biggest single televised event" which had an audience of three quarters of the country's adult population.⁷³ⁿ

For the coronation of George V in 1911 two quite distinct processions were held on consecutive days, the second a State procession through the city with the King and Queen in an open carriage expressly so that "while on the previous day they had seemed but remote historic figures, they were now England's own King and Queen among their people".⁷⁴ From 1953 such contrivances could be superceded by the universalising presence of television.⁷⁵ Never before had it been possible for the population as a whole to see the ceremonial as it happened, thereby obtaining an unprecedented sense of active participation. Thus, despite initial misgivings it proved so successful that "all subsequent royal ceremonial occasions have been primarily television spectacles".⁷⁶ Thus, at the Prince of Wales's investiture at Caernarfon the canopy above the dais was deliberately made transparent so that the television cameras might see through it.

Significantly, however, in 1995, while 4.5 million viewers watched the Cenotaph Ceremony, 2.6 million the Lord Mayor's Show and 2.5 million Trooping the Colour, the Jonathan Dimbleby interview with Prince Charles attracted 13.4 million viewers and the *Panorama* interview

with Princess Diana 22.8 million.⁷⁷ⁿ Such statistics testify to the extensive public interest in the private lives of the royals to which a bewildering variety of books, magazine and newspaper articles - both 'official' and otherwise - readily respond. This "expanding mass illusion of intimacy"⁷⁸ may be seen as a particularly prurient aspect of the Cult of Personality which reduces the absolute to the particular and so inevitably undermines the principle of 'seldom but sumptuous' once deemed essential to preserve the awe of majesty. It is instructive that although during preparations for the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, in September 1997 ceremonial form became a matter of intense national public dispute,⁷⁹ⁿ the debate was generated by an essentially media-led identification with the sentimental idea of 'The People's Princess'.

Yet even in an age when "we don't have speeches from the throne. we have fireside chats"⁸⁰ there remains a curious ambivalence. Kings may no longer rule by divine right but even today *The Times*, reporting the present Queen's state visit to Poland in 1996 and expressing a consciousness of mutual loyalties dating back to the Second World War remarked: "the symbolism of every gesture will therefore be of vital importance".⁸¹ An elaborate protocol likewise surrounds the person of the monarch in spite of the gradual erosion of the 'deference culture': a British subject who extends a hand to a monarch in greeting before the monarch's is proffered is still in breach of decorum; one who omits to bow or curtsy when addressed by the

monarch is generally deemed guilty of discourtesy, notwithstanding recent 'official' relaxation of the formality; while a Commonwealth head of state who places a solicitous arm around the person of the sovereign provokes an international incident.⁸²ⁿ After all, in the popular imagination "monarchs are still represented as clad in regal robes, sitting on a throne, and with a crown on their head".⁸³

Ian Gilmour has noted: "Modern societies still need myth and ritual. A monarch and his family supply it"⁸⁴ while David Cannadine affirms: "If, as seems possible, the next coronation takes place without a House of Lords, a Commonwealth or an Established Church, the role of ceremonial in creating the comforting picture of stability, tradition and continuity will only be further enhanced. The dynamic dialogue between ritual and society, between text and context, will continue".⁸⁵

Nevertheless, an era in which "the yellow M of the McDonald's hamburger chain is the most widely recognised symbol in the world, including the cross".⁸⁶ creating a reverential icon out of a stage monarch presents a formidable challenge to any director of Shakespeare. Occasions displaying the pageantry of state with its tendency to foster such reassuring feelings of 'stability, tradition and continuity' are outnumbered in popular experience by instances of distinctly non-establishment 'pageantry': industrial disputes, displays of trade union solidarity, civil rights marches, anti-poll tax

demonstrations, CND marches, the Belfast 'marching season' and the mournful ritual of funeral processions resulting from the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland have frequently challenged such assumptions and undermined the pageantic ideal which had become in Shakespeare's day primarily "an inducement to political order".⁸⁷ Such occasions, however, have been distinguished by their own banners, placards, insignia and ceremonial emblems and these, together with their occasionally violent conclusions, have inevitably entered the visual vocabulary of the nation. As such, in an age notoriously sceptical of the embodiments of social and political authority they have provided director and audience alike with an additional reservoir of shared iconic referants with which to interrogate and challenge the conventional pageantic mode.

For Charles Kean, as we have seen, 'pageantry' and 'understanding' were mutually exclusive terms and so they remained for the directors no less than the reviewers of Shakespeare for much of the present century. The use of pageantry for its appeal to the eye was never entirely eliminated, of course, and there have been a number of productions which have attempted with undisguised nostalgia to re-create the splendours of the past. 'Thoughtful' pageantry in the first half of the century was generally employed to reflect character but with the evolution of so-called 'Directors' Theatre' and a more interpretative approach to production ceremony has again acquired an intellectual dimension. Ceremonial elements have thus been

harnessed in the service of an idea as a visible conceptual shorthand which the production itself may well have nurtured and enhanced but which has also utilised and exploited a vocabulary of non-verbal images still understood as commonplaces of the audience's pageantic heritage.

Our concern with stage pageantry in the twentieth century will naturally revolve upon Shakespeare's plays, and yet it is a strange testimony to the 'whirligig of time' that the theatrical journey of processional pageantry begins with the solemnity of the Mass and concludes its strange eventful history in the more tawdry context of the pantomime, the traditional march-down, two by two down the central staircase at the end of the pantomime being "the last vestige of this once familiar display".⁸⁸

In one respect, however, theatre pageantry's own royal progress appears to have travelled in a neatly prescribed circle. Virtually all pantomimes, to this day, are staged on the 'traditional' proscenium stage and - following the processional walk-down - the show concludes with the dropping of the equally traditional curtain. It is a strange irony, therefore, that the return to the open stage and consequent banishment of the curtain for most Shakespearean production in the second half of the century has led to something of a revival of the reviled procession.

Eric Salmon, citing the production of *Antony and Cleopatra* at Stratford in 1972, complained that attempts to escape the picture-frame of the proscenium arch and to

restore the open platform favoured in the Jacobean theatre have been "less than happy" and cited, by way of example, the final scene of the production in which the lights having slowly dimmed on the dead Queen - majestically dressed in "a great, golden-metallic robe and seated on her throne well forward on the open stage" - she and her equally dead attendants were "seen to scramble for the wings" in the dim gloom that followed. Ideally, the long, slow fade on a tableau needs to be followed, he says, by "the slow whisper of a descending curtain". On an open stage his solution was a simple one: "Cleopatra must be picked up, throne and all, and borne off the stage in solemn procession...".⁸⁹

Stage pageantry has never entirely relinquished its hold upon the public imagination but as a recommendation for the 'modern stage' Salmon's words point towards its emergence from the critical wilderness in the latter part of the century in ways that have offered intellectual no less than practical solutions to the problems inherent in reviving Shakespeare's plays for a modern audience.

NOTES

¹ Harold Hobson, 'Hooray for Henry', *Sunday Times*, 13 April, 1975.

² Robert Brustein, 'A surfeit of regal splendour', *Observer*, 15 April, 1973.

³ Robert Brustein, *The Culture Watch: Essays on Theatre and Society 1969-1974* (New York: Knopf, 1975), pp. 131-32.

⁴ Sally Beauman, *The Royal Shakespeare Company: A History of Ten Decades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 326.

⁵ Philip Hope-Wallace, 'TWO PRODUCTIONS OF "RICHARD II"', *Guardian*, 21 January, 1955.

⁶ Herbert Farjeon, *The Shakespearean Scene: Dramatic Criticisms* (London: Hutchinson, [1949]), p. 88.

⁷ Peter Holland, 'Shakespeare Performances in England, 1989-90', *Shakespeare Survey*, 44 (1991), 157-90 (p. 172).

^{8a} See David M Bergeron, ed., *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theater* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985); Minoru Fujita, *Pageantry and Spectacle in Shakespeare*, Renaissance Monographs 8: Renaissance Institute, 1982); Barbara Hodgdon, *The End Crowns All: Closure and Contradiction in Shakespeare's History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (London: Methuen, 1986); Alice S. Venezky, *Pageantry on the Shakespearean Stage* (New York: Twayne, 1951; repr. AMS, 1972); Linda Woodbridge and Edward Berry, eds, *True Rites and Maimed Rites: Ritual and Anti-Ritual in Shakespeare and His Age* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

^{9a} See Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: 1969); David M. Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry, 1558-1642*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals 1450-1650* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Boydell, 1984); Robert Withington, *English Pageantry: An Historical Outline*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918-20).

¹⁰ David Cannadine, 'Introduction: divine rites of kings' *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, ed. by David Cannadine and Simon Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 1-19 (p. 2).

^{11a} Ibid, p.12. Cannadine describes the literature on the subject as 'vast' but he names a number of works as offering "an incisive way in" (p. 3).

¹² Ibid., p. 19.

¹³ John D. Cox, *Shakespeare and the Dramaturgy of Power* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 93.

¹⁴ Cannadine, 'Rituals of Royalty', p. 5.

¹⁵ Gordon Crosse, *Theatrical Diaries*, 21 vols (January 1890-July 1953), II, p. 124.

¹⁶ Phyllis Rackin, 'The Role of the Audience In Shakespeare's Richard II', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36 (1985), 262-81, (p. 262).

¹⁷ Jeremy Brien, 'Plight of a king without hope...', *Bristol Evening Post*, 11 September, 1986.

¹⁸ Sir John Gielgud's Introduction to *Richard II* (London: Folio Society, 1958).

¹⁹ Arthur Colby Sprague, *Shakespeare's Histories: Plays for the Stage*, London, 1964, p.29.

²⁰ Andrew Gurr, 'The "State" of Shakespeare's Audiences', *Shakespeare and the Sense of Performance: Essays in the Tradition of Performance Criticism in Honor of Bernard Beckerman*, ed. by Marvin and Ruth Thompson (Associated University Presses), 1989, pp. 167-68.

²¹ *The Royal Shakespeare Company's Production of 'HENRY V' for the Centenary Season at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre*, ed. by Sally Beauman (Oxford: Pergamon, 1976), p. 12.

²² Ralph Berry, *Changing Styles in Shakespeare* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 80.

²³ *News Chronicle*, 23 March, 1937.

^{24a} *Evening Standard*, 1 April 1937. The very fact that two major productions of the play (At the Old Vic, produced by Tyrone Guthrie; and at Stratford, produced by B. Iden Payne) opened almost simultaneously testifies to the play's perceived capacity to reflect national sentiments. Moreover,

Harold V. Neilson led a provincial tour "to mark Coronation year and to remind the younger generation of our splendid heritage": *Bournemouth Daily Echo*, 17 November, 1937.

²⁵ Trevor Nunn, 'The Centenary Season' in *The RSC's Production of 'Henry V'*, ed. by Beauman, p. 6.

²⁶ 'LYCEUM THEATRE', *The Times*, 24 December, 1900.

²⁷ Ibid..

²⁸ *Sunday Times*, 21 January, 1905.

²⁹ *Illustrated London News*, 24 February, 1900, p. 249.

³⁰ David Nancarrow, 'A Stage History of William Shakespeare's King Henry the Fifth' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham, 1975), p. 160. The productions were by Robert Atkins, Regent's Park, August 1941 and Milton Rosmer, Memorial Theatre, April, 1943.

³¹ See Steve Nicholson, 'Theatrical Pageants in the Second World War', *Theatre Research International*, 18 (1993), 186-96.

³² Quoted Brian Dobbs, *Drury Lane: Three Centuries of the Theatre Royal 1663-1971* (London: Cassell, 1972), p. 194.

³³ John Casson, *Lewis & Sybil: A Memoir* (London: Collins, 1972), p. 205.

³⁴ Dobbs, p. 194.

³⁵ Production programme for revival at Royal Court Theatre during the Liverpool Music Festival, July 1951; quoted Audrey Williamson, *Old Vic Drama 2 1947-1957* (London Rockliff, 1957), pp. 55-6.

³⁶ Stephen J. Phillips, 'History in Men's Lives: A Study of Two Cycles of Shakespeare's Histories Produced at Stratford in the Nineteen Sixties and Nineteen Seventies' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 1988), p. 7.

³⁷ Ibid., p.11.

³⁸ Ibid., p.20.

³⁹ Quoted, Beauman, 'The Inheritance of Henry V' in *The RSC's Production of 'Henry V'*, ed. by Beauman, p. 12.

⁴⁰ D.L.M., *Athenaeum*, 22 October 1920.

⁴¹ *The Times*, 1 December, 1931.

⁴² A.E. Baughan, *News Chronicle*, 1 December, 1931.

⁴³ S.C., *Birmingham Evening Despatch*, 21 April, 1934.

⁴⁴ W.H.B., *Birmingham Gazette*, 21 April, 1934.

⁴⁵ *Yorkshire Post*, 29 January, 1934.

⁴⁶ 'Eric', *Punch*, 7 February, 1934, pp. 160-61.

⁴⁷ All textual references will be from *The New Penguin Shakespeare* ed. by T.J.B. Spencer and Stanley Wells (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

- ⁴⁸ Eugene M. Waith, *Ideas of Greatness: Heroic drama in England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 94.
- ⁴⁹ Charles Edelman, *Brawl Ridiculous: Swordfighting in Shakespeare's Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 112.
- ⁵⁰ Edelman, p. 62.
- ⁵¹ Kean's Acting edition: *Shakespeare's Play of 'The Winter's Tale'*, 1856, Preface, p. x.
- ⁵² Robert Withington, *English Pageantry: An Historical Outline*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918), I, p. xvi.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. xix.
- ⁵⁴ David M. Bergeron, 'Introduction' in *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theater*, ed. by David M. Bergeron (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), pp. 1-16 (p. 1).
- ⁵⁵ Withington, p. xvii. The other three are the 'body' (ie the wagons which may have dropped away to leave the pageantic figures); the 'technique' or procession; and the 'popular' quality which he terms the 'spirit' of pageantry.
- ⁵⁶ Martha Hester Fleischer, *The Iconography of the English History Play*, Salzburg Studies in English Literature: Elizabethan & Renaissance Studies, 10 (Salzburg: Institut fr Englische Sprache und Literatur Universitt Salzburg, 1974), p. 3.
- ⁵⁷ David Bevington, *Action is Eloquence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 135.
- ⁵⁸ Fleischer, *Iconography*, pp. 32-33.
- ⁵⁹ Barbara D. Palmer, '"Ciphers to This Great Accompt": Civic Pageantry in the Second Tetralogy' in *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theater*, ed. by David M. Bergeron (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985) pp. 114-29 (p. 127).
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- ⁶¹ Stephen Orgel, 'Making Greatness Familiar' in *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theatre*, ed. Bergeron, pp. 19-25 (p. 19).
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- ⁶³ Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages, 1300-1660*, 3 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959-72), I, pp. 51-2.
- ⁶⁴ David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition", c. 1820-1977' in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 101-64 (p. 101).
- ⁶⁵ Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual', p. 102.
- ⁶⁶ Bevington, *Action Is Eloquence*, p. 136.
- ⁶⁷ Gurr, 'The "State" of Shakespeare's Audiences', p. 174.
- ⁶⁸ Fleischer, *Iconography*, p. 51.
- ⁶⁹ Fleischer, *Iconography*, p. 52.

⁷⁰ Ibid..

⁷¹ Notably the coronations of Edward VII (June, 1902), George V (June, 1911), George VI (May 1937) and Elizabeth (June, 1953); state funerals which included that of Sir Winston Churchill as well as those of deceased monarchs; Silver Jubilees (George V in May 1935 and Elizabeth in June, 1977); the Investiture of the Prince of Wales (July, 1969); royal marriages (Princess Margaret, 1960; the Duke of Kent, 1961; Princess Alexandra, 1963; Princess Anne, 1973; Prince Charles, 1981).

⁷² Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual', p. 159.

⁷³ *The Times*, 8 September, 1997. The same edition, quoting figures released by the British Audience Research Bureau, records that 31.5 million people in Britain watched the funeral and that "millions more were listening on radios in cars and at work". These figures were compared with 28.4 million who watched the wedding of the Princess and Prince Charles in 1981 and 19 million viewers for Sir Winston Churchill's funeral in 1965.

⁷⁴ *Crowning the King: The History, Symbolism and Meaning of the Coronation Ceremony* (London: Syndicate, [1936]), p. 183.

⁷⁵ BBC audience research reveals that 88% of the adult population experienced the coronation either on TV or radio: quoted Philip Ziegler, *Crown and People*, (Newton Abbot: Readers Union, 1979) p. 114.

⁷⁶ Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual', p. 159.

⁷⁷ Information supplied by the BBC's Broadcasting Research Dept.; letter dated 30 April, 1996.

⁷⁸ Tom Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and its Monarchy* (London: Century, 1988), p. 44.

⁷⁹ The focus for debate, particularly in the tabloid press, was the 'popular' demand that a flag be flown at half-mast at Buckingham Palace while the Queen was still at Balmoral against the tradition that the Royal Standard alone is flown, and only when the monarch is in residence. *The Sun* carried the front page headline 'WHERE IS OUR QUEEN? WHERE IS HER FLAG?' and even provided two telephone numbers for readers to vote as 'Jury'; after all, "who gives a damn about the stuffy rules of protocol?": *Sun*, 4 September, 1997. Pressure was sufficiently sustained to force a concessionary Union flag to be flown.

⁸⁰ William Frost, 'Shakespeare's Rituals and the Opening of King Lear', *Hudson Review*, 10 (1957-58), 577-85 (p. 578).

⁸¹ Editorial, 'THE QUEEN IN POLAND: A welcome trip to a nervous nation', *The Times*, 26 March, 1996.

⁸² During a royal tour to Australia in February 1992 the Prime Minister, Bob Keating, caused controversy when he placed an arm around the Queen.

⁸³ Cannadine, 'Rituals of Royalty', p. 6.

⁸⁴ Ian Gilmour, *The Body Politic* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), p. 313.

⁸⁵ Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual', p. 161.

⁸⁶ Giles Coran, 'The icon in a bun', *The Times*, 26 March, 1996.

⁸⁷ W. Gordon Zeeveld, *The Temper of Shakespeare's Thought* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1974), p. 16.

⁸⁸ V.C. Clinton-Baddeley, *All Right On The Night* (London: Putnam, 1954), p. 117.

⁸⁹ Eric Salmon, 'Shakespeare on the Modern Stage', *Modern Drama*, 15 (1972-73), 305-19 (p. 313).

CHAPTER I

The decorated tradition

The origins of pageantry on the English stage have been extensively chronicled: its embryonic beginnings in the Christian ritual of the Mass;¹ⁿ the religious and secular ceremonies - most notably the Feast of Corpus Christi - which abounded in medieval towns;²ⁿ the dramatic no less than the spectacular representation on Elizabethan stages of ceremonial described by the chroniclers as well as spectacles within the living memory of Shakespeare's audiences are well understood and will not be rehearsed at length here.³ⁿ

Undoubtedly, when the sub-title 'All is True' was appended to Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII* it was intended to reassure the public of the authenticity of the play's elaborate processional element and although there is but scanty evidence of the staging of Shakespeare's plays in the years immediately following the Restoration this play is something of an exception largely by virtue of its pageantry. Pepys declared himself generally disappointed with Sir William Devenant's revival of *Henry VIII* (1663) but he nevertheless excepted "'the shows and processions'"⁴ and wrote of his being "'mightily pleased...with the history and shows of it'" when he saw the play again in December 1668.⁵

A foreign visitor, too, remarked upon the practice on the English stage of the King's entering "with something like the state that prevailed at Whitehall" and "the

employment of large numbers of supernumeraries"⁶ at a time when the general run of plays was characterised by stock scenery, stock costumes and shabby production and only special productions were mounted with considerable pomp. With these the visual appeal of ceremony and procession seems to have been largely superceded by every imaginable form of spectacle in the form of transformation scenes, elaborate machines and the operatic and masque-like ingredients of song and dance as in Shadwell's operatic adaptation, *The Tempest, or the Inchaned Island* (1673) with its wealth of allegorical and emblematic devices and mechanical toys that resembled the Caroline masque.

In other productions pageantry contained a political no less than a spectacular dimension. Nahum Tate's adaptation of *Richard II* (1681), although suppressed by a government authority nervous of the representation of the downfall of an English king in troubled political times, had striven, according to Tate himself, at least, to depict in every scene 'Respect to Majesty and the Dignity of Courts'⁷ while Edward Ravenscroft's adaptation of *Titus Andronicus*, performed at the Theatre Royal in or near 1678 (though not published until 1687) may have been put together, like other adaptations of the latter portion of the decade, to warn a people divided by political animosity, of the incalculable evils of civil strife. Certainly the impressive funeral ceremony [I.1] and the formal robing of Titus [I.3], both of which represented serious attempts at pageantry, may be seen as metaphors of political and social

order.⁸ⁿ

Undoubtedly, the early troubled years of George I's reign were marked by numerous mutilations of Shakespeare's plays from those who sought to exploit the histories for parallel conditions of faction, divided allegiance, conspiracy and rebellion, yet even at a time when processions constituted practically the principal theatrical splendour in shows, Cibber's production of *Henry VIII* at Drury Lane (26 October, 1727) had a tremendous impact in the period by virtue of the stage coronation of Anne Bullen which was devised in honour of the actual coronation of George II. No less than four of the five principal events mentioned on the title page of the 1734 acting edition were presented with processions⁹ but it was that of the coronation ceremony of Anne Bullen which caught the imagination of the public and was "'even added to every Play, as a Pantomime, &c. and exhibited, that one Season. 75 Times...'"¹⁰ Indeed, it inspired such loyalty in the public that an attempt to guy it with a mock coronation at the rival theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields was "'pelted off the Stage. in the utmost Contempt'"¹¹

Such productions were, of course, very special: stock productions on the legitimate stage were "always Cinderella to the wicked sisters, opera and spectacle of all kinds, including pantomime..."¹² and Shakespeare was always vulnerable to mutilation at the hands of the adapters and those who plundered him as the basis for farcical 'entertainments'.

He was partially rescued from such treatment by the possibly fictitious 'ladies of quality' who, in 1737, 'desired' Rich to produce several of his historical plays at Covent Garden in their original form. After years of adulterated Shakespeare the emphasis appears to have been very much on the idea of authenticity, a quality which seems to have been regarded as particularly important for *Richard II*, an announcement that it was to be performed at Covent Garden 'with Proper Decorations' being elaborated by Thomas Davies in his *Miscellanies* as in part constituting "the ancient ceremony which belonged to the combat...very accurately observed".¹³

Nevertheless, it was another adaptation, Cibber's version of *King John*, which ushered in "a long line of pomp and circumstance in the way of processions".¹⁴ Cibber re-wrote Shakespeare's *King John* as *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John*, performed at Covent Garden in 1745, in the belief that Shakespeare's play lacked "Fire" against "his insolent Holiness"¹⁵ and given the troubled state of the nation in 1745 some artistic 'justification' for the splendour of the ceremonial might be claimed on religio-political grounds as an image of "the intoxicated Tyranny of Rome".¹⁶

Since most of the money available to managers was spent on after-piece trickery and scenic wonders to attract the thoughtless there was little money left to 'decorate' the great writers of tragedy and comedy, so that the procession may well have represented what passed for

splendour in the 'legitimate' drama. Nevertheless, it is at this time that the representation of processional ceremonial on stage seems particularly to have excited critical comment based on a rivalry between 'judicious' and 'popular' taste as fierce as that enjoined between the two great patent houses. Francis Gentleman's response to the funeral procession which opened Act V of Garrick's revision of *Romeo and Juliet* (first produced at Drury Lane, 29 November, 1748) was that "'stage-pageantry cannot be very pleasant at any time to judicious taste'" and he was scornful that "'three-fourths of every audience are more capable of enjoying sound and shew, than solid sense and poetical imagination'".¹⁷

The *Universal Museum*, too, set out the critical credentials by which such show was to be judged: "But what end is all this pomp, shew, and farce to answer? If it be calculated to please the eye and ear only, and not designed to have a proper tragical effect on the mind of the audience, nor contribute to the carrying out of the denouement of the plot, it is absurd and truly ridiculous'".¹⁸

Clearly in an age when "any scenery was good enough for Shakespeare"¹⁹ some degree of pomp was necessary to attract the 'thoughtless' and so obviate the need to turn exclusively to the 'gaudy scenes' of pantomime and spectacle in order to ensure financial security. Nevertheless, the extent to which the tyranny of spectacle had the theatre in its grip may be illustrated from the 1754-55 season during

the preparation of rival productions of *Coriolanus* when "the very idea of a triumphal procession at Covent-Garden, struck terror to the whole host of Drury", thus ensuring a more lavish production at the former in order to "get the start of the rival theatre, where it was preparing with infinite pomp and splendour".²⁰

No doubt Garrick in presenting *Henry VIII* at Drury Lane on 30 September, 1761 rejoiced in the additional topical justification provided by the coronation of George III and his marriage to Charlotte of Mecklenberg to stage "the grand and elaborate procession to mark Anne's [Bullen] coronation".²¹ Even so, if Thomas Davies's *Life of Garrick* is to be believed, it would appear that Rich's superior experience in matters "related to theatrical effect from splendour of dress and magnificence of decoration" was the more successful in exploiting the public appeal of the occasion. Davies complains that Garrick, knowing that Rich "had a taste in the ordering, dressing, and setting out these pompous processions, superior to his own...contented [himself] with giving the Coronation with the old dresses, which had been often occasionally used from 1727 to 1761". He concludes: "The exhibition was the meanest, and the most unworthy of a theatre, I ever saw".²²

One enthusiastic reviewer wrote: "If, in many instances, it must be inferior to the real Coronation, in some it is universally acknowledged to exceed it".²³ It was so popular, in fact, that one foreign visitor felt that there could hardly be anyone in London who had not seen it²⁴

while another visitor from abroad noted that "all the great events that occur to the nation are dramatised and represented on the stage; for example, the coronation of the present King; the Prince of Wales receiving the garter...".²⁵

Odell calls John Kemble, somewhat reverentially, "the first great 'producer' of Shakespeare on the English stage".²⁶ Indeed, his production of *Henry VIII*²⁷ revealed a change in emphasis in that "The processions...afforded great scope for the knowledge of ancient manners and habits which Mr. Kemble had acquired".²⁸ It was Kemble rather than Charles Kean who "first raised the already established procession to grandiose proportions"²⁹ and the production represented "the first of a long string of what purported to be 'authentic' revivals with 'appropriate' costumes and settings", though it was essentially a species of realism charged with the contemporary enthusiasm for the antique.³⁰

When the new Covent Garden Theatre opened in 1809 the visual appeal of pageant and ceremony had to compete for attention - and money - with more elaborate scenery and decorations, though they might, of course, be further enhanced by the increased attention to 'appropriateness of attire' which became a special feature of the new theatre. Kemble's *Coriolanus* of 1811, for instance, "embodied all his best ideas on the subject of Roman architecture, dress, habits and manners, and...was presented on a scale of great sculpturesque beauty"³¹ but it is interesting that *The*

Times should pick out only one piece of ceremony, albeit 'superb', for special mention - "the ceremony of the ovation on Caius Marcius's triumphant return from Corioli" which apparently contained some 240 persons³² - and that the same newspaper, reviewing Kemble's *Julius Caesar* in 1812, while praising "every attention to scenic splendour, and classical costume", complained of the oration scene that "this fine display was much diminished by the small number...on the stage".³³

It must also be said, however, that the popularity of such shows with the public no doubt owed a good deal to the architecture of London's enlarged two principal theatres which frequently rendered inaudible the voices of the actors to those sitting in the gallery. Richard Cumberland complained that both theatres had been "so enlarged in their dimensions as to be henceforward theatres for spectators rather than playhouses for hearers". He felt it was only to be expected that "their managers and directors encourage those representations to which their structure is best adapted" and concluded:

There can be nothing very gratifying in watching the movements of an actor's lips, when we cannot hear the words that proceed from them; but when the animating march strikes up, and the stage lays open its recesses to the depth of a hundred feet for the procession to advance, even the most distant spectator can enjoy his shilling's-worth of show.³⁴ⁿ

With the departure of Kemble in 1817 the production of Shakespeare's plays experienced a period of decline which may be attributed principally to a lack of suitable actors - Kean excepted - a lack of leadership and a

public taste ever more eager for novelty, show, spectacle, dancing and clowning. Shakespeare was still played, but he was increasingly consigned to the background in the estimation of the public and managements. It was, moreover, a more than usually contradictory age with persistent attempts to 'operatise' Shakespeare existing side by side with efforts to restore to the stage his actual text freed from the shackles of Tate, Dryden and their school. In fact, it was not until Macready transferred to Shakespeare something of the method of spectacle that the public returned, the introduction of gas lighting to the theatres in 1817 having revolutionised scenic effects, enhancing enormously the opportunities for the scene-painter and stage-manager.

Of particular interest to our subject is the production of *Henry IV, Part Two* at Covent Garden in 1821. a production chosen largely to commemorate the accession of George IV in that it offered ample opportunity to exploit spectacularly the Coronation of Henry V at the end of the play, thus continuing the practice of Cibber, Garrick and Rich of celebrating with coronations the accession of George II and George III. Both the playbill of 25 June, 1821 and the order of the procession in the book of the play printed at the same time place particular stress on the iconographic properties carried in the procession. presumably to emphasise the solemn kingly office which the new monarch was to undertake.

In general, however, the period appears to have

been interested less in the solemn and symbolic import of such ceremonial as in the historical accuracy of the costumes which dressed it. Now that Shakespeare's plays were being increasingly placed upon the stage not as stock pieces with stock scenes and dresses, but each play as a complete production in its own right with appropriate setting, costume and decoration it was no longer either appropriate or necessary to rely largely on the clumsily grafted procession to divert the thoughtless. Thus Kemble's *King John* (1823) and *Henry IV, Part One* (1824), with costumes by Planché and his *Cymbeline* (1827) all boast impressive academic sources to support a dedication to the accuracy of the 'dresses' which bordered on archaeological fanaticism. Any potential for the display of ceremonial in these plays appears to have been largely subsumed within a more general scenic and sartorial splendour.

When the raw material of such display was employed it was often reduced to an element in the repertoire of 'scenic illusion'. Thus in Macready's *Macbeth* (November, 1837) the Birnham Wood scene was praised for the effect created by painted soldiers of "a whole host...stretching away into the distance".³⁵ Similarly, when Macready revived *Henry V* in 1839, the scene of Henry's triumphal entry into London appears to have been of interest primarily as a vehicle for the technical *tour de force* which produced it - a diorama by Clarkson Stanfield. Macready's *Coriolanus* (March, 1838), produced with much magnificence, had the hero of Corioli returning in triumph to Rome crowned with an

oaken garland yet it is the "marvellous picture of a Roman holyday"³⁶ which captures the imagination; it is the multitudes which crowd round the officers of state rather than the 'state' itself which chiefly impress and perhaps anticipate the change in focus from the observed to the observers characterised half a century later by the Saxe-Meiningen Company.

It is interesting that *The Times*, praised Macready's *Henry V* only "as a pageant" and observed that "excessive pageantry is no sign of a revival of the drama". Yet its objection was based not upon any violation of the artistic integrity of the play but upon the inevitability of failure purely in terms of verisimilitude: "However great the attempt to represent closely an army on a battlefield, still the obviousness of the attempt can only render its fruitlessness more apparent.... The discrepancy between the stage and reality remains".³⁷

This did not inhibit Phelps from sending the 'gallant forty' who represented Henry's army on to the stage carrying two dummies, one on either side³⁸ while for Charles Kean at the Princess's Theatre, with more resources at his disposal than Phelps, there was no need for such deception. With his production of *Henry VIII* Kean availed himself more than any of his predecessors of the opportunities offered by the play for pageant and procession, restoring the scenes depicting the coronation of Anne Bullen and the christening of Elizabeth. In the Preface to his acting edition Kean cited Strutt's *Manners and Customs of the English* in

justification: "the whole life of Henry the Eighth...abounded with processions and princely shows of grandeur and magnificence" and he dedicated himself to "scrupulous adherence to historical truth in costume, architecture, and the multiplied details of action".³⁹ Indeed, the whole production serves as a good example of the sort of missionary zeal which justified "the production of pictorialised and archaeological Shakespeare" in terms of "educational imperatives".⁴⁰

The highlight of Kean's gorgeous and archaeologically accurate presentation of *Richard II* (March, 1857) was the interpolated Historical Episode.⁴¹ In brief, "the procession itself contained all the guilds, the Lord Mayor, minstrels, knights, archers, and many others, to the extent of several hundred supers. Small groups and individuals in the crowd - this was twenty-four years before the visit of the Meininger company - were carefully rehearsed in separate actions and movements which united harmoniously in an immense ensemble".⁴² Appropriately, during the run, Kean was made a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, a tribute which seemed to give official endorsement to The *Illustrated London News's* judgement that Kean's Historical Episode would have won Shakespeare's approval "as a fitting illustration of historical fact".⁴³

Yet it was only in the matter of degree that Kean distinguished himself in an age when the general tendency was to mount Shakespeare's plays with great pomp and ceremony whenever any but the most perfunctory

performances were attempted. Irving inherited the tradition from Kemble and Kean and passed it on to Tree, all of them aiming for "the proper decoration of Shakespeare"⁴⁴ with the different degrees of technical excellence available to them.

However, while Kean's decoration frequently cluttered the stage with a mass of historical detail, Irving's adornments sought only to interpret the plays aright. In his advertisement in *The Times* for the first performance of his *Macbeth* (1888) Irving himself speaks of the 'reverence' which he feels for Shakespeare's works and cites as authority for the scenic arrangement of his production the actual text of the play itself together with the descriptions of the chroniclers from whom Shakespeare derived most of his incidents.

This is clearly a very different emphasis from the authority of Kean's antiquarianism which was essentially historical rather than textual. Irving did not strive officiously for strict archaeological accuracy but aimed merely at a harmonious overall effect. Nevertheless, in his production of *Henry VIII* (1892) - a play which had not been seen in London for over a decade - he succumbed to the love of historical realism and sacrificed much of the drama to procession and display in his quest for pageantry and visual splendour. *The Times*, whilst confessing itself "bewildered, not to say fatigued and oppressed" by the sumptuousness of the setting nevertheless drew comparison with Kean's 1855 production and paid tribute to Irving's "still greater research and...more lavish display...";⁴⁵ another reviewer

detailed the procession of Anne Bullen on the way to her coronation in Act IV and his only regret seems to have been that the procession passed all too quickly and that the spectator "had not more time to profit by the liberal education that might be afforded him as to the dress of our ancestors".⁴⁶

This brief and selective survey has inevitably, perhaps, focused upon the London stage but one should not overlook the fact that the provinces possessed "two notable first-class managements which produced Shakespeare on a grand metropolitan scale",⁴⁷ those of Charles Calvert at the Princess's in Manchester between 1864 and 1875, and of Edward Saker at the Alexandra in Liverpool from 1876 to 1881.

Calvert mounted twelve Shakespeare revivals in association with his friend, the architect and antiquarian Alfred Darbyshire, who, like Kean, was eventually appointed FSA and the coronations of Henry V in *Henry IV, Part Two* (1874) and Anne Bullen in *Henry VIII* (1877) provided the opportunities for lengthy processions.⁴⁸

Darbyshire was a Quaker and although Calvert never joined the Society of Friends, in view of his own religious upbringing "he cannot have remained totally immune to their pacifist beliefs".⁴⁹ Calvert developed Henry's incidental allusion to an engagement with the Duke of Alençon into a major tableau in which "horsemen and footmen of the opposing hosts are inextricably mixed together in deadly combat"⁵⁰ but it seems to have been a production which, in bearing

testimony to the horrors of war and acknowledging war's victims. reflected not only Calvert's contemplative turn of mind but also contemporary interest in the Franco-Prussian war.⁵¹

Even when the spirit of Charles Kean seemed to have reasserted itself with the 'HISTORICAL EPISODE' illustrating Henry's return to London, Calvert resisted a mood of unalloyed jingoism. Thus the returning soldiers were "war and weather-worn veterans"⁵² and the crowd of some three hundred was not uniformly triumphal, groups of anxious women scanning the faces of the soldiers desperately seeking a loved one among their ranks.

The production was, not unexpectedly, fêted in the local press and yet there was also a sense in which "what the provinces claim as the outplaying of the metropolis may amount to no more than the perpetuation of an outmoded style carried to an excess, which would never have been acceptable to more sophisticated tastes".⁵³

In truth, critical opinion was beginning to weary of the quest for accuracy of setting and staging: The *Athenaeum*, reviewing Irving's *Richard III*, acknowledged that "the Court proceedings have all possible truth, and the scenes of combat are as realistic as possible when the combat is mimic" but ultimately it spoke slightly of its being "an historical pageant with accompaniment of action" with its tragic spirit choked to death by 'naturalism' - the false god of these later days".⁵⁴ Four years later Edward Craig wrote in the programme of the production of Purcell's

Dido and Aeneas which he had both designed and produced that he had "taken particular care to be entirely incorrect in all matters of detail"⁵⁵ while in 1901 genealogists were dismayed to observe Lewis Waller as Henry V at Agincourt wearing the arms of England on his coat reversed - and they were still reversed seven years later.⁵⁶

Both Craig's defiance and Waller's apparent indifference contrasted markedly with Irving's monumental devotion to detail and acknowledged that the spirit of antiquarianism in Shakespearean production had largely run its course even if it was the early years of the twentieth century that saw "the height of the realistic movement with regard to actual practice".⁵⁷ Even Irving himself, in fact, seemed to sense something of the spirit of the time: in his last Shakespearean production, *Coriolanus*, while there was an impressive show of pageantry of Forum and Capital, "the glories of the procession are...somewhat abbeviated in order not to delay the scene at the Capitol".⁵⁸

While Tree often exceeded Irving in the sumptuousness of his Shakespearean productions he "appears to have lacked Irving's monumental devotion to detail".⁵⁹ Nevertheless, his *Macbeth* included an elaborate procession to conduct Duncan to bed, his *King John* a spectacle of the signing of Magna Carta and his *Antony and Cleopatra* "an elaborate tableau of Cleopatra as the goddess Isis in procession through the steets of Alexandria to greet Antony on his return".⁶⁰

Tree's *Richard II*, first produced at His

Majesty's Theatre in September 1903, emerged as one of his most successful and enduring productions.⁶¹ Indeed, he had "not mistaken his public in serving SHAKESPEARE, DRESSED AND GARNISHED".⁶² In a period when the public demanded paintings in which everything looked real, they were delighted with the "huge, finely coloured pictures Tree showed them...in which everything not only looked real but often actually was real".⁶³

The tone of the production may be judged from the following observation:

It was a gorgeous series of pictures, of costumes, armour, and of Plantagenet pomp.... The spaciousness of the tournament lists, caused gasps of admiration. He filled the stage with admirably drilled crowds, and specialists had been consulted to secure absolute accuracy in heraldry, ceremonial and costumes.⁶⁴

Commentators condoned "the various decorative ornaments, processions and the like"⁶⁵ and acknowledged "the lavishness & care"⁶⁶ expended in creating "a magnificent spectacle"⁶⁷ in a production whose debt to Charles Kean was not confined to his "recreative and archaeological"⁶⁸ spirit but extended to direct copying from Kean's elaborate pageantry.⁶⁹

However, many who expressed admiration for Tree's spectacle were, at the same time, made uneasy or positively repelled by it. Tree's own sincerity is not in question: in endeavouring to give "'a faithful picture of the history of the time...it is hoped that the spirit in which Shakespeare conceived the work is preserved. [while] the demands of modern audiences have been met by modern

stagecraft'." he said in a 'Note by the Producer' in the souvenir programme of the play.⁷⁰

Yet, in praising "the splendour & beauty of the mounting" whilst declaring it "an inferior production",⁷¹ Gordon Crosse is giving expression to a growing general ambivalence. Tree's method of 'illustrating Shakespeare' with a succession of increasingly splendid spectacles had become "a burden rather than a delight" as the plays became almost buried "under a mountain of magnificence".⁷²

Indeed, it was partly Tree's taste for "Decorated Shakespeare at its most ostentatious",⁷³ compounded by his "love of the superfluous"⁷⁴ which fuelled the movement towards textual purity and presentational simplicity championed by William Poel who continued the work of Benjamin Webster and Samuel Phelps in freeing the production of Shakespeare from the tyranny of spectacle, and restoring the original text to the theatre. Almost half a century later Una Ellis-Fermor would still cite Tree when, writing of Ralph Richardson's production of *Richard II* in 1947, she expressed anxiety concerning "a tendency to revert to the emphasis upon setting...from which we had painfully fought ourselves clear".⁷⁵

However, although some commentators were offended by the lack of 'form' in the leisured indolence of Tree's opening sequence which centred upon a game of bowls, the scene was nevertheless replete with ceremonial in the form of thoroughly historical costumes which faithfully reproduced the heraldic insignia of the principal families.

In fact, the importance which Tree continued to place upon the 'authenticity' of such pageantic detail is confirmed by his appointment of Ambrose Lee as authoritative adviser on heraldry and ceremonial.⁷⁶

The Lists scene, however, drew universal praise from commentators. Fitzgerald felt that "Nothing could be better or so good as Mr. Tree's exhibition of the lists - the crowd and all the ceremonial".⁷⁷ Another reviewer declared:

...seldom has an actor-manager reached such heights in pure spectacle as Mr. Tree has attained in the scene of the Lists before Coventry.... It is true to history in its dressing of the crowds...and in the arrangement of the scenery - the brilliantly-decorated pavilions of the King and Queen and the splendidly-dressed spectators of the tourney appearing to flank a large arena.⁷⁸

In Tree's productions processional pageantry continued to make an important contribution to the staging and both Richard and his Queen entered ceremoniously in procession on horseback "to the accompaniment of music and fanfares and trumpet calls required by the occasion".⁷⁹ The prompt copy provides a detailed order of procession:

THE PROCESSION ENTERS FROM DOCK
L[LEFT].U[P-STAGE].E[ENTRANCE]. TO CHEERS AND
TRUMPETS FROM SUPERS OFF AND ON PLATFORMS BEHIND 6
FOOT BARRIERS WHERE ARE LORDS AND LADIES AND SOME
BOYS AND GIRLS - EVERYONE AVAILABLE OF THE
COMPANY. EVERYBODY COMING INTO THE SCENE TOTAL OF
ABOUT 190. SUPERS. CHORISTERS, EXTRA LADIES AND
GENTLEMEN.

ORDER OF PROCESSION

2 MARSHALLS MEN
2 TRUMPETERS
PURSUIVANT
1 LORD
THE QUEEN - ON CREAM PONY LED BY A
GROOM

BOY PAGE
1 COURT LADY OF WARDROBE
TWIN LADY - TWIN LADY
2 KING'S HERALDS
2 LORDS WITH BANNERS
ROSS. PERCY. WILLOUGHBY
NORTHUMBERLAND
GAUNT
KING AT ARMS
HELMET AND SWORD OF STATE

KING'S PAGE : THE KING ON HORSEBACK : KING'S PAGE
: LED BY 2 GROOMS :
:
KING'S PAGE : : KING'S PAGE

BUSHEY. BAGOT GREEN^{so}

The entry of the Champions was no less
impressive:

- A. THE CHAMPION
ON HORSEBACK
- B. HIS GROOM
- C. HIS HERALD
- D. HIS CHAMBERLAIN
WITH BANNER
- E. HIS PAGE WITH
LANCE & SHIELD
- F.F. MARSHALL'S
MEN

EACH CHAMPION ENTERS THE KING'S PRESENCE IN THE ABOVE ORDER - NORFOLK FROM P[ROMPT].. BOLINGBROKE FROM O[PPPOSITE].P[ROMPT].. HIS HERALD HANDS TO THE KING'S HERALD A COPY OF THE CHALLENGE WHICH THE LATTER HANDS TO THE MARSHALL'S CLERK; THE CHAMBERLAIN GIVES THE BANNER ALSO TO A HERALD WHO, AFTER IT HAS BEEN NOTED BY THE CLERK, GIVES IT TO THE KING AT ARMS WHO HOLDS IT DURING THE CEREMONY: THE LANCE IS HANDED BY THE PAGE TO A MARSHALL'S MAN AND HAVING BEEN MEASURED - WITH ANOTHER AT HAND FOR THAT PURPOSE - IS IN DUE COURSE HANDED BY THE MARSHALL TO A MARSHALL'S MAN WHO GIVES IT TO THE CHAMPION...

...WHEN THE KING STOPS THE COMBAT THE BANNERS ARE RETURNED TO THE CHAMBERLAINS. WHO WITH THE CHAMPIONS' HERALDS REMAIN WITHIN AND AT EACH OPPOSITE EXTREMITY OF THE BARRIER: THE KNIGHTS RETURN WITH THEIR PAGES TO THEIR SEATS - WHICH

HAVING PREVIOUSLY BEEN REMOVED TO THE SIDES OF THE BARRIER, ARE NOW BROUGHT FORWARD AGAIN - AND ARE DIVESTED OF HELMETS AND SHIELDS. THEY RETIRE IN AS FAR AS POSSIBLE THE SAME ORDER AS THAT IN WHICH THEY ENTERED.⁸¹ⁿ

Meticulous as such ceremonies appeared - as, of course, were the various heraldic devices - Ambrose Lee nevertheless admitted, somewhat grudgingly, that there were some departures from accuracy in order to conform with Shakespeare's arrangement of the scene.⁸²

In the early performances of the production the two combatants re-entered on foot but after a week or so it was arranged that they should enter mounted at '...list what with our council we have done': 'KING'S TRUMPET ON[STAGE] BLOWING BLAST TO COVER ENTRANCE AND DISMOUNTING, GIVING UP LANCES AND HERALDS TAKING BANNERS AGAIN. WHEN ON TRUMPETS STOP AND KING CONTINUES...'

Richard, having delivered his judgement from the pavilion and come down to administer the oath 'WITH HIS TRUMPETS PLAYING LOUDLY ALL THE WHILE' a procession formed for a grand exit on foot in order:

2 MARSHALL'S MEN
2 TRUMPETERS
PURSUIVANT
2 HERALDS
2 HERALDS
KING-OF-ARMS
KING'S SERVANT
HELMET. SWORD OF STATE

THE KING & QUEEN
D[OWN].S[TAGE]. U[P].S[TAGE].

TWIN : PAGE BOY : TWIN
MISTRESS OF ROBES

BUSHEY & BAGOT
1 LORD & NORTHUMBERLAND
ROSS & WILLOUGHBY
4 PAGES⁸³

In spite of Fitzgerald's enthusiastic praise of the scene he nevertheless expressed reservations which raised important principles of doubt concerning the very validity of the pictorial method of displaying it:

The lists should be placed without, and the King go to the wing in a marked ostentatious fashion to cast down his warder. By this arrangement we have the whole business *acted* and not exhibited.⁸⁴

Tree himself, however, had no such doubts and took every opportunity to enhance the text with moments of ritual formality: he concluded his opening act with a valedictory tableau "Bolingbroke's friends swearing over Gaunt's body to support him",⁸⁵ "crying 'Hereford' with crossed swords over his body".⁸⁶ Again, when Richard returned from Ireland the 'sword of state' was carried by Scroop so that "when he came down to encounter Bolingbroke at Flint Castle, the faithful Scroop carried in front of him the sword of state, as the last mournful relic of departing dignity".⁸⁷

Such business nevertheless reveals a desire to 'fit the action to the word' and even at its most grandiloquent Tree's pictorialism was seldom entirely gratuitous. The Westminster Hall scene, which opened his third act, was acknowledged the most notable of Tree's "richly beautiful" settings, praised for its "admirable treatment of masses of red"⁸⁸ in the ecclesiastical garments and hangings.⁸⁹

Much of Tree's business in this scene was said to

have been "excellent, full of meaning and entirely appropriate".⁹⁰ The solemnity and pathos of the deposition was rendered more effective by contrast with the disorder among the lords and ecclesiastics - 'ALL SHOUTING AND GESTICULATING' - following the previous confrontation between York and Bolingbroke. When York re-entered 'FOLLOWED BY RICHARD AND OTHERS' the noise gradually subsided and 'ALL RETIRE TO THEIR RESPECTIVE SIDES. ECCLESIASTICS RIGHT, PEERS LEFT AND RICHARD IN DEAD SILENCE WALKS UP FROM L[LEFT] TO C[ENTRE] carrying the sceptre.'⁹¹

During Richard's first speech in the scene Tree sought, as usual, to maximise the visual effect by moving through 'RED LIME' to 'GREEN LIME', 'VIOLET LIME' and 'AMBER LIME' before Richard sank onto the bench below the table. At 'Give me the crown' Richard placed the sceptre on the table and the crown was 'BROUGHT DOWN BY A PEER. BORNE ON CUSHION'. During the ensuing speeches the crown was naturally the symbolic focal point being alternately placed on and removed from the table which tangibly separated Richard and Bolingbroke.⁹²

At '...I must nothing be' Richard suddenly snatched the crown from Bolingbroke's hold and held it firmly before ritually uncrowning himself. At 'Now mark me how I will undo myself!' [IV.1.202]

HE TURNS UPSTAGE, L[LEFT] C[ENTRE] WITH CROWN AND SCEPTRE IN HIS HANDS... HE ASCENDS THE THRONE AND SITS... HE PLACES THE CROWN ON HIS HEAD, AND LEANS BACK IN THRONE, SCEPTRE RESTING ON HIS ARM, AND THE MURMUR SWELLS TO A LOUD CLAMOUR OF INDIGNATION. HE RAISES HIS LEFT HAND SILENCING THEM - AND WITH THE SCEPTRE BECKONS BOLINGBROKE, WHO WALKS UP RIGHT TO THE STEPS OF THE THRONE.



KING RISES TO HIS FEET AND TAKES CROWN OFF AS HE SPEAKS - HANDING IT TO BOLINGBROKE WHO IN TURN HANDS IT TO ARCHBISHOP WHO COMES FORWARD READY FOR THIS. A BISHOP PASSES IT TO DEACON BEHIND WHO TAKES IT BACK - ALSO SCEPTRE WHICH IS GIVEN NEXT⁹³

At 'With mine own tongue deny my sacred state' [IV.1.208] Richard, now standing in front of the throne seat, unfastened his purple gown and let it fall onto the seat. At 'And thou with all pleased, that hast all achieved' [1.216] he indicated the throne which Bolingbroke finally ascended.

Now politically impotent it was finally through the ceremony that is due to a true King that Richard was able both to expose the arrogance of the usurper and himself acquire a tragic dignity. When Bolingbroke had ascended the throne Richard knelt in obeisance at 'God save King Henry...' [1.219] but it was a token gesture only - perhaps, even, an ironic 'genuflexion' - as he 'RISES IMMEDIATELY' and as he wished himself a 'mockery king of snow' it was the usurper who was mocked as, turning to Bolingbroke on the throne, he held out his hands 'AS IF TO SHIELD [himself] FROM THE BRILLIANCE'.⁹⁴

In defeat Richard acquired a new authority so that the empty ceremony that had formerly been demanded by the office was now offered, in sincerity, to the man. The lords temporal and spiritual - having been stung to a 'CLAMOUR' by Richard's taunts - severally 'SUBSID[ED] INTO SILENCE AT HIS LOOK':

THEN IN THE SILENCE THE BISHOP OF CARLISLE COMES OUT TO HIM AND WOULD KNEEL IN SYMPATHY AT THE KING'S FEET. THE KING TAKES HIS HAND AND WILL

NOT ALLOW HIM TO DO SO, BUT KNEELS HIMSELF. THE BISHOP OF CARLISLE BLESSES THE KING WHO, ON RISING FROM HIS KNEES, TAKES THE RING FROM HIS FINGER AND GIVES IT TO THE BISHOP, WHO THEN KNEELS TO THE KING IN GRATITUDE. TAKES HIS HAND AND KISSES IT. THE KING MOVES AWAY ABOVE THE BISHOP WHO IS KNEELING, AND GOES TO ECCLESIASTICS R[IGHT], AND WALKS STRAIGHT DOWN THE FRONT LINE FROM UP R[IGHT] TO DOWN R[IGHT], LOOKING INTO EACH FACE, AND AS HE DOES SO, THEY EACH, SHAME-FACEDLY, TURN AWAY. HE THEN WALKS ACROSS FRONT TO PEERS L[LEFT]. AUMERLE COMES OUT FROM THE THRONG AND KNEELS DOWN LEFT AT THE KING'S FEET. SOBBING. THE KING GENTLY SILENCES HIM, AND WHILE HE KNEELS THE KING TAKES THE CHAIN AND BADGE FROM HIS OWN NECK AND PLACES IT ROUND AUMERLE'S, THEN RAISES HIM - AUMERLE KISSES THE KING'S HAND AND THE KING TURNS UPSTAGE, MEETING NORTHUMBERLAND.... THE KING LOOKS VERY POINTEDLY INTO HIS EYES. NORTHUMBERLAND DROPS HIS HEAD AND TURNS AWAY IN SHAME. THE KING CONTINUES WALKING UP LEFT, AND WHEN NEAR THE TOP, TURNS TO BOLINGBROKE WHO IS SEATED ARROGANTLY ON THE THRONE AND SLIGHTLY INCLINING HIS HEAD IN A BOW. WALKS THROUGH THE CURTAINS UP L[LEFT]. THE TABLEAU CURTAINS FALL SILENTLY ON THE END OF THE SCENE⁹⁵

Among "the various decorative adornments, processions, and the like" which Percy Fitzgerald was eager to condone in Tree's production as being "almost legitimate" was the interpolated 'Historical Episode' illustrating York's speech describing Bolingbroke's triumphal entry into London, a scene in which "there was, of course, almost a squadron of horses engaged, who took some time to pass in the vivid procession through the scenic street".⁹⁶

As we have seen, a similar episode had been one of the most spectacular moments in Kean's Shakespeare.⁹⁷ Tree placed the episode after Shakespeare's Act III, Scene 4 to conclude the second of his customary three act arrangement. Crosse describes it as "a cinematograph of street life in the 14th century...elaborately thought out & very well

realised",⁹⁸ a "questionable innovation, though...an enjoyable one....".⁹⁹

The Prompt Book indicates that the procession during this tableau was even more elaborate than those which framed the Lists scene and opened with various street business, the number of citizens being swelled by '16 STAGE HANDS' as well as ladies' and men's dressers. The procession was heard approaching by means of the trumpeters among them and subsequently came into view:

GROOM ON HORSEBACK IN ARMOUR WITH DRAWN SWORD
12 FOOTSOLDIERS - 3 ABREAST
YORK, ON HORSEBACK, WITH BERKELEY, HIS ESQUIRE ON FOOT
4 GROOMS, ON HORSEBACK, IN ARMOUR
16 FOOT SOLDIERS
MORTIMER, ON HORSEBACK
AUMERLE, ROSS & WILLOUGHBY, ON FOOT
10 FOOT SOLDIERS
PERCY
5 GROOMS ON HORSEBACK, IN ARMOUR
12 FOOT SOLDIERS
2 HERALDS, BLOWING TRUMPETS
PURSUIVANT
4 HERALDS
BOLINGBROKE
BOLINGBROKE'S PAGE
EXTON, BAGOT
CARLISLE, ALISBURY & SCROOP
4 FOOT SOLDIERS, 2 EACH SIDE
KING RICHARD¹⁰⁰

In this episode Tree seems to have used elements of broken ceremony to highlight the irony of the present plight of a King whose casual arrogance had previously undermined moments deserving of studied formality. Thus, the Properties and Lighting Plots contain additional business in which 'RICHARD PUTS OUT HIS HAND TO BE KISSED BY ONE OF THE MEN WHO SMACKS THE KING'S FACE INSTEAD' while the prompt copy records that 'ANOTHER MAN FROM THE CROWD KNEELS TO THE KING. AND THE REST DRAG HIM AWAY AND FLING HIM INTO THE

BACKGROUND', all this to the taunting strains of
'BOL[INGBROKE] MARCH PLAYED IN PART OF MOCKERY'.¹⁰¹

Tree chose to omit the final scene and substituted a concluding tableau - "CORONATION OF HENRY IV. IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY"¹⁰² and Fitzgerald recalls that "When the King is lying dead a sort of vision or phantasmagoria follows: the walls of the prison disappear, and the Coronation Scene in Westminster Abbey is shown, with processions, music, etc. The idea seems to be that the King has some dim vision of this kind...".¹⁰³

One reviewer suggested that the music of the Coronation was a "happy relief" from the gloomy picture of the dungeon scene, the "dead figure of Richard in the centre of the stage, ...the moon shining on his face, and all the rest blackness"¹⁰⁴ and indeed "the color, pomp and authentic spectacle of the tableau made a more suitable conclusion to Tree's lavish production than the stark...severity of the dungeon scene".¹⁰⁵

Ambrose Lee described the scene as showing

The King in his robes, without the mantle; the clergy in their vestments; the Peers in their robes; the Royal Dukes in purple; the others in crimson velvet; the little Prince Henry...with the "Sword of Mercy," on the King's right hand; and Northumberland, with the "Lancaster sword".... The Archbishop places the Crown on the King's head, the Peers and the King of Arms put on their coronets, the *Te Deum* is sung, and the brief vision dies away.¹⁰⁶

Crosse described the tableau as "a striking effect" and considered particularly poignant the contrast between the up-stage area of "a brilliantly lighted scene showing Henry amid a crowd of bishops & nobles, while in the

foreground Richard lies dead in his gloomy dungeon".¹⁰⁷ Notwithstanding, a 'vision' scene, however effective, seemed like an old-fashioned throw-back to earlier staging ideas; Fitzgerald declared it "too pantomimic, though certainly effective".¹⁰⁸ It was an ambivalence which characterises much of the critical reaction to Tree's style in the opening years of the century; even those who delighted in the spectacle were often taunted by guilty thoughts.

When Frank Benson had first brought his *Richard II* to Stratford in 1896 he found that critical attitudes towards 'magnificence' in staging were equally ambivalent, though in provincial Stratford it was occasioned less by aesthetic considerations than by the discrepancy between expectation and achievement. Before the production opened one newspaper, glancing back to earlier revivals by Kean and Phelps, approved that Benson's "promises to be more thorough than either of these"¹⁰⁹ while another regretted only that "our stage is too small to carry out the Kean spectacle".¹¹⁰ Post-production reaction, however, was quite content with a sparer diet: it was acknowledged to have been "carefully and accurately dressed", and there was evident satisfaction in its "painstaking attention to detail" with no fault found in Benson's leaving no 'legitimate' taste unsatisfied;¹¹¹ another local newspaper was even more accommodating in remarking that the scenes at Coventry and Westminster were sufficient to satisfy the artist, the herald and the archaeologist, "approximately at least", and there was

perhaps - as with the *Herald's* remark - a measure of provincial defiance in asserting that "more than that need not be asked".¹¹²

When Benson came to take the production to the capital in 1900 he had not in any case "the means to be spectacular",¹¹³ much of the scenery and costumes accumulated during seventeen years of touring having been burned in the fire that destroyed the Theatre Royal at Newcastle in November 1899. He nevertheless succeeded in creating at the Lyceum "an authentic suggestion of mediaeval magnificence"¹¹⁴ in which "the lists blazed with accurate heraldry; [and] the set for the Deposition faithfully reproduced old Westminster Hall"¹¹⁵ with sufficient restraint not to alienate critical opinion. There was general approval that "the scenes of regal pomp are well enough contrived to bring to the minds of the imaginative, an interesting idea of the splendour of the fourteenth century".¹¹⁶

Benson had originally spent some two months preparing the play in Lancaster and he explained that the greatest care had been taken in dressing the various characters "all of whom will wear dresses bearing the correct coats of arms of the period of the families to which they belonged".¹¹⁷

Photographs taken at Lancaster¹¹⁸ show the detail and care with which the costumes were designed and executed. Nevertheless, they represent a further step away from the historical exactness of the previous century which, as we

have seen. Tree continued to embrace. They are not "fussily detailed" but "theatrically effective", representing "Benson's sensible attitude to the use of archaeology in theatre design".¹¹⁹

Gordon Crosse paid tribute to the fact that Benson demonstrated that Shakespeare's plays "need not be treated as mere excuses for displays of magnificent mounting"¹²⁰ and felt that the manner of its staging contributed in some measure to the success of the revival: "The costumes and the heraldry were picturesque, &, as far as I could tell, correct". suggesting tentatively that the mounting "might be more magnificent, yet more magnificence would be a change for the worse".¹²¹ This is a sentiment echoed with more conviction by Robert Speaight who observes that Benson's productions - "tailored to repertory and to changing trains at Crewe on Sunday mornings - were too unspectacular for metropolitan tastes"¹²² but although some commentators in the metropolis called Benson 'The Irving of the Provinces' the sneer was lost on Benson himself who, having secured his first professional engagement with Irving in 1882, was pleased with the comparison and regarded Irving as his own inspiration.

Benson chose an informal tone for the first scene of his production.¹²³ offering his audience much splendour with studied informality to suggest an effete, self-indulgent king neither 'enthroned' nor seated in a chair of state but lolling in his "easy chair".¹²⁴ ill-fitted for the responsibilities or authority of state.

His "evident boredom and inattention"¹²⁵ were clearly at odds with the rhetorical formality of the impeachments and so exposed the "ironic disparity between Richard's personal weakness and his institutional authority as king".¹²⁶

Undoubtedly, Benson used the Lists scene as the occasion for a legitimate display of colorful medieval pageantry and the scene "blazed with the colour of shields and pennons";¹²⁷ "a triumph of stage effect produced by comparatively simple means. The lists are up and the royal pavilion set; there is a crowd of spectators, noble and of low degree.... All this is given with a life-like air...".¹²⁸ Some idea of the colourfulness of the scene is conveyed by the list of costumes in the Benson Company Wardrobe Book but although the general effect was 'appropriate', historical accuracy was not a priority.¹²⁹ⁿ

Especially effective was the music which contributed much to the pageantry of the occasion: in addition to the various flourishes and trumpet calls. Richard's approach was announced with "a march with a melody distinctive and regal - Richard's theme march"¹³⁰ with a more strident march for Bolingbroke. These themes provided a musical accompaniment to the unfolding scene, played *piano* or *fortissimo* and in major or minor keys to suit the developing action.¹³¹

The *Manchester Guardian* described how, in the first act.

Richard above everything else loves a fine situation, and prefers the pomp and show of royalty to the reality; and Mr Benson realised it well in his manner last night.

In the second act we see the causes of his downfall. On the one hand he is a firm believer in the Divine Right of Kings, and on the other a profligate and pleasure seeker of refined and expensive tastes.¹³²

Even before the production opened in 1896 one newspaper looked forward with keen anticipation to the 'Lists at Coventry', "gay with shields and banners, bearing arms and badges of the knights, nobles and prelates mentioned in the play...copied from contemporary authorities":¹³³ the *Sketch* clearly approved that the production was "historically correct in the details of its pomp and ceremony, notably...in the lists at Coventry";¹³⁴ while for one critic during the American tour "the chief interest lay in the pageantry, the Abbey-like pictures, the parades of armored knights".¹³⁵ⁿ

Travis Bogard has suggested that it is with the third act of the play, with the return of Richard from Ireland, that "the essential drama begins, for it is at this point that Richard enters on his way to suffering", evolving from the pageant king of the first two acts to "the suffering king entering the world of the dispossessed": it is a change expressed principally in terms of ceremony which "in Act III seems to be meaningful and moving whereas before it was empty formality".¹³⁶

Perhaps Benson was trying to suggest something of the kind with the ritual solemnity of the opening: When the curtain rose on the 'exterior of Barkloughly castle' a muffled side drum was heard beating a familiar marching pattern which continued until all were on-stage. The drum

stopped and the dialogue began. Presently, "as a running accompaniment to the declamation" an *Agnus Dei* was heard in a "delicious rendering off stage...suggesting the celebration of mass in the stately chapel in the background".¹³⁷ This Mozart *Agnus Dei* Benson retained in spite of objections to its being used "hundreds of years before it was composed"¹³⁸ because it was the "only strain" that gave the mood he wanted, using the music to "emphasize that atmosphere of hunger for forgiveness and that prayer for mercy which were the outpourings of [Richard's] soul" during this scene.¹³⁹

James Black points out that whereas Holinshed's description of 'the manner and order of the king's coronation' runs to nearly two thousand words of high ceremony, no such ceremonial is indicated in Holinshed's account of Richard's overthrow, yet in Shakespeare's play "it is impossible to conceive of the play without the deposition events...: Richard becomes 'unkinged', and in becoming so goes through a form of uncoronating, a ceremony of decoronation".¹⁴⁰

It is a moment when Shakespeare seems to demand a formal staging employing stylised movement and grouping in which "the mannered presentation...emphasises the symbolism of the occasion".¹⁴¹ Like the Lists scene, it placed before the eyes the picture that must have been in the poet's mind"¹⁴² and it, too, satisfied, "approximately at least, the artist, herald and archaeologist".¹⁴³ Clearly an 'approximation' of historical authenticity was now equally

acceptable to both critic and public.

No other producer this century appears to have emulated Tree in illustrating York's speech describing Bolingbroke's triumphal entry into London and some cut York's speech completely as did Benson when he omitted the Aumerle conspiracy.¹⁴⁴ⁿ

Although Benson resisted the opportunity to illustrate York's speech he fully exploited the chance for a strong processional effect in the final scene, which a number of productions have omitted altogether by ending the play with Richard's death.¹⁴⁵ His highly pictorial staging chose to keep the emphasis firmly on the idea of kingship. The final scene was set in the same London street 'leading to the Tower' in which Richard had said farewell to his Queen. The curtain rose to a *Gloria* sung by a chorus and Bolingbroke entered, as though from his coronation, in stately procession. Richard's bier, attended by Exton and a few soldiers, then entered and interrupted the royal procession. Exton presented the coffin of Richard of Bordeaux to Bolingbroke who gazed in horror and having dismissed Exton took the sword of state from his sword bearer and "places it in lieu of a cross on the dead man's breast while the courtiers stand around in reverent awe".¹⁴⁶ Following Bolingbroke's final pledge of atonement the off-stage chorus began a *Requiem* and Bolingbroke, overcome with remorse, sank sobbing over the dead body of the usurped sovereign. He was wracked by genuine grief. "As he knelt beside the dead man, a high dignitary of the church behind

and the nobles and soldiers grouped about the curtain slowly descended on a tableau which could not readily be forgotten".¹⁴⁷

This tableau was widely regarded as one of the most moving things in the play yet Tree, as we have seen, chose to omit the final scene and substituted his 'vision' tableau - CORONATION OF HENRY IV. IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY. The effect of Benson's decision was, of course, to throw the focus upon Bolingbroke whereas Tree's 'vision' kept the emphasis firmly on himself, as Richard.

Benson's first presentation of *Henry V* in Stratford on 22 April, 1897 was also the first performance of the play on the stage of the Memorial Theatre.¹⁴⁸ⁿ

The promptbook for this and his many subsequent revivals of the play has not survived, though David Nancarrow concludes that "from the newspaper accounts one can surmise that the production followed the pattern previously set by both Kean and Calvert"¹⁴⁹ and Trewin speaks of Benson's responding to the play as eagerly as he had to *Richard II*: "Benson employed all the pomp of heraldry, and filled [the play] with tableaux - the stuff of any 'spectacular' production in those days...".¹⁵⁰

Inevitably, perhaps, given the debate currently in progress on the degree of splendour appropriate to Shakespearean productions, critical comment frequently focused upon this aspect, though detailed accounts of stage business are unfortunately rare. The general parameters of the debate may be gauged by comparing two journalistic

judgements: one reviewer observed that the "superb pageants" of Charles Calvert and George Rignold would be fresh in the minds of many experienced playgoers. "At the same time 'the play's the thing', and in judging its representation, scenic effect, costly costumes, great processions, and all that help to make mere spectacle should be put to one side";¹⁵¹ another, however, while applauding the "truthfulness and good taste" rather than the "costliness and beauty" of Benson's representations, rejoiced that this production marked "the highest development of pictorial art yet reached upon the Memorial stage":

The peculiar beauty of the series of stage pictures would scarcely have been possible a few years ago. The rich costumes of the pages and pursuivants, the burnished armour, the emblazoned quarterings, the symphonious colouring, the sumptuous trappings would not have been thought necessary, even if the manager-actor's purse could have afforded them.... But the public taste in all matters of decorative art has now greatly improved, and...Mr Benson has taken the lead of some managers...in putting the theatre in advance instead of allowing it to lag behind the aesthetic culture of the people....¹⁵²

The 'mounting' debate was fuelled by Benson's idiosyncratic practice of omitting from the play the character of Chorus, though one reviewer felt that "no one can complain seriously of the omission of Master Chorus" because most of his words had been made manifest before the audience's eyes.¹⁵³ When Benson first produced the play in 1897 the *Manchester Guardian* was unequivocal:

These desperate appeals [of Chorus] to the flagging imagination of the natural man are necessarily absent from a reproduction in which the spectator has before his eyes a vivid

presentation of all the accessories of the action....¹⁵⁴

Unhappily relatively little material directly relevant to our subject has survived: one commentator spoke of the production as being "handsomely and correctly costumed"¹⁵⁵ while Benson's "regal robes" impressed another.¹⁵⁶ The *Manchester Guardian* praised the "solemn chanting" heard in the English camp before Agincourt¹⁵⁷ and "a march composed especially for the occasion by Stanley Cooper Esq." was picked out for special mention.¹⁵⁸

Reviews of Benson's *Henry V* in later years refer to "a procession of monks & nuns bearing off the bodies of some of the slain with solemn music"¹⁵⁹ in the 1898 production and there is passing reference to the "formal peace making between the two kings in the last act".¹⁶⁰ When Crosse saw the production again in 1909, however, he took exception to the monks being accompanied by "a bishop in cope and mitre"¹⁶¹ and wondered whether the addition could have been prompted "by a desire to go one better than Mr Waller".¹⁶²

The production inevitably assumed particular significance at the time of the Boer War in 1900 and again, of course, in 1914. One newspaper rejoiced that "at this time of excitement and patriotic fervour" Benson's Lyceum season should have been launched with a revival of the "great epic of English Chauvinism":¹⁶³ another saw the production of this "inspiringly patriotic" play as a welcome counter-blast "at a time when many of us are taking a pessimistic view"¹⁶⁴ and at the outbreak of the Great War

The Times noted the play's "expression of the English spirit" and urged 'everyone' to see Benson's production "not merely for its own artistic sake, but as a masterpiece in 'the literature of the war'".¹⁶⁵

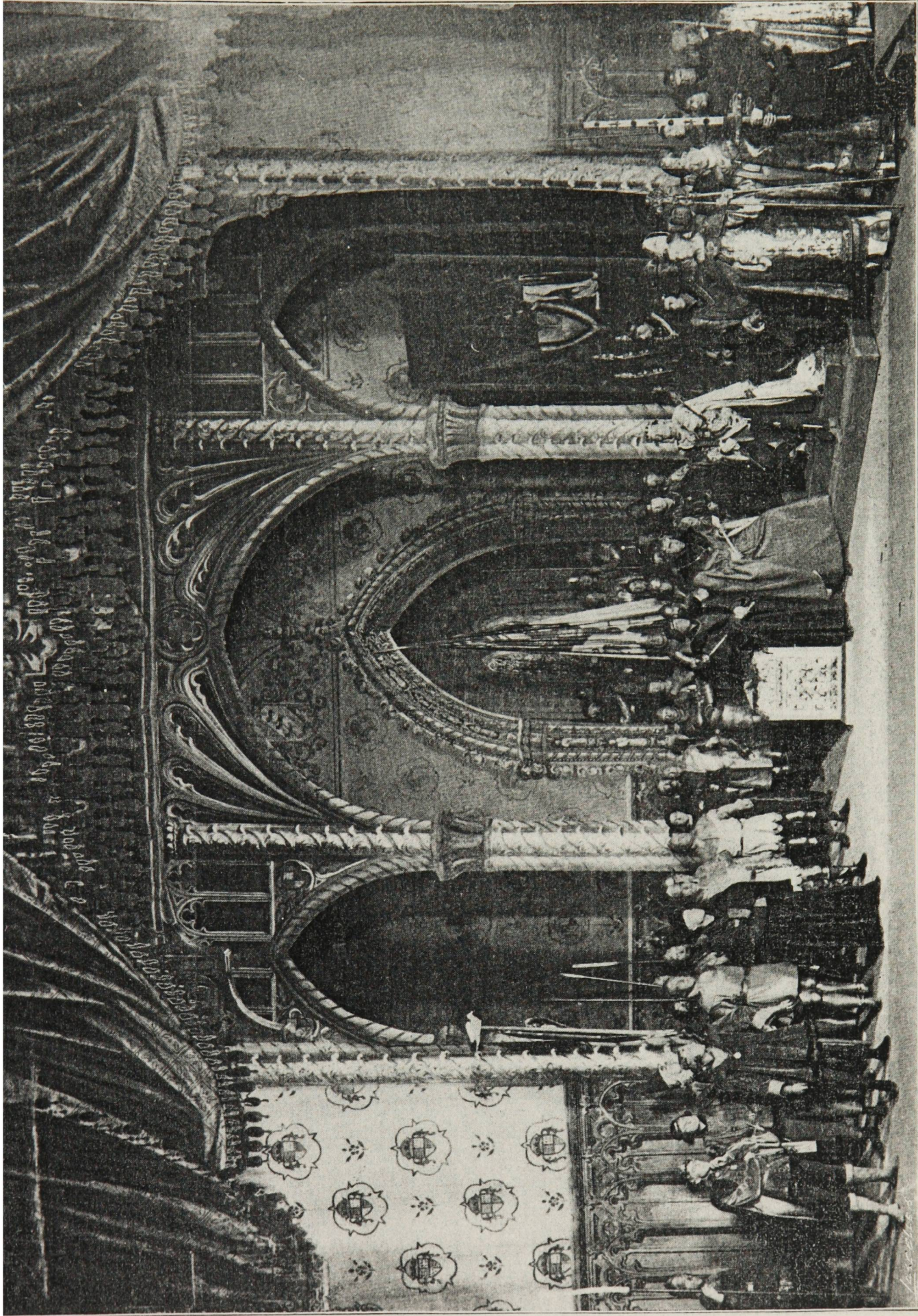
Although the inclusion of "a rather meaningless dance of the two scantily-attired young ladies in the French camp"¹⁶⁶ received wide condemnation the only major formal element to excite debate was the battle tableau of Agincourt. It was undoubtedly popular with audiences as testified by repeated curtain calls but most commentators - whilst praising the general excellence of the 'stage pictures' - expressed serious reservations about the tableau. Crosse was a persistent critic of the device and in conceding that Benson's was "well enough arranged" he flattered merely to deceive: "I do not care for these battle tableaux, with the actors like so many waxworks all in act to strike & never striking".¹⁶⁷ Another commentator felt that Benson's tableau could not be defended merely on the grounds of following established precedent: "Tableaux may or may not be justifiable, but they at least demand two conditions - that they shall be helpful to the play and artistic".¹⁶⁸ Benson's, he concluded, was neither.

It is not known whether Benson adopted recent practice in imitating journalistic battle photographs published in the illustrated weeklies¹⁶⁹ but Crosse's distaste for the device was equally in evidence when he saw Lewis Waller's *Henry V* at the Lyceum in January 1901.¹⁷⁰

In general, praise for the splendour of Benson's

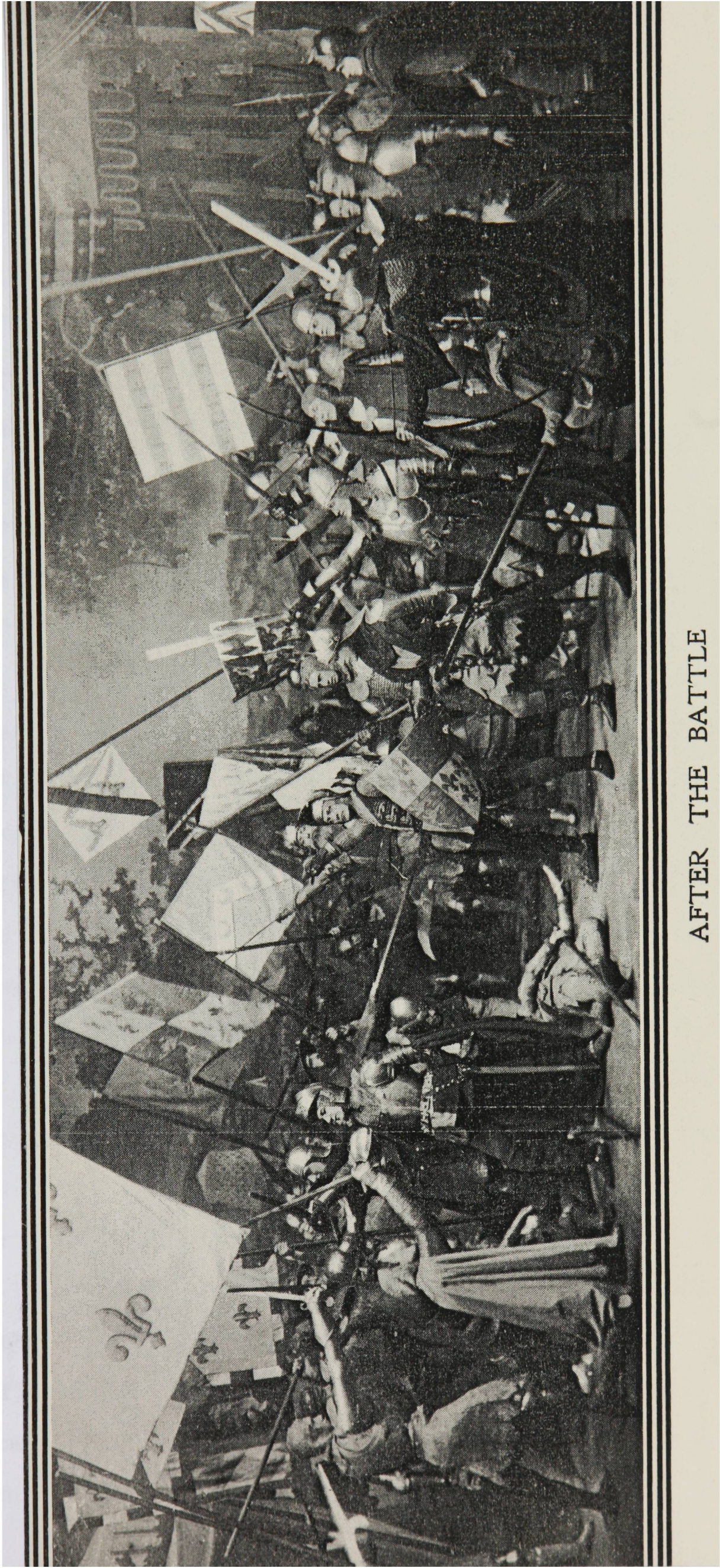
mounting was qualified by recognition of the practical limitations forced upon a touring company. However, Waller's *Henry V.* mounted "with much splendour"¹⁷¹ in 1900 at the Lyceum, where it had eighty performances, is described as having been "lavishly mounted".¹⁷² Figure 1, showing the Grand Tableau from the end of Act I, gives some idea of the scale and character of the production which was lauded as restoring the theatre to former glories: "...the Lyceum is itself again, and returns to the best traditions of the Irving management"¹⁷³ though the same commentator clearly reflected the spirit of the times in acknowledging that Waller's "thoughtful" stage management revealed his good taste in providing "magnificent yet never vulgarly obtrusive spectacle".¹⁷⁴ Crosse, too, whilst conceding that the play offered "ample opportunities for splendid mounting" which is "most essential to bringing out its true spirit" also asserted that such mounting demands the exercise of "good taste" lest it "interfere with [the play's] main purpose...".¹⁷⁵ Waller's production satisfied Crosse in that "the costumes, armour & so forth were brilliant" without being "overdone" and his reference to "a procession of monks who come upon the scene solemnly chanting, while Henry & his army kneel in prayer"¹⁷⁶ at the end of Act IV is one of the few glimpses that we have that relate directly to our subject [Fig.2].

Paradoxically, while Benson chose to omit Chorus altogether, Waller's chronicler, Sidney Lee - writing of a production manifestly more elaborate than Benson's - focused



GRAND TABLEAU IN "KING HENRY THE FIFTH," AT THE LYCEUM.

Fig. 1



AFTER THE BATTLE

Fig. 2

upon the limitations of stage setting which "cannot do all" and the importance of Chorus in stirring "the imaginary forces of the audience...[which] must always be brought into action before great drama achieves its full effect".¹⁷⁷

As with Benson's production the Boer War lent Waller's *Henry V* a particular appositeness. *The Times* was fulsome in observing that "the causes underlying the present popularity of this trumpet-call to patriotism are sufficiently obvious.... The appeal of the play to our martial ardour and to our racial pride is irresistible".¹⁷⁸

Sidney Lee, calling the play "this stirring national drama", pointed out Shakespeare's allusion to the home-coming of a contemporary hero, Queen Elizabeth's favourite, the Earl of Essex, returning in triumph to London from the war in Ireland in Chorus's last speech and then confessed "we feel instinctively that the change of a single word ('Afric' for 'Ireland') would carry a step further Shakespeare's method of vivifying the past by associating it with the present...".¹⁷⁹

When Waller next offered the play to the public - at the Imperial Theatre in 1905 - its topicality had diminished. Perhaps the desire for an expression of patriotic unity in the light of the national crisis in 1900 had had the effect of blunting critical discrimination. Certainly the reception of the later production revealed conflicting rules of engagement on the part of the commentators. Whereas one commentator spoke of the production as providing a welcome antidote to "the note of

national pessimism which is so prevalent"¹⁸⁰ another declared that "never was patriotism more manifest than in our days". For him four years had diminished neither the mood of the people nor the power of the play to affect the hearer "as a regiment of soldiers does when it marches through the streets with jubilating brass". The play was thus a "living and eloquent tableau of a glorious historical episode" and in Waller's production "the scenery, the clanging of arms and armour heighten the effect".¹⁸¹

Another reviewer, however, was less easily satisfied: "...the war spirit, which was just at its height amongst us at the time of the Lyceum production, can now hardly be relied upon to inspire every speech with instant meaning and force". For this commentator "the setting does not strike one as being on anything like so large a scale" and he was clearly disappointed that it was a production "certainly not overburdened by spectacle".¹⁸² Another reviewer, however, confidently proclaimed "the setting of the piece at the Imperial must be pronounced even finer" than that at the Lyceum and "as it is so spectacular, it gains much in this way".¹⁸³

No doubt the reality was somewhere between the two. Gordon Crosse pronounced the mounting "splendid without in the least overweighting the play" but felt that the Imperial - being a good deal smaller than the Lyceum - "robs it of some of its effect".¹⁸⁴ C.D.Linton assures us that "no attempt was made to...insert spectacles"¹⁸⁵ but when the play was again presented by Waller at the Lyric Theatre in

1908 Sidney Lee claimed it to be "in new and improved conditions"¹⁸⁶ compared with the Lyceum revival in 1900 and Linton confirms that it was "gorgeously mounted".¹⁸⁷

Predictably, Benson responded to the advent of war in 1914 with characteristic robustness. The company had just commenced its summer Festival at Stratford and sensing that a formal declaration of hostilities was imminent, at a few hours' notice Benson had substituted *Henry V* for the intended *Merry Wives* on Monday 3rd August. War was declared the following day. Even thirty years later John Dover Wilson recalled that "the epic drama of Agincourt matched the temper of the moment...so exactly that it might have been written expressly for it".¹⁸⁸

A heightened sense of shared national identity naturally characterised much of the critical comment in the early stages of the war. Indeed, critical judgement, if not actually suspended, was distinctly muted at this time, almost as if a bad notice - particularly in respect of "the patriotic play"¹⁸⁹ - would constitute an act of disloyalty. It was a climate which inevitably disarmed criticism of the play's pageantic elements.

One commentator conceded: "The theatre must be under present conditions, rather a blessing and a safety valve than a place to exercise strong opinions".¹⁹⁰ Another, twelve months later and after eulogising the soldier king, confessed: "After all, it is no bad ideal, the ideal of Henry V. in wartime, even though in peace time we may judge by another scale of values".¹⁹¹

It was, of course, 'the times' rather than its staging that bestowed a special significance upon the production. In fact, although a different catalyst had been introduced Benson's formula remained essentially the same. Indeed, the announcement the following spring that "the present programme, with the exception of *Coriolanus*, is confined entirely to Shakespearean stock-plays; there are no experiments in the staging of the rare dramas of Shakespeare..."¹⁹² might as justifiably be extended to the individual plays in the Benson repertoire as to the construction of the Festival itself.

Consequently, although *Henry V* was presented on five occasions during the first Festival of the war the production itself was reported neither widely nor in detail. Some satisfaction was expressed that the performance went "without jingoism from beginning to end"¹⁹³ and when the same reviewer 'revisited' the production after the initial exhilaration it was only to lament the "decorous debauchery" of the French Camp scene; a pause "which almost amounts to an interval" before the Agincourt tableau; and an unseemly overcrowding when the chanting of the funeral cortège - effective when heard off-stage - was brought before the audience "at the back".¹⁹⁴ Little, it seems, had changed.

No doubt the familiar brought a measure of comfort and reassurance to a generation of theatregoers whose lives had been shaken by international events. One reviewer considered that previous acquaintance with the production meant that the performance "calls for little

comment" but expressed satisfaction that "the gathering of old comrades...gave a corporate quality, akin to the national spirit, to their doings...".¹⁹⁵ Interestingly, it was the provincial press which most consistently preserved a tone of measured critical detachment in its dealings with the play. Writing of Benson's presentation of *Henry V* in the spring of 1915 there is a hint of fanaticism in *The Times's* scornful dismissal of the Germans' attempts to 'annex' Shakespeare:

We doubt if any foreigner can understand plays like *Henry IV.* or *Henry V.*, as quite ordinary Englishmen understand them.... The plays are an invocation of what is best and most characteristic in our race.¹⁹⁶

In the local press, however, the same production was praised for its 'modesty', 'simplicity' and lack of "patriotic demonstration or any sign of jingoism" and, indeed, rebuked for a tendency so to "belittle the enemy...that instead of the English standing out gloriously as heroes they are somewhat tame and lustreless".¹⁹⁷ Another reviewer balanced an understanding that "the King...is the incarnation of the English spirit during wartime" against a recognition of the play's limitations:

Strictly speaking, it is not a drama, but a pageant, a procession.... Its ideal production on the modern stage would be based upon the fact that the Elizabethan stage was particularly fitted to these half plays, half pageants. Mr Benson's Stratford production...is devised for the modern picture stage, and however much we may regret that at Stratford there is no platform stage of Elizabethan days, we cannot fail to appreciate the inspiring dignity and ceremonial patriotism of the Benson presentation.¹⁹⁸

When Benson presented the play yet again the

following spring it was found that "the fires of inspiration which burned last year...have been somewhat quenched" and that aspects of presentation that had then been indulgently borne now began to give offence as bearing "both the virtues and the faults of popularity":

No objection can be advanced against the ceremony and circumstance and all the pomp and pageantry of mediaeval colour, provided always that the mechanical arrangements make no interference with the continuity of the performance.¹⁹⁹

Irritation that "the famous tableau was still the same Parish Parlour affair" and with the concluding 'curtain' ("The characters assembled like the principals in pantomime, minus the 'fun'") was tempered by the recognition that the Festival was undertaken "with a bravery which ought to disarm the critic".²⁰⁰ Such critical barbs as remained, however, were effectively blunted by the occasion of the Tercentenary of Shakespeare's death, marked in London by a commemorative matinée at Drury Lane Theatre of *Julius Caesar* on 2nd May in the presence of the King and Queen: "a sound choice for an occasion of ceremony" recalling Tree's "magnificent revival" in 1898.²⁰¹

The event, which lasted some six hours, concluded with a Shakespeare Pageant arranged by Arthur Collins and set against a huge black and gold staircase. Again the comparison with pantomime proved irresistible. this time in justifiable homage to "one who loved masques and interludes".²⁰² On this staircase appeared in succession the characters of eight plays by Shakespeare in a series of tableaux involving "hundreds of well-known players".²⁰³ The

finale was a grand tableau, a long procession and the singing of the National Anthem. All this, and 'Sir' Frank Benson, too.

The Tercentenary Pageant is, perhaps, a fitting event with which to close a chapter on staged pageantry in Shakespeare's 'Decorated' period; Tree died twelve months later and although Benson would continue as director of the annual Shakespeare Festival at Stratford until 1919, during the remainder of the war period there would be only one other production of a play from the second tetralogy in the decorated mode, a revival of *Henry V* at His Majesty's "under the auspices of Sir Herbert Tree"²⁰⁴ which had just sixteen performances; the five other revivals of the early English histories - all under the more austere auspices of Ben Greet at the Old Vic - totalled only twenty nine performances between them.

In some respects, of course, the strand of realism with which the pageantic mode shared a close affinity has never entirely relinquished its hold upon public taste: "the modern audience, lacking the Elizabethans' sensitivity to words, needs such visual assistance".²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the early years of the century witnessed both the culmination and the decline of the antiquarian-spectacular movement. As realism was gradually up-staged by the new methods of suggestion the increased simplification and modification of realistic methods inevitably resulted in a scaling-down of attendant pageantry. Its very survival in such an ostensibly arid climate, however, is a measure of both an enduring

pictorial instinct and the recognition that although 'the proper decoration' of Shakespeare's plays need not extend to photographic elaboration a measure of 'splendour' is both proper and necessary to do justice to their spirit.

NOTES

¹ See, for example, Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933); H. Craig, *English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955).

² See A.C. Cawley and others *The Revels history of Drama in English*, I (London: Methuen, 1983); E.K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1903); Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages*, 3 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959-72); Glynne Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974).

³ See above 'By way of introduction', ⁹n (p. 23).

⁴ *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. by Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols (London: Bell, 1971), V, p. 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, IX, pp. 403-04.

⁶ Samuel Chappuzeau's *Le Theatre Franois* (1674); referred to in George C.D. Odell, *Shakespeare - From Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols (New York: Scribner, 1920), I, pp. 175-76.

⁷ Tate's Epistle Dedicatory to his adaptation of *Richard II*; quoted Odell, I, p. 57.

⁸ Details of these two episodes were given in the printed text of Ravenscroft's version of the play, printed in 1687; facsimile edition: (London: Cornmarket, 1969).

⁹ See Margaret I. Swayze, 'A History of the Literary Criticism and Stage Production of *Henry VIII*', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham, 1973), p. 99.

¹⁰ W.R. Chetwood, *A General History of the Stage, From its Origin in Greece down to the present Time* (London: Owen, 1749), p. 68.

¹¹ *Ibid.*.

¹² Odell, I, pp. 309-10.

¹³ Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Micellanies 'sic': Consisting of Critical Observations on Several Plays of Shakespeare*, 3 vols (London: n.pub.S., 1784), I, p. 124.

¹⁴ Odell, I, p. 419.

¹⁵ Cibber's Dedication 'To the Right Honourable Philip, Earl of Chesterfield' appended to the printed edition of *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John* (London: Watts, 1745).

- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Francis Gentleman *The Dramatic Censor; or. Critical Companion*. 2 vols (London: Bell, 1770), I, p. 185.
- ¹⁸ *The Universal Museum*, October, 1762.
- ¹⁹ Odell, I, p. 415.
- ²⁰ Tate Wilkinson, *The Mirror; or Actor's Tablet*; quoted Odell, I, p. 422.
- ²¹ Martin Wright, Introduction to the facsimile of David Garrick's *Henry VIII* (London: Cornmarket, 1970), p. [i].
- ²² Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.*, 2 vols (London: [n.pub.], 1780), I, pp. 320-21.
- ^{23ⁿ} *The Court Magazine*, November 1761, p.120; *The London Gazette*, 22 September, 1761 contains an elaborate description of the real coronation.
- ²⁴ Count Frederick Kielmansegge, *Diary of a Journey to England in the Years 1761-1762*, trans. Countess Kielmansegg (London: 1902), p. 194.
- ²⁵ W. de Archenholz, *A Picture of England* (Dublin: 1791), p. 236.
- ²⁶ Odell, II, p. 85.
- ^{27ⁿ} First performed at Drury Lane on 25 November, 1788 and revived periodically until 1811.
- ²⁸ James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, 1825), I, p. 423.
- ²⁹ Swayze, p. 135.
- ³⁰ Herschel Baker, *John Philip Kemble: The Actor in His Theatre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), p. 128.
- ³¹ Odell, II, p. 104.
- ³² 'COVENT GARDEN THEATRE', *The Times*, 16 December, 1811.
- ³³ 'COVENT GARDEN THEATRE', *The Times*, 2 March, 1812.
- ^{34ⁿ} Richard Cumberland, *The Memoirs of Richard Cumberland*, 2 vols (London: Lackington, Allen, 1807), II, p. 384. See also Boaden, II, pp. 428-29.
- ³⁵ *John Bull*, 13 November, 1837.
- ³⁶ *John Bull*, 19 March, 1838.
- ³⁷ 'COVENT GARDEN THEATRE', *The Times*, 11 June, 1839.
- ³⁸ See John Coleman, *Memoirs of Samuel Phelps* (London: Remington, 1886), p. 217.
- ³⁹ Kean's acting edition: *Shakespeare's [sic] Historical Play of King Henry the Eighth* (London: 1855), Preface ix-x.

- ⁴⁰ Michael R. Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850-1910* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 30.
- ⁴¹ Described comprehensively in Kean's acting version: *Shakespeare's Play of King Richard II* (London: 1857), pp. 60-64.
- ⁴² Booth, pp. 30-1.
- ⁴³ *Illustrated London News*, 21 March, 1857, p. 264.
- ⁴⁴ Odell, II, p. 417.
- ⁴⁵ 'LYCEUM THEATRE', *The Times*, 6 January, 1892.
- ⁴⁶ 'Our play-box', *Theatre* (February, 1892), p. 105.
- ⁴⁷ Booth, p. 57.
- ⁴⁸ See Richard Foulkes, *The Calverts: Actors of Some Importance* (London: The Society For Theatre Research, 1992), p. 64.
- ⁴⁹ Richard Foulkes, 'Charles Calvert's Henry V', *Shakespeare Survey*, 41 (1988) 23-34 (p. 24).
- ⁵⁰ *Examiner and Times*, 8 September, 1872.
- ⁵¹ See Foulkes, 'Calvert's Henry V', pp. 28-31.
- ⁵² *Weekly Times*, 21 September, 1872.
- ⁵³ Foulkes, 'Calvert's Henry V', p. 23.
- ⁵⁴ Joseph Knight, *Athenaeum*, 26 December, 1896.
- ⁵⁵ Quoted Roger Savage, 'Producing Dido and Aeneas: An investigation into sixteen problems', *Early Music*, 4 (1976), p. 397.
- ⁵⁶ Calvin Darlington Linton, 'Shakespearian Staging in London from Irving to Gielgud' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1940), p. 295.
- ⁵⁷ Linton, 'Shakespearian Staging in London from Irving to Gielgud' p. 140.
- ⁵⁸ '"CORIOLANUS" AT THE LYCEUM', *The Times*, 16 April, 1901.
- ⁵⁹ George Rowell, *The Victorian Theatre 1792-1914: A Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 107.
- ⁶⁰ James Woodfield, *English Theatre in Transition 1881-1914* (Beckenham, Kent: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 137.
- ⁶¹ The play ran for over a hundred performances in its first season and was repeatedly revived by him subsequently. See Richard L. O'Connell, 'A Stage History of *Richard II*, 1800-1920' 2 vols (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Shakespeare Institute, Birmingham University, 1958), II, Appendix: Hand List of Performances.
- ⁶² *Pendragon*, 13 September, 1903.

- ⁶³ Norman Marshall. *The Producer and the Play*. 3rd edn (London: Davis-Poynter, 1957), p. 144.
- ⁶⁴ A.E. Wilson. *Edwardian Theatre* (London: Barker, 1951), p. 77.
- ⁶⁵ Percy Fitzgerald. *Shakespearean Representation: Its Laws and Limits* (London: Stock, 1908), p. 76.
- ⁶⁶ Crosse. Diaries, III, p. 114.
- ⁶⁷ *Daily Express*, 28 April, 1910.
- ⁶⁸ Booth, p. 50.
- ⁶⁹ See O'Connell, I, pp. 137-38.
- ⁷⁰ Quoted O'Connell, II, p. 195.
- ⁷¹ Crosse. Diaries, III, p. 114.
- ⁷² Gordon Crosse. *Shakespearean Playgoing 1890-1952* (London: Mowbray, 1953), p. 37.
- ⁷³ J.C. Trewin. *Shakespeare on the English Stage 1900-1964: A Survey of Productions* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1964), p. 3.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- ⁷⁵ Una Ellis-Fermor, 'Some Other London Productions', *Shakespeare Survey*, 1 (1948), p. 106.
- ⁷⁶ See G. Ambrose Lee, 'The Heraldry of Shakespeare's *Richard II* at His Majesty's Theatre', *The Genealogical Magazine*, 7 (December, 1903), pp. 332-38.
- ⁷⁷ Fitzgerald, p. 77.
- ⁷⁸ [*T. [imes] & M. [ail]*], 12 September, 1903.
- ⁷⁹ O'Connell, II, p. 220.
- ⁸⁰ *Richard II* Prompt Book in the Beerbohm Tree Collection, File HBT 152, Bristol University Theatre Collection.
- ⁸¹ Typed notes appended to *Richard II* Prompt Book [Tree]. Pageantic details from the prompt copy are included at some length since they are not referred to by O'Connell.
- ⁸² Lee, p. 336.
- ⁸³ *Richard II* Prompt Book [Tree]
- ⁸⁴ Fitzgerald, pp. 77-78.
- ⁸⁵ Crosse. Diaries, III, p. 116.
- ⁸⁶ *Westminster Gazette*, 11 September, 1903.
- ⁸⁷ Lee, p. 337
- ⁸⁸ *Sketch*, 4 November, 1903.

- ⁸⁹ Lee naturally affirms their historical provenance, p. 336.
- ⁹⁰ⁿ *The Pilot*, 19 September 1903. O'Connell infers some of Tree's business from the stage directions of an acting edition of *Richard II* as presented by the students of Denstone College, Shrewsbury in 1907, which "seems strongly influenced by Benson's presentation of the play": O'Connell, II, p. 248.
- ⁹¹ *Richard II* Prompt Book [Tree].
- ⁹² *Richard II* Prompt Book [Tree].
- ⁹³ *Richard II* Prompt Book [Tree].
- ⁹⁴ *Richard II* Prompt Book [Tree].
- ⁹⁵ *Richard II* Prompt Book [Tree].
- ⁹⁶ Fitzgerald, p. 76.
- ⁹⁷ⁿ Booth gives a detailed description of Kean's episode, pp. 50-51.
- ⁹⁸ Crosse, Diaries, III, p. 118.
- ⁹⁹ Gordon Crosse, *Fifty Years of Shakespearean Playgoing* (London: Mowbray, 1940), p. 50.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Richard II* Prompt Book [Tree].
- ¹⁰¹ *Richard II* Prompt Book [Tree].
- ¹⁰²ⁿ So described in the descriptor of scenes in the Prompt Book.
- ¹⁰³ Fitzgerald, p. 78.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Country Life*, 19 September, 1903.
- ¹⁰⁵ O'Connell, II, p. 261.
- ¹⁰⁶ Lee, p. 337.
- ¹⁰⁷ Crosse, Diaries, III, p. 120.
- ¹⁰⁸ Fitzgerald, p. 79.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Birmingham Post*, 9 April, 1896.
- ¹¹⁰ 'RICHARD II: THE REVIVAL PLAY', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 17 April, 1896.
- ¹¹¹ 'THE SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL. THE MEMORIAL PERFORMANCES', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 24 April, 1896.
- ¹¹² 'PRODUCTION OF 'RICHARD II'', *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 24 April, 1896.
- ¹¹³ Trewin, *Shakespeare on the English Stage*, p. 6.
- ¹¹⁴ M. C. Day and J. C. Trewin *The Shakespeare Memorial Theatre* (London: Dent, 1932), p. 78.
- ¹¹⁵ T. C. Kemp and J. C. Trewin, *The Stratford Festival: A History of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre* (Birmingham: Cornish, 1953) pp. 38-39.

- ¹¹⁶ *Winchester Guardian*, 16 March, 1900.
- ¹¹⁷ 'THE FESTIVAL WEEK'. *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 17 April, 1896.
- ¹¹⁸ O'Connell, II, illus. 70 & 71 bet. pp. 91-92.
- ¹¹⁹ O'Connell, II, p. 92.
- ¹²⁰ Gordon Crosse, 'The Shakespearean Stage in Our Time: A Few Impressions', *The Commonwealth* (1916), p. 304.
- ¹²¹ Crosse, Diaries, II, p. 124.
- ¹²² Robert Speaight, *Shakespeare on the Stage: An Illustrated History of Shakespearian Performance* (London: Collins, 1973), pp. 129-30.
- ^{123ⁿ} The game of bowls which provided the focus for the opening business was copied from Benson by Tree. O'Connell gives a detailed description of the scene culled from a variety of reviews: I, pp. 131-32.
- ¹²⁴ O'Connell, II, p. 132.
- ¹²⁵ 'THE MEMORIAL PERFORMANCES: RICHARD II'. *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 5 May, 1905.
- ¹²⁶ Phyllis Rackin, 'The Role of the Audience in Shakespeare's *Richard II*' (p. 263).
- ¹²⁷ Day and Trewin, *The Shakespeare Memorial Theatre*, p. 78.
- ¹²⁸ *Morning Post*, 14 March, 1907.
- ^{129ⁿ} Details of the costumes, including details of colour, style and the names of the characters which they dressed are provided by the Wardrobe Book, *Richard II* in the Shakespeare Centre Library, Stratford-upon-Avon, Ref. MSS. 72.5.
- ¹³⁰ O'Connell, II, p. 135.
- ¹³¹ See O'Connell, II, pp. 142-43.
- ¹³² *Guardian*, 11 December, 1896.
- ¹³³ *Birmingham Post*, 9 April, 1896.
- ¹³⁴ W.J.L. 'RICHARD II. IN THE PROVINCES'. *Sketch*, 17 March, 1897.
- ^{135ⁿ} *Ohio State Journal*, 26 November, 1913. Edwin Austin Abbey (1852-1911) was an American painter and illustrator. Active chiefly in England, he was influenced primarily by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. "His exhibited works were usually based on Shakespearean, troubadour or Renaissance themes. Large and richly coloured, the paintings reflect Abbey's fascination with the stage, particularly in the arrangement of the figures, their poses and sumptuously coloured costumes": Marc Simpson in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. by Jane Turner (London: Grove, 1996), I, p. 23. He designed the costumes for Irving's production of *Richard II* (1898) and was awarded the commission to paint Edward II's coronation in 1902.
- ¹³⁶ Travis Bogard, 'Shakespeare's Second Richard'. *PMLA*, 70, (1955), 192-209 (p. 203-04).
- ¹³⁷ W.J.L., *Sketch*, 17 March, 1897.

- ¹³⁸ *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 18 August, 1911.
- ¹³⁹ 'MR F R BENSON'S "INFORMAL RAMBLES"', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 22 August, 1913.
- ¹⁴⁰ James Black, 'The Interlude of The Beggar and the King in *Richard II*' in *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theater*, ed. Bergeron, pp. 104-13 (p. 108).
- ¹⁴¹ Alice S. Venezky, *Pageantry on the Shakespearean Stage* (New York: Twayne, 1951; repr. New York: AMS, 1972), p. 131.
- ¹⁴² *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 5 May, 1905.
- ¹⁴³ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 24 April, 1896.
- ¹⁴⁴ⁿ Crosse, Diaries, II, p. 126. Six years earlier, in 1894, William Poel, the apostle of 'full text' Shakespeare, had also cut York's speech and when Poel was consulted by John Martin-Harvey on the design for his production of *The Taming of the Shrew* in 1913 "his interest in the matter seemed confined to the necessary 'cuts' to be made...rather than the decoration of it": *The Autobiography of Sir John Martin-Harvey* (London: Low, Marston, [1933]), p. 412.
- ¹⁴⁵ See O'Connell, II, p. 186.
- ¹⁴⁶ O'Connell, II, p. 187.
- ¹⁴⁷ O'Connell, II, p. 188.
- ¹⁴⁸ⁿ During that year's Festival the play was performed on four occasions in all and was featured as the Birthday Play.
- ¹⁴⁹ Nancarrow, p. 106.
- ¹⁵⁰ J.C. Trewin, *Benson and the Bensonians* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1960), p. 92.
- ¹⁵¹ 'SHAKESPEARE COMMEMORATION AT STRATFORD: PRODUCTION OF "HENRY V."', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 23 April, 1897.
- ¹⁵² 'THE SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL: HENRY V.', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 30 April, 1897.
- ¹⁵³ *Illustrated London News*, 24 February, 1900, p. 249.
- ¹⁵⁴ "'HENRY V.' AT STRATFORD-ON-AVON", *Guardian*, 24 April, 1897.
- ¹⁵⁵ 'SHAKESPEARE WEEK AT STRATFORD-ON-AVON: PRODUCTION OF HENRY V.' *Evesham Journal*, 24 April, 1897.
- ¹⁵⁶ 'THE SHAKESPEARE COMMEMORATION', *Daily Graphic*, 21 April, 1897.
- ¹⁵⁷ Quoted Trewin, *Benson and the Bensonians*, p. 93.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Daily Graphic*, 21 April, 1897.
- ¹⁵⁹ Crosse, Diaries, II, p. 42.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- ¹⁶¹ Crosse, Diaries, IV, p. 138.

- ¹⁶² Ibid., p. 137.
- ¹⁶³ *Illustrated London News*, 24 February, 1900, p. 249.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Sketch*, 14 February, 1900.
- ¹⁶⁵ *The Times*, 28 December, 1914.
- ¹⁶⁶ *Evesham Journal*, 24 April, 1897.
- ¹⁶⁷ Crosse, Diaries, II, p. 42.
- ¹⁶⁸ W.H.H., *Pilot*, 3 March, 1900.
- ¹⁶⁹ See Cary Mazer, *Shakespeare Refashioned: Elizabethan Plays on Edwardian Stages*, Theater and Dramatic Studies, 5 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981), p. 47.
- ¹⁷⁰ Crosse, III, pp. 10-12.
- ¹⁷¹ *The Green Room Or Who's Who on the Stage: An annual biographical record of the dramatic, musical and variety world*, ed. by John Parker (London: Sealey Clark, 1908), p. 448.
- ¹⁷² Nancarrow, p. 111.
- ¹⁷³ *Illustrated London News*, 29 December, 1900, p. 966.
- ¹⁷⁴ Ibid..
- ¹⁷⁵ Crosse, Diaries, III, pp. 11-12.
- ¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 12.
- ¹⁷⁷ Sidney Lee, *Shakespeare's 'King Henry the Fifth': An Account and An Estimate* (London: Smith, Elder, 1900), p. 10.
- ¹⁷⁸ *The Times*, 24 December, 1900.
- ¹⁷⁹ Lee, 'Shakespeare's King Henry the Fifth', p. 11.
- ¹⁸⁰ *Tatler*, 1 February, 1905.
- ¹⁸¹ J.T.Greig, *Sunday Times*, 23 January, 1905.
- ¹⁸² *Daily Chronicle*, 23 January, 1905.
- ¹⁸³ *Mall*, 23 January, 1905.
- ¹⁸⁴ Crosse, Diaries, III, p. 146.
- ¹⁸⁵ Linton, 'Shakespearian Staging in London from Irving to Gielgud', p. 205.
- ¹⁸⁶ Lee, *Shakespeare's 'King Henry the Fifth'*, p. 20.
- ¹⁸⁷ Linton, 'Shakespearian Staging in London from Irving to Gielgud', p. 295.

- ¹⁸⁸ John Dover Wilson, ed., *Henry V*. The New Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), p. viii.
- ¹⁸⁹ 'THE SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL A PATRIOTIC FINALE', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 4 September, 1914.
- ¹⁹⁰ R.T.Rundle Milliken, 'THE DRAMATIC PERFORMANCES: RICHARD II', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 7 August, 1914.
- ¹⁹¹ 'THE STRATFORD FESTIVAL: THE BIRTHDAY PERFORMANCE: "HENRY V."', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 24 April, 1915.
- ¹⁹² 'THE STRATFORD FESTIVAL', *Warwick Advertiser*, 24 April, 1915.
- ¹⁹³ R.T.Rundle Milliken, 'THE DRAMATIC PERFORMANCES: HENRY V', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 7 August, 1914.
- ¹⁹⁴ R.T.Rundle Milliken, 'THE DRAMATIC PERFORMANCES: HENRY V', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 21 August, 1914.
- ^{195a} 'THE SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL', *Morning Post*, 24 April, 1915. Benson was to continue to revive the play during the next three Stratford Festivals. Its selection for the Birthday performance in April 1915 acquired an added lustre for "in the coming October falls the five hundredth anniversary of the battle whose hold upon popular imagination is largely maintained by the memory of Shakespeare's great dramatised chronicle": *Birmingham Daily Post*, 24 April, 1915.
- ¹⁹⁶ 'The Shakespeare Temper', *The Times*, 24 April, 1915.
- ¹⁹⁷ R.T.R. Milliken, 'THE SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL: THE MEMORIAL PERFORMANCES: HENRY V. THE BIRTHDAY PLAY', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 30 April, 1915.
- ¹⁹⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 24 April, 1915.
- ¹⁹⁹ 'SHAKESPEARE AND THE WAR: MR F.R. BENSON'S "HENRY V."', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 25 April, 1916.
- ²⁰⁰ R.T.Rundle Milliken, 'THE DRAMATIC PERFORMANCES: HENRY V.', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, April 28, 1916.
- ²⁰¹ '"JULIUS CAESAR": THE TERCENTENARY PLAY', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 April, 1916.
- ²⁰² 'SHAKESPEARE DAY SURPRISE: MR BENSON KNIGHTED AT DRURY LANE', *The Times*, 3 May, 1916.
- ²⁰³ Ibid.
- ²⁰⁴ Nancarrow, p. 117.
- ²⁰⁵ Calvin D. Linton, 'Some Recent Trends in Shakespearean Staging', *A Journal of English Literary History* 7 (1940), 300-24 (p. 320).

CHAPTER II

Dressing down

The origins and progress of the 'New Stagecraft' have been extensively chronicled and will not be rehearsed at length here.¹ The term itself is, of course, a loose one which embraces a considerable diversity of belief within an exceedingly broad church. However, if the exponents of the creed perceived the New Jerusalem in different terms they were united in rejecting the dual heresies of spectacle and antiquarianism. All sought in their different ways to free the audience's imagination by abandoning scenic literalism, whether by William Poel's method, releasing "the exquisite rhythm and cadence of the verse"² to create drama through the ear as in the Elizabethan theatre or like Gordon Craig who sought to express the poetry visually through suggestive 'decoration' instead of representative scenery.

A contemporary summarised the principles embraced by the exponents of the 'New Stagecraft': "The business of these artists...was to evoke the atmosphere of the piece in setting and in lights". To this end they "put as little as possible on the stage that might distract the spectator from the meaning of the general design...: they enriched the setting...through suggestion" and they strove for "a synthesis of all the available and appropriate forces of the theater, and of all the qualities of the play...".³

In brief, the visit of the Saxe-Meiningen company to Drury Lane in 1881 had been an important precursor of the

New Stagecraft because of their stress upon the artistic unity of production, all aspects of performance and design being integrated into a total effect. This was a concept which inspired E.W. Godwin, the father of Craig, no less than Wagner who acted as the catalyst for the revolution in staging on the Continent initiated by Adolphe Appia. Both Appia and Craig sought the substitution of an abstract, symbolic mounting for one of realistic illustration - light replacing the traditional painted scene - together with a "synesthetic integration of experience".⁴

Appia sought to impart a mythic dimension to the heroic world conceived in Wagner's music-dramas through 'sculptured' light and shadow. Using different stage levels to create "an aesthetic connection between the actor and the setting"⁵ and curtains imaginatively draped, "at one swoop Appia cleared the clutter of proscenium arch, painted scenery and stage machinery".⁶

Craig likewise rejected representation and illusion in favour of expressive, significant 'Form'. Like Poel, Craig worked at first with amateurs and in non-theatrical spaces seeking, through a personal control over and integration of all of the elements of theatre, to free the spectator's imagination. Unlike Poel his approach was neither 'antiquarian' nor scholarly but after a brief and acrimonious sortie into the professional theatre - he largely retired from an active role in production, influencing the new methods principally through his writing - notably *The Art of the Theatre* (1911) - and suggestive

designs.

The revival of interest in the Elizabethan theatre with its open stage and minimal scenery was "a particularly British contribution to the overthrow of realism".⁷ Like other theatrical innovators at this time Poel sought to release the imagination of an audience "clogged with superfluous illustration".⁸ However, when Waller's revival of *Henry V* was reviewed by the *Sunday Times* in 1905 the play's action was celebrated as being entirely "declamatory and pictorial" and as such it was deemed to be unsuitable for a treatment consisting of "bare boards and merely curtained entrances".⁹ This was a squib clearly directed at William Poel and the disciples of Elizabethan 'nudism'¹⁰ and is a testimony to both the continued dominance of pictorialism and the suspicion which the new methods generated. Even by 1914 England's response to the new movement had been relatively slight compared to the extent that experiment had been embraced on the Continent:

The English, less susceptible to change [than the Germans], had scarcely been touched by [the 'new movement'] and of course after August, 1914, there was no thought of anything but carrying on as best they could.¹¹

With the outbreak of war, in fact, experimental methods were forgotten; what the public wanted in the midst of confusion, as we have seen, was a return to established practice and the comfort of familiarity. Even by the early twenties an American on a 'Grand Tour' of Continental theatres appeared dismissive that "England experiments in little theaters...".¹²

There is evidence, nevertheless, that by the outbreak of war the old order was beginning to change, even in England: "Tree had become quiescent. Sir Alma Tadema was dead. Granville Barker was producing and writing, Craig was making a stir on the Continent, and reviewers were growing more and more sympathetic toward the efforts of the new theorists".¹³ At the same time, the legacy of pictorialism was deeply ingrained and even exponents of scenic simplicity did not entirely abandon other elements of the pictorial mode so that our subject - whilst hardly flourishing in the prevailing climate - proved sufficiently hardy to survive, albeit in stunted form. The most revolutionary aspect of the New Movement was in the realm of the visual, manifested primarily in the stripping away of illusionistic scenic elaboration. However, in this country this was done without substituting a 'suggestive' alternative, a fact which threw the weight of the visual even more emphatically on costumes, 'groupings' and stage movement, conditions not entirely unsympathetic to some degree of pageantic display.

On the face of it, the fact that in 1894 William Poel had chosen to cut York's speech describing Bolingbroke's triumphal entry into London when he directed a public reading of *Richard II* in the Steinway Hall and did so again for his full production of the play at the University of London in 1899 might be taken as a thinly-disguised public rejection of 'Decorated Shakespeare' as represented by the infamous 'Historical Episode' and an affirmation of what Bridges-Adams was to call "the nudist way" of stage

production.¹⁴ After all, in 1857 (and the play had largely languished in the study since then) the interpolated, so-called 'Historical Episode' had been the popular highlight of Kean's gorgeous and archaeologically accurate presentation. It had been revived by Tree, as we have seen, and in many ways exemplified the ethic of managerial commercialism which Poel claimed had "turned the stage into a huge business for the exhibition of trivialities" and against which he had set his face.¹⁵

In practice, however, Poel's 'nudism' was confined principally to the shedding of scenic dressing. Believing both that "the imaginative faculties of modern man...were being smothered by the insistent appeal to the eye, which at every turn was recklessly flattered"¹⁶ and that Shakespeare was essentially "his own scene painter"¹⁷ he displayed "a sovereign contempt for the land of milk and honey where Beerbohm Tree pastured his horses, dogs, and rabbits".¹⁸

Yet although Poel relied largely upon what has been termed "architectural scenography"¹⁹ supplemented with draped curtains for his settings, he was by no means indifferent to visual appeal in his staging and to exploiting the opportunities for pageantry offered by the text.

Poel's use of the *tableau vivant*, one of the most prominent features of the Victorian pictorial theatre, has been noted;²⁰ C.E.Montague, making comparison with Raphael and Giorgione, claimed gratefully that Poel's pyramidal formation in his production of Milton's *Samson*

Agonistes in 1908 had served to rescue the "vacant eye" from the play's "wide expanses of still rhetoric"²¹ while Speaight enumerates instances indicative of Poel's "painter's eye".²² Montague concluded that it was "not strict playgoing, perhaps...but quite strict pleasure; the playgoing eye was at least triumphantly pacified".²³

When, towards the end of his career he directed four productions on a full platform stage for the Elizabethan Stage Circle, Ivor Brown, distinguishing between this stage and the 'compromise' of the apron stage, remarked on the scope it offered - by virtue of its size - for "much and intricate movement...: It enables you to understand the processional values of the Elizabethan Stage and the welcome which it gave to the invasive masque".²⁴ During this period, for example, Poel made full use of the processional elements in his staging of Samuel Rowley's *When you see me, you know me* in order to introduce as much spectacle and action as possible, while in 1895 in *The Comedy of Errors* he had introduced a procession which passed through the audience and which anticipated Max Reinhardt's similar attempts to link spectators and stage.

In many of his Shakespearean productions, Poel made use of beefeaters, halberdiers and servants, some of whom remained on stage throughout the performance. Some were used for purely practical purposes but "for the most part...the function of these supernumeraries was purely pictorial".²⁵

Although much revised and heavily overwritten,

the prompt copy for *Richard II* has an extensive 'ORDER OF ENTRANCE' for the opening scene which brackets characters and groups of characters together as if to indicate processional pairings and includes numerous supers which are listed again separately alongside:

4 HALB[ERD]IERS
NORFOLK
CARLISLE
SURREY
SALISBURY
NORTH[UMBERLAND]
ABBOT
GAUNT, 2 BLUE SER[VANTS]
2 JUDGES, RECORDER, ROSS, WILL[OUGHBY],
BUTLER
Mr ORME, YORK AND 2 RED SER[VANTS]
2 BEEF[EATERS], RICH[ARD], AUMERLE, 2 BEST
RED SER[VANTS]

Provision is also made for '2 BLUE SERVANTS' to accompany Bolingbroke's entrance,²⁶ all of which compares very favourably in terms of numbers with the thirty-seven massed on stage in *The Comedy of Errors* in 1895²⁷ and, indeed, is comparable with Benson's cast for *Richard II*.²⁸ⁿ

Even more impressive provision was made for the opening of the lists at Coventry. In addition to the named characters - Ross, Willoughby, Scroop, Salisbury, Northumberland, Gaunt, Aumerle, Surrey, Richard, Bushy, Bagot, Green - there were two 'BLUE' servants, four halberdiers, two beefeaters, ten guards, two 'BEST RED SERVANTS WITH TWO CUSHIONS, [STATE] SWORD AND ORB'.a 'RECORDER' and 'TWO OTHER RED SERVANTS' as well as boys [ie Bluecoat Boys] to 'BRING ON CHAIRS AND BRING DOWN ALTAR TABLE'. Norfolk and Bolingbroke was each accompanied by 'TWO HERALDS' comprising a 'BUGLE BOY' and a named super bearing

a 'GILT WAND'. In this Poel actually 'improved' upon the stage direction which required only a single herald for each. He also chose to elaborate the various martial calls in having two trumpets 'ANSWER EACH OTHER' as Richard and the court enter and again following Norfolk's declaration.²⁹

When Richard and his train had left the stage no less than four halberdiers and four 'BLUE' servants remained on stage to decorate the leave-taking of Gaunt and his son, presumably to see Bolingbroke off the premises.

The fact that Poel used so many supers to swell the scene led at times, no doubt, to a very crowded stage and it may be this to which the *Athenaeum* was alluding in its patronising assessment of this scene:

It was, of course, impossible for the fight between Mowbray and Hereford to take place. All that could be done was to bring on the contending noblemen, put blunted lances in their hands, and make them, with the aid of their squires, don, and then at royal bidding doff their casques. For a moment it seemed as if they were going to fight without, but on the king's throwing down a superfluous warder they were haled back.³⁰

Even for an informal 'Court' scene such as Aumerle's report of Bolingbroke's leave-taking Richard, entering from stage left, was attended by two beefeaters and two 'BEST' servants while Aumerle, entering from the right, was accompanied by four halberdiers. An additional refinement was the playing of a harp - presumably intended to suggest courtly indulgence - during the opening speeches of this scene, as it did during the opening scene of the play.³¹

Indeed, Poel seems to have used music principally

to point the mood of a scene. The martial scenes were marked by trumpet and bugle calls and by drums while the solemnity of the scene portraying the ailing Gaunt in Ely House was established by an on-stage choir comprising four Blue servants as 'MONKS', an Abbot, two choristers and a Nun, a mood that was effectively destroyed with the entrance of Richard and his followers, again to the accompaniment of the harp. Significantly the prompt copy shows that Poel's original intention to announce the King's presence with a conventional trumpet flourish was abandoned in favour of the less respectful harp.³²

Although Poel seems, within the limits of his means, to have made the most of the play's pageantic elements the prevailing stage conditions ensured that his staging of processional entrances and exits was not always in keeping with the dignity of the occasion:

Monarchs, heroes, and the like, had again and again to step across the footlights and ascend by steep steps through files of spectators to a dressing-room somewhere at the back of the auditorium.³³

In Westminster Hall Richard apparently entered in formal procession preceded by two beefeaters 'WHO GO AND STAND BY THRONE' and followed by York bearing the royal crown on a cushion and by two 'BEST RED' servants with two cushions displaying the orb and sceptre respectively. Once Richard had been deposed the processional element was again exploited, the separate exits of Richard and Bolingbroke being combined in a single augmented procession headed by two halberdiers. They were followed by Northumberland

escorting Richard and they, in turn, by Bolingbroke with two halberdiers to bring up the rear.³⁴

For the coffin episode in the final scene four choristers bearing lighted candles led the procession, followed by two monks, two 'BLACK SERVANTS', four soldiers carrying the coffin, two additional soldiers and, finally, Exton.³⁵

Here Poel seems to have deliberately focused the audience's attention upon the spectacle of the cortège and so upon the personal tragedy of Richard. To this end he ensured that they were not distracted by Bolingbroke's internal turmoil - which would not, in any case, have sat easily with the solemn choral background - and cut all reference to Exton's justification of his deed, Bolingbroke's response and his pledge to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

The prompt copy (Shattuck calls it a 'partial' prompt book)³⁶ contains little indication of business or of movement about the stage and it seems probable that Poel was content to rely upon a generally static stage picture - embellished as it was by historically authentic costumes rich in colour and texture - to hold the eye of the audience. This impression is confirmed by the *Athenaeum* which observed that "stage conditions were...prohibitive of any kind of decoration beyond dress and of almost any kind of action", a point which it reiterated later in the review by stating that the production was dressed in "handsome Tudor costumes" and that the lines were declaimed "with

little accompaniment of movement or gesture".³⁷

The Times concluded that "the picturesque grouping stood out effectively against the tapestry which served for background".³⁸ The very variety in the offices of the various supernumeraries alone - halberdiers, beefeaters, soldiers, together with matching pairs of red, blue and black servants - suggests a stage impressively 'decorated' for all 'public' occasions and hardly less so, as we have seen, for many less formal scenes.

The Sale Catalogue for the auction of the Elizabethan Stage Society's stage effects, properties and costumes gives an instructive snapshot. Among the costumes four servants' liveries were itemised, emphasising their authenticity and claiming that they were copied from the state household of Queen Elizabeth. Although the colour was not given they consisted of heavily gold braided tabards edged with fur with the emblem of the Tudor rose, with tunic and trunk, hose, shoes, ruff and flat hat.³⁹

Of course, in attempting to re-create the spirit of the Elizabethan playhouse Poel was bound to fail; it was apparent to a contemporary observer that "reconstitute the Elizabethan stage as you may, you cannot restore the Elizabethan frame of mind";⁴⁰ Shakespeare's audience took completely for granted the dress and architectural setting which provided the context for their experience of the plays. Poel laboured to re-create these features in terms of 'costume' and the simulated physical environment of the sixteenth century public theatre as earnestly as Tree sought

to create his own brand of realism. As such, his interest was self-conscious and equally antiquarian. It is profoundly ironic that in 1912 Granville Barker should have said of Poel: "'I think his method is somewhat archaeological'".⁴¹

Poel may have shared with Craig the desire to free the spectator's imagination but thereafter their paths diverged and the following extract from the 'Watchtower' of the New Stagecraft, *The Mask*, to some extent defines the nature of Poel's relative failure:

It is meretorious [sic] to insist on forms. Religion and all else naturally clothes itself in forms; but there are suitable true forms, and then there are untrue unsuitable. As the briefest definition one might say, Forms which GROW round a substance, if we rightly understand that, will correspond to the real Nature and purport of it...; forms which are consciously *put* round a substance, bad. I invite you to reflect on this. It distinguishes true from false in Ceremonial Form, earnest solemnity from empty pageant, in all human things.⁴²

It is a vision that exposes the discrepancy between Poel's theory and practice, expresses the essentially organic nature of Craig's approach and anticipates the 'Holy Theatre' of Peter Brook.⁴³

However, the dearth of production detail in press reviews of productions of Shakespeare in England at this time is itself a measure of the relative failure of the new staging methods to make a significant impact on either the producers of plays or their public. Conversely, such special events as the Tercentenary Pageant were widely reported because the productions themselves were frequently predictable rehearsals of well-tried models. At Stratford not only Benson but Bridges-Adams, too, and even his

successor, Ben Iden Payne - whose reign extended into the second world war - "worked from old promptbooks when remounting a play. fossilizing the performance texts, conceptions, characterizations, and the basic scenography".⁴⁴

At the Old Vic which had "taken to itself...the task of looking after Shakespeare"⁴⁵ and where *Henry V* and at least one other of the second tetralogy was in repertoire every Shakespeare season between 1915 and 1920, Ben Greet "never wanted to alter anything in the way of stage business or reading of parts".⁴⁶ For the proprietor, Lilian Baylis, "limited finances and a prejudice against elaboration justified one another.... The Old Vic presented the plays as an austere, evangelical alternative to lasciviousness and drink".⁴⁷

For her producer, Ben Greet, it was economy rather than ideology which precluded anything other than purely nominal pageantic display. The prompt books themselves have not survived, but although he has tended to be associated with the austerities of William Poel "Greet was not, by disposition, an Elizabethanist".⁴⁸ His Shakespeare seasons at the Olympic Theatre and the Metropole, Camberwell, in the later 1890s had been "fully scenic"⁴⁹ and were actually criticised for being merely scaled down versions of Lyceum productions.⁵⁰ Certainly when The Ben Greet Players were invited to undertake the Shakespeare Birthday Festival in 1895 his presentation of *Much Ado* had "lacked nothing in beauty of scenery and was

sumptuously dressed" while "the church scene was particularly impressive with incense and acolytes. The choir of Holy Trinity Church sang the first part of the marriage service".⁵¹ Moreover, his production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Theatre Royal, Leamington in January 1895 included a cast of sixty, the entire suite of Mendelssohn's music performed by "an increased orchestra and chorus" as well as "a fairy ballet, a shadow dance, a dance of flowers, a dance of stars [and] an electric ballet".⁵²

He had gained the reputation of being an 'Elizabethanist' when he toured with Poel's *Henry V* at the beginning of the century. Even so, although an open air performance at Stratford-upon-Avon enabled him to simplify his scenic presentation he embraced enthusiastically such moments of spectacle as remained available to him, sending Henry into battle on a white charger and dressing him in a "silver armour" which glittered impressively in the light of the open camp fire.⁵³

At the Old Vic, too, although Greet paid close attention to inculcating distinct and sympathetic verse-speaking in his actors he was not indifferent to the visual appeal of his productions, giving "much attention to the grouping of 'Attendants' and 'Crowds'" while the costumes, too, hired from Raynes in the Waterloo Road, although "only hired...in extreme necessity",⁵⁴ were "handsome and suitable".⁵⁵

He continued to argue that the best way to present Shakespeare's plays was on a "plain stage

representing as nearly as possible Shakespeare's own stage" and with "as much as possible, all, in fact, of the text" but in practice compromised with "carefully arranged 'Acting versions'" with changes of scenery "to make them entertaining and interesting to ordinary audiences".⁵⁶

When Greet had presented *Henry V* at Stratford in 1901 - a production which Poel had rehearsed - its staging clearly had a certain curiosity value for its small number of contemporary reviewers:

Upon the Memorial boards had been constructed an Elizabethan stage, hung with arras, or hanging curtains, and overhead a blue canopy of stars representing the heavens. At the back was a 'balcony', on which the incidents not immediately connected with the play were portrayed, this part being occasionally concealed by a second curtain. The stage, in fact, was an exact reproduction of the old Curtain Theatre, London, so famous in Elizabeth's day.⁵⁷

Repeatedly the stage's "strangely bare appearance"⁵⁸ was contrasted with "the magnificent mounting and dressing now in vogue",⁵⁹ though the same reviewer who acknowledged that "the majority of playgoers are moved by gorgeous costumes, gay trappings, and elaborate scenery" was also sufficiently realistic to concede that managers were unlikely to embrace 'Elizabethan methods' since when there is "no tinsel scenery to distract it" the attention of the audience is likely to be fixed upon the words of the poet which is equally likely to expose bad acting and so ensure "a beggarly array of empty benches".⁶⁰

When Benson decided to devote himself to hospital war work abroad and the Old Vic company - dressed

in the unfamiliar garb of 'The Shakespeare Repertory Company of The Royal Victoria Theatre' - presented the summer Festival at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1916 *Henry VIII* was the only English history play in the repertoire. Even so, Greet chose to retain the coronation procession in Act IV, Scene 1 in accordance with the stage directions, and ended the play with the baptism of Princess Elizabeth, represented by a real baby.

When Greet presented *Henry V* at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in a matinée performance on 23rd October, 1916, albeit with a "full cast of thirty-five, apart from supernumeraries"⁶¹ again it was the staging which excited most comment, evidently on the principle that the remarkable thing about the production was not so much that it was done well, but that it was done at all. It was termed, somewhat circumspectly, "a bold experiment",⁶² "a students' play" presented under "very novel and interesting circumstances".⁶³

Harley Granville Barker's few Shakespearean productions did not include a history play. However, his so-called "Post-Impressionist Shakespeare"⁶⁴ abandoned the "splendid irrelevant pageantry"⁶⁵ along with the pictorially realistic settings that audiences had come to see as part of the Shakespearean tradition inherited from Irving and Tree. Barker acknowledged the influence of Poel and Craig on his thinking but resisted the antiquarianism of the former no less than the monolithic tendencies of the latter, striving always for an intimacy between actor and audience. The

simplified staging of Shakespeare initiated by Poel was, in effect, "popularised by Barker in less academic reconstructions"⁶⁶ to profoundly influence the stylised productions in the period between the wars.

A practitioner who could assert that there was "no Shakespearean tradition" and who, beyond the text and its demands, claimed complete freedom in representing them would no doubt have felt the constraints of popular expectation regarding the portrayal of English history to be excessive. His productions of Euripides, however, necessarily called for symbolic action, particularly when they were performed in America on a much larger scale than previously. The prompt copy for *Iphigenia in Tauris*, in particular, reveals that the director adopted a version of ritualized performance, paying "close attention to formal, ceremonial patterns".⁶⁷ In his Shakespearean productions, too, he used stylisation not only in his designs - he employed Norman Wilkinson as his 'decorator' - but also in stage movement. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1914) his fairies were "gilded figures moving stiffly in hieratic patterns".⁶⁸ Photographs of the production also show both Oberon and Titania attended by extensive trains⁶⁹ while one commentator was impressed by the "rich pageant when they marched across the stage in a glittering procession".⁷⁰

Ironically, for an unadventurous public the shock of Barker's new scenography had the effect of interposing itself between the play and its reception just as obtrusively as had the old illusionist scenography from

which Baker was seeking to escape. His achievement with Shakespeare undoubtedly extended beyond the visual to involve "rehabilitated approaches to the text, to verse speaking, and to acting as well"⁷¹ but a significant proportion of his audience remained stubbornly faithful to a creed dedicated to maintaining "the time-honoured gulf between spectator and actor" since "the average theatre goer craves illusion".⁷²

Like Barker, Max Reinhardt - styled 'the Great Eclectic' because he mounted each presentation in its own unique style - had a profound influence on contemporary staging precisely because he avoided the shrill tones of extremism. Reinhardt utilised the new inventions of the revolving stage ("Reinhardt's modern compromise between illusion and non-illusion")⁷³ and developed types of cyclorama, devices which he brought to the Coliseum in 1911 with *Sumurûn*, the first of three great symbolic pageants which he brought to the capital. Interestingly, Reinhardt had threatened to withdraw the production only hours before the opening performance because Sir Oswald Stoll had had the decor painted with motifs from the Alhambra, "and the scenery was now red, gold, yellow, blue and heaven knows what other colours of the rainbow" instead of the uniform white that had been specified. When challenged, Sir Oswald's response is revealing: "'The London audience expects its Orient to be colourful.... That's in accordance with its taste'".⁷⁴ Even so, Stern recalls: "The audience recognized that they were facing something new and unusual...."

Literally overnight Reinhardt and I became famous in London as the most daring and successful of stage innovators"⁷⁵ and the production ultimately proved influential in establishing here a simplified setting and an atmospheric unity.

The spectacular *The Miracle* (1911) in the vast area of Olympia and *Oedipus Rex* (1912) at the Lyceum were both notable examples of what Stern, calls "a favourite slogan at that time":⁷⁶ '*Sprengung des Bühnenrahmens*', breaking down and extending the physical limits of the stage, extending the action beyond the footlights. The entrance of the blinded Oedipus through the auditorium - a 'make-shift' arrangement, according to Martin-Harvey, arising from the original Circus staging⁷⁷ - caused a sensation even though the theatre building did not permit Reinhardt fully to incorporate play and audience into one setting as he had done in Munich in 1910. Olympia, however, converted into the semblance of a cathedral for *The Miracle*, gave the audience the sense of actually participating in the experience. The spectacular mimed drama - with a cast of some 1,800, over a dozen horses and specialists imported from Switzerland to instruct ceremonial flag-wavers⁷⁸ - provided the scope for a number of impressive processions enhanced by costumes that were "reckless and exaggerated" and properties "manufactured much larger than usual" to increase the scale of the actors.⁷⁹

It was through his Shakespeare productions, however, that Reinhardt became nationally and internationally known, precisely because he approached the

plays "with eyes unclouded by the traditional staging of the Victorian age"⁸⁰ and it is wholly characteristic of Reinhardt's 'eclecticism' that the extravagantly spectacular style of his great mimed pageants should give way to Elizabethan simplicity for Shakespeare. Like Poel in England and Jacques Copeau in France "he saw nothing anachronistic in reverting to the imaginative freedom of an empty stage",⁸¹ though he adapted his approach to suit each play, using the revolve to provide a degree of scenic background and his impressionistic, broadly symbolist, settings could be as simple or as lavish as the text required. Although Reinhardt's general design style evolved towards ever-increasing simplicity, the visual appeal of ceremonial was unashamedly indulged: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* - first presented by Reinhardt in 1905 and repeatedly revived over a thirty four year period - included "brilliant processions under a star-spangled sky. with Theseus and Hippolyta making their entrance to a candle-lit parade and at Oxford in the open air in 1933 a cast which included some eighty supers."⁸²

John Martin-Harvey who had played Oedipus for Reinhardt in 1912 could not but be influenced by the director's methods. In May 1916 Martin-Harvey revived *Henry V*, ostensibly 'in the Elizabethan manner', at His Majesty's. While Benson's revival of the same play earlier in the year had failed to inspire and Greet's production had the air of a worthy academic experiment, Martin-Harvey's revival succeeded in moving the audience to applaud with "patriotic delight"⁸³ as the curtains masking the rear stage

were drawn apart on the final couplet of the Southampton scene to reveal the English fleet ready to sail for France. "the King's ship...all golden and scarlet and glorious, hung about with emblazoned armoury":⁸⁴

Was it Elizabethan? At the moment we would have agreed to anything.... When the magic dimmed...we recognised it as a Christmas pantomime - the transformation scene put to legitimate dramatic effect.⁸⁵

Martin-Harvey had shown himself to be not entirely averse to the practice of simplified staging by seeking the advice of Poel before deciding on the design for *The Taming of the Shrew* in 1913 but was his *Henry V* 'Elizabethan'? Clearly not. In fact, Martin-Harvey's biographer felt that the production's 'Elizabethan' pedigree to be "one of the manager's grave, unconscious jokes"⁸⁶ though Cary Mazer - likening Martin-Harvey's use of this inner stage to Tree's interpolated tableaux - appears to have missed the joke in seeing the production as "a return to archaeologism through the transformation of the Elizabethan stage into a pictorial showcase".⁸⁷

Gordon Crosse's evaluation reveals his characteristic good sense:

The Elizabethan device of an inner & outer stage was followed, not slavishly or with pedantic archaism, but the main idea enabled the sequence of scenes to be intelligently given without waits, & it was adapted to the needs of the modern theatre. The front part of the stage with its own doors (in appropriate fifteenth century architecture) was separated by a curtain from the inner stage, on which a succession of quite sufficiently elaborate sets in the modern style were shown.⁸⁸

Martin-Harvey's approach to the settings of his Shakespearean Tercentenary revivals was more 'modern' than even Crosse could have foreseen, each of the four productions being planned on a different method in a manner remarkably akin to the 'holistic' ideal and reflecting Reinhardt's influence. Expressing contempt for what he called an "antic futurism" in theatrical art designed to "bewilder the eyes of the groundlings and earn...a spurious reputation for 'modernism'" he placed his faith firmly in the supremacy of 'the play':

Everything must be subordinate to the *play itself*. It does not matter whether your style is the realistic, the academic, the archaeological, whether it is old-fashioned, or whether it is reformed.... It is the *spirit* in which a play is produced which matters, not the form. To design a new, ingenious, eccentric setting is nothing, unless the design arises naturally and inevitably from the play itself and is conceived, too in a spirit which subordinates decoration to the meaning and expression of the play, unless, in other words, the setting of the play is studied from the inside out and not from the outside in.⁸⁹

We have several tantalising glimpses of our subject: Martin-Harvey himself speaks of "troops of 'Lords, ladies, officers, soldiers, citizens, messengers, and attendants'"⁹⁰ and - among curtains of different designs and fabrics hung behind the false proscenium - one was of gold tissue for rich interiors.⁹¹ The programme for the production acknowledged a debt to Alfred Rodway in respect of "archaeological details"⁹² and Martin-Harvey names Kruger Gray as being responsible for "all the furniture, weapons, armour, coats of arms, heraldry, cannon, tents, [and] costumes"⁹³ while pageantic music included Elgar's *The*

Crown of India and Percy E. Fletcher's *The Spirit of Pageantry*.⁹⁴ⁿ

Arthur Machen gave a stirring glimpse of the production's pageantry which "gladdened us with his understanding approval":⁹⁵

The old history comes to us splendidly arrayed. It glances with noble and golden banners, with the blazonry of leopards and lilies and all the tinctured learning of the heralds. Wherever King Harry goes the square, stiff banner of England follows him, his knights are surcoated in strange devices, armoured with glittering splendours.⁹⁶

Notwithstanding Machen's obvious enthusiasm, Martin-Harvey had to confess that he had been mistaken in supposing that "in those warlike days" it was the play which the public "most wished to see"; in the event, it proved to be the only one of the four Shakespearean productions which failed to show a profit.⁹⁷

Nevertheless, Machen's tone in his review of a production built on the older order of pictorialism and spectacle, though reduced in scale, indicates how tenuous had been the foothold gained by the theorists of the New Movement before the war. Indeed, with Martin-Harvey's season Shakespeare activity in the capital effectively ceased until five months after the Armistice as audiences, supplemented by large numbers of soldiers on leave, streamed into the theatres with a taste for "only the lightest kind of fare".⁹⁸ Sex plays, burlesque and music hall entertainment thrived and "the London theatre sank to its lowest point since its nineteenth-century revival".⁹⁹ A contemporary observer expressed contempt that "the theatre in all its

varieties has been in the sordid hands of money-makers" and concluded: "If there was ever a period when England was blessed with an idiot theatre, and an idiot spectator to match, it was then".¹⁰⁰

When in 1919 the Stratford Festival was restored after its wartime interruption W. Bridges-Adams succeeded Frank Benson's long and distinguished reign, though no history play was offered during that first post-war season. When it was, in 1920, it was on the basis of a sensible compromise between the old ways and the new. Bridges-Adams, himself, spoke of his desire to avoid "pseudo-simplicity as well as over-elaboration"¹⁰¹ and theatre historians of a later generation have been able to acknowledge that "Shakespeare, under Bridges-Adams, had a fair deal without pomp or barren experiment".¹⁰²

A contemporary reviewer spoke of Bridges-Adams's device of four movable columns, creating "an expanding and contracting proscenium", as combining "the advantages of Shakespeare's platform stage with those of the pictorial stage of modern times"; a workable truce had been achieved, it seems, between the parties in another theatre of war:

...the veriest fanatic for Elizabethan nudity cannot accuse Mr Adams of wasting time...[while]...he keeps the eye pleased and the imagination stimulated... ¹⁰³

Between 1920 and 1930 at least one play in the second tetralogy featured in all but two years (1920 and 1925), though *Richard II*'s appearance in nine Festivals (spring and summer) far outweighed *Henry V*'s three. The imbalance is to be accounted for in part, no doubt, by an

understandable measure of war-weariness, as this review suggests:

In these days, when all men know the romance and glamour of war to be an exploded sham, the spectacle of Harry of England plunging two nations into a struggle for the sake of his personal honour fails to move an audience as it must have moved those of another age... 104

Productions during this period are not extensively chronicled and in most cases our thoughts must 'make imaginary puissance' with the meagre evidence available.

The 1920 *Henry V*, with a cast of "some forty characters",¹⁰⁵ seems to have combined simplicity of means with an effect that was, overall, pictorial. The *Daily Telegraph* recognised that "it is, of course, no part of his [Bridges-Adams's] idea to pageantise this play"¹⁰⁶ while the *Manchester Guardian*, echoing the sentiments of other reviewers, proclaimed the production "a triumph for simplicity".¹⁰⁷ Little detail of the production has survived but a glimpse of the French camp in terms of "a screen, one banner and three spears" is a world away from Benson, let alone Kean, Irving and Tree.¹⁰⁸

The play was presented in panel form between two dark velvet transverse curtains which could disclose larger or smaller portions of the stage, as required. The *Daily Express* remarked that "the play is essentially a spectacular work, and therefore none too amenable to such treatment"¹⁰⁹ and yet both it and others declared it to be 'pictorial', and even 'gorgeous'.¹¹⁰

Its claim to be judged in these terms seems to

ave rested almost entirely on its costumes. The *Stage* praised "the wonderful 'Sothern' wardrobe which has been acquired by the Memorial Theatre governors".¹¹¹ⁿ Others observed "the dresses are rich";¹¹² remarked on the "historical accuracy of the costume"¹¹³ or picked out "among the many beautiful costumes" a robe "worn at the end by Miss Ethel Warwick [which was] an exact copy of a rich robe of the period, exact even to the minutest stitch".¹¹⁴

When Bridges-Adams next presented *Henry V* at Stratford, in April 1927 - in a dignified retreat to the town cinema following a fire the previous year - it was again the costumes which caught the eye, though such comment as was offered was necessarily qualified: "..the dresses were quite rich and splendid when one considers what a great deal of the Shakespeare wardrobe perished in the flames...";¹¹⁵ "...although its pageantry cannot now at Stratford be its strongest feature...the setting and dressing lacks that richness of colour, that heraldic gorgeousness, that one would desire for *Henry V*";¹¹⁶ *Henry V* "is a production which calls for pageantry...although this was not possible on a big scale...".¹¹⁷

There are glimpses, too, of a modified pageantry in the 'Agincourt song' sung behind a lowered curtain before the production opened and in the vigour of the silhouetted battle pieces¹¹⁸ but in truth, press attention at this time was focused more on the progress of the fund-raising to replace the Memorial Theatre and on speculation regarding the new theatre's design than upon

reporting current productions.

Even before the conflagration which consumed it the Memorial Theatre was itself frequently portrayed as imposing constraints upon the new management of Bridges-Adams. The smallness of the stage and the "archaic nature of the facilities"¹¹⁹ were seen by some as being responsible for perceived shortcomings in his first season at Stratford.

Curiously, such logistical failings had not been an issue during the period of Bensonian pictorialism - and he was not called 'the Irving of the provinces' for nothing. Now they provided a practical and therefore legitimate justification in an era but painfully breaking away from "the outworn, 'representational', sham-realistic style of production"¹²⁰ for settings that were "simple and free from all unnecessary scenic decoration".¹²¹

This was no doubt unnerving for provincial audiences whose reverential solemnity and conservatism in all matters Shakespearean were in danger of rendering his work what one national newspaper called "a dead letter in modern England",¹²² though Bridges-Adams's 'simplicity' was infinitely preferable to the "freakish, or futurist, or rebellious" perceived in Europe.¹²³

Undoubtedly national prejudices played a part in fostering opposition to experimental staging. Reviewing James Fagan's production of *Twelfth Night* at the Court Theatre which restored Shakespeare to the West End after "the glut of tomfoolery" which had characterised its

war-time theatre the *Daily Express* expressed satisfaction that there were "no new-fangled German-art ideas" to mar it; "no Nurembergian toy landscapes or futuristic 'art' effects...".¹²⁴

This has a clear 'populist' appeal but even *The Times*, reporting on Bridges-Adams's first production as director of the Stratford Festival when it was revived after a gap of three years, expressed relief that "for all his reputation as a designer" he "does not intend to be freakish" and hoped that he would contrive to be "original without being outrageous".¹²⁵

'Outrageous' he certainly was not and the qualified originality of combining traverses and painted scenery which was "rather a suggestion than a statement"¹²⁶ soon settled into a predictability attested to by the fact that the same prompt copy of *Richard II* served for revivals in 1920, 1924, 1926 and 1929.

One reviewer of the first of these called it "a gorgeous production"¹²⁷ though its claim to the adjective again seems to have rested upon a tapestry lowered to form a "taking background"¹²⁸ and on its costumes which anticipated an eclectic approach more common later in the century. They were primarily in the Elizabethan style but employed "the most striking attributes of the various fashions which have ruled throughout the ages".¹²⁹ As with his *Henry V* his "adherence to historical detail"¹³⁰ and "absolute accuracy"¹³¹ was noted while Murray Carrington's *Richard* assumed an impressive black armour in honour of his father.

the Black Prince.¹³² Clearly the play's pageantry was not the producer's principal concern but he was aware, nevertheless, that something must be done if the play's inherently formal qualities were to be respected.

Unusually, reviews of the production make little reference to the lists scene, traditionally one of the play's big 'production numbers'. The prompt copy suggests a 'sufficient' pageantry, though its detail was modified, no doubt, according to time and place.¹³³ⁿ

The King's pavilion was 'dressed' with eight soldiers and, in front of them, eight lords flanking the King and Queen symmetrically. Both soldiers and lords entered from left and right rather than being discovered and so brought a processional flavour to the scene, while a ceremonial 'swordbearer' was a permanent symbolic presence throughout the scene. All of the Marshall's proclamations were delivered with 'BACK TO AUD[IENCE]', a simple device which focused attention upon the King and the spectacle of the trial of arms and turned the audience into the onlookers on the fourth side of the jousting field.

Richard and his Queen entered to a flourish which 'STOP AS KING SITS'. Indeed, ceremonial flourishes, both specified and additional, punctuated the scene. Two quite separate music cues - albeit 'SEGUE' - proclaimed Mowbray's initial declaration and then announced Bolingbroke, while a further flourish gave force to the latter's declaration.

Further 'flourishes' marked the King's command

'Order the trial. Marshal and begin' (this one designated a 'MARCH'), the conveying of Norfolk's lance and the conclusion of the First Herald's speech. The Marshal's 'Sound trumpets; and set forward, combatants' was also made the occasion of additional ceremony, the line being modified by omitting the 'and' to create two quite distinct commands. The first ('Sound trumpets') permitted a flourish during the exit stage left and stage right of Mowbray and Bolingbroke respectively and the second ('set forward, combatants') produced a 'LONG FLOURISH AND ROLL OF DRUMS' for the charge.

There was, of course, a further 'LONG FLOURISH' following Richard's '...let the trumpets sound // While we return these dukes what we decree' to allow Mowbray and Bolingbroke to return to the stage, but the oath swearing was conducted with more than usual ceremony, both combatants repeating the oath, line by line, together with 'BUS[INESS] OF CHANGING HANDS' as each swore to keep the oath.¹³⁴

If this scene succeeded in offending neither traditionalists nor innovators, the staging of Westminster Hall was felt by the *Morning Post*, at least, to have "fallen between two stools, going either too far in the direction of actuality or not far enough"¹³⁵ while the *Athenaeum* urged a "far more ruthless simplification of scenery".¹³⁶

The ritual of uncrowning followed broadly conventional lines, though a long refectory-type table

placed downstage of the throne suggested an administrative dimension prevailing over the purely ceremonial and the producer was unusual in having Richard formally crown Bolingbroke in his stead.

After the gages episode in which Bolingbroke had already established his authority by personally coming between the drawn swords of the incensed nobles Richard entered ahead of York and a page bearing the regalia. He responded to Bolingbroke's 'Are you contented to resign the crown?' with unspecified 'CROWN BUS[INESS]' before 'undoing' himself by placing the crown on a cushion borne by a page and handing the 'SCEP[TRE] TO BOL[INGBROKE]'. At 'With mine own hands I give away my crown' he relinquished the orb and during the remainder of the speech 'TAKES BOL[INGBROKE] BY HAND AND LEADS BOL[INGBROKE] UP STEPS'. At 'Long mayst thou live in Richard's seat to sit' he 'PLACE[S] CR[OWN] ON HIS HEAD', and bowed to Bolingbroke before turning to York to ask 'What more remains?'

The purely administrative nature of the interchange between Richard and Northumberland was emphasised by its being conducted from opposite ends of the long downstage table and Richard's breaking down at the table allowed a moment of compassion from Bolingbroke as he 'DROPS DOWN TO L[EFT] AND TOUCHES R[ICHARD'S] SHOULDER'.

For the final scene in Windsor Castle there was provision for sixteen supers as well as those 'lords' now redundant to line the back of the stage - restrained by two lines of men-at-arms - to cheer as the curtain rose and

bells chimed ('SOFTLY') for Bolingbroke's entrance. The stage was bathed in 'BRIGHT SUNLIGHT' as the King ascended the royal throne. The image of Bolingbroke triumphant was in poignant contrast to the solemnity surrounding Richard's coffin. Here Bolingbroke's triumphal chimes were succeeded by a single bell tolling on stage as the coffin entered to additional music which 'STOP DEAD' once the coffin was on stage, giving way to a solemn 'CHANT'.¹³⁷

At the Old Vic Ben Greet's immediate successors - Russell Thorndike (1919); Robert Atkins (1919-1925) and Andrew Leigh (1925-29) - all, of course, under the parsimonious eye of Miss Baylis - perpetuated a house style in which "productions were not so much designed as outfitted"¹³⁸ and which was characterised, scenically, by "dowdy curtain settings".¹³⁹ All produced plays from the second tetralogy in this period but the prompt copies have not survived, even reviews are far from numerous and treatment of our subject is necessarily fragmentary.

In Russell Thorndike's 1919 production of *Richard II*, in collaboration with Charles Warburton, the pageantry of the Lists was emphasised in "the picturesque and presumably accurate dresses and excellent scenery by Wilfred Walter"¹⁴⁰ while an iconic image of Christ was invoked in the deposition scene. Here Thorndike, who played Richard, carefully arranged his make-up "to suggest the conventional portrait of Christ"¹⁴¹ and at the line 'Nay, all of you that look at me...' he threw open his long black cloak to reveal a white surplice-like gown beneath and posed

in a Christ-like attitude. "his...hands appealingly held out slightly from his sides as he completed his speech".¹⁴²

Robert Atkins, a disciple of Poel, used a semi-permanent Elizabethan setting based on "a false proscenium of black velvet...and a forestage".¹⁴³ His judicious use of the old stock material may have secured "miraculous effects"¹⁴⁴ but it did not, evidently, stretch to pageantry: Herbert Farjeon's admiration for his revival of *Richard II* in 1925 was for a production contrived "without fuss or flourish".¹⁴⁵

Barry Jackson's attitude to Shakespearean production has been described as "the logical extension of the Elizabethanism of William Poel".¹⁴⁶ Believing that period costume and 'poetic' vocal delivery were "artificial barriers between the play and the spectator" it would be necessary to eliminate "the entire tradition that continued to dominate Shakespeare performance in Great Britain" if these barriers were to be removed.¹⁴⁷ This he attempted with modern dress settings and low-key, 'naturalistic' verse-speaking, notably in his productions of *Cymbeline* (1923) and *Hamlet* (1925).

Jackson evidently felt that history plays did not lend themselves to modern dress treatment and the theatre was not yet ready to embrace contemporary analogies so that Jackson assayed only the two parts of *Henry IV*¹⁴⁸ which were presented in terms of a "stylised medievalism".¹⁴⁹ At the same time, his stylisation was still underpinned by a familiar vein of realism as the distinguished antiquary,

Alfred Rodway, was engaged to "ensure accuracy in the various heraldic devices emblazoned on the shields and banners".¹⁵⁰ Photographs of the production reveal a quantity of stiff banners in the Shrewsbury scenes which helped to enhance the production's emblematic quality while a backcloth depicting "a tiny conventionalised view of the walled town of Shrewsbury"¹⁵¹ contributed to an illuminated missal effect. Settings were displayed within a proscenium painted to resemble the decorative timber frame of a medieval house and with a permanent vertical wooden post which divided the upper stage and reinforced the 'halving' principle underpinning the scenic display and which was regarded as important in revealing the dual nature of Hal's character.¹⁵²

However, if Barry Jackson had begun "quietly and firmly to jettison worn traditions"¹⁵³ Terence Gray was a conscious iconoclast who "played havoc with Shakespeare amidst the modern-dress and anti-illusionist ferment of the period".¹⁵⁴ Although Gray did not produce any of the plays under consideration here and was little known outside Cambridge his production of *Henry VIII* in 1931 is of interest because it was a play traditionally treated as "a densely-textured popular pageant, with narrative subordinated to crowd-scenes, processions and elaborate ceremonial"¹⁵⁵ and frequently performed as a commemorative tribute on the occasion of some significant national royal event. Shaughnessy suggests that "the persistence of a surfeit of pageantry and spectacle on the stage may be

paralleled with the British monarchy's attempts to reinvent itself for the twentieth century - often in terms of the revival of generally bogus 'ancient ceremony'"¹⁵⁶ and the fact that in 1931 the monarchy was entering a newly turbulent phase that would culminate in the abdication crisis of 1936 meant that "such pomp was ripe for debunking".¹⁵⁷

The production will not be treated in detail here but it provided Gray with the opportunity to explore his own idiosyncratic view of drama history, rejecting the conventional approach which seeks to "create a pageant that brings before the eyes of a modern audience a near representation of the outward semblance of a past epoch of the human race" in favour of a satirical method "poking fun at...aspects of the modern world by contrast with a caricature of an age that is past".¹⁵⁸ Barry Jackson's cautious stylised medievalism appears positively conservative set against a production in which all of the characters were depicted emblematically as playing cards. Some of these were actually life-sized cardboard cut-outs, a device which recalls Tree's practice of using cardboard cut-outs for many of the extras in his revival of the same play in 1910. It was a court reminiscent of that in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* which "reduced the characters to flat, manufactured and depersonalised playthings, and characterised court politics as a ruthless and arbitrary game".¹⁵⁹

In general, however, the experimentation of the

1920s had much smaller results in England than in central Europe. Here audiences and producers tended to be "protective of Shakespeare's official cultural status and defensive regarding his poetry".¹⁶⁰ Leonard Merrick, writing under the name 'Stanley Jones' at the end of the nineteenth century, was typical of a school of opinion which believed that "the plays of Shakespeare belong to literature, not to the stage...".¹⁶¹ This perception of Shakespeare as a classic literary figure who happened to have expressed himself in dramatic form and "must therefore be given his meed of ritual worship in the theatre" led to a degree of conservatism about visual representation.¹⁶² Barker in his Savoy productions had undoubtedly thrown out a challenge to convention and tradition "not in obscure society productions, but in a commercial theatre in the heart of the West-End".¹⁶³ Nevertheless, "the general approach remained closer to Tree than to Craig"¹⁶⁴ and there would still be a few West End productions that united "firm and often major playing with substantial realism".¹⁶⁵ Trewin cites the production of *Henry VIII* by Lewis Casson (Christmas 1925) which "did not forget its pageant quality"¹⁶⁶ and contained a scene depicting the coronation of Anne Boleyn which impressed Norman Marshall as "one of the most magnificent stage spectacles" he had ever seen.¹⁶⁷

Gray was undoubtedly ahead of his time in perceiving that pageantry, hitherto used primarily for decorative effect, might be employed to interrogate social and political anomalies. For proponents of the New Movement

in general pageantry was deemed guilty by association with the excesses of nineteenth-century historicism and yet the genre, although in disgrace with the discerning, was proving remarkably resilient. In the commercial theatre pageantic display, though reduced in scale, continued to play its part in satisfying audiences' taste for conspicuous consumption. Even the most scholarly of practitioners, however, recognised that in performance the eye must be fed and though it was never openly acknowledged there was a tacit acceptance that a pageantic presence was intrinsic to the proper presentation of the plays even if, as yet, the 'soul' of pageantry with its appeal to the understanding of the spectator remained obscured by its decorative form.

NOTES

¹ See, for example, Mordecai Gorelik, *New Theatres for Old* (New York: French, 1940); Sheldon Cheney, *The New Movement in the Theatre* (New York: Kennerley, 1914); Kenneth MacGowan and Robert Edmond Jones, *Continental Stagecraft* (New York: Blom, 1922).

² Lillah McCarthy O.B.E. (Lady Keeble), *Myself and My Friends* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1933), p. 28.

³ Kenneth MacGowan & Robert Edmond Jones, *Continental Stagecraft* (New York: Blom, 1922), p. 43.

⁴ Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth Century Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 43

⁵ Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 44.

⁶ Sybil Rosenfeld, *A Short History of Scene Design in Great Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), p. 146.

⁷ Rosenfeld, p. 153.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 157

⁹ *Sunday Times*, 23 January, 1905.

¹⁰ Poel had, in fact, presented *A Comedy of Errors* a little over a month before Waller's *Henry V*.

- ¹¹ Brock Pemberton. 'Europe in a Nutshell'. *Theatre Arts Magazine*, 6 (1922), 209-25 (p. 218).
- ¹² MacGowan & Jones. p. 42.
- ¹³ Linton. 'Shakespearean Staging in London from Irving to Gielgud', p. 410.
- ¹⁴ Ivor Brown, 'Man of the Theatre: at Stratford', *Drama* (Winter, 1965), 25-27 (p. 26).
- ¹⁵ William Poel, *Monthly Letters*, selected and arranged by A.M.T. (London: Laurie, 1929), p. 1.
- ¹⁶ Robert Speaight. *William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954, p. 87
- ¹⁷ Letter, 'The Staging of Shakespeare', *Fortnightly Review*, July 1, 1900, p.355.
- ¹⁸ Speaight, *Shakespeare on the Stage*, p. 132.
- ¹⁹ Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 25.
- ²⁰ See Lesley Stewart, 'William Poel's Staging Techniques' (unpublished master's thesis, Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham, 1978), pp. 25-26.
- ²¹ C.E.Montague, *Dramatic Values*, 3rd edn, rev. (London: Methuen, 1911), p. 224.
- ²² Speaight, *William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival*, pp. 156-57.
- ²³ Montague, p. 227.
- ²⁴ Ivor Brown. 'Salute to William Poel'. *Saturday Review*, July 23, 1927. p.91.
- ²⁵ Stewart, p. 32.
- ²⁶ Prompt Book: Poel, *Richard II* [1899]; Charles H. Shattuck, *The Shakespeare Promptbooks: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Urbana and London: University of Illinois Press, 1965), *Richard II* No. 25: reproduced in *Prompt Books & Actor's Copies: Theatre Museum, V&A, London* (London: Ormonde, 1983), microfiche 1.1.0014.
- ²⁷ See Stewart, p. 32.
- ²⁸ Benson's programmes usually listed between thirty-five and thirty actors: "At various times he added extra pages, gentlemen, singers, ladies and officials.... The largest cast, London 1900, contained thirty-three characters": O'Connell, II, pp. 129-30.
- ²⁹ Prompt Book. Poel: *Richard II* [1899].
- ³⁰ *Athenaeum*, 18 November 1, 1899.
- ³¹ Prompt Book: Poel: *Richard II* [1899].
- ³² Prompt Book Poel: *Richard II* [1899].
- ³³ *Athenaeum*. 13 November. 1899.
- ³⁴ Prompt Book: Poel *Richard II* [1899].
- ³⁵ Ibid..

- ³⁶ Shattuck, *Richard II* No. 25 [Poel: 1899].
- ³⁷ *Athenaeum*, 18 November, 1899.
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- ³⁹ Sale Catalogue of the Elizabethan Stage Society sold by auction 5 July, 1905 (London: Boreham, 1905), RST Collection, Shakespeare Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon, ref. 50.33.
- ⁴⁰ A.B. Walkley, *Drama and Life* (London: Methuen, 1907), p.137-38.
- ⁴¹ Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 41.
- ⁴² Gordon Craig, 'GOD SAVE THE KING', *The Mask*, 2 (1909-10), p. 2.
- ⁴³ See Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968; repr. 1969) pp. 42-64.
- ⁴⁴ Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 122.
- ⁴⁵ Trewin, *Shakespeare on the English Stage 1900-1964*, p. 77.
- ⁴⁶ Harcourt Williams, *Old Vic Saga* (London: Winchester, 1949), p. 29.
- ⁴⁷ Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 122.
- ⁴⁸ Mazer, *Shakespeare Refashioned*, p. 71.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ See William Archer, *The Theatrical 'World' of 1897*, (London: Scott, 1898), pp.152-53.
- ⁵¹ Winifred F.E.C. Isaac, *Ben Greet and the Old Vic: A Biography of Sir Philip Ben Greet*, (London: Greenbank, [1964]), p. 61.
- ⁵² Isaac, p. 56.
- ⁵³ Winifred Loraine, *Robert Loraine, Soldier, Actor, Airman* (London: Collins, 1938), p. 73.
- ⁵⁴ George Rowell, *The Old Vic Theatre: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 100.
- ⁵⁵ Isaac, p. 132.
- ⁵⁶ Isaac, p. 130.
- ⁵⁷ *Birmingham Post*, 24 October, 1901.
- ⁵⁸ 'MR BEN GREET'S COMPANY AT THE MEMORIAL THEATRE: HENRY V.', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 25 October, 1901.
- ⁵⁹ *Birmingham Post*, 24 October, 1901.
- ⁶⁰ *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 25 October, 1901.
- ⁶¹ *Birmingham Post*, 24 October, 1916.

- ⁶² *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 25 October, 1916.
- ⁶³ *Birmingham Post*, 24 October, 1916.
- ⁶⁴ A. B. Walkley, *The Times*, 23 September, 1912.
- ⁶⁵ Dennis Kennedy, *Granville Barker and the Dream of Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 123.
- ⁶⁶ Rosenfeld, p. 157.
- ⁶⁷ Kennedy, *Barker*, p. 183.
- ⁶⁸ Russell Jackson, 'Actor-Managers and the Spectacular', in *Shakespeare: An Illustrated Stage History*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Russell Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 112-27 (p. 125).
- ⁶⁹ Reproduced in Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 78.
- ⁷⁰ *Nation*, 14 February, 1914; quoted J. L. Styan, *The Shakespeare Revolution: Criticism and Performance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) p. 100.
- ⁷¹ Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 79.
- ⁷² *Standard*, 7 February, 1914.
- ⁷³ J. L. Styan, *Max Reinhardt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 52-53.
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- ⁸⁶ Disher, p. 230.
- ⁸⁷ Mazer, *Shakespeare Refashioned*, p. 77.

- ⁸⁸ Crosse, Diaries, VI, pp. 38-40.
- ⁸⁹ From Martin-Harvey's address at the opening of an Exhibition of Scenic Designs in Manchester, 12 October 1926 in *The Book of Martin Harvey*, ed. by R.N. Green-Armytage (London: [n.p.], 1930), p. 63.
- ⁹⁰ Martin-Harvey, *Autobiography*, p. 466.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 468.
- ⁹² Production programme dated 3 June, 1916 in Theatre Museum production file.
- ⁹³ Martin-Harvey, *Autobiography*, p. 469.
- ⁹⁴ Production programme. Prompt book: Shattuck, *Henry V* No. 28 [Martin-Harvey]. The prompt copy for this production is extant in private hands and might yet reveal much valuable detail. Correspondence was undertaken with the owner, Mr Martin Holmes, formerly of the London Museum, shortly before his death in January, 1997. Mr Holmes was not averse to permitting the examination of the document but the poor state of his health prevented this at the time.
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- ⁹⁶ *Evening News*, 8 June, 1916.
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- ⁹⁹ Linton, 'Shakespearean Staging from Irving to Gielgud', p. 435.
- ¹⁰⁰ Huntly Carter, 'Wartime Theatres of England and France', *Theatre Arts Magazine*, 1 (August, 1917), 151-60 (p. 151).
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- ¹⁰³ *Illustrated News*, May 1920.
- ¹⁰⁴ SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL: SEASON AT STRATFORD', *Daily Telegraph*, 3 August, 1920.
- ¹⁰⁵ 'KING HENRY V.: Pageant of Rare Beauty at Stratford', *Morning Post*, 30 July, 1920.
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- ¹⁰⁷ *Guardian*, 18 October, 1920.
- ¹⁰⁸ 'THE SUMMER FESTIVAL', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 30 July, 1920.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Daily Express*, 5 October, 1920.
- ¹¹⁰ 'STRATFORD SUMMER SEASON', *Stage*, 5 August, 1920.
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- 132 'A NEW THEATRE FOR STRATFORD? "RICHARD II." IN BLACK PRINCE'S ARMOUR', *Daily Chronicle*, 22 April, 1920.
- 133ⁿ Prompt Book held at the Shakespeare Centre Library, Stratford-upon-Avon; ref. *Henry V* [Bridges-Adams] 71.21.
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- 136 *Athenaeum*, 30 April, 1920.

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- ¹³⁸ Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 123.
- ¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 134.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Stage*, October, 1919.
- ¹⁴¹ O'Connell, II, p. 152.
- ¹⁴² *Ibid.*.
- ¹⁴³ Trewin, *Shakespeare on the English Stage*, p. 89.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*.
- ¹⁴⁵ Farjeon, *The Shakespearean Scene: Dramatic Criticisms* (London: Hutchinson, 1949), p. 84.
- ¹⁴⁶ Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 109.
- ¹⁴⁷ Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, pp.109-10.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Henry IV, Part One* was first staged at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in November 1920 and then revived with *Part Two* in April 1921. He had also devised the staging for Arnold Pinchard's production of *King John* in 1913.
- ¹⁴⁹ Claire Cochrane, *Shakespeare and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre 1913-1929*, (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1993), p. 84.
- ¹⁵⁰ Cochrane, *Shakespeare and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre*, p. 84.
- ¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*.
- ¹⁵² See *Birmingham Gazette*, 29 November, 1920.
- ¹⁵³ Trewin, *Shakespeare on the English Stage*, p. 56.
- ¹⁵⁴ Robert Shaughnessy, '"Ragging the Bard": Terence Gray, Shakespeare, and Henry VIII', *Theatre Notebook: A Journal of the History and Technique of the British Theatre*, 51 (1997), 92-111 (p. 92).
- ¹⁵⁵ Shaughnessy, '"Ragging the Bard"', p. 100.
- ¹⁵⁶ Shaughnessy, '"Ragging the Bard"', p. 101.
- ¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*.
- ¹⁵⁸ Terence Gray, 'Historical Drama', *Festival Theatre Review*, 2, No. 4 (1928); quoted Shaughnessy, '"Ragging the Bard"', p. 101.
- ¹⁵⁹ See Shaughnessy, '"Ragging the Bard"', p. 104.
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¹⁶² W.A. Darlington, *Six Thousand and One Nights: Forty Years a Critic* (London: Harrap, 1960), p. 65).

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¹⁶⁶ Ibid..

¹⁶⁷ Marshall, *The Producer and the Play*, p. 163.

CHAPTER III

(i) Necessity's virtue

During the 1930s the public taste for pageantry appeared largely undiminished and was satisfied by several instances of high public ceremonial: King George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935; the "majestic spectacle" of his funeral the following year which brought "unprecedented crowds" onto the streets¹ and the coronation of George VI in 1937. The King's Christmas Day radio broadcasts to the Empire in 1932 and the three succeeding years also had the force of solemn international celebrations. *The Times* clearly understood the expectations of its readers when it reported on six consecutive days in January 1930 the celebrations and ceremonials surrounding the marriage of the obscure Princess Marie José of Belgium to the Prince of Piedmont in Rome, its ceremonies, pageants and processions being recorded in meticulously detailed verbal pictures.²

Increasingly during the first three decades of the century the pageantic aspects of theatrical production had to be measured less against the excesses of nineteenth century theatrical historicism than against the superior physical reality of film. Of course, the many people who went to a Shakespeare play "more to see a picture than a drama"³ were among the millions who flocked during the thirties and forties to 'the pictures'. "the tidal wave of the kinomatograph"⁴ which "really could mount a cast of thousands whenever necessary"⁵ and supplied a new and more

seductive realism against which to assess the rival claims of eye and ear.

From the early days of the silent movie the great epic cycles of D.W.Griffith and DeMille had been conscious demonstrations "confirming film's superiority over the theatre's physical limitations"⁶ and exploiting the late nineteenth-century vogue for spectacle; film had become "the congenial medium for handling stories that depend on a vast time span, multiple settings, spectacle, and physical reality".⁷ During the 1930s such films were made on a more modest scale than formerly. The taste for spectacle was somewhat diminished and the advent of sound lent a stilted quality to the dialogue of epic heroes robbing them of the mythic stature which silence had bestowed. Even so, in a different mode the Busby Berkeley musical extravaganzas provided the cinematic equivalent of the massed ranks of Kean, Irving and Tree. The choreography of such films took its inspiration from the marching and counter-marching of the drill yard and many numbers had a military theme.⁸

The theorists of the serious theatre recognised the unequal nature of the competition and used it as a further justification for abandoning any attempt at 'realism' or scenic elaboration though in practice there was during the period a reassertion of realism, albeit of a modified or impressionistic kind.⁹

Shakespearean production at this time was a "world of experiment"¹⁰ but a world in which pageantry played only a grudging and discredited part, the use of

stage ceremonial of any but the most nominal kind inviting scorn as reviewers and producers alike found themselves respectively limited and inhibited by past excesses. By 1945 T.C.Kemp, writing of the "unusually heavy load of pageantry" in *Henry VIII* - in which "almost every scene is a state occasion" - could acknowledge that "even these may be impressed into dramatic service",¹¹ but in the thirties the past usually cast too profound a shadow for such potential to be recognised. Gielgud's production of *Richard II* at the Queen's Theatre in 1937, for example, was said by one reviewer to be "sadly reminiscent of 1906 and *All That*"¹² while J.C.Trewin, summing up critical attitudes to Oscar Asche's revival of *Julius Caesar* at His Majesty's in 1932, identified a "revulsion against a grand manner some called grandiloquent".¹³

Clearly it was a production "not geared to the current stage. Fashion, imperceptibly, had shifted".¹⁴ This was a sentiment shared with Tyrone Guthrie who writes that at the time when he first produced at the Old Vic in 1932 "in all the arts naturalism, or realism, was out of fashion";¹⁵ for commentators and practitioners alike 'simplicity' was itself a virtue. Indeed, Henry Cass seemed to speak for a whole generation when, succeeding Guthrie at the Old Vic in 1934, he said, "'A use of modern simplified production seems to me the best method of expressing the full richness of Shakespeare's plays'"¹⁶ and although the word 'simple' characterised several reviews of Henry Cass's production of *Richard II* at the Old Vic in 1934, at least

one reviewer felt that "more simplicity would have been to the good".¹⁷

Not everyone, of course, was convinced of the unqualified virtues of scenic and presentational austerity. Even at a time when many commentators were encouraging the spirit of William Poel's 'nudist way'¹⁸ others were less enthusiastic. For Harcourt Williams's production of *Richard II* at the Old Vic in 1930 the ceremonial of the play was sufficiently important for Michael Watts, the stage manager, to take "great pains over the heraldry"¹⁹ while at least two observers identified "pecuniary necessity" as well as "genuine belief"²⁰ as playing a part in Cass's commitment to 'simplicity of production'; the reviewer of *Sphere* alluded to Tree's commercial success in "putting it on splendiferously" and added, with perhaps a hint of wistfulness, "At the Old Vic...splendour is not possible".²¹ Some two years earlier at the opening of the new Shakespeare Memorial Theatre another reviewer suggested that restraint in respect of the mounting in recent years might have owed more to practicalities than to idealism when he observed that during the previous six years Bridges-Adams and his players had laboured on a "platform built out behind a picture house, with little equipment beyond bare boards, containing walls and time-serving scenery. They have been cramped as to space and depth, handicapped by the nature of the auditorium from attempting anything in the way of expansiveness or pageantry".²²

It was natural, perhaps, that Shakespearean

revivals at His Majesty's, in particular, should prompt nostalgic comparison and a greater degree of critical tolerance. Sydney Carroll's production of *Henry IV, Part One* at Tree's *alma mater* was one such. Perhaps Lady Tree's presence as Mistress Quickly gave added romantic lustre to a revival described as a "lavish heraldic production"²³ but at least one reviewer was prepared to concede - perhaps with a hint of irony - that "...pomp must be observed when Shakespeare is played at His Majesty's. So the trumpets blew and the drums sounded".²⁴ Elsewhere there were other wistful backward glances: Stanley Bell's production of *The Merchant of Venice* transported one critic "back to the old Lyceum as not many revivals that have happened since have done".²⁵ No doubt "the days of the Lyceum and His Majesty's [were] still the Golden Age to some of them".²⁶

Nevertheless, stage ceremony continued to be equated with the excessive pictorial realism of the past and the moving picture could, in any case, "tell a naturalistic story better in most ways than it could be told on the stage".²⁷ The resultant tension between theatrical and cinematic philosophies inevitably influenced Shakespearean production during this period. Iden Payne, addressing the Birmingham Rotary Club in 1936, observed that "the mechanised theatre definitely held up a mirror to nature. Its very literalness was its undoing from the point of view of the artist, who was essentially the revealer of the imaginative world which to the artist was much more real than the literal world".²⁸ Interviewed the following week at

the end of the 1936 Stratford Festival Payne again made distinction between "a kind of stark realism about anything photographically produced, whereas the poetic drama can and does carry its audiences into another world - the world of imagination".²⁹

Given that the ideal of the cinematic art was to create "the seamless image of a world which has an illusory resemblance to our own but which is presented as coherent, continuous, universal, and wholly decipherable" for a spectator who "must never be disturbed in his willing suspension of disbelief" a degree of caution was understandable.³⁰ Theodore Komisarjevsky writing in 1934 observed that "the art of the cinema is organically alien to the essential elements of the art of the living theatre"³¹ but he also perceived that "the cinema has a strong influence on the modern theatre",³² its "sham naturalism" playing its part in the debasement of the idealistic significance of theatrical performances and workmanship".³³ Three years later W.A. Darlington remarked more in sorrow than in anger: "Realism is still the plain man's favourite convention in the theatre. He applies just the standard of ordinary life without any special knowledge of the theatre".³⁴

The appearance of George Robey as Falstaff in Sydney Carroll's revival of *Henry IV, Part One* inevitably excited a good deal of 'popular' interest. After all, in going to the cinema "it was the star that the public went to see more often than not"³⁵ and so it was on this occasion.

so much so that Robey's presence "threw the whole thing a little out of focus".³⁶ Perhaps it was the combined effects of the venue (His Majesty's) and the fact that Robey was bound to attract large numbers of patrons more accustomed to the sham naturalism of the cinema that prompted one commentator to anticipate effusively that "the decor promises to be marvellous - quite in the Tree vein, brought up to date...and every one of the innumerable scenes is to be completely realistic, from the roaring fire in the Old Boar's Head tavern to the embossed throne of the king".³⁷ All this, no doubt reassuring to 'barren spectators', could not but make the judicious grieve.

When commentators inveighed against any suggestion of excess it was a response which Guthrie believed was based upon misunderstanding. "As is so often the case with critics who are not practitioners, they perceive a symptom and believe the symptom to be the cause, not the result, of a malady which they have not diagnosed":³⁸

...as far back as 1936 I felt convinced that there could be no radical improvement in Shakespearean production until we could achieve two things: first, to set the actors against a background with no concessions whatever to pictorial realism...; secondly, to arrange the actors in choreographic patterns, in the sort of relation both to one another and to the audience which the Elizabethan stage demanded and the picture-frame forbids".³⁹

The reality, however, was what he called "the insuperable problems posed by the architecture" both at Stratford-upon-Avon and the Old Vic where "director after director...falls back upon elaboration of spectacle. To give the public something for its money, a Pageant is mounted to

the accompaniment of a Shakespearean text".⁴⁰ The tyranny of the picture-frame was apt to render attempts at restraint in such matters somewhat exposed and invite complaint, even in 1935: "Whether or not there should have been more scenic display, for the stage is wide enough to look barren sometimes, was a matter of opinion".⁴¹

Factors such as these also seem to have influenced not only reviewers' expectations regarding the staging of Shakespeare's plays, but the very vocabulary used to describe it. George Reynolds, rejecting the assumption that an open stage must necessarily be bare or uninformative, acknowledges "the eye's natural hunger for pageantry" but equates such pageantry merely with "vivid costumes".⁴² In fact, usually at this time the use by commentators of the term 'pageantry' carries no implication of "the glories of the procession"⁴³ but almost always refers to costumes that are colourful and have an air of historical authenticity together with hangings more or less heraldic in design: "the pageantry was essentially right in every detail of banneret and tabard"⁴⁴ is a typical response and Gordon Crosse commended "the plain modern style which rightly concentrates on the text & the acting, and relies for its appeal to the eye on costumes...".⁴⁵ Tyrone Guthrie, too, in his first season at the Old Vic, being "in full reaction against naturalism", decided to have no scenery except a permanent structure thus "eliminating the cost of scenery. The money so saved was to go into costumes",⁴⁶ though one reviewer - albeit a self-confessed "inveterate antiquary" -

was conscious of the process of linguistic no less than stylistic evolution: "The pageantry, that memorial of a distant age, has become merely the rich armorial decoration of a spectacle".⁴⁷

Clearly the first appearance of a play's central character - and he a king - is dramatically a very significant moment; in Shakespeare's plays it is

...accented by music or the blast of trumpets or roll of drums, and...accompanied by lords and lesser attendants in proper order of precedence and attired in the gorgeous habiliments of the Renaissance court. Such an entrance appeals to the intelligence, to the ear and to the eye, and is, im [sic] short, a Grand Entry.⁴⁸

Both Tree and Benson had favoured a mood of languid self-indulgence at the opening of their productions of *Richard II* secure in the knowledge that there would be no lack of ceremony later in the evening. The balance of opinion, however, has favoured a degree of ceremonial - or at least formality - in the opening scene. John Russell Brown says: "It begins with the stage set formally. Richard is enthroned and surrounded, as the Quarto edition of 1597 says, with 'Nobles and attendants'".⁴⁹

Harley Granville Barker, writing to John Gielgud about the latter's 1937 production, believed that "'W.S. thought of the scene as a meeting of the Privy Council - Richard presiding...probably raised on a dais at the end or centre of the table, formally presiding'".⁵⁰ Charles Kean seems to have played the scene in the way which Barker indicates, setting the scene in a "real council chamber and

striving to look business-like and important during the quarrel".⁵¹

Barker thought Gielgud mistaken in "'hiding yourself in a corner'"⁵² and therefore diminishing the initial impact which the figure of the king should make. Yet both Barker's reading of it and that of John Russell Brown seem to imply - in spite of the reference to 1597 - a curtained stage in which Richard is discovered, an arrangement which wastes the occasion demanded by the open stage of a ceremonial entry of the king at the very start of the play when the audience's anticipation is high.

The opening of Gielgud's production of 1937, in fact, offered an unusual glimpse 'behind the scenes' of the spectacle of pageantry, a device more common at the end of the century than then. Here was a change of emphasis with suggestions of the political manoeuvring and suspicions that ceremony masks; it is a mood of tensions which heightens expectation for the entry of the king upon whom all these people attend, and depend:

The curtain goes up on a court...but for once we are not assisting at a kind of threadbare tattoo, a blazoned concourse of waxworks briskly rattling off obscure allusions, slapping each other on the back, waiting for somebody important to come and say something that the audience knows by heart. but a real court, belonging to an inadequate king in the Middle Ages. For perhaps a minute nobody speaks; but there before us, true and suggestive, is the court: an ante-room, darkly splendid but above all a place for waiting about in, shot with fears and ambitions and jealousies, heavy and violent with glances and encounters and withdrawals and the things these things portend.⁵³

In a sense Guthrie's 1933 production at Stratford has the best of both worlds: the prompt copy direction - 'CURTAIN UP ON BARE STAGE' - creates a certain expectancy which is intensified as members of the court enter from stage right and left:

'ENTER R[IGHT]

ENTER L[EFT]

1. YORK & NORTH[UMBERLAND]. BUSHEY, BAGOT, GREEN
2. ROSS & WILLOUGHBY
4. AUMERLE
5. GAUNT - JOINS YORK R[IGHT].C[ENTRE]
6. BOLINGBROKE'S HERALD'

York's movements - 'YORK X'S L[EFT] - SPEAKS TO BAGOT - X'S R[IGHT] TO GAUNT' give an added urgency so that by deliberately delaying the king's entry a sense of restlessness and anticipation is created which is resolved by a ceremonial entry, albeit modest by the standards of former times:

'FLOURISH

RICHARD ENTERS ON DAIS C[ENTRE] FROM R[IGHT] WITH
4 CANOPY BEARERS & 2 TRAINBEARERS'⁵⁴

The king's entrance in Sydney Carroll's production of *Henry IV, Part One* in 1935 generated a measure of enthusiasm from the musical director, Ernest Irving:

'The King's entrance will be signalised by the Old English Drum March, for centuries the State march of the English kings. There is extant a curious Royal Ordinance of Charles I ordering the revival of 'the ancient march of this, our English nation, so famous in all the honourable achievements and glorious wars of this our Kingdome in forraigne parts...'.⁵⁵

But while some commentators spoke in terms of a "lavish heraldic production",⁵⁶ and of its "fine pageantry",⁵⁷ the entrance, in competition for column inches

with the novelty value of Robey's Falstaff, went almost unregarded. Only Gordon Crosse, it seems, troubled to give it a second glance: "We began with a procession of the King returning from church. This preceded I,1..." and even then he dismissed it summarily as "unnecessary embroidery".⁵⁸ Herbert Farjeon betrayed similar irritation with suggestions of ceremonial in Henry Cass's production of *Richard II* the previous year: "Instead of plunging straight into the dialogue, preliminary business is introduced, as the lighting of candles, or a Grand Parade of Old Vic students. This tendency should be curbed at once. It inevitably leads to cuts".⁵⁹

It can be argued that pageantry is of even greater importance as an accompaniment to the first entrance of Henry V than of Richard:

For two whole plays, the King (as Prince Hal) had appeared in a most unkingly role as guller of Falstaff and tavern-roisterer; and Shakespeare had to give the audience vivid, ocular evidence of his complete change of character. Henry must now become the mighty hero of Agincourt.... Henry now appears with royal pomp and dignity, and is inclined to patriotic conquest, provided his claim is just. Thus the Grand Entry serves both plot and character, and is more than a theatrical flourish. To an outsider, the pageantry of courts looks like mere pageantry; but, to the initiate, it has personal and political significance...⁶⁰

In the 1930s, however, it was a sad if understandable declension that stage ceremonial had come to be equated with tasteless and irrelevant ostentation, ostentation with realism and realism with populism so that directors generally chose not to gratify the popular 'outsider' with theatrical flourish and so avoided the

danger of alienating an 'initiate' not yet ready to embrace the duality which Draper identifies.

Even so, Coronation year (1937) inevitably permitted greater indulgence of 'the patriotic play', the *Evening Standard* describing it as "the inevitable choice for occasions of this kind".⁶¹ The very fact that two major productions of the play opened almost simultaneously⁶² is a measure of the extent to which the play was regarded as a fitting expression of national loyalty and patriotism. In addition, Harold V. Neilson led a touring version of the play to the provinces "to mark Coronation year and to remind the younger generation of our splendid heritage".⁶³

Reviews of Tyrone Guthrie's production of *Henry V* were actually pleased to invite comparison between the stage and the national event to which it was seen as paying tribute, praising "a setting of flags and decorative costume that will not look tawdry by comparison with Coronation costume itself"⁶⁴ and expressing a conviction that "the real show in Westminster Abbey will not glitter more than the Old Vic trappings".⁶⁵ One reviewer of Iden Payne's Stratford production went even further:

England will be full of colour during this year of the Coronation.... But the colour of "Henry V", is not the cold red, white, and blue with which the drabness of modern England will be bedecked.

"Henry V" is crammed with colour - the rich glowing colours of heraldic emblems.⁶⁶

Sally Beauman has remarked that in the twentieth century the play "has been rescued from the grip of spectacle".⁶⁷ This is no doubt true, relatively speaking.

and yet many retained the conviction that "if *Henry V* is to be played at all, it must surely be played lavishly..."⁶⁸

The *Observer's* reviewer at the beginning of the decade, regarding the play primarily as a vehicle for pageantry, described Harcourt Williams's production as being "in the right spirit with plenty of tuckets and martial flourishes".⁶⁹ In 1934 *The Times*, with the William Poel school of production in mind, saw the choice of plays for Stratford Festival as offering "a challenge to those who cherish the belief that the Elizabethan stage was almost invariably as bare as it was made out to be in De Witt's famous sketch of the Swan theatre", and also observed that Robert Atkins, in producing *Henry V* and "perceiving the relevance of heraldry to an heroic theme which turns on the clash of kings and nobles, had no need to look outside the play for his decorations".⁷⁰ Three years later the *Sphere* spoke enthusiastically of Tyrone Guthrie's production as supplying "a healthy tang of royalty and loyalty and mediaeval pageantry in general, banners and everything".⁷¹

Perhaps it was guilt that persuaded commentators to excuse the pageantry in terms of the play's inherent weaknesses. *The Times* expressed the opinion that *Henry V* was "so much a pageant of general action and so little a drama of individual thought that it must flow strongly or stagnate"⁷² while the *News Chronicle*, also reviewing Harcourt Williams's production at the Old Vic, described the play as "nothing but a pageant with bursts of poetry and streaks of humour".⁷³ In 1934 the *Birmingham Evening*

Despatch dismissed it as "a faked chronicle - not a play - and as such commands interest only as a spectacle",⁷⁴ and while the *Birmingham Gazette* was prepared to acknowledge its universal significance "for anyone who loves any plot of ground" it was equally dismissive of its dramatic qualities: "Henry V is not a play. A pageant - yes; a procession - of course: but a play. never".⁷⁵

Even so, there were some who eschewed pageantry, even in this play. The "Coronation summer" notwithstanding, the *News Chronicle*, beneath the headline 'HATES CEREMONY SHAKESPEARE'S KING', pointed out that "one of the longest and most impressive speeches is one wherein the King deploras ceremony" and asks whether the spectacular presentation of Iden Payne's production is "entirely appropriate".⁷⁶

As plays for celebration *The Henrys* have always had a special place at Stratford and it was with both parts of *Henry IV*, that the new Memorial Theatre opened in 1932, an occasion described as "a ceremony as much as a performance".⁷⁷ Certainly the producer seems to have been infected with the solemnity of the occasion; even the programme has the flavour of the eighteenth century: 'The Second Part of Henry the Fourth, containing his Death: and the Coronation of King Henry the Fifth'. In fact, the coronation procession was unusually impressive for its time, containing, according to the prompt copy, 10 Peers, Warwick and Westmoreland, Lancaster, Clarence and Gloucester, 2 Archbishops, 2 bishops, 'HAL', 4 canopy bearers, 2 train

bearers, the Chief Justice and 2 beadles. Falstaff's words 'I will deliver her' were the cue for 'CANNON' and 'BELLS' to sound, the bells continuing until the king's exit. The general sense of excitement was enhanced by a substantial crowd jostling for vantage in four choreographed groups and restrained by six spearmen who 'JOIN SPEARS IN A LINE TO KEEP CROWD BACK'.⁷⁸ The Coronation procession was given added visual impact by the judicious use of the new theatre's 'rolling stages' by which means "the sliding stage took us along the length of a crowded street and back again, Henry pacing ceremoniously against the movement as the horses used to run at Drury Lane".⁷⁹ There were some words of warning to the effect that "the least word of Shakespeare is more important than the finest moving stage"⁸⁰ but the device rendered most commentators unusually indulgent. The *Birmingham Mail* reviewer used words like "novelty" and "trick" but with no sense of malice and for once populism became a virtue: "it is the sort of thing that will bring back the general public to Shakespeare, if anything will".⁸¹

The added "air of reality"⁸² inevitably drew comparison with the cinema: The *Era* described "the new mechanism" as "a triumph", enthusing that "by means of the sliding stage the coronation of young Henry V was shown moving through the streets. It had the same effect as the moving camera in a modern film".⁸³ The *Scotsman*, with greater gravity, made the same point:

What may be done at Stratford by way of making a stage play compete with cinema was shown when the coronation procession of Prince Hal was rendered more vivid by the use of the rolling

stage. In full view of the audience, a whole street was unfolded as in a panorama, and by ingenious manipulation the procession was protracted.⁸⁴

Bridges-Adams used the same device that season in *Julius Caesar*. Thus "the street scenes before the assembling of the Senate will be played continuously with the main scene, so that Caesar will be shown passing through the Roman streets and entering the Capitol - all, as it were, in one set. A whole Roman panorama will be built along the rolling stage".⁸⁵ The *Birmingham Post* used words like "unnecessary" and "showmanship" and was minded of 'Mr. Cochran'⁸⁶ but *The Times* after threatening to be overwhelmed by the ebb tide of spectacular reason was able - if somewhat tentatively - to take advantage of the flood tide of dramatic potential:

Henry V was unusual, it could scarcely be called a trick, for the sense it gave us of the splendour of the young king's accession to power helped us to realize the ruin of Falstaff's hopes. The march of Caesar and the conspirators to the Capitol - the stage moving in one direction and the procession in the other - is at first sight much more like a trick.

What purpose does it serve beyond showing the wonders of the new stage?"

Having been brought "to the very edge of the crisis" we are expectantly waiting "for the daggers to strike":

Then comes the picturesque interlude, the stately procession from the door of Brutus's house to the inside of the Senate House, and lets the tension down.

On reflection, however, it would seem possible that the fault is ours. The spectacle has introduced no extraneous idea that is in conflict with the ideas of the play, and it may be considered as a convenience to the producer, since it enables him to run three scenes into

one. Whether the play does not profit by the usual pause between the glimpse of the tremulously apprehensive Portia and the crisis of Caesar's death is a debatable point, but it may be that we have been looking on the novel spectacle as a 'stunt', and that when we are better used to the stage and its possibilities there will be no loss of suspense in this picturesque scene.⁸⁷

If these words express a degree of caution towards acknowledging the dramatic potential of pageantry on stage the prompt copy for Iden Payne's coronation production of *Henry V* in 1937 suggests an inhibition bordering on neurosis. Time and again the prompt copy records 'DISC[OVERY]' where the stage direction has 'Enter' - a device which played its part in prompting much comment on the production in terms of its 'stage pictures' - and a curtain 'DROP' often forestalls exits, whether ceremonial or otherwise. However, after the victory at Agincourt the producer accepted the King's invitation to 'go...in procession to the village' and the ritual *Exeunt* is made to a 'TE DEUM'. However, the prompt copy reveals no less than three rather inconclusive attempts to order the procession. For the royal betrothal in the final scene of the play, too, notes in pencil to the left of the text indicate attempts to arrange an 'ORDER OF ENTRANCE DURING FLOURISH' but after some erasing and altering the attempt is abandoned and replaced with the ubiquitous 'DISCOVERY' - though the 'FLOURISH' is retained.⁸⁸

Robert Atkins in his 1934 production of *Henry V* also opted for discovery in the final scene and even cut the 'Flourish' which the stage direction in the edition

favoured for the production indicates should greet the kiss exchanged between Henry and Katherine, though perhaps this was an attempt to suggest that the betrothal should be regarded in personal rather than purely dynastic terms. After Agincourt, too, the ceremonial element was muted: Henry's words referring to the procession were retained but no procession was attempted - at the end of the scene during Henry's last speech 'ALL MOVE UP C[ENTRE]. & KNEEL', the act concluding with 'MUSIC' and 'SLOW ACT DROP'.⁸⁹ Where there was praise for a production "full of colour and pageantry",⁹⁰ and for its "befitting air of regality and gallantry"⁹¹ it was almost entirely the setting which created the effect. "The stage glowed with colour from shields and banners and surcoats richly embroidered" though without "the least suggestion of realistic heaviness":

A permanent feature of the stage was an elaborate carved inner proscenium reminiscent of a rood screen. Behind the screen were hung draperies which displayed the golden crown of England, or the fleur-de-lis of France as occasion demanded, and within the framework of the screen were set the Royal Presence Rooms, and taverns, streets, and battlefields of the play. The effect sought was that of a richly ornamented medieval missal....⁹²

There was not even unqualified approval of the costumes on this occasion. One critic thought they made a "brave show" though even he spoke of the use of heraldic draperies in terms of "compromise" between "mass spectacle" and "the curtains which other companies effect";⁹³ others, however, felt that some of the costumes looked "dingy and ill-assorted against these rich backgrounds"⁹⁴ and had "evidently been fished out of the rag-bag".⁹⁵

Perhaps the charge of compromise misjudges Atkins's treatment of ceremonial in this production. Henry's first appearance is a case in point. The distinction between the Antechamber and the Presence Chamber was lost as the first two scenes were run into one and Canterbury and Ely remained on stage, the King coming into their presence rather than they into his. A 'FLOURISH' announced the King's arrival with members of the court and he was attended by two pages and four men-at-arms.⁹⁶ There was no sense of a state entry about the king's arrival, however, and little sense of formality; indeed, the only sign of formal respect was shown to the Archbishop of Canterbury to whom Exeter bowed. Henry received the Archbishop's 'No woman shall succeed' speech [I.2.33-95] seated not on the throne but on the triple-backed gothic seat stage-right. Only when the messengers from the Dauphin were called did he move to the throne, put on the crown, take the sceptre and orb and sit. The decision to abandon the state entry was not an arbitrary one, however, nor was it dictated by anti-pageantic prejudice. By distinguishing between Henry's essentially political role in determining policy and a separate and distinct ceremonial role bestowed by assuming the theatrical properties of majesty Atkins suggested a means of interrogating the nature of kingship which another generation of directors would exploit more rigorously.

(ii) Dressed to kill...

There were in this decade, however, two productions of plays from the second tetralogy to which the words 'tremulous' and 'compromise' could not with justice be applied. These were both productions of *Henry V* and each in its own way was a maverick, uncharacteristic of its time and undertaken in circumstances outside the main stream of Shakespearean production.

When Colonel Stanley Bell's production of *Henry V* opened at the Hippodrome Theatre, Manchester on Boxing Day 1933 public expectation had already been raised by the time, the place and the extensive press coverage for several weeks prior to the event. It was, after all, the festive season, the season of pantomime; and the Hippodrome, famous for its water spectaculars, was generally regarded as a "high class music hall".⁹⁷ Moreover, the Alhambra to which the production was transferred in the new year was a "vast house which has spent its life in the service of spectacle".⁹⁸

"'Pageantry is the sort of thing the public want at Christmas...and they will get it in this show'"⁹⁹ promised the producer some three weeks before opening night and this was the theme which the press enthusiastically pursued in its pre-show coverage: 'A Pageant of Shakespeare', 'Patriotic Spectacle', 'Splendour and Magnificence' were typical of the headlines to articles which anticipated the production.

Early in his career Stanley Bell had been a

designer for Beerbohm Tree and it was a heritage on which he now seemed anxious to capitalise. Undeterred by the fact that he had never seen the play performed on stage Bell's approach was "'just the same as it would be towards any great war play that might be written today, but I have this advantage - great opportunities for displaying splendour and magnificence'".¹⁰⁰ It was an emphasis which the press readily echoed, referring to "this greatest of all war plays...[which] lends itself to colour and pageantry, and Colonel Bell has spared nothing of magnificence..."¹⁰¹ and to "Shakespeare's masterpiece of patriotic declamation...[which] will be presented as a great historical pageant, keyed to a pitch worthy of the period when 'this star of England' shone at its militaristic brightest".¹⁰²

'Authenticity' was another of Tree's watchwords which Bell embraced with an almost child-like enthusiasm:

'Mr. Godfrey Tearle, who is particularly interested in the period, constituted himself unofficial armourer to the company, and he and I ransacked all kinds of shops in London to find 15th century armour.

We have succeeded in getting faithful replicas of armour used during that period together with weapons, including cannon, longbows, swords, pikes, battle rams and scaling ladders'.¹⁰³

As might be expected, the heraldry of the show also came in for special attention: "Henry V encouraged the advancement of Heraldry", observed the *News Chronicle*, "and close attention has been given to the accurate copying of banners and shields..."¹⁰⁴ the *Manchester Daily Dispatch*, having earlier assured its readers that "Colonel Bell

searched the records of 49 English and French families to ascertain their heraldry".¹⁰⁵

Yet here again the play was forced to bear an additional burden, one which lay altogether outside the play's own artistic integrity, as "an experiment that ought to succeed".¹⁰⁶ If previous comments have suggested that *Henry V* has frequently been regarded primarily as a vehicle for the expression - if not the actual inflaming - of patriotic fervour or as a commemorative metaphor, this production was the culmination of a pioneering crusade first mooted twenty six years earlier and carried out with almost religious zeal to bring Shakespeare to the people; to bring about a mass conversion in a temple of thespis which held fully 3,000 souls. Already *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice* had each played for four and a half weeks. Now *Henry V* was seen as the culmination of "Sir Oswald Stoll's effort to popularise Shakespeare in Manchester",¹⁰⁷ as the "third big realisation of Sir Oswald Stoll's vision of a Shakespeare revival in the North of England".¹⁰⁸

There is perhaps a hint of scorn for Norman O'Neill's "martial theme-song of the requisite popular quality"¹⁰⁹ but it was certainly a distinctly populist approach which the *Manchester Evening News* chose to adopt:

Wasn't it in Bernard Shaw's 'You Never Can Tell' that the butler remarked that it was the unexpected that always happened?

I was reminded of this when I called upon Colonel Stanley Bell and the manager of the Manchester Hippodrome, Mr. A.S. Whittaker, today. I found them humming a tune, a really attractive tune, and one which I began to whistle myself when I had listened for a few minutes.

"Which pantomime is that from?" I asked, my

mind being full of pantomime, Christmas being here, and all that.

"That's no pantomime; that's Shakespeare!" said Colonel Bell, the producer of Shakespeare for Sir Oswald Stoll.

A lilting, catching tune from Shakespeare? The unexpected had certainly happened.

Then I learned that it was a marching song which Norman O'Neil [sic] has composed, with all the other music for 'Henry V', the Hippodrome's Christmas show.¹¹⁰

It was a 'show' which the *News Chronicle* promised would be "as new and fresh as *Cavalcade*"¹¹¹ and some first night reaction accorded with this tone: the *Daily Express* compared the "festive gathering" with "the first night of a Cochran review";¹¹² the *Manchester Daily Dispatch* felt that "the public is ready for Shakespeare properly produced" and rejoiced that "Stanley Bell has restored Shakespeare to his rightful place as a popular dramatist";¹¹³ while the *Manchester Evening News* regarded Bell as championing "the ordinary theatregoer" over "those who call themselves students of Shakespeare"¹¹⁴ and *Punch* later called it "popular SHAKESPEARE, but none the worse for that".¹¹⁵

Nevertheless, the opening night reviews also spoke of "artistic restraint" as well as pageantry: "...the beauty of the words and the dramatic tension were not sacrificed once for the purpose of spectacle.... It must have been a temptation, with such facilities at his command, to prolong the marching and the battleground scenes, but Colonel Bell knew the precise moment to switch out spectacle and bring us back to the drama in the tents and around the camp fires of opposing armies."¹¹⁶ 'A.S.W.' in the *Manchester Guardian* spoke of the "restraint and beauty"¹¹⁷ of a production in

which "waving banners are not allowed to detract from the play's quick movement".¹¹⁸

It was inevitable, however, that attention should focus primarily upon the spectacle of the production, "a beautiful pageant...in the lavish style of *Tree*",¹¹⁹ if only because it ran counter to current fashion. For the *Daily Mail* reviewer the production was "as dazzling as a pantomime" in which "dazzling scenes stamped themselves on the mind's eye";¹²⁰ the *News Chronicle* described it as "a pageant of colour and light"¹²¹ and 'R.J.F.' in the *Manchester Daily Dispatch* exalted in "all the panoply and pomp with which mediaeval kings went forth to battle, the jingle of harness, the shouts and tramp of armed men, the massing of troops"¹²² and two days later rejoiced that "at last we have Shakespeare produced in a modern style which enables his plays to compete commercially with modern spectacle".¹²³ While the *Manchester City News* reviewer, under a headline 'THE GREATEST STAGE SPECTACLE?', could remember "nothing approaching [it] in grandeur and scenic spectacle" in "a long experience of Manchester theatre going"¹²⁴ the *Scotsman* acknowledged that it "makes its main appeal as a spectacle".¹²⁵ For the *Morning Advertiser* it was "a beautiful production, full of colourful pageantry and the clash of arms".¹²⁶

Generally acknowledged the most spectacular of the scenes, an "animated tableau",¹²⁷ was the interpolated marriage in which "Henry and his French princess stand before the altar of Rouen Cathedral amid the pageantry of

two nations".¹²⁸

Inevitably this involved taking certain liberties with the text, liberties which most commentators were prepared to accept:

The King himself says 'Prepare we for our marriage', and the Royal wedding in Rouen Cathedral is a natural sequel. The stage directions read 'exeunt', the usual Shakespearian finish, and then follows an epilogue spoken by the chorus, mostly a reference to "Henry VI.", written earlier, with which his public was familiar.

Colonel Bell showed genius in refusing to accept an ending dictated merely by the limitations of the Elizabethan stage, and in substituting one in keeping both with modern taste and with the spirit of Shakespeare.¹²⁹

Thus, Queen Isabel's speech beginning

'God, the best maker of all marriages,
Combine your hearts in one, your realms in one!'
[V.2.351-60]

was given to an interpolated Cardinal "in gorgeous robes" who performed the ceremony.¹³⁰ This, the "scenic highlight" of the production was further enriched by "swelling strains from the organ, choirboys singing in procession, and the rich vari-coloured costumes of the throng assembled..."¹³¹ with red and gold predominating.¹³²

Most commentators, as has been said, regarded the scene as a "legitimate innovation"¹³³ and felt compelled to "admire Mr. Stanley Bell's daring",¹³⁴ but others were less tolerant, believing Bell to be "using the text as something to be maltreated at the producer's convenience and in the interests of scenic spectacle".¹³⁵ It was an attitude which left the producer unrepentant: "That was a wicked thing to do, perhaps, but it was very greatly enjoyed, don't you

think, by the majority of the audience?".¹³⁶

Audiences may have enjoyed it, but 'C.B.' of *Time and Tide* was moved to reflect on how Bell in the "theatrical hereafter" might justify to a much-wronged playwright "a twopence-coloured cathedral" which left "the articulate Harry of England with nothing but a mute processional and an unnecessary tableau".¹³⁷

Yet Bell could not be accused of indulging totally indiscriminate spectacle and he actually received some criticism for having the 'breach' speech delivered straight to the audience on a stage devoid of soldiers, though the *Illustrated London News* judged the decision "brilliant".¹³⁸ *Punch* saw the issue as one of scale: "The magnitude of the speech makes one imagine a vast throng, and to see a handful of listeners would surely bring the illusion crashing from Harfleur to Hyde Park".¹³⁹ Bell's own explanation was more prosaic, perhaps, but nonetheless valid:

'It is absolutely necessary that the famous speech of Henry should be delivered while he has his back to a wall.

If I had filled the stage with soldiers I should have had to push Henry right to the back of the stage and risk his being inaudible'.¹⁴⁰

This seems like good sense in a theatre in which "several of the actors seemed to find the vast spaces...too much for their elocutionary resources".¹⁴¹

Indeed, it is possible that Bell may have altered his production of this scene in response to the enormous stage at the Alhambra. The *Manchester Evening News*, reviewing the production at the Hippodrome, reports as particularly admirable "the capitulation of Harfleur, with

the drawbridge lowered from a broken wall to receive the invaders"¹⁴² and 'R.J.F.' in the *Manchester Daily Dispatch* says "the army stands victorious before the high walls of Harfleur, and the drawbridge slowly lowers for the besieged leaders to make their peace". There is nothing here, of course, to suggest that the army was on stage during the 'breach' speech itself, but the last quoted review also speaks of Henry "in shining armour leaping into the breach at Harfleur to speak that glorious harangue, 'Once more unto the breach, once more'" which does seem to 'push Henry right to the back of the stage'¹⁴³ while 'A.S.W.' in the *Manchester Guardian* appears to confirm both Henry's position and the presence of soldiers, unless of course they were off-stage: "the famous 'unto the breach' exhortation is spoken halfway up the walls of Harfleur in such a din of cannonade and shouting that only the schoolboy who remembers every syllable of it will catch it".¹⁴⁴

Reports of the number of people involved in the production varied from the relatively conservative "nearly 150",¹⁴⁵ through a "portentous parade of costumed supers"¹⁴⁶ of "over 160 people on the stage at one time"¹⁴⁷ to the report that "some 200 supers" had been engaged to "provide an army worthy of this stirring play".¹⁴⁸ Of these "about 50" according to the *Daily Independent* were real soldiers, Guardsmen employed at 4s a night.¹⁴⁹ It seems to have been a justifiable expense given that Colonel Ball had "frankly treated Shakespeare's play as a scenario for a tattoo":¹⁵⁰

Like Fluellen, he knows that it will not do to neglect the etiquette of war.... Formalities are

observed, orders are given with a professional air; these ceremonies and that sword-drill really do mean something¹⁵⁰

The first-night army may occasionally have lost step yet "their manoeuvres did infinite credit to their mastermind."¹⁵¹ At the same time, if the 'breach' speech was delivered amid the clamour of battle an effective and "stirring" contrast was achieved with "the final counsel to the troops before Agincourt...delivered in the silence of camp, with the dawn slowly breaking over the poplars of France with the massed troops and bowmen drawn to attention".¹⁵²

But it was the thanksgiving most commentators found particularly memorable:

...a list of the English dead was read over; immediately it was finished the entire cast marched briskly forward to the footlights, dropped to its knees and sang the Te Deum to the accompaniment of an American organ (presumably part of King Henry's normal military baggage).¹⁵³

Even this rather sardonic reviewer had to admit, somewhat grudgingly, "It was most impressive". 'R.J.F.' adds a further detail to the picture in describing "Henry and his men kneeling with spears upraised".¹⁵⁴ The *Stage* conceded this episode "one of the most impressive effects" in the production, yet it also found it "shocking" that it was achieved by sacrificing the last three lines of Henry's speech in order that the curtain bringing an end to Shakespeare's fourth act should fall after the king says 'Let there be sung Non Nobis and Te Deum' and during the solemn chant which followed. This was just one example, it claimed, of a policy in which "the end justifies the means".

in which the producer "shapes the play to his purpose".¹⁵⁵ This criticism is implicit in another reviewer's observation that "Death itself is romanticised with a mass Te Deum" in a production of the play envisaged by the producer as a "purely romantic 'thriller'".¹⁵⁶

The music by Norman O'Neill which accompanied many of the scenes enjoyed an equally mixed reception. The *Stage* acknowledged that "Mr Norman O'Neill's music...helps materially to enhance with appropriate martial strains the numerous enlivening events" of the play,¹⁵⁷ while 'Eric' writing for *Punch* felt "an accompaniment of martial music" to be important in holding together the "loose and sometimes tedious strands which allow the dramatic interest almost to disappear".¹⁵⁸ The *Manchester City News*, accepting the producer's conception of the play as a "purely romantic 'thriller'", paid tribute to the fact that there was "music, rousing, pompous, tender, all the way".¹⁵⁹

Music which caught the imagination of reviewers frequently accompanied marching soldiers. The *Manchester Daily Dispatch* was fulsome in its praise of the production which, it claimed, ranked Stanley Bell as "one of the greatest living producers" and among the "glorious settings" of the production recalls that "in the semi-darkness we see...archers and soldiery, marching past, on to Agincourt, singing their war song...one of the most haunting lilts of the beautiful music which Norman O'Neill has written for the play".¹⁶⁰ The *Daily Mirror* saw and heard echoes of the Great War in the scene of the English camp 'On the Somme':

At the first flush of dawn you see the archers marching to Agincourt, their song cunningly set to a tune which nearly becomes 'Tipperary'.

In the half-light, morions and bows seem to become shrapnel helmets and rifles - an illusion which binds the present to the past in a moving manner.¹⁶¹

Praise was far from unanimous, however. What had moved the *Daily Mirror* reviewer produced only scorn in 'C.B.' of *Time and Tide*: "The musician...may smile at (even while deploring) Mr O'Neill's inverted hint of Colonel Bogey, and his direct allusion to Tipperary".¹⁶² The *Daily Mail*, although "loath to mention faults", complained of "an excess of music" and suggested that "if Mr. O'Neill's creative zeal cannot be checked it is high time he composed operas";¹⁶³ the *Daily Telegraph*, expressing no reluctance at all in finding faults, itemises the interpolation of songs and martial music as examples of an intrusive producer "'helping out' [Shakespeare] in every possible way".¹⁶⁴ *Vogue* was scathing about the "woebegone attempt to make Shakespeare musical by getting the orchestra to play all through Henry's big speeches"¹⁶⁵ and while *Punch* found it to be "in keeping" but "unnecessarily loud"¹⁶⁶ *Truth* was forced to the conclusion that "the verse...was incidental to the music".¹⁶⁷

The *Daily Telegraph* rather patronisingly judged the overall effect of the production to be "'Well-meaning but Ponderous'" but also felt that "'author' seems too big a word to describe Shakespeare in regard to this show: a mention on the programme as 'librettist' is all he has really earned".¹⁶⁸ The same sort of distortion is implied by

the *Western Morning News* which felt that the production "may fairly be described as a musical play by Mr. NORMAN O'NEILL based upon SHAKESPEARE'S 'Henry V'".¹⁶⁹

When Gordon Crosse referred to the music and singing introduced during Katherine's first scene, the chant of thanksgiving and the interpolated Cathedral scene and termed it a "reversion to the Tree style" he could not help wondering whether this would produce "any effect elsewhere".¹⁷⁰ Several reviewers referred directly to Tree and others alluded to him, among others, by dubbing Bell's production 'old style', 'old-fashioned' or 'traditional'. There is, perhaps, a hint of deliberate mischief-making in Ivor Brown's suggestion that "in 1934 there is something desperately original in suggesting that the old method may have been right after all, and in backing the suggestion with the spectacle".¹⁷¹ but the *Glasgow Herald* is verging on the counter-revolutionary:

Sir Oswald Stoll's production was a munificent one, the inherent magnificence of the narrative being given full play. With flying banners and appropriate music Henry V. marched upon his way, while the adequate scenery was a real relief. There was nothing of that obvious if artistic poverty which marks too many Shakespearean ventures in London. Plain curtains, fanfares, and a tendency to leave far too much to onlookers' imaginations were avoided. This is essentially a literal chronicle, and the latest version treated it with a rich reality pleasant to eye and ear.¹⁷²

The *Yorkshire Post*, too, turned almost with relief from "the modest and intellectual productions of the Old Vic" to proclaim "Shakespeare in the Tree style has come back to London".¹⁷³ There is more than a hint of exhilaration as the *Manchester Evening News* declares "it is

years since London has seen such a lively and glamorous production of Shakespeare"¹⁷⁴ and a distinctly belligerent recklessness in A.E. Baughan's rejection of "highbrow nonsense" and "modern affectations". He rejoices that "the audience was not asked to accept cock-eyed cubism as the proper background for flesh-and-blood actors, for Stanley Bell...has remembered his old days as a designer for Beerbohm Tree's performances of Shakespeare.... Will a younger generation accept his Shakespeare in full dress?".¹⁷⁵ As if leading a purge of intellectualism there is a cavalier acceptance of "the omissions and cutting of a few of the speeches [which] allow the drama to march along rapidly with flags flying and the sound of war-like alarms and excursions..." so that by the time the *Daily Express* can recommend unreservedly "this experiment in presenting Shakespeare in the lavish style of Tree" as an address to "the intelligent playgoer" we seem to have returned to the to the aspirations of Charles Kean.¹⁷⁶

The following month Robert Atkins addressed the British Drama League:

Shakespeare...wrote his plays to be *listened* to and not *looked at*. And we are looking at Shakespeare now. We are not listening to him, and our methods are making it necessary that we cut out so much that should be listened to.¹⁷⁷

If in the context of Bell's production these words carry suggestions of a beleaguered old guard clinging desperately to a fading dream it was a position which was further undermined by another 'old style' production three years later. However, when the *Stage* had reviewed Stanley

Bell's production at the end of 1933 there were distinct remnants of popular jingoism in finding reassurance in the "numerous enlivening events of a play which in these days of Disarmament Conferences still points the popular appeal of the pomp and pageantry of war".¹⁷⁸ By 1937, even in Coronation year, there was a note of inhibition, even self-consciousness, in 'J.G.B.'s suggestion that Guthrie's production inspired "a glow of national pride which we have a right to indulge on decently rare and special occasions. Agincourt is not a thing to be ashamed of".¹⁷⁹ By 1938 'E.P.M.' for the *News Chronicle* was able to use a rehearsal of the theatrical battle of Agincourt as a welcome escape and refuge, enabling him briefly to forget "the possibility of war in Europe". Yet even in rehearsal the intrusion of the real world could not be gainsaid: "the tumult of battle...even though theatrical was much too near what was uppermost in our minds that afternoon to be really enjoyable"¹⁸⁰ so that when the press of world events forced the play into an unequal perspective and helped to bring it to a premature close these words appear almost prophetic.

Here again, as so often before, the production's inception - like its demise - owed more to external considerations than to the play's own intrinsic qualities, though here the matter was driven by issues of personal and theatrical identity rather than by international affairs.

At the personal level Ivor Novello, who played Henry, apparently "beguiled by a brief appearance as Romeo in the balcony scene at a charity matinée some years

before...was determined to prove that in addition to his other talents, he could be a classical actor".¹⁸¹ The *Glasgow Herald*, less charitably, proffered an arrogant personal ego as an alternative to professional pride in assessing his motives: "Either Mr. Novello was inflamed with the desire to play a genuine, as distinct from a musical-comedy hero, or Mr. Novello audaciously set out as if for a wager to prove that his vast public would come to gaze upon him even in Shakespeare".¹⁸²

Diana Devlin has identified contradictions in Lewis Casson's character in which "the Puritan in him fought with the Anglo-Catholic love of pageantry". The latter prevailed on this occasion partly on the grounds of "the actor's reputation [which] 'justified' a spectacular production", certainly, but also by virtue of the venue for the production, the historic Drury Lane Theatre itself, where *Henry V* had been produced on only four occasions - and not at all for fifty nine years.¹⁸³

In addition, as with Stanley Bell's production, there is a hint of the crusading evangelical spirit in Devlin's suggestion that the production was also to be "a bridge between popular and 'highbrow' entertainment".¹⁸⁴ Certainly its style owed much to the background of Novello, "a well known figure in the West End theatre as a star of musical comedy and not as an actor per se"¹⁸⁵ which perhaps prompted Lewis Casson to mount the play "in the pattern set by the opulent revivals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries".¹⁸⁶ In fact, as early as 1936 Novello

had expressed a personal ambition to produce the play "'in the grand heraldic manner, full of colour'" and so "'do my bit in carrying on with the fine tradition which Tree established'".¹⁸⁷

Tree himself had expressed the opinion that *Henry V* "'should be done brilliantly, splendidly, or not at all.... Except a few purple passages of poetry, it contains nothing whatever of merit.... As a spectacle it might be made much of'".¹⁸⁸

Add to these factors the choice of theatre whose vastness actually "calls for a pageantry at loggerheads with the protestations of the Chorus"¹⁸⁹ and the style of the production could hardly have been other than splendid; "pageant of the kind that best suits this theatre";¹⁹⁰ a production "resplendently spectacular"¹⁹¹ and with a "huge scale bravura" that brought to mind Cecil B. DeMille.¹⁹²

It was frequently the battle scenes which caught the imagination of reviewers:

The hoard of actors and supers shoving and shouting and struggling across the huge stage of the Lane, lit fantastically by flickering spotlights and with the cloud machine painting weird patterns of shadows on the cyclorama, made an exciting theatrical picture, one which should stir the hearts of tonight's audience.

It was a brave sight...with men in flashing armour, bright banners carried on high, the chinking of mail and the clashing of swords, all the 'boast of heraldry, the pomp of power'.¹⁹³

'M.N.' seemed genuinely thrilled by "a real breach and 200 men to pass through it"¹⁹⁴ and *The Times* was similarly impressed:

Through the burning breach scores of good yeomen charged, and on the field of Agincourt itself.

in place of four or five most vile and ragged foils right ill-disposed in brawl ridiculous, masses of mailed men are locked in deadly embrace. There are marchings and counter-marchings, fires answering fires from camp to camp, an army chanting its *Te Deum* after battle....¹⁹⁵

Again, "there never was more glittering parade of weapons, never armies more terrible with steel and brilliant with banners";¹⁹⁶ "one remembers the endless chain of victorious English soldiers entering Harfleur to the tune of a march composed by Ivor.... One remembers, too, an impressive Southampton scene with the ships and banners and what was the best stage representation of the actual battle of Agincourt I have ever seen.... It was an affair of clash of arms, gleaming armour, the flutter and surge of banners backwards and forwards, and the turmoil and noise of battle seen in glimpses through splendid lighting".¹⁹⁷

Inevitably, for some it was the very splendour of it all which was its principal failing: "A spectacular production this, with armies and processions masterfully handled by Mr. Lewis Casson. But the eye and the ear are not co-operative organs. The more you see, the less you hear".¹⁹⁸

Yet if Lewis Casson himself had seen elements of his production as representing "'the last in the Tree tradition'" perhaps it was the Puritan streak in him which also included "'a great deal that belongs to the present way of producing Shakespeare' by which he meant the simple directness of the Old Vic and Stratford".¹⁹⁹ Perhaps it was this quality which 'J.G.B.' recognised when he called the production "straightforward".²⁰⁰ *The Daily Express*

identified "simplicity, for all its lavishness and splendour" as being "the keynote of this production. The Drury Lane stage is used just as it should be used; its size exploited without fussy detail..."²⁰¹ and *The Times* recognised that enthusiasm had been tempered by discretion: "...for all its splendour of literalism the production hardly ever gives the impression of something overdone. The spectacular opportunities are there and they have been well taken".²⁰²

Inevitably, Shakespeare himself was appealed to as principal witness in support of diametrically opposed judgements: for the defence - "Shakespeare in this piece insistently regretted the spectacular effects that were beyond his reach; and Drury Lane seeks every opportunity to make them good";²⁰³ and for the prosecution - James Agate doubted whether Shakespeare would have approved "these modern marvels of production" and believed "all sensible people have always regarded that prologue as a mere *façon de parler*",²⁰⁴ a view reinforced by Ivor Brown who protested "Shakespeare made it amply plain that *Henry V* was written for a limited cast and a small theatre.... He aspired, accordingly, to write a chronicle that would soar upon the wings of poetry, as simple in its trappings as a school charade. Drury Lane completely reverses the situation. The play is here in danger of foundering under its own load of hardware".²⁰⁵ For some commentators Brown's sense of excess constituted "well-equipped troops",²⁰⁶ an essential ingredient for "battle effects...to be as

realistic as Drury Lane can make them",²⁰⁷ a realism which extended to a moving ship which "with swelling sails visibly sets a course for Harfleur".²⁰⁸ Yet if 'realism' was Casson's intention - and the production was reported as being staged "with great care of historical detail"²⁰⁹ and of being "decked with all the splendour that archaeology and the arts can give" [Fig. 3].²¹⁰ Ivor Brown wryly drew attention to an "extremely good-looking and well-valeted warfare" which defined the limits of contemporary theatrical authenticity: "War remains, as ever on the stage, uncommonly aseptic, but the realism of dirt is not one which audiences readily endure. They could not, apparently, feel cordial to a hero of the deadly breach who too obviously needed a wash and brush-up, as warriors occasionally must".²¹¹ It was a fair point, though perhaps to be expected in a production which, given Novello's background, treated Henry as a purely romantic figure [Fig. 4].

David Nancarrow has suggested that the premature close of the play, which lost Novello some £15,000 of his own money, is evidence that Lewis Casson had misjudged his audience's taste: "The simpler methods of staging Shakespeare's history plays were becoming the norm. Scenery and costumes were still of great importance, but selectively so. Extravagance in these areas, of almost mid-Victorian proportions, was no longer felt to be necessary. For all its pomp and spectacle this revival at Drury Lane did not catch the public's imagination and it soon closed"²¹² after only eighteen performances, the shortest Drury Lane run for more



Fig. 3

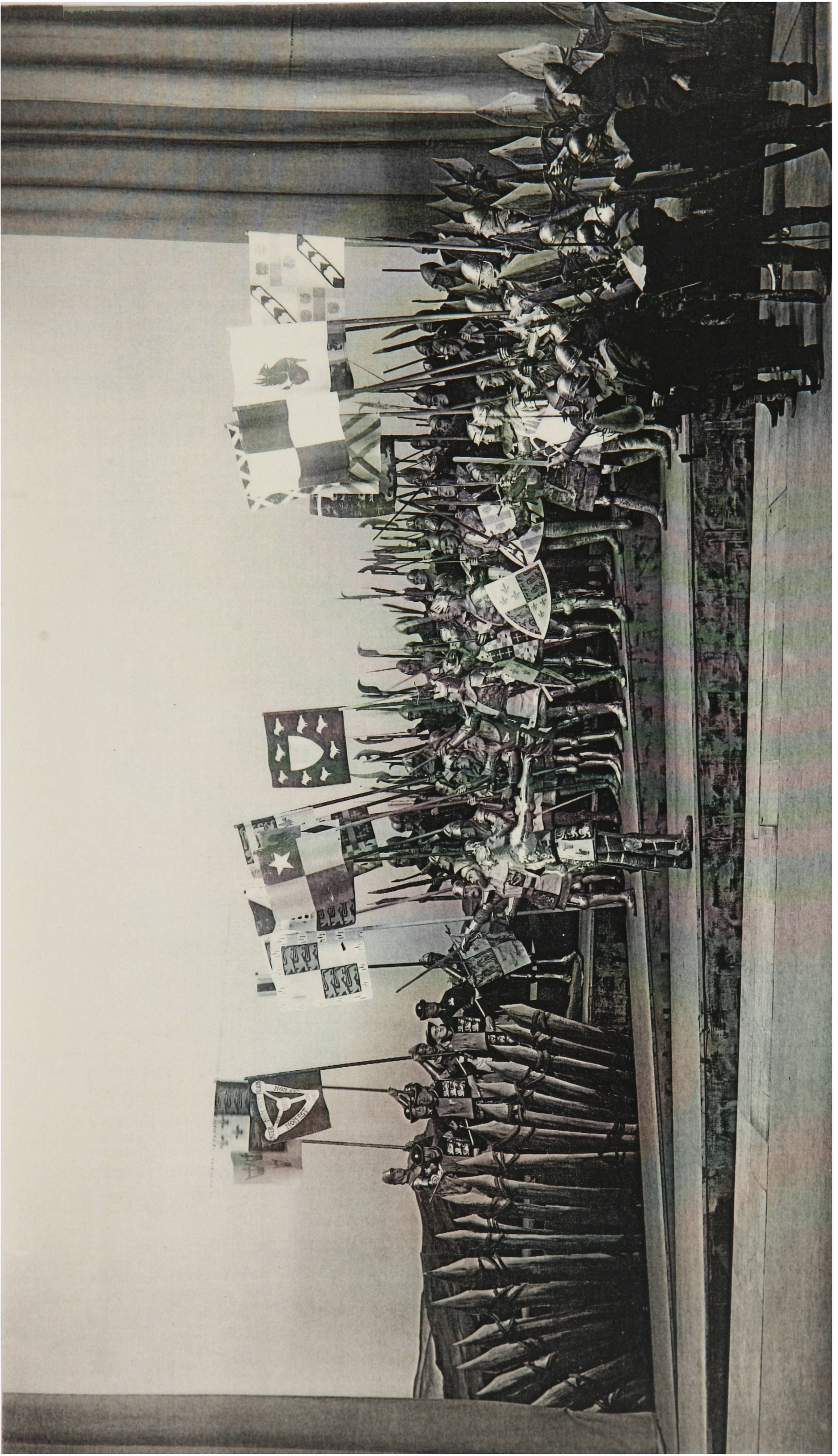


FIG. 4

than 30 years.

This seems at odds with claims that "the splendid crashing clangour of the play came to an end amid tumultuous cheers"²¹³ and "the first two weeks... were a resounding success".²¹⁴ Indeed, the *Observer* recorded that the audience "expressed its appreciation so clearly that at the end of the performance Mr. Ivor Novello came before the curtain" and addressed them.²¹⁵

What seems more likely as an explanation of the production's early demise is that it fell victim to a more dreadful reality that exposed the inadequacy of its vision and the untimely nature of its exposure. *The Times* remarked that "those who remember 1914 will be sadly aware of the difference between what 'King Henry V' seemed then and what it seems now; and they, better perhaps than younger people, will see how necessary it is to dress that noble romance in the brightest of antique trappings".²¹⁶ Yet even antique trappings could not disguise it indefinitely nor protect it from the real drama without.

The production opened on September 16th, when Neville Chamberlain was beginning negotiations with Hitler in Berchtesgaden on the question of Czechoslovakia. As Ivor Novello led his troops eagerly into one European war, Britain's leader tried desperately to prevent another. On September 30th the piece of paper was signed that would bring 'peace in our time' and the British public rejoiced and turned their minds thankfully away from the subject of war.²¹⁷

Thus the play found itself at odds with the temper of the time. After all, "What did a nation cheering Chamberlain's useless scrap of Munich stationery want of a King who urged them to stiffen their sinews and summon up

their blood?"²¹⁸ Thus, "'with the growth of the fear of war, the public did not want to see a play that dramatized war almost from the start to the finish. The only real applause was given to passages referring to peace'".²¹⁹

(iii) Glimpsing a sea-change

Although both Bell and Casson had rejoiced in restoring the grandiloquent manner to Shakespearean production few producers in the 1930s would have relished comparison with Tree. Productions such as these may have been aberrations, nostalgic echoes of a former age but as exercises in pageantic panoply they achieved their objective; they raised questions of taste but as confident and spirited pageants they were skilfully and effectively managed. Unhappily, such skills could not always be taken for granted and when something more elaborate was felt necessary producers seemed sadly inept at managing such things; 'the proper decoration of Shakespeare' showed evidence of being a lost art.

The tournament scene at Coventry in *Richard II* is undoubtedly the most substantial piece of 'authorised' pageantry in the second tetralogy, a ceremony requiring "the rigid etiquette of formal occasions".²²⁰ Tree's version of the scene, as we have seen, received almost universal acclaim as a triumph of meticulous realism. Tyrone Guthrie's production at the Memorial Theatre in 1933 was mounted "in Elizabethan style" and although Richard had a 'state' at Coventry evidently the episode was "rather bungled": "The

combatants were ludicrously preparing to fight on foot with huge lances when the king fortunately intervened".²²¹ For this commentator the lack of verisimilitude had actually destroyed to some extent the theatrical integrity of the scene and so undermined the effectiveness of the ceremony itself. Evidently the theatre was beginning to pay the penalty for an orgy of Tree-felling with little thought for conservation. Ambrose Phillips chose the course of evasion for this scene at the Lyric Theatre in 1936, placing the audience "in the royal pavilion: the actual lists (unseen) were supposed to be at the back of the stage on a lower level".²²²

Another observer, reviewing John Gielgud's production of *Richard II* in 1937, drew attention to Holinshed's account of the ceremonial entry of Mowbray and Bolingbroke and gave every appearance of damning with faint praise:

The designers made lavish contribution to the evening with as much splendour as Shakespeare has indicated and his original Holinshed has set down. The latter described Bolingbroke and Mowbray as entering the lists "with a great company of men apparelled in silk sendal embroidered with silver both richly and curiously, every man having a tipped staff to keep the field in order", the former's horse being embroidered with golden swans and antelopes and the latter's with lions of silver and mulberry trees.

We at least had a glimpse of a swan, many lions, and a riot of scalloped clothes and curling shoes in black and red. Mr Manges, too, was profuse with new tuckets, sennets and fanfares delivered by a subtle orchestra.²²³

Like Ambrose Phillips the previous year the producer had chosen to gratify his audience's vanity with a

seat in the royal enclosure whilst denying them so much as a glimpse of the main event. Thus, they must content themselves with gazing at the fashions and listening to the public address system broadcasting much sound and fury but signifying nothing.

Milton Rosmer succeeded Iden Payne as Director of the Stratford Festival in 1943 and their views on the production of Shakespeare's plays could hardly have been more different. While Payne was bent on presenting the plays "as nearly as could be contrived to their original production...Mr Rosmer, on the other hand, takes the view...that were Shakespeare at Stratford today, he would use all the resources of the Memorial Theatre stage".²²⁴ If Payne was numbered with those 'faddists' who were characterised by "gloom and pedantry" Rosmer's production of *Henry V* in 1943 was generally celebrated: Rosmer was, thankfully, "none of your art-for-art's sake producers" intent on "making Stratford's modern stage look like the Bankside theatre" but one alive to the need to appeal to "a modern audience brought up to appreciate the expert showmanship of Hollywood".²²⁵

Commentators responded positively, too, to Rosmer, the "gentle reactionary"²²⁶ as a welcome relief from wartime austerity:

Utility has no place in Mr Milton Rosmer's production.... The sartorial splendour of Herbert Norris's costumes shines bravely in the wide spaces of the Stratford stage, which is this year being used as it deserves. The pageant moves in full theatrical fig of glittering armour, heraldic banners and ample velvet; no

austerity limits the opulence of this Tudor tailoring.²²⁷

The very continuance of the Stratford Festival "which marches on triumphantly through the war years"²²⁸ was itself a symbol of patriotic resolve and the 'spectacular' nature of Rosmer's production of this 'patriotic chronicle' bore testimony to its spirit. Indeed, Charles Reading's Chorus, dressed and made up as Shakespeare himself, may be seen as an instance - a year before the release of Olivier's monumental film of the play - of a tendency to place "the ideological power of 'Shakespeare' at the service of the national war effort".²²⁹

Among its many perceived virtues the production was said to have "plenty of colour and pageantry"²³⁰ and "pageantry without unmeaning elaboration".²³¹ The guarded nature of this last remark extended, too, to the play's patriotic content. A nation already four years into the war was understandably wary of reckless jingoism so that Baliol Holloway's "famous speeches" were praised for their restraint as "the calls to battle of a soldier king of broad humanity and no thought about heroics"²³² while "homely touches" such as the introduction of luggage belonging to the embarking soldiers "and little incidents like the removal of gloves and hanging up of cloaks"²³³ lent a reassuring verisimilitude. The prompt copy reveals that even the French - their effete-ness having been established by gestural ceremony which included kissing the hand of the king and a page combing the Dauphin's hair before the battle - were granted a measure of realism with an off-stage

challenge and the giving of a password as they made their preparations.²³⁴

At the same time, lines of a broadly anti-patriotic nature were among the many cuts that were imposed upon the text and included Henry's threatened atrocities upon the town of Harfleur together with the reference to English bodies 'reeking up to Heaven'. Nevertheless, the prompt copy also confirms that the pageantic aspects of the play were far from neglected. The opening scene, for example, was dressed with two halberdiers, four standard bearers and two pages, with Fluellen acting as Herald. Eight soldiers were used for the traitors' scene [II.2], four who 'STAND TO ATTENTION AT BACK' and four to escort the prisoners. The scene 'Before Harfleur' [III.1] included four 'STANDARDS' stationed upstage together with '5 ARCHERS' and '6 PIKEMEN' who stood in arrowhead formation during Henry's great rallying speech; in the Picardy scene [III.6] Henry was accompanied by a drummer, four standard bearers, eleven 'PIKEMEN' and two 'SPECIALS' while 'The English Camp at Agincourt' [IV.1] boasted an army of fourteen soldiers and four standard bearers.²³⁵

Although the line proclaiming 'Non nobis' and 'Te deum' after the battle was cut and there was no procession as 'ALL RAISE SWORDS & SPEARS' as the tabs closed, other celebratory moments were enhanced by sound effects. These included 'BELLS' at the conclusion of the first act which continued for the first eight lines of the

second speech from Chorus and 'CHIMES' for the last twenty five lines of the Crispin speech, while rousing 'SHOUTS' punctuated Henry's 'Breach' speech on four separate occasions.²³⁶

It was the surrender of Harfleur, however, which contained the most elaborate patriotic tribute as the Governor kneeled to Henry with the key to the town borne on a cushion, the French flag was lowered and the English standard was ceremonially raised. The scene concluded with a 'SALUTE' and three cheers.²³⁷

When Rosmer himself resigned at the end of the season "in protest against conditions largely, but not altogether, imposed by the war"²³⁸ he was succeeded by Robert Atkins who claimed to be "an out-and-out Elizabethan"²³⁹ in seeking a 'non-stop intimacy' between actors and audience that would restore the plays to a stage in which Shakespeare's plays "can be listened to and not merely looked at".²⁴⁰ Although Atkins knew and respected William Poel and, indeed, adopted some of his ideas, these were carried out "with a tact and good sense which their originator did not always possess".²⁴¹

The prompt copy for his revival of *Richard II* in 1944 reveals little pageantic detail beyond conventional gestural ceremony, though the general impression was of Atkins having made "a State occasion" of the production.²⁴²ⁿ The costumes were primarily responsible for creating "an atmosphere of Court brilliance"²⁴³ as "history...moves in the full splendour of silk and velvet, heraldic surcoat and

shining armour".²⁴⁴ Indeed, a reported conversation with the designer, Herbert Norris, suggests a measure of archaeological interest in that "the King's crown and the green velvet robe worn in the Coventry scene are copied from the Westminster Abbey portrait. the gold embroidery...correct in all its details" while Gaunt's costume was "a close copy from an old manuscript".²⁴⁵ Norris was also anxious to pay tribute to C.Rivers Gadsby whose skill in heraldry was deemed to be an "important part of any 'history' production".²⁴⁶

The most striking example of pageantry in respect of staging also provided an uncanny echo of a bygone age and may, perhaps, be attributed to the residual influence of the three years which Atkins spent with Tree at His Majesty's in the first decade of the century. This took the form of an interpolated vision depicting the Coronation of Henry IV. With Richard's corpse lying darkly in the foreground "lighting from the rear makes diaphanous the wall of the castle dungeon at Pomfret...to reveal Bolingbroke as the new King with his attendants at Windsor".²⁴⁷ A separate 'Call Book' refers to 'MONK SUPERS' being present during this finale while additional solemnity was supplied by local singers chanting a thirteenth century *Requiem* and a *Dies Irae* by Thomas of Celano.²⁴⁸

Dorothy Green's production of *Henry V* at Stratford in 1946 was the first major revival of the play since the release of Olivier's film. Inevitably, perhaps, it found itself somewhat eclipsed and Miss Green was the first of two generations of producers to experience the

odiousness of this particular comparison.

Harold Matthews actually expressed a preference for the Stratford production - "so rich in three dimensional pageantry"²⁴⁹ - over the film while the *Birmingham Mail*, uncertain of the expectations of members of an audience "who know 'Henry V' only as a film", considered the producer wise "not to have attempted any challenge in spectacle".²⁵⁰

Several commentators paid tribute to the "spectacular brilliance of costume"²⁵¹ of a production "handsomely dressed", particularly in the French scenes²⁵² but although the specially composed 'Agincourt Hymn' celebrated the king's expedition to Normandy in terms of 'Grace and Might of Chivalry',²⁵³ "small scale" and "unambitious"²⁵⁴ were typically used by reviewers who often chose to damn with faint praise. Even one who acknowledged that "cramp[ing] the heraldry" enabled the producer to express the "emerging democratic spirit" implicit in the play and so assist the understanding of a twentieth century audience was uncertain whether the effect had been achieved "by accident or design".²⁵⁵

Another, however, rejoiced that "humanity is never lost in ceremony" and saw any deficiency in that area as characterising a king of "convincing soldiership" with "little patience with 'painted pomp'";²⁵⁶ yet another considered that "the pageantry is there in its rightful relation to the spoken word".²⁵⁷

The lack of stage movement of which some

commentators complained was partly explained by the king's being "always tethered to a throne or to a council table when he should be on his legs".²⁵⁸ In the opening scene, the 'Court Chamber', he had both to constrict him. The table, draped to ground level with a covering bearing the emblems of *fleurs-de-lys* and lions, occupied the centre stage. The throne assembly was mounted by three steps which elevated the king's person and stood centre-stage left: it comprised a shallow enclosed canopy arched in the decorated style and displayed the royal coat-of-arms behind the throne.

A somewhat sketchy prompt copy suggests that Henry, having entered, occupied the throne throughout the opening exchanges but even so there was much 'RISING' and 'SITTING' by the other characters with no less than sixteen separate instances before the arrival on stage of the French ambassadors.

Most scenes offering the potential for pageantry were restrained, though Henry was permitted to ascend 'ON TO BALCONY' to deliver his resolute 'No king of England, if not King of France'. His royal office was usually indicated by his being attended on most entrances by a page who thereafter stood deferentially up-stage; the French court scenes boasted two pages, apparently to signal their wanton luxuriousness.

For the military scenes three standard bearers provided the panoply for a host of six supers before Harfleur and twelve in the English Camp. However, extensive use was made both of trumpets and of drums even in the

civil scenes and particularly at the raising and lowering of the curtain. The arrest of the traitors was also managed with some ceremony - each kneeling in turn when named before being deprived of his sword - and the surrender of Harfleur involved the formal handing over of the keys of the town.

Unusually, given the scale and tone of the production, two processional scenes were used when a 'drop' and 'discovery' might have been expected. The first, following Agincourt, was made 'DOWN C[ENTRE] STEPS' to the 'Agincourt Hymn' begun by Fluellen and 'JOINED GRAD[UALLY] BY ALL' and comprised all ranks. the three standard bearers and 'PENNONS' being spaced at intervals along its length to maximise the pageantic effect.²⁵⁹

The final 'French Court Scene', in fact, was decorated with two simultaneous processions, the French entering from up-stage and the English from 'BELOW - COMING UP' with the respective monarchs bringing up the rear in each case. It was this scene "against a background of cypresses and cedars limned on the evening sky" which one commentator saw as symbolic:

...for this was the late evening of the age of chivalry.... [Shakespeare's] King, no longer the playboy Prince Hal, has to wear no mere Plantagenet crown, but the circlet of enduring English personality down the ages.²⁶⁰

In writing this play Shakespeare had always been dramatising a myth but the medium of film had rendered the myth both visible - and therefore tangible - and universal. Revivals of the play would now be judged, to a greater or

lesser degree, with reference to the film's images and values, while the 'enduring English personality' would henceforth cry out 'Olivier'.

When a reviewer had detected the possibility of design in Dorothy Green's sparing use of 'the heraldry' in 1946 he had not, apparently, considered the likelihood of constructive rationalisation on his own part.²⁶¹ Nevertheless, E.M.W.Tillyard's *Shakespeare's History Plays* had been published in 1944 and this, developing ideas put forward by John Dover Wilson in his introduction to the New Cambridge Edition of *Richard II* (1939) had "shifted scholarly focus from seeing the plays as character studies to interpreting them as more theoretical structures".²⁶² This was followed three years later by Lily Campbell's study, *Shakespeare's 'Histories': Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy* so that when reviewers of Walter Hudd's production of *Richard II* at Stratford in 1947 perceived signs of two value systems in conflict - the medieval values of Richard and Bolingbroke's Renaissance pragmatic efficiency - it is possible that they were reacting to current academic analysis of the play "in at least as great a proportion as they were reporting the stage realization".²⁶³

Certainly one reviewer referred directly to John Dover Wilson's description of the play as "'a gorgeous dramatic essay on the Divine Right of Kings'"²⁶⁴ while *The Times* saw the playing as specifically designed "to emphasise the importance of kings reigning by divine right in a society likely to be split asunder by the deposing of

one".²⁶⁵

Hudd attempted to portray the conflict of Medieval and Renaissance visually, making use of the new scene shop that had been installed as part of the major overhaul of the Memorial Theatre following Sir Barry Jackson's arrival as general director to create sets "with the scope of West End spectacles" instead of the drop and curtains which had previously been the norm.²⁶⁶

For the most part the setting used solid three-dimensional pieces on trucks together with the revolve and drew general applause as being "grandly realistic"²⁶⁷ and "architecturally ambitious"²⁶⁸ with praise for its "detail" and "authenticity".²⁶⁹ Hudd together with his designer, Hal Burton, seem to have consciously attempted to distinguish between the medieval world of Richard and the Renaissance tone of Bolingbroke and his party with costume and accoutrements and were able to use the ceremonial elements of the play to highlight the hierarchical nature of the Age of Chivalry.

There was praise for the production as "a pageant of royalty and high nobility",²⁷⁰ for its use of "the trappings of chivalry"²⁷¹ and for reflecting "all the pageantry and colour of the Middle Ages"²⁷² while the *Observer* considered the production to have been decorated with "a wise flourish" in keeping with its tone.²⁷³

When the curtain rose at the beginning of the production Richard was discovered, enthroned and alone on

the stage as if to point to the splendid isolation of his office. so that when his favourites entered and invaded the throne area - Aumerle kneeling and kissing his hand - the office itself was violated. Significantly, the rise for the final scene discovered Bolingbroke, also enthroned. In fact, the Property List confirms the 'THRONE' and 'ROYAL STANDARD' 'AS IN ACT I SC. 1' to reinforce the parallel. Here, of course, there was no invasion of 'butterflies' so that when Ross, Northumberland, Fitzwater and Percy all knelt in turn the impression was of a measure of dignity being restored.

The Lists scene was fully medieval in tone and was performed virtually uncut. The tilting ground, supposedly out of sight on the other side of the royal pavilion, was decorated with four flag rows while separate tents for the two combatants occupied the down-stage left and right positions. During most of their time on stage in this scene Mowbray and Bolingbroke sat formally erect outside these tents, like the stone effigies that decorated most of the interior scenes. Indeed, even after his banishment had been pronounced by Richard, Bolingbroke returned to his seat and remained there until after the king and court had exited.

Observers and participants alike assembled in response to a series of trumpet flourishes, the proceedings being under the general direction of the Marshal. Following the arrival on stage of the assembled nobility and while the Marshal exited to 'FETCH K[ING] & Q[UEEN]', 'ALL...STAND

in 2 LINES C[ENTRE] FACING MAKING GANGWAY FOR QUEEN & KING WHO ENTER WHEN ALL IN POSITION LED BY MARSHAL FROM D[OWN-STAGE] R[IGHT]'. .

Richard's exit, too, was managed with some ceremony with a procession comprising eight elements and thirteen individuals: 'RICHARD TAKES QUEEN'S HAND & LEADS PROCESSION D[OWN-STAGE] C[ENTRE] & EXIT D[OWN-STAGE] R[IGHT]'.²⁷⁴

Indeed. Hudd seems to have been fully aware of the value of the effect of a procession even when its full realisation was impracticable. When the curtain rose on the Coast of Wales the prompt copy has: 'FIGURES OF BAGGAGE CARRIERS & SOLDIERS SEEN IN SILHOUETTE X [CROSS] UPSTAGE L[EFT] TO R[IGHT] & EXEUNT, WITH PACKS ETC. AS IF ONLY THE END OF A LONG PROCESSION' while the theatre critic for *Punch* was clearly moved by the "...silhouette of the beaten army tottering across the back of a darkened stage against a dying sky, telling a whole story of hopelessness in a few weary moments...".²⁷⁵

The poignancy of this moment was in part, of course, an example of fractured ceremony arising from the implied contrast with the brave display of the unseen departure. A similar device was used in the deposition scene in Westminster Hall. Here the extreme formality of the events preceding Richard's renunciation of the crown was in marked contrast to its dislocation afterwards.

Richard entered at the rear of what was, in

effect, a reduced procession headed by two regalia carriers bearing the crown and sceptre and followed by York. At Richard's line 'Give me the crown' [IV.1.180] the two regalia carriers approached the king and knelt before him. Having taken up the crown and sceptre in turn and then returned them he knelt down, rose after '...all duty's rites' and bowed to Bolingbroke after 'God save King Henry unking'd Richard says' just as Bolingbroke and Mowbray had knelt and bowed to him in the opening scene.

Bolingbroke assumed the throne at Richard's 'What more remains ' and thereafter formality gave way to expressions of violence from Richard and calculated gestural insult from Exton. First Richard 'THROWS DOWN SCROLL' cataloguing his crimes and had to be physically restrained by York at 'Fiend thou torment'st me ere I come to hell'. At Bolingbroke's instruction to 'Convey him to the Tower' Richard 'SWINGS ROUND'. In a gesture as summary as it was insultingly familiar Exton 'TAPS [RICHARD] ON SHOULDER' and then, under escort of two guards, Richard was led out, 'EXTON WITH HAND ON RICHARD'S SHOULDER'.²⁷⁶

It was fitting, therefore, that ultimately Bolingbroke should be up-staged by a ceremony in which Richard's inherent supremacy was reasserted. One commentator referred to the production's "series of resplendent pictures culminating in one of impressive majesty"²⁷⁷ as the coffin of the dead Richard, surmounted by his crowned effigy, was borne before Bolingbroke and his court by six pall bearers and followed by a standard bearer.

Hudd had "appeared successfully in numerous pictures"²⁷⁸ and it was his experience of film which undoubtedly contributed in some measure not only to the pictorial aspects of the production - including the 'realism' of its settings - but also to the way in which the stage picture was presented to the audience from a variety of 'camera' angles: "...sometimes one seems to be looking at the picture from the side or even from the back rather than from the centre-front".²⁷⁹

At the same time, among the production records a loose mimeograph entitled 'Tudor Beliefs and Medieval Facts' which paraphrased Tillyard's discussion of *Richard II* in *Shakespeare's History Plays* testifies to Hudd's awareness of current academic thinking and provides an intellectual basis for a production which "began to move the play away from personal pathos and Romantic alienation and towards the political and social implications of such problems"²⁸⁰ by using symbolic or stylistic devices which opened the play to broader considerations of political ideology. The time was approaching when pageantry might again be employed without guilt or embarrassment in the service of an idea.

NOTES

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- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 175.
- ³⁴ *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 14 August, 1936. Darlington was presenting the inaugural address for the Central School of Speech and Dramatic Art at King Edward VI School in Stratford.
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- ³⁶ *Daily Mirror*. 1 March, 1935.
- ³⁷ *Edinburgh News*. 28 February, 1935.
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- ³⁹ Guthrie, *A Life in the Theatre*, p. 186.
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- ⁴¹ *Glasgow Herald*, 2 March, 1935.
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CHAPTER IV

Re-awaking the emblematic eye

Roy Strong, commemorating the twenty fifth anniversary of the Festival of Britain, identifies it historically as "a lineal descendent of the whole art of festival as it stemmed down from the renaissance". He sees it as a part of the tradition which included triumphal entries into cities, tournaments, water spectacles, ballets, firework displays, masques and pageants as vehicles through which monarchs and governments alike have sought to express, through visual symbols, temporary buildings and allegorical tableaux, the ideas and aspirations of their rule".¹

Whether the Festival was in fact what it officially purported to be - a celebration of the British contribution to civilisation since the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 in the arts, in science and technology, and in industrial design - or, more parochially, "a celebration of the achievements of the Labour Government",² that it was a celebration cannot be denied. It may have been a self-conscious attempt to demonstrate that "post-war difficulties were over and England was entering the second half of the century on confident footing"³ but it served to generate or at least provide the excuse for "a great reawakening of the arts after years of privation".⁴ T.C.Kemp, writing the day before the King performed the Festival's opening ceremony in St. Paul's Cathedral recognised that it was a time when "testimony to the

aspiring spirit of man was never more needed" and he rejoiced that the British Theatre had "risen to the occasion".⁵

The 'British Theatre' at Stratford-upon-Avon was equally eager to be part of the great national event. The cycle of historical plays - last performed as a cycle by Sir Frank Benson's company in 1905 - and performed now in a newly renovated and extended Memorial Theatre was seen not merely as a group of productions taking place in Festival year but more significantly as the Stratford Memorial Theatre's contribution to "mark the Festival of Britain".⁶

One function of the Festival was actively to promote a sense of national unity at a time when the nation, in the absence of a readily identifiable wartime 'enemy' was in danger of being overwhelmed by a spiritual malaise which the Rev. C.E. Tomkinson, preaching the Shakespeare sermon that year, identified as a "'loss or weakening of morale which seems to be afflicting us all in these wretched years - the dregs of time'".⁷

Anthony Quayle's concept of a great tetralogy in which four plays which had hitherto been regarded as different kinds of plays and as vehicles for different kinds of actors "were united by a single vision of English history"⁸ was in many ways the realisation of ideas set out in Tillyard's *Shakespeare's History Plays*, itself "an act of faith in the war-time survival of English culture that was now to be celebrated by the Festival of Britain".⁹

Theatre World, reviewing the first three plays of

the tetralogy spoke of *Richard II* and *Henry IV, Parts One and Two* as having been planned as a lead-in or prelude to England's Glory. *Henry V* and recognised a climactic fitness in performing a play said to have been written "to open the Globe Theatre with a patriotic flourish of trumpets" now that "the time for clamant patriotism has come round again".¹⁰

Journalistic anticipation of a season of "rhetoric and pageantry"¹¹ seemed to reinforce Leslie Bridgewater's promise that the return of a live orchestra to replace the recorded incidental music of the previous five years would enable the musicians to "'make a great show with our trumpets'".¹²

Had Anthony Quayle allowed himself to be inhibited by his critics following his first year as Director of the Memorial Theatre he might well have abandoned all shows of pageantry as being incompatible with the emotional depth and right handling of verse claimed by the 'purists' as being the proper business of the director of Shakespeare.

Certainly one reviewer had denigrated Quayle in terms reminiscent of the detractors of Tree as one of a breed of younger producers eager to "muffle Shakespeare with elaboration, to keep the eye too busy at the expense of the ear" with "visual ingenuity".¹³ Eric Keown complained of Shakespeare being "elbowed off the stage by a designer"¹⁴ yet it was the set design which excited most pre-Festival comment. Many observers perceived visual echoes of the Elizabethan stage but one, at least, saw in its "rough and

unfinished" appearance the potential for pageantry as he anticipated the capacity for "the grey and unpainted weathered timber" to "offset the rich colour of the costumes".¹⁵ Some were troubled by the absence of a drop curtain to "seal up the fourth wall"¹⁶ regarding the "bare platforms" in full view before the play began as "unpromising",¹⁷ as offering "no promise of elegance; rather an austerity warning".¹⁸ Such anxieties might have been allayed by the consideration that the modern rising curtain has a tendency merely to 'discover' - with a consequent loss of pageantry - what in the Elizabethan theatre would necessitate a Grand Entry of the king and his court while, to offset the lack of visible scenery, "the central figure and his attendants were costumed in the rich panoply of the Renaissance, and often entered with music or at least a fanfare of trumpets or a roll of drums".¹⁹ Alice Venezky made the same observations at the time of the Festival productions with no sense of outrage that the spirit of Shakespeare's plays was being violated: "Like the Elizabethan presentations on an uncurtained stage, these plays achieve their visual effects chiefly through colourful costumes and processions".²⁰

In this respect, too, Tanya Moiseiwitsch's set proved a controversial peg on which to hang pre-rehearsed attitudes. Thus it "sometimes blunted the sense of royal occasion and gave the impression that affairs of state were being conducted on stairs and landings";²¹ conversely "the bridge...is always pictorially pleasing. It prolongs the

pageantry of a royal entrance...";²² conversely again, the designer's "predilection for placing the actor at various levels...stands to cramp the episodes of banner attended pomp".²³

Whether the set 'blunted' or enhanced such moments there seems to have been a greater degree of tolerance towards such display than had existed formerly. Two years earlier Gordon Crosse had actually complained that Richardson's 1949 production of *Richard II* was "too bare and plain for this play" - though he had added the hurried rider that he would not wish to "go back to the style of Tree"²⁴ - and genuine pleasure was expressed that Quayle's Festival production of the same play came to life "when banners and flags were unfurled and crested players took the stage."²⁵

Perhaps there was a recognition that in this cycle the use of pageantry was far from gratuitous but a thoughtful and integral part of a series which sought seriously to explore and redefine the plays' continuity and purpose - "their political meaning as well as their personal qualities"²⁶ - in terms of the idea of 'kingship'. *The Times Weekly Edition*²⁷ as well as Quayle's programme note to *Richard II* identified 'kingship' as being the 'theme' of the Festival, an idea expressed not as "blind patriotism" but through an insistence on "kingly rights, kingly duties and social morality".²⁸

As a permanent reminder of these solemn absolutes the potent symbol of the throne of England stood down-stage right of the proscenium arch throughout the series and "just

as the political business of the plays centred around it...it was the first thing which was gradually illuminated to mark the beginning of each play".²⁹ The throne may have been a permanent tangible metaphor for the cycle's theme but it was far from being a static one. Indeed, it "altered slightly as the kings who possessed it changed. For example it was draped in light coloured, luxurious cloth while Richard was in power, but by Act IV, Scene 1 of *Richard II* it was stripped down to become little more than a wooden chair, devoid of personality and ready for the usurper".³⁰ In fact, for the accusation of Aumerle the prompt book actually has Bolingbroke seated in what it terms the 'CHAIR'.³¹ One commentator also noted that the throne was "draped with ermine while Richard is king and with a rougher, more masculine fur, for Bolingbroke..."³² and the prompt book for the production declares 'ERMINE REMOVED FROM THRONE D[OWNSTAGE] R[IGHT]...' to signify Richard's decline and 'SABLE SET ON THRONE D[OWNSTAGE] R[IGHT]...' for Bolingbroke's assumption of power.³³

It was in relation to this potent focal point that the action was largely seen to ebb and flow:

Richard and his court lounged there in the opening scene; Gaunt and the Duchess of Gloucester used it as a central prop in the following scene; as the conspirators in II i discussed their plans, Northumberland maneuvered [sic] the group into the shadows as far away as they could get: in the Deposition (IV i) Bolingbroke was forcibly blocked from it. Even in scenes where the throne could have no logical place, its visual presence made it a powerful symbol; for example, during the Garden scene it had been robbed of most of its finery and was a sad commentary on Richard's esteem in the eyes of his subjects.³⁴

Again, during Act I, Scene 2 Gaunt's lines.

'But since correction lieth in those hands
Which made the fault that we cannot correct...'
[I.2.4-5]

the prompt book note has 'GAUNT LOOK AT THRONE' to reinforce the point.

Such symbols carried the unspoken but ubiquitous presence of the solemn dignity of the office of king and were eloquent if silent commentators on Richard's inadequacies. In the opening scene of *Richard II* the orb and sceptre which Richard took up as he entered testified to the fact that the occasion was a formal council of state, yet in the hands of the "epicene king and his followers [who] are dandies, dressed in pastel pinks, light blues and golds"³⁵ they appeared like toys or extensions of the jewelry which they paraded so that when Richard "lightly exchanged his royal orb for a pomander"³⁶ he seemed merely to be confirming his priorities. Similarly, the throne assembly at the beginning of the performance was dressed with 'SHIELD, HELM & BANNER AT THRONE'³⁷ suggesting the medieval king's role as soldier and nation's protector yet when Richard returned from his Irish wars "he was still elegantly dressed, carrying not a sword but a rose".³⁸

Nevertheless, the pageantry of the court was particularly dignified and solemn "to reinforce upon us that the king as person is only incidental to the king as function.... The majesty of the king as king, and the respect paid to his sovereignty, were carefully exemplified, however wilfully and childishly Richard himself behaved".³⁹

Thus, the sense of courtly hierarchy was suggested by Richard's instructions to servants being communicated through attendant lords and when Northumberland went forward to bear the king a greeting from Bolingbroke and was "chidden by Richard for not kneeling to the sacred majesty, he doesn't drop to his knee, he just stands there insolently, immovably.... Not so, though.

Bolingbroke...[who] when Richard descends, tells his followers to show all due respect to the king, and he himself performs a wonderfully elaborate triple obeisance in front of the man who must still be regarded as his leige lord".⁴⁰ In fact, at the end of the Flint Castle scene the prompt book shows that the original intention of the director to set an order of precedence for the exit was abandoned and replaced by 'BOL[INGBROKE] HOLD OUT L[EFT] HAND - LEAD KING U[PSTAGE]/C[ENTRE] THROUGH D[OUBLE]/D[OORS]' with a music cue as Richard accepts the gesture and 'PUTS HAND ON BOL[INGBROKE]'S ARM' so that they exit through the double doors together to produce a poignant image to close the first part of the play.⁴¹

Bolingbroke's first attempt to ascend the throne is preceded by his crossing himself at 'In God's name I'll ascend the regal throne' [IV.1.113] as if trying to bestow upon his self-elevation some religious sanction but Carlisle's headlong rush across the stage, "flushed with emotion". to prevent Bolingbroke from ascending the throne, together with his struggling restraint by Hospur seemed a grotesque antithesis of the ordered formality of the court

and undermined the traditional proclamation 'Long live Henry' initiated by York and chorused by Northumberland and the other lords so that Bolingbroke who had tried to keep decorum during the Deposition scene was "clearly shaken and did not even approach the throne".⁴²

Yet even in this most mannered of history plays the director ensured that the audience were not merely passive receptors of what ceremony the production contained or implied. The first appearance of the king - in which a degree of ceremonial might be both appropriate and expected - was usually preceded by tantalising glimpses 'behind the scenes' as preparations were made to provide a context and prepare the way for the appearance of the great man. Thus at the beginning of *Richard II* the static austerity of the initial stage picture of the vacant but illuminated throne and the sombre structure of the set thrust into silhouette by the luminous blue of the cyclorama glimpsed through gaps deliberately left between the timbers was quickly transformed into expectation and gathering excitement:

...rising lights clothed and coloured the bare timber, softened its harshness. A single figure was seen to hurry across one of the gaps. Others followed. The gates beneath the high platform were pushed open, and men-at-arms poured onto the stage. Nobles descended the staircase meeting and waving aside pages and servants ascending them on task or errand. Quickly the hustle settled down to order, only just in time - for here was the dazzling entry of the king.⁴³

Yet in a sense expectation was deliberately frustrated by Richard's brilliant yet unceremonial entry to his throne. "fairly skipping onto the scene, and surrounded by his minions"⁴⁴ and this was in marked contrast to

Bolingbroke's "noble stalk up to the throne when he assumes it" once he had regained his composure following Carlisle's intervention.⁴⁵

Alice Venezky, whose own seminal work *Pageantry on the Shakespearean Stage* was also published in 1951, was among a number of commentators who found Richard's funeral procession - the coffin borne by six monks - particularly impressive: "lit by tapers and proceeding from stage right, where Bolingbroke sits enthroned, through the central exit of the inner stage".⁴⁶ Barbara Hodgdon has suggested that in many ways the production's finale was not "familiar Shakespeare", but then Tree's "swelling chords or closural anthem", "swelling scene, filled with three or four hundred supernumeraries" and "curtain fall to mark 'the end'" with which she compares Quayle's production had long ceased to be 'familiar Shakespeare' too.⁴⁷

Nevertheless her analysis of Quayle's "choreography of gesture and look, combining symbolic and naturalistic detail" points persuasively to a contrast of directorial purpose between Tree's Richard and Quayle's. Tree emerges as the "epitome of high romantic individualism, [who] crowns Bolingbroke, and doubly reenslaves spectators to kingship's theatrical spectacle".⁴⁸ Quayle's, however, perceived *Richard II* as the point of departure in a cycle tending towards the celebration of a true hero and embodied in the person of Henry V "who personified to the people of Shakespeare's England the ideal king: brave, warlike, generous, just, and...loving humour".⁴⁹ Thus the concluding

minutes of Quayle's production - framed by the striking image of the spotlit empty throne and impelled by ritual gestures and symbolic properties - subordinated personality to the idea of kingship and the destiny of the nation.

Some critics found this finale to be "not only understated but enigmatic and unsatisfying" yet this initial experience of loss was necessary "in order to give precise closural value to that ideal, embodied in Henry V".⁵⁰

The next play in the cycle, *Henry IV, Part One*, calls for little in the way of pageantry or regal spectacle and although John Kidd and Anthony Quayle's production had a relatively large cast of forty-six: "twenty-nine for speaking roles and, luxuriantly, seventeen supernumeraries"⁵¹ no attempt was made to gild the lily. Kingship was the main issue but the guilt-ridden reign of Henry sought no spurious authority from the ceremonial trappings of monarchy. As with *Richard II* the opening moments of the production were marked by bustling activity but here it marked not the mounting excitement that served as the preliminary to the appearance of the great man with its overtones of patronage and precedence but the work-a-day activity of a court that was business-like rather than decorative: scribes mingled with soldiers-in-attendance; there were no courtly hangers-on and the permanent throne - now draped with the dark, 'masculine fur' - was balanced by a functional table and stools.

The king's entry was without ceremony and although

he immediately took his place on the throne the move appeared to be little more than a token gesture and he soon left the throne and sat, rather more at ease, on the Opposite Prompt end of the table. Even in Act I, Scene 3 his rebuke to Worcester and Hotspur appeared more an administrative matter than a reassertion of the majesty of the office of king. The well-peopled stage contained four scribes as well as five non-speaking lords and four soldiers while a writing desk, lens and candle lent the episode the air of a disciplinary hearing in the civil service. The king made little attempt to exploit the emotive power of the throne in this scene - his opening speech being delivered from centre stage - and although he moved to the throne after this speech he remained standing during the expulsion of Worcester so that the authority which he wielded appeared personal and intrinsic rather than symbolic and inherited. And yet the audience were not allowed to forget the underlying malaise surrounding if not the office of king then the king in office, a 'DOCTOR' remaining in attendance throughout the scene and the king - now seated on the throne - 'HAS HEART ATTACK' at 'I tell thee/He never did meet with Glendower...' so that the music which marked the king's exit through the double door appeared at odds with his unceremonial exit supported and attended by Blunt, the Doctor, Westmoreland and Lord Hayes.

Even at the end of the play, marked by conquest in the field, the sense of victory was not so complete as to warrant a fully triumphal exit, a more or less formal

tableau resolving into 'GENERAL EXIT UP O[PPPOSITE] P[ROMPT] STAIRS & OVER BRIDGE DOWN P[ROMPT] S[IDE], KING'S PARTY LED BY MOSS WITH PENNANT' at the head of a somewhat muted procession consisting of the king, 'PRINCE H[ENRY] & PRINCE J[OHN], WEST[MORELAND], ATIENZA, CICERI, HINES' and even that diluted as 'THE REST EXIT O[OPPOSITE] P[ROMPT] STAIRS'.⁵²

In this production the 'private conference' between the King and his son [III.3] had the throne as its background so that the stage moves ebbed and flowed around this focal point and yet the earlier parody of this scene by Hal and Falstaff had already mocked the courtly pageantry of throne, crown and sceptre that had characterised the formalised ceremonies of Richard's reign and while Richard had presided over the chivalric niceties of mock tournaments his usurper must contend with the realities of 'civil butchery'.

Barbara Palmer has observed that the pageantry in the two parts of *Henry IV* is set out in Henry's opening speech in terms not of Richard's glistering show but of mutual 'well-beseeming ranks' which "March all one way", a military image of a different kind of order in which the pageant of trumpet and drum replace the pageantry of crown and sceptre: "In the armed, orderly war councils, in the trumpets, colors, and plumes, and in the abundance of chivalric language. Shakespeare here has created an image of display linked with force, display with a purpose".⁵³ In 1951 the knowledge that victory is rarely, if ever,

comprehensive and is bought at awesome cost rendered the relatively insubstantial pageant that concluded the play both artistically and historically apt.

Although such restraint might well accord with the mood of a nation whose recent experience had taught a sombre respect for the sacrifice of war and a measure of caution in surrendering to the intoxication of its pageantry the Festival had, after all, been devised to counteract a mood of post-war drabness and austerity. Its design team under Hugh Casson and Misha Black had sensed a "hunger for visual stimulation among the British"⁵⁴ which was echoed even among theatre critics instinctively suspicious of treating the plays "with too much pomp and pageantry".⁵⁵ The *Observer's* theatre critic spoke of the public, "colour-starved in daily life", enjoying "the tinted panoramas of the peep-show"⁵⁶ while another "longed to see a flash of pageant red...",⁵⁷ so that the royal entry of the newly crowned Henry V in *Henry IV, Part Two*, "the most fully dramatised of any coronation in Shakespeare's histories"⁵⁸ might indeed have responded to this need with relatively little fear of rebuke, the more so, perhaps, since even the royal throne - the more or less permanent signifier of pomp throughout the cycle - was absent for much of the play. The Opposite Prompt Assembly which normally contained the throne comprised instead for this production three standards formally displayed behind a shield while the opening set piece included 'TATTERED NORTHUMBERLAND FLAG FLYING ON INSTAGE POST OF GRANDSTAND'.⁵⁹

The reconciliation scene between the king and Hal was bounded by pageantic business designed to focus the imaginative consciousness of the audience on the essentially evolutionary nature of kingship; the personal anguish attendant upon the transfer of authority was seen as contained by the wider historical process which sought to stress the idea of dynastic and, by implication, national continuity:

...scattered figures crossed the bridge, carrying a canopy with the motif of the Jerusalem Chamber; the central doors opened on to a processional entry, in which the crown and sceptre preceded the King.... At the last, Henry died surrounded by Warwick, Hal and all his sons; placed on a litter he became the centre of a processional exit which recalled *Richard II's* closing moments.⁶⁰

Shortly afterwards a distant trumpet sounded a "'twisted, saddened version'" of the Bolingbroke theme but the final act of the play began with a short fanfare which proclaimed the new King, during which "Henry IV's flag was taken down from the right panoply and hung above Richard II's; brought on by soldiers, Henry V's flag was hung in the topmost position":⁶¹ 'The King is dead; long live the King'.

Roy Walker's belief that "Nowadays we under-rate the dramatic importance of the coronation ritual through which Hal has just passed, which has exalted his spirit to true Kingship, a personal transfiguration"⁶² perhaps glances at the loss of our capacity to 'wonder' at the Prince's reformation rendered in the stage spectacle of his coronation procession.⁶³ⁿ

The 1951 production attempted to anticipate that personal transformation in Henry V's first appearance as king [V.2] in that the staging "choreographed the play's emphasis on rule".⁶⁴ Thus, prior to his appearance,

...what little lighting there was favoured the royalty corner and, as the new king appeared (dressed in royal robes but not yet wearing the crown), the light built up so that 'he seem[ed] to dazzle'. Once again, blocking suggested connections to past plays: the courtiers stood in precisely the same positions as in *Richard II*'s court scenes, but, although Henry's entrance was identical to Richard's the new King's manner of acknowledging his court was in marked contrast: he did not, as Richard had, sit on the throne"⁶⁵

Although the initial exchanges between Henry and his brothers were awkward and tense, "after naming his new father in the royalty corner, Henry crossed the stage to include John of Lancaster...within his newly created family of rule".⁶⁶ In this context the coronation procession itself was a celebration of a spirit of unity and order in which the spirit of Falstaff could have no part.

For this scene the stage was transformed with celebratory bunting. The Fly Plot includes '18 CORONATION PENNANTS' and additional decoration consisted of:

3 P[ROMPT] SIDE FLAGS
1 O[PPOSITE]/P[ROMPT] FLAG
2 ON STAGE O[PPOSITE]/P[ROMPT] FLAGS
2 BACK 'GOALPOST' GARLANDS
2 FRONT " "
2 GARLANDS ON P[ROMPT] DOWNSTAGE POSTS
GARLANDS ON P[ROMPT] SIDE OF BRIDGE
" " O[PPOSITE]/P[ROMPT] " "
BASKETS OF FLOWERS IN GRANDSTAND
& BEHIND BRIDGE ON FLOOR

while hand properties included '4 PAINTED STAVES FOR TOWNSEND, ORR, MOSS' and a crozier and censer for the king's procession in addition to the orb and sceptre carried by the

king.⁶⁷ As Henry spoke the rejection, framed by his two 'fathers', "he stared straight ahead...wearing the impartial mask of one who is neither man's son but, instead, their king".⁶⁸

Perhaps the setting was merely insufficiently sumptuous to induce the requisite degree of awe and fear or the spectators were not yet sufficiently accustomed to transforming such ceremonial signifiers with "imaginative eyes"⁶⁹ into an aesthetic response akin to worship. At any event, Roy Walker remained unmoved both by Richard Burton's newly-crowned Henry and by the setting for the scene for which "London was apparently decorated with broad strips of yellow sea-weed".⁷⁰ The sense that such episodes of 'banner attended pomp' were somewhat constricted by the nature of the permanent set⁷¹ⁿ is supported by production photographs of the coronation scene though some commentators felt that the 'double view' afforded by the opportunity to process across the balcony and down the winding stairs to the main stage more than compensated⁷²ⁿ and for another reviewer it had "the excitement of a real royal procession".⁷³

The play ended with an emblem which looked forward to the final play in the cycle, and its climax:

Two supers placed a new covering on the downstage-right throne and, after John and the Lord Chief Justice had exited, three more entered with Henry V's banner, helmet and shield, closing the play with the familiar image which...linked beginning to ending, reign to reign, substituting for the play's own Epilogue an emblem of royal deeds to come and, perhaps, alluding to Britain's Allied European victory, most recently commemorated in Laurence Olivier's 1944 film of *Henry V*.⁷⁴

At the beginning of the cycle one critic had complained that Quayle's production of *Richard II* was treated "with too much pomp and pageantry"⁷⁵ though such criticism went on the affirm the greater tolerance of such treatment customary with *Henry V*: "What is right for 'Henry V' is not right for 'Richard II'".⁷⁶ Alice Venezky subsequently claimed that in the final production in the tetralogy there was a tendency for "the desire to decorate the 'unworthy scaffold' [to] get out of bounds, with lavish hangings, a full curtain setting for the French Court, and the elaborate costumes. Henry V has five costume changes, beginning in an ermine robe of state and ending in orange velvet and gold".⁷⁷ Certainly Richard Burton's Henry was not universally admired with some reviewers feeling that his "quiet naturalism" was not sufficiently regal and that "the pageantry dwarfed the low-keyed acting".⁷⁸

In many ways the critical reception of *Henry V* reflected the patriotic ambivalence of a nation poised uncertainly between the triumph of past victories, the reality of present hardship and austerity and the apprehensions of a people who "might indeed see the end of the world in their lifetime".⁷⁹ The tone of the whole cycle was later to be termed "sentimental patriotism"⁸⁰ and elsewhere it was referred to as "the post-war equivalent of Laurence Olivier's 1944 film of *Henry V*, which transformed English Kingship into a celebratory commodity".⁸¹ Indeed, the cycle was adapted so that the shadow of the Wars of the Roses was not allowed to fall over "a model to which

post-war Britons might aspire - an England united, after victory over a continental foe, under the benevolent rule of Henry V".⁸² To that end the lines of the original and rarely performed epilogue to *Henry V* referring to the loss of the French territories and the Wars of the Roses were cut and replaced by lines of Patrick Dickinson which closed the cycle on a triumphant note and thus accorded with the Festival's intended purpose of demonstrating Britain's post-war recovery with a suitable celebration of English achievement. In that respect it was true to Tillyard's *Shakespeare's History Plays* which had influenced the thematic conception of the cycle.

At the same time the Rev. C.E. Tomkinson in his Shakespeare sermon quoted above spoke for many when he referred to "these dark, disastrous times" and spoke of an England in which "we were all very frightened".⁸³ *Henry V*, once an extremely popular play, had fallen on hard times in the theatre because of the warrior king's unrelenting patriotism: "In the days of the British Empire it was seen as glorious patriotism; after World War II, it was interpreted as war-mongering jingoism".⁸⁴ The play had, in fact, received only two revivals during the recent war. At least one contemporary reviewer made essentially the same point: "When Agincourt was fought, an aggressive war, provided it was successful and profitable, was not only respectable but popular. Now it seems criminal".⁸⁵

Yet such a reaction was by no means universal. *The Times* spoke of "the dusky banners and dim heraldic coats"

failing to give "the martial imagination the fillip it requires"⁸⁶ while another reviewer felt the production the least successful of the season "perhaps because the limitations of the Elizabethan stage drained it of the colour and pageantry required by the patriotic hymn on the glory of England and the English".⁸⁷ The *Birmingham Post* felt no discomfort in describing *Henry V* as a play which must "take the stage with trumpets ringing and banners flying"⁸⁸ while the *Stage* offered a context which in retrospect appears positively reckless: "In these unsettled times of the atom bomb it renews our faith to hear Shakespeare assuring us that

'This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror'"⁸⁹

In sum, *Berrows Worcester Journal* may perhaps be allowed to speak for middle of the road, middle class, middle England in settling, after all, for the sentimental patriotism of "the happy idea of putting on plays with a patriotic theme in step with the spirit of Festival of Britain year".⁹⁰

The importance of this cycle of plays for our theme can hardly be overestimated; these productions "had the effect of erasing nineteenth- and early twentieth-century stagings, supplanting them with an interpretive vision...."⁹¹ Thus, characters were appraised in terms of "the political issues current in their historical moment"⁹² rather than in terms of their personal fortunes. If present-day spectators were to see with Elizabethan eyes it was necessary to revive an emblematic dramaturgy that

required the spectator to engage his visual imagination in order to share that vision. Within the Festival context the device may have served an essentially reactionary end - mobilising "the Shakespeare myth to serve a distinctly nationalistic cause"⁹³ - but it was also a radical break with theatrical tradition which would enable pageantic iconography to be employed apprehensively rather than merely decoratively in a manner not dissimilar from the 'emblematic eye' with which Shakespeare's own audiences interpreted stage imagery.

However, the impact of Quayle's cycle was immediate so that when Richard David came to review Byam Shaw's production of *Henry V* for *Shakespeare Survey* he seemed to be measuring Alec Clunes's Henry against the unified vision of history - or "tetralogy thinking"⁹⁴ - initiated by Quayle's cycle in the spirit of Tillyard. For David, Clunes "...seemed to hear at his back his whole family history from the preceding plays...though such things partly miss their effect when the whole sequence is not played consecutively...".⁹⁵

The broadly conceptual approach of the Festival cycle which this reviewer looked for was not, however, significantly embraced by directors of individual plays of the second tetralogy in the years immediately following and there was therefore little scope for thoughtful pageantry to contribute to the productions' vision. This being so, such pageantry as existed was generally employed in creating a sense of historical period or remained essentially

character-orientated.

The audience of 1951 may have had few illusions about war and there may indeed have been a "general sense of cynicism about Shakespeare's military hero"⁹⁶ and yet there was no sense of inconsistency in recognising the play as a fit and proper expression of the new energy and hope represented by the forthcoming Festival of Britain when it was produced in the Waterloo Road early in the year:⁹⁷ "It was to be expected that the Old Vic company, our nearest approach to a national theatre organisation, would produce *Henry V* during the Festival year".⁹⁸

Indeed, perhaps the most surprising aspect of critical comment is the very lack of expressed distaste for the play as war pageant: "The play is, first, an essay in patriotism...";⁹⁹ "a Shakespeare play which particularly needs directing and decorating";¹⁰⁰ "this play...is so poor in dramatic content that only right royal pageantry and a rattling heroic performance of Henry can save it";¹⁰¹ "the stage problem set by this play...is not to probe beneath the surface but to induce in the spectator a state of unthinking excitement, to flood his ear with martial music, dazzle his eye with the glitter and pomp of arms".¹⁰²

This last quotation contains more than a hint of ironic resignation and yet the production succeeded on the whole in reconciling the claims of both the pageant-mongers and their detractors and was generally well received. The producer did not shirk the play's patriotic trumpet call, recognising that "at the time when Shakespeare wrote it, a

tremendous wave of national feeling was sweeping over the country. In order to interpret the intention of the author, it seemed essential to capture that spirit"¹⁰³ and, perhaps in deference to the Festival spirit, he edited the text so as to enhance the stature of Henry:¹⁰⁴ⁿ "Henry remained a benevolent, almost saintly, figure, but the effect was not to glorify the war...but to show it as an unfortunate necessity...: if he had to fight, then he would dedicate himself and his army to the unwelcome duty".¹⁰⁵ This was very much the spirit in which many British people felt that their country had recently fought and a number of contemporary parallels were attempted. The appearance of Paul Rogers's Dauphin evoked memories of Hitler while many reviewers commented on the 'Nazified' French court. Richard David, for one, recognised that "Byam Shaw sought to lend these rather frivolous foes the colours of a more recent and more deadly enemy of England, and their foppery, like Goering's medals and flash uniforms, covered not so much a cowardly feebleness as real viciousness and degeneracy".¹⁰⁶

Accordingly the production acknowledged the brutal reality as well as the glory of war though some thought it unduly cautious in both respects: The *Stage* considered Motley's pageantry too "gentle and unassuming" and longed for "rich flashing movement, for more banners and smoke and sweat".¹⁰⁷ In general, though, the production was thought to have "enough pageantry".¹⁰⁸ Motley wisely avoiding the "pomp and pageantry of the heraldic device, streaming banners and the panoply of armour" while at the same time providing

"that seemliness and due order which should attend a king".¹⁰⁹

'Spacious' was a word which many reviewers used to describe a setting which was touched in with economy and trusted the audience to 'make imaginary puissance': "silken banners and canopies moved fluidly against a blue canvas background, creating a panorama of Court life and war which was both simple and mobile".¹¹⁰

Unusually the prompt copy identifies a number of 'PROCESSIONS', though it is not clear whether these are always entirely formal or whether the word is used as a generic term to cover all group entries. Serpell has suggested that "in the early scenes, Clunes was remote, feeling his way into kingship behind a facade [sic] of regality"¹¹¹ and the prompt copy certainly suggests a degree of measured formality. Following the opening exchanges between Canterbury and Ely 'EXETER PROCESSION ENTER FROM PROS[CENIUM] OPENING P[ROMPT] S[IDE]'. Behind Exeter are 'BEDFORD, GLOUCESTER, WESTMORELAND, CAMBRIDGE, WARWICK, SCROOP' and after business which serves to dispose the characters equably about the stage 'ENTER M[AIN] S[TAGE] U[PSTAGE] C[ENTRE] KING'S PROCESSION' to music and lighting cues, including 'YELLOW ARC FULL AS HENRY COMES DOWN'. Henry enters formally beneath a canopy supported by four 'CANOPY BOYS' and when in position the canopy is fixed, the throne placed beneath it by Gower and 'EVERYONE BOW TILL AFTER BLESSING' by Canterbury.¹¹²

The Ambassadors also enter and exit formally and

at the end of the scene Henry exits between a phalanx of six lords to another music cue. Additional 'PROCESSIONS' are awarded to Exeter and the king at the beginning of the Southampton scene, perhaps to set a formal tone for the exposure and sentencing of the traitors. After Agincourt a 'PRISONERS PROCESSION' provides the occasion for Henry to challenge Williams though the 'procession to the village' at the end of the scene is cut short by the curtain at the second Gloria of the *Te Deum* as 'EVERYONE FACES UP' and 'EXETER BEGIN TO GO UP RAMP'.¹¹³

The formal peace making at the royal palace in France is particularly elaborately choreographed onto an open stage and not 'discovered' so as to emphasise the spectacle of the occasion. Five separate trumpet calls announce first four English and four French soldiers entering 'M[AIN] S[TAGE] U[PSTAGE] R[IGHT]' and 'M[AIN] S[TAGE] U[PSTAGE] L[EFT]' respectively together with 'GOWER & MEN' from 'M[AIN] S[TAGE] D[OWNSTAGE] R[IGHT]' and Alice and five ladies-in-waiting from 'M[AIN] S[TAGE] D[OWNSTAGE] L[EFT]', Gower and Alice exchanging bows.

A second trumpet call brings on Fluellen and the Herald from the 'O[PPPOSITE] P[ROMPT]' proscenium opening and 'P[ROMPT] S[IDE]' proscenium opening respectively each holding back curtains to admit Exeter, Bedford, Gloucester, Westmoreland and Warwick on the English side and Burgundy carrying a scroll on the French. Burgundy and Exeter exchanging bows D[OWN] S[TAGE] Centre before moving 'BELOW STEPS' and 'IN FRONT OF THRONE' respectively. Third and

fourth trumpets proclaim the entry first of Kate and then the French King and Queen. 'FROM ROSTRUM P[ROMPT] S[IDE]' to their respective thrones and a final trumpet announces the entry of Henry 'FROM STEPS U[PSTAGE] C[ENTRE]...'. His bow from centre stage is universally returned before Henry crosses to his throne.¹¹⁴

The formality of the occasion is reinforced by a curtsey from Kate in response to Henry's greeting to her and a bow from Burgundy after Henry has acknowledged him. Bows are given to the English 'PRINCES' when welcomed by Charles and in response to Queen Elizabeth's 'SALUTE', the royal parties finally sitting on the loyal proclamation and bow from Burgundy. Indeed, it is interesting that in a production which cut 857 lines from the Temple edition used as the prompt copy these formal speeches should have been retained in full, only Henry's greeting to the 'princes French, and peers' being cut owing to the paucity of the French court.

Two productions of *Richard II* were seen on consecutive nights in 1955: Michael Benthall's at the Old Vic and Joan Littlewood's at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East. It seems that the lack of funds, the necessary smallness of the company and the claustrophobic simplicity of John Bury's set at the Theatre Royal would have prevented any conspicuous display. In any case Harry H. Corbett's interpretation of Richard as a "frenzied pervert, mentally unstable from the beginning",¹¹⁵ who declined into madness as the play progressed ensured that what critical attention

the production enjoyed inevitably focused upon the central character rather than the staging, although in the deposition scene Richard's madness was made more evident by his continuing to wear the crown though dressed in a ragged sackcloth shift.

If the merits of Benthall's production of *Richard II* were largely visual, again it was felt that much of the sense of pageantry was conveyed through Leslie Hurry's setting and costumes. The set was basically a central platform raised on gothic arches, with backdrops that suggested locality and had the unhappy effect of "forcing the action downstage, making the actors play in front of the structure rather than within it". Thus, "the first scene and the Deposition were played across the forestage in front of an actdrop, and the action was so cramped that the large cast appeared to have been arranged like a freize".¹¹⁶ "Real Plantagenet splendour",¹¹⁷ "magnificently dressed",¹¹⁸ "lushly costumed"¹¹⁹ were typical of reviewers' response to the costumes and although *The Times* thought the production "noisy" and "dark"¹²⁰ *Theatre World* thought "the dim lighting assisted in conveying fourteenth-century Gothic interiors" and served to allow the "colourful traditional costumes [which] glowed magnificently".¹²¹ During the American tour it was again suggested that the pitch black background actually enhanced the pageantry: "although set heraldically against a background of ebony black the scenes of ceremonial were often aglow with the colour of royal pomp...".¹²²

Hurry - like Sainthill for Gielgud's revival of the play in 1952 - reflected the fall of Richard's fortunes in the costumes:

Richard himself began the play clean shaven, sitting in state in an ermine-trimmed scarlet cloak over a royal blue tunic, a golden crown on his head and sceptre in his hand. For the visit to John of Gaunt, he wore a gold tunic decorated with his emblem, the white hart, a flamboyant chaperon and gloves, and carried an elegant little riding whip. He returned from Ireland bare-headed, bearded and wearing a simple traveller's robe of heavy green velvet. He appeared for the deposition scene in a dull grey robe with no adornment except for a simple girdle, and a cross at his neck. The range of colours beautifully matched the change in the king's fortunes; he might have selected them with care to mirror his sorrows".¹²³

When Bolingbroke assumed the crown his costume provided a striking contrast to Richard's early splendour: "sober black velvet, sparingly trimmed with scarlet, white and gold" while "the nobles' costumes were mostly of simple heraldic colours and there was a stained-glass effect about some of the formal assemblies."¹²⁴ The difference between Richard's costumes and Bolingbroke's seems to have pointed the contrasting characters of the two protagonists rather than hinting at contrasting monarchical styles and the production did not attempt to explore a political dimension.

Commentators were often characteristically dismissive of such pomp as the production contained, however. Philip Hope-Wallace felt that "the general coming and going with banners aswirl calls for no special comment"¹²⁵ while there was only a grudging acknowledgement that "Mr Benthall gets the maximum effect out of the stiff ceremonial which makes up the play's duller passages of pomp

and circumstance".¹²⁶

Yet Benthall had clearly been at some pains to create the "martial splendour"¹²⁷ that had impressed another reviewer. The prompt book for the American tour contains a properties setting list which includes 'SOFT BANNERS' for Richard, York, Willoughby, Lord Marshall, Bolingbroke and Northumberland; 'HARD FLAGS' for Richard, Bolingbroke, York, Mowbray and Northumberland; two 'SOFT STANDARDS' each for Richard and Bolingbroke as well as two additional 'ROYAL' soft standards. Having said that, the army seems to have been modest in number and poorly equipped, '4 PIKES' and '2 CROSS BOWS' apparently being their total resources.¹²⁸

Although Benthall appears to have largely ignored the opportunities offered by the play for formal entrances and exits - Richard being 'discovered' in state at the beginning of the play and the prompt book offering no details of any coffin procession at its end - he compensated in part for these deficiencies in formality by employing a variety of trumpet calls and fanfares. These were employed more or less conventionally and are interesting principally for the way in which their tone reflected the fortunes of the central characters: following Bolingbroke's banishment on his line 'Though banish'd, yet a trueborn Englishman' the decline in his fortunes was marked by 'BOL[INGBROKE] TRUMPET IN MINOR'; similarly, at the end of the 'base court' speech Richard's descent was accompanied by 'DISTANT TUNE IN MINOR' while his submissive 'Then I must not say no' was greeted by 'BOL[INGBROKE] TRUMPET TRIUMPHANT' and later in the play

Bolingbroke's proclaiming his coronation was given added force by 'BOL[INGBROKE] TRUMPET'.¹²⁹

Formality was created by moments of limited ritual which included symbolic ceremonial properties. At the end of the opening scene, for example, the inappropriate influence of his favourites was pointed by Richard's being followed by the royal regalia as he exited with Bushy, Bagot and Green. During the Festival cycle, as we have seen, the royal throne became an emblem of English nation itself and helped to bestow a coherent and organic rationale upon the four plays. By contrast, Benthall's prompt copy reveals a somewhat casual, even careless, treatment of this potentially important property. During the second interval the 'THRONE & ROSTRUM' were set and the Queen actually sat on the throne during the Garden scene [III.4] which opened the third part of the production. At the end of the scene the 'GAUNT CHAIR & THRONE CUSHION' were set for the abdication scene though there is nothing to suggest that the royal throne was struck, the presence of both thrones on stage at the same time during this scene might have suggested the imminent dynastic change. Even so, there is no suggestion that this was the director's intention and Richard was still permitted the use of a 'THRONE' in prison.

The abdication scene itself began with some ceremony with the entry of 'OFFICERS BEARING THE REGALIA', both officers entering U[P-STAGE] R[IGHT], one 'WITH CUSHION ORB & SCEPTRE L[EFT] OF THRONE KNEEL' and the other 'WITH CUSHION CROWN R[IGHT] OF THRONE KNEEL'. Moreover, the

formality of kneeling and rising, proffering and accepting of these symbolic properties served as a framework to reveal - through moments of contrasting violent action - the emotions which formality both refines and masks and hence to mark stages in Richard's personal tragedy. Thus after Bolingbroke's line 'Are you contented to resign the crown?' the prompt book has 'RICH[ARD] SNATCH[ES] CROWN AWAY...' and when Norwich offered the articles to Richard 'RICH[ARD] STRIKE[S] IT FROM HIS HAND'.¹³⁰

Such formality as John Gielgud's production of Richard II had contained in 1952-53 seems to have been contained within the setting designed by Loudon Sainthill rather than in production.¹³¹ It was a pictorial, romanticised environment which reflected the highly stylised world of medieval art. Sainthill acknowledged that his design had been influenced by medieval Books of Hours as well as by the Wilton Diptych and various medieval Missals.¹³² Several commentators referred to "dazzlingly lovely costumes and scenery"¹³³ or to costumes which "flash in pavonine splendour".¹³⁴ Such an approach now appeared somewhat dated and many thought the decorative aspect of the production excessive: "We should not be reminded of Toytown", one commentator remarked,¹³⁵ while other detractors lamented the triumph of style over 'humanity' as well as the production's remoteness from 'reality' - two elements which increasingly came to be perceived as artistic absolutes.

It is interesting, therefore, that when in the

Old Vic's 'Coronation' production of *Henry VIII* in 1953 "the pomp and pageantry were humanised...by a plethora of stage business" the device was seen as having "rendered it ridiculous".¹³⁶ In the same issue *The Times* had given details of the orders for the forthcoming Coronation-day processions which comprised "nearly 200 printed foolscap pages" and was clearly too infected with the solemnity of the occasion to suspend its pomposity, especially as the presence of the Queen and Prince Philip in the audience on the opening night on 6th May gave extra significance to the added emphasis that was naturally placed on the coronation scene.¹³⁷

In view of the fact that when Benthall produced *Henry V* at the Old Vic in 1955 as part of its Folio plan there was no great national celebration for the production to mark there was relatively little criticism of the play as merely war-mongering pageantry. True, 'A.M.' writing for the *Stage* spoke scornfully of its being a play of "outmoded 'patriotism', of praise of war, killing of boys and prisoners, and thanks to God"¹³⁸ and George Scott, more in sorrow than in anger, said "The play is like one long formalised Coronation or, perhaps more accurately, Victory Parade".¹³⁹ Indeed, far from seeking modern parallels, Audrey Williamson sought to distance the play from recent events by pointing out that "it is idle at this date for us to turn our modern views of statecraft and political morality on a play conceived in a different civilisation and tradition"¹⁴⁰ For the rest Michael Benthall's production,

Audrey Cruddas's decor and Richard Burton's Henry succeeded in largely suspending their belief of the barbarity of war. Milton Shulman positively enthused: "Massed regimental bands playing 'There'll always be an England' on St. George's Day could hardly outstrip in patriotic enthusiasm William Shakespeare's *Henry V* at the Old Vic".¹⁴¹

Plays and Players felt that Burton's Henry was "acceptable" even to "modern audiences who have seen enough of aggressive war not to regard it as a colourful and romantic adventure"¹⁴² while *New Statesman and Nation* claimed that Burton had restored the Crispian speech to its pride of place as "a good rhodomontade planned to thrill us to the marrow" which, in his opinion, it invariably did "until very recently when patriotism went out of vogue".¹⁴³

Commentators spoke of a "rich and dressy production"¹⁴⁴ and "fine flashes of pageantry",¹⁴⁵ of Benthall's "emphasising the pageantry and the colour"¹⁴⁶ yet again its pageantry seems to have resided very largely in its "gorgeously splendid costumes"¹⁴⁷ with significantly less attention being devoted to 'directorial' pageantry than in Byam Shaw's 1951 production. There was grudging acknowledgement that the designer had "for once caught the historic and heraldic spirit"¹⁴⁸ but there was no attempt to re-create the 'statecraft and political morality' of which Audrey Williamsom had written in anything but purely personal terms.

Henry himself wore shining armour for the military scenes and English and French were colour-coded by

prevailing reds and blues respectively.¹⁴⁹ The "magnificence of the trappings of the French knights" was noted and was clearly in violent contrast to the "tattered banners and cloaks"¹⁵⁰ of the English soldiers (the Property Setting Plot lists '7 TATTERED BANNERS' together with a total of four 'DOUBLE BANNERS' and four 'SINGLE BANNERS').¹⁵¹ Indeed, there were charges that the excessively "beribboned" French were rendered effeminate which detracted from their legitimate "pomp and power" and so made them less than worthy opponents.¹⁵²

It was evidently a production honed for speed in performance and not the measured pace of state ceremonial, W.A. Darlington, for one, noting Benthall's success in "dovetailing and almost overlapping his scenes which assemble and disintegrate before our eyes".¹⁵³ "Meticulous"¹⁵⁴ and "efficient"¹⁵⁵ were words typically used to denote a production in which a great medieval map formed a background for many scenes and which allowed a few 'mobiles' to be dropped in to suggest an inn, or battlefield or a throne room and whose "vertical take-off leaves the stage instantly clear for the troops".¹⁵⁶ Perhaps it was precisely because the pageantry of the piece was largely confined to "lavish" costumes¹⁵⁷ that almost the only processional moment was generally deemed one of the most dramatic - the *Te Deum* bringing down the second curtain at the end of Act IV with the chanting soldiers led by Fluellen "in an admirably churchy voice"¹⁵⁸ winding around Henry in a widening spiral to exit 'U[P] S[TAGE] R[IGHT]' with the King

bringing up the rear as the curtain fell. The only other processional which the prompt copy records is that which acts as prelude to the French palace scene, though even that appears to have been conducted with a minimum of pomp, being introduced by a modest 'DRUM ROLL' though the order is apparently incomplete and there is little detail as to how the tableau was managed. The prompt copy's record of the play's ending is equally sketchy: Henry's last speech is cut, a universal 'Amen' being followed by:

'WEDDING MARCH
H[ENRY] & K[ATHERINE] STEP
OFF ROS[TRUM]
H[ENRY] & K[ATHERINE] ATTENT'¹⁵⁹

For the rest, the production appears to have been marked by a distinct lack of formality. There is no sense of ceremonial at the king's first entry: Henry enters U[PSTAGE]C[ENTRE] on a 'FLOURISH', other characters entering variously 'D[OWNSTAGE] R[IGHT]', 'D[OWNSTAGE] L[EFT]' and 'PIT'. The Ambassadors are granted a 'FR[ENCH] TUCKET' which also marks their departure while at the end of the scene the prompt book tone is casual not to say peremptory:

'K[ING] H[ENRY] OFF D[OWNSTAGE] R[IGHT] LORDS
FOLLOW
BISH[OP]S OFF R[IGHT] PROS[CENIUM]
HER[ALD] OFF PIT'

though Henry is granted the consolation of an 'EXIT FANFARE'.

Since the throne could not be as readily flown off as the "series of pleasing objects"¹⁶⁰ which served to fix the various locales it seems to have remained on stage for much of the play, though identified appropriately by the

'ENGLISH THRONE COVER' or the 'FRENCH THRONE COVER' listed in the Property Setting Plot.¹⁶¹ Thus, although the 'THRONE BACKING' was flown out after the Ambassadors' scene and the throne 'CUSHION' removed the throne itself remained on stage throughout the following street scene to be struck at the end of the Southampton scene [II.2] and although it was required for the French palace and to support the French king's collapse following his words of 'sharp defiance' and exhortation to the nobility of France [III.5] it remained in the following scene, 'The English Camp in Picardy', since 'ENTER L[EFT] C[ENTRE] PIS[TOL] JUMP ON THRONE' and then 'PIS[TOL] SIT THRONE' at '...giddy Fortune's furious fickle wheel...' [III.6.26].¹⁶²

However 'meticulous' the production, therefore, realism was clearly not one of Benthall's principal concerns. The *Stage*, in fact, commented upon Benthall's "non-realistic approach, minimising the blood..."¹⁶³ and *Plays and Players* noted that the production avoided "the realism of bloodshed, except in the pathetic showing of the boys", though even that was tempered by a romanticised treatment that was "beautiful in its colour and grouping".¹⁶⁴

Increasingly, however, when there was no 'special occasion' to bestow a certain commemorative indulgence on "the heroic flourish"¹⁶⁵ the tendency towards portraying Henry as 'man' together with greater 'realism' in production - which meant, in practice, "realistic in blood and sweat"¹⁶⁶ - both tended towards a reduction in descriptive

display and these developments were sufficiently daring departures from the 'traditional' view of the 'warrior king' to occupy producers and critics alike after the Festival cycle so that the torch of 'apprehensive pageantry' that had been lit on that occasion was carried forward but fitfully in the years immediately following.

Douglas Seale's production of *Henry V* at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in 1957 was a modest exception, however, perhaps because his "many productions of the histories...made him conscious of the relation of each play to the cycle".¹⁶⁷ It is even possible that he was ahead of his time in treating Bernard Hepton's Chorus with a measure of irony since he was said to have begun speaking "very quietly"¹⁶⁸ whilst "amid a pyramid of banners".¹⁶⁹

It was a production which moved away from "the traditional warrior Henry towards the later conception of a man aware of his vulnerable humanity and of the enormity of the burden he carries".¹⁷⁰ *The Times* praised the production's "original imagination"¹⁷¹ and the *Illustrated London News* reviewer was among a number of commentators impressed by the production's opening in which a "vertical shaft of light descends upon the gold crown, set for a moment on the council table at which the king will sit",¹⁷² an image which was seen as representing "that theme of the responsibility of kingship that Mr Seale found so convincingly at the heart of King Henry IV".¹⁷³ Two reviews spoke of this moment in terms of the "Crown of England",¹⁷⁴ giving it an historical dimension clearly conveyed by the

production, and this perspective was reinforced by the production's concluding tableau of Henry and Katherine, "he kneeling as though already carved upon his tomb, and she mourning him, and the light once more striking upon the Crown".¹⁷⁵ Thus any triumphalism implicit in the final scene was tempered by a contemplation of sorrows yet to come.

Of the producers of *Henry V* in mid-century Seale seems to have been alone in embracing a growing tendency towards 'humanising' the king whilst at the same time containing that humanity within a conceptual framework. The fact that Seale's Henry (Albert Finney) emerged "not as a symbol but a man"¹⁷⁶ did not prevent him from embracing, too, a certain representative quality that would subsequently find theatrical expression in the concept of 'The King's Two Bodies'. Here was a king who "removes his crown at every available opportunity" and a production which "pushed aside the piles of arms...to find Henry a man, charming, likeable and modest".¹⁷⁷

No doubt that was as it should be - but "now and again...I did miss the battle-banner Henry".¹⁷⁸

To judge from the observations of some commentators one might be excused from concluding that the strain of realism noted in such productions of *Henry V* had been scored for full orchestra by the Hall-Barton-Williams triumvirate and dedicated to Beerbohm-Tree for the 1964 quatercentenary cycle at Stratford. The *Sheffield Telegraph* spoke with some relish of the "continual delving into history" and of two permanent blacksmiths having been taken

on "to cope with the armour, and the weapons, all of them real";¹⁷⁹ W.A.Darlington rejoiced at the impression that the duel between Bolingbroke and Mowbray in *Richard II* was to be "a real affair of chivalry with real horses"¹⁸⁰ and others noted "some fearfully realistic equipment for the lists at Coventry",¹⁸¹ "a fetish for detail" that produced "wicked, long duelling lances, enormous broadswords, obscure musical instruments, costumes that were the very epitome of correctness, right down to the belts, buckles and clasps"¹⁸² while for the return of Bolingbroke and his feudal levies, suitably travel-stained, "the sense of boot and saddle was most refreshing".¹⁸³

Such a conclusion would, of course, be both partial and misleading, even assuming one had not read Peter Hall's somewhat dismissive remark that "literal naturalism should be left to the screen media".¹⁸⁴ The clue to a more considered understanding of the directors' purpose and method is to be found in the references to the sheer size of weapons quoted above. In general, in fact, "personal and hand props and accessories were all over-sized.... Huge, heavily-jeweled belts and flashing swords, banners and candlesticks..."¹⁸⁵ while the actors were "clad in what seemed to be oversized, metallic pseudo-armor"¹⁸⁶ so that these objects were transformed into virtual emblems of the things themselves, becoming imbued with additional layers of significance. In some respects the effect was deliberately to de-humanise or at least de-personalise the characters, an effect reinforced by the setting. Hall's interest in

emblematic theatre was to increase subsequently. In 1973 he would say, in interview, "I've become very interested in emblematic theatre.... I think we are perhaps a little puritanical as a nation about the visual theatre.... The emblematic, visual side of theatre...is immensely potent".¹⁸⁷

In its essentials this was the setting already familiar from the *Wars of the Roses* cycle in 1963 and one that "could hardly be further from the homely wooden platforms and graceful banners...provided by Tanya Moisewitch [sic] for the 1951 Stratford production of the second tetralogy":¹⁸⁸

On either side of the acting area were triangular 'periaktoi' towers whose metallic faces could be turned to present a different face to the audience or be swung in at different angles modifying the shape of the acting area. To the left of the stage was a huge metallic wall with enormous double doors which was also moveable. The entire set could be swung into the wings to leave a bare stage for the battle scenes.¹⁸⁹

Undoubtedly, as John Russell Brown has observed, "at times the setting operated in defiance of the words, especially for scenes of...ceremonial splendour".¹⁹⁰ Indeed, the very language of ceremonial was occasionally defied, the word 'chivalry' and the reference to 'all the rites of knighthood' being cut from the opening scene. Thus in one sense the production was stripped of much of the trappings of ceremony and chivalry: "no crowds of supernumeraries, no banners, no decorative detail which could, as in the Quayle 1951 series, present the epic 'whole life' of a particular time and place swelled the 1964 Hall

productions".¹⁹¹

Peter Roberts, reviewing for *Plays and Players*, had been sceptical that Bury's "metallic skeleton" could accommodate the formality, chivalry and ceremony of *Richard II's* "medieval spirit" but discovered that the adaptability of the "rotating wings", the lowering of "filigree tree shapes that disguise and arrest the renaissance surge of the basic set in favour of an earlier, more static style" and the manipulation of costume, grouping and lighting served to "throw up a series of stage pictures that conjure up medieval illuminations".¹⁹²

The fact that "it was found necessary to add more decoration...for *Richard II* than for any of the other plays suggested that the directors had found...that this play was stylistically different from the rest of the second tetralogy".¹⁹³ Its ritualistic quality was acknowledged with the "extraordinarily elaborate preparations for the tournament"¹⁹⁴ and yet there was no attempt to create a particular illusion of a specific historical period: the sets were "of no real time or place so much as they were of all times and all places".¹⁹⁵

Hall's "selective realism"¹⁹⁶ depended in part upon the power of emblematic signification to bestow what David Nathan discerned as "a ritual quality"¹⁹⁷ upon the production. Thus "it is the gilded throne of England that one sees first on entering the theatre",¹⁹⁸ a throne fully twenty feet high while far upstage, in the shadows, was a "giant, looming, implacably distant statue of Christ"¹⁹⁹

which dominated all the court scenes and provided a brooding sanction for Richard's rule. The divine nature of his authority was reinforced by an off-stage choir as the performance began and Richard made his entrance in a costume of gold clearly linking him with the throne which symbolised the earthly expression of his divine election, though one reviewer, more prosaically, felt that the use of gold on the throne and costumes was merely "a splendid way of suggesting the atmosphere of surface glitter with which Richard loves to surround himself".²⁰⁰

Instead of an elegant, sweeping entrance in the mould of Gielgud or Neville, Warner's first entrance was almost inconsequential, "deliberately insignificant":²⁰¹ "he shuffled on, uncertain, hidden behind others, and most assuredly not 'grand' or regal"²⁰² so that the focus remained the symbolic throne itself and not the "weak, uncertain man"²⁰³ who leaned against it throughout the scene. Warner's "shambling walk up the steps of the throne and the loud over-confident voice in which he first spoke" marked him as "a weak man trying to pass himself off as a strong one in a society where strong men abounded".²⁰⁴ Here, in fact, was a man dwarfed by his role.

The throne, 'trucked' forward from the back of the stage, was one of a number of set pieces which changed mechanically with no visible assistance from stage hands to suggest a mood that was "an anxious anticipation of being overwhelmed by forces beyond one's control, always in terms of weight, strength and impenetrable power".²⁰⁵ The throne

is, of course, a powerful symbol in the iconography of the history play, the 'scene of state' being "a visualization of existing order".²⁰⁶ Such symbols have undoubtedly shed much of their potency with the passing of time but Hall seems almost to have sought to stir residual instincts of what has been termed "analogical thinking".²⁰⁷

Another important item of stage furniture in the series was the Council Table which has its own place in the visual vocabulary, having the advantage of "traditionally strict preferential order in seating, and...its own Christological associations...".²⁰⁸ In the *Wars of the Roses* series it was "carried laboriously on from the wings" but now "it rises efficiently from out of the paving-slabs of the flooring, to provide an even more richly evocative anchor-point for the ever-changing succession of nobles who sit at it".²⁰⁹

At a time when the 'image' of the Monarch - particularly the perceived relationship between the Queen and her subjects - was a matter of intense public debate the production was in some respects concerned to explore the idea of monarchical style. At Flint Castle Richard was transformed from a "suffering Christ-figure" to "a kind of Mithraic Pope, glowing in golden robes, the rising sun embossed on his chest" utterly remote and isolated.²¹⁰

In contrast with Richard's assumption of divinity the audience was repeatedly made aware of the populist nature of Bolingbroke's authority: when Bolingbroke returned from exile he and his forces entered "with banners and pikes singing a marching-song";²¹¹ as the gardeners' scene ended

"the marching song of Bolingbroke's forces was heard off-stage"²¹² and the interval took place while "the deposition scene opened with cheers off-stage as Bolingbroke entered the parliament."²¹³

While Bolingbroke was personally indifferent to the ceremonial of kings, appointing 'On Wednesday next' for his Coronation "in a matter-of-fact tone",²¹⁴ he was clearly politically astute. the sarcastic tone of Warner's speech surrendering the throne clearly suggesting that he was "reciting a text that had been written for the occasion"²¹⁵ and for public consumption.

Apart from the Coronation procession of the newly crowned King Henry V there is little that is intrinsically ceremonial within the text of *Henry IV, Part Two* and yet through the interpolated business of ritual "all parties were shown to be aware of the religious dimension to public events";²¹⁶

The Archbishop of York was given much business to indicate that he regarded the confrontation with the king as a matter of religious duty; I:iii opened with a choir heard off-stage, and the Archbishop's palace was indicated by a large crucifix on the wall, ironically complimenting [sic] the crucifix in Henry's bedchamber. The Archbishop and the rebels bowed to the crucifix before sitting at the table. When the rebels had concluded their discussion they rose and unsheathed their swords; the Archbishop blessed them and was left alone on-stage to speak the speech beginning 'The commonwealth is sick of their own choice...'. In this way the directors kept in the minds of the audience the view of English history as revealing God's displeasure at the murder of Richard II".²¹⁷

A table and stools were also brought on for the parley between the rebels and Prince John [IV.1]. the rebels

sitting at the table while Prince John read the Archbishop's list of demands:

"The passing of the goblet to seal the agreement in wine became a very elaborate ceremony serving to heighten the shock of hypocrisy when the betrayal came. After the rebel army had been disbanded Prince John and the Archbishop crossed themselves, and the Archbishop, Hastings and Mowbray began to pray. Prince John ordered Exeter to discharge their forces. Exeter rose, smiled at Mowbray, bowed to the Prince, and made his exit".²¹⁸

The effect was to demonstrate the shallow and debased nature of such ceremony employed in the service of human treachery and political expediency.

That said, the production focused attention upon the awesome effect upon the individual of attaining the office of king. In Act IV, Scene 5 Hal knelt very close to the sleeping King when he put on the crown. Believing his father to be dead, he crossed himself and rose, speaking the lines

'Lo, here it sits,
Which God shall guard: and put the world's whole
strength
Into one giant arm, it shall not force
This lineal honour from me.' [IV.5.44-7]

in a tone of impersonal detachment. "He moved slowly, staring into space like a sleep-walker. His face was absolutely neutral".²¹⁹ The reconciliation between Hal and his father was marked by an embrace but when the Court returned Hal rose, such shows of affection apparently being inconsistent with the office even of king-in-waiting. Act V, Scene 2 opened with a death-knell. The Lord Chief Justice, Exeter and Hal's brothers were uneasy. Hal entered and ascended to the throne. Ian Holm's Henry exuded an air of

icy authority. His brothers knelt, and "as he walked through them, and away towards the exit, he made no attempt to encourage them to rise".²²⁰ The princes raised their father's bier and left the stage with it as a *Requiem* was sung: "Hal had mounted the staircase of power and the public office of ruler now exercised strict claims upon his private life. He had inherited the loneliness of kingship".²²¹

The treatment of such ceremonious gestures as the princes' respectful and submissive kneeling and their brother's tacit acceptance of a role in which "the individual is subsumed in the sacred office"²²² provide important directorial signifiers. Phillips noted that Eric Porter's Bolingbroke "always showed the King great respect"²²³ since without these tokens the symbolic enormity of Richard's subsequent deposition and the debilitating guilt of the usurper are necessarily weakened.

The prompt copy for *Richard II* disappointingly reveals the barest suggestion of the disposition of the characters, stage movement and business. Most of what it does reveal, however, has to do with the business of standing, sitting, bowing and kneeling and in Act III, Scene 3 it specifies what it terms an 'INCREDIBLE 25 SEC[OND]S' pause while Richard waits for Norfolk to kneel to him.²²⁴ Such details preserved something of the integrity of an age of studied formality and helped to characterise a king of 'Tradition, form and ceremonious duty' [III.2.173] at a time when 'sumptuous pageants' were inconsistent with both artistic taste and strained budgets.

In the 1964 production of *Henry V*, however, broken gestural ceremony, particularly in respect of the Dauphin, was a way of suggesting a court - and hence a nation - at odds with itself and ripe for conquest.

Like all of the French scenes Act III, Scene 4 was set in formal symmetry, the throne - its towering twelve-foot back culminating in a forward-projecting canopy - was trucked forward to centre stage on a shallow dais of two steps and flanked by chairs positioned down-stage of the throne and angled in-stage at forty five degrees. The Dauphin was repeatedly out of step with the formal tone and visual balance of the scene. Bourbon and the Constable were the first with 'FOLLOWERS' from 'P[ROMPT] S[IDE] ASS[EMBLY]', bowing conventionally to the king as he entered 'O[PPOSITE] P[ROMPT] PROS[CENIUM]'. The Dauphin, however, entered at line 8 of Charles's opening speech - the reference to the Dauphin in line 6 having been cut - and thus interrupting it, offered only a token 'CURT BOW TO THE KING' before sitting in the 'O[PPOSITE] P[ROMPT]' chair. The Dauphin was the only character to move behind the throne, from stage right to up-stage left of it as he warned his father of the sin of 'self-neglecting' and apparently remained seated at the end of the scene when all others rose in response to Charles's rising. He was the last person to leave the stage at the end of the scene and he alone exited 'P[ROMPT] S[IDE] PROS[CENIUM]', in marked contrast to the other characters: 'KING, CONST., BOURB. EXIT THRU O[PPOSITE] P[ROMPT] PROS[CENIUM]. FOLLOWED BY LORDS THRU O[PPOSITE]

P[ROMPT] PROS[CENIUM]'. 225

Such instances of broken ceremony were set against moments of studied ceremony, as when in the same scene a messenger announced the ambassadors from England, first bowing and then kneeling to deliver his message.

In Act I, Scene 2 in the episode in which the French ambassadors present the Dauphin's 'tun of treaure' to Henry, the directors chose to highlight the dramatic tension between the degree of formality proper to the occasion - in which the participants have symbolic roles as representatives of national identities - and the emotions experienced by those participants as individuals. Of course, the whole episode is the first instance of broken ceremony for which the Dauphin is responsible, constituting "a literal and emblematic violation of decorum"²²⁶ all the more shocking for being offered in the manner of respectful tribute.

Henry's instruction to 'Call in the messengers sent from the Dauphin' [I.2.222] signalled a change from the essentially 'democratic' mode focused upon the council table to the hierarchical and ceremonial. Henry moving to the throne on

'...we'll bend it to our awe
Or break it all to pieces'[I.2.225-26]

while the council table descended to merge with the stage floor and the four benches were set symmetrically, flanking the throne in two L-shapes, angled in-stage and accommodating the lords spiritual and temporal respectively. The French ambassadors, Bourbon and Orleans, entered

formally and knelt before the king as the box containing the tennis balls was borne in by four attendants. They rose to deliver the Dauphin's message, bowed at its conclusion and knelt again as Henry rose to respond. Set, as it were, in counterpoint against this rigidly formal theme, high emotions strained and threatened the letter of a decorum already scorned in spirit by the Dauphin. At Exeter's revelation of the box's contents the English clerics and lords all rose spontaneously while Henry remained seated, an unconscious indecorum which Henry reinforced as he signalled them to sit when he rose to respond.

Indeed, it was typical of this Henry that he should choose to waive, at times, such conventional tokens of respect. Such moments were in marked contrast to his frigid acceptance of his brothers' homage at the end of *Henry IV, Part Two* and suggested a king now thoroughly comfortable with his role, confident of his own authority and his subjects' loyalty and affection. The opening of Act I, Scene 2 had the air of a democratic council chamber. Henry had entered with the principal lords but without ceremony or other attendants. The seating arrangements at the council table itself minimised the sense of hierarchy. A book of genealogy and a map moved for reference purposes around the table suggested the idea of informed debate and between lines 122 and 130 the lords severally voted for war with France. The vote having been taken, however, the decision was reinforced and given a spiritual dimension by overtly ceremonial elements: at the Archbishop's words 'And

you withal shall make all Gallia shake' 'ALL PUT HANDS ON TABLE' in the manner of a solemn pledge and after the French ambassadors had left Henry knelt to Canterbury for blessing, a symbolic submission to the will of God rendered the more impressive as 'ALL KNEEL'.²²⁷

Here was a king who could acknowledge the importance of what Gareth Lloyd Evans has termed "a necessary ceremonial"²²⁸ but was neither its slave nor its dupe. Following the exit of the French ambassadors Henry rose, moved downstage, shut the chest and then, as the rest of the court rose respectfully to their feet, sat on it boyishly before finally kneeling for the Archbishop's blessing.

After the opening formalities in Act V, Scene 2 Henry was left alone with Katherine and her chaperone. Katherine and Henry faced each other formally and awkwardly at opposite ends of the same long table which had separated Henry and her father during the exchange of speeches of guarded statecraft with which the scene had begun, the royal throne of France a constant and inhibiting presence up-stage centre. The French court was also shown in formal mourning; Katherine and Alice wore black which "heightened the sense of cold restraint, reminding the audience that the man now wooing the Princess was responsible for her mourning".²²⁹

The tension which this unpromising setting generated and which the change from formal verse to more homely prose had not been able to dissipate was to some extent relieved when Henry, asking Katherine 'And what

sayest thou then to my love?' removed his crown and placed it on the table. Katherine, however, remained reserved and cool, "playing for safety in a tense situation, conscious that she was a political pawn".²³⁰ Thus the episode, lacking gaiety and charm, echoed the manoeuvrings of formal diplomacy continuing off-stage between her father, his advisors and Henry's representatives.

With the return of the court the conference table was removed and the prompt copy indicates that Henry, having bowed to Charles, now assumed the right of precedence by independently sitting in the P[ROMPT] S[IDE] chair which Charles had earlier occupied. The transfer of authority from Charles to Henry was confirmed as Burgundy who had presided over the initial formal exchanges by occupying the central position at the table - the two kings seated at either end - now 'MOVE TO R[IGHT] OF HEN[RY]' Henry and Katherine nevertheless knelt formally to Queen Isabel to receive her benediction and then led a roughly delineated procession up-stage, exiting in order:

HEN[RY] KATE
CHA[RLES] ISABEL
FRENCH LORDS & LADIES
ENGLISH LORDS
BURGUNDY ALICE 231

The day after *Henry V* opened on 3rd June, 1964 Enoch Powell had written "The political chord which the general ear most easily catches is that of patriotism: the romantic self-consciousness of national identity as against the rest of mankind.... A thoroughly Tudor...exaltation of the monarchy identifies crown with country in a

personification that is almost modern: 'Cry God for Harry! England and Saint George!'.²³²

If these words stirred the hairs on the back of the neck the phenomenon was more likely to have been produced by the uncomfortable suggestion of fanaticism in their tone than in sympathetic response to their sentiments. The reviewer of the *Stage and Television Today* acknowledged that "to many war is still a grand and glorious myth.... We British seem to be adept in sentimentalising carnage, in pouring treacle over shattered bone and circus sawdust over spreading blood".²³³ In the imagery of the newsreel, press, radio and television "Britain continued to be represented...as a 'big' country" while "undoubtedly, a pervasive sentiment was 'we won the war'".²³⁴ No doubt many middle aged men *had* been "wallowing in genuine nostalgia over those sad pictures of the Normandy beaches with which the National Press celebrated D-Day's 20th birthday"²³⁵ the previous weekend, but Britains of all ages were profoundly frightened by the ever-present prospect of nuclear annihilation and the Labour Party's adoption in 1960 of a resolution in favour of Britain's unilateral nuclear disarmament reflected the support for such action from between one quarter and one third of the British public.²³⁶

Thus *Henry V* at this time could act as a focus for both memories of the past and fears for the future. "This is not an age that takes kindly to unabashed jingoism" said the *Daily Express* reviewer; "the wounds made on our time by militant nationalism are too recent to permit of

forgetfulness"²³⁷ and "a full-bloodied exploitation of *Henry V* would be unacceptable in a democratic age".²³⁸ In another review there was as much anxiety as bitterness:

Normally one leaves the theatre...feeling that the clash of steel has merely taken the place of the click of leather against willow, with the scoreboard reading England 25 dead, France 10,000 dead. Today, tomorrow, or next year it may read Strontium 90. The World 0: fall-out stopped play.²³⁹

There was some satisfaction expressed, therefore, that Hall and Barton's production declares that "war is war - whatever; and it brings with it blood, death, sickness, deprivation and misery"²⁴⁰ while another reviewer felt the production "weighted down by the memory of two world wars", had been "stripped of what Shakespeare elsewhere called: 'the pomp and circumstance of glorious war'".²⁴¹

'Realistic' and 'realism' were words which frequently flowed from the reviewers' pens: "remarkable realism";²⁴² "richly detailed sense of reality";²⁴³ a "quiet realism" in visual detail that evoked "scenes from 'All Quiet on the Western Front' [rather] than the glitter of sunlight on armour".²⁴⁴

At Agincourt "the exhausted English soldiers wore ragged costumes and mud-caked boots. The covered supply waggons were splashed with mud";²⁴⁵ "the English costumes are more realistically battle-stained and threadbare than usual";²⁴⁶ "the battle scenes are dominated by the sheer exhaustion and grubbiness of war".²⁴⁷

Only in the French camp could war still be imagined as the sport of princes - "a Royal Ascot played out

against a field of the cloth of gold...".²⁴⁸ The stiff formality of the French scenes suggested a nation "clinging onto a hierarchic concept of society which the English have already begun to modify".²⁴⁹ Ian Holm's king received the French herald in the presence of his men; the scene at the breach showed him surrounded by common soldiers; half-way through his 'breach' speech he raised Falstaff's boy to his feet and took a banner from one of his soldiers at its end. Later, even the Duke of York was addressed, familiarly, as 'John'.

In contrast the French appeared for Agincourt [IV.2] with banners in magnificent armour; they appeared splendid but remote like pieces set out on a chessboard battlefield. Any suggestion of 'realism' was studiously avoided here: the entry of the three principal characters - the Constable, the Dauphin and Orleans - was choreographed symmetrically, the Constable entering first from 'O[PPPOSITE] P[ROMPT] PROS[CENIUM]' to centre stage and then Orleans and the Dauphin entered together from opposite sides of the stage with attendants to arm them and others bearing stiff ceremonial banners some twelve feet high or huge fifteen-foot jousting lances. These were disposed evenly and formally about the stage. At 'Do but behold yon poor and starved band...' [IV.2.14] the three principals marched downstage and faced the audience in a line across the front of the stage. The scene ended with formal handshakes.²⁵⁰

Against such conspicuous display any moments of English formality appeared modest and dignified. At Henry's

command to 'march away' his soldiers formed into lines and crossed themselves and there was no sense of triumphalism when victory was conceded. When Henry named the field of Agincourt only Mountjoy - who had previously knelt to Henry to concede 'The day is yours' [IV.7.84] - now remained on his feet. The final 'procession', to the background of a *Non nobis*, was a battle-weary affair with Gloucester, Exeter and the French herald preceding the residual soldiers up-stage Opposite Prompt, then each of the three carts was struck in turn by two soldiers with Henry finally bringing up the rear.

Even so, the reviewer who recognised "the boredom, pain, misery and dogged determination" which the production projected in merely localised historical terms as "the lot of the English soldiery before Agincourt"²⁵¹ seems partly to have missed the point. Reference has been made above to the emblematic, universalising effect of the directors' essentially 'selective' realism. Although there was hand-to-hand combat on stage before Harfleur and "men with banners move into battle across the back of a darkened stage" at Agincourt²⁵² at key moments, such as 'Once more unto the breach...' [III.1] a single banner, ladder and cannon have an almost allegorical force, while attempts to suggest the battle with a few supers engaging in "the orthodox melee of sword play so often used in these histories"²⁵³ was abandoned in favour of a deafening forty second tape of electronic sound effects, billowing smoke and thunder flashes: "An amplified din of battle against an

Alamein of gun flashes"²⁵⁴ suggested "the shrieking clangour of electronic souls in torment".²⁵⁵

Here was the inevitable ironical denouement of "a man of conscience caught up in an inexorable political pattern of events".²⁵⁶ In the programme to *Henry V* Peter Hall had written of the contradictions and ambiguities implicit in a man who also had the misfortune to be a king, caught up in a process determined for him by his father's act and destined to fulfil a role not of his own choosing. Perhaps the intimidating, chaotic horror of Agincourt might be viewed as being deliberately antithetical to the cycle's use of the Council Table as a universal metaphor for the process of political power; namely, the hate, lust and violence of political man that "transforms the executioner into a victim, and the victim into an executioner".²⁵⁷

Michael Greenwald points out that Hall had a proof copy of Kott's enormously influential *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* in February, 1963.²⁵⁸

If Ian Holm's King Henry had been "scaled down to normal human size".²⁵⁹ it had less to do with the social irreverence currently in vogue than with suggesting a humanity caught up in an almost mythical pattern of "retribution, of paying for sins, misjudgements and misgovernments"²⁶⁰ as the workings of Kott's 'Grand Mechanism' moved inexorably towards an inevitable and climactic Armageddon.

Even as the great cycle of seven plays was beginning to unfold in repertory Peter Hall had spoken of a

growing awareness of an underlying "Theatre of Ritual and of Man's basic passions" in Shakespeare's plays which transcended the political, moral and ethical issues of any particular historical period:²⁶¹ a ritual dealing with "the recurring patterns of human behaviour which comes from instinct, and this is almost ungovernable".²⁶² It is significant that it was in 1964 that Hall participated in a roundtable discussion on Antonin Artaud who explored the power of theatre to expand self-awareness through ritual. The discussion included Peter Shaffer whose plays frequently presented "a dialectic between a threatened, often isolated, individual trapped in a world of roles and codified behavior and his alter ego..."²⁶³ and that Hall and John Bury later directed and designed Shaffer's plays.²⁶⁴ⁿ

At a time when society at large was impatient with 'pomp' and 'ceremony', when "the English people as a whole have gone over to the proletarian standpoint...all trying hard to be just ordinary chaps"²⁶⁶ the theatre was beginning to rediscover the power of ritual ceremony to give visual expression to the human condition.

NOTES

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- ⁹⁷ It was first presented on 30th January, 1951 and revived at the Royal Court Theatre during the Liverpool Music Festival in July the same year.
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- ⁹⁹ *Sketch*, 14 February, 1951.
- ¹⁰⁰ *News Chronicle*, 3 February, 1951.
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- ¹⁰⁸ J.C. Trewin, *John O'London's Weekly*, 16 February, 1951.

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- ¹²² John Coe, 'Hippodrome: "Richard II"', *Bristol Evening Post*, 20 July, 1956.
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- ¹³⁰ Prompt Book: Benthall: *Richard II* [1955]: Shattuck, *Richard II*, No. 43.
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CHAPTER V

Ancient rites recovered

Apart from revivals of the 1964 Stratford production of *Henry V* at the Aldwych in 1965 and again at Stratford in 1966 there were no new major productions of the play pertinent to our theme during the decade¹ though *Richard II* inspired new productions at more or less regular intervals throughout.

Perhaps something of the play's continuing appeal can be traced to the contemporary social climate which discovered echoes of its own self-conscious spirit of class rebellion in Bolingbroke's challenge and subsequent triumph. John Neville in a television interview in 1967 spoke of his 1965 production in Nottingham having been done "at the time of a change of government in this country, and it seemed to have very definite links with the change of regime".² The production seems not to have attempted overtly to exploit this specific parallel but some reviewers were clearly alert to the potential which the play offered for flexing their own brand of muscular satire in an era when the magazine *Private Eye* and the television programme *That Was The Week That Was* had popularised and fostered an "exuberant undergraduate irreverence for authority".³

For one reviewer the appeal of James Grout's production of *Richard II* at the Oxford Playhouse lay precisely in its being "mercifully devoid of gimmicks and blissfully free from those self-conscious attempts to make

the play 'relevant for our times' which so often mar present-day Shakespearean presentations".⁴

However, the *Guardian*, reviewing Neville's Nottingham production, saw this play as being of all Shakespeare's histories "the most relevant to our period of grudging social change":

The tussel between Bolingbroke and Richard himself is, in its essentials, a tussel between an efficiency machine and an established order characterised primarily by politeness and a vague sense of the aesthetic. Seeing the play, indeed, is almost like living through the General Election campaign again. Or going to an Oxbridge invaded by hopeful scientists from grammar schools....⁵

Penelope Gilliat, in the *Observer*, had even conspired to turn Neville's "fine symmetrical good looks" into an exposé of the English aristocracy:

The real nobs and monarchs are usually much less pretty, with big rubbery features, inexpressive bodies, and a curious locked gait as though their lean shanks were lightly bolted together above the knee.⁶

Thus, at a time when the nation's social and moral mores were in obvious turmoil, a time when "innovation knew no bounds"⁷ the simplicity and directness of ritual 'presentation' as opposed to naturalistic 'representation' satisfied a need for certainties in an ever-changing world. A historian of the theatre of the Middle Ages reminds us that "a universally felt desire to impose order on disorder finds expression in traditional rites and patterns".⁸ The importance in hierarchical societies of ceremonial - which depends essentially on distinctions of rank, status or class - is well understood, and yet the twentieth century in

Britain has seen "the dissemination of democratic ideas and lip-service paid...to the principle of equality". This has created a climate in which "there has been a reduction in the number of ceremonial occasions..."⁹ occasioned by a dilution of the meanings of ceremonial as it has become increasingly divorced from the exercise of actual, as opposed to merely notional, forms of power.

Since "all ceremonies...stress some aspect of social organisation"¹⁰ ritual satisfied a social need at a time when overtly 'hierarchical' ceremonial seemed at odds with the prevailing spirit of egalitarianism. Indeed, the mood of the time had been anticipated in one commentator's enthusiastic review of the visit of the Grand Kabuki Company to New York at the end of 1959 in which he distinguished between the attempts of the western tradition to 'represent' life in doomed naturalistic imitation and the Japanese tradition of theatrical "'presentation' of ancient ritual and ceremony. style and language, movement and iconography" to reveal "what we have learned from life or nature or what we have dreamed in our conscious or sub-conscious life as...human beings".¹¹

Peter Hall's interest in ritual drama and of his commitment, with John Barton, to an essentially 'mythical' dimension in the 1964 Stratford cycle has already been noted. Barton - who was subsequently to direct the epic cycle *The Greeks* in 1980 - had been drawn to myths since his Cambridge days because they give this age "a series of political and human archetypes which we can still

recognise".¹² In 1968 Peter Brook had identified this spiritual dislocation in terms of imperfect ritual: "We don't know how to celebrate because we don't know what to celebrate".¹³ He had pointed to the new Coventry Cathedral as making "a civilized stab at celebrating God and Man and Culture and Life through a collective act".¹⁴ The result was "a new building, fine ideas, beautiful glass-work - only the ritual is threadbare.... The new place cries out for a new ceremony, but of course it is the new ceremony that should have come first - it is the ceremony in all its meanings that should have dictated the shape of the place...: the outer form can only take on real authority if the ceremony has equal authority".¹⁵

As early as 1955 Brook had directed *Titus Andronicus* as "a piece of ritual, full of slow processions, hieratic priests, musique concrete, stylised colours...".¹⁶ Now Brook's instincts resonated with a whole generation of dramatists and directors as the decade unfolded and moved into the next. One commentator, had written in 1962 of "the new classicists"¹⁷ looking to the Greek theatre in the quest for 'significance' and 'grandeur'; another, writing in 1976, drew attention to the fact that "'ritual' continues to be a fashionable term" which has "an increasing appeal not only for the experimental theatre and those who write about it but for a broad range of literary critics".¹⁸

Such a tradition inevitably invited a degree of stylisation in production,¹⁹ so that symbolism came to occupy an increasingly central role in the work of

contemporary dramatists, symbolism which was an integral part of the myths and rituals of ancient civilisations.²⁰

Richard Cottrell's production of *Richard II* for the Prospect Theatre Company was an important production which in some respects anticipated John Barton's more completely stylised revival in 1973.²¹ The original setting by Tim Goddard of a plain curtained stage, with a movable central structure of steeply piled buff rostra was designed with touring in mind but was far from creating the degree of formality required by this, the most mannered of Shakespeare's histories, so that the actors were required to convey this quality in their performances.

Kenneth Rowell's later permanent setting for *Richard II* and *Edward II* was adapted for *Richard II* at the Piccadilly Theatre by Tim Goodchild. A central gold circular platform or "floating golden dish"²² was approached from below the stage level by a flight of steps on either side of the stage, and three further flights led to a raised platform behind. "The set was effective, and most attractive in its brilliant abstract designs of red and blue on the gold.... The costumes were also splendid, in predominant colours of blue, gold and red, emphasising the formal opulence of the court".²³ This was a feature which impressed many reviewers: "This cloth of gold revival..." was how the *Birmingham Evening Mail* described it,²⁴ and phrases such as "magnificent spectacle",²⁵ "flamboyant colours",²⁶ and "sumptuously colourful" were typical.²⁷

In some respects the early scenes of this

production had the effect of actually reducing the play's ceremonial impact. Cottrell's decision to open the play with the first forty three and a half lines of Act I, Scene 2 was clearly made with the intention of supplying the audience with background information to Gloucester's death. After this transposed section the court entered and Act I, Scene 1 followed after which came the remainder of Act I, Scene 2 to produce, in effect, one long scene which "lost the impact of Shakespeare's opening with the ceremonial pomp of Richard's court"²⁸ and "there was so little pause between the first and third scenes that the valuable contrast was lost between the wide focus of the court that narrows to the dark-toned intimacy of the dialogue, and then broadens again to the panoply of the lists".²⁹ In addition, among other cuts, the formal exchange between the Marshall, Heralds and Bolingbroke was omitted, lessening the build-up of tension and reducing the stylised 'stained-glass' texture of the scene.

Perhaps the director's intention was to focus the play's formalism upon the person of the king. Certainly Cottrell began by establishing the element of ceremony and ritual surrounding the king. Even during the opening scene by the Duchess and Gaunt the tall golden throne stood focused in a spotlight on top of the rostra and as they moved aside the stage filled with whispering, tense courtiers who stiffened as Richard entered ceremonially, his Queen beside him and with Aumerle as his train-bearer. The *Financial Times* reviewer dwelled, fascinated, on the king's

first entrance:

The divine right of kings hovers almost tangibly over Ian McKellen's Richard as, with his back to the audience, he makes his first ascent of the steps of his throne. A long, gold-embroidered train trails behind him; his hands extend from the golden threads of his tabard in kingly benediction; and then he turns towards us, and we see that the face beneath the crown is a mask of aristocratic nullity.³⁰

The ritual gesture of the raised hands, palms outward, was one which he was to repeat whenever he asserted the authority of his divine office. He mounted the steps of the throne slowly. "a small puppet-like figure weighted down by the robes and train"³¹ and his voice was light and boyish so that "his youth contrasted with the kingly authority in a way that was both pathetic and alarming. He appeared to have adopted a mask that had grown to be part of him"³² but behind the mask the man was weak and vulnerable and exercised authority only through the office with which he strove to identify himself. Thus 'We were not born to sue but to command' was "rapped out...in a staccato delivery, his voice rising to a shrill crescendo, the hands jerking into the ritual posture on the word 'command' as the frightened boy took refuge behind the mask of kingship".³³

Many reviewers were impressed by the persona of a man projected "almost as a stylised symbol of absolute power...":³⁴ McKellen's Richard is "a study in ceremony which he takes in deadly sacramental earnest, making his first entry in the midst of a priest-like procession, palms upraised and face chastely impassive, consciously holding himself as a sacred vessel...";³⁵ "The ineffable presence of

God Himself enters into Mr McKellen's Richard. As the Deity takes possession his eyes glaze. the real world vanishes from before him. and the king's petulant tones strengthen into the commanding grandeur of a ritual omnipotence";³⁶ McKellen's Richard "in gold brocade, is a symbol of the divinity of kingship".³⁷

Indeed, widespread use was made of the ceremonial symbols of office. The elevated golden throne, backed by an allegorical emblem likening the king to a sun-god, not only provided Richard with a vantage point from which he could look down several feet on Bolingbroke at their first two meetings but also enabled Bolingbroke to reveal his long-term ambitions, glancing at the throne as he left the stage following his banishment. The royal sceptre, too, held limply in one hand with an ever-filled goblet in the other became an emblem of absolute, if arbitrary, authority: he summoned up Bolingbroke and Mowbray to the lists with gestures of his sceptre "as if performing a casual miracle" and brought the lists to an end by hurling it to the ground.³⁸

For the deposition scene Richard entered in full robes of state and, his mind already wandering, moved slowly round the Hall, peering suspiciously into the nobles' faces. 'Give me the crown' was almost casual "but his hand would not release its grip on the circlet"³⁹ nursing the crown in his arms; then on 'Now mark me how I will undo myself' he placed it on his head and "began a ritual ceremony of dethronement as attendants knelt before him holding the

symbols of state as he touched them in turn, obedient even at this moment to the ceremonious ritual of his office. Finally, stripped of the robes of state, he stood in a plain shift, nervously fingering his hair".⁴⁰

The scene had begun with Bolingbroke's solemn entry, a menacing figure dressed in black. Throughout the production Bolingbroke and the King were strongly contrasted, West's character regarding Richard's ritualised histrionics with a cold disapproval - "he is like a rationalist frowning at the excesses of a particularly gorgeous High Mass"⁴¹ - and exerting authority without raising his voice...and handling Carlisle's protest "with a chilling calm".⁴²

More than one reviewer had noted that Richard's recourse to ritual was the instinctive defensive reaction of a monarch who has "lost sight of the man beneath the protective shell of majesty".⁴³ It was wholly consistent, then, that Bolingbroke's instinctive response to a supposed threat - as when Aumerle knocked - was for his hand to fly to his dagger, an action which seemed particularly incongruous since in this scene he now wore the crimson royal robes for the first time. This had been a visual shock after his dark garments throughout the play, though his reaching for his dagger showed that the ruthless survivor had been in no way metamorphosed by the trappings of office. It was wholly consistent, too, that Richard - "sick with pomp and surfeited with ceremony"⁴⁴ - should, when reduced to captive insanity, pace rhythmically about the perimeter

of his cell "as if unconsciously harking back to his love of external form and ritual" as if, indeed, still a king in subconscious memory.⁴⁵

The word 'spectacle' was used by a number of reviewers to refer to Ian McKellen's Richard as he moved onto stage "with a more than human smoothness, and his arms upraised from the elbows, framing the godhead and the crown, and fixed like the many arms of an Eastern Deity".⁴⁶ Here was a production "ablaze with royalty and splendour",⁴⁷ a "glorious spectacle of the age of chivalry"⁴⁸ which depicted a king "wholly self-conscious of his own royalty...almost dancing on his ritual march up the steep stage to his throne, his hands raised in hieratic gesture, superbly enjoying...the spectacle of himself".⁴⁹ "The flamboyance and movement and the gold and red colours"⁵⁰ of this production succeeded in delighting rather than offending because they gripped both "the eyes and the imagination" in an analogical reconciliation of spectacle and intellect.⁵¹

David William, who directed Ronald Pickup as Richard II in 1972 in the National Theatre's first production of a Shakespeare history play, acknowledged the difficulties of doing a play in which the two main characters are God and England at a time when these are "not very strong ideas in contemporary terms".⁵²

Irving Wardle, reviewing the production for *The Times*, drew comparison between Pickup's Richard and McKellen's in terms of the pageantry of kingship:

McKellen's Richard took the royal magic very seriously; he was a priest-king - a playboy

when off duty, but a sanctified presence whenever gracing a public function. By contrast, Pickup is a shaky convert to the royal myth. Surrounded by ceremonies and flattery he has complete belief in his authority. But as soon as the externals start crumbling, so does his inner conviction.⁵³

In this production Bolingbroke's "Cromwellian banality"⁵⁴ was opposed by Richard's royal pageantry expressed in Michael Annals's stylised setting which employed emblems of the political and thematic issues: "The unit setting was a flight of steps and levels resembling a relief map of Britain; and a golden, sun-like light was constantly played on Richard, giving him a divine, halo-like aura" while "a flaming sunburst dropped from the flies whenever Richard entered the stage".⁵⁵

The symbolism did not impress all reviewers. One, clearly unimpressed by an attempt to locate the idea of monarchy in a universal mythic past, was unmoved by the 'throne', a "symbolic stone block at the top of an uneven, granite-looking staircase", and found the setting almost universally "dreary";⁵⁶ another referred to "this bare, austere platform".⁵⁷ Others, however, even those for whom Annals's functional "revolving pebble-dash" steps were "far from handsome" felt that "this pageantry does exert real power".⁵⁸

Sources as diverse as the *Morning Star*⁵⁹ and the *Financial Times* noted "the opulence of the costumes",⁶⁰ "bright red under Richard and blue under Henry"⁶¹ with Richard himself almost enveloped in "yards of white fur and feather",⁶² his shoulders supporting a veritable yoke of

office emblazoned with emblematic rays of a totemistic sun-king . Even so, although the production - with a cast of fifty-two, including walk-ons - was described as "large and lush"⁶³ , there was some disappointment that "we get little hint of the sumptuous Italianate medieval autocracy over which Richard precariously presides" and that the "dun-coloured assembly forever striking postures on a flight of town hall steps" hardly did justice to the text's demands for a court "so steeped in artifice and ritual that reality is kept at bay".⁶⁴

The bold strokes of symbolism in the design of the production succeeded in underwriting the tacit assumption of royal autonomy and made it unnecessary for Pickup to project himself as a living symbol of absolute power as McKellen had done. Thus he could play Richard as a vain, weak man "as certain of his divine rule as he is that the sun will rise in the morning".⁶⁵ and who "runs a mellow and relaxed court".⁶⁶ As such, his "pale, youthful arrogance"⁶⁷ can afford to begin quietly "without histrionics" and "it is only when he realises his vulnerability that Pickup raises his voice in regular fashion"⁶⁸ but by the time this is necessary the very rising and setting of the symbolic sun "surrounding him with a quasi-halo" only serves to confirm "the total unsuitability of the man for the role decreed for him by fate".⁶⁹

Derek Mahon, for the *Listener*, observed that "we are conscious throughout of the ritualistic quality of the play. The great set-pieces...are static and formalised, and

end-rhymes of the regular couplets always audible"⁷⁰ and yet - as if to confirm Peter Brook's lament that "we have lost all sense of ritual and ceremony"⁷¹ - the production made no attempt to "draw out the threads of a possible contemporaneity".⁷² Instead, the production began in total blackout and - as if to point an alienation between the world of the audience and that of the play - "the light went slowly up on a mediaeval court, frozen into a grim pageant".⁷³ One commentator felt that "far from reaching forward to the present, the production reaches back, with its visual hints of primitive religious and social structures, to the origins of the Divine Right principle in the priest-kings of a pre-Christian era".⁷⁴ This concern with the medieval view of the divine right of kingship involved "one rather assertive piece of symbolism" as Richard at his deposition appeared "in a white shift and with long hair and beard looking like a betrayed Jesus"⁷⁵ his arms "momentarily outstretched on an invisible cross",⁷⁶ an image which suggested that the idea of the Divine Right of Kings was to be equated with the 'divinity' of kings.

Yet equally the production exposed the limitations of both Richard and Bolingbroke with examples of ruptured ceremony. Richard, elegant and self-sustained, seemed "most at home when performing some ceremony" but his insecurity emerged when he was "easily flustered by interruptions"⁷⁷ and petulantly turned over tables when ignored or dashed state papers from people's hands. Bolingbroke, on the other hand, was good-humoured and business-like, even "a mundane.

prosaic creature"⁷⁸ but he was mercilessly exposed during the abdication scene where "he makes a dignified descent to take the crown, and stumbles finally in making a greedy grab for it".⁷⁹

In interview David William had been cautious, even enigmatic, in drawing modern parallels. Reluctant to indulge "the simplicities of our trendier criticism"⁸⁰ he had side-stepped an invitation to picture the nub of the play in terms of "a single image, a silhouette" in the form of "a man holding a crown. On top of an ant-heap".⁸¹ He had pointed to the essential dissimilarity between the "organic lives" of Shakespeare's characters and our own: "Now we are compartmentalised. Cut off", he said,⁸² but he was nevertheless confident that a modern audience does not need any directorial 'nudging' to see the relevance to their own time; he was content to leave the words of the text themselves, "spoken properly", to prompt the audience to "think of contemporary equivalents".⁸³ By paying his audience this compliment the production perhaps paid the penalty of being perceived by some as being "aimed...in several directions but never quite hitting the target".⁸⁴

William's staging with its use of stylised emblems has been compared with John Barton's revival of the same play the following year and yet their directorial impetus could hardly have been more different. Some commentators had welcomed the classical virtue of restraint in William's production in not forcing the play into an alien shape "to suit some ingenious and exotic theory";⁸⁵ another, while

regretting that the production "does scant justice to the play's thematic richness". acknowledged it to be "direct and gimmick-free".⁸⁶ William, himself, admitted that there has to be 'interpretation' but was mindful of the danger of "wrenching the play out of shape" and so 'distorting' it.⁸⁷

Barton's production, on the other hand, was described by Stanley Wells as "the most strongly interpretative" production of a Shakespeare play that he had ever seen.⁸⁸ Robert Speaight referred to "Mr Barton's dogmatic approach"⁸⁹ and the title of Harold Hobson's review for the *Sunday Times* - 'Power Behind the Throne' - pointed unequivocally towards the director of a production in which it was not so much the actors as 'the thought' that counts, "and the thought is Mr Barton's".⁹⁰

In an interview with Michael Greenwald Barton claimed that he was "not consciously very conceptual"⁹¹ but Greenwald concluded that in the case of *Richard II* - as with his *King John* the following year - Barton had approached the play with a predetermined concept: both productions were "too idiosyncratic to be judged otherwise".⁹²

Stylistically, ritual motifs were central to Barton's conception of *Richard II*: his production of *Troilus and Cressida* in 1968, also designed by Timothy O'Brien, had been notable for its emblematic primitivism while O'Brien had since worked in collaboration with Tazeena Firth for Terry Hands's *Pericles* the following year to produce a stage "filled with mysterious blue light, ceremony, and totemic devices".⁹³ Christopher Morley's designs for Trevor Nunn's

ambitious mounting of the four Roman plays at Stratford in 1972 had also embraced a strong ritualistic imperative: all, apart from *Titus Andronicus*, were "cast in Roman marble, accentuating the ceremonial and the primitive" while "each began with an invented ritual calling to mind the ancient human order".⁹⁴

Greenwald identifies a number of important sources for the concept:⁹⁵ the idea of alternating the roles of the King and Bolingbroke between two actors was apparently suggested by Terry Hands as a response to Barton's consciousness of the essential symmetry of the play and of the 'bucket' speech [IV.1.180-88] as the most striking example of a group of images focusing on duality. "There followed a recognition that there were complementary aspects of the two characters, and also that a means existed of showing that 'Kingship' in *Richard II* was a role, making an actor of a King as well as a King of an actor".⁹⁶

The perception of Richard and Bolingbroke as presenting complementary aspects of each other's roles rather than the traditional notion of 'martyred king' versus 'aggrieved usurper' gave the characters the mythical dimension Peter Brook had sought, "thus making *both* protagonists in a more universal drama than that suggested by history".⁹⁷ This was an idea reinforced by the set design which consisted of two giant escalators at the right and left of the stage. "Across them a bridge carrying the king silently traveled, making visual the rise and fall imagery of the text. A machine was in control...", an emblem of an

implacable universe.⁹⁸

James Stredder observes that in Barton's production Bolingbroke was himself a victim of historical process and concludes:

It was, perhaps, the director's concentration on the historical forces of the tragedy that gave the production its own powerful, but unforced, feeling of contemporaneity. For Richard and Bolingbroke these historical forces are the processes of kingship itself.... While avoiding misleading parallels with modern monarchy, the production made kingship seem intrinsically dramatic and interesting through re-discovering its symbolic power and the fascination of defying its sanctioned authority.⁹⁹

Ann Righter's book, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* - written fully twelve years before the production - had contained a passage identifying successive instances of role-reversal which the play imposes on Richard and Bolingbroke and when she elaborated upon the idea in her programme note she further identified as an important source for the production Ernst Kantorowicz's book *The King's Two Bodies* which examined the Elizabethan doctrine that a monarch inhabits two bodies in one, the Body Natural which is "fallible, individual, and subject to death and time" and the Body Politic which is "flawless, abstract, and immortal", the two natures being "fused at the moment of coronation" in a way that "deliberately parallels the incarnation of Christ, whose representative on earth - as *Richard II* continually reminds us - the king henceforth will be".¹⁰⁰

The production was thus propelled thematically by the idea of king as a player of roles and stylistically by

an "elaborate theatricality grounded in ritual".¹⁰¹ Barton himself admitted that he was aiming at a "Greco-Elizabethan style in acting and production"¹⁰² and indeed such a style is encouraged by the very texture of the play. Greenwald notes "a distinctively classical quality in its great declamatory speeches and in the general sparsity of the dialogue";¹⁰³ Stanley Wells identifies "a degree of stylization and artificiality in the language" resulting in a number of characters being "so lacking in individuality that they seem mainly or entirely choric in function".¹⁰⁴

There is in any case much high ceremony in the action of the play as well as its language: "the lists at Coventry are framed by incantations of the marshals and combatants; kneeling, hand-kissing, gage-throwing, and other symbolic gestures recur throughout the play"¹⁰⁵ but in Barton's production the ritualistic element was even more insistent. Greenwald has suggested that "Barton's theatricality was more Greek than medieval..."¹⁰⁶ and he sought in the rehearsal process to encourage formalism in stage movement and delivery as opposed to the naturalism with which most of his actors were familiar¹⁰⁷ while the natural symmetry of the play was enhanced even in areas not by their nature formal:

"The Gardeners' scene [III.4]...was set in a monastery garden signified by two apricot trees on either side of the stage. At the start of the scene three gardeners (monks) kneeling at the rear of the stage were balanced by the Queen and her two attendants in wigs and half-masks at the front. Much of the scene was delivered straight out to the audience and symmetry of blocking was maintained throughout".¹⁰⁸

Elsewhere, interpolated choric repetitions produced "a momentary hesitation in the pace of the play... Scene 8, Welsh Captain, [II.4], had such a function. Barton split up the Captain's speech into eight parts adding repetitions of 'Farewell' and 'We will not stay' and accompanying Salisbury's speech about the setting of Richard's sun with mournful horn music.... The choric repetitions of the Captain gave the scene a valedictory eeriness".¹⁰⁹ Thus, while plotting the usurpation, for instance, "the rebel lords wore stylised masks and cothornoi; their speeches were depersonalised by being redistributed in single lines reminiscent of Greek *stychomythia*";¹¹⁰ in addition, "Gesture and movement are reduced to a minimum in many scenes. Northumberland, Ross and Willoughby stand in a straight line, ritually cross themselves as Gaunt's coffin is lowered into the ground, and then, without moving, comment as a chorus on Richard's inadequacies as king."¹¹¹

It is remarkable that while in the first quarter of the century Tree's love of ceremonial display should have been widely condemned as allowing "the setting to obscure the jewel" of Shakespeare's verse,¹¹² seventy years later the production which perhaps utilised 'ostentatious display' on a scale not seen in this play since Tree should be regarded as not only acceptable, but necessary to do justice to Shakespeare's vision. The understanding that "*Richard II* does not work as a play...unless the audience can be made to believe that kingship matters in a way that might hardly

occur to us nowadays"¹¹³ provided the intellectual justification for employing ceremony and its symbolic properties to recreate in the modern audience a sense of an idea of kingship long forgotten.

Anthony Dawson made much the same point some years later:

We are no longer much interested in the fate of kings - though public interest in their private lives still runs high. This lack of feeling for the essence of kingship is, in fact, an impediment to the appreciation of *Richard II* on the part of a modern audience.... What we miss today is the sense of the overwhelming importance of the monarch, his or her absolute centrality.¹¹⁴

John Barton himself acknowledged that "the very subject of a king's fall has far less import than it would have had for the Elizabethans".¹¹⁵ Thus, Barton's emphasis on the "solemn ritual of king-making and on the ceremonial that enlarged every official action of the king may have seemed excessive.... Something of the sort is, however, needed if the basic themes of the play are to be heard at all".¹¹⁶

The setting for the production's opening sequence - "a space boxed in with black curtains, overhung with a starry sky"¹¹⁷ - immediately threw the selective 'dressing' into sharp relief, bestowing a strong emblematic quality upon the objects displayed: "A pyramid of five steps occupies the center of the dark-carpeted stage; on the top level stands an iron scarecrow, its face a golden mask beneath a golden crown. Over its outstretched arms hangs a circular golden robe. Everything is symmetrical.

hierarchical"¹¹⁸ though initially the players who strode in to line the two sides of the stage were individually indistinguishable, being dressed in anonymous brown costumes. The striking opening mime constituted a formal, stylised tableau, a ritual coronation in which the public roles of actor and king were shown to be synonymous. The play having been 'cast' by the 'author' and the king assigned his role the bustle of preparation began to resolve towards the ritual inevitability of performance as the music became a coronation march. The king kneeled, facing upstage, the golden robe was draped over his shoulders and the crown placed on his head. "He walks up to the top of the steps as the rest of the men chant 'God save the king', 'Long live the king', 'May the king live forever'".¹¹⁹ As he sat at the summit of the pedestal gold curtains were drawn over the black ones, he removed the mask and handed it to a servant, checked the opening lines from a large book placed on his lap and then, with the opening line, 'actor' became 'king' in the world of the play.

This opening sequence has been described in some detail not only because it established the rules by which the 'world of the play' would operate in this particular production but because such interpolations, "before Shakespeare started writing and after he stopped"¹²⁰ have been among the most characteristic features of so-called 'Directors' Shakespeare', enabling directors to offer an unimpeded interpretative vision, particularly in "the alluringly vague area between the house lights going down

and the first word of the dialogue":¹²¹

It is a deliberately theatrical world, where we watch people get into their roles: for a play where people seem constantly to be acting parts, the theatricality is another way of expressing that role-playing....¹²²

This opening mime seemed to be at pains to establish ground rules for the production which "cue us to accept a symbolic gesture as true. On the almost empty stage, with almost everyone at first wearing the same costume, each prop and each article of clothing takes on a strong symbolic importance" so that the entire production becomes an extended ritual. Moreover, this opening coronation ritual "prefigured the play's concern with the inevitable tension between the demands made by the office of kingship, of being God's deputy on earth, and the capacities of the human being who has to try to fill a role that is inevitably too big for him".¹²³ As if to emphasise the point, each evening's 'king' was dressed by the Lord Marshall who conducted the ceremonials of the Lists scene and the evening began - as it ended - "with the gilded simulacrum of royalty, and Richard and Bolingbroke on either side of it".¹²⁴ Anthony Dawson felt that through the opening mime "the stiff formality of the opening scene was thus precisely caught, and a rich metaphor for the grip that kingship has on a human being emerged.... As the actor is defined by the costume he wears and the words he must speak...so too the king".¹²⁵

In the Lists scene, too, non-naturalistic staging was an important element in demonstrating the

theatricality of the idea of 'king in office'. Seeing the lists at Coventry primarily as "an opportunity for showmanship"¹²⁶ Richard approached the lists carried on a litter by four servants, a living pageant or emblem displayed in terms of the spectacle of majesty, while Irving Wardle noted how Pasco's Richard caught "the switching on and off of the public performance".¹²⁷

Miriam Gilbert has made the point that in this production "each prop and each article of clothing takes on a strong symbolic importance".¹²⁸ The symbolic significance of the ceremonial crown, for example, was used repeatedly as a visual metaphor and Stanley Wells has pointed out that during the Lists scene "the idea of becoming king was shown to have occurred to him [Bolingbroke] earlier than in Shakespeare's text. After his banishment his father, John of Gaunt, bidding him farewell, drew the shape of a crown in the air over his head".¹²⁹ In the scene Near Barkloughly Castle [III.2] Barton used properties with strong symbolic ceremonial associations to focus upon the change in Richard's kingly fortunes, and gave added ritualistic significance to the scene by positioning and blocking so that minor characters spoke most of their lines straight out to the audience, and were symmetrically grouped: Richard had entered magnificently on 'roan Barbary', here a mythical horse with a unicorn's head, propelled on skis:

...a life-sized effigy in white trappings with the plumed king astride it in front of a frieze of his followers carrying tall white lances and wearing on their chests shields with the fully-modelled heads of horses in white. Thus Richard's cavalry stood motionless like a frozen

wave of impotence but 'Late tossing on the breaking seas'.¹³⁰

When he heard of the defection of the Welsh the cross which he had taken from the Bishop of Carlisle was allowed to fall back into his hands and, having remounted, when he heard of the deaths of his friends he allowed his sword to clatter to the ground and himself dismounted, "speaking his great lament in a spotlight to the front of the stage".¹³¹

However, nowhere was the symbolic use of costume more apparent than in the Flint Castle scene [III.3]. The fact that Richard wore no crown served the more to focus attention on the glittering golden robe which at 'Down, down I come, like glist'ring Phaeton,' [III.3.178-83] was held out at arms' length to display it as a circular, sun-emblem. The metaphor of Phaeton's fall was re-stated at the end of the scene when Richard and Bolingbroke stepped over the crumpled golden robe which Richard had discarded when he finally descended to the 'base court':

...and the stage is empty save for the sound of Bolingbroke's triumphant trumpets. Then the huge golden sun stretched over the center of the heavens suddenly detaches itself and falls, billowing to the floor; a single spotlight catches the fall, and then goes out, leaving us in darkness. It's a vividly strong playing of the metaphor - obvious, if you will - but justified by the style of the production and completely unforgettable.¹³²

Greenwald considers the scene in Westminster Hall [IV.1] "innately theatrical because of Richard's histrionic acts: his divestment and his gesture of shattering the mirror"¹³³ and suggests this as being the reason why John

Barton in 1973 left the scene relatively unadorned. Even so, the words were accompanied by "ritual gestures suggestive of an actor removing his costume".¹³⁴ For Greenwald, the climax of the scene occurs when Richard shatters his only remaining earthly vanity, the mirror. Barton highlighted the moment with both a large and a small gesture: first, Bolingbroke's line 'The shadow of your sorrow' was repeated and intoned by the entire cast; second, the smashed mirror, framed by the circle of gold, was lifted by Bolingbroke and "placed over Richard's head (a re-play of the opening tableau) deliberately enough for us to see it pass from halo to crown, and from crown to noose".¹³⁵ Richard wore the prop around his neck for the remainder of the play and was now escorted from the stage in a ceremonial procession "as Bolingbroke began a new act in the chronicle drama of English Kings. The leading actors had again reversed the roles established in the opening pantomime".¹³⁶

Barton's striking final scene was characterised by another tableau which focused upon the king-actor dichotomy which was at the centre of the production, this time in terms of the crown-death metaphor; "the ceremonial mask of kingship which changes, in the final tableau, to a skull".¹³⁷ The mournful music which accompanied the descent of Richard's coffin as if into a vault was succeeded by coronation music:

The familiar drum roll and coronation fanfare is heard once more, but with a strangely ominous quality; for the third time in the play we see a coronation, as the golden robe and the crown-mask encircle Bolingbroke, kneeling with his back to us. The golden figure once more

ascends the central steps but when he turns around, the face is that of a skeleton; now indeed "keeps Death his court". Then the two hooded figures at the bottom of the steps throw back their hoods to reveal Richard and Bolingbroke, Pasco and Richardson, standing there together, *both* subject to the rule of Death.... So the play ends as it began, with the two men standing together. They take their curtain calls together, hand in hand, reminding us once again that the external circumstances of this production - two leading actors switching the two main roles - is an exact counterpart of the production's interpretation of this play. How the play is performed and what it means are inseparable.¹³⁸

The 'formality' of Barton's production received universal recognition, most commentators readily accepting it as an essential ingredient in communicating the director's vision of the play: "What we see in fact is the deliberately stylised pageant in which we are constantly reminded of the theatrical framework," a method "wholly appropriate for a play that is basically an extended ritual and whose central character is obsessed with the concept of performance".¹³⁹

Not all commentators concurred, of course. Some complained of its distortion of the text and lamented the sacrifice of both the play's poetry and the interplay of individual personality to a concept deemed 'homiletic'.¹⁴⁰ Robert Brustein, writing for the *Observer* at the time of the first production, had reservations that the director's assertive interpretation "proceeds regrettably against a background of extravagant ceremony that sometimes threatens to obscure it" and expressed anxiety that a level of "conspicuous consumption" more native to Broadway - "where stage wizardry is often used to disguise a poverty of

invention and a failure of intelligence" - was in danger of overwhelming the production.¹⁴¹

Two years later Brustein still regretted the retreat from "the Brechtian revolution [the Royal Shakespeare Company] had undergone under Peter Hall" towards "the sumptuous, over-produced, somewhat declamatory Shakespeare left over from a previous age".¹⁴²

Some commentators complained of the production's excessive 'literalness', of Barton's using "shrieking capitals to accentuate his interpretation".¹⁴³ When Miriam Gilbert had called the spectacular exploitation of the declining sun metaphor in the Flint Castle scene 'obvious', she had justified Barton's method in terms of scale - "Richard is larger than life and the symbolic staging gives both the actor and the emotion that size".¹⁴⁴ An explanation in terms of personality, however, seems inadequate; in Barton's schemata it is 'what' rather than 'who' he is that pre-determines the destiny of Richard and the personality of the king-in-residence seemed almost irrelevant. That, surely, was the rationale behind alternating the actors playing the two principal roles.

When Rita Stein observed, without reproach, that "the actors were alienated from the text", she recognised that the "unified intelligence" which informed the production required that the actors did not so much perform as 'demonstrate' the play, reciting many of the lines "like a litany" because kings no less than common soldiers were working out their destinies with grim inevitability as pawns

of a mocking fate.¹⁴⁵

David William, in 1972, had resisted the heavy directorial hand but nevertheless expected his audiences to perceive 'contemporary equivalents'; Barton, a decade later - and citing Jan Kott's seminal *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* - eschewed a 'forced topicality': "We should get at our own experience through Shakespeare's text. *Not*: we should get at Shakespeare's text through our own experience".¹⁴⁶ At the time of the production, however, he had seemed more than usually anxious that audiences should not miss his point: "Both [Richard and Bolingbroke] are characters who consciously assume various roles. I would like the audience to be more than usually aware of this and of a special acting duel between them".¹⁴⁷ If the de-personalising ceremonies which comprised much of the business of the production appeared, in Robert Speaight's term, 'dogmatic' it was because Barton - unlike David William the previous year - did not yet sufficiently trust his audiences to make their own responses and while William's production may have lacked intellectual focus Barton's production methods attracted the charge of indecent obtrusiveness: "...they were directing their audience what to think, instead of stimulating their imaginations to think it".¹⁴⁸

Although Richard Giles's 1978 production of *Richard II* for the BBC as part of its grand plan to do the complete canon does not fall within the scope of this work it is nevertheless significant that by comparison with Barton's production it was entirely 'conventional'. The

settings were "naturalistic period pieces fully three-dimensional and solid, not in the least symbolic of mythic or contemporary parallels".¹⁴⁹ One commentator has noted that "the costumes were as historically accurate as scholarship could provide"¹⁵⁰ and Robin Fraser-Paye, the costume designer, conceded that "in all the histories [in the BBC cycle] the aim is to be historically accurate to the period in which the play is set".¹⁵¹ The importance of these design decisions for our theme lies in the fact they were made on the basis that the potential television audience would not be "a sophisticated theatre audience" accustomed to stylisation.¹⁵² Thus the theatre director was able to make certain assumptions about the way in which his audience would 'see' and perceive visible stage images that could not be made of a television audience and this deficiency imposed important limitations upon a production which added little to the play in terms of its genre:

In this production, the play is 'historical' in that it is set in the past and grounded in a philosophy, theology and psychology of a different time. But it is not an Elizabethan 'history play' since it posed no contemporary ethical or political problems to the audience. Hall's or Barton's attempts at the RSC were productions which strove to restore the play to the political and ethical immediacy which an Elizabethan might have felt.¹⁵³

Whereas the BBC film was a dramatisation of a tragical historical incident appealing on a personal level the theatre was now beginning to speak again in a language of symbolic representation in the expectation that it would be read by its audience's reawakened emblematic eye and John

Barton's production of *Richard II* had undoubtedly played a vital part in that process.

Terry Hands's staging of the *Henriad* in 1975 may be seen as representing another aspect of that reawakening as economic constraints came to be employed as a pretext occasioning a realignment of artistic imperatives by stimulating the audience's creative imagination and so going some way towards reconciling a continuing ambivalence between audience expectation and directorial aspiration. Alan Howard who played Henry in this production spoke of a 'tradition' having grown up of seeing the play "as an extended pageant play"¹⁵⁴ and if pageantry, spectacle and visual display "have dominated nearly every stage production of *Henry V*", since Olivier's wartime film "it is his particular kind of pageantry against which subsequent productions are judged".¹⁵⁵

Hands himself has said that "it was a time of economic crisis. National inflation was breaking all records. The Treasury was being called upon to aid industry, and local government. The Arts were necessarily low priority and throughout the country, threatened with curtailment or closure. The RSC itself was contemplating the loss of the Aldwych, and with it the identity painstakingly built up since 1960".¹⁵⁶ It was a profound irony that the Company's centenary year should have been marked by a Centenary Appeal. "What was seen on stage, therefore, was a message to the government. More precisely, what was *not* seen on stage was the message".¹⁵⁷

Hands sought to make an artistic virtue out of economic necessity and "start from scratch".¹⁵⁸ Liberated from the tyranny of audience and critical expectation and "under the protective umbrella of financial stricture...we could abandon the artistic strictures of 'naturalist' theatre, with its cinematic crowds and group reactions, and focus on each actor as an individual".¹⁵⁹ In this he was embracing the artistic spirit of the times. S.J. Phillips has noted that by the mid-1970s "large theatres were coming to be regarded with suspicion by theatre workers on the fringe"¹⁶⁰ and this suspicion arose from an egalitarianism which felt that "anything that stood in the way of the basic purpose of theatre - to communicate - had to be stripped away...; there had to be nothing between the performance and the audience, all of whom had to be equal".¹⁶¹ Hands himself, in an article written to publicise the 1975 history play revivals, had noted that "recently 'open space' (or at least non-proscenium theatres) have been developed - by Brook and Grotowski [sic] in their researches.... Here the actor is all".¹⁶²

It is ironic, too, that in a century for which plain and simple in Shakespearean production has so often been seen as a measure of artistic integrity, a production of *Henry V* should have received the austerity treatment at least in part as a political statement; doubly so that the play should suffer an enforced chastity imposed by a director and designer often perceived to be 'baroque' in their production styles. Significantly, the cast size for

Hands's *Henry V* was only half that of the 1964 revival, the English army consisting of the seven men who had speaking parts.¹⁶³ Any pageantry would clearly have to be expressed through design.

Hands's principal ally in reconciling what he called "the conflict of text and decor" was, of course, Chorus:

As Chorus bemoans the passing of spectacular masque theatre, so we may regret the passing of lavish proscenium theatre; as he regrets a small company, so we miss the marching tread of spear-carriers....¹⁶⁴

His first lieutenant was Ald'Elkader Farrah who was the designer for all eight histories and designed both the set and costumes for this production. Farrah had been associated with the French director, Michel Saint-Denis, who had worked "in conscious rejection of naturalism"¹⁶⁵ and now spurned what he called the "box of illusions",¹⁶⁶ opting for a style for the cycle that was simple and plain, "a clear departure from the epic realism of *The Wars of the Roses*".¹⁶⁷ He removed the cladding from the proscenium arch of the Memorial Theatre leaving the bare brick exposed. The back wall of the stage was without flats or drapes, and gas pipes and electrical fittings were stripped off. The proscenium arch and walls were painted off-white, and a black stage platform was built with a steep one-in-twelve rake, designed to "launch the actors into the audience".¹⁶⁸ Dennis Kennedy has remarked that Terry Hands's production of the play in 1975 was an instance "where scenography was intended both as an aesthetic and a political statement, and

the politics were much more immediate than those of the play's themes".¹⁶⁹

A production with such a pedigree would surely have a good deal to offer the 'thinkers' in the audience, but precious little to delight the eye. As far as stage business was concerned this was largely true, but Farrah later said that he had detected a reaction to the period of Brechtian austerity in stage design, "a feeling of *après moi le deluge*, people spending money to go and see a show and wanting to enjoy and see something as spectacular as possible, as a way of escaping from the day's reality".¹⁷⁰ The result was a production that not only stimulated the intellect but was also visually stunning.

The opening of the production was controversial and as egalitarian as one could wish. After the Prologue - Emrys James in modern dress - "the opening visuals...were certainly a shock": actors on a bare stage in jeans and miscellaneous dress "casually discussing great matters of state and the Salic law as if at rehearsal",¹⁷¹ the bespectacled king in dark, loose-fitting trousers, white trainers and a white, zip-up track suit top and distinguished from the rest of the 'court' only by a small crown motif embroidered on his left breast pocket and a single black leather glove that might have been a baseball glove - or was it a knightly gauntlet?

The uncertainty was the point. Hands explained that "The play is full of doubt. Full of uncertainty. And it begins with an admission of failure. The Chorus apologises

that the theatre is too small, too impoverished, too limited properly to bring forth the story of Henry V. He calls upon the imagination of the audience to supplement that of the 'flat unraised spirits', so that together, working, they may collaborate in an act of creation called *Henry V*".¹⁷²

This was the rationale behind the unusual opening - the consciousness that "if the audiences were really to participate imaginatively then they had to become actors *within* the spectacle".¹⁷³ The audience was gradually drawn in to the world of the play: "as the Chorus...continues to urge us to use our imaginations...so the colour creeps in, first with the robes of the French Ambassador, then with the service dress of Nym and Bardolph and Pistol, until, delightfully, a shapeless bundle that has been hanging over the middle of the stage unfolds to provide a many-splendoured canopy over the action".¹⁷⁴

This canopy, likened variously to a "giant upended artichoke"¹⁷⁵ and "an untidily bunched umbrella"¹⁷⁶ - together with the costumes "rolled out on a cannon mount"¹⁷⁷ and which the English gradually assumed as they dressed for war - were Farrah's solution to "the scenic demands of pageantry".¹⁷⁸ It was a source of relief for many who had found the opening disappointing. Sheridan Morley for *Punch* felt that "few Shakespearian scenes so amply illustrate the need for costume as the opening of *Henry V*", but with the release of the canopy "we are back in the pageantry business".¹⁷⁹

In interview Farrah admitted that he had to some

extent conceded to the monarchical myth in providing "exactly the feeling that a modern audience expects when it goes to see a play about the kings of England".¹⁸⁰ In its first incarnation, descending on Chorus's reference to 'English Mercuries' at the beginning of Act III, it consisted of a tapestry of multicoloured heraldic signs sewn onto the inside. Later it descended to stage level to represent the fields of France, its dun-coloured reverse side now suggesting variously the mud of battle and therefore essentially timeless, "a wilderness of tents"¹⁸¹ⁿ and a "battlefield moonscape".¹⁸²

Many commentators, of course, found the "self-conscious modernity" of the opening irritating;¹⁸³ⁿ J.C.Trewin spoke of it as "the production's only silliness";¹⁸⁴ Nicholas de Jongh thought it 'inexplicable' and 'boring', at best "a sour but pertinent joke at the expense of the Arts Council";¹⁸⁵ and Eric Shorter spoke of his 'relief' when the modern dress opening "gives way to the familiar tale told in familiar dress".¹⁸⁶ Yet even some of this criticism was deliberately disingenuous: Charles Lewson realises perfectly well that "we are supposed to have eked out Farran's imperfections with our thoughts..."¹⁸⁷ and Benedict Nightingale presumes the director began with the "rehearsal room opening" because "Mr Hands fears we'll be ravished and lulled by too much spectacle too soon. He wants us to enter the play in a detached, critical frame of mind.... He's going to do what few directors nowadays dare, especially with plays as controversial as this: allow us to

decide what we think, on the lavish and sometimes contradictory evidence Shakespeare himself offers us".¹⁸⁸

W. Stephen Gilbert was less ambiguous:

What Terry Hands has done to *Henry V* is to let the muse of fire invade his production gradually as if our imaginations have summoned costumes, props, business, visual grace and power. In the opening tableaux - casual, static - all emphasis is thrown on the text. A single gesture becomes momentous. When the loyal nobles speak up, they rise and come forward and the stage is suddenly, strikingly peopled. When Canterbury takes the centre of this group for his 'Therefore doth heaven divide/The state of man' speech they become a force. Then our imaginations, as it were, summon a real prop, the gold casket. Soon we hear a sennet, a gorgeous canopy is unfurled, a vast cannon hauled on and the low comics appear in costumes of grey, brown and white, with the splash of colour in Pistol's hat trimmings suggesting the splendour that will follow.¹⁸⁹

Yet all of these views acknowledge, whether tacitly or explicitly, that the play's history - "full of pageantry, of shining armour and of banners"¹⁹⁰ - continues to exert a powerful influence over both director and designer all too conscious of "the weight of centuries of theatrical tradition"¹⁹¹ which had performed the play as a pageant for two hundred years: conscious, too, of the long tradition of pressing the play into service as a vehicle for "patriotic tub-thumping".¹⁹² Harold Hobson admitted that it is "a most difficult play, to which the temper of the time is altogether hostile": Firstly its pageantry is "something to which we are almost instinctively unsympathetic" and secondly "it glories in being English" at a time when "to be proud of being English is generally regarded as bordering on indecency".¹⁹³ Hobson detected a quality of self-inflicted

Anglophobia in this, while Irving Wardle, writing during the Company's Aldwych season, recognised that for many the only way in which the play can be reconciled with the "post-war conscience" is to present it as "a nationalist propaganda pageant with a private sceptical play going on inside".¹⁹⁴

Hands's production was remarkable in that it embraced the play's pageantry without becoming a pageant and recognised its heroism without becoming jingoistic.

W. Stephen Gilbert believed that it was the "gradual tricking out" of the production that created the 'illusion' for the audience that it was they that had "given birth to [the] fantastic imaginings"¹⁹⁵ that Chorus had required. Farrah may have dismissed the idea of theatre as a 'box of tricks' and yet Trevor Nunn, the artistic director of the RSC, spoke of the 'sleight of hand' with which Farrah "with two simple canopies, one cluster of dead branches and a few glimpses of gold armour...hypnotised audiences into listening to the splendour of Shakespeare's words and believing they had seen it".¹⁹⁶

As stated above, from the point of view of stage business the production contained virtually nothing worthy of the name of ceremony. The prompt copy shows that during the opening sequence Canterbury and Ely knelt, conventionally, during Canterbury's first speech to Henry, rising to answer his query about Salic law. The king's manner, like his dress, lacked formality: he 'CROUCHES' throughout Canterbury's justification of his claim to France, rising to ask, definitively, 'May I with right and

conscience make this claim?' Indeed, Henry's movements were marked by a certain restlessness: he made a counter-clockwise circuit of the stage during his speech expressing anxiety about the Scots, repeatedly crossing and re-crossing the stage, walking twice round the 'tun of treasure', 'PICKS UP A BALL, PLAYING WITH IT' during his retort to the Dauphin and finally tossing it to Exeter as he exited 'U[P-STAGE] O[PPOSITE] P[ROMPT]'. Again, during the traitors' scene the prompt copy has him 'WHEEL' and 'BREAK' as he repeatedly crosses the stage and circles the traitors, knocks Scroop to the floor, 'KNEELS BY HIM FACE TO FACE', 'DROPS' him, 'GRABS' him again and 'KNOCKS' him 'SPRAWLING' in again 'BREAKING' upstage.¹⁹⁷

However, Henry having dismissed the traitors, 'CLAR[ENCE] BRINGS HELMET + CLOAK D[OWN] S[TAGE] TO K[ING] H[ENRY]'. After the previous violence this was clearly a solemn moment. Henry's first assumption of regal costume undertaken "with awe and terror as he takes up the Dauphin's challenge and prepares for battle in France".¹⁹⁸ Henry was the last character to assume 'costume' (apart from Chorus who remained in modern dress throughout) but then the greatest responsibility was his also: this symbolic commitment to the demands that the play - and his role as king - would make of him were not lightly undertaken. His destiny required not a crowned figurehead but a warrior-king and he embraces his destiny: now there is no going back: now "in black leather suit...[and] decked in a regal singlet of mail, he leaps astride the cannon and off they go to war, to

a cheeky little version of *Deo Gratias*".¹⁹⁹

Thus, "the social hierarchical and national distinctions, so important in *Henry V*, all reveal themselves in costume".²⁰⁰ in this production. The period costume for the French was especially gorgeous, as is usual. Even while the English court was still in casual attire "the French ambassador enters in the gorgeous colours of a medieval costume. He and the mocking gift of Paris balls sent by the Dauphin and contained in an ornate golden chest are immediately recognised as evidence of a rich foreign arrogance displayed in the poverty stricken context of the British court held in contempt".²⁰¹

The French court scenes were "embroidered with visual richness"²⁰² in metallic peacock blue and gold.²⁰³ⁿ

Hands noted:

They are not going to war. Their entrance is stately, to harp and flute. They are obsolete. The stillness of the staging [sic], the follow spots, the echoing hall, suggest an etiquette-bound remnant of the age of chivalry, the age of Richard II. Theatrically, period costume is an outmoded convention. Used here it helps to accentuate the fact that the French are frozen in an era that has already passed.²⁰⁴

Richard David felt that the difference between the formal and informal scenes was "enormously emphasised in this production" and that in no other of the plays in the cycle of histories were the court scenes quite so formal: "the French lords, whether in black or blue brocades, as linear and as iridescent as in a stained-glass window, ...were persons from a fairy tale or a *chanson de*

geste...".²⁰⁵

Moreover, the French court was particularly static, fixed by the lighting to the centre stage area and marked by 'TURN's and 'LOOK's but with little movement about the stage. Such movement as there was took the form of conventional gestures of obeisance.²⁰⁶ For Agincourt the French donned "armours of resplendent gold in spectacular echo of Orleans' line: 'The sun doth gild our armour...'" [IV.2.1],²⁰⁷ a moment which prompted Robert Cushman to enthuse: "It is worth going to Stratford merely to see the golden armour of the French catch the sun".²⁰⁸ Harold Hobson called this one of the 'brilliances' of the production²⁰⁹ while Frank Marcus was reminded of the Noh Theatre.²¹⁰

The unpretentious English, by contrast, appeared for battle in "oatmeal sacking or (at best) brown leather tunics"²¹¹ while in their helmets and capes they evoked "1st War survivors in a Nash battle scene"²¹² or, "in greys and brown appeared in a timeless ambience suggestive of world war combat".²¹³ The battle itself, conveyed largely by sound effects, was "somewhat unconvincing" for Sheridan Morley,²¹⁴ "a battle of sound - horses, arrows, yells...".²¹⁵

The authorised pageantry following victory was characteristically low-key: as the list of English dead was read Henry, Exeter, Clarence and Gloucester all knelt: Fluellen began the *Te Deum* as a haunting solo as the procession made a clockwise circuit of the stage, exiting upstage left, Mountjoy and Henry following last, Henry

"dallies to look at the field as the singing fades".²¹⁶

When the canopy rose again, "blazoned this time with the *fleur-de-lis*"²¹⁷ it provided a rich cloth-of-gold roof over "the formal and handsomely symmetrical blue, red, white, grey and gold confrontation of Henry and Charles".²¹⁸ Henry now wore a crown for the first time, though a field-crown had previously topped his battle helmet and at other times a crown motif was visible on the cuffs of his coat of mail. Even in this scene Hands maintained the distinction between English and French, the former 'ENT[ER] FAST FROM U[P-STAGE] L[EFT]', the latter 'ENT[ER] SLOW FROM U[P-STAGE] L[EFT]' and bringing both courts on from the same entrance reduced the ritual tableau effect created by the usual procedure of entering formally from opposite sides. These kings, together with their advisers, might just have come from 'substantive' discussions off-stage.²¹⁹

During the wooing Henry playfully pursued Katherine, manoeuvring her to submit to his embrace. Alice, clearly shocked, 'GOES U[P]/S[TAGE] LOOKING ABOUT FOR FRENCH COURT' to restore a measure of decorum. The betrothal was sealed, Henry and Katherine joining hands with Charles. in a pre-contract that was also a solemn pledge of peace.²²⁰ The prompt copy gives no indication of a processional exit. Indeed, one commentator speaks of the characters as "wander[ing] off into shadow", leaving Chorus to 'wrap up',²²¹ though photographs show them lined up in the background during the Epilogue.

Henry V was, of course, performed in repertory with *Henry IV, Parts One and Two*.²²²ⁿ The season opened with *Henry V*. This was, after, all, the Company's Centenary year and Charles Lewson concluded that the motive for presenting the 'cycle' out of historical sequence lay in the play's greater public appeal.²²³ Indeed, the three plays were performed in historical order and on the same day only once and on that occasion the reversion from the "coronation finery" at the end of *Henry IV, Part Two* to the "rehearsal rig" which opened its sequel jarred the sensibilities.²²⁴

The rejection scene was, nevertheless, a considerable *coup de théâtre*:

A great white tablecloth was spread over Shallow's orchard, perhaps intended to convert mellow autumn to bleak winter but in effect turning concrete to abstract. Upon this appeared a token procession, robed in suitable grandeur but consisting only of the Lord Chief Justice, cousin Westmoreland, and the three younger princes. Against these Falstaff's lively rout...seemed to belong to a different play. To them entered the newly crowned King, a Dalek in complete gold armour. The intervention of the Lord Chief Justice, which humanises the meeting of priest and victim, was cut.... Man met machine, and Falstaff reeled from the collision....²²⁵

Kennedy speaks of Henry as being 'encased' in armour and of his being "so heavily attired that nothing human remained inside the symbols of responsibility and the garments of office"²²⁶ while Emrys James who played Henry IV, in interview with Michael Mullin, made reference to the theory of the king's 'two bodies' which had underscored John Barton's production: "One of the interesting things about playing a king is that you have two

bodies - the body politic and the human body. The face that the king presents has that duality"²²⁷ and Hands spoke of *Henry V* as a play in which "every aspect of role playing is examined".²²⁸ This was a concept which accorded well with the Company's sense of its own need to re-examine and perhaps re-define its role in the light of current financial and artistic constraints. Henry, too, needs must re-define his role. As Hal he has been essentially an observer; as king he is "an unknown quantity, so too, at the start of the evening is the actor playing the role. They should both be rehearsing"²²⁹ as indeed the casual clothes, and black platform, bare of adornment in which "the mechanics of theatrical performance were always visible" readily testified.²³⁰

In *Henry IV, Part One*, which was rehearsed with *Henry V*, Hands established the device of 'watching' to underline the conscious theatricality of the performance, a device which itself helped to focus upon the idea of king as the 'observed of all observers'. Actors from the scene just concluded might stay on stage to watch the beginning of the next scene, or those from the new scene might arrive early to watch the preceding one. Similarly properties from one scene might be left in place to serve for the next so that "this blending of scenes working together with the overlapping of properties" gave the impression of "a flow of observed action rather than an assembly of discrete units".²³¹

Thus a chair used by Hal in a court scene would

acquire additional resonances when used by Falstaff in the tavern and an exchange between the king and his son observed by a row of courtiers dimly seen at the rear suggested that "privacy is hard to attain in this theatrical Court.... The watching motif intrudes upon privacy, reminding one that role-playing and theatricality require public displays at the expense of intimacy".²³² Frank Marcus, reviewing *Henry V*, noted that Alan Howard "explored with intelligence and passion the assumption of various identities demanded of the king.... Here was an actor playing a man playing a king: an exercise far removed from the usual recruiting poster".²³³

In *Henry IV, Part Two* when Hal believed his father to be dead, and placed the crown on his head "his face registered anguish as well as wonderment. He blinked as if subjected to a blinding light"²³⁴ and when his father, reviving briefly, "jammed the crown back on [Hal's] head, Hal cried out in protest".²³⁵ Playing the king was going to be a painful business. The rejection of Falstaff is 'necessary' and can be achieved only by subsuming identity and humanity behind the protective armour of office. At the beginning of *Henry V* Henry was seen in rehearsal, exploring the part, searching for a role. As Henry "lifts into decision, the first costume arrives on stage, the lights come up"²³⁶ and inexorably, he forces himself into the responsibility of leadership: "He accepts the banner-surtout of 'patriotism', he re-asserts the 'glory' of conquest. Astride the cannon, sword in hand, singing with his troops,

he 'acts' the role of warrior-king".²³⁷

This was a decade in which the British monarchy was itself seen to be searching for a role to fit the time: "The decade started with a significant breakthrough, the TV film *Royal Family*...putting the accent on the natural simplicities of the second word of the title rather than the awe and dignity of the first", though as the decade unfolded it became apparent that "the right balance was not easy to strike".²³⁸

Robert Cushman caught something of the ambivalence of the time when he noted:

Historically kings may be outmoded, but dramatically we miss them.... A king interests us...partly because both what he does and what he suffers may affect thousands of others. Most of all, perhaps, the king interests us because he knows all this; there is hardly a moment when he can forget it.

This, of course, is the burden and magic of Shakespeare's histories Its definitive statement is the ceremony speech in *Henry V*.... This speech follows a debate on the monarch's responsibility to his subjects; it details obsessively the symbols of royalty, describes the concept as a 'proud dream', but offers no hope that it may be escapable. Henry by now is wedded to his office; nothing else of him is left.²³⁹

In many ways this was a conventional reading of the speech but not one that was supported by Hands's production. Hands reveals a further element in the process of re-definition by observing that in this speech Henry

...confronts Kingship and public responsibility - its torment, its barrenness. He strips it bare of theatrical adornment - make-up, costume, decor - with all its attendant behaviour. He finds it has no separate identity. Like a long-lived nightmare he finds at last that it doesn't exist. There is no king or kingship. Only Henry himself.²⁴⁰

This was a concept which Alan Howard developed more graphically:

The ceremony speech is an angry bitter speech.... In no way is it a calm reflective speech followed by a sweet prayer. It is a sickening-up of everything in him, he is caught in the cross-fire of his own imagination. He pulls down all the symbols that represent the conventional king with huge ferocity.²⁴¹

This ferocity reflects his realisation of the impotence of temporal power. When he ends the scene with 'all things stay for me' [IV.1.301] "...he is saying much more than that his army is waiting for its leader. He is saying that events are waiting upon his ability to become himself" so that "when he makes the Crispin's Day speech the next morning it isn't just a performance any longer. The real man merges with the role, and makes it his own".²⁴² If John Barton's *Richard II* had explored the theatricality of kingship as a way of revealing the monarch as an agent of a mythic-historical absolute, Hands's *Henriad* sought to expose the role-playing required of the office in terms of its human cost.

In 1975 economic and political considerations had imposed a conscious if qualified austerity on Terry Hands's production of *Henry V*; five years later much critical response to his revival of *Richard II* betrayed a profound sense of relief that "Stratford's itself again...the costumes rich, the settings...breathing out the air of monarchs".²⁴³ There was general agreement and approval that Farrah's settings "reflected the pageantry of the prime time of coat-of-arms, emblems, signs and gaudy

decoration".²⁴⁴

This was particularly true of the early scenes of the production where Hands established a sense of medieval splendour, "an extravagantly gorgeous court"²⁴⁵ that served as a reference point against which to measure a process of evolution that marked not simply a change of dynasty but a painful if necessary adjustment to a different mind-set of the nature of monarchy as "expediency and pragmatism replace a somewhat decadent chivalry".²⁴⁶ Beginning in "a world of ritual, ornament and excess...by the end we are plunged into a society of darkness, gloom, flickering torches, and of men signing documents in small back rooms...".²⁴⁷

However, although the production did not attempt the extreme stylisation of John Barton's in terms of its acting style, the *mise-en-scène* embraced a high degree of emblematic pictorialism and much of the business emphasised the distinction between the individual and the rituals that defined his role. Ceremony was projected in Neo-Platonic terms as a worldly expression of a monarchical and universal ideal of which mortal man inevitably falls short.

The opening scenes in particular were "stiff with iconic and heraldic ornament".²⁴⁸ The first scene had a consciously emblematic quality, the wooden floor, hinged about half way upstage, being raised as a series of vertical panels "carved with huge emblems of the Christian King of Kings and his saints, enfolding the temporal king and his bishops".²⁴⁹

In front of these was hung a transparent curtain of panels embroidered with Richard's white hart motif behind which were dimly seen figures identified in the original prompt copy as Mowbray, York, King Richard, Gaunt and Bolingbroke in a line across the stage and facing down-stage, stiff impassive echoes of the effigies behind them.²⁵⁰

Before a word was spoken, however, and against a background of solemn music the king was shown to be demonstrably separated from lesser mortals by his office as he stepped forward to place the crown which he was carrying on his own head in an act of self-coronation. The prompt copy is specific: 'DURING MUSIC, KING STEPS D[OWN] S[TAGE], PUTS CROWN ON AND THEN TAKES ANOTHER STEP D[OWN] S[TAGE] at which point the gauze was raised.'²⁵¹

This opening ritual bore certain similarities to the opening mime of John Barton's production of *Richard II* in 1973 in its use of the same symbols of majesty - crown, emblem and music. However, the appropriateness of Richard's self-crowning has been questioned, given his repeated insistence on the divine origins of his office throughout the play,²⁵² and the episode lent substance to commentators who regarded the production as "an indulgent exercise in burnished pageantry and hollow fanfare".²⁵³ In its defence, it might be argued that a modern audience, perhaps unaware of the concept of divinely appointed kingship, might well derive some sense of the dignity of the temporal authority of the office, at least, from such a mime.

Stage movement during the opening minutes of the production had the precision and angularity of chess pieces moved around a board, formal and detached. Thus a character takes 'A STEP D[OWN] S[TAGE]', 'TURNS TO FACE', 'FACES D[OWN] S[TAGE]', 'KNEELS', 'STANDS', 'CROSSING HIMSELF', 'TO LEVEL WITH' 'FACES U[P] S[TAGE]'.²⁵⁴ There was a practical reason for this: "...the rake is such that the actors move most easily either straight down the stage...or straight across it. Any more complicated choreography works, as it were, against the grain...".²⁵⁵

Thus the design of the production co-operated with its intellectual dynamic to convey a sense of social and behavioural rigidity: "...the actors are placed in four-square units. denied the intimacy of conversation, stopped from wandering. The design introduces an inflexibility of behaviour...".²⁵⁶ The effect was formal - almost ritualistic - reflecting the formality of the verse and bestowing a heightened symbolic quality to the events depicted.

In contrast with the impression of timeless permanence conveyed by the opening solemnities and regal *mise-en-scène* Richard himself seemed "neurotic and mannered";²⁵⁷ his moods changed quickly and he commanded respect by shouting: 'We were not born to sue but to command...' [I.1.196]. Only then did the adversaries kneel to him.

At Stratford in 1980 the hydraulic ramps - set vertically to display the bas relief effigies in the first

two scenes - were lowered to a perilous angle of one in four for the lists scene. Richard and his court entering 'U[P] S[TAGE] OVER TOP OF IT'.²⁵⁸

In 1981 the scene was introduced by another procession in which the visible symbols of kingship were given even greater emphasis than in the opening tableau:

Music and singing were heard, and Richard's throne was carried on in the background. Richard himself appeared amidst his courtiers, and he joined them in solemn singing. A silver statue of a hart was carried in the procession as a symbol of Richard's kingship, as were the coats of arms of Edward's seven sons.

...Richard was wearing a different crown this time, heavier and more regal.²⁵⁹

Conventional forms of ceremonial obeisance, too, proliferated in this production. At Stratford there was extended business accompanying Richard's entrance in which, to a background of solemn music, and with some members of the court already kneeling, Richard descended and came down-stage centre. As he turned to face the up-stage throne the entire court kneeled and remained so until Richard had returned to the throne and turned to face down-stage, all standing as the music reached its conclusion.

At the same time, gestural ceremony in the production was used to point and measure the distance between action and motive, a sub-text which ultimately crystallised in Richard's 'Ceremony' speech. Thus the language and gestures of fealty offered by subject to sovereign were frequently uttered with bitterness and grudgingly performed.

Richard's manner, too, suggested a degree of

remoteness, even alienation. Bolingbroke's request to 'kiss my sovereign's hand'. for instance, prompted extended business, instead, with Richard's warder which had earlier been handed by Richard to the Marshal and thereafter became a visible symbol of and substitute for the king himself.

This was clearly a world bounded by rigid chivalric codes. When not personally involved in the preliminary formalities Mowbray and Bolingbroke was each isolated within his own 'list', bounded by four posts and connecting ropes, and, legs astride, faced fixedly out into the audience. Even shows of relative intimacy were regulated within a stiff, formal protocol. Thus Richard's folding Bolingbroke in his arms was followed by Bolingbroke's kneeling to receive a kiss on the head from Richard whereupon Bolingbroke stood and kissed the king's warder as he took his leave of the Marshal. At Richard's 'Farewell my lord' to Mowbray he held out his warder to Mowbray who held it with the king and kissed it, Richard finally relinquishing the warder - the visible symbol of his own authority - to the Marshal at 'Order the trial, Marshal, and begin' [I.3.97-99].

The substantial authorised ceremonial of the lists was further augmented as the Bishop of Carlisle, in full regalia, and complete with mitre and crosier, advanced in procession preceded by 'ARMSTRONG WITH HOLY WATER, AND FOLLOWED BY HUNTER WITH INCENSE AND FITZGERALD WITH CROSS' and blessed first Mowbray, then Bolingbroke who had each been armed by his respective steward.

Richard's intervention as the combatants approached each other, 'WEAPONS HELD HIGH'. therefore, precipitated a violent dislocation of the formal, measured codes that had regulated conduct hitherto. Thus Ross and Willoughby, assisted by the two stewards, 'BREAK THROUGH' the ropes defining the list - thereby violating the sanctity bestowed upon the contest by the elaborate blessing - to 'GRAB' the combatants and 'DISARM' them.

Against the background of this violation the oath appeared as a desperate attempt to restore an order which Richard himself had disturbed. Bagot, who had carried the sheathed sword of state throughout the scene as a further symbol of kingly authority, now handed the unsheathed sword to Richard, whereupon Mowbray and Bolingbroke 'KNEEL EITHER SIDE OF SWORD AND PUT THEIR HANDS ON IT', the sword being returned to Bagot when they had sworn.²⁶⁰ Such ceremonial, however elaborate, appeared as a framework reflecting order and stability but increasingly remote from a reality perceived from a subtext of glances, facial expressions and vocal intonation at odds with the literal meaning of the words spoken.

Throughout the production, in fact, conventional gestural ceremony served as a barometer of monarchical style. During Gaunt's sickness [II.1] the prompt copy records five separate 'KNEELING' cues yet the respect which they conventionally signify was deliberately negated by Richard's cruel and insensitive jibes during the scene. But in Act II, Scene 3 when Northumberland 'PUSHES PERCY TO HIS KNEES' to

show respect to Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke himself kneeled, took Percy's hands and 'LIFTS PERCY TO HIS FEET'. Moreover, when Ross and Willoughby entered they, too, instinctively kneeled to Bolingbroke but he 'SHAKES THEIR HANDS' as they then did with Northumberland and Percy. Perhaps we were intended to recall the business with the warder in the lists scene and conclude that here is a man apparently without pride and with a very different style, an impression confirmed when his request that his uncle, York, 'Look on my wrongs with an indifferent eye' [II.3.115] was spoken with his 'ARM AROUND HIS SHOULDERS'.²⁶¹

In the prison scene at Pomfret [V.5] Richard's former arrogance had been replaced by humility and a new shared humanity. There was mutual bowing between Richard and the groom and later they sat on the ground together, enclosed within the arc formed by Richard's long prison chain. Conversely, in the earlier Aumerle scene [V.3] the conventional forms of obeisance were employed to pantomimic effect with no less than ten 'KNEELING' cues in the prompt copy and three instances of hand kissing. These included the Duchess 'walking' on her knees across the stage to Henry and of Henry himself kneeling and kissing the Duchess's hand.

Bolingbroke was clearly uncomfortable with the outward signs of ceremony - no doubt he appreciated how imperfectly the 'shadow' may reflect the 'substance' - but as king ceremony is inescapable. This disconcerting truth was made manifest during the deposition episode. In this scene the throne was set off-centre at centre stage right

rather than up-stage centre as previously, perhaps to suggest the irregularity of the king's elevation, perhaps as a visible token of the dislocation of the symmetrically ordered world picture that was disintegrating before us.

When York entered as Richard's emissary he carried the royal sceptre. This clearly stood for Richard himself and was solemnly presented to Bolingbroke who now received both it and the tribute of his uncle's knee without demur. York's line proclaiming 'Long live Henry, fourth of that name' [IV.1.112] was echoed by the kneeling court. Again, however, Bolingbroke seemed uncomfortable with such tribute and attempted to 'ascend the regal throne' in what proved to be an undignified and distinctly unceremonial rush. Carlisle's intervention effectively removed any residual dignity from the episode and the sceptre was duly returned to York.

Richard's arrival served only to increase Bolingbroke's discomfiture. Here were all the most potent and visible symbols of kingly authority and glory - crown, sceptre, orb - but the dignity upon which their symbolic if not actual power depends was deliberately withheld in a parodic coronation of which the tavern crowning of Falstaff in *Henry IV, Part I* is an echo.

Here Richard took Bolingbroke's hand and 'MAKES HIM HOLD THE CROWN WITH HIM' then 'SNATCHES' the crown back and placed it on his own head at 'Now mark how I will undo myself'. Thereafter he systematically heaped all the regalia on to Bolingbroke as he named the symbols in his speech.

first holding the crown over Bolingbroke before 'PUTTING IT ON HIS HEAD'. followed by the sceptre and then the orb at 'The pride of kingly sway...'. After simulating 'mine own tears' by licking his fingers and wiping his eyes and 'mine own breath' by embracing Bolingbroke he took Bolingbroke's hand, led him up the steps of the throne and after '"God save King Henry". unking'd Richard says' 'MAKES BOL[INGBROKE] SIT ON THRONE'.²⁶²

Thus, this moment of 'triumph' for Bolingbroke saw him edging "further and further into the corner of the throne"²⁶³ as Richard succeeded in embarrassing him onto the throne in a manner from which one critic felt he was unlikely ever to recover.²⁶⁴

Following Richard's exit it was with some relief that Bolingbroke handed the 'heavy load' of sceptre and orb to Northumberland, but the undignified 'coronation' had changed him nevertheless; he was now a king and clung to the most potent symbol of his kingly authority as if needing its reassuring presence to sustain him. Thus, as he descended the steps of the throne, he removed the crown from his head, but as Northumberland held out his hands to receive it 'BOLINGBROKE HOLDS ON TO IT'. Inevitably, he had succumbed to the "pathology of kingship".²⁶⁵

Throughout the rest of the play the crown had the power of a talisman for Bolingbroke. During the Aumerle scene [V.3] on an otherwise bare stage and with the seated Bolingbroke cutting "a schoolmasterly figure, wearing glasses and a long muffler"²⁶⁶ the crown sat incongruously

on a rich cushion on a rough wooden table. One began to understand why in *Henry IV, Part Two* this King Henry might feel the need physically to retain the crown even as he lay on his sick bed. It was fitting, too, that with Richard's body at his feet - the last two lines referring to the processional exit having been cut - King Henry's final action of the play as he spoke of voyaging to the Holy Land 'To wash this guilty blood off from my guilty hand' was that of self-coronation - a visual echo of the production's opening mime. The man who had demeaned his kingly office had ultimately contemplated its true dignity and was ennobled by it while his usurper, an awkward successor to its worldly ceremonies, finally embraced its mystery.

James Fenton, in fact, wrote of retaining the clear impression of the quality of kingship from the production: "the king as the sun, the source of light; the king as the isolated man-God...".²⁶⁷ At Coventry, for example, lowered behind a golden throne three strips of cloth combined to produce the image of a golden sun; at Flint Castle [III.3] Richard emerged to the sound of trumpets wearing a crown, a short tunic and a golden cloak with jagged edges suggesting the stylised rays of the sun. Even in a relatively informal context [I.4] Richard wore a long, loose, golden robe over a golden tunic and while he was talking to Aumerle the yellow cloak which replaced the robe had a sun motif on the back.

Lighting, too, co-operated to point the symbolism. For much of the production Alan Howard was followed by a

spotlight suggestive of the golden aura of kingship". At the start of the lists scene [I.3] the stage blazed with light as the hydraulic ramp - vertical since the play's opening - tilted back "becoming a horizon over which, at the back of the stage, rises the sun of Richard in his golden throne...";²⁶⁸ it ended with the stage "ablaze with the hues of the setting sun".²⁶⁹

Such emblems - characteristic of a director whose imagistic, and even pageant-like approach has labelled him "the most operatic of our directors"²⁷⁰ - were underpinned in this production by quasi-religious signifiers which were an insistent reminder of the 'divinity doth hedge a king'; an assumption of a monarchical ideal which rendered the courtier's knee of obeisance an act of genuflection, a token of religious devotion to which the sign of the cross was a natural adjunct.

Thus, the identification of Richard with the sun was overlaid with an insistent religious motif so that secular and religious ritual merged. This may be illustrated by reference to the scene depicting Richard's return from Ireland [III.2] from which the soldiers were omitted in this production. The Bishop of Carlisle appeared dressed in a short cope - which also suggested a military cape - his legs encased in armoured greaves, still wearing his mitre and holding a banner bearing the emblem of the madonna and infant Christ as the centre-piece of a blazing sun: a living emblem of the Church Militant.

Significantly, too, the supernumeraries that

peopled Richard's court wore monastic dress. There were no 'guards' or 'soldiers' since treason, far from 'peeping', was clearly unthinkable: a king was both infallible and untouchable. The oath in Act I, Scene 3, therefore, became a defining moment because it admitted a doubt; it was here that Richard "seemed to notice Bolingbroke for the first time",²⁷¹ a sign of foreboding imaged in the setting sun at the scene's close.

If the monks sometimes doubled as stage crew - as when they carried on the throne for the deposition scene [IV.1] - it was nevertheless fitting in the new regime that their role should be utilitarian rather than symbolically spiritual and that the solemn singing that had prefaced several scenes should have been superseded by the sound of drums as Bolingbroke and his 'court' entered.

Having been violated, the divinity of kingship - hitherto confidently assumed - must be conspicuously asserted. Thus Richard entered for the deposition scene Christ-like in long white robe and made his way to prison accompanied by monks carrying crosses. Such imagery was increasingly seen to be at odds with that which characterised the new regime: the cross worn by Bolingbroke for the Aumerle scene appeared curiously incongruous, almost blasphemous: torch-bearing monks accompanying Richard during his farewells to his Queen were supplemented by an escort of three spear-carrying soldiers so that while Richard was dragged off to prison his Queen exited "in a slow, impressive torchlit procession upstage"²⁷² as an emblem of

two irreconcilable ideologies of monarchy.

If the mirror episode may be viewed as an act of ritual scourging, Richard's murder had the force of authorised iconoclasm: the episode with the groom had an ominous red backdrop with Exton and the assassins ranged in a line across the top of the angled stage floor. The murder itself - particularly violent and protracted - was accompanied by solemn religious singing and was preceded by Richard's being encircled by his nine murderers, the circular shape - already suggested by the long trailing prison chain as he sat with the groom - reproducing that of the mirror frame. Now he achieved a new dignity as he fought heroically as the 'substance' of the man transcended the 'shadow' of a king.

A production which projected "a world of symbol, elegance and ritual"²⁷³ inevitably attracted widely differing judgements: Benedict Nightingale, an avowed sceptic "somewhat resistant to pomp and swank", discovered a certain "unreconstructed excitement" in himself "as the shields and standards of the English nobility trundled across the stage...followed by Alan Howard's glistering sun king";²⁷⁴ others acknowledged that Hands had "steered the history plays towards greater pageantry" but dubbed his pageantic style, though bold, 'operatic' and ultimately superficial, "like a half-empty shop with a spectacular window display".²⁷⁵ While some commentators thought that Hands's "relentless theatricality"²⁷⁶ destroyed both sensitivity in the delivery of the verse and subtlety in the

dramatic interplay of character others were willing to indulge a directorial vision on an altogether broader canvas:

Time is at the back of everything in this production gradually transforming the twin protagonists from feudal rivals into broken reeds joined together by an invisible thread of sorrow.²⁷⁷

Such a judgement recalls John Barton's production of 1973 and, indeed, the programme of Hands's production - the first of *Richard II* by the RSC since Barton's - sought to steer the audience away from an interpretation of the play in terms of personal tragedy no less than the thesis of political cynicism which had informed many post-war productions of the play.

On a more parochial level:

Richard's tragedy...became a symbolic one, not a tragedy of character. The production posed the problem of what to do in a *fin de siècle*, when what had once been meaningful - a King, for example - had lost its effective, emotive reality and existed only on an intellectual plane, as a curiosity.²⁷⁸

Some observers, however, saw the production as "an epic masterpiece"²⁷⁹ in the "monumental tradition" of Peter Hall's *The Wars of the Roses* cycle in 1963, giving expression to a mythic dimension encompassing "the interminable ebb and flow of human fortune" and embracing a scale "larger and grander than the usual.... part of the past, present happening and the future action of history".²⁸⁰ Even at the parochial level, however, its relevance for a post-imperial hereditary monarchy was surely inescapable.

In 1976 Peter Brook had concurred with the view that "the absence of ceremony is the barometer of...irredeemable isolation"²⁸¹ but he had also cautioned - "particularly in relation to a theatre which has tried to re-discover and re-invent ritual" - against the perception of ceremony or 'ritual' as a form that is separable to be superimposed: "A true ceremony", he said, "like a true ritual. is an expression".²⁸²

John Barton's *Richard II* was only the most extreme example of a number of productions which made much of "the forms and ceremonies that marked the public actions of a Tudor king and reflected and symbolised the God-given authority with which he had been endowed".²⁸³ One end of the ceremonious spectrum in Shakespeare production at this time reached back towards universal absolutes grounded in magic, to "the invisible currents that rule our lives";²⁸⁴ the other sought, through pageantry, to compensate for the absence of the necessary degree of "king-worship"²⁸⁵ required for a full understanding of plays that turn upon 'the death of kings'.

The four productions considered in this chapter all employed ceremonial on a scale that had hardly been contemplated since the days of Tree, but sought to reach beyond spectacle to give expression to an informing idea. Detractors, focusing primarily on the 'idea', complained that in so-called Directors' Theatre the director had a tendency to sermonise: he was too committed to a 'thesis' which risked obliterating the dramatic counterpoints; his

hand was "too plainly seen, too obviously masterful":²⁸⁶ one trans-Atlantic reviewer of Barton's production of *Richard II* was left with a "deadening sense of what happens when an academic director is afflicted with Brookomania".²⁸⁷ Others, nervous of the 'spectacle', were alarmed that the history plays were being "steered...towards greater pageantry"²⁸⁸ and away from the 'naturalism' and 'topical relevance' which had distinguished post-war interpretation: they spoke of "brash visual symbolism"²⁸⁹ and of the sacrifice of "psychological subtlety to theatrical effect".²⁹⁰ There were, undoubtedly, excesses, but pageantry had now to be measured in terms of its contribution to understanding rather than dismissed as merely diversionary spectacle.

NOTES

¹ A Theatregoround production adaptation of *Henry IV* and *Henry V* made by John Barton and directed by Barton and Gareth Morgan toured during 1969-70.

² *Listener*, 88, 10 August, 1967, pp. 174-76.

³ Marwick, p. 127.

⁴ *Oxford Times*, 28 April, 1967.

⁵ *Guardian*, 28 January, 1965.

⁶ Penelope Gilliat, *Observer*, 31 January, 1965.

⁷ Brian Masters, *The Swinging Sixties* (London: Constable, 1985), p. 21.

⁸ William Tydeman, *The Theatre in the Middle Ages: Western European Stage Conditions, c.800-1576* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, repr 1984), p. 86.

⁹ Elizabeth Burns, *Theatricality: A Study of Convention in the Theatre and in Social Life*, (London: Longman, 1972), p. 211.

¹⁰ Burns, p. 208.

- ¹¹ Saul Colin, 'Plays and Players in New York', *Plays and Players*, Vol. 7, No. 12 (September, 1960), p. 16.
- ¹² John Barton in interview with Michael Kustow, 'Synthesis', *Flourish*, (1967), p. 14.
- ¹³ Brook, *The Empty Space*, p. 47
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 45.
- ¹⁵ Brook, *The Empty Space*, p. 45.
- ¹⁶ Michael Billington, 'A Misspent Youth' in *Summerfolk: Essays Celebrating Shakespeare and the Stratford Theatres*, ed. by Stanley Wells (Ebrington, Gloucestershire: Long Barn, 1997), pp. 43-53 (pp. 46-7).
- ¹⁷ Bamber Gascoigne, *Twentieth-Century Drama* (London: Hutchinson, 1962), p. 88.
- ¹⁸ Anthony Graham-White, '"Ritual" in Contemporary Theatre and Criticism', *Educational Theatre Journal*, 28 (1976), 318-24 (pp. 318-19).
- ¹⁹ However, Barton in *The Greeks* was at pains to eliminate any sense of the 'heightened' in the dialogue: "I've always found the heightened a wallow, a self-indulgence" (John Barton in interview with Mark Amory, 'John Barton Brings His Gift to the Greeks', *Sunday Times Magazine*, 3 February, 1980, p. 41).
- ²⁰ See, for instance, David Fontana, *The Secret Language of Symbols: A Visual Key to Symbols and Their Meanings* (London: Pavilion, 1993), pp. 8-10.
- ^{21a} The production, with Ian McKellan as Richard, began its life as part of the Company's autumn tour of the provinces in 1968 and was re-worked for the 1969 Edinburgh Festival where it was placed in repertory with Marlowe's *Edward II*. Both plays had a short season at the Mermaid Theatre during a further British and Continental tour and in January 1970 it was revived for a further London season at the Picadilly Theatre. During its extended lifetime the production necessarily evolved in terms of both personnel and interpretation. Timothy West, who replaced Neil Stacey as Bolingbroke, said that it would be a mistake to regard the two versions as the same production (Serpell, p. 323) but since the main difference in the two productions lay in the interpretation of Bolingbroke himself a degree of overstatement is possible here.
- ²² Peter Lewis, 'See this really amazing Richard', *London Daily Mail*, 21 January, 1970.
- ²³ Serpell, p. 327.
- ²⁴ 'The white hot spark' *Birmingham Evening Mail*, 19 November, 1969.
- ²⁵ '"Richard the Second' *Stage*, 28 August, 1969.
- ²⁶ Harold Hobson, 'A king acclaimed', *Sunday Times*, 31 August, 1969.
- ²⁷ *Cambridge News*, 2 November, 1968.
- ²⁸ Serpell, p. 321.
- ²⁹ Ibid..
- ³⁰ B.A.Young, 'Richard II', *Financial Times*, 3 December, 1968.

- ³¹ Serpell, p. 323.
- ³² Ibid..
- ³³ Serpell, p. 324.
- ³⁴ *Illustrated London News*, 6 September, 1969.
- ³⁵ Irving Wardle, 'Every inch the kings', *The Times*, 30 August, 1969.
- ³⁶ Harold Hobson, 'A king acclaimed', *Sunday Times*, 31 August, 1969.
- ³⁷ J.C.Trewin, 'Richard II', *Birmingham Post*, 27 August, 1969.
- ³⁸ B.A.Young, 'Richard II', *Financial Times*, 28 August, 1969.
- ³⁹ Serpell, p. 326.
- ⁴⁰ Serpell, p. 326.
- ⁴¹ *Sunday Times*, 31 August, 1969.
- ⁴² Serpell, p. 325
- ^{43a} Michael Billington, 'A superb Richard', *The Times*, 26 September, 1969. See also Robert Cushman, 'Seconds out', *Spectator*, 6 September, 1969.
- ⁴⁴ *The Times*, 26 September, 1969.
- ⁴⁵ Michael Billington, 'Thoughtful reading of Richard', *The Times*, 5 November, 1968.
- ⁴⁶ Harold Hobson, 'A king born to be man', *Sunday Times*, 8 December, 1968.
- ⁴⁷ Allen Wright, 'Great young actor raises drama to full stature', *Scotsman*, 28 August, 1969.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid..
- ⁴⁹ Christopher Small, 'Outstanding portrayal elevates Richard from the level of drab history', *Glasgow Herald*, 27 August, 1969.
- ⁵⁰ Desmond Pratt, 'Agony and thrill of Richard II', *Yorkshire Post*, 11 November, 1969.
- ⁵¹ *Yorkshire Post*, 11 November, 1969.
- ⁵² 'THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY, HE SAYS, ARE GOD AND ENGLAND', *Guardian*, 18 March, 1972.
- ⁵³ Irving Wardle, 'Richard II', *The Times*, 30 March, 1972.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid..
- ⁵⁵ Gibson, p. 191.
- ⁵⁶ P.M., 'So short of colour', *Birmingham Evening Mail*, 30 March, 1972.
- ⁵⁷ Ian Christie, 'Power politics richly portrayed', *Daily Express*, 30 March, 1972.

- ⁵⁸ Irving Wardle, 'Richard II', *The Times*, 30 March, 1972.
- ⁵⁹ Jack Sutherland 'A tragedy fails to move', *Morning Star*, 1 April, 1972
- ⁶⁰ B.A.Young, 'Richard II'. *Financial Times*, 30 March, 1972.
- ⁶¹ David Gow, 'National Theatre, London: Richard II'. *Scotsman*, 31 March, 1972.
- ⁶² Peter Lewis, 'Richard II', *Daily Mail*, 30 March, 1972.
- ⁶³ Gibson, p. 190.
- ⁶⁴ 'Richard II', *Guardian*, 30 March, 1972.
- ⁶⁵ Ian Christie, 'Power politics richly portrayed', *Daily Express*, 30 March, 1972.
- ⁶⁶ Unidentified press cutting: Birmingham Shakespeare Library, *Richard II* volume dated 'March, 1972'.
- ⁶⁷ J.C.Trewin, 'King Richard the Second', *Birmingham Post*, 30 March, 1972.
- ⁶⁸ Ian Christie, 'Power politics richly portrayed', *Daily Express*, 30 March, 1972.
- ⁶⁹ Frank Marcus, 'DONE RIGHT', *Sunday Telegraph*, 2 April, 1972.
- ⁷⁰ Derek Mahon, 'Priest-King', *Listener*, 6 April, 1972.
- ⁷¹ Brook, *The Empty Space*, p. 45.
- ⁷² Derek Mahon, 'Priest-King', *Listener*, 6 April, 1972.
- ⁷³ John Barber, 'Richard II lacking in depths of poetry', *Daily Telegraph*, 30 March, 1972.
- ⁷⁴ *Listener*, 6 April, 1972.
- ⁷⁵ Felix Barker, 'Richard II', *London Evening News*, 30 March, 1972.
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- ⁷⁸ Derek Mahon, 'Priest-King', *Listener*, 6 April, 1972.
- ⁷⁹ Irving Wardle, 'Richard II', *The Times*, 30 March, 1972.
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- ⁸¹ *Guardian*, 18 March, 1972.
- ⁸² Ibid..
- ⁸³ Ibid..
- ⁸⁴ David Isaacs, 'Bold "Richard" will keep you awake', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 31 March, 1972.
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- ⁸⁶ 'Richard II', *Guardian*, 30 March, 1972.
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- ⁸⁸ Stanley Wells, 'John Barton's Richard II, 1973-74' in *Royal Shakespeare: Studies of four major productions at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Farnham Studies*, n.s. 23 (June, 1976), pp. 64-81, (p. 65).
- ⁸⁹ Robert Speaight, 'The Stratford-upon-Avon Season', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 24 (1973), 400-04 (p. 401).
- ⁹⁰ Harold Hobson, 'Power Behind the Throne', *Sunday Times*, 15 April, 1973.
- ⁹¹ Greenwald interview with Barton, 5 November, 1980; quoted Michael L. Greenwald, *Directions by Indirections: John Barton of the Royal Shakespeare Company* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), p. 116.
- ⁹² Greenwald, p. 116.
- ⁹³ Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 240.
- ⁹⁴ Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 246.
- ⁹⁵ Greenwald, pp. 116-18.
- ⁹⁶ Timothy O'Brien, 'Designing a Shakespeare Play: Richard II', *Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft West Jahrbuch, 1974*, 111-20 (p. 113).
- ⁹⁷ Greenwald, p. 116.
- ⁹⁸ Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 242.
- ⁹⁹ James Stredder, 'John Barton's Production of Richard II at Stratford-on-Avon, 1973', *Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft West Jahrbuch, 1976*, 23-42 (p. 26).
- ¹⁰⁰ Ann Barton, 'The King's Two Bodies', *Richard II production programme*, pp. 13-4.
- ¹⁰¹ Greenwald, p. 116.
- ¹⁰² 'Director's Forum', 23 August, 1973 at the Shakespeare Institute, Stratford-upon-Avon.
- ¹⁰³ Greenwald, p. 120.
- ¹⁰⁴ Wells, *Royal Shakespeare*, p. 69.
- ¹⁰⁵ Greenwald, p. 121.
- ¹⁰⁶ Greenwald, p. 120.
- ¹⁰⁷ In addition, "to effect ritual formality, Barton drilled his actors for almost twelve weeks...to adapt them to formal acting, as opposed to the more naturalistic style to which they were accustomed": Greenwald, p. 121.
- ¹⁰⁸ Stredder, 'John Barton's Production of *Richard II* at Stratford-on-Avon, 1973', *Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft West Jahrbuch, 1976*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁹ Stredder, 'John Barton's Production of *Richard II* at Stratford-on-Avon, 1973', *Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft West Jahrbuch*, 1976, p. 36.

¹¹⁰ Greenwald, p. 123.

¹¹¹ Miriam Gilbert, 'Richard II at Stratford: Role-Plying as Metaphor', in *Shakespeare: The Theatrical Dimension*, ed. by Philip C. McGuire and David A. Samuelson, AMS studies in the Renaissance, 3 (New York: AMS, 1979), pp. 61-84 (p. 92).

¹¹² Crosse, *Fifty Years of Shakespearean Playgoing*, p. 40.

¹¹³ Richard David, *Shakespeare in the Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 172.

¹¹⁴ Anthony B. Dawson, *Watching Shakespeare: A Playgoers' Guide* (London: Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1988), p. 77.

¹¹⁵ Gareth Lloyd Evans, 'Directing Problem Plays: John Barton Talks to Gareth Lloyd Evans', *Shakespeare Survey*, 25 (1972), 63-71 (p. 64).

¹¹⁶ David, *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, p. 45.

¹¹⁷ Gilbert, p. 87.

¹¹⁸ Gilbert, p. 87.

¹¹⁹ Gilbert, p. 88.

¹²⁰ Robert Smallwood, 'Directors' Theatre', in *Shakespeare: An Illustrated History*, ed. Bate and Jackson, pp. 176-96 (p. 192).

¹²¹ Smallwood, 'Directors' Theatre', pp. 192-93.

¹²² Gilbert, pp. 88-89.

¹²³ Wells, *Royal Shakespeare*, p. 76.

¹²⁴ Speaight, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 24 (1973), p. 401.

¹²⁵ Dawson, pp. 78-9.

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¹²⁸ Gilbert, p. 92.

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¹³⁰ O'Brien, p. 118.

¹³¹ Wells, *Royal Shakespeare*, pp. 72-73.

¹³² Gilbert, p. 95.

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- 140 John Simon, 'Theatre Chronicle', *Hudson Review*, 27, No. 2 (Summer, 1974), p.259.
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- 147 Press release, dated 26 March [1973].
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- 153 Gibson, p. 194.
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- 157 Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 247.
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- ¹⁶⁴ Hands in *The RSC's Production of 'Henry V'*, ed. Beauman, p. 15.
- ¹⁶⁵ Phillips, pp. 140-41.
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- ¹⁶⁷ Kennedy. *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 247.
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- ²²²ⁿ *Richard II* was omitted as John Barton's production had been in repertory for the previous two years but Hands began with *Henry V* in March, then added the two parts of *Henry IV* in April and June, and finally remounted his 1968 *Merry Wives of Windsor* in August.
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- 250ⁿ For the revival of the production at the Aldwych in 1981 the ceremonial element was enhanced by having Richard and his court enter in procession and the strong religious element in the production was signified by the addition of two monks: Liisa Hakola, *In One Person Many People: The Image of the King in Three RSC Productions of William Shakespeare's 'King Richard II'*, *Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia Toimituksia Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae*, Ser. B, 243 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1988), p. 95.
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CHAPTER VI

The theatre of state

It has been suggested that one effect of the kinds of criticism aimed at director-centred conceptual Shakespearean production noted at the end of the previous chapter was a tendency for directors to seek to render themselves 'invisible' by placing the theatre itself at the conceptual centre of their productions, with a consequent shift of emphasis, superficially at least, towards the actors. Sometimes financial imperatives impelled this interpretative trait, as in Terry Hands's 1975 production of *Henry V* in which "the basic process of theatre, the actor's exploration of a part" had become the interpretation of the play, "the rehearsal a performance"¹² but a theatre language in which the theatre itself became a major theme has clear implications for our own pageantic vocabulary. A society sceptical of its public figures and its institutions of government and increasingly conscious of the importance of image in the dramaturgy of power was capable of responding to the contextualisation of the ceremonies which celebrate those institutions and thereby of engaging in a process of re-evaluation.

As early as 1970 and with Jan Kott's world view in mind Trevor Nunn had observed: "It's being said that the RSC are becoming afraid of throne-rooms and courts.... In most of our work now we are concerned with the human personalities of a king or queen rather than their public

roles".² In practice, however, his approach was more ambivalent. When he directed *The Romans* season at Stratford in 1972, although the productions were praised for individual performances and for the psychological insights which they revealed, each of the four plays had been prefaced with an elaborate procession indicating stages in the evolution of Roman civilisation, while the first of three productions of *Macbeth* (1974) which Nunn directed for the RSC in the mid-seventies began with a mimed coronation of Duncan.

It was a similar piece of pageantry which began its inaugural production when the RSC took up residence at the new Barbican Theatre in 1982 with Trevor Nunn's production of 'A History in Two Parts' (for this was how *Henry IV* was sub-titled in the souvenir programme). Unsurprisingly, perhaps, it was usually the physical setting to which commentators first reacted: impressions of the design of the theatre building led naturally to more localised reflections upon the three tiers of John Napier's "stunningly carpentered set".³ a design which has been seen as making its own distinct contribution both to the concept of 'Designer Shakespeare' and the reinvention of theatrical spectacle.⁴ Dennis Kennedy has cited Napier's setting as an instance of the sort of lavish representation - characterised by "ocular luxury and expensive 'high concept' design" - which has been seen as "a replacement for the rough-edged emphasis on intellectual meaning of the postwar *avant-garde*".⁵

It was a "magnificent folly of balconies, gangways, rotting beams and rusting armour"⁶ arranged on three huge hydraulically operated trucks whose constantly-changing superstructure of street, court and tavern provided "a living backdrop of England".⁷ The pageantry that opened *Part One* was correspondingly conceived on a scale which suggested a national rather than a private context for the king's guilt. King Henry entered at the head of a procession comprising three pairs of monks in white cowled robes, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and another monk bearing a cross. The procession emerged from "banked masses of candle-clutching pilgrims"⁸ to the sound of an opening anthem, *Adoramus te Christe*; the entire nation seemed tainted by the guilt which wracked its king.

At the same time, the gorgeous ceremonial episcopal 'vestments' which the king wore were less displays of kingly pride than the conspicuously visible public acknowledgement of personal culpability, thereby turning the king's "obsessive penance into public theatre".⁹ a ritual designed, in part, at least, "to exorcise the King's guilt as well as that of the entire society".¹⁰

Public display for this king was, it seems, a penitential obligation. His opening speech was at once an expression of religious devotion and an act of contrition. At its conclusion he both assisted in and submitted to a systematic disrobing which carried echoes of the uncrowning of his predecessor in Westminster Hall as gloves, stole (which he kissed devotionally), tabard and coat were removed

in turn in favour of a dressing gown and cup of wine. The idea of the man confined by the symbols of office was suggested by Henry's needing the assistance of two attendants to remove the stole and tabard, and yet for the remainder of the production this was essentially a working king, an administrator with no relish for personal pomp, though at least one commentator felt that it was a weakness of Napier's set that "it never suggests a royal court".¹¹ If this was a fault it was not a grievous one and might be answered in terms of the prevailing austerity of Henry's monarchical style in which "pageant is continuously undercut by melancholic reflections on the human gestures it celebrates".¹²

Gestural ceremony, too, was sparingly used.

Although Blunt kneeled to Henry to deliver his news there was little conventional bowing, and when Henry entered for Act I, Scene 3 the Court/Council simply stood respectfully and sat again at the conclusion of his opening sentence. At other times he seemed impatient of his courtiers' attentiveness and suspicious of their motives. Instead, "the king was much concerned with administrative efficiency. Minutes were taken at his Council...".¹³ Thus, the third scene in *Part I* was unmistakably a Council Chamber and the king's first private conference with his son [III.2] had Henry at his desk. The prompt copy indicates an empty 'THRONE' stage-right in this scene but commentators have not remarked on it and it was evidently cut for the performances. Only the purple cloths covering the table and

ewer-stand. "each with a small gold emblem of the crown" relieved the "prim fastidiousness"¹⁴ of the set with a touch of unostentatious regal 'splendour'.

In a pre-Falklands, Thatcherite Britain that was groping towards re-definition the production was "a kaleidoscope vision of society in flux";¹⁵ political "in the roundest sense of the word"¹⁶ it "restlessly probes beneath received Shakespearean interpretation".¹⁷ Thus Hal was someone "capable of violence and thuggery",¹⁸ a high class lout who "ascends the throne with great conviction, proclaiming a Justice that is bound to be unjust and a Christian morality that is immoral".¹⁹ This was an extreme view but the general tenor of the production - if not actually anti-heroic - was undoubtedly one of melancholy scepticism. This was expressed in pageantic terms by continually blurring the distinction between public and private, spectacle and spectator and past and present in ways which invited audiences to question the very nature of government itself together with those values and institutions whose self-evident traditional virtues have been part of received mythology.

The citizens who populated the urban sprawl of Napier's set and who both witnessed and had participated in their king's penitential progress at the beginning of *Part One* coalesced emblematically into a "pyramidal configuration reminiscent of the programme cover's Tower of Babel"²⁰ to supply the various tongues of Rumour in *Part Two*, still bearing candles but now wearing black cowled robes. At other

times they were the voiceless multitude performing domestic or workaday tasks or unremarked observers of the unfolding pageant of history, even its most intimate moments.

On one level they were a visible testimony to the fact that what the great perform the less will prattle of; on another they were a reminder of the many nameless necks that are broken when 'a great wheel runs down a hill'. As observers they were expressions of both the relativism of historical 'truth' and reminders that "in the postmodern age, history is not something in which one participates but is, instead, a consumer commodity".²¹

The treatment of ceremonial in the production reflected these ambiguities. Repeatedly ceremony was deliberately undermined: the disrobing of Henry IV following the visually impressive opening procession drew attention to it as costume theatre; during the first reconciliation scene [*Part One*, III.2] Henry's ironic 'crowning' of Hal with a cushion was doubly unsettling when removed from the roistering context of the tavern; the interpolated court scene from *The Famous Victories* challenged the dignity of the court with its action and broad street theatre; a tee-shirt held aloft by Pistol emblazoned with *Si fortuna me tormenta, spero contenta* and his *Obsque hoc nihil est* chanted "as an aggressive football slogan"²² were jarring anachronisms while Henry V's coronation procession, itself already halted by Falstaff, resumed its progress with Poins "in a brand new short cloak" smugly bringing up the rear.²³

Such moments did not so much present a cynical debasement of the ideal as draw the audience towards a new realism which acknowledged the illusory nature of the myth whilst having it still in view. After Shrewsbury, for example, the showy epaulettes and royal devices of lions and *fleurs-de-lys* in scarlet, blue and gold which decorated Falstaff's leather jerkin did not themselves deny the existence of honour.

The symbolic properties of ceremony retain much of their mythical purity while their role is confined within the ceremonial context; outside that context they acquired in this production an even more potent capacity, providing an often ironic focus for the infinite complexities of personal and political interplay. In the Gaultree episode, for instance, the fact that the Archbishop's cross was held by one of a group of attentive peasants gave his words a measure of popular authority; when it was held by a single peasant during the final parley it suggested that "power authorises itself to speak for the people by playing what looks like a gentlemen's private game";²⁴ finally, the Archbishop's arrest was prefaced by an example of ceremonial violation as Prince John first knelt as though devotionally to kiss his hand only to tear the official ring from his finger and so forcibly divest him of the authority once ceremonially conferred.

In the crown scene the crown itself acted as an emotional catalyst, first prompting Hal - angry and confused at being trapped in a role he dreaded - incongruously to jam

the ill-fitting crown onto his unruly curls in a bizarre angst-ridden self-coronation; when he was too slow in returning it to his father's outstretched hand its snatched recovery unleashed from the king an outburst of bitter sarcasm which modulated through a range of emotions to an embrace which represented "a rare moment in an otherwise painful, tense father-son relationship".²⁵

When Hal sat on the throne he did so hesitantly yet although he rose to reassure his brothers, and actually embraced Gloucester and Clarence, he himself found reassurance in its authority for the 'trial' of the Lord Chief Justice. He had finally accepted the public role of formal majesty. Thus, his prayer to his father's memory, offered to the *prie-dieu* and with everyone kneeling behind him, was "very much a performance" and the last twelve lines of the speech "a policy statement" while "the burst of music and sudden blaze of light that enclosed and isolated his figure registered how quickly he had assumed the theatrical trappings of kingship".²⁶

When Henry entered in procession for his coronation - "his face a blank, unreadable mask"²⁷ - he wore the heavily embroidered white cope worn by his father in the opening sequence of *Part One*. The returning procession, in fact, produced an image reminiscent of that opening tableau:

There, candles had flickered and streamed in the darkness: here the light was harsh and steady. And only one monk, carrying a cross, walked behind this new King who, like his father before him, seemed uneasy in majesty's garment and had become a smiling mechanism of authority....²⁸

In 1980 at Stratford as in 1973 ceremonial in *Richard II* had served a strong directorial imperative; in Barry Kyle's revival in 1986 it became suborned in the service of a lavish neo-pictorialism: one commentator thought that the set "threatens to take over from the actors";²⁹ another that the director - "apparently unable to assert himself against the concept of 'designer theatre' - had abdicated his responsibility".³⁰

Two years earlier William Dudley had designed an emblematic medieval cathedral setting for Bill Alexander's production of *Richard III* which included "a coronation scene with massed extras and musicians"³¹ which some commentators likened to nineteenth-century historicism.³² Now much of the production's pageantry undoubtedly resided in its emblematic medieval castle setting. Jeremy O'Brien felt that it was Dudley's "Gothic perpendicular set" no less than Barry Kyle's "banner waving production" which emphasised that "*Richard II* is nothing if not a ceremonial play":³³

Plantagenet England is a miniature walled garden.... There are six gates which lead to a world elsewhere.... The Dukes of Lancaster...and York...lodge in stalls like bishops' thrones, slender and Gothic, one on each side of the stage.... The King's fretwork pavilion - set in the centre of the tapestried ground, grass embroidered with daisies - houses his throne. In the azure sky surmounting this orgy of illuminated manuscript...is a symbolic golden sun which shifts about as York and Lancaster prosper or decline.³⁴

Much of the formality of the production's staging was imposed - even more so than by the steeply-inclined ramps in Hands's 1980 revival of the play - by the division of the stage floor garden into rectangular lawns whose

inter-connecting paths insisted that movement about the stage be in rigid straight lines with changes of direction effected by abrupt ninety degree turns. A programme note observed that Richard "played life as if it were chess...";³⁵ the set design seemed to reinforce the analogy.

Commentators were reminded of a richly illuminated medieval Book of Hours and many inevitably cited *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*. Designer William Dudley explained that he and Barry Kyle had tried to create a stage world reflecting Richard's "self-image of his domain...of England as a kind of jewel, a garden.... You have to see it as the end of a kind of Golden Age"³⁶

A number of commentators pointed out that this "fastidious and visually sumptuous version"³⁷ represented a considerable re-drafting of the customary RSC medieval house style. Nicholas Shrimpton - for whom the "sackcloth and steel" of Peter Hall and John Bury's *Wars of the Roses* had transformed the image of Shakespeare's Middle Ages for a generation - felt that "the wheel of taste has come full circle".³⁸

Dudley himself observed that the 'traditional' austerity of a "butch, heavily corroded and shaggy Middle Ages"³⁹ was at odds with the historical reality of an era which delighted in craftsmanship and beauty; the production programme spoke of Richard's court, unlike those of his immediate predecessors, being "dominated by romantic rather than military virtues" and noted his "passion for ceremonial and gorgeous display"⁴⁰ but Michael Coveney who considered

the style of the *Wars of the Roses* cycle a "breakthrough" which had "rendered superfluous" the treatment of the Shakespeare history plays as a "pretty pageant"⁴¹ clearly felt that Dudley's approach was a retrograde step.

Michael Billington concluded that the fact that "the excitement is visual rather than verbal"⁴² reflected a similar emphasis in modern culture while Jill Parkin lamented that the set's very ingenuity "robs the imagination of the audience, which is made lazy".⁴³ In essence, of course, Kyle's production was a throw-back to old style Shakespeare with scenic 'decoration' providing a suitably elaborate setting for the precious stone at its centre. On this occasion Jeremy Irons's star currency had been immensely increased by his performance as Charles Ryder in the acclaimed TV serialisation of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* and in view of Irons's star rating it was perhaps inevitable that the production should have been concerned less with the play's political dimension than with an exploration of the character of the king. Thus the production's design lacked the intellectual challenge of Hands's 1980 production and its pageantry was less concerned with stimulating the emblematic eye than with appeasing it. It says much, for example, that Barry Kyle felt it necessary to alter '...for God's substitute,/ His deputy anointed in His sight...' to '...If Richard,/ His deputy anointed in His sight...' [I.2.37-38].⁴⁴ Clearly the director could not sufficiently rely upon the audience's grasp of the central concept of divine right to equate 'God's substitute' with

King Richard. Equally significantly, perhaps, the production's own imperatives did not stretch to creating a world view which would go some way towards remedying the deficiency. A late twentieth century audience with an increasingly sophisticated awareness of the cult of personality would more readily recognise a man so seduced by his own self-image that he could take it for the reality.

In this production, therefore, the concept of divine right and the ceremonial forms through which it has been represented were expressed in terms of a debased personal vanity. Elsewhere - notably in representations of Richard's successor, Henry IV - ceremony was less a cosmic absolute made visible than a mask for "the inelegant realities of military power on the one hand and the mundane details of administrative efficiency on the other".⁴⁵ These were values with which a sceptical age could more readily identify than with the 'Invisible-Made-Visible'.⁴⁶

The production opened with a striking tableau: Jeremy Irons as Richard reclined on the ground down-stage caressing the ground. He was dressed regally in a "cobalt blue robe fretted with stars"⁴⁷ worn over a "golden robe and [with] a light gold crown",⁴⁸ as formally, in fact, as the Richards in the two previous revivals at Stratford. But here the ceremonial trappings of the public man already seemed at odds with his languorous posture. Although the prompt copy suggests that he was listening to the song of a solo female voice, in some performances he seemed to be "lifting his face to the sun"⁴⁹ in ineffable

self-veneration, in others pensive and abstracted or "contemplating his ornate throne".⁵⁰

The assumption of his public, ceremonial role was undertaken reluctantly, even wearily, as he 'GETS UP SLOWLY' and ascended the elevated throne, accepting a slender, delicately engraved sceptre from an attendant. The moment of actually taking his seat on the throne - the beginning of the 'performance' - gained added import from a marked change in mood as 'DRUMS START' and the court entered swiftly through the two up-stage doors to take up positions formally and symmetrically about the king in preparation for the arrival of the two complainants who entered together to take up positions downstage.⁵¹ They both kneeled before the king when greeting him and again in response to Richard's line 'We were not born to sue but to command' [I.1.196] but the production had already succeeded in communicating a sense of rhetoric and hyperbole constructing a ritual but transparent gloss over "unspoken but thoroughly understood accusations".⁵²

As preparations were made for the lists Richard's throne became the centrepiece of an otherwise functional and unadorned timber grandstand which sat oddly among the "Strawberry Hill Gothick"⁵³ of the permanent set.

Richard entered in his full regalia, wearing a high Gothic crown and, on top of his golden robe, a magnificent cloak, the left side of which was a gold-embossed red, the right side being blue. From under the cloak the wide trailing sleeves of the golden robe emerged, almost reaching the ground. The crown was decorated with red stones; the sceptre, too, was richly decorated.⁵⁴

Now on-stage trumpets announced the commencement of the formalities. However, as in the opening scene, the formality of the court's proceedings could not conceal underlying passions and resentment. Here, too, the ceremonial was repeatedly undermined and rendered redundant. In the first instance, the director himself chose to curtail the ritual formality of the event by cutting some thirty lines from the first 122 lines of the scene comprising the lists episode, including both Heralds' speeches.⁵⁵ Richard, too, presided with an urbane self-awareness, to comic effect, which ran counter to the high seriousness of the ritual language and formalised setting.

Richard heard Bolingbroke's speech with conspicuous boredom and having instructed the Lord Marshall to begin returned to his throne. Trumpets and drums accompanied the combatants' arming and then provided a background as they 'BEGIN TO SKIRT EACH OTHER PREPARING TO FIGHT' armed with six foot long poleaxes.⁵⁶

When Richard threw down his warder it was a petulant and wilful gesture apparently arising from Bolingbroke's earlier initiative in requesting to 'Kiss my sovereign's hand' [I.3.46] in which he had not only "dared to steal the limelight"⁵⁷ but had served for the first time in the play to bring the king down from his lofty throne to 'fly an ordinary pitch'. As Richard and the Queen descended trumpets and drums again played but the assertive instrumental tone was repeatedly at odds with the "lingering spiritual lethargy"⁵⁸ which characterised Jeremy Irons's

performance. The administering of the oath confirmed this as a conscious production imperative since, with Bolingbroke and Mowbray kneeling on either side, each with a hand on the sword, Richard merely 'PUTS HAND ON HANDLE' in the token gesture of a man whose assumption of supremacy has long rendered obsolete the necessity to assert it.⁵⁹

Elsewhere, too, emblems of majesty appeared purely decorative and potent symbols were reduced to fashion accessories to set off golden robes and rich embroidered fabrics as in Act I, Scene 4 where the crown was merely a thin band of gold and Richard's personal emblem, a white hart, was worn like a trinket on a chain round his neck; when in the opening scene of Act II Richard's golden robe and pale green cloak were enhanced by an embroidered band "from which small golden suns were hanging"⁶⁰ the emblematic sun above the stage had already started its slow but inexorable descent.

Richard's return from Ireland gave an equally unconvincing image of the King as warrior-protector of his people: rehearsal notes show that it was decided that 'THE ROYAL ROBE IS CUT FROM THIS SCENE'⁶¹ in favour of a plain oilskin cloak. Nevertheless, although wet and weary from the journey, and to the sound of the "thunderous noise of the sea"⁶² Richard entered wearing an ostentatious golden mail hood topped with a crown and when he removed the oilskin to reveal an unserviceable white robe his enterprise appeared as the whim of a dilettante. For this scene there was, no doubt, method in having 'CROWN, ORB & SCEPTRE' WRAPPED IN

CLOTH' for the journey: certainly it was a detail which effectively robbed these symbols of the dignity on which their potency depends and, being 'WRAPPED IN CLOTH', they were rendered invisible to the audience and therefore, like the king himself, essentially irrelevant as symbols.⁶³

Most commentators paid tribute to the exquisite beauty of the "delicately attractive set".⁶⁴ Some complained that being "scaled down to human height"⁶⁵ produced "a toytown-like setting":⁶⁶ others felt this "spindly, toy-like set" underlined "the fragility of the court"⁶⁷ or that it permitted "the physical dominance of the actors over the set [which] mirrors the primacy of political realities over courtly ceremony" and so demonstrates the the concept of divine right to be "empty rhetoric unless majesty is backed by power of arms".⁶⁸

Physically displaying this power of arms in this permanent setting proved to be a problem, however: "A formal garden is hardly the best setting for the battle scenes".⁶⁹ An attempt was made to overcome such generic difficulties with "plenty of pageantry, and trumpeting too";⁷⁰ one critic spoke of a "banner-waving production"⁷¹ and, indeed, the props setting list identifies individual standards for Bolingbroke, the Welsh, Bagot, Exton, Percy, Richard, Surrey, Ross and Willoughby with seven standards being employed in the Flint Castle scene for 'ALL...EXCEPT BOL[INGBROKE], NORTH[UMBERLAND], YORK'.⁷² Difficulties sometimes arose, however, when standards had to be fully lowered and raised to negotiate the six low doors: "banners

did get tangled up".⁷³

Bolingbroke's military scenes were invariably accompanied by powerful on-stage drumming which contrasted markedly with the haunting strains sung by the dispirited Welsh. Stage armies processed either to 'MAKE A CIRCLE ROUND LIFT' [II.4] or 'ALL FOLLOW ROUTE ROUND LIFT' [III.3] as if to point Richard's sad decline as the ornate, delicately traceried throne and surrounding crown were symbolically encompassed.⁷⁴

Richard's entry in the Flint Castle scene [III.3] was announced by an on-stage trumpet at up-stage centre. Dressed ceremonially in a grey cloak with a rich red and blue lining, the golden robe bearing the embroidered sun motif and the high gothic crown, he and Aumerle moved on to the throne assembly which was then raised to reveal Scroop, Carlisle and Salisbury emblematically presented as effigies of the lords spiritual and temporal in the 'cloistered' area beneath.

At the Barbican Bolingbroke was the first to kneel⁷⁵ though the prompt copy indicates a different emphasis: Richard's demanding of Northumberland 'the fearful bending of thy knee' effectively disrupted the confident and unified formalism of Bolingbroke's supporters distributed evenly and symmetrically around the perimeter of the stage. Bagot, Ross Willoughby, Exton and Surrey knelt at '...awful duty of our presence'; Harry Percy, York, 'W.C.', 'man' and Northumberland after he 'GLANCES AT BOL[INGBROKE]'. Through all this Bolingbroke defiantly 'REMAINS STANDING'.⁷⁶

Richard's 'Down, down I come...' [III.3.178-83] was the signal for the throne assembly to descend to stage level, a woman's voice singing to create "an unreal and eerie atmosphere",⁷⁷ at which point Richard fell to the ground and what remained of the original formal blocking disintegrated as 'LINES BREAK UP AS ALL MOVE INTO CROWN TO WATCH'. When 'order' was restored it was in response to Bolingbroke's kneeling at '...show fair duty to his majesty' when 'ALL KNEEL'.⁷⁸ Briefly Richard seemed to regain the initiative and it was Bolingbroke who was "unsure and undecided"⁷⁹ but when Richard had stood he had been forced to steady himself with the sceptre, using it, indeed, as 'a palmer's walking staff', a prelude to submission.

In the deposition scene [IV.1] when York entered he was attended by Exton carrying the regalia on a cushion to suggest that Richard's intention was to surrender his authority by proxy without attending in person. Bolingbroke was generally acclaimed 'King Henry, Fourth of that name', as is usual, but as he began to ascend the steps to the throne Carlisle 'BREAKS FROM POSITION' holding the cross aloft as if to conjure divine intervention. Composedly Bolingbroke 'STANDS & LISTENS'. While Carlisle was fetching Richard Exton moved from stage right to down-stage of the throne steps and kneeled facing up-stage with the cushion and regalia following a whispered instruction from Bolingbroke who now took up a position stage left of the steps.⁸⁰

When Richard had no reply to his cry of 'God save

the king!' he sat on the throne steps. Earlier in the scene when Exton had presented the regalia to Bolingbroke as visible embodiments of kingly majesty they had resumed something of their symbolic significance. During the deposition itself, however, their dignity was diminished to the level of pieces in an elaborate but childish power game. At 'Here, cousin...' Richard 'PICKS UP CROWN FROM CUSHION AND HOLDS OUT TOWARDS BOL[INGBROKE]'. After an uncertain pause Bolingbroke moved to stage left of Richard and 'PUTS HAND ON CROWN', copying Richard's gesture with the sword of state when he and Mowbray had taken the oath.⁸¹

At 'seize the crown' Bolingbroke, discomfited, withdrew his hand. He replaced it when Richard again urged, 'Here, cousin...', only to drop it a second time at 'I thought you had been willing to resign'. When Richard again held out the crown to Bolingbroke at '...for I resign to thee' Bolingbroke, losing patience, 'PULLS IT OUT OF R[ICHARD]'S HAND AND REPLACES IT ON CUSHION' and then mounted the steps, sitting as Richard completed the line. 'Now mark me how I will undo myself'.⁸²

The 'undoing' was performed 'STANDING FACING FRONT' and in a manner strangely detached from the figure of Bolingbroke seated uncomfortably and unregally behind him. According to the prompt copy Richard 'PICKS UP & REPLACES' first the crown, then the sceptre and finally the orb⁸³ though by the time the production had reached the Barbican he merely touched the symbols. At 'Good king, great king...' Richard finally 'TURNS U[P] S[TAGE] TO FACE

BOL[INGBROKE] & BOWS'.⁸⁴ In this production it was consistent that a king whose own sense of personal identity was inseparable from his contemplation of the perceived image of majesty should, at the moment of his abdication, embrace ritual suicide, shattering the mirror, the symbol of his self-delusion, with his forehead.⁸⁵ Bolingbroke's triumph appeared a shallow thing as his first command as enthroned king - that Richard be conveyed to the Tower - was greeted with ironic applause from Richard and a patronising pat on the foot.

The wry humour that characterised the production featured again as the swelling organ music that greeted the announcement of Bolingbroke's forthcoming coronation provided the context for the now treasonable words of the Abbot of Westminster, the Bishop of Carlisle and Aumerle. As the lights dimmed to near darkness they met down-stage centre - monks having entered with candles and placed them down-stage of the stage right and stage left pathways - where they 'CROSS THEMSELVES & KNEEL'. The paradox of senior clerics using spiritual devotion to mask political plotting was compounded by the stage reality that the episode was a transparent device to cover the scene change behind as 'CROWN DESCENDS'.⁸⁶

Michael Kitchen's sardonic Bolingbroke was not universally admired but the "weight of royal robes and role"⁸⁷ clearly sat uncomfortably on him and as a career politician he had as little time as talent for the public relations aspect of ceremonial. Thatcher's Britain,

combining soft-focus nostalgia and ruthless un sentimentality, recognised Bolingbroke as one of its own. No one actually mentioned the Iron Lady by name, though Nicholas Shrimpton labelled the production "tendentiously topical"⁸⁸ and Giles Gordon recognised it as "one for our times".⁸⁹ Unquestionably the ethos of the eighties was everywhere: Bolingbroke was a "power brat",⁹⁰ "getting on with his career".⁹¹ "like a brewery chairman intent on a takeover".⁹² a "mercantile executive".⁹³ When the production moved to the Barbican the London press - writing for 'Essex man' - paid a wry tribute to "a cautious stockbroker",⁹⁴ "an out-and-out yuppie"⁹⁵ and perceived England as "a Book of Hours giving way to mercantilism, with hours of book-keeping".⁹⁶

It was a view which the production clearly encouraged. The first of the Windsor Castle scenes [V.3] was designated 'KING AT WORK' in the prompt copy with the throne relegated to obscurity up-stage centre. The 'UNKINGLY CHAIR' that replaced it on the central throne assembly was a plain stool while the sword that rested against it was serviceable rather than ceremonial.⁹⁷

The Aumerle episode with multiple instances of kneeling was predictably milked for comedy. At one point the three petitioners "FOLLOW [BOLINGBROKE] ON THEIR KNEES' in a line moving down-stage. Here, as with the business with the regalia in the deposition scene and the devotional treason that concluded it Kyle both created and exploited an expectational discrepancy which depended on the audience's

received notions of ceremonial solemnity being deliberately and ludicrously frustrated. At the end of this scene, however, he went further: When at 'Good aunt, stand up' and 'BOL[INGBROKE] DROPS TO HIS KNEES' he had the lords of the court re-enter to register astonishment at finding the king in such an uncharacteristic position. The audience - having witnessed the circumstances that had led up to it - had a privileged knowledge denied to the newly-arrived lords whose surprise at the resulting loss of decorum was therefore doubly satisfying.⁹⁸

At Pomfret the image of Richard as archetypal suffering Christ emblem was forcibly exploited. To solemn music the 'CROWN STRUCTURE' rose again, though this time its base formed a cage. The lighting contrived to project huge shadows of the prison's bars onto the walls, transforming decorated medievalism into gothic expressionism. Images of Richard as sacrificial lamb contrasted with echoes of faded majesterial splendour as the vacant throne loomed down from on high and the groom was dressed in livery.⁹⁹ By this time Richard's white robe was stained and wet. Even so, the single spot which first illuminated him bestowed a divine aureole upon him which gradually expanded to full length to reveal further emblematic ironies as he was seen to be tethered to the crown structure by a chain of 'FINE BUT STRONG GOLD' attached to a 'CROWN COLLAR' around his neck.¹⁰⁰ The sincerity of the groom's continued respect for his 'royal master' pointed these ironies even more poignantly and contrasted forcibly with the extreme violence

of Richard's death struggles as - to the background of the song of a sweet female voice - medieval formality succumbed to political ambition. At its conclusion the lighting which, in retrospect, had bathed even the prison in the warm glow of a golden age was transformed to the uncompromising harsh white glare of *realpolitik*.

The final scene provided generously for those commentators who found Kyle's "stylised direction"¹⁰¹ "obvious",¹⁰² "self-conscious"¹⁰³ or "mannered and...overstated"¹⁰⁴ As the scene opened Bolingbroke was seen to be wearing "a handsome and kingly costume with an embroidered cloak"¹⁰⁵ which clearly sat uneasily on him as he continually adjusted it.

The potential for a processional entry of Richard's coffin was passed over. Almost inevitably the crown structure rose again "with the air of a parcel sent up in a lift",¹⁰⁶ this time trapping Bolingbroke on top and thereby intensifying the symbolic discomfiture of the usurper, to reveal Richard's coffin in the space beneath. Happily the original macabre intention that 'JEREMY WILL BE LYING IN THE COFFIN'¹⁰⁷ was abandoned and the coffin was closed. As the production moved to its conclusion it resolved itself into an emblematic and somewhat laboured tableau in which the grave-like cage enclosing the coffin sprouted red and white roses in an image which suggested both future dynastic conflict and a happy land beyond. As such it accorded with a strain of sentimentality in the production which abetted Jeremy Irons in depicting Richard

in some respects like "a Sunday school painting of Jesus".¹⁰⁸ The emblematic quality which had fittingly characterised the early scenes now seemed out of step with the new political mood.

The uncertainty as to whether the flowers represented grim portents or spiritual triumph - or both - characterised the "air of conceptual confusion"¹⁰⁹ which irritated some commentators and may be contrasted with the more consistently assertive and confident symbolism of John Barton's production with which Kyle's final images of death shared some common ground. One lamented that the main theatre of the RSC "too often substitutes ostentatious pictorial effect for genuine interpretation".¹¹⁰ Evidently Kyle had sought to develop emblematically the idea of England imaged by Gaunt as 'this blessed plot'. The production opened in a formal garden and concluded with Richard's coffin overlooked by monks bearing scythes, traditional emblems of death and harvest, "the destructive and creative powers of the Great Mother".¹¹¹ In between, the idea became curiously dissipated: Kyle had intended, for example, that Richard should be murdered 'USING GARDEN TOOLS'¹¹² in order to sustain the theme but Hakola speaks of his being struck from behind with a sword at the Barbican¹¹³ while at Stratford he had been "run through by a soldier's spear".¹¹⁴

The director had taken pains deliberately to undermine the iconography of the Age of Chivalry in terms of a self-indulgent vanity, surrendering its inherent potency

in order to project Richard's self-image in similar terms; it was hardly surprising, therefore, that his own emblematic pretensions should not have been taken entirely seriously, dismissed by one commentator as a "Twopence Coloured pageant".¹¹⁵

The charge of conceptual confusion which had been laid against Barry Kyle's production of *Richard II* was not one generally levelled at Ron Daniels's revival of the play in 1990. On the contrary, the director was accused of "interference",¹¹⁶ of too relentlessly pursuing a vision of the play apparently inspired by "historical research revealing that Richard conducted a tyrannical reign of terror".¹¹⁷ For many the effect was of "a concept...being imposed from without rather than a meaning mined from within".¹¹⁸

Recent events in Eastern Europe provided an all too tempting contemporary 'relevance' with programme references to the Ceaucescus and Marcoses as well as to Hitler and Mussolini asserting a context of overthrown, exiled or assassinated dictators. The insistent projection of Richard as archetypal tyrant resulted in some blurring of an issue central to Shakespeare's play: "For his subjects...this is not just any old despot, but the Lord's anointed"¹¹⁹ and thus begged the question "at what point is it legitimate to rebel against a bad but divinely sanctioned ruler?".¹²⁰

Moreover, the design implications of the production's historical cross-referencing undermined - or

re-located, at least - much of the potential for pageantry which the play contains. In Barry Kyle's production of the play four years earlier the elaborate setting had both implied and imposed hierarchical, intricately patterned modes of external behaviour. Now Antony McDonald's design complemented the meta-theatrical rationale of Richard's ego-centricity, framing the action of the play within "a white plastic false proscenium arch of the kind popular with totalitarian regimes".¹²¹ Beneath it was "a gloomy world...black the predominant color of its stage and costumes" where courtiers assembled "whispering and furtive as they gathered like so many black insects in the dark space".¹²² The red throne carried on unceremonially by a single super emerging from a dark tunnel centre-stage brought a splash of colour but it already appeared anachronistic in such a context and the manner of its setting drew attention to it as a piece of portable stage furniture.

For all the sumptuousness of Dudley's gothic setting, Jeremy Irons's Richard had been an urbane, detached observer of an apparently eternal absolute. In Daniels's production it was we, the audience, who remained detached, conscious observers of the pageantry of office which served both as regressive escape into childhood certainties and as cynical and manipulative political tool. Alex Jennings as Richard, unlike Irons, was totally absorbed in his role: ceremony for him was not a symbol of a divinely ordained universal order or even an assertion of social mores but a

means of gratifying the delusions of grandeur of a man in love with the trappings of the theatre and theatricality of power; a monarch "eclipsed by a notion of office that does not really exist".¹²³

This was an impression confirmed as Richard entered in a "fairy-tale king's costume"¹²⁴ of red and blue velvet and white ermine "sporting the kind of crown a Holy Roman Emperor might have worn"¹²⁵ and by "the seraphic smile which breaks over his face as he sinks voluptuously into his throne" denoting "a king utterly entranced with the role".¹²⁶ In this he differed from Jeremy Irons's Richard who was bored with the role-playing but continued to take its rewards for granted.

The production's programme observed that Richard had succeeded to the throne at the age of ten and had been accustomed as a child to "presiding on a dais while even the most exalted of his subjects bent the knee to him three times".¹²⁷ In the production itself there was a child-like naivety about such luxuriating self-indulgence in the trappings of kingship; the symbols of ceremony clearly provided a temporary reassuring escape or retreat from the brutalities of political reality.

During the deposition scene, for example, the crown, sceptre and orb were carried inside a large painted wooden chest that resembled a child's toy box and Richard sat on the floor "fondling them, for all the world like a boy playing with his toys".¹²⁸ Having held out the crown to Bolingbroke he snatched it back with childish petulance; as

he 'undid' himself he assumed the separate elements of the regalia like a child engaged in a dressing-up game and by the time the speech was concluded - with the crown, sceptre and orb lying on the floor like so many discarded playthings - the lid of the toy chest had been closed with grim finality.

At other times the peripheral trappings of ceremony were subordinated to what were evidently more tangible expressions of authority. The court was peopled not with decorative, liveried attendants but with bodyguards with crossbows who "scour the skies waiting to pick off potential assassins" in what was clearly a police state.¹²⁹

Repeated kneeling and rising during the opening scene might signify the rightful homage due to God's deputy but when Mowbray's line 'Myself I throw, dread sovereign, at thy foot' [I.1.165] was illustrated by his literally prostrating himself before Richard, the action suggested a degree of self-abasement demanded to flatter a tyrant.

Anton Lesser's 'Bullingbrook' clearly did not covet the crown; on the contrary, even when Richard offered it to him at 'Here, cousin, seize the crown' "he backed off, clearly frightened of it"¹³⁰ and yet he found himself propelled inexorably towards the acceptance of an alien role as a figurehead, a conspicuous front-man for the conspiratorial men in black suits. Bullingbrook received the same sycophantic courtly knees that had humoured Richard but whereas in the opening scene of the play Mowbray had flattered Richard's self-image by prostrating himself before

him, now, having incurred the king's displeasure, Exton 'PROSTRATES HIMSELF AT BULL[INGBROOK]'S FEET' in abject terror for his life.¹³¹ Bullingbrook's response - violently half-lifting, half-dragging Exton upright - seemed of a piece with the bleak concentration camp ethos of Pomfret and left a starker and more enduring impression of the shape of things to come than the cosmetic ritual respect paid to the confined Richard by kneeling lords and candle-bearing mourners.

It has been suggested that one of the most characteristic features of postmodern pictorial production has been the reassertion of the proscenium, exploiting the distancing effect of the picture frame and thus effecting "a glorious commodification of the image".¹³² While Daniels's setting undoubtedly sought to draw the eye of the audience to the false proscenium arch which framed much of the action, its purpose was less to distance the audience from the stage spectacle than, emblematically, to distance Richard, through the spectacle that comprises the theatre of kingship, from the reality which spectacle masks.

Far from being distanced from the action, in fact, ultimately the audience was not permitted the luxury of detachment. When Bullingbrook was proclaimed 'Henry, fourth of that name' the dust sheet which had covered the throne was pulled off by the menacing and manipulative figure of Northumberland. The image was striking in suggesting not only that post-Ricardian ceremony was a redundant anachromism - an occasional ornamental dressing to be stored

away at the back of the attic after use and cynically revived by each succeeding generation to disguise ruthless politicking - but also as a mildly nostalgic curiosity to provide a cosmetic gloss for public consumption. It was we, the audience, who were 'the public' in this case; it was our ranks that successive cohorts of 'heavies' had scoured first with crossbows, then with rifles for potential assassins and it was we who now sat in passive complicity witnessing the installation of the next incumbent with whose role came the implicit inevitability of a continuing cycle of tyranny.

Although there was no proscenium in Deborah Warner's production of *Richard II* at the National Theatre's Cottesloe Studio theatre in 1995, the presentation of Richard in terms of role-play was important to both productions. At the same time, Hildegard Bechtler's setting using a rectangular traverse stage-configuration and with the audience on three sides of the rectangle was one aspect of a more determined attempt to distance the audience from the action than had been attempted by Ron Daniels. The choice of a woman, Fiona Shaw, in the title part of the later production no less than its setting has been seen as offering a "challenge to conventional interpretation"¹³³ and both sought to draw attention to the presentation of kingship in terms of "an elaborate theatrical charade"¹³⁴ with Shaw's gender being of importance only as drawing attention to the element of role-play implicit in the office: "'I'm not playing a man. I'm playing a king'", Shaw had said in a pre-production interview.¹³⁵ Thus, if Alex

Jennings's Richard had been intoxicated by the properties of kingship. and by its theatrical *mise-en-scene*, Fiona Shaw's impersonation explored the idea of king as performer. In this context the audience, seated in "high-sided wooden stalls...down each of the long sides of the courtyard-style auditorium" were essentially "sharing the ritual space"¹³⁶ with the participants. Moreover, since no one spectator could encompass the whole scene at any one moment - together with the fact that spectators always had other spectators within their line of vision - the audience was invited to "watch the 'show' with an additional critical distance interspersed between the signifier and the signified".¹³⁷

Shewring has suggested that "no attempt is made to evoke medieval spectacle, or to rely, as most productions do, on a focus on the throne of state and the trappings of monarchy...",¹³⁸ a point also made by Gerald Berkowitz who claims that although Bechtler's design "seemed to take its cue from the tournament setting" there was a "general lack of spectacle".¹³⁹ The experience of ceremonial in such a setting was necessarily fragmented and although it is true to say that the audience was offered "no one unified visual image...to underwrite the script's dependence on a shared understanding of rule by Divine Right"¹⁴⁰ Warner and Shaw had tried in a "'post-democratic world'"¹⁴¹ to recover something of that understanding in rehearsal. "'The word 'king' holds in it something different to ordinary men'" Shaw had said in interview¹⁴² and had confessed to trying to work out "'bowing distances' - where to stand when receiving

bows as a royal, and the etiquette involved....";¹⁴³ "It's all about the rituals of elevation and withdrawal"¹⁴⁴ and, indeed, the prompt copy¹⁴⁵ shows ten separate bowing or kneeling cues during the opening scene of the play.

In fact, a good deal both of the spectacle and the trappings of monarchy survived into production. At one end of the traverse and stage right of a pair of doors which gave access to the performance area numerous candles burned on a multi-layered pedestal.¹⁴⁶ⁿ These provided a quasi-religious background against which to display a gold coronation robe hanging on a T-shaped support which, when the robe was removed, carried strong suggestions of the Christian symbol of the cross and this remained in view throughout the performance as an oblique reminder of the divine origins of Richard's office. Of course, both the displaying of the robe and Richard's being subsequently dressed in it drew attention to it as costume and so reinforced the presentation of the idea of kingship as performance.

Continual plain song - which also punctuated many changes of scene - preceded the performance¹⁴⁷ⁿ which began with the reciting off-stage of the *Kyrie Eleison* followed by an interpolated symbolic coronation which took place dimly behind a gauze which stretched across the entire width of the performance area and so preserved something of the mystery of the ritual. Richard entered behind the gauze accompanied by two attendants. One, bearing the crown on a cushion, knelt while the other dressed the king in the

coronation robe, Richard having first held out his arms, making the shape of the cross, in order to receive it. The attendants then placed the crown on Richard's head and Richard solemnly crossed himself before all three retired. It was a ceremony calculated to give substance to the idea of 'king' that the rehearsal process had sought to explore: "'We're doing stringent work on the nature of glorifying someone who's God's anointed'".¹⁴⁸

When Richard entered again he did so formally, the double doors being opened by two attendants who then stood either side of the doors while Richard, crowned, but now without the robe, was preceded by another attendant bearing the orb and sceptre retreating before the king. Richard was dressed in white, perhaps suggested by his emblem, the white hart.¹⁴⁹ⁿ

Richard's royal 'robes' throughout the production were far from conventionally lavish; one commentator, in fact, called them "preposterous", particularly one worn during the final scenes in which he was "swathed in bandages, like an Egyptian mummy".¹⁵⁰ Shewring, however, felt that they reinforced the sense of 'show', suggesting a child dressing up in an assortment of oddments "to piece together a brave show in a context in which the ordinary clothes of others are drab and unremarkable";¹⁵¹ certainly the contrast with the conventional coronation robes of the opening mime was marked. The throne, too - carried on by one of Richard's 'caterpillars' acting as an eminently conspicuous stage hand - was very much a stage property: it

boasted a conventional gold-embroidered cushion and gold painted legs but it was essentially little more than a narrow-backed chair whose crude wooden structure was plainly visible.

Nevertheless, both throne and coronation robe frequently remained in view at times when the king himself was not on stage, lending a ubiquitous royal presence not easily ignored. Thus throughout the Ely House scene [II.1] the throne remained on-stage and actually supported Gaunt during his early speeches, giving added point to his 'royal throne of kings' speech [II.1.31-68].

Although Richard repeatedly removed his crown as soon as formal moments were completed he continued to carry it around under one arm as if gaining reassurance from holding it and he frequently called for the ceremonial symbols of his office to give added authority to his words. Thus, at 'Now by my sceptre's awe I make a vow...' [I.1.118] he motioned for the sceptre and took both sceptre and orb for the speech beginning 'Wrath-kindled gentlemen, be ruled by me...' [I.1.152-57]. He also took the sceptre to command the Lists: 'We were not born to sue but to command...' [I.1.196-205] was spoken whilst walking down the length of the acting area back towards the throne as if to a place of safety, but already having accepted that his command had been defied.

The customary pageantry of the lists was much reduced with none of the colour and banners usually associated with it, though the four barriers defining the

acting area were draped with white cloth. This dressing of the set was accompanied by an off-stage cacophany of noise - whoops, shouts and the raucous blast of brass horns - the very antithesis of the usual formality; Richard, nevertheless, entered formally, in yet another of the production's stylistic ambivalences. Crowned and dressed in the gold coronation robe he held the gold sword of state and carried a gold staff. Preceded by an attendant bearing the sceptre and orb he was carried in standing on a litter by two other attendants while Bushy and Aumerle supported his hands. When centre-stage the litter was lowered to the ground, Aumerle laid 'LEAVES AT HIS FEET'¹⁵² and Richard descended. Barriers were then slid into place across the stage to enclose the king and to separate the combatants. Richard appeared amused by the arrival of the knights-in-arms and by the preliminary formalities, which he conducted with some flippancy as if impatient of surrendering the ceremonial centre-stage to anyone else. Mowbray was duly blessed by Richard's making the sign of the cross on his forehead with holy water but when Bolingbroke was similarly blessed Richard concluded the little ceremony by playfully flicking water in his face.

From the beginning Richard had indicated his partiality for Bolingbroke with small intimate gestures of affection but with Bolingbroke's line 'My loving lord, I take my leave of you' [I.3.63] Richard removed his crown and kissed him fully on the lips, a gesture which the dying Gaunt would later inflict on Richard, himself.

The king and his attendants having retired to the side-aisle 'VOM[ITORIES]' to observe the remainder of the proceedings the combatants' lances were compared and the transverse barriers withdrawn. The two heralds' speeches, however, were spoken simultaneously out to the audience as they walked around the outer perimeter of the field. This had the effect of at once involving and distancing the theatre audience from the event: one felt deliberately alienated, excluded from participating in an event whose rules were imperfectly understood. Once Mowbray and Bolingbroke had withdrawn the cacophany of noise again built up expectation as the two heralds gave animated encouragement to their respective knights, by shouting and 'WAVING FLAGS' but as soon as Richard had thrown down his staff the transverse barriers were again slid into position.¹⁵³

The solemn emblems of both royal and religious ritual no less than those of the elaborate courtly etiquette of the tilting field were employed but they were frequently presented in terms of form rather than substance. For the cousins, brothers and uncles who populated Richard's court the splendours of court ceremony acted as a genteel façade to mask ruthless political manoeuvrings. For Richard, controversially portrayed as an emotionally immature boy-king in "yet another study of tortured neuroticism",¹⁵⁴ they were alternately toy-like playthings and, in moments of insecurity, objects of refuge for a man who "loves the sensation and the trappings of power, but is blithely

impatient of its responsibilities".¹⁵⁵

In the Ely House scene, for instance, Richard and his retinue arrived bearing, in anticipation of Gaunt's death, various symbols of ritual mourning which bore testimony, initially, to his gauche insensitivity and subsequently to his immaturity: Richard arrived wearing a black arm band and carrying a wreath which - seeing that Gaunt was not yet dead - he at first attempted to hide decently behind his back but, like a child who knows not the stop, he became increasingly disrespectful, placing it first around the neck of a monk kneeling to offer up prayers for Gaunt and finally, callously, around Gaunt's own neck.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, Queen Isabel's attempt to offer up prayers for Gaunt in latin were peremptorily cut short by Richard's 'so much for that' [II.1.155]. It was an instance of the insecure, clownish exhibitionism which one commentator saw as mirroring "the psychological confusions caused by the identity crisis of a King's dual nature: the anointed, mystique-ridden role having to be filled by an all-too-fallible human being".¹⁵⁷

At Flint Castle Richard followed by Aumerle, Carlisle and Scroop entered in single file enforced by the structure of a narrow walkway suspended fully twenty feet above the ground and against the end of the traverse stage opposite the spectators' balcony. Richard entered carrying rather than wearing the crown and the coronation robe as if already inclined to surrender them both. At 'I'll give my jewels for a set of beads' [III.3.147] he polished the crown

affectionately with his sleeve and at 'Down, down I come like glistering Phaeton' [1.178] he threaded the robe through the circular rim of the crown, held the robe at arm's length over the side of the balcony and allowed the crown to slide part-way down the length of the suspended robe before allowing both to drop into the 'base court' below. It was a flamboyant gesture, a conscious piece of theatre - which "exploits the precariousness of Richard's physical position...drawing all eyes to their common descent".¹⁵⁸

Throughout the abdication episode Richard's behaviour was again childishly idiosyncratic but was now marked by a devastating irony. When he entered he carried the crown in a basket. At first he sat on one of the side benches while Bolingbroke stood centre stage throughout the episode. At '...seize the crown' [IV.1.181] Richard initiated a child's patting game to see whether he or Bolingbroke could grab the crown first and at 'Now mark me how I will undo myself' [1.202] he sat on the throne and mimed an unsuccessful attempt to remove an invisible crown from his head. At '"God save King Henry." unkinged Richard says...' [1.219] he picked up the crown from the ground and physically placed it on Bolingbroke's head before extravagantly prostrating himself with his arms outstretched to make the sign of the cross and finally standing back to back with Bolingbroke with his arms again outstretched at '...you Pilates/Have here delivered me to my sour cross' [1.239-40].

Throughout the episode Bolingbroke had remained virtually unmoved by Richard's sarcasm though at his '...so I were from your sights' [1.314] he was genuinely angered and made as if to throw the crown at Richard who cowered on the throne. When Bolingbroke exited at the end of the episode the crown was placed on the seat of the throne, though Bolingbroke did not himself sit on the throne throughout the scene, nor did he during the remainder of the play. Richard had needed to cling to such symbols to supply an authority which his own person could not command whereas Bolingbroke was manifestly all in all sufficient.

Bolingbroke's violent gesture was a significant one, however: whereas for Richard the trappings of office had signified "not so much he who rules the country, but he who plays the king"¹⁵⁹ for Bolingbroke they would be harnessed to legitimise a ruthless political authority. It was a fitting precursor to Richard's violent murder.

At the beginning of the final scene Bolingbroke did, indeed, assume the symbols of office in another interpolated episode which paralleled Richard's 'coronation' at the beginning of the play. At the opposite end of the traverse from the 'throne' end was placed a broad pedestal which supported a cushion on which had been placed the crown, sceptre, gloves and a crucifix on a chain. The crucifix was placed around Bolingbroke's neck and he was helped into the gloves but he took the crown and sceptre himself, perhaps to point an acknowledged distinction between spiritual and secular authority. Indeed, just as it

Bolingbroke was dressed regally in robe, rosary, gloves, sceptre and, finally, crown but as the new king stood surrounded by his court its spurious and fragile dignity was broken by the arrival of Richard's body, not borne in solemn procession but dragged in unceremoniously by Exton in a plain, deal coffin. Any remaining illusions were removed as the coffin lid was roughly prised off to reveal Richard's corpse. Genuinely dismayed, Bolingbroke exited in despair having removed the crown and holding both it and the sceptre limply at arm's length, their universal iconic power eclipsed by personal guilt.

The productions examined in this chapter frequently approached the histories from a meta-theatrical perspective which celebrated theatre "not as an inferior copy of reality but as a valid metaphor for the human condition".¹⁶⁴ This perspective has offered a view of "man as a role-player and of social life as theatrical interaction".¹⁶⁵ As such, whilst acknowledging the centrality of the notion of 'God's annointed' to the plays it has increasingly focused upon the fallible human manifestation of the King's 'Two Bodies' and exposed the flawed reality of his identification with his universal role as 'Body Politic'. John Barton's *Richard II* had revealed the theatrical no less than the political ambivalence of the Player-King but recent productions have focused less upon the ritual of majesty than upon the spectacle of state and have sought to engage "the bicameral roles of actors and audiences, performers and spectators".¹⁶⁶

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It been remarked that occasions of state and civic pageantry are "above all...rituals bringing ruler and subject into mystic union",¹⁶⁷ the spectators, in effect, 'consecrating' the spectacle.¹⁶⁸ In these productions the dynamic between performer and spectator was repeatedly asserted - whether between actor and actor or actor and audience - so that audiences were continually reminded of their own complicit role as 'spectator'/'public'/'subject'. The effect was not only to present the relationship between pomp and power in terms of performance and its iconic symbols as stage properties but also to delineate the relationship between monarch and subject as a manifestation of reception theory.

NOTES

¹⁰ Nyberg, p. 121. See "'Director's theatre" and "actor's theatre"', Nyberg, pp. 114-22.

² Peter Ansorge in interview with Trevor Nunn, 'Director in Interview', *Plays and Players*, Vol. 17, No. 12 (September, 1970), 16-17 (p. 16).

³ Sheridan Morley, *Punch*; undated review in *London Theatre Record*, June 3-16, 1982, p. 311.

⁴ See Hodgdon, *Henry IV, Part Two*, pp. 92-4.

⁵ Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 293.

⁶ Michael Coveney, 'RSC opens at new home', *Financial Times*, 10 June, 1982.

⁷ John Elsom, 'Henry IV Part I + II', *Plays and Players*, No. 347 (August, 1982), p. 26.

⁸ Michael Billington, 'There's a hole in Hal's bucko', *Guardian*, 11 June, 1982.

⁹ Hodgdon, *Henry IV Part Two*, p. 102.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹¹ John Barber, 'Firebrand Dalton is Shakespeare star', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 June, 1982.

¹² Michael Coveney, *Financial Times*, 10 June, 1982.

- ¹³ Roger Warren, 'Shakespeare in Stratford And London, 1982', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34 (1983), 79-88 (p. 81).
- ¹⁴ Wharton, p. 50.
- ¹⁵ Suzie Mackenzie, 'Theatre: West End', *Time Out*, 18 June, 1982.
- ¹⁶ Jim Hiley, *City Limits*, undated review in *London Theatre Record*, June 3-16, 1982, p. 312.
- ¹⁷ Ibid..
- ¹⁸ 'How Gerard created Hal', Trevor Nunn in interview with Francesca Simon, *Guardian*, 4 June, 1982.
- ¹⁹ *City Limits*, undated review in *London Theatre Record*, June 3-16, 1982, p. 312.
- ²⁰ Hodgdon, *Henry IV, Part Two*, p. 102.
- ²¹ Hodgdon, *Henry IV, Part Two*, p. 103.
- ²² Hodgdon, *Henry IV, Part Two*, p. 116.
- ²³ Ibid., p. 117.
- ²⁴ Hodgdon, *Henry IV, Part Two*, p. 106.
- ²⁵ Hodgdon, *Henry IV, Part Two*, pp. 114-15.
- ²⁶ Hodgdon, *Henry IV, Part Two*, p. 116.
- ²⁷ Ibid..
- ²⁸ Hodgdon, *Henry IV, Part Two*, p. 117.
- ²⁹ Jill Parkin, 'Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford: "Richard II"', *Yorkshire Post*, 12 September, 1986.
- ³⁰ Charles Osborne, 'A cipher for a king', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 May, 1987.
- ³¹ Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 293.
- ³² See Nicholas Shrimpton, *Shakespeare Survey*, 38 (1985), 201-13 (p. 207).
- ³³ Jeremy Brien, 'Plight of a king without hope...', *Bristol Evening Post*, 11 September, 1986.
- ³⁴ Giles Gordon, 'Stratford Illuminations', *Punch* 24 September, 1986.
- ³⁵ Gervase Mathew, *The Court of Richard II* (London: Murray, 1986); quoted production programme (p. 13).
- ³⁶ Kathy Elgin, 'England, Home and Beauty', *RSC News*, Spring 1987 (p. 31).
- ³⁷ Susan S. Powell, *Shakespeare in Performance*, ed. by Keith Parsons & Pamela Mason, (London: Salamander, 1995), pp. 176-81 (p.177).
- ³⁸ Nicholas Shrimpton, 'Shakespeare Performances in London, Manchester and Stratford-upon-Avon, 1985-6', *Shakespeare Survey*, 40 (1987), p. 180.

- ³⁹ Elgin, [p.3].
- ⁴⁰ Production Programme.
- ⁴¹ Michael Coveney, 'Richard III/RSC, Stratford', *Financial Times*, 12 September 1986.
- ⁴² Michael Billington, 'King of tradition', *Guardian*, 12 September, 1986.
- ⁴³ Jill Parkin, 'Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford: "Richard II"', *Yorkshire Post*, 12 September, 1986.
- ⁴⁴ Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* [1986].
- ⁴⁵ Stephen Orgel, 'Making Greatness Familiar' in *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theater*, ed. by Bergeron, pp. 19-25 (p. 19).
- ⁴⁶ Brook, *The Empty Space*, p. 47.
- ⁴⁷ Michael Ratcliffe, 'Adela and her sisters', *Observer*, 14 September, 1986.
- ⁴⁸ Hakola, p. 115.
- ⁴⁹ Hakola, p. 115.
- ⁵⁰ Jack Tinker, 'This is an insult to Shakespeare', *Daily Mail*, 11 September, 1986.
- ⁵¹ Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* [1986].
- ⁵² John Peter, 'A portrait of fatal power', *Sunday Times*, 14 September, 1986.
- ⁵³ *Observer*, 14 September, 1986.
- ⁵⁴ Hakola, p. 116.
- ⁵⁵ Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* [1986].
- ⁵⁶ Rehearsal notes, 15 August, 1986; production records housed with Prompt Book at 71.21.
- ⁵⁷ Hakola, p. 116.
- ⁵⁸ Andrew Rissik, 'The king in waiting', *Independent*, 7 May, 1987.
- ⁵⁹ Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* [1986].
- ⁶⁰ Hakola, p. 117.
- ⁶¹ Rehearsal notes 19 August, 1986; production records housed with Prompt Book at 71.21.
- ⁶² Hakola, p. 118.
- ⁶³ Rehearsal notes, 19 August, 1986.
- ⁶⁴ Viv Thomas, 'RSC at its best', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 19 September, 1986.
- ⁶⁵ Michael Coveney, *Financial Times*, 11 September, 1986.

- ⁶⁶ Peter Roberts, 'The Year of the Swan', *Plays International*, December, 1986, p.34.
- ⁶⁷ Robin Ray, *Punch*, 20 May, 1987.
- ⁶⁸ Viv Thomas, 'RSC at its best', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 19 September, 1986.
- ⁶⁹ Don Chapman, 'Richard revisited by Irons', *Oxford Mail*, 11 September, 1986.
- ⁷⁰ Malcolm Hay, *Time Out*, 13 May, 1987.
- ⁷¹ Jeremy Brien, 'Plight of a king without hope...', *Bristol Evening Post*, 11 September, 1986.
- ⁷² Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* [1986].
- ⁷³ J.M. Maguin, *Cahiers Elisabethains*, 32 (Octobre, 1987), p. 101.
- ⁷⁴ Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* [1986].
- ⁷⁵ See Hakola, p. 119.
- ⁷⁶ Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* [1986].
- ⁷⁷ Hakola, p. 120.
- ⁷⁸ Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* [1986].
- ⁷⁹ Hakola, p. 120.
- ⁸⁰ Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* [1986].
- ⁸¹ Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* [1986].
- ⁸² Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* [1986].
- ⁸³ Note: Hakola, p. 121.
- ⁸⁴ Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* [1986].
- ⁸⁵ See Hakola, p. 122n.
- ⁸⁶ Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* [1986].
- ⁸⁷ Jill Parkin, *Yorkshire Post*, 12 September, 1986.
- ⁸⁸ Nicholas Shrimpton, 'Suddenly gorgeous', *Times Educational Supplement*, 19 September, 1986.
- ⁸⁹ Giles Gordon, 'Stratford Illuminations', *Punch*, 24 September, 1986.
- ⁹⁰ Michael Coveney, 'Richard II/RSC, Stratford', *Financial Times*, 12 September, 1986.
- ⁹¹ Irving Wardle, 'Actions speak as loud as words', *The Times*, 12 September, 1986.
- ⁹² David Nathan, 'Lacking the skills of incompetence', *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 September, 1986.

- ⁹³ Giles Gordon, 'Stratford Illuminations', *Punch*, 24 September, 1986.
- ⁹⁴ Milton Shulman, *London Evening Standard*, 6 May, 1987.
- ⁹⁵ Tim Robinson, *City Limits*, 14 May, 1987.
- ⁹⁶ Giles Gordon, *London Daily News*, 7 May, 1987.
- ⁹⁷ Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* (1986).
- ⁹⁸ Prompt Book: Kyle: *Richard II* (1986).
- ⁹⁹ Rehearsal notes to wardrobe 15 August, 1986.
- ¹⁰⁰ Rehearsal notes, 19 August, 1986.
- ¹⁰¹ Don Chapman, 'Richard revisited by Irons', *Oxford Mail*, 11 September, 1986.
- ¹⁰² Michael Coveney, 'Richard II/RSC, Stratford', *Financial Times*, 12 September, 1986.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid..
- ¹⁰⁴ *Yorkshire Post*, 12 September, 1986.
- ¹⁰⁵ Hakola, p. 124.
- ¹⁰⁶ Nicholas Shrimpton, 'Suddenly gorgeous', *Times Educational Supplement*, 19 September, 1986.
- ¹⁰⁷ Rehearsal notes, 15 August, 1986.
- ¹⁰⁸ Giles Gordon, 'Richard II', *Plays and Players* (November, 1986), p. 24.
- ¹⁰⁹ Hakola, p. 125.
- ¹¹⁰ Roger Warren, 'Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon, 1986', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38 (1987), 82-89 (p. 89).
- ¹¹¹ J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 146.
- ¹¹² Rehearsal notes, 19 August, 1986.
- ¹¹³ Hakola, p. 123.
- ¹¹⁴ Mark Swallow, *Gloucestershire Echo*, 13 September 1986.
- ¹¹⁵ Jack Tinker, *Daily Mail*, May 6, 1987.
- ¹¹⁶ John Gross, 'More leather and greatcoats', *Sunday Telegraph*, 11 November, 1990.
- ¹¹⁷ Harry Eyres, 'Richard II', *The Times*, 13 September, 1990. The work in question was *The usurper king: Henry of Bolingbroke 1366-99* by Marie Louise Bruce (London: Rubicon, 1986).
- ¹¹⁸ Michael Billington, 'Richards in a twist', *Guardian Weekly*, 18 November, 1990.
- ¹¹⁹ Paul Taylor, 'The acting monarch', *Independent*, 9 November, 1990.

- ¹²⁰ Michael Billington, 'A mockery king of snow', *Guardian*, 9 November, 1990.
- ¹²¹ Robert Smallwood, 'Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon, 1990', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42 (1991), 345-59 (p. 355).
- ¹²² Smallwood, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42 (1991), p. 354.
- ¹²³ Michael Coveney, 'A rewardingly tricky Dicky', *Observer*, 11 November, 1990.
- ¹²⁴ Smallwood, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42 (1991), p. 355.
- ¹²⁵ Harry Eyres, *The Times*, 13 September, 1991.
- ¹²⁶ Ibid..
- ¹²⁷ Production Programme.
- ¹²⁸ Smallwood, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42 (1991), p. 356.
- ¹²⁹ Michael Billington, *Guardian*, 9 November, 1990.
- ¹³⁰ Smallwood, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42 (1991), p. 356.
- ¹³¹ Prompt Book: Daniels: *Richard II* [1990].
- ¹³² Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, p. 293.
- ¹³³ Margaret Shewring, *King Richard II*, Shakespeare in Performance Series (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 181.
- ¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 182.
- ¹³⁵ Fiona Shaw in interview with Michael Coveney, 'She who would be king', *Observer Review*, 21 May, 1995.
- ¹³⁶ Shewring, *King Richard II*, p. 181.
- ¹³⁷ Shewring, *King Richard II*, p. 182.
- ¹³⁸ Shewring, *King Richard II*, p. 181.
- ¹³⁹ Gerald Berkowitz, 'Shakespeare Abroad', *Shakespeare Bulletin: A Journal of Performance Criticism and Scholarship*, incorporating *Shakespeare On Film Newsletter*, 14 (Winter, 1996), p. 9.
- ¹⁴⁰ Shewring, *King Richard II*, p. 181.
- ¹⁴¹ Shaw with Coveney, *Observer Review*, 21 May, 1995.
- ¹⁴² Deborah Warner and Fiona Shaw in interview with Claire Armitstead, 'Kingdom under siege', *Guardian*, 31 May, 1995.
- ¹⁴³ Shaw with Coveney, *Observer Review*, 21 May, 1995.
- ¹⁴⁴ Warner and Shaw with Armitstead, *Guardian*, 31 May, 1995.
- ¹⁴⁵ Prompt Book: Warner: *Richard II* [1995].

- 146ⁿ Candles played an important part in the production and the production records include a separate Candle Plot.
- 147ⁿ The prompt copy has 'START MASS' ten minutes before the start time.
- 148 Shaw with Coveney. *Observer Review*, 21 May, 1995.
- 149ⁿ A white leather jacket was worn over a loose pleated shirt worn outside heavily-pleated trousers tightly gathered at the ankles. He also wore gold sandals and white leather gloves.
- 150 Charles Spencer, 'King on the verge of a breakdown', *Daily Telegraph*, 5 June, 1995.
- 151 Margaret Shewring, *King Richard II*, p. 182.
- 152 Prompt Book: Warner: *Richard II* [1995].
- 153 Prompt Book: Warner: *Richard II* [1995].
- 154 Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 5 June, 1995.
- 155 John Peter, 'Passion not fashion', *Sunday Times*, 11 June, 1995.
- 156ⁿ Apparently this business developed during production as Richard simply 'THROWS WREATH ON FLOOR' at 'I am in health' in the prompt copy.
- 157 Paul Taylor, 'Paul Taylor defends Fiona Shaw's Richard II from the baying critics', *Independent*, 14 June, 1995.
- 158 Shewring, *King Richard II*, p. 183.
- 159 Peter, *Sunday Times*, 11 June, 1995.
- 160 Shewring, *King Richard II*, p. 181.
- 161ⁿ The prompt copy lists these as 'EGYPTIAN', 'HORSE', 'MEDALLION', 'DAGGER', 'SMALL FIGURE', 'CRYSTAL' and 'HEADLESS FIGURE' but offers no other explanation. Indeed, the absence of conceptual clarity is reinforced by the fact that the same page of the prompt copy has them listed variously as 'EXHIBITS', 'OBJECTS' and 'VALUABLES'.
- 162 Prompt Book: Warner: *Richard II* [1995].
- 163 Shewring, *King Richard II*, p. 184.
- 164 Nyberg, p. 122.
- 165 Ibid..
- 166 John J. MacAloon, 'Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies' in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*, ed. by John J. MacAloon. (Philadelphia, Penn.: Publication of the Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), pp. 241-80 (p. 243)
- 167 Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300-1660*, I, p. 52.
- 168 See Pierre de Coubertin, *The Olympic Idea: Discourses and Essays* trans. by John G. Dixon (Lausanne: Editions Internationales Olympia, 1966), p. 32.

CHAPTER VII

Pageantry in an age of irony

In a programme essay for the English Shakespeare Company's *Wars of the Roses* cycle (1986-89) Michael Pennington wrote of the absence of a 'middle ground' in contemporary British politics and saw in the conflicts between the extremes of 'democracy' and 'manipulation', 'compassion' and 'efficiency' evidence of "a constantly repeating trauma". He saw the plays as essential to "our understanding of ourselves"¹ but neither they nor the productions were perceived as offering any coherent solution. As such he was giving expression to the prevailing ethos of an increasingly fragmented and culturally mixed society in which the understanding to which Michael Pennington was resigned has compensated for the 'belief' which Peter Brook desired to celebrate.

A climate of intellectual and moral relativism in a pluralist society has frequently been represented in the theatre in terms of a rejection of the visual and conceptual unity that characterised Directors' Theatre at its most assertive in favour of a "radically dissociative mix of styles".²

It is within this context that emblematic pageantry has frequently provided an iconic referant with which to negotiate the tensions implicit within the cultural identity of the nation. If the pageantry of Shakespeare's time was a visual affirmation of universal order in modern

times it has generally been experienced as a branch of a heritage culture, which gives a "reassurance of tradition, experience and continuity to a world where turbulent change makes the present seem uncertain and the future fearsome".³

As such it has provided a rich source of shared images with which to examine the historical legitimacy and cultural validity of a modern international media community. *Henry V* - a play which "alludes in some way to the most recent war in the memory of its audience"⁴ - has proved particularly receptive to such an approach, Henry being seen as "the embodiment of England's self-image at that historical moment".⁵

Adrian Noble's revival of the play at Stratford in 1984 and subsequently at the Barbican was as much post-Hands and post-Falklands and it has been remarked that "several of Noble's choices were clearly designed to set his production off from this recent and still well-remembered triumph".⁶ It has even been suggested that the threadbare tarpaulin under which the English sheltered from torrential rain was "a grim parody of Farrah's magnificent canopies".⁷

As in 1975 the country was in the throes of a national crisis. On this occasion the miners' strike had precipitated "a kind of civil war"⁸ while the cultural reverberations of the Falklands War two years earlier were still as raw as the red brick of the stripped proscenium: "While many had fantasised the campaign as a rediscovery of Imperial identity and national destiny, others had seen it as a combination of violent desperation, adventurism and

political opportunism, spawned by national delusions of grandeur".⁹

Many commentators - like Michael Coveney who referred to "the aberration of the Falklands campaign"¹⁰ - alluded to the contemporary socio-historical context which, given that "today's fashion is for anti-heroes"¹¹ might, indeed, have tempted a less assured director to a crudely political exposé. In the event, since "jingoism is no part of this production because unlike when Olivier made the film it is no serious part of British public life"¹² Noble avoided "mere tub-thumping exercises in mindless nationalism"¹³ whilst at the same time declining to treat the play as an anti-imperialist pacifist tract. Kenneth Branagh, who played Henry in the production, writing of the rehearsal process, expressed relief that "we would not be burdened by the 'Post Falklands' tag that some of the press had already given the production. Our feelings about that conflict would inevitably inform our thoughts but not to the point where the effect was reductive to the work".¹⁴

At the same time, the director acknowledged that the play will support extreme positions and contrived "both to take the mickey and blow the trumpet".¹⁵ Other commentators expressed satisfaction that it was a production which "doesn't wantonly impose a point of view: it simply seeks out the variety of arguments in Shakespeare's multi-angled text":¹⁶ one in which "all ambiguities are nicely afloat, and none resolved".¹⁷

The Company's programme for the production was

apparently iconoclastic, the popular Shakespearean mythology of Henry V as 'hero-king' and as ruthless 'scourge of God' being measured against historical imperatives whilst at the same time observing that Henry V must be understood "in the light of values which are not our own".¹⁸ Henry's appeal was explained in terms of contemporary standards of princely conduct. Thus ruthlessness in battle abroad was combined with carefully stage-managed elaborate pageants at home to create the model of the ideal king in the popular imagination. It was an explanation which at the design level effectively defined the production's style as a marriage of realism and ritual.

Some commentators - perhaps owing greater allegiance to King Coal¹⁹ than King Henry - have spoken slightingly of a production "with something for everyone. Balancing pain with pageantry, patriotism with pathos, the production offered the pleasures of spectacle in conjunction with a liberal humanitarianism which was unexceptional precisely because it did not ask the really awkward and divisive questions".²⁰ What it did do was acknowledge the stirring pageantry of war no less than its "professional camaraderie" and "idiot waste".²¹

Like Hands's production of the play in 1975 it began with a bare stage. "the proscenium arch...stripped to the bare brick; bleak concrete walls were added on either side, with two absolutely plain doors set into them" suggestive of a gas chamber²² or "a disused warehouse".²³ Like Hands's production, too, was the gradual removal of the

need for the audience to use their imagination. Here Brechtian austerity almost imperceptibly gave way to striking visual images which matched the production's progress from rhetoric to reality.

Visually the opening was as drab as it was bleak: "even the Archbishop of Canterbury's soutane and skullcap were in the prevailing gray, with only the merest hint of purple edging to suggest his office".²⁴ The only crown worthy of the name was attached to Henry's helmet for the battle scenes while even for the 'triumphal' final scene at the French court he wore merely a discreet, narrow gold 'headband'.

Gestural ceremony and courtly formality, too, were minimal. The initial exchanges between Canterbury and Ely were considerably cut and conducted with Henry and his court on stage throughout. During Canterbury's advice to Henry (which was offered while seated on 'CHAIRS') Henry's advisers/courtiers 'START TO CHAT'. Only when Henry asked 'May I with right and conscience make this claim?' [I.2.96] did Canterbury kneel before the king to deliver his response, as then did the full court in formal appeal, finally applauding Henry's resolve. Even at the French court the prompt copy has no suggestion of bowing or kneeling while Exeter's ambassadorial mission concluded with a simple handshake with the Constable.

At other times formal submissive gesture was violated: when the three traitors kneeled to the king in Act II, Scene 2 Scroop who had defiantly been the last to

kneel was grabbed by Henry who 'DRAGS SCROOP TO C[ENTRE] S[TAGE]' as he castigated him; the law of arms so beloved of Fluellen was again violated when, on Mountjoy's return, Henry 'DRAGS HIM TO S[TAGE] L[EFT] PROS[CENIUM] TO THE GROUND OVER BOY'.²⁵ Such acts of physical brutality - most notably the garotting of Bardolph on stage by Exeter - were themselves vivid emblems of the reality of war in which chivalric codes of conduct appear as irrelevant as Fluellen is tedious. Appropriately, Henry's instruction to kill the prisoners was retained.

Elsewhere collective acts of ritual assertiveness or celebration were deliberately weakened. The prompt copy shows that the original intention that the final line of Henry's 'breach' speech - 'God for Harry. England and St. George' - be echoed by 'ALL' was altered to simply 'EXETER', while the intention that first Henry and then 'ALL' should kneel and kiss the ground following Mountjoy's conceding victory to the English was abandoned.²⁶

Several commentators observed that Noble had "not attempted to turn the occasion...into [an] heraldic dress parade"²⁷ and had "avoided unnecessary pageantry"²⁸ and yet it was also noted that "Crowley's realism...is hedged about with heraldry and symbolism".²⁹ The weaponry of war, for example, acted as an ironic commentary on its waste and brutality even as it was offered as an emblem of its rituals. No less than twenty nine swords are itemised in the production's 'Props Setting List', including 'GOLD' swords not only for the French but for Bedford and Gloucester with

a 'SILVER' for Erpingham. At the conclusion of the Crispin Crispianus speech the English force joined the king to 'GATHER ROUND IN CIRCLE. ALL PUT SWORDS TOGETHER' and when Mountjoy had conceded victory to the English 'THEY ALL DROP THEIR WEAPONS'.³⁰

It was a single sword, however, which provided a wryly ironic comment on the carnage as it stood vertically in the centre of the up-stage area among the debris of the battle's aftermath where, indeed, it remained dimly perceived - and surrounded now by lighted candles - throughout the final scene as it was conducted down-stage in front of a semi-transparent transverse scrim. During the Epilogue it was given greater prominence as the battlefield area became visible again and was restored to full view during and after the curtain call where it remained as "a tangible and continuing reminder of war and destruction".³¹

The French at war were consistently displayed on gold trucks, immobilised and frieze-like in golden armour along a "gleaming, pennant-hung gantry"³² for 'The sun doth gild our armour' [IV.2.1]. At the same time, a series of spotlights shone down vertically from beneath the gantry lending a futuristic quality which lifted such panoply out of the fifteenth century and imbued it with a timeless universality. Characteristically in a production praised for its integrity in honouring Shakespeare's "subversive subtext" in a play "outwardly supportive of traditional authority"³³ such pageantic splendour was deliberately undermined by the personalisation of one such knight who,

"his headpiece ripped off, transpires to be middle-aged, balding and avuncular, hysterical with fear, and helplessly entombed inside a hundredweight of primrose-colored armour".³⁴

The most striking emblem of the pageantry of war, however, was a 'GOLD TRUCK' which descended,³⁵ⁿ *deus-ex-machina*-like, from the skies and bearing the French awaiting the battle apparelled in burnished gold and "symbolising the phoney glamour of war"³⁶ in what has been termed "an intellectually exciting visual statement".³⁷ Here the grim sculpture of weaponry appeared primarily decorative, curiously distanced from its utilitarian objective. The French commanders, seated in gold chairs, played chess or drank wine from gold goblets against a background of massed "gleaming golden ranks of halberds"³⁸ placed horizontally on racks occupying the full width of the truck, while two horses in gold armour and an 'ARMOUR STAND WITH GOLD SWORD ATTACHED'³⁹ awaited the conflict.

The contrast with the homely English, sleeping in full view in the down-stage area in front of the proscenium arch could hardly have been more palpable, more especially as after the first few previews the red St. George's emblems were physically painted in blood⁴⁰ⁿ onto the breasts of the English soldiers' tunics - a poignant metaphor which deliberately blurred the distinction between symbolism and realism. The moral implicit in the contrast was obvious:

...visual splendor must automatically be mistrusted, while drabness must reflect the grim reality underneath the glittering surface of

war, the price in human terms to be paid for it.⁴¹

The English were permitted only a modified splendour in the theatre of war. their colourful battle tabards in the early war scenes contrasting nevertheless with their otherwise customary drabness. The Props Setting List also boasts two 'NEW BANNER[S] OF THE KINGS COLOURS' yet even these were offset by the three 'BATTLE WORN BANNERS' and the 'BLOODY SILK RAGS' which adorned the aftermath of the battle when 'CURTAIN OPENS TO REVEAL FIELD OF BODIES & COATS'.⁴²

Noble studiously avoided processions, even that sanctioned by the text following the reading of the battle dead, though the lengthy *Non Nobis, Domine* sung by the cast as the English slowly left the stage was impressively evocative of religious ritual and was retained by Branagh in his film of the play in 1989. Even so, the "lines of warriors confronting or advancing on the audience"⁴³ so beloved of the director carried a similarly ritualistic, if also more machismic, impact. One critic spoke of a stylised production in which "the movements of the actors are so meticulously choreographed that they almost become living props".⁴⁴

It was a device which, together with its bare bricks and steel drop curtain, also contributed to the production's conscious virility of style. Following the Governor of Harfleur's capitulation, for instance, the English - apart from Exeter and the king down-stage centre - formed into a line across the stage in line with the

proscenium arch and on Henry's words 'Come, uncle Exeter' [III.3.51] 'ALL MOVE DOWN TO EDGE OF STAGE'. With the last line of the scene 'ALL TURN TO FACE U[P] S[TAGE] (LEFT TURN)' to enter the town. The English prepared for Agincourt, too, by forming up in a single line across the stage to 'ALL KNEEL & KISS GROUND'. When York threw up and caught the baton given to him to signify his 'leading of the vaward', 'ALL CHEER & STAND' and then gathered into a phalanx of three ranks in close formation to 'RUSH INTO WHITE WORLD' as military emblems entering the gate of war.⁴⁵ The conventional door in the up-stage wall through which characters had exited hitherto gave way to an "unsuspected portal the height of an aerodrome hangar...looming overhead, to swallow the warriors in its swirling light as if into some monstrous apocalyptic plain".⁴⁶

There was no attempt to represent the battle itself realistically; indeed, it was shown emblematically "in almost balletic terms, with never a sword clashed between the two armies";⁴⁷ "turbulent lighting and a sudden violence of color lashed from the streaming of titanic banners".⁴⁸

Kenneth Branagh records that while studying the part he found himself writing in the margin of his text: 'Do not judge this man, place him in context - understand!'.⁴⁹ It was an exhortation which his director seems sympathetically to have embraced. The persistent ambivalence of the production - a tone sustained by the sardonic, ever-present Chorus of Ian McDiarmid - forced a

progressively multi-layered contextuality which sought less to explain than to create an awareness of the distinction between the essential simplicity of Henry V as myth and the complexities of actual responsibility.

It was a process reinforced by design imperatives. Seen initially in terms of an Elizabethan Dream Play in which Henry was perceived as legend, the early part of the play was represented two dimensionally on the shallow forestage⁵⁰ so that "the public scenes of politics and court life took place before a curtain drawn across the front part of the stage".⁵¹ When the dream became nightmare in France "the...battle scenes and camp scenes in the 'poring dark' took place [in] the great unfocussed recess behind the curtain, a no man's land, an area of bad dreams lived out in blank verse".⁵² By the final scene we were aware simultaneously of multiple levels of contextuality which lent both poignancy and irony to the events principally in focus.

The scene began formally, French and English entering Opposite Prompt Side and Prompt Side respectively. There was little in the way of 'pageantry' (the two kings' 'BOW TO EACH OTHER' was the only instance recorded in the prompt copy) and Charles and Henry alone were seated, all diplomatic stiffness at opposite ends of the stage. As the wooing took place around a simple bench centre-stage, the peace negotiations continued to one side of the forestage, "reminding us that the two manoeuvres were inextricably related."⁵³ At the same time through the scrim could be

discerned "the flickerings in twilight of testimonial candles".⁵⁴ a moving reminder of the cost in human terms of foreign adventure as well as an anticipation of future domestic broils.

Some critics were repelled by the production's "visually stunning" effects:⁵⁵ *The Times*, for example, spoke of "sumptuous extravagance".⁵⁶ Others, however, perceived an intellectual justification: "This is not mindless pageantry: each scene is staged in a way that offers a critical comment on its content with even the traverse-curtain turning into a blood-stained emblem after the murder of the boys".⁵⁷

In resisting a distinctive interpretation Noble embraced an eclecticism of style ranging from spartan "minimalism"⁵⁸ to "opulent theatrical visuals, dominated by set pieces"⁵⁹ in ways which expressed the play's many ambivalences. Although he made minimal use both of conventional pageantry and its emblematic properties his neo-pictorial method was based on the construction of emblems with a 'universal' pageantic dynamic. If he declined on this occasion to utilise the signifiers inherent within the common pageantic tradition the production's multi-contextuality nevertheless reflected an inherently post-modernist ethos.

The undoubted limitations of other touring productions during the period make the monumental Bogdanov-Pennington *Wars of the Roses* cycle all the more remarkable. Partly, no doubt, from practical and financial reasons touring productions have frequently appeared out of

step with current artistic trends and have been seen as old-fashioned either in terms of production style or in returning to the notorious star system.

Bill Alexander's touring production of *Henry IV, Parts One and Two* for the RSC in 1980 consciously avoided a conceptual approach in which "the actors spend more time solving the problems of production than of the play itself".⁶⁰ Alexander - a self-professed artisan - expressed contempt for the exponents of conceptual Shakespeare whom he proclaimed "'charlatans [who] can flourish and be promoted as gurus'".⁶¹ But expectations had been raised by such gurus in the seventies and reviewers observed reproachfully that "directors like John Barton and Barry Kyle have proved that even in a small space you can create a sense of ritual".⁶² There were even complaints that "a moment like the coronation procession of the new king has not even the faintest hint of colourful splendour".⁶³ Four years later Alexander's staging of *Richard III* with Antony Sher as the king would prompt comparisons with nineteenth century historicism⁶⁴ but here the rival deities of Eye and Mind each considered that he had been offered but grudging tribute: "the supposedly frugal nature of the 'small scale' touring company...is no excuse for a stageful of very small-scale ideas".⁶⁵

Clifford Williams's production of *Richard II* in 1988 was widely perceived as a vehicle for its star, Derek Jacobi whose currency had been enormously re-valued as the result of the television series *I. Claudius* (1976). The

production received occasional tribute for its director's restrained "straightforward interpretation" in which "no attempt has been made at arty contrivance"⁶⁶ or as one which, thankfully, "interposes no irrelevant directorial concept between playwright and audience".⁶⁷ But such remarks appear almost as nostalgic as the production itself: "More competent than inspired";⁶⁸ "dull and unfocused".⁶⁹ 'Staid', 'cautious', 'conventional', 'solid' were typical of judgements which placed it in a tradition long since past: "At first sight it is 1930s Shakespeare";⁷⁰ "woefully old-fashioned and unimaginative";⁷¹ "it bears all the hallmarks of very old hat Old Vic...like back numbers of *Theatre World*";⁷² "the vague and tasteful pictorialism of *Richard of Bordeaux*";⁷³ with costumes "from Henry Irving's dressing up box"⁷⁴ it would "not have looked misplaced in Olivier's time".⁷⁵

Ultimately, it was a production which displayed its star to good effect and yet irritated with its "third rate pageantry";⁷⁶ whilst some praised the absence of interpretative 'perversity'⁷⁷ the majority - even those who had a guarded welcome for the return of the star actor - lamented the absence of a coherent point of view.

In similar vein. Stephen Unwin's English Touring Theatre production of *Henry IV. Parts One and Two: An English Epic* (1996-97) marketed itself principally on the curiosity value of having Samuel West ('the brilliant young star') and Timothy West ('one of the country's most popular actors')⁷⁸ playing opposite each other as Hal and his

surrogate father, Falstaff. Discerning judgements may have deemed what publicity material described as a 'lavish production' to be merely "handsome but serviceable" but the production appealed, nevertheless, as "one of those traditional Shakespearean productions that one so seldom gets to see nowadays" and was distinguished by "fine performances" rather than bright ideas.⁷⁹

Michael Bogdanov has insisted that "'the only reason to make theatre is to initiate change'".⁸⁰ Undoubtedly in Thatcherite Britain of 1985 - "the era of New Brutalism"⁸¹ - Bogdanov, who has described himself as a "dedicated modernist",⁸² perceived inescapable parallels with Shakespeare's *Henrys* which revealed Jan Kott's concept of the Grand Mechanism still very much at work: "*The Henrys* were plays for today, the lessons of history unlearnt".⁸³

Some commentators have found that Bogdanov's insistence on socio-political topicality combined with a zealous missionary egalitarianism which shrinks from the charge of cultural elitism tends towards an over-simplification of production style. Stanley Wells was reminded of "children's-paper versions of Shakespeare that print the full text alongside garish, comic-strip illustrations of the action".⁸⁴

In searching for a style for the productions Bogdanov was 'put off' by the Trevor Nunn productions which had marked the opening of the Barbican Theatre and in which "the story and the politics had both been submerged in an effort to bring medieval pageantry and protocol to the

stage".⁸⁵ Bogdanov, it seems, was convinced that

...if performed Shakespeare is to retain its signifying power in present-day culture, it must contain something more than mere expressiveness, images of medieval pageantry and royal protocol or reflective meditations on Shakespeare's 'greatness'.⁸⁶

His solution, revolutionary in the "form-obsessed English theatre" found common ground between the contemporary European theatre where "eclecticism is the norm, rather than purity of concept"⁸⁷ and the Elizabethan "theatre of expediency".⁸⁸ Bogdanov would embrace an aggressively anti-illusionistic imperative, the mechanics of 'performance' clearly visible to create "a theatre within a theatre".⁸⁹ This would have the effect of creating "a space for staging history as something other than a pictorial discourse designed to commemorate, and contain, a lost Elizabethan past".⁹⁰

Yet although Bogdanov was driven by an idea he was not wholly confined by it. His Brechtian instincts towards an "essentially rough theatre" - influenced in part by budgetary considerations - did not preclude "when we needed it, a degree of sophistication";⁹¹ the "raw approach" nevertheless acknowledged the theatrical 'need' for "a splash of colour".⁹² In the event, Stanley Wells - notwithstanding his considerable reservations - conceded that "there was much theatrical life in *The Henrys*".⁹³

Visually his method was to free the imaginations of company and audience alike by "an eclectic mix of costumes and props, choosing a time and a place that was most appropriate for a character or scene",⁹⁴ a method which

would release the argument by "a series of conflicting images, idea joggers, memory aids, etc".⁹⁵

Nevertheless, as Bogdanov points out, there was a sort of chronology to be found:

Stephanie [Howard] proposed that we start *Richard II* in the Regency period, which would then allow us, with the advent of Bolingbroke as King Henry IV, to retain our Victorian frock coats and scarlet tunics for his court. The *Henry VIs* would progress through the Edwardian period, the First World War, the twenties and thirties, the Second World War, until we arrived at *Richard III* which I wanted modern and 'computer'.... Street life, battles, etc., retained their eclecticism....⁹⁶

Reviewing *Richard II* for the *Glasgow Herald* one commentator wistfully observed that "decontextualising the play did mean that emphasis on ritual and visual interest in general was removed...",⁹⁷ while another complained that the "crucial hierarchical distinctions of early fifteenth-century England go for nothing...".⁹⁸

Nevertheless, although Bogdanov had no intention of allowing the cycle to degenerate into a nostalgic pageant in celebration of a received national mythology, the pageantry - or its absence - was a potent referential signifier; Bogdanov did not hesitate to use - or abuse - pageantic emblems in the service of his cause; only by capitalising upon the emblem of the throne as "the ultimate symbol of power".⁹⁹ for example, could it be redefined as the "symbol of misuse".¹⁰⁰

There was no throne, of course, for the opening scene of *Richard II*; instead, a *chaise-longue* and broadly Regency dress characterised a court of langorous

sophisticated socialites. "The Regency style, Beau Brummell dandyism, suited our purposes; a profligate, dilettante Richard...surrounded by music and artists, a contrast to the puritan austerity of Bolingbroke Rule".¹⁰¹ If there was little in the way of the gestural ceremony of royal protocol it was because Richard's own self-mocking tone or wry detached irony - like his speaking of the rhyming couplets as doggerel - almost invited disrespect for the office.

For the Coventry scene the context was more obviously formal: a royal pavilion up-stage centre was backed by a twenty foot high St. George's banner and the principal courtiers stood in a line across the back of the stage beneath the pavilion platform. Richard - dressed regally in a fur-lined blue robe with ermine cape worn over a military tunic and white trousers - swept in to ceremonial trumpets. Yet Richard again constantly undermined the formality of the occasion; the 'quaintness' of the ritual of the lists amused him and he was apparently oblivious to the way in which the ritual regulated passions that were real and intensely felt.

The combatants, both dressed in military uniform, relinquished their ceremonial swords for more serviceable weapons and actually struck two blows before Richard intervened.¹⁰² The king's warder - a gold baton with decorative tassels which the prompt copy describes as a 'SCEPTRE' - now appeared doubly frivolous; he asserted authority but could not command respect. His attempt to retrieve the situation by enforcing the oath resulted in

Mowbray and Bolingbroke only briefly placing their hands on the hilt of the sword as Richard held it towards them, a resentful token gesture; neither knelt and Mowbray exited angrily and without ceremony.

When he appeared aloft at Flint Castle Richard was dressed even more ceremonially than at Coventry. Brilliantly lit, his scarlet tunic, heavily decorated with gold frogging on the breast, royal blue cape and gold crown, together with the formal scarlet dress uniforms of the supporters who flanked him were in marked contrast to the dun greatcoats of Bolingbroke's party, dimly lit in the 'base court'.

But it was clearly already too late; enclosed by the skeletal framework of a cabinet construction the form of kingship of which Richard was the last example already looked like an exhibit in a museum display case and even as he spoke of his divinely ordained authority the ominous silhouettes of Bolingbroke's soldiers with shouldered rifles could be seen patrolling to and fro behind a screen at ground level beneath his feet.

When Richard was next seen, in Westminster Hall, it was Bolingbroke who occupied the centre-stage position, facing down-stage and seated at the end of a heavy black desk-cum-table, very much the "chief executive".¹⁰³ Behind him the huge St. George's banner from the Coventry scene soared upwards carrying visual echoes of the trappings of twentieth-century dictatorships. From behind this banner all characters entered and exited in this scene, and they were all dwarfed by it.

The lords spiritual (identified by a purple sash at the waist of his black robe, purple skullcap and a silver cross worn on a chain round his neck) and temporal (dressed in formal dark grey morning suits) sat facing each other in two ranks across the table as at "an austere Edwardian board meeting";¹⁰⁴ the secular state had clearly taken over from the divinely ordained - "the day of the administrator had arrived".¹⁰⁵ Bolingbroke appeared genuinely surprised by York's proclaiming him 'Henry, fourth of that name' and paused to reflect before standing, whereupon the others stood.

When Richard entered - stage-right of the banner - he was without a tie and with his shirt open at the neck; the regalia was carried in by an attendant on a scarlet and gold cushion stage-left of the banner. Richard knelt, only half-ironically, at 'God save the king' but when he invited the still seated Bolingbroke to 'seize the crown' he leaned across the table to thrust it in his face before moving centre-stage and holding it at head height. Throughout the episode the crown was used very much as a 'prop' to taunt and unsettle the deposer. At 'Ay, no...' 'RICH[ARD] HANDS OUT CROWN TO BOL[INGBROKE]. BOL[INGBROKE] GOES TO TAKE IT. RICH[ARD] TAKES IT AWAY.'¹⁰⁶

When Bolingbroke responded and joined Richard he held it tentatively with the forefinger and thumb of his left hand while Richard grasped it firmly with both hands, seeming to cling desperately to it even as he gave it away. Even when Bolingbroke relinquished his tenuous hold of it

Richard still held it at head height, then clutched it greedily to his breast as Bolingbroke asked if he was 'content' to resign the crown.

At 'Now mark me how I will undo myself' Richard first held the crown reverentially aloft with two hands and then at 'I give this crown from off my head' he gave it to Bolingboke with a flourish reminiscent of a magician performing some sleight of hand. He then mimed the 'heavy weight' of the royal symbols as he loaded them onto Bolingbroke, almost gratefully. One commentator was reminded of 'Crackerjack' prizes.¹⁰⁷ⁿ The regalia was then returned by Bolingbroke to the cushion (now placed on the table in front of Bolingbroke's chair by the attendant) where it remained poignantly behind Richard throughout the mirror episode.

When Bolingboke subsequently proclaimed his coronation the "undercurrent of modern menace"¹⁰⁸ that characterised the new regime was sufficient to prompt the court to stand and bow formally and uniformly at the conclusion of his speech in a show of royal protocol unknown in Richard's day; one almost expected to hear the click of Nazi heels.

The Pomfret scene conveyed all the chilling austerity of a ruthless totalitarianism: Richard was all too recognisably a political prisoner. Clearly bruised, he was dressed in frayed woollen vest and long johns; his cell was furnished austerey with a single chair, galvanized metal bucket and simple wooden bed, its royal purple blanket a

mocking reminder of 'sunshine days'. His death came with clinical efficiency through the single bullet of a contract killer.

Richard's exit in this scene - dragged out unceremoniously by Exton - was in marked contrast to his final 'entrance', wheeled in noiselessly, encased in a dark grey metal casket. With the stage dimly lit and Bolingbroke's ministers dressed identically in dark grey suits, Bolingbroke's exhortation to don 'sullen black' seemed hardly necessary. Only the extravagant floral tributes were lacking for the archetypal mafia funeral.

Although the huge St. George's banner and the immaculately uniformed officers who reported to Henry kept before our consciousness the fact that Henry owed his position and maintained his authority by virtue of military power, Henry IV's reign was marked by an absence of court regalia; Henry was "envisioned more as prime minister than king".¹⁰⁹ For the final scene of *Richard II* Bolingbroke was 'FOUND AT DESK WITH PAPERS'.¹¹⁰ Indeed, his administration was associated with the large black Edwardian table rather than a throne, though Bogdanov did concede that he would need a "'special chair'".¹¹¹

The power residing in such symbols has always been more notional than real: "the crown is an idea".¹¹² In the modern world, however, the media can be manipulated to mould the idea; the microphone is ultimately a more powerful symbol than the sceptre since it actively shapes our perception of authority rather than merely representing it.

Forty years earlier James Agate had sensed, prophetically, that in an age of mass communication a radio broadcast could elicit the same emotional response as a conventional public ceremonial event.¹¹³ Thus, before the *Henry*s trilogy became *The Wars of the Roses*, the opening scene of *Henry IV, Part One*, partly in the interests of clarity, was turned into a 'media event' with Henry at the microphone and his cabinet, visibly supporting him, lined up alongside him. Bogdanov himself concedes the device to have been "a wilful distortion of the intention of the scene"¹¹⁴ and reverted to the conventional reading of it once *Richard II* was added to the cycle in 1987.

'The Ballad of Harry le Roy' which had opened the original *Henry*s to supply essential background information was nevertheless retained even when the trilogy became a tetralogy. The folk ballad form in "the troubadour tradition"¹¹⁵ clearly satisfied Bogdanov's populist and egalitarianism principles but it also presented an essentially 'popular' view of the history that it told; history was perceived in broad, simplified terms of personalities and feats of arms, the 'edited highlights' which are the stuff of popular myth. It is precisely this mythologising of history with which ceremony co-operates and ultimately sanctions; battle honours, medals, the physical trappings of monarchical, military and ecclesiastical office are essentially an encoding of the myth of greatness expressed hierarchically.

The very naivety of 'Harry le Roy', however, was

very much at odds with the jaundiced perspective of ceremony which the *Henryys* offered. If the court of King Henry IV was characterised by the absence of regalia and form it was because such tokens had been possessed and rendered stale and cheap by vulgar company; while there was no personal decoration to distinguish the king from his ministers, Hal's companions sported the badges and insignia of a variety of youth cults, all of them aggressively anti-establishment. It was entirely consistent that the police constable who accompanied the Lord Chief Justice to the Boar's Head Tavern should be given a Nazi salute by Peto as he exited; when Hal came before his father two scenes later dressed incongruously in denim jacket and jeans his clicked heels carried similarly insolent overtones. Thematically the king appeared as "a frock-coated Mr Gladstone surrounded by courtiers in scarlet, imperialist tunics and clearly out of touch with an England full of punkish, heavy-metal low life".¹¹⁶

At the same time, Bogdanov made no attempt to sentimentalise the lower orders and if his view of Thatcher's Britain projected a vision of "duplicity and opportunism at the top" it conceded a "violent desperation at the bottom".¹¹⁷ King Henry seemed in many respects to rule over a nihilistic moral vacuum populated by a nation of scoundrels who had appropriated the emblems of a patriotism that their political masters would recognise only in terms of expediency:

...Boadicea had rallied her troops around her with a senseless war of expediency, sailing

heroically...twelve thousand miles to the Falklands to do battle for 'a little patch of ground that hath in it no profit but the name...'.¹¹⁸

The vogue among the young for wearing items of military uniform as fashion statements following the Vietnam War debacle was sufficiently recent to revive memories of the mood of disillusionment and cynicism which it characterised. Long before his elevation to the rank of 'lieutenant' in *Henry V* Bardolph's taste for the trappings of spurious military office was suggested by his army greatcoat and corporal's stripes in the *Henry IV* plays. Samuel Crowl has drawn attention to the variety of coats and jackets - most of them of military origin - which characterised Hal's "growing mastery of role playing".¹¹⁹

Much of the pageantry of the cycle invited a variety of wry, ironic perspectives on the concept of personal honour, its collective manifestation, patriotism, and its debased declension towards a xenophobic jingoism. On the personal level the tensions between these perspectives was focused emblematically upon the opposed values represented by Hotspur and Falstaff - their very names, of course, are emblems in the medieval morality tradition. In this production Hal's only concession to formality when he was summoned to meet his father in *Henry IV, Part One* was a kerchief which subsequently became the 'favours' with which he covered Hotspur's 'mangled face' at Shrewsbury; when Falstaff claimed credit for Hotspur's death he carried off as trophies of war not only Hal's favour but also the black headband which had been Hotspur's badge throughout

the play and this he continued to wear among his battle honours at the beginning of *Part Two*. Hotspur departed ignominiously, pulled off under a white flag of truce on the same trolley that had borne Falstaff 'enthroned' on his frayed upholstered Boar's Head chair while Falstaff's scarlet uniform, bright with medals, and his shaggy bearskin, was itself a living emblem of the death of Honour.

It was this same emblem which began *Part Two* and placed in perspective the campaign medals which adorned Falstaff's gaudy civilian suit. Time and again Bogdanov deliberately dislocated the conventional pageantic images which are part of our cultural iconography and so compelled us to readjust our perspective. In *Henry V* there were glimpses of interpolated processions, yet shorn of their customary ceremonial solemnity. Falstaff's funeral procession, for example, was shown passing in silhouette across the up-stage panel screens preceded by Bardolph playing a mournful trombone solo and with the coffin-bearers visibly staggering under the weight of their charge; after Mountjoy's first visit to the English Camp King Henry and his officers formed up in pairs and marched briskly out, their departure covered by soldiers backing up and holding machine guns in a state of combat readiness.

Bogdanov occasionally used the processional device - though again without ceremony - as a means of moving characters between locations in adjacent scenes: in the scene before Flint Castle in *Richard II* Bolingbroke's instruction to 'March on, and mark King Richard how he

looks' had Bolingbroke himself leading his followers, bearing two colours. in single file around one circuit of the stage before encountering Richard 'aloft'; in *Henry IV, Part Two* King Henry's 'progress' from the Jerusalem Chamber to his bedchamber took the form of a procession - his 'state' shrunk to a wheelchair - while he returned to the Jerusalem Chamber solemnly conveyed on the same ubiquitous trolley - now his bed - which had previously carried Falstaff and Hotspur and followed by Hal solemnly holding out the crown before him.

The scene which was bounded by these two processions exposed the limitations of Bogdanov's idiosyncratic directorial approach to the iconography of power: a king who has hitherto been indifferent to the symbols of his office now perversely commands the crown to be set upon his pillow. Perhaps the psychological justification lay in Clarence's observation '...he changes much'; Andrew Rissik concluded that King Henry's ability to perceive that "the crown is an idea, and...you must be intoxicated with it" was only glimpsed by him in "stray moments of anguish".¹²⁰

Crowl has observed that the crown - absent from Bogdanov's staging since it had passed from Richard II to Bolingbroke - was now used as a "symbol of tension and apprehension between the two men".¹²¹ It provided a theatrical dynamic reminiscent of the Richardson-Pasco pairing in John Barton's *Richard II* in 1973; the two actors who had last exchanged the crown in the Bogdanov cycle

prepared again to "negotiate its power and its meaning".¹²²

Now the crown was placed down-stage of both men, Hal being physically divided from it by the ailing king so that Hal must reach across his father to grasp it. He did so, apparently eagerly - though when he crowned himself "it sat about his ears, too big for his head"¹²³ - and he exited wearing it. When he returned he was carrying it and, weeping under his father's rebuke, he placed it on the bed between them like a child caught out in some misdemeanour and kneeled, anxious to win back parental favour. Father and son embraced on the bed, Henry taking up the crown and physically handing it to Hal on 'How I came by this crown'. Then it lay temporarily forgotten as Henry took a last farewell of a son who had embraced his destiny even as he was reconciled with his father.

The discordant electronic music which accompanied Hal's taking up the crown again resolved itself into the triumphal strains of Handel's 'God save the King.... May the King live forever' as he exited, the principal mourner in a symbolic state funeral cortège.

In the meeting with his brothers Hal's casual dress, though it had helped in breaking the barrier of reserve which had previously divided Hal and his father contrasted with their formal military uniforms which themselves now contributed to the mood of anxiety and reserve with which they greeted the new king, bowing stiffly and awkwardly on 'God save your majesty'. Reassured, they exited embracing Hal to *Zadoc the Priest*. This was to be

the last occasion, in fact, on which Hal wore informal clothing; henceforth he showed himself to have accepted the form as well as the substance of majesty: "Hal's marriage of Richard's understanding of ceremony and his father's understanding of politics was immediately made manifest in his coronation parade and his decisive confrontation with Falstaff".¹²⁴

Henry, crowned, entered in procession to the triumphal *Gloria* from Handel's *Coronation Music* and flanked by two ranks of peers in full length crimson robes and white ermine capes. Henry's robe and cape, however, were worn over a scarlet military uniform to suggest his future military role.

In 1983 Howard Davis for the RSC had confronted the traditional view of *Henry VIII* as a "royalist celebration".¹²⁵ In this production, too, "the machinery of pageantry was opened up for critical inspection".¹²⁶ Queen Anne's coronation procession which has been the occasion historically for the indulgence of pageantry and spectacle in "a mythical vision of social hierarchy"¹²⁷ was presented in terms of "a slightly panicky rehearsal"¹²⁸ with the 'Order of the Coronation' being merely read aloud, robed tailors' dummies representing the Court and rows of clothes racks for the cheering crowds. It was a pastiche which sought to expose "the unstable artifice of spectacle"¹²⁹ and one in which Terence Gray would have taken considerable delight.

However, if the dignity of power on display is

itself part of the myth of the English monarchy - one aspect of the "pretence [that] may be used to justify the tranquillity of order"¹³⁰ - it was a world away from the tawdry manner in which it was celebrated in the streets in Bogdanov's representation of the coronation of Henry V:

The set scaffolding had been draped with holiday bunting and a huge Union Jack. Falstaff, Pistol, Shallow and Silence entered equipped with noisemakers and waving tiny flags. Falstaff wore a cheap felt bowler decorated with Union Jacks straight from a Leicester Square souvenir shop.¹³¹

Anachronism and eclecticism - the dual design strands of the cycle - came together in a single collective image that was disturbingly 'realistic': we might have been watching any great event of British public ceremony in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Hitherto the Union flag had been the rebels' standard, reflecting the coming together of diverse national identities against the ruling English tyrant which was represented by the St. George banner which dominated the English court scenes. Having put down rebellion the ruling class had appropriated this symbol to itself, redefining its parameters in terms of 'the whole nation'. As such the scene characterised Bogdanov's general method which sought to "construct a pastiche of the stereotypical past and present" and so created an ethos which placed it "within the cultural dominant of postmodernism...characterised by depthlessness, a waning of historicity and the random cannibalisation of signs stored in global memory...".¹³²

The depthlessness of such an iconographical

collage was manifested in the final image of Falstaff exiting through the debris of the procession, the strings of flags which had decorated the scaffolding having been ripped down by Pistol in response to King Henry's sentence, and a scene which had begun with the majestic pomp of Handel ended, famously, with Status Quo's 'You're in the Army Now'.

This was more than mere directorial iconoclasm, however, an "aggressive populism"¹³³ which took "every opportunity to offend tradition and authority".¹³⁴ as some critics claimed. Among the debris of commercial patriotism it focused attention, in an age whose iconography was dominated by the commercial image, on the distinction between the packaging and the product, between the recruitment pitch and the complexities of war which *Henry V* would explore.

The war-time Olivier *Henry V* may be viewed on one level as "a flag-waving recruiting piece";¹³⁵ the Bogdanov production, however, was more than simple anti-war propaganda, even though its post-Falklands theme of a "self-justifying foreign invasion, drowning discontent at home in its patriotic clamour"¹³⁶ seemed particularly resonant. Michael Pennington identified the play's central paradox:

The play constantly embarrasses you with unsettling images of patriotism, but it lifts you from the gut - like *The Last Night of the Proms*. The aim is to examine the nature of patriotism, why and how people take sides and follow one banner rather than another.¹³⁷

Inevitably, in an age in which the national flag

had itself been hi-jacked by neo-Nazi thugs and football hooligans as a convenient brand image with which to package racism and xenophobia the nature of the banner itself could hardly escape inspection.

The departure from Southampton was the most controversial expression of this as flags of the home nations were hung from the up-stage scaffolding to mingle with the offensive banner 'Fuck the Frogs' and a placard bearing the infamous tabloid legend, 'GOTCHA'¹³⁸ together with a cacophany of noise that included 'Jerusalem', deafening air horns and football rattles to create a memorable image of the "puff-up patriotism...reminiscent of Falklands fever...".¹³⁹

The *Guardian* summed it up thus:

The elements of chauvinism which colour *Henry V* are rendered through the signs and codes of contemporary emotive jingoism and xenophobia, with which any Sun reader could identify.¹⁴⁰

As such it generally drew applause from the audience. A similar jarring effect was created after Agincourt when the moving *Non nobis*, sung as a solo by Chorus, degenerated into the inane "'ere we go, 'ere we go' as the soldiers exited, with no suggestion of the procession.

After Shrewsbury Falstaff's costume was "the outward sign of a self-aggrandising vulgarity";¹⁴¹ Hal on the other hand had 'worn' his Shrewsbury tabard with easy assurance, draped as an antimacassar over the back of the couch in his rooms. Since Falstaff's huge medal - his Hotspur ribbon - was a shameful fraud, King Henry V was

distinguished by the absence of medals on his red dress military jacket.

The same easy assurance characterised his court. He was dressed formally in military uniform and the St. George banner was retained and yet there was an absence of the rigidity of royal protocol: not all of his advisers stood when they addressed the king and Henry himself rose at the conclusion of Canterbury's 'Salic law' speech [I.2.32-95] and perched on the end of the same desk/table used by his father. At the same time he appeared as "an efficient chief executive"¹⁴² cutting through the Archbishop's rambling account by quickly scanning his briefing papers, tossing them on to his desk and directly addressing the nub of the issue: 'May I with right and conscience make this claim?'.

It has been remarked that in Bogdanov's staging "Henry V incorporated his father's sense of political efficiency and theory with Falstaff's sense of dramatics and play".¹⁴³ This latter may be illustrated by the treatment of the French ambassador episode. Only a single ambassador was used in this production, the same actor who was to play Mountjoy. Although he was less formally dressed than Henry's 'courtiers' his tone was nevertheless patronising and having placed the casket on the table at the conclusion of his 'tun of treasure' speech he wiped a finger across the surface of the table and inspected it for dust, a studied piece of impertinence calculated to convey that the kingdom was in a state of neglect. In a tit-for-tat gesture Exeter, the

English ambassador in France [II.4], though formally dressed, strode boorishly through the picnic laid out on the ground when approaching and departing.

Henry responded to 'tennis balls, my liege' with an amused, even roguish wink to the ambassador before undertaking to 'dazzle all the eyes of France' [I.2.260-98]. Henry, however, retained one of the tennis balls which he pointedly dropped into Mountjoy's hand at 'There's for thy labour, Mountjoy' at the conclusion of his first visit to the English Camp [III.6].

The surrender of Harfleur [III.3], too, became a civil ceremony as much as a military operation. Again Henry - now wearing combat gear familiar to audiences from television coverage of the Falklands War - appeared as an administrator with negotiations conducted whilst seated at a trestle field table, with the city officially signed over to Henry by the Governor and the keys duly handed over. Henry's taste for theatrics was again in evidence when in sharing a large 'whew' of relief with the audience when the Governor capitulated, his monstrous threats were shown to be part of a calculated negotiating bluff.

Henry's wooing of Katherine, too, was clearly part of the diplomatic package being negotiated between the two countries. Henry had put off his practical combat gear for the plain red and blue dress uniform he had worn in the opening scene of the play. However, "no medals, no ostentatious ribbons or sashes, no braids or epaulettes were necessary to define his achievement" though the plain black

desk/table - "his legacy from his practical father" - defined "the inescapable political reality of this moment of private charm: the politics of wooing and wedding".¹⁴⁴ He wore the crown, however, the first time it had been seen since his coronation and now "an object of negotiation in the extension of the Lancastrian empire".¹⁴⁵

For the battle scenes the French had worn powder blue tunics with a navy blue front crossed with gold braid and cream trousers with gold braid down the leg. Bogdanov was seeking to echo "the futile French cavalry charges of the First World War, their battalions mown down by automatic weapons"¹⁴⁶ and they did indeed appear as comic opera soldiers contrasting ludicrously with the modern battle dress of the English soldiers. They and the English - now restored to scarlet dress uniforms - came together as in a negotiating chamber backed by a blue banner with *fleurs-de-lys* emblems, the table centre stage flanked by a semi-circle of chairs and with Burgundy presiding as chairman. The opening speeches were delivered in measured, dispassionate, diplomatic tones. Only when Henry's negotiators had left with the French party to discuss the fine print of the peace treaty did Henry remove his crown and Katherine put up her veil.

The final image of the play, however, was not one of harmony "but of impending disruption and chaos"¹⁴⁷ as the Dauphin, angry at his father's capitulation to English terms, left the assembly noisily, overturning his chair, as Henry publicly claimed Katherine with a kiss. In this context the strains of 'Land of Hope and Glory' which

accompanied Chorus's final speech were an ironic pointer to current triumphalism and future strife.

Bogdanov had sought to re-create plays originally performed for "a whole cross-section of the community, some educated, some not" by embracing "popular methods of communication".¹⁴⁸ In some respects it was a method which produced history that would address a particular historical moment: "the contemporary references that infused the ESC *Henry's* with the vital energies of mass culture quickly fade"¹⁴⁹ but Bogdanov had demonstrated that combining traditional pageantic emblems with the iconography of the rituals of contemporary popular culture directors could render Shakespeare's histories "relevant...to the way we live now"¹⁵⁰ without patronising their audience and without sacrificing their integrity.

If Adrian Noble's production of *Henry V* in 1984 had been undertaken in the shadow of Terry Hands's 1975 revival of the play, the latter's spectral presence was even more apparent when Noble succeeded him as Artistic Director of the RSC in 1991. In fact, London performances of Ron Daniels's production of *Richard II* - the last production under Hands's tutelage - actually overlapped with those of *Henry IV, Part One* which inaugurated Noble's reign: "one could, in the summer, see Anton Lesser's Bolingbroke being crowned King Henry IV at the Barbican while Julian Glover's King Henry IV ruled in Stratford".¹⁵¹

In what was seen as "a necessary piece of self-assertion"¹⁵² Noble and his designer, Bob Crowley,

chose largely to abandon the twin deities of 'realism' and 'contemporary relevance' which had distinguished Daniels's production in favour of "a radically stark, emblematic production"¹⁵³ which frequently offered the drama in terms of a medieval morality play.

Noble's *Henry V* has been seen as having contributed in design terms to "the lavish connotations of the decade"¹⁵⁴ but initially, at least, the new production was marked by austerity. The troubled, guilt-ridden reign of Henry IV was represented emblematically by "a huge white cross on a bleak stage backing a solitary Gothic throne"¹⁵⁵ which broodingly dwarfed its present incumbent dressed in grey and black. In this court "everything is monochrome and formal",¹⁵⁶ a "bleak, barren place filled...with chastisement and the odour of sanctity"¹⁵⁷ and characterised by "incense and monkish chant".¹⁵⁸ "Downstage center at the opening of *Part One* stood a small golden replica of the Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem, before which we encountered Henry IV at prayer; the replica was flown out at the end of the scene to hang above the stage like a sanctuary lamp for the rest of the play, an ironic...reminder of Henry's crusading aspirations".¹⁵⁹

Furnished with "hard chairs and severe tables" the court setting contrasted startlingly, therefore, with the Eastcheap tavern which "erupts on us like a medieval vision of hell",¹⁶⁰ a "scarlet, multi-storeyed stew"¹⁶¹ in a further instance of the neo-pictorialism of the period. The same reviewer wrote of Noble's "rejection of processional

pageantry and a penchant for stylisation"¹⁶² but in some ways the spectacle of pageantry was provided by the meticulous choreography of the hydraulic lifts and platforms which either displayed or revealed a series of 'ravishing' pictures and although Noble scorned the procession his most striking set piece - in a production noted for its "physical splendour"¹⁶³ - was a re-working of another pictorial device beloved of the Victorian theatre, the tableau. At Shrewsbury, for example, in cinematic imagery reminiscent of the martial tableaux in Noble's direction of *The Plantagenets* (1988-9) realism gave way to the emblem: "Forget the brutality, dirt and despair of medieval warfare"; in its place Noble introduced "a percussion orchestra in place of a sweaty army, and silken, multi-coloured banners shimmering in the light in the place of mud-stained flags":¹⁶⁴

Blue and red banners of shimmering silk wave and swirl under bright lights; a magnificent battery of percussion - gongs, side drums, timpani, bass drum, tubular bells - appears behind a backstage panel and thunders rhythmically in full view of the audience, reinforced by offstage brass; dry ice seeps into the auditorium, victims of warfare limp by, groups of warriors grapple in slow motion.¹⁶⁵

At one point Noble offered an apparently 'heroic' emblem which one commentator, with no sense of outrage, likened to "a Victorian battle monument".¹⁶⁶ Another saw the "six warriors clinging onto a giant flag" as "an image reminiscent of Raising the Flag at Iwo Jima".¹⁶⁷ Yet this image also contained an ambiguity, at once "the most famous war photograph of all time and the most controversial";¹⁶⁸

an icon of American heroism yet under suspicion of having been staged for the camera; an emblem, moreover, subsequently enlisted - even debased - in the service of causes as diverse as the War Against Drugs and tinned Spam.¹⁶⁹ⁿ Later in the run the actual throne property itself became the object of contention and so "made manifest the aims and ambitions of the rebellion, satisfyingly concretizing the notion of kingship and rule",¹⁷⁰ yet at the same time stripping away any heroic pretensions in favour of an image of naked striving after power.

Most observers regarded such moments as at the least visually 'stunning' or, in their overt theatricality, even as a 'magical' re-working of Brechtian principles of alienation¹⁷¹ and welcomed a fresh approach to a play "hitherto staged to show the realities of England, war and politics";¹⁷² one saw Noble's style as "a rejection of realistic clutter in favour of a spare, lean neo-Expressionism" increasingly favoured in the opera house.¹⁷³

A few, however, spoke sneeringly of the "arty minimalism" of Crowley's sets¹⁷⁴ or lamented "occasional over-production and a lot of silly flags".¹⁷⁵ feeling that "the mandatory tableaux effect seemed to ooze theatrical cliché".¹⁷⁶

Yet Noble's presentation of war was not without its conscious ironies. Even as the battle tableau rose from the stage, the king at its centre, "a heaving mass of armoured soldiers on either side, seething and writhing in

slow-motion combat around him, the clash and cacophony of the music and the falling bits of arms and armor seemed to catch something of the futile destructiveness of war".¹⁷⁷ Before Shrewsbury, too, Bardolph's tatty banner was in marked contrast to the mass of multi-coloured banners up-stage and to one side a woman screamed silently while one commentator remarked on the incongruity of Falstaff's "marching in time to the military drum"¹⁷⁸ as the armies prepared to fight.

If this detail had passed largely unremarked as an ironic counterblast to the illusory nature of chivalric heroism the opening of *Part Two* magnified the irony as Falstaff's disgraceful 'victory' over Hotspur, having already entered the realm of folk legend, was 'celebrated' by two giant puppets as part of an interpolated carnivalesque episode during which the revellers gave utterance to the 'painted tongues' of Rumour. John Peter considered Noble's "boisterous mood" both here and throughout the Eastcheap scenes in *Part Two* both patronising - "middle class actors... busy sending up lower class characters" - and out of tune with the prevailing mood of what is in many ways "a twilight play: its characters...stalked by death, betrayal and disappointment".¹⁷⁹

Yet the opening sequence with its "lawless mobs and unruly carnivals"¹⁸⁰ depicting "a motley bunch of townsfolk swirling about in a stylised manner, some wearing masks...and carrying bizarre-looking white maypoles bedecked

with paper lanterns and white masks"¹⁸¹ was in many ways an apt visual metaphor for "an England turbulent with decay".¹⁸² The excesses of carnival were, after all, both disturbing and dangerous since "Carnival encourages drunkenness, disruptive behavior and symbolic disorderly conduct" as well as "actual misrule, including increased sexual promiscuity, street violence and civil commotion".¹⁸³

The image was also a timely reminder that "the Battle of Carnival and Lent is an explicit structural device in the two parts of *Henry IV*"¹⁸⁴ and that the triumph in effigy of the Carnival figure of Falstaff is inevitably succeeded by the Lenten austerity of his eventual banishment, "a consolidation of rule by the ruthless and permanent suppression of misrule".¹⁸⁵

Authority's victory is not assured, of course, until the final scene of the play and Noble chose to illustrate the tenuous nature of its hold in *Part Two* in a number of striking emblems which combined visual stylisation with psychological realism. Julian Glover's Henry IV, transformed from the "bold commanding figure"¹⁸⁶ of *Part One* to a physically "ravished victim" began *Part Two* "vaguely clutching his crown"¹⁸⁷ still tormented by Richard's death his lines on sleeplessness in which he also laments:

'...the body of our kingdom
How foul it is: what rank diseases grow,
And with what danger, near the heart of it'
[III.1.38-40]

were delivered in the very heart of that danger, in the Boar's Head setting surrounded by the debris of the night's near-anarchic revels.

The emblem lent additional poignancy to the reconciliation scene. Hal had clearly inherited his father's certainty that 'uneasy lies the head that wears the crown'. First upbraiding it with the accusatory venom of a "thwarted son who has been denied a father by the claims of kingship"¹⁸⁸ he eventually grasped it, not eagerly, but with a "wild lunge...ramming it on his head like someone trying to get a necessary torture over with quickly".¹⁸⁹ Thus it was all the more agonising for him when his father woke to misconstrue his desperation as precipitate ambition and subjected his son to a brutal mock coronation. He pressed the golden circlet into his temples "as though it were a crown of thorns",¹⁹⁰ with a cushion placed on top of the crown in a bitter allusion to the mock interview between father and son played out in the Boar's Head in *Part One* with Falstaff in the role of 'carnival' king.

Noble's placing King Henry in the Boar's Head setting in Act III had presented the personal anguish of a disappointed father within the context of social disintegration. In Henry's funeral procession the dead king was carried up-stage by his four sons through a ghostly cloudscape populated by mysterious white figures whose masks resembled deaths-heads. As the cortège disappeared through a blue opening in the back wall the Elisian fields resolved themselves in a surprising "cinematic dissolve"¹⁹¹ into Shallow's orchards: "the mysterious figures transmuted into Shallow's beekeepers, the clouds into the smoke they had been using in their apiarist activities".¹⁹² On one level

the device could be seen as an emblem of the eternal rustic cycles that continue "irrespective of the activities of kings",¹⁹³ on another as an enduring metaphor for the nation which suggested that "none of the play's seemingly separate worlds has been immune to the infections of the reign".¹⁹⁴ In a sense, the wry joke played by fate on Henry IV was extended to embrace the audience as we too found ourselves deceived by appearances and although the episode proved a notable *coup de théâtre* it came dangerously close to *kitsch*.

The one piece of authorised pageantry in *Part Two*. Henry's coronation procession, provided a "regal and ceremonial end".¹⁹⁵ While a mimed coronation ceremony takes place up-stage, complete with "trumpets and blazing lights, and Hal in silver and white"¹⁹⁶ the audience were themselves drawn in to the crowd down-stage as spectators as events in the Abbey were mirrored in their faces.

Thus a play which had begun with irreverent carnival concluded with a visual reaffirmation of authority over disorder; a production in which "all the leading characters are locked into either past or future tense"¹⁹⁷ and whose cosmology had contained idiosyncratic emblems of heaven and hell was resolved by a ceremony of worldly order in the universal present.

Peter Brook wrote in 1968: "At a time when all sands are shifting, the search is automatically a search for form".¹⁹⁸ In some respects history - or our perception of history - can supply that sense of form by enabling us to

attempt an explanation of our own confused present in terms of a more ordered past: "...history departs from the past in being an interpretation rather than a replica: it is a view, not a copy of what happened".¹⁹⁹

"All history is myth", said Enoch Powell in a speech quoted in the programme for Matthew Warchus's production of *Henry V* at Stratford in 1994; "it is a pattern which men weave out of the materials of the past".²⁰⁰ It was a point reinforced by John Ramsden in an essay written for the same programme: "...we all live by myths that organise our past for us".²⁰¹ That process of organisation frequently involves representing the past in essentially emblematic terms as our natural search for order finds reassurance in a progressive reductivism culminating in a species of visual shorthand.

Warchus's production repeatedly suggested an analogy between the historical and theatrical in which the audience no less than the principal players were at once participants and spectators, part of the historical event and detached observers of history in the making.

John Peter observed in his review of the production that for Warchus "...the play speaks with two voices. It speaks of the past, and to the present"²⁰² and it attempted to fulfil this dual role at one level, at least, by presenting the story of King Henry V as a story. Indeed, the programme reminded us that "the word 'history' comes from the same Latin word from which we also derive 'story'".²⁰³ As such, it has resonated across the centuries

through an accumulation of contextual historical accretions and now as the latest expression of the play's own theatrical history. Again, the programme seemed at pains to establish the play's multiple contextualities with academic essays on the history of the histories' composition; the stage history of *Henry V* with photographs drawn from Stratford productions during the previous half century as well as the present production; the means by which Shakespeare realised in theatrical terms the idea of historical 'greatness'; the nature of history itself and the place of Shakespeare's play in the nation's historical consciousness; illustrated extracts representing "'voices from the thick of battle through the centuries'" from the Middle Ages to the Second World War; even a history of the Royal Shakespeare Company itself. "'building on a glorious past' ".²⁰⁴

If the production's images sometimes bordered on cliché it was because received history is frequently represented to ourselves and by ourselves in terms of emblematic mental as well as physical images. Brook has observed that when a stage production is over what remains is its "central image" or "silhouette"²⁰⁵ and so it is with history: "Each new production of *Henry V* turns our history into a new myth for the times".²⁰⁶

When Peter Holland reviewed *Henry VI, Part 3* the same season he remarked that the cast was "that rarest of Stratford visitors, a group of actors almost all new to the RSC".²⁰⁷ By contrast, Tony Britton might almost

have been cast as Chorus for *Henry V* by virtue of his familiarity: a recognised actor in the old 'theatrical' tradition who in his military camel hair overcoat, campaign medals and poppy button-hole was a type of "those upright dignified elderly men who march past the cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday",²⁰⁸ a modern metaphor for one idea of war and also a minor theatrical icon in his own person.

The production's opening image established immediately the tension between the past as event and history as myth. Typically in this production it took the form of a static tableau, an image frozen in time and preserved in the amber of public imagination. Roped off within a chrome post and red rope enclosure was Henry's royal robe with a gold collar displayed on a dummy "like an exhibit in the Imperial War Museum".²⁰⁹ Surrounded by tall red poppies. "the strongest modern symbol of the cost of war", it was an image which "established a sense of royal myth".²¹⁰ It was essentially history as exhibit, represented by its stage properties, effectively lit and displayed for the public gaze.

When Britton set the stage furniture for the clerics' scene and then physically put out the house lights in a gesture which mirrored Derek Jacobi's Chorus at the beginning of Kenneth Branagh's film version he not only blurred the distinction between spectator and participator - just as he would do at Agincourt when he held out his walking stick to help Henry to his feet and so give him assurance of history's benison - but he also took the

audience from "his contemporary perspective on the history of war into the play's own sense of its own history".²¹¹

Indeed, during the second scene of the play Henry (Iain Glen), though without his crown and dressed in a plain rough cloth gown, studied the genealogical texts within an expanded version of the post and rope enclosure which was brightly lit from above by four spotlights lowered in full view of the audience as if through its very theatricality to point the analogy between historical process and spectacle.

Other broadly pageantic aspects of the staging contrived to force the comparison: a small group of onlookers, principally women and children, dressed in drab 1940s clothes were "ushered on at the back to witness the spectacle"²¹² and if "their demeanour and costumes suggested that their morale needed boosting"²¹³ there was also the suggestion of "drawing comfort from the story of *Henry V* at a time of national crisis, just as they did with the Olivier film...and as they must have done repeatedly down the centuries".²¹⁴

Moreover, up-stage a brick theatre wall complete with doors, 'EXIT' signs and stage ladders, ropes and lamps contained an enormous 'window' frame with a "high metal roller blind suggestive of a theater's loading dock".²¹⁵ This served to frame various tableaux during the production and so contrasted "a heroic up-stage picture frame with the down-to-earth stage floor [which] invites a dialogue between the rhetoric and reality of war".²¹⁶

This division was not rigidly observed, however,

for the French ambassadors were received in the down-stage area. For this event Henry removed his loose robe and assumed more regal attire in the form of a scarlet robe and golden crown, while his legs were shown to be clad in mail. Such an historic occasion - "one of a series of inspiring tableaux. 'great moments in history'"²¹⁷ - provided a photo-opportunity for the crowd of onlookers. It was a device which "accentuated Henry's meta-theatrical role as 'great actor' and suited the Chorus's appeals to the audience's sense of theatrical occasion and patriotism".²¹⁸

The production was criticised by some commentators for sacrificing a "controlling vision" to "a series of short-term visual effects"²¹⁹ and yet it did seek to represent the discrepancy between the event and its subsequent representation both as 'history' and as theatre consistent with Chorus's apologia; 'history' and theatre are thus co-operating agents in the mythologisation of the past. It was this process which the production sought to illustrate. If the French were represented as "ineffectual fops",²²⁰ dressed in blue costumes which some found both "beautiful and offensive"²²¹ it was because that is how history - or, at least, history in the theatre - has tended to represent them; if the battle included "the Olivier-esque sound of arrows whizzing through the Agincourt air"²²² and if Neil Warmington's designs offered "picture-book glimpses of fairytale castles"²²³ it was at least in part because the Olivier film itself had both expressed and shaped an essentially romantic perception of the events depicted. A

contemporary reviewer of the Olivier film expressed it thus:

Shakespeare treated history romantically;
Olivier in turn treats Shakespeare
romantically.... Visually the film is a dream,
full of charm, magic, and unusually delicate
color.... It is like living in a fairy-tale.²²⁴

Warchus's scenography did not quite aspire to the level of 'fairy-tale' but it was often consciously pictorial. Cue notes in the production's prompt copy refer to the 'PICTURE OF HARFLEUR', the 'BATTLE PICTURE' and the 'FRENCH FIELD PICTURE'²²⁵ and if there was relatively little pageantry in terms of parades of crowns and coronets there was much that sought to exploit the play's notoriously episodic structure by presenting its public scenes as generic pageant play, offering "tableau visions of a heroic version of the narrative, images of a Boys' Own history-book".²²⁶ Thus, at the end of the Southampton scene [II.2] and Henry's rousing 'No King of England if not King of France' - his voice amplified and with the addition of an echo effect and stirring music - the up-stage area resolved itself into a framed heroic tableau which suggested to one commentator 'the spirit of adventure', "a photo-pose waiting for the court painter to capture it for posterity"²²⁷ and which was held, poignantly, throughout Falstaff's reported death down-stage.

Such contrasts between the heroic or public posture and local or private experience were a characteristic feature of the production. Following Mountjoy's first visit to the English Camp [III.6] Henry shouldered his own pack and led his soldiers in a disorderly

procession one full circuit of the stage as the silken French pavilion was set, but the next scene which concludes with the promise that 'We shall have each a hundred Englishmen' [III.7.153] brought the interval with another heroic tableau showing an iconic warrior astride a gold-armoured steed. If this appeared to some observers to represent "the vision of what the French anticipate from the impending battle"²²⁸ and to others a vision of the forthcoming English triumph the ambiguity demonstrated the propensity for every nation to interpret 'history' from its own perspective.

In the scene in which Henry receives the French ambassadors national pride, religious devotion and personal ambition combined to suggest a hero as multi-layered as the historical legacy he inspired. Even in the presence of the ambassadors Henry had kneeled briefly at 'But this lies all within the will of God' [I.2.190], holding the crucifix bestowed upon him earlier by the Archbishop. After the ambassadors had left, however, Henry returned to the throne to deliver the final speech of the scene and with God as his argument pledged himself to his task, whereupon fifteen battle swords suspended from chains descended from the flies suggesting, emblematically, the divine favour of the 'God of battles'. These Henry and his noblemen claimed as Chorus came forward to proclaim 'Now all the youth of England are on fire...' [II.1.1].

In many ways, however, the defining moment of the production occurred before the ambassadors had entered.

Henry, now 'ROBED UP' to receive them, had sat on the throne and spoken of his grave, his 'epitaph' and his 'history'. Only during the Agincourt scenes, when the 'GRAVESTONE' was raised to a steep rake at 'The day, my friends, and all things stay for me' [IV.1.301] was it evident to the entire audience that much of the down-stage action had taken place on top of Henry's memorial tablet which carried his name and dates, and that in watching the Agincourt scenes we were witnessing Henry's historical epitaph being illustrated before us.

It was a perspective reinforced by the presence of 'CHRONICLERS' throughout the Agincourt scenes. Occasionally spotlighted as lighting cues 'SNAP TO CHRONICLERS', they 'START WRITING' throughout Henry's scenes but 'STOP WRITING' during 'incidental' episodes deemed to be of no historical significance. This 'STONE FLOOR' remained 'AT STEEP RAKE' until it sank to 'PROUD OF STAGE LEVEL' during the *Te deum*.²²⁹

The *Te deum* itself, sung in four parts by the entire company disposed evenly over the stage, facing out into the audience and with swords held aloft had the flavour of an 'heroic' West End musical such as *Les Miserables*, the collective eye level of the company being meticulously choreographed with ten separate moves concluding with: 'LOOK REACHES S[TAGE] C[ENTRE]'; 'ALL LOOK UPWARDS'; 'CO[MPANY] BRING DOWN HEADS + CLOSE EYES'; 'START TO LOOK UP + SPL[IT]'.²³⁰

Its stirring, triumphant harmonies perhaps alluded

to the rising heroic strains of the *Non nobis* in the Branagh film and with long-stemmed red poppies flanking the ramp, a number of swords planted upright in it suggesting grave crosses, with dismembered joints of armour hanging from the flies and the ground scattered with the 'RED SNOW' of poppy leaves it had almost the air of self-parody: heroism, carnage and ambition, all in the name of God and to perpetuate the name of Henry on whose memorial tablet the 'big production number' was celebrated. At the same time, the crucifix received from Canterbury as a sort of religious talisman had lain forgotten - or abandoned - on the battlefield since Henry's prayer to the 'God of battles'.

Religious and political iconography combined, too, in the final peace-making scene at the French court. The long table centre-stage, draped in white, had the appearance of an altar, notwithstanding the two quill pens positioned centrally; Queen Isabel's final speech became a prayer as all except the aged French King kneeled, the speech concluding with swelling chords and universal cheers. As the final Chorus was spoken in full another tableau formed around and over the table for the formal signing of the treaty. Interestingly, although Henry had removed his crown during the wooing of Katherine he continued to wear his chain mail throughout the scene and during the final tableau it was noted that "he was seen forcing [Katherine's] hand down to make the signature that should initiate a reign of peace".²³¹

It was Chorus who brought the pageant to an end.

throwing the switch that reduced the spectacle to blackout, and when the lights were restored the dual fictions of theatre and history combined again as the company took their curtain calls with the royal robe again displayed and lit by four spotlights as at the opening of the production, and it was this image which remained in view as the house lights came up and the audience left the theatre.

It was a production which addressed the idea of 'history' received as myth, perceived as spectacle and experienced as reductive emblem. At the same time, it acknowledged the theatre's own contribution to a process of mythologisation represented in terms of populist hero-worship and provisional and qualified 'truth' expressed visually as iconic absolute.

On one level *Henry V* at the Globe in the summer of 1997 gave expression to a nostalgic yearning to re-connect with a glorious theatrical past; the past it depicted was, moreover, coherent and consistent within its own iconic terms of reference. Ron Daniels's touring production of the play for the RSC which opened at Stratford in September 1997, however, was one in which the medium was at least as important as the message: "Style. style, style...is flaunted here obtrusively" was the view of one commentator who could not resist the conclusion that Daniels and his team had first visited the Globe production "and decided to do the precise opposite".²³²

Thus, while the Globe production was

characterised by a high degree of stylistic consistency, in Daniels's production ceremonial elements together with pageantic emblems provided coded signifiers for a variety of styles in manifestly post-modernist vein. It was a mixture which Daniels himself saw as contributing to "'a fantasy, a poetic statement about war rather than a documentary'",²³³ the modern references expressing his fear of "the dangers of nationalism, of 'the flaring up of genocidal tendencies and religious ethnicities'".²³⁴

The production's programme cover proclaimed an Anglo-American context with an image of Michael Sheen as Henry dressed in American Army Vietnam combat gear with revolver holster at his hip and cartridge belt across his chest and gripping a royal standard while the 'V' of the play's title was given a prominence clearly intended to suggest the Second World War *V For Victory* device together with its Churchillian overtones. Selected quotations in the programme focused upon the way in which American involvement in the Gulf War - accompanied by a "'burst of nationalist religiosity'" - was expressed through a wealth of emblems in the form of patriotic slogans, flags and yellow ribbons. "'the fetishes of our faith'",²³⁵ Likewise, if Daniels saw the production as exploring "a curious national quest for identity"²³⁶ the production itself demonstrated that 'imagining the nation' has much to do with 'imaging' the nation in emblematic terms.

Ashley Martin-Davies's permanent setting - a

series of receding proscenium arches inscribed with the names of thousands of the battle dead - was itself a moving emblem of war's waste and a tribute to the fallen. An image which suggested the Menin Gate and conjured associations with Cenotaph ritual provided a fitting backdrop for an interpolated funeral procession in which four ranks of soldiers in full military dress uniform and eerily lit from below accompanied an Unknown Soldier to solemn drums and electronic music.

This production shared with Warchus's revival of the play a concern with the memorialisation of the past but differed from it in shifting the play's emphasis from the construction of the heroic image of the King towards the anonymous multitude upon whom that image has been sustained. It was ironic, therefore, that the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, resulted to some extent in the production's democratic aspirations being hi-jacked by the star quality implicit in the cult of personality.

For some commentators the death and funeral of the Princess of Wales just a few days before press night provided irresistibly resonant parallels. Michael Coveney, recalling that Princess Diana's coffin was draped in a flag showing the *fleurs-de-lys*, was reminded that the play shows how "we nabbed the emblem for our standard":²³⁷ for others the play seemed "oddly out of touch with the present mood" as recent events had revealed "the growth of a softer, more feminine spirit"²³⁸ while "with Britain feeling more concerned and confused about the Royal Family than at any

time since the abdication crisis. it's a poignant moment to revive the nearest thing we have to a national epic".²³⁹

If Daniels's production was, indeed, "a living monument to all that is noble and all that is savage about the theatre of war".²⁴⁰ its nobility depended but little upon the pageantry of war. The single English standard was carried furled before the battle and was unfurled after it only as a military tribute to the fallen. The conventional emblems of war's pomp were thus muted or represented in the debased form of their late twentieth century equivalents. The style of the Eastcheap characters, for instance, was reminiscent of Michael Bogdanov's *Wars of the Roses* cycle. "a gang of Hell's Angels. all leathers and flick knives".²⁴¹ Here, too, a profusion of badges, tattoos and chapter emblems signified rivalries no less ritualised than those of the medieval jousting field, though if the King's royal crown and lion argent tattoos were poignant reminders of his own Eastcheap days in the scene in which Bardolph was hanged. Nym's union jack belt buckle was a world away from the provocative jingoism of the post-Falklands mid-eighties. The tasteless crudities of Bogdanov's soccer pageantry were superceded in this production by the equally tasteless excesses of the wedding ritual. The black bikers' leathers of Bardolph and Nym threw into incongruous relief both Pistol's white morning coat and grey top hat and Mistress Quickly's bridal attire, a sugar almond vision in pink and white lace and a bridal bouquet that doubled as a wreath for Falstaff's coffin where it stirred uncomfortably

parodic memories of the cortge of 'The People's Princess'.

Some were irritated by the "muddle"²⁴² of styles which embraced realism, and stylisation in addition to the element of fantasy which Daniels himself had identified, though such stylistic eclecticism might also be seen as a visual expression of the moral ambivalence which underlies the text of the play. The sense of stylisation was heightened by the "exaggerated side- and top-lighting [so] that everything looks artificial"²⁴³ and by the delivery of the lines in which "few people look each other in the eye, and where everyone faces front and orates like hell".²⁴⁴ Such devices - reminiscent of the neo-pictorialism of Adrian Noble's production of *The Plantagenets*, images "literally detaching themselves from both historical and human contexts"²⁴⁵ - helped in conveying the concept of patriotism as "bloody spectacle"²⁴⁶ and enhanced the pictorial tableau effect suggested by the multiple proscenium frames.

These pictures were embellished with a series of martial emblems from discrete - though not always internally consistent - periods. The British at war wore what was variously described as 1914-18 battle dress and Vietnam battle fatigues. Nevertheless, medieval mail was discernible beneath their shirts and Henry's sword seemed incongruous among the rifles and bayonets of his men. The opening scene - the exchange between Canterbury and Ely having been cut - was placed in an operations room with First World War trench warfare film footage projected onto a

portable screen so that "the ghastly images tattoo [Henry's] face"²⁴⁷ to become thereafter an iconic moral referant.

The overt theatricality of the receding proscenium frames provided an apt setting for a Henry assuming the part of hero-conqueror with some trepidation. He began his speech of defiance to the French ambassador in the opening scene hesitantly, conscious that his performance was being noted by the court, but quickly warmed to the role expected of him and seemed surprised at his own passion. Thereafter, "though warfare goads him to steely fanaticism, he never quite loses a sense of wracked anxiety and insecurity"²⁴⁸ so that when the war was miraculously won and the actor could come out of role he "bursts into racking tears - of relief, of gratitude, but also for the waste of war".²⁴⁹

It was in the 'breach' scene, however, that Henry not only came of age in personal terms but seemed to carry military ethics forward in time from an age of gentlemanly idealism to one of modern brutalism: Henry's threats to the civilians of Harfleur were delivered via field speakers with a psychotic callousness which so discomfited his brother that he attempted, unsuccessfully, to wrest the microphone from Henry's hand. It was a re-working in dramatic terms of the same ethical conflict implicit in the film footage of the Great War shown at the beginning of the play and proved an apt precursor to the carnage of Agincourt.

In battle the idealistic French - on

emblematic, two-legged silver steeds reminiscent of those in John Barton's 1973 production of *Richard II* and here, too, "glitteringly covered in medieval armour"²⁵⁰ - were unequally matched against the brutish English. Their 'riders' carried penants which recalled the ritualised conflicts of the medieval courtly lists. The incongruity may have been self-conscious and for some came "perilously near to making war itself a spectacle"²⁵¹ but the uncompromising sound of artillery shell and shot that was the field of Agincourt ended the chivalric codes of medieval spectacle no less than the pre-1914 perception of war as an extension of the values of the sports field with a shockingly brutal finality.

Even the 'realism' of the battlefield, however, had an emblematic air. the selective reality of theatrical warfare with its improvised field-hospital syringes, cigarettes for the wounded and body bags for the dead mirroring the edited realism of newsreel footage that passes for the experience of war for the late twentieth century viewer. The fact that in the final scene the tribute to the French dead took the form of a huge wreath of poppies, the most potent modern symbol of the waste and sacrifice of war, signalled their belated recognition of the demise of the old order. It was also a timely reminder, in a setting which listed many times the 'numbered' dead recorded in the text of Shakespeare's play, that for today's Western audiences at least, war is generally experienced not in the killing fields but as spectacle.

either as archival film footage or as ceremonies conducted around cenotaphs.

AFTERWORD

Whereas Bogdanov's *Henry V* had offered a critique of a debased heritage culture and numerous recent revivals of the play had sought to interrogate, with varying degrees of bitterness, the mythologisation of history, the Globe Experience seemed in danger of embracing both as articles of faith. A production which self-consciously combined elements of both Poelian and nineteenth century historicism can hardly be discussed in the same terms as the products of a post-modern, post-imperial age.

On the face of it, the revival of *Henry V* for the reconstructed Globe Theatre's inaugural season in 1997 seemed doomed to be crushed under the weight of its own history. Directed by Richard Olivier - son of the heroic war-time Henry - and performed in "the space that Shakespeare wanted us to meet him in",²⁵² 'authenticity' was the company's watchword, with an all-male cast and costumes made from hand-spun wool and constructed from evidence "pieced together from surviving inventories of clothes".²⁵³

However, if the slightly officious ushers reminded one observer of the National Trust²⁵⁴ commentators in general felt that the production itself avoided the charge of 'antiquarianism' by virtue of the sincerity of its artistic purpose in attempting to discover something of the

reality of Elizabethan theatre. There was also a welcome for the rejection of "the director-designer axis that has dominated for so long" in favour of a return to "the actor's words playing on an audience's imagination".²⁵⁵

Nevertheless, some whose expectations had been whetted by the director's stated intention in the production programme to 'explore the myth' of King Henry expressed disappointment with a "generally dullish production"²⁵⁶ which operated "to no great interpretative effect".²⁵⁷

In the Elizabethan theatre it was "the costumes that made it spectacular";²⁵⁸ here, too, they were acknowledged to be "gorgeous".²⁵⁹ Henry, who wore "a very glittery, oversized crown",²⁶⁰ initially appeared as king in high white ruff, black velvet cloak and cream doublet which he exchanged for a helmet-crown and full-skirted coat bearing royal emblem quarterings for the military scenes. The French, in richly coloured velvets and quilted fabrics for the court scenes, were, fittingly, "gorgeously gaudy and beplumed"²⁶¹ for battle, their body armour with its decorative insignia, plumes, breeches and stockings all colour co-ordinated.

Such visual pageantry, however, lacking a clear intellectual imperative, appeared - like the two high-canopied thrones - either functionally descriptive or purely decorative, an impression exacerbated by the fact that the director "cannot call on as many players as Shakespeare's company could presumably muster" so that even the pageantry of battle was muted. "unmartial" and

"unenergetic".²⁶²

By contrast, there were occasions - most notably at the opening - when prolonged drumming provided an accompaniment and the entire company striking the wooden floor rhythmically with staves generated a thrilling primitive energy, while fanfares punctuated the action with moments both of splendour tinged, at times, with humour: Henry actually cued with an upraised arm the fanfare from the gallery musicians that concluded Act I, Scene 2: the English ambassador pointedly halted the flourish that marked the French King's line 'Tomorrow shall you know our mind at full' [II.4.140] before urging Charles to 'Dispatch us with all speed...' while the 'low' characters were sometimes introduced with a parodic version of the court fanfares.

At other times drum and fanfare provided a token formality more or less conventionally: typically, Henry entered in procession to parley with the Governor of Harfleur preceded by a single drummer and himself signalled a fanfare that signified the opening of the gates; for the Bardolph scene the drummer was augmented with a single banner-bearer. The most original use of the device - and the most effective - was the insistent drumming which underscored the 'breach' speech, periodically increasing in intensity to give an added emotional charge to the language.

Mark Rylance had played the king as both sensitive and modest so that Henry's gauchness in the wooing scene was wholly consistent and was enhanced by his

awkwardly retaining the high crown during much of the episode; he removed it only for a hesitant kiss and was then forced to resume it in some confusion when, preparing to kiss Katherine again, more confidently this time, the Court returned unexpectedly. The dynastic-political sub-text to the scene which many modern directors have exploited was entirely absent here and when the company exited at the end of the performance they did so processionally in pairs, led by Henry and Katherine, to a shower of rose petals descending from the 'heavens'. It was a charming moment but there was a suspicion that it had been inspired less by the demands of the play than by a desire to demonstrate an 'authentic' piece of Globe technology.

No doubt when the novelty of the physical environment has worn off it will be possible both to direct and watch plays there with a reduced sense of the Globe itself as cultural and theatrical icon. On this occasion, however, it was difficult to resist the conclusion that in seeking to 'explore the myth' of *Henry V* Richard Olivier had succeeded principally in confirming the space as hero.

'All on for the procession' has been a familiar backstage call down the centuries when pageantry needed no intellectual justification. It is no doubt true to say that the procession "will not come into its own again until the return of a more lavish age".²⁶³ Nevertheless, as the twentieth century draws to its close Bernard Beckerman reminds us that "parades grow in power as they involve more and more people over a longer and longer route".²⁶⁴ It is a

fine irony. therefore, that one commentator acknowledged of the New Globe production that "if our imaginations are to play their part, they need a little more help than even Shakespeare's verbal scene-painting can provide" and conceded that the 'problem' lay partly in the fact that the modern director "cannot call on as many players as Shakespeare's company could presumably muster".²⁶⁵

Perhaps, after all, Shakespeare and his contemporaries knew what they were about when they called for 'as many as can be'.

NOTES

¹ Michael Pennington, programme essay: 'Shakespeare and History - the actor's view'.

² Hodgdon, *Henry IV, Part Two*, p. 125.

³ David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, (USA: Free Press, 1996; London: Viking, 1997), Front Fly Leaf.

⁴ Lois Potter, 'Bad and Good Authority Figures: Richard III and Henry V since 1945', *Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft West Jahrbuch, 1992*, 39-54, (p. 39).

⁵ Ibid..

⁶ Alan C. Dessen, 'Staging Shakespeare's History Plays in 1984: A Tale of Three Henrys', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36 (1985), 71-79 (p. 72).

⁷ Robert Shaughnessy, *Representing Shakespeare: England, History and the RSC*, (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p. 117.

⁸ Desmond Pratt, 'The Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford upon Avon: The Royal Shakespeare Company. "Henry V"', *Yorkshire Post*, 29 March, 1984.

⁹ Shaughnessy, *Representing Shakespeare*, p. 116.

¹⁰ Michael Coveney, 'Henry V/Royal Shakespeare Theatre', *Financial Times*, 29 March, 1984.

¹¹ Norah Lewis, 'Right royal time for the reluctant hero', *Birmingham Evening Mail*, 29 March, 1984.

¹² Michael Coveney, 'Henry V/Royal Shakespeare Theatre', *Financial Times*, 29 March, 1984.

- ¹³ Jack Tinker, 'Special spirit of our golden ages', *Daily Mail*, 29 March, 1984.
- ¹⁴ Kenneth Branagh, 'Henry V' in *Players of Shakespeare 2: Further essays in Shakespearean performance by players with the Royal Shakespeare Company*, ed by Russell Jackson and Robert Smallwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 93-105 (p. 98).
- ¹⁵ Gareth Lloyd Evans, 'Surprise, surprise', *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, 6 April, 1984.
- ¹⁶ Michael Billington, 'Unto the breach again', *Guardian*, 18 May, 1985.
- ¹⁷ Kathy O'Shaughnessy, 'Heroes and villains', *Spectator*, 1 June, 1985.
- ¹⁸ Production programme.
- ^{19ⁿ} 'King Coal' was the tabloids' name for Arthur Scargill, President for life of the Miners' Union.
- ²⁰ Shaughnessy, *Representing Shakespeare*, p. 118.
- ²¹ Michael Billington, 'Onward Christian soldiers', *Guardian*, 29 March, 1984.
- ²² Roger Warren, 'Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36 (1985), 79-87 (p. 81).
- ²³ Brian Jarman, 'Hooray Henry wins the day', *South Wales Argus*, 29 March, 1984.
- ²⁴ Warren, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36 (1985), p. 81.
- ²⁵ Prompt Book: Noble: *Henry V* [1984].
- ²⁶ Prompt Book: Noble: *Henry V* [1984].
- ²⁷ John Trewin, 'Henry V', *Birmingham Post*, 29 March, 1984.
- ²⁸ Desmond Pratt, 'The Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford upon Avon: The Royal Shakespeare Company, "Henry V"', *Yorkshire Post*, 29 March, 1984.
- ²⁹ Bob Crowley in conversation with Michael McNay, 'Set pieces that release the forces of darkness', *Guardian*, 17 April, 1984.
- ³⁰ Prompt Book: Noble: *Henry V* [1984].
- ³¹ Dessen, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36 (1985), p. 73.
- ³² Martin Cropper, 'Patriotic to a fault', *The Times*, 17 May, 1985.
- ³³ Chris Fitter, 'A Tale of Two Branaghs: Henry V, Ideology, and the Mekong Agincourt' in *Shakespeare Left and Right*, ed. by Ivo Kamps (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 259-75 (p. 261).
- ³⁴ Fitter, p. 265.
- ^{35ⁿ} At the Barbican the truck descended; at Stratford it had risen from beneath the stage.
- ³⁶ Michael Billington, 'Unto the breach again', *Guardian*, 18 May, 1985.
- ³⁷ Michael Coveney, 'Henry V/Royal Shakespeare Theatre' *Financial Times*, 29 March, 1984.

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- ³⁹ 'Prompt Side' Properties Setting List. Production records: *Henry V* (1984: Noble), Ref. 71.21.
- ^{40a} *The Properties setting List included a 'BUCKET OF BLOOD WITH BRUSH' to be placed Prompt Side.*
- ⁴¹ Warren, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36 (1985), p. 81.
- ⁴² Prompt Book: Noble: *Henry V* (1984).
- ⁴³ Peter McGarry, 'Headlong through Henry's heroics', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 29 March, 1984.
- ⁴⁴ Helene Ward, 'The effects nearly upstaged the actors', *Leamington Spa Courier*, 30 March, 1984.
- ⁴⁵ Prompt Book: Noble: *Henry V* (1984).
- ⁴⁶ Fitter, p. 261.
- ⁴⁷ B. A. Young, 'Henry V/Barbican', *Financial Times*, 17 May, 1984.
- ⁴⁸ Fitter, p. 272.
- ⁴⁹ Branagh, *Players of Shakespeare 2*, p. 100.
- ^{50a} Branagh has spoken of its "tapestry-like effect": *Players of Shakespeare 2*, p. 99.
- ⁵¹ Crowley with McNay, *Guardian*, 17 April, 1984.
- ⁵² Ibid..
- ⁵³ Warren, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36 (1985), p. 81.
- ⁵⁴ Fitter, p. 267.
- ⁵⁵ Helene Ward, 'The effects nearly upstaged the actors', *Leamington Spa Courier*, 30 March, 1984.
- ⁵⁶ 'Patriotic to a fault', *The Times*, 17 May, 1985.
- ⁵⁷ Michael Billington, 'Unto the breach again', *Guardian*, 18 May, 1985.
- ⁵⁸ Ros Asquith, 'Hooray Henry', *Observer*, 19 May, 1985.
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- ⁶² 'Henry IV', *Guardian*, 29 August, 1980.
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- ⁷¹ 'Jacobi runs the gauntlet in a dreary clothes show', *Daily Express*, 1 December, 1988.
- ⁷² Michael Coveney. *Financial Times*; quoted *Independent*, 3 December, 1988.
- ⁷³ Kenneth Hurren, 'King Derek, the jewel in the crown', *Mail on Sunday*, 4 December, 1988.
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- ⁸⁰ Bogdanov in interview with Barbara Hodgdon; quoted Hodgdon, *Henry IV, Part Two*, p. 123.
- ⁸¹ Michael Bogdanov and Michael Pennington, *The English Stage Company: The Story of 'The Wars of the Roses' 1986-1989* (London: Hern, 1990), p. 24.
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- ⁸⁵ Bogdanov and Pennington, p. 26.
- ⁸⁶ Hodgdon, *Henry IV, Part Two*, p. 123.
- ⁸⁷ Bogdanov and Pennington, p. 30.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- ⁹⁰ Hodgdon, *Henry IV, Part Two*, p. 125.
- ⁹¹ Bogdanov and Pennington, p. 29.

- ⁹² Ibid., p. 31.
- ⁹³ Wells, *Shakespeare Survey*, 41 (1988), p. 162.
- ⁹⁴ Bogdanov and Pennington, p. 29.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 30.
- ⁹⁶ Bogdanov and Pennington, p. 103.
- ⁹⁷ *Glasgow Herald*, 24 March, 1988.
- ⁹⁸ Giles Gordon, *London Daily News*, 23 March, 1987.
- ⁹⁹ Bogdanov and Pennington, p. 42.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 108.
- ¹⁰¹ Bogdanov and Pennington, p. 107.
- ¹⁰² The prompt copy speaks of their exchanging 'SABRES' for 'JOUST STICKS', though 'sword' is substituted for 'lance' in the text. The English Shakespeare Company Archive is held in the Theatre Museum Archive. References for relevant prompt books for *The Wars of the Roses* cycle: *Richard II* [2.83]; *Henry IV, Part One* [2.81]; *Henry IV, Part Two* [2.82]; *Henry V* [2.79].
- ¹⁰³ *Scotsman*, 24 March, 1988.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Scotsman*, 24 March, 1988.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Glasgow Herald*, 24 March, 1988.
- ¹⁰⁶ Prompt Book: ESC: *Richard II*.
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- ¹¹³ See James Agate, *The Autobiography of James Agate: A Shorter Ego: The First Selection* (London: Harrap, 1946), p. 144.
- ¹¹⁴ Bogdanov and Pennington, p. 43.
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- ¹¹⁶ *Country Life*, 26 March, 1987.
- ¹¹⁷ *International Herald Tribune*, 25 March, 1987.
- ¹¹⁸ Bogdanov and Pennington, p. 23.
- ¹¹⁹ See Crowl, pp. 146-47.
- ¹²⁰ Andrew Rissik, 'The Henry Trilogy', *Plays and Players* (March, 1987), 8-11 (p. 9).
- ¹²¹ Crowl, p. 153.
- ¹²² Crowl, p. 154.
- ¹²³ Crowl, p. 153.
- ¹²⁴ Crowl, p. 154.
- ¹²⁵ Shaughnessy, *Representing Shakespeare*, p. 151.
- ¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 157.
- ¹²⁷ *Ibid.*.
- ¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 158.
- ¹²⁹ *Ibid.*.
- ¹³⁰ *Stage*, 2 April, 1987.
- ¹³¹ Crowl, p. 154.
- ¹³² Hodgdon, *Henry IV, Part Two*, p. 127.
- ¹³³ *International Herald Tribune*, 25 March, 1987.
- ¹³⁴ *Field*, March, 1987.
- ¹³⁵ Heather Neill, *Times Educational Supplement*, 24 October, 1986.
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- ¹³⁷ Pennington in interview with Heather Neill, *Times Educational Supplement*, October 24, 1986.
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