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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

CITIZENS AND KINGS:
DRAMATIC GENRE AND SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN
EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN ENGLISH

BY

ANNA N. ULLMANN

CHICAGO, IL

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INTRODUCTION

From all that's near the court, from all that's great,
Within the compass of the city walls,
We now have brought our scene.
—Induction.1-3

These lines begin Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and they are a good place to begin the present study for two reasons. First, as the Prologue's address to the audience, they indicate the literal setting of the play and stage amongst the commons of the City as opposed, pointedly, to the Court. Of course, when speaking of the commons, it is important to note that this means wealthy commoners—the sort of merchants, authority figures, and important men of the City who could afford to go to the private theatres, where *Knight* played (Gurr 89). These were the kinds of citizens who, around the turn of the seventeenth century, were busily earning and growing their wealth and steadily establishing themselves as the rising social class in London, becoming a viable political match for the aristocracy who, as Lawrence Stone has demonstrated, were in financial crisis by 1600 (*Crisis* 6-9).

Second, the lines speak to a trend happening across the commercial theatres which, I will argue, was directly related to this steady shift in economic and political power from the Court to the City. It has been noted by many scholars that, by 1600, a significant change was occurring in the types of productions that the London theatres offered. Quite literally, the acting companies were bringing their works from “all that's great” into “the compass of the city walls” when it came to genre and content, and they were increasingly probing the metatheatrical relationship between genre, content, and culture, as the existence of a play like *Knight* suggests. Dramatic

works, even tragedies, were no longer focusing solely on “great men” or noble themes but were often incorporating citizen and clown figures into what, according to intellectuals like Sir Philip Sidney, should have been theoretically unified artistic plots. This had been happening for some time, as Sidney famously complained when he noted the “gross absurdities” committed by the acting companies, their “mingling kings and clowns” by thrusting the clown into “majestical matters” (244). Tragedies and especially histories quite often included characters from among the citizens and peasants, and by the 1590s these characters were not, as Sidney suggests, merely thrust into the historical content for the sake of comic relief, but served as critical commentary and a reminder that history included both citizens and kings.

The chronicle history play, which, alongside romances and comedies, had dominated the theatrical scene of the 1580s and 90s, is generally acknowledged to have been in slow decline after 1600. The genre had enjoyed a period of widespread popularity during Elizabeth’s reign with foundational works such as *Gorboduc* (1561) and *Cambyses* (1569) and culminated in the works of Marlowe (*Tamburlaine*, 1588; *Edward II*, 1593) and Shakespeare. Roslyn Knutson notes “changes taking place around 1600 in the choice of subject matter for English history plays” (94), changes such as a focus on more recent history rather than medieval as well as a tendency to feature famous commoners such as Thomas Cromwell or Thomas Gresham rather than kings. Irving Ribner argues—rightly, judging by performance and publication dates—that “following the accession of James I the history play passes into a period of rapid decline” (266). Critics have attempted to explain this decline in various ways. Phyllis Rackin suggests that, as the field of historiography became more formalized, a “division between historical fact and literary truth foreclosed the possibility of writing historical drama” (32). Leonard Tennenhouse argues that the history play genre depended on a kind of glorified nationalism that aged and

finally died out with Elizabeth (85, qtd. in Morgan-Russell 246). Ribner significantly notes that the decline of the history play coincided with the rising popularity of “the sophisticated satiric drama of Marston and Jonson” and suggests that chronicle history simply couldn’t compete (267). There is certainly some merit to each of these theories, and the true cause of the history play’s downfall most likely lies in some combination of them. However, I would like to highlight Ribner’s observation that the decline of chronicle histories on the stage was simultaneous with the rise of satirical city comedies, for it is my contention that the history play did not simply give way to the citizen comedy but that it, in fact, caused its emergence.

This causation is why we see the steady movement in setting and content from Court to City, from “all that’s great” to simply what was common, from plots that center upon kings and archbishops and great lords of the past to ones that include the citizens who were influential in the same historical events. The historical consciousness that had been steadily growing in early modern culture, which will be discussed in detail in the first chapter, enabled, partly via the history play, the consequential development of a social consciousness in London theatre audiences. Ultimately, this change would result in not only more socially inclusive history plays but an entirely new genre focused upon the citizenry itself. The critical historical consciousness that led to such developments as the metatheatrical Chorus and rather impertinent soldier Williams in Shakespeare’s *Henry V* was transformed, over time, into the kind of social awareness that could make audiences laugh at portrayals of City officials and puritans, apprentices and ambitious wives, even though these types were undoubtedly their friends, neighbors, and even themselves. But it is not sufficient to simply make this leap without demonstrating the layers of this transformation. This project will therefore establish the steady movement from one genre to the other and its relationship to shifts in social consciousness by

examining plays that contain distinct but overlapping elements of both history plays and the new city comedies, with the goal of demonstrating the intimate connection between the historical and the social aspects of human life and their manifestation in dramatic genre.

Just as scholars have noted the history play's decline, so they have not been entirely blind to the connection between the popularity of the history play and the rise of the new citizen comedy genre. Jean Howard has referred to the "generic hybrid" of the late 1590s, especially with regard to the works of Thomas Heywood, and notes that many history plays were beginning to contain elements that were decidedly critical of the monarchy and celebratory of the citizens' historical role (141). Simon Morgan-Russell more assertively argues, as I do, that "the city comedy emerges from the same moment and as a result of the same cultural conditions that undermine the viability of the history play" (247), though he locates the cause of this emergence in the rise of chorography as a historiographical genre. It was becoming increasingly difficult, he argues, to stage history plays because of the immense size and scope of "England," as evidenced by the many battle scenes of Shakespeare's second tetralogy. As such, playwrights turned to the local rather than the national for their plots in a turn that mirrored the shift in the field of history from huge chronicles to more intimate chorographic accounts. Citizen plays, then, were the logical outcome.

Morgan-Russell's essay is an invaluable starting point for thinking through these changes, and I agree with his argument as far as it goes. But it is limiting for several reasons. First, he does not explain why chorography should have developed to supplant the chronicle history in the first place, but simply takes this change as an established fact. This change will be explained at length in chapter one, and revisited briefly in chapters two and three, as the factors which caused this shift in historiography are vital for understanding both the rise and fall of the

history play. Second, Morgan-Russell does not address why it should have been city *comedy* that developed, and not just citizen histories; why is it that the switch to a more chorographical approach should have also necessitated the use of satire? And finally, his view does not sufficiently acknowledge the role that the theatre itself played in this transition. He argues that the city comedy was caused by the same “moment” and “cultural conditions” that undermined the history play without accounting for the fact that it may have been the history play itself which helped create those cultural conditions.

Susan Wells provides a possible explanation for the growth of a new citizen genre as satirical comedy in particular, and offers a glimpse into the key political and ideological developments which both caused the genre’s emergence and ultimately resulted from it. She argues that city comedy was “a response to specific contradictions within the hegemonic ideology concerning the City of London,” and that the most prominent contradiction was the importance of both “commerce and celebration” to the City’s consciousness (37). The kind of communal festivity outlined by Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* was a vital part of the self-perception of the middling sort, but it was being systematically compromised at the end of the sixteenth century by the progressive transformation of the marketplace from a point of gathering to a place of credit, trade, investment, and debt: i.e., the other essential aspect of citizen consciousness. The simultaneous conceptualization of two such opposing visions of the market produced a tension resolvable only by self-deprecating satire (Wells 53-4). Thus, city comedy was born, a genre which both reflected and shaped the social awareness of its audience and the political and economic contradictions of citizen ideology. This project seeks to place this ideological problem in conversation with the critical developments in sixteenth century historiography: in pointing to the history play as the precursor of city comedy, I argue that the

movement from one genre into the next parallels the evolution of an early citizen class consciousness resulting directly from the historical awareness facilitated by such historiographical developments as antiquarianism, chorography, and historical drama.

In order to explore and attempt to explain the connections between the cultural and economic conditions of the early modern period and their relationship to changing theatrical genres, this project adopts a Marxist theoretical approach for historical and literary analysis. While the various economic, political, religious, and cultural developments of the period can certainly be examined without such an approach, the terminology and theories of Marxist critics are particularly useful for connecting such changes to both the evolution of class consciousness and ideological shifts. Further, because this project is examining the formation of what is essentially the early bourgeoisie, a Marxist approach allows us to connect this to future developments such as the English Revolution, capitalist industrial relations and their importance in modern Western society, and our contemporary understanding of income inequality and social justice. This project will not address these future developments in depth; however, it is an important investigation into the origins of modern class relations and the way that literary developments can illuminate them.

It should first be established precisely who is meant when discussing the “citizens” or “proto-bourgeoisie,” for this group has by no means been conclusively defined for the early modern period. Marxist theory understands historical consciousness as a prerequisite, in any society, for class consciousness; in order for a group to identify itself as having a shared ideology and way of life, they must first internalize the historical specificity and formation of their material conditions. As Georg Lukacs has defined it, class consciousness is “a class-conditioned *unconsciousness* of one’s own socio-historical and economic condition” which comes from the

collective understanding of a shared “position in the process of production” (*History* 51-2, emphasis his). Class consciousness is the understanding, often tacit understanding, of one’s place socially and economically *as it has been constituted over time*; only when individuals in an economic group are able to conceive of themselves as having a collective history, a class history that has led to their present reality, can class consciousness be said to have fully matured and be capable of asserting itself as an ideology. This shared history will be rooted in a similar experience of the changing material conditions of production and therefore society.

This is why it is possible to talk about the formation of an emerging class consciousness for the bourgeoisie in early modern England even though the terms “class” and “bourgeois” are decidedly anachronistic for the time period. Certainly the reified and hegemonic consciousness of the bourgeoisie as discussed by Marx and others in the nineteenth century did not yet exist, but its foundations were being laid in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century experiences of what scholars sometimes refer to as the “middling sort” (Leinwand; Kegl; Barry and Brooks). Indeed, most critics choose to employ the terms “bourgeois” or “middle class” with the understanding that this group is not precisely the same as that of the industrial period, but that it supplies many of the same economic functions for the early modern period, such as manufacturing and investment. While some critics, like Theodore Leinwand, insist on the “middling sort” appellation, most others have been content to use “middle class” (Hinely; Grav; Kegl) or “bourgeois” (Hunter; Barry and Brooks) because they recognize, culturally and economically, “the bourgeoisie of Renaissance England as that feudal middle class which was neither nobility nor peasantry” (Kegl 81). In the chapters that follow, I use the terms “bourgeois,” “middling sort,” and “citizenry” interchangeably, then, on the assumption that while economic and social relations between groups in the early modern period were different

from those of the industrial age, I am talking about the same group of people simply at different points in the historical construction of their class consciousness.

Part of the reason that it is so difficult to settle on a particular term for these middling groups is that specific divisions within the “middling sort” did not exist in the period. It is clear from the social analyses of contemporary writers that the terms available for classifying people were inadequate or loosely defined, for they had already begun to reapportion the various types of men in society in ways that differed significantly from the medieval system of the three estates. No longer satisfied with the accuracy of the clergy, nobility, and commons dynamic, writers such as William Harrison and John Stow were extolling the “honour of citizens” (Stow 129) and dividing men according to social status and especially property rather than title. In Harrison’s *Description of England*, his “four sorts” of people in the commonwealth include all of the royalty, nobility, and knights as one “sort” (94); he makes little mention of the clergy, and describes the other three sorts—citizens, yeomen, and laborers and artificers—as types of commoners separated murkily by property holdings and participation in government. “Citizens and burgesses” are “those that are free within cities” and “likely to bear office...in their cities and boroughs, or in corporate towns where they dwell” (115), while yeomen, whom Harrison classifies as a different degree of persons, are “freemen born English” with “a certain pre-eminence” who “live wealthily, keep good houses, and travail to get riches” whereby they are able to “buy the lands of unthrifty gentlemen” (117). Harrison also includes merchants among the citizens, although they, like the yeomen, “often change estate with gentlemen” (115), because they are able to accumulate wealth to hire servants and laborers. The lack of precise distinctions here and the tendency to retroactively conflate one group with another is not a fault of Harrison’s

writing. Rather, it is indicative of the great difficulty in defining classes, degrees, or sorts at the time based on any certain, quantifiable measures.

One measure that Marxist theory offers and that I will use going forward is these groups' shared experience of the material and social changes associated with the long shift from feudalism to mercantilism and finally capitalism. Harrison's citizens, burgesses, merchants, and yeomen all would have benefitted significantly from the increasing economic and social mobility associated with the period of so-called primitive accumulation,¹ during which certain groups who would later become the bourgeoisie were able to achieve economic superiority through means such as investment and manipulation of prices. Richard Halpern has examined at length the ways in which these conditions of "primitive accumulation" enabled "nascent and anticipatory forms" of capitalist culture, namely literary and social developments, to begin to develop as early as the late medieval period (13). A term coined by Marx in order to analyze the conditions which allowed for the subsequent development of capitalism, so-called primitive accumulation identifies a unifying factor in the early modern period for the groups who would later constitute the bourgeoisie.

Harrison describes how merchants would manipulate markets and prices so as to squeeze out their smaller competitors. He explains how "if any country baker happen to come in among them on the market day with bread of better quantity, they find fault by and by with one thing or another in his stuff," so that "by virtue of their privileges," "...the greatest commodities are brought into the hands of few, who embase, corrupt, and yet raise the prices of things at their

¹ "So-called" because it is, of course, only later bourgeois historians who understand the period in this way, as one in which their thrifty ancestors made good decisions which enabled the prosperity of future generations. The Marxist historian understands the sixteenth century as a period of bourgeois theft, when the means of production were forcibly taken or dishonestly schemed away from the lower classes. Hence, "so-called" primitive accumulation.

own pleasures” (Harrison 247, 257). In addition to material accumulation and investment, Harrison’s second and third groups, or the “middling sort,” were the beneficiaries of intellectual developments like Renaissance humanism, which ultimately enabled those without family titles to attend university and secure government positions, thereby significantly improving their income and possibly acquiring gentle status. While it is true that groups such as citizens, merchants, and yeomen may have achieved wealth through different means, the timing of the rise of these various middle degrees of people and its correlation with the change from a feudal to a mercantile mode of production gives them a common history which allowed for a shared consciousness and ideology to develop over time. Rosemary Kegl’s argument that the middle class in the early modern period is “not a *thing* to be defined but, instead, a *process* of constructing alliances among groups characterized by their multiple and often contradictory short- and long-term interests” (79-80, emphasis hers) is exceptionally valuable here. Understanding class formation as a process of collective experiences rather than a set of definable outcomes enables us to see how a shared historical consciousness and therefore ideological stance might exist between seemingly disparate groups.

The development of a critical historical consciousness that understands history as contingent and constructed was vital to the emergence of bourgeois class consciousness. Once the varied middle “degrees” of people all, even unconsciously, conceived of history as a constructed narrative with causes and effects, as events orchestrated and influenced by human beings and material circumstances rather than simply dictated and imposed by God, they were able to—albeit unconsciously—consider themselves as members of historically constituted groups. If history is no longer an uncontested, providentialist narrative, then social groups are not necessarily natural and determined either, for all social and historical institutions “consist of

relations between men” (Lukacs, *History* 48, emphasis in original). Historical consciousness is thus a precursor to class and social consciousness, or the understanding of oneself as a member of a group with definable, shared interests that might be at odds with those of another, definable group. Both of these things were only possible, as Lukacs states, because of the shifts in the mode and relations of production ushered in by the “advent of capitalism” (*History* 58). Once these economic and social changes had happened and historical consciousness had been achieved on a large scale, a new class, or in this case “sort” of people, could become capable of asserting itself ideologically.

Raymond Williams’ definitions of dominant, residual, and especially emergent as terms for the historical analysis of culture and class consciousness will be crucial for the entirety of this project, both in defining citizen ideology and in examining its relationship to the dominant ideology of early modern England. Williams asserts that various cultural systems have “determinate” features, their dominating ideology, which set them apart from other systems as specific “epochs,” but which always contain “a sense of movement” which connects the dominant ideology with “the future as well as the past” (121). Residual and emergent elements of culture exert themselves within this dominant ideology and exist only insofar as they bear some relationship to it. In the early modern period, aristocratic ideology had dominated social and political discourse for centuries. It espoused such beliefs as the value of court service, generosity, social hierarchy, tolerance of hedonism, and a conviction that poverty was simply part of the natural order (Stone 6). While the economy was certainly shifting to a proto-capitalist, wealth-oriented system, with a “massive tide of wealth flowing into the hands of yeomen, lawyers, City merchants, top-ranking administrators, and successful politicians,” Lawrence Stone and others have explained that “the dominant value system remained that of the landed gentleman” (Stone

23-4; McKeon; Brenner). A title still held an enormous amount of worth and was, at least until the turn of the seventeenth century, still fundamentally linked to blood and family name. Even those of the “middling sort,” despite their mercantile success, still aspired to own land and acquire the status of “gentleman.”

But the tension between the dominant ideology and its residual and emergent elements is a crucial aspect of any historical analysis. The residual, an active cultural element that was “effectively formed in the past” (Williams 122), makes itself felt within aristocratic ideology in such notions as the divine right of kings or the idyllic country house, ideas which were dominant under medieval feudalism but which still made themselves felt as aspects of a more cosmopolitan, bureaucratic Elizabethan court culture. The emergent, by contrast, is that which makes itself felt as oppositional to the dominant because it is comprised of “new social values and institutions” which seem to outpace the current cultural relations (124). The relationship between these emergent and dominant ideological strains in the early modern period is central to this project, for they closely correspond to competing citizen and aristocratic values. The emergent, proto-bourgeois consciousness based honor upon merit and ability rather than an “assumed worth” based on family name (McKeon 153). It valued such things as “self-improvement, independence, thrift, hard work, chastity and sobriety, competition, equality of opportunity, and the association of poverty with moral weakness” (Stone 6; McKeon 196), the last item, notably, being the moral imperative behind what would later become the bourgeois version of the history of primitive accumulation.² As Williams explains, one of the most

² Max Weber would later establish the connection between this moral imperative to earn a profit and the religious convictions of various Protestant sects. In *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism* he notes that a “virtuoso capitalist commercial sense coincides with the most intense forms of a piety which permeates and regulates the whole of life” (6), and that many capitalists, whether they be artisans, merchants, or landowners, consider it a moral imperative to accumulate wealth as an end in itself, similar

important indicators of emergent elements in a society is “the formation of a new class, the coming to consciousness of a new class, and within this, in actual process, the (often uneven) emergence of elements of a new cultural formation” (124). The shift to a mercantile and capitalist economy, the rise of historical consciousness, the intellectual development of Protestantism and humanism, and, most importantly, the accumulation of wealth, power, and status by those who would become a new class, the bourgeoisie, mark the early modern period as one in which emergent elements elicited real tension within the dominant aristocratic ideology.

Marxist literary theory understands literature and literary genre in particular as an aesthetic expression of the particular ideology of the period in which it is produced. By exposing the workings of ideology, the literary work allows us to access the history from which both it and its ideology develop; or as Frederic Jameson puts it, artistic form reveals the “final articulation of the deeper logic of the content itself” (*Form* 328). The literature of the early modern period is one of the most powerful registers of the social and economic changes happening at the time, for a particular genre or artistic form can only happen where the organization of social life itself creates the conditions for that form’s possibility. It is therefore my contention that the economic and social changes that enabled the emergence of citizen historical and class consciousness are what led to the development of the city comedy genre out of the chronicle history play, for such changes exert their influence upon literary genres as well. Just as social life and the history of nations do not happen as single instances but are part of a long cultural narrative, so genres must be understood as developments along a continuum that correspond to given historical and social

to the way they view their duty to God (11-12). Indeed, Protestantism, as one of the major social changes to accompany the shift toward the mercantilist and capitalist modes of production, would become integral to the formation of bourgeois consciousness and the ideal of the individual.

moments; a literary genre corresponds to a given state of social relations and a given mode of economic production.

Of course, multiple genres can and do exist at once. Williams notes that social development is “always uneven” and “certain to be incomplete” when moving between dominant modes (124). This is because, as Jameson further points out, “every social formation or historically existing society has in fact consisted in the overlay and structural coexistence of several modes of production all at once” (*Unconscious* 95). There is no such thing as a purely feudal or purely capitalist society; society is always transitioning between various economic and therefore social modes and negotiating those transitions. Literary genres, therefore, are always transitioning as well, and since they are always related to their historical moment, analyzing a genre must take into account the “tension between several generic modes or strands” (*Unconscious* 141). History plays and city comedies obviously coexisted in the early modern period, but as different genres they cannot have been produced by precisely the same ideology or class consciousness. Instead, the shift in popularity from one to the other registers the shift in ideology that was beginning to happen at the turn of the century, and their relationship to one another parallels that of historical and class consciousness.

The temporal scope of this project naturally falls around the turn of the seventeenth century because this is the moment both when the chronicle history play reaches its height and the emergence of city comedy first becomes apparent. With few exceptions, scholarly studies of history plays tend to focus upon the 1590s, and for good reason.³ While there are certainly earlier examples of the genre that clearly show that it had been developing for some time, the 1590s were the height of both sophistication and popularity for the chronicle history play, as

³ For one of the exceptions, see Ivo Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

exemplified by such works as Shakespeare's first and second tetralogies. The elements of the genre had been clearly established, and it is helpful to list them here. There is always a monarch, as well as typically a Vice figure of some kind, an assortment of lords and clergymen that make up the main *dramatis personae*, and of course, content drawn directly from chronicle sources. Other elements include battle scenes where power is consolidated by force, balanced by diplomatic conversations where it is negotiated, soliloquies given by a monarch ruminating on the meaning of power and the privileges and responsibilities of having it, and obligatory scenes of common people that acknowledge other registers of society but do not engage meaningfully with them. In this way, then, the English history play depicts history and nationalism using a top-down approach, where the key figures are those wielding political power at court or abroad. By 1600 these elements had been used, defined, and explored to the point where playwrights were beginning to introduce metatheatrical versions of them and to move away from medieval history to new subject matter. Chapter one offers a brief explanation of how early modern historical understanding reached this point, but otherwise the project begins at this moment in the late 1590s when chronicle history plays had already become a dominant genre.

The height of city comedy as a dramatic genre has been generally acknowledged to be somewhat later, around the 1610s. Just as critics have essentially linked the peak of the history play's development and popularity with Shakespeare's histories, so the high point of city comedy is associated (fairly or not) with the performance and publication of Ben Jonson's satirical comedies such as *The Alchemist* (1610) and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614).⁴ City comedies provide

⁴ See Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy: A Study of the Satiric Plays by Jonson, Marston and Middleton*, Harvard University Press, 1968. For Gibbons, city comedy "articulated a radical critique of the Age" and "dramatized conflicting forces" of change (17), while demonstrating an ideology that attacked the king and yet resisted that change (56). Gibbons credits Jonson with the invention of

an alternative perspective to that of history plays, their focus being contemporary English society at the level of local government or economics. There is typically a citizen, usually a tradesman who is a member of one of the guilds, his wife, who is probably promiscuous, hedonistic, or overreaching in some way, a member of the lesser gentry who is cash poor and poses some kind of threat to the citizen and his family, and an assortment of other characters who demonstrate the diversity of society while also providing much of the comedy. Some kind of trickery or scheming ensues, and in the end those who sought to venture outside their social place are shamed and reconciled back into society while those who stayed true to their position and its values are rewarded, or at least satisfied.

Many of the satirical London comedies produced in the first two decades of the seventeenth century contain some or even all of these elements. However, this project will not look at those works in depth. Instead, three of the four chapters examine plays from *before* this full establishment of the city comedy genre, at the point of its emergence, especially where this overlaps with the dramatic height of the history play. This moment comes around the turn of the century; indeed, the first three chapters examine plays likely performed around 1597-99. The exception is Middleton's *Hengist, King of Kent; or, The Mayor of Queenborough* (1620) in chapter four, which comes at a later point when the city comedy genre had been established and when history plays had become almost nostalgic. Middleton's play offers the benefit of essentially examining the relationship between the genres from a point of hindsight in order to see how juxtaposing two fully recognized genres against one another reveals major conflicts in Jacobean society.

the genre (18), an assertion that is problematic as it seems highly dubious to credit any playwright of the period with invention of this kind, given the collaborative and evolutionary nature of the theatre.

Each of the plays discussed, then, has been chosen specifically because it is a prime example of some point along the evolutionary trajectory from history play to city comedy. This may seem an artificially selective group chosen for the sake of making an argument, but there do exist other plays that exhibit overlapping elements. Shakespeare's *Henry V* (1599) and Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me You Know Me* (1605) are history plays which also give significant voice to common characters; William Rowley's *A New Wonder, a Woman Never Vexed* (c. 1610) is usually classified as a city comedy, though its plot depicts historical material; Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* (1605), when taken in both parts, is quite difficult to define as one genre or the other. The point here is that the plays examined in the chapters that follow are not alone in their use of both chronicle history and city comedy elements. They are simply the clearest indicators of this generic movement, demonstrating not only distinct elements of both genres, but also when arranged chronologically, a steady progression from one to the other.

The first chapter looks at Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, particularly as it relates to the *Henry IV* plays of his second tetralogy. It begins by briefly covering the development of a more critically aware historiography and the history play as a genre up to the 1590s and then discusses the ways in which these history plays, using *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2* as examples, challenged the accepted monarchal historical narrative of the period. The plays' various departures from the version of history told by both Hall and Holinshed and depiction of shifting notions of honor (in *Part 1* particularly) show that by the 1590s, monarchal and aristocratic ideology were already being challenged through the theatre's historical representation. The crux here, and the most overt link to *Merry Wives*, is Falstaff. The chapter

looks at the comic tavern scenes and moments like Falstaff's catechism on honor as particular instances where the dominant narrative comes under attack.

The bulk of the chapter then focuses on Shakespeare's comic spin-off of the *Henriad*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, as one of the earliest versions of city comedy. Given the many overlapping characters and the temporal proximity of the plays' performances, the audience members would have had the *Henriad* in mind as they enjoyed *Merry Wives* and would have considered the two Falstaffs to be the same character. This means that the historical consciousness engendered by the *Henriad* would have been active in the viewing of *Merry Wives*, an early citizen comedy that has many elements of the later "pure" city comedies even though it is considered by many scholars to be a sort of precursor. While Page and Ford do not have identifiable trades and are not members of guilds as far as we can tell, and while the play is not set in the City of London, the threat of the wives' promiscuity and the cash-poor gentleman looking to marry the daughter of a rich citizen are prominent motifs. These would become staples of city comedy as the genre became more defined. The chapter explores how *Merry Wives* builds on the subversive foundations laid by the *Henriad* in order to expose the ideological contradictions of early modern society, and argues that the character of Falstaff functions as a way of revealing the contradictory influence of aristocratic values within the culture of the citizenry, just as he revealed contradictions within that aristocratic mindset in the histories.

Further, the chapter looks at the influence of folk custom and country humor within citizen ideology. Mikhail Bakhtin explains in *Rabelais and His World* that one of the most important traits and uses of laughter was "its relation to the people's unofficial truth" (90), but he also distinguishes between "two types of imagery...the folk culture of humor...and the bourgeois conception of the completely atomized being" (24). Just as Jameson argues that no mode of

production and therefore no genre has ever existed in a pure state (*Unconscious* 95), Bakhtin here asserts that the early modern period was a crossroads, a transitional moment between two forms of laughter. This idea is similar to the one put forth by Susan Wells, discussed above, where the satire of city comedy seeks to reconcile these contradictory elements. In combining an examination of ideological contradictions that would seem to further citizen ideology with a country setting in the provincial town of Windsor, *Merry Wives* contains both of the forms of laughter laid out by Bakhtin. The final scenes in particular, in which the knight Falstaff is shamed in a midnight dance in the forest where the middle class characters are disguised as fairies, reveal the influence of folk custom in the dismantling of aristocratic ideology.

The second chapter discusses Thomas Heywood's *Edward IV Parts 1 and 2*, especially the ways in which Heywood's account of Edward and the Shores differs markedly from that of other playwrights, historians, and poets of the sixteenth century. The story of Edward and Mistress Shore was a cultural touchstone by the 1590s; numerous poems, ballads, and historical accounts propagated slightly different versions of the story that all nonetheless shared in moralizing Mistress Shore as a warning to ambitious or unchaste women. Shakespeare's first tetralogy mentions Mistress Shore but gives her no stage role, focusing instead, like many chronicle history plays, upon the battle scenes and struggle for the throne as it plays out between the more powerful characters. Heywood's plays shift the focus, drawing attention primarily to how the actions of "great men" impact those further down the social scale. *Edward IV* places Jane Shore, named by Heywood, and her invented husband, Matthew, at the forefront of the plot. It presents Jane not as an ambitious whore but as the victim of circumstance. The chapter argues that by repositioning Edward as antagonist to the Shores, the play challenges the idea that history should be only about great political leaders. The play exposes the major conflict between

aristocratic and citizen ideology by suggesting that historical narrative, controlled by the monarchy and aristocracy, had been significantly biased and exclusive of those most powerfully impacted by historical action.

But the chapter's argument is complicated by the fact that aristocratic and citizen ideology were overlapping elements of early modern culture. While there is a severe conflict between the two which would come to a head eventually, *Edward IV* also demonstrates that at the moment of its writing citizen ideology was not fully formed, and while the Shores are presented as heroes, they are conflicted heroes because of this tension. Matthew is a major figure in putting down the Falconbridge rebellion and a wealthy and influential citizen of London, and yet he does not challenge his king when that king demands his wife, Jane. Other elements of the plays further support this argument. The Falconbridge rebellion in the first half of *Part I* emphasizes not so much the rebellion itself as the role of the commons in it, particularly the noble apprentices who refuse to fight for their rights if it means rebelling against their lawful king. Heywood's Edward is still a womanizer, but he is far more charming than Shakespeare's and has other qualities such as military prowess and diplomatic talents that make him more likable and depict him as a good king, whatever his personal faults. It is difficult to point to the nobility or citizens as truly bad or truly good. But the Shores' story combined with that of the other citizen characters demonstrate that while history may be enacted by those in power, its consequences are felt by those lower down the social scale.

Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is generally considered to be a city comedy, but chapter three argues that Dekker's play is in fact a history play that, unlike the typical chronicle plays of the 1590s, depicts the specific history of the citizenry rather than the nation at large. Dekker's play does celebrate London life and possesses many of the hallmark features of a

city comedy; Margery Eyre is ambitious and materialistic, Ralph's Jane is pursued by a threatening gentleman, and the contradictions between wealth and status in the period are depicted in the Rose/Lacy marriage plot. But the more central plot is that of the rise of Simon Eyre to become Lord Mayor of London, a true story Dekker pulled from a combination of Holinshed, John Stow, and Thomas Deloney's prose work, *The Gentle Craft*. This historical narrative is actually the driving force of the play, and the Eyre that Dekker gives us seems self-consciously aware of it. The chapter explores some of the ways in which citizens throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries sought to memorialize themselves by leaving their mark upon the City itself or one of the guilds through sponsorship or charitable contributions, actions imitated by Dekker's Eyre throughout the play. If *Edward IV* sought to offer an alternative citizen history in tension with the monarchal version, *Shoemaker* simply presents this citizen history *as* history, the official version itself.

However, this is not to say that citizen history is without its own problematic elements. Just as chronicle history plays were beginning to challenge the official version of events by exposing narrative's constructed nature, so citizen histories like Dekker's reveal contradictions within the newly emerging citizen consciousness. Because the play *shows* Eyre's attempts to construct his persona, it immediately undermines that image. Further, Eyre's treatment of other characters of lower status than himself shows that citizen ideology was that of the elite citizenry, those holding major wealth or prominent City government positions, and not necessarily that of small business owners or artisans. The chapter argues that Eyre's affinity with Roland Lacy and his striving to place himself above the artisan shoemakers who have been the means to his success compromises the notion of a coherent, more inclusive citizen history or ideology.

The final chapter discusses Thomas Middleton's *Hengist, King of Kent, or, The Mayor of Queenborough*, a play whose very title points to its use of both history play and city comedy elements. *Hengist* is representative of a trend that emerged in the first years of the seventeenth century toward history plays that focused less upon medieval England and more on ancient Britain and Rome (Knutson 125). Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Cymbeline*, as well as his Roman tragedies are products of this trend, along with Jonson's *Sejanus* and Fletcher's *Bonduca*. This change in historical focus can be linked to the reassertion of Protestantism in the face of a perceived Catholic threat both at home and abroad, as religious writers and thinkers sought to legitimate Protestantism and discredit the unpopular James I by locating England's religious roots in a pre-Reformation past. I argue in this chapter that this shift in historical focus to ancient Britain rather than medieval England is also linked to the shift from aristocratic to citizen ideology. Aristocratic values find their roots in medieval feudalism; an obvious rebuttal to these values is to look further back in history for something purer, deeper, and more definitively *English*, to assert that citizen ideology and status based on merit rather than inheritance actually preceded the peerage system and absolute monarchy.

This chapter argues that combining city comedy elements with a history plot set in ancient Britain can therefore be read as both a critique of aristocratic ideology and a celebration of citizen values. The play consists of two nearly separate but mutually dependent plots, one in which Hengist and Horsus, the famous Saxons of British lore, invade England under the guise of serving as mercenary troops to the usurper Vortiger, and one in which Symon, a tanner, runs against Oliver, a weaver, for the mayoralty of Queenborough on a campaign supported by Hengist. *Hengist* comes much later than the other plays that the project examines, at the popular height of the city comedy genre. The play seizes on elements that audiences had come to identify

with city comedy in order to exploit what might be called the “ancient turn” in the genre of the history play, a turn which is also linked to rising citizen ideology. I argue that it draws distinct parallels between the villain Vortiger and James I in the main historical plot through the use of city comedy elements in the subplot. City comedy, the generic representative of citizen consciousness, directly critiques the history play, the symbol of monarchal and aristocratic ideology.

Finally, we must ask ourselves what the real-world outcome of such ideological developments and contradictions might look like. The project concludes by introducing questions about the role of the theatre in social revolution, for if it was capable of facilitating the rise of citizen ideology, it seems logical to ask what role it had in the downfall of Charles I.

CHAPTER ONE

“A TWO-FOLD OPERATION”: HISTORY AND IDEOLOGY IN SHAKESPEARE’S *HENRY IV AND THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR*

In Act 1 of *Henry IV*, Sir John Falstaff speaks his first line, “Now, Hal, what time of day is it, lad?”, to which the prince replies, “What a devil hast thou to do with the time of the day?” (1.2.1, 5-6).¹ Well-known and often-quoted lines though they may be, offering the first description of Falstaff as a glutton, whoremonger, and drunkard who cares nothing for the time of day because none of these things need be done at a particular time, these lines not only introduce the character himself, but invite questions about his dramatic function in the plays in which he appears; for what, indeed, does this swaggering knight with no concept of time, who seems to have walked out of an Elizabethan tavern and into the medieval world of the Plantagenet court, have anything at all to do with English history?

Further, what is he doing stepping from one time into another and wreaking havoc in an English comedy like *The Merry Wives of Windsor*? Taken literally, his opening lines in the *Henriad* give us a clear characterization of Falstaff; taken more thoughtfully, they reveal the function that Falstaff as a character serves in both the histories and *Merry Wives*. In the histories, he disrupts the history play’s traditional focus on the monarchy and providence by embodying and enacting a more early modern understanding of historiography; in *Merry Wives*, he symbolizes the declining nobility and courtly excess despised by an emergent proto-bourgeoisie.

¹ All quotations from both the *Henry IV* plays and *Merry Wives* are taken from the Norton Shakespeare, Second Edition.

The John Falstaff of the histories is often taken to be an entirely different character from that of *Merry Wives*. The semi-historical, comic figure that follows the prince has typically been viewed as superior in characterization, a more fully-formed and satisfying dramatic personage than the one that appears in the citizen comedy spin-off (Barton 132; Phillips 127). But this is not the case, and viewing the *Henry IV* plays and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as one artistic project focused around the dynamic but unitary Falstaff reveals important connections between history play and city comedy in their development as genres, as well as the corresponding cultural relationship between historical and social consciousness that was evolving in early modern England.

The expulsion, or evacuation, to use Jonathan Hall's phrase (123), of Falstaff from these plays has been a much-studied topic. In the history plays, Falstaff is most often viewed as a subversive force that must be subdued in order for the ideological or dramatic conflicts of the play to reach a settled conclusion. He has been viewed as the ultimate example of the New Historicist model of subversion contained, "genuine and radical" but at the same time "contained by the power it would appear to threaten" (Greenblatt 30). Other scholars have seen Falstaff in similar ways, albeit to different critical ends. Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin describe Falstaff as "characterized in feminine terms" (165), a superfluity of sexual energy and other inappropriate appetites that must be purged from "the hegemonic project of affirming the authority of a true king" (166). For others, he is the carnivalesque Lord of Misrule who is briefly allowed to challenge the controlled culture of the state, but cannot be allowed to continue laughing and feasting once the "Lenten" rule of law is established at the end of *2 Henry IV* (Ruiter 19; Holderness, "Carnival and History" 160). Eventually, as we are told at the end of the very scene

in which Falstaff is introduced, the “unyoked humour” of his “idleness” cannot and will not be allowed in a history play genre that looks to uphold monarchal power (*IH4* 1.2.174).

The punishment of the fat knight in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* has garnered similar explanations, though most assign him the additional role of a social scapegoat. Peter Holland argues that the Windsor of Shakespeare’s play demonstrates the values of a “stable social order” to which Falstaff cannot and will not assimilate (13). Others have noted that not only does Falstaff not assimilate, but he actually threatens that order by bringing his various effusions of bodily and moral excess into a community that values self-control and moderation (Hall 130; Roberts). Because of his outsider status, Falstaff is able to mitigate many of the excesses of which other characters in the play are guilty, namely Ford’s sexual jealousy and rage (Gallenca 32-3) and Fenton’s wildness and unthriftiness (Erickson 124). When it comes to the Falstaff of both the histories and *Merry Wives*, therefore, Falstaff is almost invariably seen as a subversive force which is temporarily allowed to wreak havoc, whether for dramatic effect or to expose the precarious underpinnings of ideology, but which is ultimately suppressed and expelled, as he must be, in order to maintain a stable political or social order.

I want to suggest instead that Falstaff is integral to the visions of history and society that Shakespeare presents in these plays, and that he is subversive not just for the reasons outlined by critics, but because his presence is ideologically disruptive in both the *Henry IV* plays and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. In both cases, the character of Jack Falstaff offers an anachronistic perspective that must be reconciled with the apparently cohesive worldviews offered by the plays. He is perfectly suited to Shakespeare’s time and place, an expression of the contradictions inherent in Elizabethan and Jacobean society. But placed into a self-contained play-world where either monarchical or middling sort values predominate, Falstaff’s presence brings the

contradictions within these worldviews to the forefront and inhibits true ideological cohesion. Further, as the explicit connection between the histories and Shakespeare's only comedy of the middling sort, Falstaff highlights the intimate connection, indeed, the interdependence, of historical and social consciousness that was emerging within the ideology of early modern England. More importantly, his presence in both genres allows us to understand and explore the relationship between chronicle history play and city comedy as one based upon shifting material and cultural conditions.

John Falstaff as Dramatic Anachronism

It will be useful to pause here to explain precisely what is meant by "anachronism," or "anachronistic perspective," and how those terms illuminate the early modern theatre in particular. In the early modern period especially, "the actor-audience relationship was not subordinate, but a dynamic and essential element of dramaturgy" (Weimann 213). A work of theatre only truly exists when it is being performed. Thus any analysis of a theatrical work is incomplete unless it considers the effect that a work would have upon an audience and the effect that an audience might have upon the work, for "the essence of dramatic effect is immediate, direct impact upon a multitude" ("Historical Drama" 130). Brecht would later argue that all good drama should have this impact, and called this dialectic the "alienation effect," where a representation "allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar" (192). While of course it was not known by this name, early modern plays and actors often employed Brecht's "a-effect" in their interactions with an audience in numerous ways. In the case of history plays, early modern playwrights most often achieved the a-effect through the use of anachronism, the inclusion of clearly contemporary elements in what purports to be a representation of events in the medieval (or another) period. Dramatists might also depart from

their historical sources for the sake of refining the dramatic narrative or for their own artistic ends. We often perceive the past as distant from us and our own present moment, but for historical drama to be successful it must find a way to make the past accessible and engaging to an audience. Anachronisms create a point of familiarity in order to make the historical content accessible, while also providing a point of disturbance such that the audience becomes critically engaged.

This is the function which Falstaff fulfills for both Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. As Phyllis Rackin explains, anachronisms achieve the alienation effect by "breaking the frame of historical representation" and highlighting the fact that a history play takes place in the "eternal present of dramatic performance" (94). In the history plays, not only does Falstaff's constant lying and manipulation of narratives bring an implicit early modern perspective into a medieval English play world, but he himself is an overt anachronism who must be expelled because he is not a historical figure.² He is a purely early modern figure, one who holds the action in the "eternal present of dramatic performance" even as he participates in the action of the historical plot, both through material details like his drinking of sack throughout both *Henry IV* plays and his offer of a pistol to Hal at the Battle of Shrewsbury (*IH4* 5.3.51), and through his expression of an ideology and attitude toward historiography that would not become

² Although the historical Sir John Oldcastle did exist, I take *2 Henry IV*'s assertion that "this is not the man" (Epilogue.28) at face value. Besides his liberal quoting of Biblical verses, there is little to connect the Falstaff of the plays to the Oldcastle of history, and by the time *1 Henry IV* was published and *Part 2* and *Merry Wives* had been performed, audiences knew the fat knight as Falstaff, not Oldcastle, as all the authoritative texts will attest ("Killed with Hard Opinions" 102). Corbin and Sedge point out that Sir William Brooke, Lord Cobham, ostensibly the source of the outrage that forced Shakespeare to change the name (in both the histories and *Merry Wives*), was not actually a familial connection to Oldcastle and was not himself a Puritan. They assert that pressure to change the name came from Puritan authorities, rather than Cobham, and that typical theatregoers were likely unaware of the connection (11). Further, as Loren M. Blinde points out, Falstaff was historically unnecessary to the plot of the history plays and therefore a perfect mouthpiece for Shakespeare himself (43), a perception that is helpful to my argument.

current until the sixteenth century. These attitudes in particular serve to awaken an audience's historical consciousness. By juxtaposing Falstaff's anachronistic person and opinions with historical figures like King Henry and Hal, Shakespeare creates a kind of alienation effect that generates both familiarity and critical distance.

In *Merry Wives* Falstaff fulfills a similar function, but in this case he represents not an early modern eye turning a critical view back upon the machinations of history, but a historical and perhaps outdated position which nonetheless imposes itself upon a forward-looking present. In the histories, Shakespeare uses King Henry and Hal to represent the monarchical attempt to control a historical narrative that supports a providentialist, monarchical worldview. The paradigm of the citizens of Windsor, by contrast, is a proto-bourgeois mindset that is simultaneously hostile to courtly excess while embracing a conservative love for stability and tradition. Falstaff clearly represents this courtly excess in *Merry Wives*, and yet his presence highlights an important, historical strain in the minds of the middling sort. His re-inclusion at the end of *Merry Wives*, as opposed to his death in the histories, is an indication that his presence is both anachronistic, needing to be purged, as well as an inherent and necessary contradiction between dominant and emerging ideological modes. History could continue without him; present ideology necessarily contains within itself both dominant and emergent elements. The *Henry IV* and *Merry Wives* sequence can thus be read as one cultural project with Falstaff as its focal point. Falstaff's status as a dramatic anachronism means that he first awakens historical consciousness in the audience by exposing the inconsistencies of providentialist narratives, and then puts tension on the proto-bourgeois ideology that this historical consciousness enables by exposing that ideology's inherent contradictions.

Historiography and Historical Consciousness

I first want to examine Falstaff's role as an anachronism in the *Henry IV* plays, because the early modern historical consciousness which he represents there is integral to the proto-bourgeois ideology that he disrupts in *Merry Wives*. Historical and social consciousness go hand in hand, and it is no wonder that the huge popularity of history plays in the 1590s gave way to an audience appetite for city comedy in the early Jacobean period. In order to fully understand the social and ideological function of history plays in the 1590s, the genre must be seen as the culmination of a long and changing discourse of historical representation. This shift in historiographical focus in the sixteenth century can be likened to the one Hayden White has identified in the nineteenth. White argues that by the end of the nineteenth century, historiography had turned to a discernably ironic mode. The Romantic notion of history which characterized the beginning of the century, whereby history is figured as "fundamentally a drama of self-identification symbolized by the hero's transcendence of the world of experience, his victory over it, and his final liberation from it" (*Metahistory* 8) signifies, for White, the culmination of centuries of historiographical representation. But as the nineteenth century continued, writers became increasingly aware that history as it had always been written was far from natural or scientific in its methods and its finished narratives. A historical narrative is always emplotted poetically, and therefore always ideologically motivated. There is no purely factual or unbiased history, for in the very act of writing it we make choices that inflect it with ideological force.

The trend which White describes for historical representation in the nineteenth century, from Romantic to what he calls Satirical emplotment, can be traced in sixteenth-century England as well. Here we must define Romantic not as the individualistic and transcendental motif of the

early nineteenth century, but as the medieval romance, where we find a hero whose adherence to cultural values enables him to triumph over the messy “world of experience.” This conception of Romance is an accurate description of the kind of history being written under the early Tudors, when providentialist historiography was engaged in creating and shoring up what E.M.W. Tillyard has called the “Tudor Myth” (36). By contrast, as the sixteenth century progressed it is possible to detect a shift from this kind of historiography to a more causal mode which emphasized human agency within the divinely created universe. Sir Thomas More’s early humanist historiography, while considering the human element, was still indebted to the notion of divine right monarchy, and Edward Hall’s *Vnion of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre & Yorke* is perhaps the best early modern example we have of a history that espouses the Tudor Myth. But the years after the Elizabethan settlement particularly allowed for increased literary and historiographical projects by providing a stability that enabled writers to explore just what Englishness meant for a national narrative, and to further incorporate a more causal approach to history within the traditional providentialist mode. Holinshed’s *Chronicles* is one such project. Holinshed presents a religious providentialist account, but one that does not deny the individualist and humanist imperatives of causal historiography.

But the chronicle form could not do the work of a full ideologically emplotted narrative. According to White, the chronicle “often seems to wish to tell a story, aspires to narrativity, but typically fails to achieve it. More specifically...to achieve narrative closure” (*Content of the Form* 5). The fully emplotted and narrativized causal history in the early modern period did not emerge through traditional writers like Hall or Holinshed, but in the literature that arose in the last third of the sixteenth century. As D.R. Woolf explains, these writers’ “providential mode of explanation had ceased to provide a satisfactory interpretation of the unfolding of events now

perceived as having immediate, contingent causes, human or natural” (*Reading History* 12); he further states that the chronicle did not precisely decay but rather “dissolve[d] into a variety of genres” (*Reading History* 26) which were more accessible to the populace. Biographies, almanacs, newspapers, poetry, and plays were all cheaper to produce and sold faster; history packaged for cheap and easy consumption became more attractive to both printers and readers and thus the chronicle fell out of circulation.

History plays were among these popular “parasite genres” (*Reading History* 26). This long but steady evolution of historiography and the development of a notion of history as contingent upon narrative structures and choices created the atmosphere for a sophisticated historical consciousness to grow in the culture of Elizabethan England. It is this ironic, skeptical attitude toward historical narrative which Falstaff embodies in Shakespeare’s histories. It has been argued that Falstaff represents a “verbal expression of a counter-truth” that resists a dominant ideology (Hall 127), and indeed his famous speeches on the concepts of honor (*IH4*, 5.1.127-139) and counterfeiting (*IH4*, 5.4.113-118) may attest to this. But the ideology which his presence resists most strongly is that of the narrative that Henry would craft for himself. Shakespeare uses Falstaff’s constant lies and spinning of tales to undercut Henry’s mythmaking at every turn and highlight the contingency of historical narrative, a truly early modern perspective that challenges Henry’s attempts to foreground a medieval one. Falstaff brings historical consciousness to bear upon the narrative that Henry and later Hal seek to craft.

Historical consciousness and the knowledge that history is a contingent narrative separate from the lived world of the present are one and the same, and they enable people to see not only narratives but social institutions as both historically and culturally constituted. When we reveal the “historical origins” of institutions, writes Georg Lukacs, we dismantle them *as* monolithic

institutions (*History* 47). The fact that concepts like monarchy or divine right, chivalry, femininity, indeed History itself *have* histories necessarily means that they are not natural and must therefore be manmade. A precondition for understanding this is an awareness of the past as an entity objectively different and separate from the present, a sensibility that did not always exist for early modern people. D.R. Woolf and Keith Thomas both assert the importance of the chronicle form and the spread of printing in the sixteenth century as contributors to an increasing awareness of the past *as* past. “A sense of change,” writes Woolf, is “a precondition of the ability to think historically” (*Social Circulation* 19), and the social circulation of various modes of discourse, among them chronicles and the other genres he describes, as well as major changes like the Protestant Reformation, inflected early modern people with a profound sense that their society was different from previous historical periods (*Social Circulation* 12-3). Thomas further argues that because of “written records and printed books,” “the unassimilated, unfunctional past” could not be ignored (Thomas 3). If something could not be worked into the dominant narrative, by the end of the sixteenth century it also could not be hidden or relegated to the conveniently lost archives. This “critical sensibility” toward history (Walsh 14), the notion that History itself is a historical development and that narratives are crafted after the fact, not lived, is what is meant by historical consciousness. It is this kind of historical consciousness that Falstaff anachronistically imposes upon the medieval world of the *Henry IV* plays.

The early modern theatre, and the history play genre in particular, was perhaps the most powerful medium available for exercising and awakening historical consciousness. This is because a theatre audience is directly complicit in giving life to the narrative that unfolds onstage. Unlike a chronicle history, which might be read by an individual whose perspective interacts only with that of the writer, the theatre audience actively participates in both the

creation and interpretation of the narrative. This is not to say that chronicles or other genres are incapable of awakening historical consciousness or that they function unidirectionally from page to reader; but as an embodied, collective experience the theatre is better suited to reconstruct (or rather, construct) something as embodied and collective as a national history narrative. Theatre scholars routinely discuss the immediacy of theatrical experience as its most powerful and dangerous aspect (“Historical Drama” 130; Hattaway 11; “Proud Majesty” 119).³ Because any theatrical performance takes place in the present and onstage in front of living spectators regardless of when or where the action is set, it creates a potentially powerful connection between past and present, then and now, in the minds of the audience. History is similarly dependent upon present culture for its existence. If no one talks or writes about a historical event, it effectively does not exist; the proverbial tree falling in the empty forest does not make a sound. It is this acute sense of the present that so profoundly connects the concept of history with theatre as a medium. As Brian Walsh puts it, “history has no being unless people produce it *and* other people consume it” (21, emphasis his). The same is true for theatrical performance—someone must watch, and in watching they both take in and reflect upon what they see. This is why anachronisms are so powerful in history plays. Anything that enhances the connection between historical past and theatrical present, while simultaneously breaking the illusion that the history being presented is “truth” and exposing it as a constructed narrative, will inevitably stimulate a critical sensibility toward history. Anachronisms awaken historical consciousness in an audience, and for Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* plays Falstaff is that anachronism, for his perception is that of an early modern theatregoer.

³ The list could go on here. Phyllis Rackin sees the stage as an “eternal present” (94), Stephen Greenblatt as a place where “boundaries are remarkably permeable” (19), Robert Weimann as a “potent force” interdependent with its social and political reality (xii), Jean Howard as “enacting ideological contestation” (7).

Henry IV: Falstaff's Critique

In his cycle of history plays, particularly the second tetralogy, Shakespeare presents English history not as an ordered and neatly structured narrative but as a process which both historians and politicians have attempted to control. In the *Henry IV* plays, his King Henry is a monarch who seeks to propagate a version of history that upholds his own power; more broadly, he represents the misguided impulse to create any perfectly emplotted historical narrative. As Paul Siegel notes, Shakespeare is concerned in his history plays with “the history that human beings make, the consequences of their actions” within the divine universe (56). Of course, a human being cannot create providence; but Henry’s manipulation represents the earthly forces which would seek to cover over the power and danger of human agency by ascribing all events and actions *only* to God. Even as they depended upon a providentialist paradigm for their power, early modern rulers were indebted to figures like Machiavelli for the strategies they used to craft the illusion of divine right (Siegel 64). Shakespeare’s Henry is this Machiavellian monarch. Just as early modern rulers sought to consolidate power through control of the historical and ideological narrative, as evidenced by Henry VIII’s commissioning of Hall’s *Chronicle*, so Shakespeare’s Henry looks to secure his own rule by crafting a narrative that will give him the appearance of divine right. Shakespeare therefore uses the character of Henry IV to portray not just the medieval king, but any monarch who would seek to control the people’s awareness of history.

Shakespeare’s tool for combating this kind of ideological narrativizing in the *Henry IV* plays is Falstaff, who becomes the anachronistic mouthpiece of the more skeptical late-sixteenth century attitude toward history and historiography. Falstaff comically mimics Henry’s convolution of the facts in order to fit them into his narrative, thereby undermining both Henry’s

power and the narrative itself. Shakespeare thus gives us characters whose attempts to control the narrative compromise the very notion of narrative truth. Henry and Falstaff are foils for each other, not only in the representation of power, but in the representation of historiographical ideologies, as both the king and Falstaff repeatedly fail to fully control their respective narratives.

Act 1 of *1 Henry IV* is dominated by scenes which demonstrate for the audience the kind of narrative construction and control that Henry is seeking. In his opening speech, he expresses his plans to go on crusade, talking of “the sepulchre of Christ” and “those holy fields / over whose acres walked those blessed feet” which were nailed to the cross “for our advantage” (1.1.19-27). From the beginning of the play, we see a Henry eager to establish a narrative that will affirm his right to rule. Successfully completing a crusade in the name of Christianity and winning the forgiveness of God will give him the appearance of divine right. Paradoxically, Henry’s opening speech immediately subverts the truth which he seeks to proclaim: if his power depends upon his ability to craft a narrative which appears providential by crusading in the name of God, then the providential mode itself must be a deception, and this is the subversive suggestion which the play makes for the audience. Henry’s anxiety about his right to rule is further underscored by his interactions with the Percy family in 1.3. His grounds for refusing to ransom Mortimer are indicative of his need to establish a story that upholds his own power. He insists that Mortimer “hath wilfully betrayed / the lives of those that he did lead to fight / against that great magician” (1.3.80-82). But Hotspur notes that the king was “trembling even at the name of Mortimer” (1.3.142), the heir that Richard II had named to succeed him. Henry treats Mortimer’s plight not as a cruel way to assert his authority, nor as an opportunity to make a show

of good faith to his supporters; rather, it becomes an opportunity to shape the narrative, or “engineer” it (Knowles 73).

Of course, the “incomprehensible lies” that this “rogue” is telling cannot be allowed to stand in an early modern historiographical paradigm (1.2.165), and it is in the midst of this narrative manipulation that Falstaff makes his entrance. “To mime the monarch” writes Stephen Orgel, “was a potentially revolutionary act” (45), and here Falstaff, albeit not always deliberately, does just this. If the actor playing Henry is “miming” the historical King Henry, Falstaff is miming any king who mimes divine right by ideological imperative. Act 1 is dominated largely by Henry’s problems; Act 2, by contrast, is dominated by Falstaff: specifically, an episode in which the audience is privy to the true version of events, and then later witnesses Falstaff’s attempts to rewrite the story so that he himself is the central hero—a farcical representation of Henry’s narrative-making. C.L. Barber describes the role of the “Lord of Misrule” in traditional May games and other carnivalesque events as “burlesquing majesty by promoting license under the forms of order” (25). I would argue though, that the notion that this “Lord of Misrule” is “burlesquing majesty” is more powerful than scholars have given it credit for.⁴ The Gadshill robbery, following upon Henry’s determination to go on crusade and his insistence upon Mortimer’s treason, “burlesques” not just the image that monarchs would seek to cultivate but the very concept of a coherent historical narrative. The audience knows that Falstaff, “after a blow or two,” ran away, “leaving the booty behind [him]” (*IH4*, 2.3.11) in what

⁴ Kastan has argued that Falstaff’s presence undermines Henry’s authority by serving as a “counter to the totalizing fantasies of power” (“King Hath Many” 133); however, he presents Falstaff as a threat to the “unitary state” (132). He argues, rightfully, that Falstaff’s “exuberance” resists the homogeneity of State power (136). I take this argument on board, and extend it to the notion that it is not only that Falstaff’s excess mocks the staidness of Henry’s person and political power which makes him a threat, but also his chronic lying, which mimics Henry’s own. It is not simply Falstaff’s comic presence which mocks the representation of power that is important, but his constant attempt to craft a more flattering narrative and thereby mock historiographical endeavors as well.

was likely a very comical and memorable scene. His entrance to the tavern in 2.5, then, blustering about the cowardice of Hal and Poins, recalls Henry's insistence on the treason of Mortimer (1.3.85). Just as Henry was not present to witness the fight between Mortimer and Glyndŵr and so invents a narrative that suits him, so Falstaff, who does not know whether Hal and Poins were actually cowardly or whether they were merely late or got lost in the woods, takes the invention of narrative to comical extremes. As if the parallel between Falstaff's and Henry's attempts to narrativize were not clear enough, this story is followed by the famous role-playing scene, where Falstaff literally plays the king (349ff.).⁵ Falstaff himself may be contained by his expulsion and then his reported death in *Henry V*, but the effect he has is too damaging to be fully suppressed, if Hal's interactions with the soldier Williams are to be any indication (*H5*, 4.1.84-205).

This kind of comparison between Henry and Falstaff continues throughout *Part 1*. In 3.2, Henry compares Hal directly with Richard II in an attempt to steer him back to the proper course, but this comparison is somewhat troubling. Henry says that he would never have succeeded in winning the crown "had I so lavish of my presence been, / so common-hackneyed in the eyes of men, / so stale and cheap to vulgar company" (3.2.39-41), but rather credits his rise to power with his own "humility" and "rareness" (51, 59). Richard, by contrast, apparently "grew a companion to the common streets, / enfeoffed himself to popularity" (68-9) until he destroyed the mystery that Henry is here saying must accompany a true king. The problem with Henry's description is that it does not ring true, for it was in fact *Henry* who made a public display of himself to win the hearts of the commons, "with humble and familiar courtesy, / what reverence did he throw away on slaves, / wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles" (*Richard II*

⁵ Another example of Falstaff's status as anachronism. He professes he will do the king "in King Cambyses' vein" (2.5.352), a play and style that should be unknown to a medieval figure.

1.4.25-7). But, while Henry's practical method of kingship has served him in deposing Richard and ruling England thus far, it cannot be maintained without the respect and reverence that the idea of the divinely ordained ruler commands.⁶ As king, he is in control of the ideological narrative, and so he seeks to rework it into one which establishes him as a providentially ordained ruler.

Once again, directly after this conversation, in which Hal agrees to play along with his father and help him craft the new narrative, Falstaff enters to point out the absurdity of reconstructing factual events. At the end of 2.5, Falstaff falls asleep in the tavern and Hal and Poins pick his pockets (484-495). They share the contents with the audience and laugh at the tavern reckoning that is mostly for sack (another anachronism). This brief episode is necessary to Shakespeare's use of Falstaff to undermine Henry's notion of history, for the audience must know by 3.3 what was actually in Falstaff's pockets in 2.5 for the new jest to work. Directly after we see Henry revising history to suit his needs, we again see Falstaff doing the same. While the audience knows that Falstaff's pockets contained essentially papers and string, he blusters around the tavern claiming to have "lost a seal-ring of my grandfather's worth forty mark" and "three or four bonds of forty pound apiece" (3.3.73, 92-3); the audience knows that he is inventing a story that will make his loss seem greater and absolve him of his debt to the Hostess.

⁶ It is also worth noting that the question of whether or not a king should submit himself to common view points to the struggle between waning medieval scholasticism and divine authority and the new rise of civic humanism. Erasmus refers to the prince "born to office" as a deplorable practice "in our own times" that is based on "the custom among some barbarian peoples in the past" (5), and urges that the key to good government is education; the prince must get to know his people, and the people their prince. To facilitate this, Erasmus advocates "frequent tours of the towns and territories" (65) as well as the prince making "every kind of effort to gain affection from the people," including walking among them and speaking to them (66). Henry's actions in *Richard II* are thus in line with his new forward-thinking method of kingship, and his denial of them bolsters the argument that he is attempting to revise history in order to diminish his reliance on political maneuvering instead of divine right.

Thus far, Falstaff's twisting of the truth mimics Henry's attempts to craft a narrative; but from this point he begins to disrupt the narrative as it is being constructed by Hal.

Perhaps one of the most significant examples of this disruption comes out of Hal's dramatic juxtaposition with Hotspur. Just as Henry must eliminate Richard and Mortimer as rivals to both the throne and the role of hero, so Hal must "make this northern youth exchange / his glorious deeds for my indignities" (3.2.145-6). Holinshed describes how Prince Harry engaged in "riot and other vnciuill demeanor vnséemelie for a prince" but dismisses the behavior as basically harmless (539); Shakespeare increases the scale of Hal's riot and, importantly, makes it something which the Prince is intentionally contriving so that he might 'miraculously' redeem himself later. Both the dishonorable behavior itself and the motives behind it are portrayed as dubious but central to the prince's character. In this way, Shakespeare positions Hal as the ultimate crafter of the "providential" narrative, even more so than his father. Before Shrewsbury, Hal makes the honorable offer to spare "many a soul" who may be killed in the ensuing battle by settling the matter in a hand-to-hand combat with Hotspur, "to save the blood on either side" and "try fortune with him in a single fight" (5.1.83, 99-100). This is the kind of offer that a chivalrous prince might be expected to make, though it might also be seen as a gesture calculated to cast Hal and his father in the roles of benevolent rulers blessed by God. Hal is ready to assume his role within the providential narrative of Henry V; he has learned his lines and donned his costume. All that remains is for him and Hotspur to meet, for Hal to cast out the man who actually fills the role of honorable warrior so that he might have it to himself.

And Shakespeare gives us this battle, complete with boasting on either side, clash of swords, and the honorable death of Hotspur, for whom Hal professes deep respect once he is dead. However, this battle, the two men's jests about each other as rivals, the offer of single

combat, the ultimate death of Henry Percy by the prince's hand—all are fictional, an account constructed by Shakespeare for dramatic effect and to uplift the riotous prince so that he might eventually become the famed Henry V. But no sooner has Hal left the dead Hotspur and supposedly dead Falstaff on the stage than the fat knight pops up and delivers an entire speech on the naturalness of counterfeiting when it might benefit one to do so (5.4.113-118). He then “wounds” Hotspur and is in position to be discovered by Hal and John when they re-enter, upon which he promptly asserts, “I look to be either earl or duke, I can assure you” (5.4.137). Falstaff's version of counterfeiting undermines Hal's in the eyes of the audience. Where the prince and his father seek to establish a version of events that glorifies their heroic action, Falstaff's mimicry once again emphasizes the intentional nature of that project. In Hal's case, Falstaff does more than just mimic the mythmaking that Henry attempted to achieve; Shakespeare uses Falstaff to intervene in Hal's crafting of a Romantic narrative and expose it for the fabrication that it is.

It is for this reason that Falstaff is expelled from the narrative at the end of *Part 2*: in order for Henry V to become the king of legend, the critical consciousness that knows history as a contingent narrative must be silenced. Critics have noted extensively the structural looseness of *Part 2* compared with *Part 1*, the “tendency toward disintegration that is the signature of this play” (Cohen 311; Blinde; Thorne); I suggest that what they are noting is not so much “disintegration” as a simple lack of an attempt at a cleanly emplotted providential history. In *Part 1*, Shakespeare presents a narrative structure which strives to achieve what Hayden White describes as “narrative closure” (*Content of the Form* 5); in *Part 2*, by contrast, he does not and does not *want* to achieve such closure. Here Falstaff, Rumour, Shallow, and others represent the “still-discordant wav'ring multitude” (*2H4* Induction.19) of historiographical voices. Characters

like Henry, who were previously presented as confidently in control of the narrative, express increasing feelings of loss and confusion at the progression of history, while Falstaff commands a second plot that neither mimes nor is subordinated to Henry's and Hal's, but is merely the rest of recorded history, the bits and facts included in the extensive chronicle form which cannot be incorporated into the official narrative. In *Part 1* Falstaff was an anachronistic liability to the providentialist narrative because he brought the early modern historical consciousness to question certain aspects of that story: in *Part 2*, he is completely outside the bounds of that narrative, living and telling what would otherwise be unknown stories.

For it is not as if there is nothing happening outside the throne room or off the battlefield. Quickly's tavern is still open for business while the great political events are happening, and it is this "irrelevant" part of history that *Part 2* gives us. Whether or not Falstaff owes Quickly money or whether he has promised to marry her as she claims in 2.1 is wholly unrelated to the problem of Northumberland's being up in arms. Yet, some 150 lines are devoted to the debate for which Quickly offers substantial, detailed evidence: Falstaff did not just swear, he swore "upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in my Dolphin chamber, at the round table, by a sea-coal fire, upon Wednesday in Wheeson week" (2.1.79-81). The episode is ridiculous, unimportant to the political machinations happening elsewhere in the play, and yet, the debate between Falstaff and Quickly is given enough stage time to raise it to a level of importance on par with the actions of Henry and Hal. Similarly, not only are the scenes with Justice Shallow not required for the historical narrative to proceed, they are full of their own irrelevant historical claims. Shallow says that he and several others led quite the life of revelry in their time together at the Inns of Court when Falstaff was but a boy (3.2.15-23). However, Falstaff later debunks his statements, "every third word a lie," for the Shallow he remembers was "like a man made after supper of a

cheese paring...for all the world like a forked radish” (3.2.279-86). But Falstaff himself, of course, is not exactly a reliable source for these counterclaims. As he says, “how subject we old men are to this vice of lying!” (3.2.276-7), echoing his exclamation at the end of *Part 1* and pointing to the contingency of *any* historical evidence that might be offered. Through Falstaff’s antics both in the tavern and in Gloucestershire, Henry’s carefully crafted narrative is effectively dismantled, undermined at every turn as an emplotted history is when presented with extraneous details that cannot satisfactorily be corroborated or debunked, and certainly not incorporated.

It is for this reason that Falstaff must ultimately be rejected by Hal at the end of the play. By 5.5 Hal is fully enmeshed in monarchal ideology and his constructed role. What began in *Part 1* with his setting himself next to the honorable Hotspur continues in *Part 2* until it culminates in his coronation scene. Hal’s training in narrative construction is almost complete, his kingly persona almost perfected but for Falstaff, who is not just the evidence of his riotous youth but the embodiment of a dangerous and anachronistic challenge to both narrative and persona. Sir John Falstaff, “unimpeded” by “the demands of chronicle history” (Bulman 169), cannot be allowed to continue his presence into *Henry V*. The Lord Chief Justice replaces Falstaff for Hal as the “father to my youth” (5.2.117) to prevent him from “wrenching the true cause the false way” any longer (2.1.101). The true cause, of course, is the historical narrative which relies on the illusion of providence to uphold Lancaster’s divine right. It is the laws of providentialist history that must triumph here, bringing the narrative structure back into line so that Hal becomes the central figure again.

This is why the rejection of Falstaff garners so much sympathy from the theatre audience: not only is the likable old knight rudely cast off by a young man whom we have seen he clearly loves (“my royal Hal,” “my heart” 5.5.39, 44), but the late chronicle form and questioning

historical consciousness which Falstaff represents and which Shakespeare's audience *lives* is rejected. Because on many levels Falstaff represents the audience's own perspective, his expulsion from the story is a reminder that while Harry the Fifth was their king, he is not, in the present moment, their King, and the ideology which he espoused is no longer wholly theirs.

Emergent Windsor: the Problem of Falstaff

Plays such as Shakespeare's histories were successful because they effectively spoke to and thus enhanced the historical consciousness of their audience. Such a historical consciousness was certainly already developing and present by the time of Shakespeare's and others' writing of history plays; in no way can we say that they are responsible for the development of such a critical stance toward historical narratives. Rather, they were tapping into something which was already functioning in the minds of their audiences, something which had taken at least a hundred years or so to develop. This is why Falstaff was such a popular and successful character in the *Henry IV* plays. The audience could recognize its own voice and sensibilities being enacted and spoken by the fat knight. But Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* also stars our knight, and in this play he again functions as a dramatic anachronism. However, rather than imposing early modern concepts like the contingency of history upon a narrative set in the past, in *Merry Wives* he brings the past to bear upon the present. In drawing an explicit connection between the history plays and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* through the character of Falstaff, Shakespeare imposes the critical, slightly distanced stance of historical consciousness upon the emergent proto-bourgeois ideology of the early modern present.

Falstaff in *Merry Wives* confronts the consciousness of the audience from a different perspective than he does in the histories. If, in the *Henry IV* plays, he represents a critical stance toward providential history that the audience largely shared and thereby subjects providentialism

to an early modern historical awareness, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* his presence as an anachronism from the medieval world of the histories poses a challenge to the emergent bourgeoisie of Windsor. Because the time and therefore the ideological stance of the play-world has shifted from a medieval, aristocratic and monarchical one to an early modern, bourgeois one⁷ while the character of Falstaff changes almost not at all, he presents a problem for both worlds while also vitally connecting them. In *Merry Wives* he is more than just a comical challenge to the middling sort that must be humiliated at the end in order to restore order according to the conventions of comedy, though he is certainly that; his presence also exposes the contradictions within citizen ideology in such a way that order is not wholly restored.⁸ Tensions are allowed to hang unresolved in the play because they are as yet unresolved within bourgeois consciousness. The way that the play deals with the “problem” of Falstaff shows that not only is historical consciousness a precondition for class consciousness, but paradoxically, historical consciousness and the tension caused by contradictory ideological elements inhibit the formation of any fully cohesive class consciousness. Falstaff’s status as a knight and the abuses he commits place him within dominant aristocratic ideology, and yet his presence stirs the memory and continued

⁷ Lines such as Page’s description of Fenton having “kept company with the wild Prince and Poins” (3.2.61) and the presence of so many characters from the history plays would seem to suggest that the setting is not, in fact, early modern England, but I have as yet to find a critic who reads the play as set in the middle ages. Indeed, the general assumption is the opposite. Peter Grav argues that *Merry Wives* is the only play where Shakespeare depicts his own “contemporary society” (217) and Graham Holderness does not even qualify the notion that the play is “set in contemporary England” (“Courtly and Popular” 27). Other than the presence of characters from the history plays, one of whom I am already arguing is a deliberate anachronism, there is nothing in the play to suggest a medieval setting and much to demonstrate an early modern one.

⁸ As described in the introduction to this project, I am here using Raymond Williams’ definitions of dominant, residual, and emergent ideological elements both in identifying citizen ideology and in examining its relationship to the dominant aristocratic ideology of early modern England. It is this emergent strain within the dominant ideology with which we will be most concerned in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. This emergent, proto-bourgeois cultural practice valued such things as “self-improvement, independence, thrift, hard work, chastity and sobriety, competition, equality of opportunity, and the association of poverty with moral weakness” (*Crisis* 6).

existence of the medieval paradigm as it overshadowed the seemingly forward-looking ideals of the middling sort. The emergent, proto-bourgeois consciousness seeks to define itself by and to disseminate new and oppositional values, but it cannot escape the dominant ideology of which it is only an antithetical part.

Falstaff is immediately presented as an affront to bourgeois values. *Merry Wives* opens upon the complaint of Justice Shallow, who “writes himself ‘Armigero,’” complaining that Falstaff has abused his property (1.1.1-8).⁹ Shallow is a nearly perfect character for the introduction of this complaint. Not only does he emphasize the connection to historical consciousness and the history plays, where he also appeared alongside Falstaff, but his insistence on the “Armigero” and “Esquire” mark him as one of Harrison’s “citizens and burgesses” (115), a member of local government holding office as a judge but who has also attained the status of gentleman based on merit. Having attended the Inns of Court and owning a bit of land in the country, Shallow here represents the distinctly bourgeois voice of the man whose family has climbed slowly but surely up the social ranks. He accuses Falstaff of having “beaten my men, killed my deer, and broke open my lodge,” and demands that, “This shall be answered” (1.1.93-96). Falstaff, in true knightly fashion, flippantly responds, “I will answer it straight: I have done all this. That is now answered” (1.1.97-8). This is the kind of ill-informed response that one might once have heard from a liege lord who believes that all these things of Shallow’s are actually *his* by right of rank. Here the emergent values of thrift, hard work, and property rights

⁹ Because there has been so much critical discussion around the two texts of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, I feel it is necessary to make clear that I will be referring to the folio text offered by the Norton Shakespeare, 2nd edition. Although it has been argued that the folio represents a more locally specific version of the play while the quarto is more sympathetic toward the middle classes, “closer to the pattern of city or ‘citizen’ comedy” (Marcus 175), and therefore Q would seem to be more useful to my argument, I contend that both versions dramatize the conflict between the emerging bourgeoisie and the aristocracy to such an extent that the more authoritative nature of F can take priority over these thematic and interpretive concerns. The text being referred to throughout is therefore F.

come into direct conflict with those aristocratic ones of social hierarchy and wealth based upon an assumed natural order. Whereas in the histories Falstaff's penchant for crafting narratives exposed the relative contingency of anything perceived as 'natural,' in *Merry Wives* his assumption that people will unquestioningly believe his stories reads as offensive to a citizenry that values a morality and a truth that undermines the privileged assumptions of the nobility.

The distinction and even hostility between the elements of ideology becomes even more apparent as the citizens of Windsor discuss what is to be done about Falstaff. Shallow swears that he "will make a Star Chamber matter of it" (1.1.1-2), but in fact the matter is ultimately to be settled by "three umpires," namely Page, the Host of the Garter Inn, and Parson Evans (114-117). The settlement by local citizens rather than the Crown or the word of the knight, Falstaff, is significant here. As Robert Tittler has argued, as towns grew, so did their "quest for greater self-direction, and hence greater ability to deal with economic and social affairs" (476).¹⁰ Town charters became an important place for the negotiation of this autonomy from the crown. Members of the urban wealthy and upwardly mobile middle class "spent much of their time trying to obtain new charters or confirm controversial clauses in old ones" in order to obtain more political autonomy in governing the towns where they had a vested commercial and social interest (Clark and Slack 126), and the City of London authorities were often engaged in similar conflicts with the royal government. Harrison's description of citizens and burgesses as "likely to

¹⁰ The identification of Windsor as an incorporated town rather than a truly urban, City setting needs comment. Scholars cite this as the most definable reason for not including *Merry Wives* within the city comedy genre, and Leah Marcus points out that the F text is more rural than urban, more intimately connected to the actual Windsor locale (175). It is true that F contains more direct references to Windsor, but I fail to see why this would make the setting the rural countryside rather than a medium-sized town. The setting also does not negate the presence of distinct generic plot elements such as the prodigal knight, the jealous husband, and the emphasis on money which connect the play with the city comedy genre. Towns, like the City of London, were places where bourgeois identity was being negotiated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so that whether we see Windsor as a truly urban or a provincial locale makes little to no difference as far as how ideology functions in the play.

bear office...in corporate towns” (115) speaks to this growing involvement of the middling groups of society in local government and economics where they often played an active part (Leinwand 295). Parson Evans’ lines about how the issue between Shallow and Falstaff will be resolved are therefore significant in establishing both the setting and the social atmosphere of the play. This is not a place where the jocular knight may skate by with impunity under the protection of the Crown Prince, nor even a place where the royal bureaucracy will have priority in deciding legal matters. The citizens of Windsor are presented as independent and largely self-governing, attributes which set the community against Falstaff’s aristocratic excesses from the first scene.

When we next see Falstaff, it is to learn that despite his knighthood and his assumption of rank, he is “almost out at heels” (1.3.27) and unable to pay yet another tavern reckoning to the Host. Falstaff’s title and service to the crown should have provided him with a modest income, enough for him to live on, at least, albeit not unimaginable wealth. His position has also allowed him the chance to abuse his power to get funds, as he does in the histories when he enlists his “food for powder” (*IH4*, 4.2.58) and keeps the money allotted by the crown for the enlistment and equipping of his soldiers to himself. And yet, despite these various sources of money, his spendthrift ways have left him destitute; it is therefore not his lack of income but his inability to manage it and his wasteful living that have caused him to be in this situation, both faults that put him at direct odds with a citizenry that values thrift and hard work. This is not a new character development. In the history plays Falstaff is infamous for his schemes to make and get money any way he can and for the seemingly infinite line of credit he has with the Hostess. But the history plays are set in another time and therefore another ideological moment. Falstaff is able to live in this way because the promises that he makes as Sir John to the Hostess are at least half-

believed and especially because up until the end of *Part 2*, he always has Hal to back him up, either by securing funds from the exchequer as Hal does for repayment after the Gadshill robbery or by lending his royal credence to Falstaff's empty promises. But such aristocratic abuses have no place in the middle-class paradigm. In *Merry Wives* Falstaff's attitude toward money and the status assumptions that underpin it are outdated.

As we see throughout *Merry Wives*, it is not as if the other characters do not value money. Shallow and Slender, while they rage at Falstaff's abuses, are at the same time easily enticed by the "seven hundred pounds of moneys, and gold and silver" that Anne's grandfather has left her, and the "petter penny" that will come from her father (1.1.43, 50). There is no romance and no pretense about Shallow's reasons for engaging his nephew to Anne Page when he asks, "Will you, upon good dowry, marry her?" (1.1.200-1), the emphasis being upon the condition of her dowry. Similarly, when Page explains his dislike of Fenton as a suitor, it is partly Fenton's rank that he mistrusts, but far more emphasis is laid on Fenton's lifestyle: "He kept company with the wild Prince and Poins....No, he shall not knit a knot in his fortunes with the finger of my substance" (3.2.61-3).¹¹ What is important is not just that Fenton is "of no having" (3.2.61) but that he is so because of his own actions and his lack of solid, bourgeois values. Anne Barton notes that Page's attitude here is typical for the citizenry of the time (138). But Falstaff (and Fenton, for that matter) are not just representations of early modern gallants who have impoverished themselves by overspending; they are also remnants of a time when knights could overspend and get away with it because their rank was more important than those they owed. While the wild life of the tavern is frowned upon in the Henry IV plays, Falstaff's

¹¹ See the previous note about this line and its relationship to the play's setting.

spending and promiscuity do not pose any real threat to the social order. In Windsor, his actions are scorned from the start.

Falstaff's economic profligacy is matched only by his sexual transgressions, and indeed, the two quite often appear to go hand in hand for the fat knight. In the histories his problems with both the Hostess and Doll Tearsheet stem from lack of payment; but in the histories he gets away with this, endlessly deferring his bill on the basis of his supposed courtly status. In *Merry Wives*, it is of course Falstaff's economic troubles that induce him to court the two wives in the first place. The knowledge that Mistress Ford has "all the rule of her husband's purse" (1.3.45-6) and that Mistress Page "bears the purse too" (59) entices him to "trade to them both" as his "East and West Indies" (61-2). For middle-class society in particular, a woman's reputation was tied closely to both her chastity and to her management of her husband's money. As Tim Reinke-Williams explains, "female credit and respectability....were gauged" based upon a woman's reputation with regard to "property, industry and competence in the household" (45), an indication of the emphasis which would be placed upon the private, domestic sphere by later, fully-developed bourgeois ideology. Men would seek out for their wives women who "could run a careful household" and who displayed some skill in the management of money (45). Falstaff's sexual advances therefore constitute more than a personal affront to the Pages and Fords and their domestic spaces. They are also a direct assault upon the middle-class values that these families and the citizens of Windsor hold, and they reveal both his dismissive attitude toward women and money and his anachronistic understanding of honor.

For it is indeed honor which Falstaff misunderstands in *The Merry Wives*. In the medieval world of the history plays, the notion that honor might be no more than "A word....Air. A trim reckoning!" and finally "a mere scutcheon" (*IH4*, 5.1.134-38) was a direct affront to the values

of a king such as Henry; this notion belonged to the contingent, critical stance which Falstaff brought to bear upon a play world that would see itself as ordered and defined according to such concepts as the “laws” of history. Shakespeare presented a Henry and Hal who sought to give their power the appearance of providence based upon the romantic notion of honor as represented by Hotspur, an honor which Hal needed to achieve in order to take up Hotspur’s role as warrior-prince. Falstaff’s assertion that honor is a mere trifle was therefore anachronistic in the play but attractive to an early modern audience, who were skeptical of Henry and Hal, who were characterized as seeking to construct the narrative and their personae. But over the course of the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century, “the predominant meaning of the word ‘honor’ as a term of denotation shifted from ‘title of rank’ to ‘goodness of character,’” signaling the ideological and political changes that were happening at the same time (McKeon 156). “Honor” referred to military valor, nobility of blood, or chivalric virtues for Shakespeare’s audience, but was also becoming increasingly aligned with middle-class values such as sobriety and economy of management—both of one’s household and oneself. This kind of honor was *not* viewed as contingent or negotiable, and so Falstaff’s stance on honor becomes outdated rather than questioning as the definition of the word shifts.

Falstaff, of course, does not understand this. When Pistol and Nim refuse to bear his letters to the wives, he takes it as a personal affront, for he has allowed them “to lay my countenance to pawn;” he has “grated upon my good friends” to keep these two out of jail for various petty crimes, and “when Mistress Bridget lost the handle of her fan,” he took it “upon mine honour” that Pistol could not have taken it (2.2.6-13). In short, Falstaff has allowed Pistol and Nim to use the assumption of his knightly “honor” in order to compromise that honor for the benefit of themselves. He sees it as far less than he is due from them that they deliver a couple of

paltry letters: “Thinkest thou I’ll endanger my soul gratis?” (2.2.15-16). He delivers another speech on honor that puts us in mind of his catechism in *I Henry IV*, upbraiding Pistol for his seeming hypocrisy in claiming to have any honor at all (2.2.19-26): he accuses Pistol of ensconcing “your rags, your cat-a-mountain looks, your red-lattice phrases, and your bold beating oaths, under the shelter of your honour!” (24-26). Pistol and Nim, like Falstaff, have no honor of the kind earned and touted by Hotspur and Hal, and it is this kind of romantic honor which Falstaff rages at Pistol for claiming to stand upon. In reality, the two have refused on the basis of the other definition of honor which comes from the bourgeois sensibility. Pistol declines to become “Sir Pandarus of Troy,” while Nim “will run no base humour” and “will keep the haviour of reputation” (1.3.65-68). They object not to the idea of thieving trickery per se, but to the notion that Falstaff would violate the chastity of both women in order to gain their husbands’ money. It is true, as Falstaff claims, that characters such as Pistol and Nim have very little moral ground to stand upon, and they go along with his plan at first; it is only when he comes to the idea of seducing both wives in order to get the money, not just talking a few coins out of Mistress Ford, that they object and refuse to bear the letters. The audience might be inclined to believe that this is out of selfishness or laziness, as Falstaff later claims, except that his two followers back up their words with action, running straight to Page and Ford to tell them of Falstaff’s plan. They will not violate the honor of the purse if it means violating home and bed, a distinction which demonstrates that they, at least, understand the new alternative meaning of the word “honor” even if their master does not.

Falstaff’s misunderstanding of this usage of the word “honor” is not only a way in which he is presented as anachronistically out-of-date when it comes to middle-class values. *His* definition of “honor,” as having to do with status, family name, or money, is also at play within

the play world of *Merry Wives*, and the middle-class characters' behavior reveals the contradictory status of the term as both dominant aristocratic values and emergent ones vied within bourgeois consciousness. It is true that the wives belong to a middle class that values stability and morality as the basis of individual honor and merit, and true that they are profoundly offended by Falstaff's suggestion, even assumption, that they would sully their reputations for his sake. And yet, it is also true that both Mistress Page and Mistress Ford display a slight inclination to do so, that there is a tendency within their respectable bourgeois consciousness to entertain ambition and an understanding of honor more akin to Falstaff's. This is because whatever their changing values, they still exist within the dominant Elizabethan paradigm.

When Mistress Ford first enters after receiving her letter, and before she discovers that Mistress Page has received an identical one, she is more excited than offended. "O woman, if it were not for one trifling aspect, I could come to such honour!" she exclaims: "I could be knighted" (2.1.38-9, 43). She even uses the word honor in a sense closer to Falstaff's, referring to title and rank, specifically that earned by a knight for military valor. Her husband, the comfortably wealthy, middle-class Ford, whose reputation she is supposed to hold as dear as her own, is a "trifling aspect." It is only after Mistress Page shows her the other letter that she becomes offended and wants vengeance. Mistress Page, while she does not voice or, as far as we can tell, think about giving in to Falstaff's advances, does acknowledge the possibility that something within her might be subconsciously betraying that desire. The letter's suggestion that she has given Falstaff cause to hope for success makes her "almost ready to wrangle with mine own honesty" and she wonders whether Falstaff "know[s] some strain in me that I know not

myself' (2.1.74-77), gesturing toward the notion that whatever the values to which she may outwardly adhere, a more honest understanding of herself might acknowledge a hidden ambition.

Peter Holland has argued that both the wives and their husbands are happy with their positions, that the wives' "contentment within marriage is matched only by their husbands' contentment with their social status" (13). But others such as Peter Erickson argue that the Pages and Fords are both upwardly mobile in their ambitions, and that the play in fact celebrates aristocratic interests given that these two bourgeois families aspire to that kind of mobility (124). I would argue that it is, in fact, both, that both the contentedness and ambition that scholars read in the two bourgeois families are there because this is a fundamental contradiction between the various elements of ideology. Social development from residual to dominant to emergent modes is never linear; rather the three fold back and forward upon each other (Williams 124). In this way, we might see both residual elements of a feudal mode and emergent bourgeois elements at work within aristocratic ideology. The middling sort valued good household management and temperance in all things, ideals which point to a sense of contentedness with one's lot in life; and yet, it also valued opportunity, wealth, social mobility, and as Harrison noted, the accumulation of land. These ideas fundamentally contradict, and yet they coexisted as new values emerged. Mistresses Page and Ford betray this contradiction in their initial reactions to the letters, and although they immediately compose themselves, the audience briefly glimpses the tension between the different elements of the ideology in which the women exist.

The Pages belie a similar desire for social mobility in their arguing over a choice of suitor for Anne. It is interesting that this supposedly content couple does not consider any young local men of a similar station and character to their daughter. Anne's three suitors are all wealthy, landed, influential, or courtly in some way, and it is these particular attributes that make Slender

and Caius attractive to her parents. Slender, “my father’s choice,” is an idiot who cannot seem to hold a conversation or speak for himself for the entirety of the play; however, “what a world of vile ill-favoured faults / looks handsome in three hundred pounds a year!” (3.4.30-2). Slender will be able to “maintain [her] like a gentlewoman” (3.4.43), for as Mistress Page later corroborates, he is “well landed” (4.4.83), an important thing for those aspiring to “armigero”¹² status. As we have already seen in the first scene, the matching of Anne’s money with Slender’s land is the sole goal of the match. As for Caius, as a doctor with a private practice he is comfortable enough to employ multiple servants, and in addition to being “well moneyed,” he has “friends / potent at court” (4.4.85-6).

Even Fenton, Anne’s own choice and ostensibly the romantic suitor which many scholars cite as a reason for not considering the play to be a city comedy (Gibbons; Melchiori; Barton), is above Anne’s station, “of too high a region” (3.2.62), and exhibits questionable motives and attitudes toward money. Page suspects him of only aiming at Anne for the sake of her dowry, and Fenton admits that this was so at first: “thy father’s wealth / was the first motive that I wooed thee” (3.4.134). But he goes on to swear that, keeping with the metaphor, “wooing thee, I found thee of more value” and “’tis the very riches of thyself / that now I aim at” (3.4.15-8). Critics who consider Fenton to be the romantic suitor are apparently taking this profession at face value, but a closer look at Fenton throughout the play reveals that even here, when first he admits to being greedy but then promises that this is no longer the case, we should not intrinsically trust him. For one thing, Anne herself is a bit suspicious that maybe her father “tells you true” when he says that it is impossible for Fenton to love Anne “but as property” (3.4.10-11). Further, other than with Anne herself, at every point at which Fenton attempts to break

¹² Slender’s malapropism.

down the barriers to their marriage, he buys his way into favor. When he asks Quickly to put in a good word for him, he gives her a ring to bear to Anne as a gift, but also gives money “for thy pains” (3.4.97). Later, when he enlists the Host to set up the secret wedding to take place while the others are busy humiliating Falstaff, he promises him “a hundred pound in gold” and a “present recompense” for doing so (4.6.5, 54). Fenton’s spending habits and assumption that money can buy him anything are characteristic of the typical courtly aristocrat, it is true: but none of the other characters seem to take issue with them. Quickly and the Host accept his money without comment. Anne is suspicious of his motives but willingly puts doubt from her mind. Her parents, particularly Master Page, who raged at Fenton’s excesses earlier in the play and paid lip service to good, bourgeois, thrifty values, were ready to marry her off for money and land, and they eventually embrace Fenton as their son-in-law without complaint at the end of the play. In another play, this ambition and greed from various characters might seem commonplace, part of the fabric of everyday social life.

But the presence of Falstaff, the prodigal knight who importantly is a transplant from the history plays and whose aristocratic understanding of social interactions and conception of honor mark him as anachronistic in a contemporary bourgeois society, emphasizes by ready comparison the contradictory nature of the middle-class characters’ values. This tension is most readily apparent when it comes to Master Ford. While the other characters betray some contradictory values and desires within themselves, Ford overtly and explosively enacts two forms of the same excesses that Falstaff commits in his economic and sexual transgressions. The bourgeois sensibility emphasized chastity, sobriety, and temperance of mind, body, and emotion: in general self-control as a moral virtue. We know that Falstaff is incapable of managing money and that he is given to sexual promiscuity, both in *Merry Wives* and in the *Henry IV* plays. What

is interesting is that in Ford's intense jealousy and his miserliness when it comes to Falstaff's paying him back, he is guilty of similar excesses, albeit in their opposite extremes. Ford's infamous jealousy when he hears that Falstaff has sent a letter to court his wife has prompted comparisons with both Othello and Leontes. When he calls Falstaff a "damned epicurean rascal" (2.2.253), emphasizing both the knight's sensuality and his deception, it is with the irony that he himself is apoplectic with unbridled rage and jealousy ("cuckold, cuckold, cuckold!" 274) and is currently also in disguise as Brooke. Similarly, his insistence that Falstaff repay the money that was lent to him by Brooke answers Falstaff's own excessive spending. We know that Ford is not precisely in need of the money, for he makes sure that Falstaff understands that he thinks himself "in better plight for a lender than you are" (2.2.149-50) when they first meet and there is nothing in the play to indicate that the Pages and Fords are hard up; quite the opposite, really. And yet, at the end of the play, when the town and Falstaff have been reconciled, when Falstaff has taken his humiliation and accepted his punishment and all seems to be trending toward a peaceful and happy resolution, Ford chimes in with "Over and above that you have suffered, I think to repay that money will be a biting affliction" (5.5.156-7). Emergent middle-class values include good management of funds and self-improvement, yes; but Ford's comment is ill-timed and unnecessary at this point, and it reveals not so much efficient management as miserliness and a tendency toward an excess of greed.¹³

¹³ Ford's miserliness becomes even more apparent when compared with his benevolence at the end of the quarto version of the play. Leah Marcus has argued, rightly, that Q is a bit closer to city comedy in its content and structure, while F seems to express more aristocratic or courtly sympathies (175). In Q, the "citizen" text, Ford forgives Falstaff the debt he owes to "Brooke:" "*Mi. For.* Nay husband let that go to make amends, Forgiue that sum, and so weele all be friends. / *For.* Well here is my hand, all's forgiuen at last" (Q 2651.2-4). Here, the sense of neighborliness and community becomes more important than balancing the books. The Fords' thriftiness and responsibility so far have placed them in the financial position of being able to forgive such a debt, and so Mistress Ford reminds her husband of this. F ends on the same note of community and forgiveness, and so Ford's insistence on repayment feels out of place.

It is Falstaff who draws these excesses out of Ford, revealing him as a manifestation of the glaring contradictions within Windsor society. However, Falstaff's role as an anachronism from the past in this play allows him to function as a scapegoat for Ford's excesses and for the community as a whole. The mistresses' ambition and the other characters' love of money can be placed on him; Ford, especially, can unload his rage and jealousy. Janet Hinely and Cristina Gallenca have noted that Falstaff serves the function of *pharmakos* in this play (Hinely 48; Gallenca 32), that is, the scapegoat which society punishes in order to reconcile itself to its own sins. It is telling that Ford himself is never punished for his excessive jealousy and rage, while Falstaff, who never *actually* commits adultery with the wives, is pinched and burnt by "fairies." Because Falstaff is not fully a part of contemporary Windsor society, it is acceptable, even desirable, to shame and excise him, and this shaming tentatively resolves the contradictions displayed by the other characters. The resolution is not perfect and there are still social tensions that the audience must overlook for the sake of comedy, as Ford's comment about repayment and Anne's marriage to a courtly suitor demonstrate, but the punishment of Falstaff as the reminder of aristocratic ideology means that the community's transgressions can be rationalized as the excesses of another time period, as problems with aristocratic ideology rather than manifestations of the latent tension between the dominant and emergent modes. The citizens of Windsor can reconcile their citizen values in their own minds, laying the blame for the contradictions upon Falstaff and ignoring it within themselves.

The functioning of residual and emergent elements within any dominant ideology is a result of a mature historical consciousness. This historical consciousness, while it is a prerequisite for class consciousness, is the reason why social development always happens unevenly in the way that Williams (124), Jameson (95), and others have described. When a

group of people, or an audience, is aware of the historicity of their own social and cultural moment, of the construction of that cultural moment through the process of historical narrative, then they necessarily become aware of the influence of past eras upon their present consciousness such that the elements that Williams defines within a given ideological moment become discernible. Citizen consciousness was the product of many years of history and was beginning to find a surer hold around the turn of the seventeenth century, but it was dependent upon the knowledge of the history of its development for its existence; the emerging bourgeoisie was therefore dependent upon the influence of history within its own consciousness, even as it simultaneously looked to the future. Phyllis Rackin has argued that the early modern audience's historical consciousness and taste for history plays was partly driven by nostalgia; Shakespeare's and other playwrights' use of anachronisms was successful because the audience wanted to be connected to their past at the same time that they were aware of the historicity of the events and ideas represented on stage (Rackin 91). A consequence of historical consciousness and an awareness of the contingency of history is the desire to recuperate the more cohesive narrative that has been debunked or lost, to reintegrate it into the present. As Keith Thomas puts it, nostalgia is the desire to rescue a "golden age" that "represented a happiness which had gone forever" (13).¹⁴ I argue that this "nostalgia" is in fact the pressure of residual cultural elements upon the dominant and, by extension, emerging ideology. The fact is that historical awareness was developing within a dominant ideology that depended upon neat and cohesive narratives in order to perpetuate itself. It would be impossible for those of the middling sort to entirely escape this sensibility. Shakespeare's depiction of bourgeois characters in *Merry Wives* demonstrates the interplay between various elements of ideology, for even while striving for social mobility and

¹⁴ This thinking would ultimately lead to such movements as the Levellers and Diggers, and political narratives such as the Norman Yoke.

gentlemanly titles, they eschew the courtly characters and propound citizen values because of their sense of historical consciousness. Their hostility toward Falstaff demonstrates a certain awareness that Falstaff's values are different from theirs because they have been historically constituted in different ways; but their eventual acceptance of him and willingness to embrace certain dominant or residual elements shows that there are elements of that history which need to be recovered in order to fully ground class consciousness. The final scene of *Merry Wives* richly demonstrates this.

Once Falstaff's misguided courtship and the games the wives have been playing with him are revealed to their husbands, the citizens of Windsor meet to devise the means of Falstaff's punishment. Mistress Page describes the legend of Herne the Hunter and how it will be used as their device. "There is an old tale," she begins, of Herne the Hunter, "sometime a keeper here in Windsor forest" (4.4.26-7), but she seems to place no real stock in the story: it is merely a tale they might use, which "the superstitious idle-headed eld / received, and did deliver to our age" as an irrational truth (4.4.34-6). For the most part the other citizens seem to view the tale in the same way, except for one caveat offered by Master Page. It may be that the story is an invention, to be taken as a fiction, and yet Page reminds the others, "there want not many that do fear / in deep of night to walk by this Herne's Oak" (4.4.37-8). He does not directly express personal belief in the tale, but this statement reveals the latent contradiction within the citizens' minds about the story and the forest. Their bourgeois sensibility causes them to dismiss the tale as just that, a tale, a constructed narrative cooked up by "idle-headed" people of the past, not to be taken seriously by the pragmatic people of early modern Windsor; and yet, there are many in the town who apparently still believe in Herne, or want to believe, and it cannot be denied that it is to this

historical personage that the citizens turn in order to attempt to purge themselves of another element of the past, Falstaff.

In its use of fairies and tapers and an ancient oak, the citizens' punishment of Falstaff employs carnivalesque elements that resemble folk ritual. The concepts of folk and carnival, of ancient tales and wooded glens used by the citizens may at first seem archaic when placed within the bourgeois paradigm of the rest of the play; and yet, they are not directly at odds with that paradigm, but are instead an essential element of it. This is why Falstaff is not purged from *Merry Wives* in the way that he is summarily removed from the histories. Historical narrative as it purports to be cohesive and true cannot contain an entity such as Falstaff, whose presence questions it at every turn; ideology, on the other hand, never exists without this anachronistic element from the past, this residual element. Not only is Falstaff anachronistic in his adherence to aristocratic values, but he is also, it has been extensively noted (Hall 130; Roberts; Melchiori; Phillips) a grotesque figure, one which literally inhabits the "deeply positive" bodily principles of "fertility, growth, and brimming-over abundance" which Bakhtin identifies as dominant in the medieval period (Bakhtin 19); that is, those which were residual in the early modern era. Falstaff's excesses, his gluttony, sexual promiscuity, and the exhaustive comments upon his belly in all the plays in which he appears, not to mention his transplantation from medieval history into citizen comedy, all serve to make him this grotesque figure of medieval carnival. He is also the mouthpiece in the histories of "unofficial truth," the people's challenge to the official doctrines of ideology and those in power (Bakhtin 90). His role as scapegoat in the Herne-the-Hunter scene and the use of a stylized folk ritual in order to enact his punishment demonstrate the citizens' subconscious recognition of him as this medieval carnivalesque figure, and especially of their desire, but inability, to purge these historical elements from themselves.

Mistress Quickly's invocation and blessing upon Windsor Castle as the "fairy queen," which is often used to date the play to the 1597 induction of new knights of the Order of the Garter, serves another, more complicated purpose here. In a ritual meant to cleanse unwanted and contradictory elements from the purported citizen ideology of Windsor town, another transplanted character from the history plays invokes both medieval and early modern dominant Tudor imagery in order to effect this purgation:

Strew good luck, oafs, on every sacred room,
That it may stand till the perpetual doom
In state as wholesome as in state 'tis fit,
Worth the owner, and the owner it....
Buckled below fair knighthood's bending knee—
Fairies use flowers for their charactery. (5.5.54-7, 69-70)

Quickly is obviously appealing to the elves and fairies (oafs) inherent to the current scene. But her other statements complicate the relationship between current and historical ideology here. First, it is not clear who "the owner" is; if we take *Merry Wives* as a spin-off or addendum to the history plays, then the owner would be either Henry IV or Henry V, depending on precisely where the spin-off is situated. But the bourgeois sensibilities and the potential for this to have been played for the Garter ceremonies of 1597 mean that the owner would be Elizabeth I, a theory underscored by the fact that Quickly is in the habit of the fairy queen, a clear allusion to the ideological imagery employed by and toward Elizabeth herself. Further, the Garter ceremony itself straddles eras. Founded by Edward III in 1348, it is undoubtedly a medieval, feudal institution. And yet it is one that persisted not just through Elizabeth's reign but which continues to carry symbolic importance to the present day, clearly giving it influence both within Tudor ideology and over the emergent elements.

It is unclear, then, precisely which ideological elements are hostile to Falstaff, for as the use of the fairy ring and Herne the Hunter as well as the indirect appeal to Elizabeth indicate, it is impossible to clearly pinpoint the lines between seemingly contradictory elements of the play world of Windsor. I would suggest, then, that Falstaff's humiliation is not a ritual of purgation but of rebirth, a reaffirmation and renegotiation of the varied but equally important influences on the citizens' minds. Jeanne Addison Roberts has asserted that *Merry Wives* is a Halloween play, that the Herne-the-Hunter episode, in the forest at night with spirits appearing to dance around the tree, is a reenactment of the pagan festival of the new year (80). Not only is Halloween night a Celtic celebration of renewal, but it coincides with the Christian All Saints' Day, celebrating the baptism and resurrection as saints of those who have died in faith and service to the Church.

Falstaff's humiliation ought therefore to be read not as a final punishment, but as a ritual of renewal; even if the Halloween aspect is debatable, it is true that as a carnivalesque figure who is ritually purged in this manner, Falstaff represents the enduring significance of past values within the mindset of the citizens. The method and punishment which they had initially set out to level against him never comes to fruition. Shallow never takes the issue to the Star Chamber, and the citizen tribunal of Page, Evans, and the Host which the audience was promised in the first scene of the play never convenes. These are early modern methods for dealing with an aristocratic transgressor. But it requires a medieval method to deal with a grotesque figure, a ritual that can "absorb the energies of nascent capitalism into an older value-pattern" (Hunter 14) and then, through acknowledgment of that value-pattern, reconfigure and reabsorb it back into nascent capitalism. For Falstaff is indeed reabsorbed, rather than expunged. Twice after the "fairies" are revealed to be Evans and the children, the Pages invite Falstaff back to their home as part of the community. Page promises him that "thou shalt eat a posset tonight at my house"

(5.5.158-9), and Mistress Page's parting words for the company embrace both Falstaff and Fenton into the early modern, middle-class fold: "Good husband, let us every one go home, / and laugh this sport o'er by a country fire, / Sir John and all" (218-20). In this way, even as Falstaff exposes the latent contradictions within citizen ideology, his final humiliation and reconciliation with the citizens of Windsor resolves those contradictions into an at least provisional harmony.

Falstaff thus bridges the temporal gap between the *Henry IV* plays and *Merry Wives* by embodying both the skeptical stance toward history that is integral to the emergent forces within ideology and the residual elements of that ideology which expose its inherent contradictions. Harriet Phillips, while arguing that Falstaff is indeed a kind of "merry" anachronism in *Merry Wives*, also asserts that he is ultimately a failure in that play because he is "unable to recognize—and therefore to function within—the genre in which he finds himself" (126). Phillips is expanding here upon an argument also made by Bakhtin about "laughter's degradation" and the notion that, over time, comedy, the people's laughter and carnivalesque being, tended toward the "single tone of seriousness" that characterizes bourgeois satire (Bakhtin 101). But Bakhtin comes to the eventual conclusion that "seriousness and laughter, coexist and reflect each other...true ambivalent and universal laughter does not deny seriousness but purifies and completes it" (123). I argue that Falstaff's relationship to *Merry Wives* and the early citizen comedy genre is this relationship; he *is* able to function within the genre—he is essential to it. The separation of the emergent historical and social elements of ideology, because of their separation into different plays in this case, at first obscures this connection. Falstaff seems out of place in *Merry Wives* when we read that play as a unitary, singular whole, but when the *Henry IV* plays and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* are read as a "Falstaff sequence," the connections between them as pertains to the ideological and social developments of the late sixteenth century become clear. Falstaff's

presence in all of these plays connects them in a way that highlights the importance of historical consciousness in the emerging proto-bourgeois ideology of Elizabethan and Jacobean England. Despite his not belonging wholly to either play-world, neither is complete without him, for the past and present are essential elements of the same consciousness, and only became further entwined as the relationship between the history and city comedy genres developed.

CHAPTER TWO

“UNRIVALLED MAJESTY”: CITIZEN IDEOLOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF HISTORY IN HEYWOOD’S *EDWARD IV*

Sir Thomas More’s *History of King Richard the Third*, famous during the early modern period as the authoritative account of Richard’s reign and valued by modern scholars as perhaps the earliest example of humanist historiography, offers the following editorial note after its description of Mistress Shore and her misfortunes: “I doubt not some shall think this woman too slight a thing to be written of and set among the remembrances of great matters” (More 66). Critics have quoted these lines when discussing Thomas Heywood’s *Edward IV* plays to such an extent that it seems a commonplace, almost a requirement, to do so; and for good reason. Given that More’s *History* was the original source for the Mistress Shore story and well-known in the period, undoubtedly Heywood would have been familiar with it. Moreover, the language More uses, describing Mistress Shore as “too slight a thing” and the history in which she features as “remembrances of great matters,” establishes the generic dichotomy with which Heywood is concerned. History, according to the great chroniclers, was indeed interested in the “great matters” of political life, the actions of kings and nobles and the significance of those actions. But Heywood’s *Edward IV*, as many have rightly noted, is interested in the things that are “too slight to be written of,” those people and deeds not generally included in detail, if at all, in the official histories.

This alternative view of history is partly achieved simply by Heywood's choice of sources. Rather than drawing exclusively or even predominantly upon works such as the chronicles of Edward Hall or Polydore Vergil, Heywood makes abundant use of what D.R. Woolf refers to as "parasite genres," the ballads, diaries, newsbooks, humanist histories (such as More's), and other history plays that were gradually replacing the chronicle by the end of the sixteenth century (*Reading History* 26). Even where he does depend on chronicle, specifically in using Holinshed for his account of the Falconbridge rebellion, Heywood manipulates and selects to such an extent that the original source is almost unrecognizable. But it is not merely Heywood's use of these sources that makes his history different from Hall's, or Shakespeare's for that matter. His choice to foreground those things "too slight to be written of," the Mistress Shores and the tanners and the citizens of London who people the various cultural narratives of Edward IV, rather than the king himself, is a particular use of his sources which asserts a specific agenda: namely, to create a history play focused on the lesser figures, the citizens and peasants whose lives were certainly touched by the "great matters" of those in political power, and whose stories also deserve to be told.

Opening the field of historical representation in this way exposes monarchal and aristocratic ideology to perilous interrogation. Bringing various sources into play and focusing on other classes of people means that Heywood not only offers a different kind of history; he challenges the dominant definition of history itself as a form of narrative and of political and ideological control. His *Edward IV* plays draw attention to the fact that Tudor historiography and even history plays by other playwrights, specifically Shakespeare, were built upon an intellectual bias which favored the monarchy and nobility. As Richard Helgerson has noted, "Shakespeare's history plays are concerned above all with the consolidation and maintenance of royal power,"

while those by men like Heywood “give their attention to the victims of such power” (“Staging” 234). Between Heywood’s *Edward IV Parts 1 and 2* and Shakespeare’s first tetralogy, there is not a single overlapping scene, not one moment that is dramatized in both authors’ works, surprising given that Edward is king for much of both *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*. While Shakespeare’s works by no means simply uphold the status quo or reinforce the ideology of those in power, as the previous chapter should demonstrate, they are nevertheless interested in exploring how power establishes, protects, and perpetuates itself, the game of politics. Heywood’s plays, on the other hand, are concerned with what, or who, gets destroyed in that process and the struggles with which people must contend if they seek to challenge such power.

By refocusing historical representation upon the subjects and victims of royal power rather than the monarch and thereby exposing the official version of history to interrogation, Heywood’s *Edward IV* plays force the conflict between aristocratic ideology and that of the emergent bourgeoisie to the fore, into the very genre of history itself. In doing so, the plays contribute to the shift in generic preference from history play to citizen comedy by demonstrating, within the play, the cultural overlap between historical and social consciousness; the two plays together reveal the difficult, nearly impossible process of incorporating an emerging citizen consciousness into a historical narrative dominated by the traditional figures of kings and nobles. Many critics have argued that Heywood’s plays, especially when compared with Shakespeare’s, represent a different kind of history, a sort of separate-but-equal focus; Jean Howard explains that Heywood is not “really producing a more inclusive view of England than Shakespeare, simply a differently exclusive one” which gives the commoners’ perspective (149). Wendy Wall similarly refers to the “supplementarity” of Heywood’s version which allows his common characters to forge an “identity separate from their status as subjects” (135). But mutual

exclusivity or supplementary identities are oversimplified ways of approaching the ideological tension present in Heywood's text. The citizens do not represent a precisely bourgeois consciousness that pits itself against the monarchy, nor is the monarchy entirely antagonistic toward the commoners. Rather, the contradictions within the ideology of the early modern period make themselves felt inside individual characters, as dilemmas facing a single class or person, and it is these moments of hesitation or confusion which show that the traditional chronicle history play or official historical narrative is too narrowly focused to sufficiently encompass social consciousness.

To return to the note from More's *History* with which I began, it is not only the rhetoric but the subject of his statement which is crucial for understanding Heywood's approach to history and the way his plays expose ideological conflict. For More is referring, of course, to "this woman" Mistress Shore, and it is Heywood's treatment of Jane and Matthew Shore which most enables us to see the conflict arising between dominant and emergent elements. It seems to have become conventional to refer to Heywood's *Edward IV* plays as "episodic," as structurally inferior especially when compared with Shakespeare's histories (Crupi 229; Stevenson 204; Rowland "Introduction" 7). But as Kathleen McLuskie points out, this episodic nature is illusive, explained by "the planting of episodes whose significance will appear only in the final unfolding of the whole plan" (10). The Shores provide the dramatic focus for this plan. Even scenes in which neither Jane nor Matthew are present serve indirectly to set up the difficulties which pervade their story and ultimately claim the audience's sympathies. As Heywood's invention, Matthew in particular accomplishes in Heywood's play what Falstaff could not in *Henry IV*. Matthew is not merely a mocking voice, poking fun at the way the king consolidates power in order to throw the historical narrative into comic relief; he is a challenge to Edward's power, a

middle-class character with whom the audience could identify and who resists not only the dominant historical narrative but the ideological values of Edward's court as well. Matthew Shore is a loyal, temperate, economically responsible man of the City, his wife a chaste, loving, dutiful woman. Together they comprise the almost perfect citizen couple. King Edward, on the other hand, is consistently portrayed as an unworthy king. He is likable and merry, to be sure, and may have played well onstage, but this characterization is also troubled by the sense that he takes such merriness too far, that his joviality has tipped toward an abuse of power which threatens the sobriety and prudence that the citizens value.

This contrast between merry but overbearing king and restrained, loyal commoner is set up from the beginning of the play and forms its central theme, so that what seemed a happy and functional political relationship between Court and City is, by the end, clearly problematic. This is not to say that the two are blatantly antagonistic. To portray, as Helgerson says, the "victims of such power" ("Staging" 234) is not the same as portraying the overthrow of that power. Quite the contrary: by the end of the play the Shores are dead and the other citizen characters have been abandoned, while the final scene focuses on Richard III. These people and their values must be silenced, as Edward's and then Richard's oppression of Jane Shore demonstrates, in order for the history play to find resolution. But by foregrounding the citizens and their concerns in a history play which might be expected to focus primarily upon the monarchy, Heywood exposes the problematic nature of the monarchal approach to history and leaves the way open for a new focus upon citizen society. If the purpose of a chronicle history play is to accurately depict historical events and to consolidate and bolster national feeling, then Heywood's is a failure, for it more successfully portrays the breaches within such nationalism, the contradictory nature of the

dominant ideology, and makes clear by the end that both the theatre and society are moving in a new direction.

The Falconbridge Rebellion and the Citizen Hero

While the majority of Heywood's play focuses on people other than King Edward himself and action for which he is not present, the story begins in a more traditional manner, with the disagreement and political outrage resulting from Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, the widowed Lady Grey. Shakespeare explored the repercussions of this incident too, but in his *3 Henry VI* the focus is hardly upon the actual wedding and more upon the consequences of it as they are important to the historical plot. Directly juxtaposed with Edward's wooing of Elizabeth in *3 Henry VI* are two important scenes. First, after witnessing the betrothal, Richard of Gloucester is left onstage to deliver one of his most famous speeches. It is because of Edward's terrible political decision to marry this lowly widow that we learn Richard's true nature, that he will "make [his] heaven to dream upon the crown" (3.2.168) and that he "can smile, and murder whiles I smile...and frame my face to all occasions" (182-5). Second, Edward's marriage causes him to lose the loyalty of the Earl of Warwick, who is humiliated when he receives a message in France telling him of the marriage, for he is in France himself to arrange a marriage between Edward and the French king's sister. Upon receiving the news, Warwick declares that Edward is "no more my king" (3.3.184) and that "to repair my honour, lost for him, / I here renounce him and return to Henry" (193-4). The marriage is a plot device to move the "great matters."

In *Edward IV Part 1*, by contrast, the discussion of the marriage is used to set up Edward's character. Although Shakespeare is true to history in that the marriage with Elizabeth Woodville was a significant reason for Warwick's desertion of Edward (though Shakespeare

collapses the timeline quite a bit for drama's sake),¹ in Heywood's play there is only scant mention of the fact that the Earl might be upset by the marriage, and no observable consequence from that quarter. The Duchess of York admonishes Edward, "What may the Princess Bona think of this? / Our noble cousin Warwick, that great lord / ...[will] have his honour touched with this foul blemish" (1.27-8, 36). But Edward brushes off her warning, and the way Heywood presents it, nothing ever comes of Warwick's being offended. Of course, this is misleading not only because of the importance of the battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury in English history as the final confrontation between Edward and the Lancastrian army of Henry VI, but because of the battles' connection with the Falconbridge rebellion, which Heywood does choose to dramatize at some length. Falconbridge, as Warwick's bastard cousin, was attempting to pass through London on his way to aid the Lancastrian army at Barnet; the battle for London between his army and the citizens which resulted was therefore a direct result of Edward's marriage to Elizabeth and the resentment it spawned among Warwick and his friends and allies.

But Heywood draws no such connection.² Instead, he uses the first two scenes to contrast Edward's character as a bawdy, overly merry king with the heroism and respectability of the citizens of London: the scenes essentially lay the foundation from the very beginning of *Edward IV* for the incongruity between the monarchy and middling sort. The first scene gives the audience a very clear view of Edward's character. The Duchess's anger and fear of reprisals are completely well-founded, as history made all too clear, but not only does Edward irresponsibly dismiss her, he further makes lewd jokes to his own mother. When she exclaims that he has

¹ Edward's marriage to Elizabeth took place in 1464. The final Lancastrian stand and the battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury took place in 1470-1. Warwick stewed for a bit before actually rising against Edward.

² Even though Heywood collapses the timeline as Shakespeare does, so that Edward's marriage and the entrance of Falconbridge which historically were separated by seven years or so are immediately adjacent, there is no politically causal line drawn between the two events.

“made work!” (1.7) his response is that she “shall see us make work for an heir apparent” (1.9) and that they are “as you see...going about to get a young king” (1.20). The effect is that this Edward is a man with no respect or sense of propriety even when it comes to his mother, as well as that Elizabeth was perhaps pregnant before their marriage, if their “work” and “going about” is already visible (“see us,” “as you see”). He also discusses his marriage in base, animalistic terms, referring to himself and Elizabeth as the “cock and the hen” who are “both of one breed” in order to justify his marrying an Englishwoman, and for good measure calls his new wife and queen, “this wench” (1.43-4, 47). Heywood’s Edward is clearly a man of good humor but little reverence.

In addition to these bawdy comments, Edward’s reaction to the news that Falconbridge is marching on London is also indicative of his character, and in a more damning way. When a messenger enters to give him the news, he responds by saying that he “thought one day I should see / that bastard Falcon take his wings to mount” (1.149-50), again making no connection between Falconbridge and Warwick, and then, strangely, declaring to Howard and Sellinger that

This night we’ll spend in feast and jollity
 With our new queen, and our beloved mother.
 Tomorrow you shall have commission
 To raise up power against this haughty rebel. (1.155-8)

This delay is Heywood’s invention, for not only could Edward not have received this news at his wedding because it took place seven years after Falconbridge’s attack on London, he also, historically, was absent from the citizens’ defense of London against Falconbridge for a very good reason: the Battle of Tewkesbury preceded Falconbridge’s attack by mere days.³ Heywood

³ Edward’s army defeated Queen Margaret’s forces at Tewkesbury on May 4. Ten days later, unaware of the outcome of this battle, Falconbridge demanded entrance to the City of London on grounds that he was going to aid Warwick. Edward’s absence from London when the citizens defended it was therefore,

therefore takes away one of Edward's most famous acts of heroism and transfers it to the citizens of London, whilst simultaneously portraying Edward as shirking his duty for the sake of a feast. For of course, Edward's decision to delay preparations to aid the citizens while he enjoys his "feast and jollity" means that he arrives too late to help. Heywood's depiction of Edward in this opening scene, including the Duchess's line that he has dishonored himself "with the base leavings of a subject's bed" (1.77), clearly a foreshadowing of his later treatment of Jane Shore as much as a slight on Elizabeth Woodville, sets up the king as oppositional to citizen values like industriousness and temperance from the very first. He is brash, neglectful, and inclined to excess, attributes which will later challenge the citizens' loyalty.

After this opening scene, Heywood takes us to London, where a group of capable and dutiful citizens have been left to defend the city on behalf of a king whom the audience has just seen is somewhat unworthy of their loyalty. The Falconbridge rebellion is the only section of the plays where Heywood relies mostly upon chronicle history for his source,⁴ but he is so deliberately selective with Holinshed that his use of this official version of history only serves to emphasize the way in which a historical narrative might be biased and manipulated in the service of a particular political project. He omits all mention of the "fiftéene hundred of the choisest souldiers" which Edward sent as an emergency advance aid from Tewkesbury (Holinshed 689), as well as the fact that "the earle of Essex, and manie knights, esquiers, and gentlemen, with their fréends and seruants, came to aid the citizens" (690). In *Edward IV*, the citizens are on their own,

historically, entirely justified. He had not yet returned from the one of the most crucial battles of the Wars of the Roses.

⁴ John Stow describes how "In the year 1471, the 11th of Edward IV, Thomas, the bastard Falconbridge, having assembled a riotous company of shipmen and others in Essex and Kent, came to London" (60), and it is true that Heywood likely also had access to his account. However, Stow's account is so brief (it appears as a side note in a broader discussion of Aldgate) that it fails to include many of the details which *Edward IV* shares with Holinshed.

and their heroism is enlarged by this. Further, Heywood omits the fact that Falconbridge had initially raised his army for the purpose of coming to Warwick's aid, that he had "latelie before beene sent to the sea by the earle of Warwike" and that the two men were cousins (Holinshed 689). Even though the decisive battles in the north had already taken place, it is unlikely that Falconbridge could have known about them (Richmond 676). It was only after the citizens informed him that Edward was victorious and no longer opposed by any real power that the rebels "resolved with all their forces to assault the citie, and to enter it if they could by plaine strength, that putting it to the sacke, they might conueie the riches to their ships" (Holinshed 689), a last desperate attempt to salvage something from their uprising. Heywood portrays their rebellion as having always been conceived as a petty attempt to sack the City while the king was away. His rebels have no true political cause or backing, and this characterization is meant to separate this group of commoners from those defending the city.

Historically, however, the distinction between them is not absolutely clear. C.F. Richmond relates that there were "over 200 citizens of Canterbury" in Falconbridge's army, including many members of Canterbury's trade guilds and even the city's mayor, Nicholas Faunt (684-5).⁵ That Heywood makes them "rusticals" (9.122) is therefore important, for he is establishing a difference between attackers and defenders which serves to emphasize and thus crystallize citizen values and motives for his audience. Heywood's Falconbridge starts out by giving what seems to be a plausible and perhaps honorable reason for the rebels' coming, that they are "touched with true feeling of King Henry's wrongs" (2.11) and come only in service to

⁵ Much of the army was composed of laborers or unemployed, frustrated men who may have seen this as an opportunity for loot, or at least escape to a different life. But Richmond's research reveals that among the rolls of those penalized after the revolt there are a surprisingly large number of true citizens of Canterbury and other towns in Kent, men who would've had something to lose. Faunt was drawn and quartered for his involvement in the uprising.

the house of Lancaster, taking up “just arms” (2.24). He is adamant that they do *not* “rise like Tyler, Cade, and Straw,” the “rascal rout” who formed a long tradition of revolt in English history by the time of Edward IV (27-8). However, as Helgerson points out, “his evocation of Jack Straw and Jack Cade serves rather to associate him and his fellow rebels with that convention than to distinguish them from it” (“Staging” 210). This association seems likely on a stage that had already seen dramatic versions of these men in recent years, and the things which Falconbridge and his followers dream of and promise to the hundreds of commons that follow them would suggest likeness with Cade and Straw rather than difference. Declarations such as “we will be masters of the Mint ourselves / and set our own stamp on the golden coin” (2.49-50) and “we will measure velvet by our pikes” (67) are reminiscent of Shakespeare’s Cade in 2 *Henry VI*; Cade swears that “there shall be no money” (2*H6*, 4.2.66) and his followers make a very similar joke about “taking commodities upon our bills” (4.7.133) that connects commercial theft with a sexual threat. By the end of the scene, all pretense is put aside even by Falconbridge himself, who agrees that it is “bravely resolved” that “if anybody ask who shall pay, / cut off his head, and send him away” (2.96-7, 99). Heywood’s rebels have none of the reasons which Falconbridge historically had for marching on London, and their rhetoric and professed goals are more than just threatening; they are threatening in a precise way which links them to a theatrical tradition of revolt and separates them as one group of commoners from the other sort of commoner Heywood gives us: the chivalric citizen of London who does his duty to the Crown.

In stark contrast with the rebels, the citizens of London are not only loyal to King Edward, they are portrayed as romantic heroes whose high ideals are directly in line with the kind of perfect vassalage valued by aristocratic ideology. This play was by no means the first to portray citizens in such a light; as both Helgerson and Stephen Greenblatt have argued in regard

to Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI*, it is, finally, a middle-class force which puts down the rebellious Cade, who of course threatened the middling sorts of people as much as he did the Crown.⁶ Heywood himself had already given the theatre a play which associated the City directly with heroic, even knightly deeds in *The Four Prentices of London*. Laura Stevenson O'Connell has called this type of literature, where noble or gentlemanly attributes are assigned to middle or even lower class characters, the "bourgeois hero-tale," and identifies many other examples of the genre in the period (O'Connell 267-8). "Curiously," she notes, the figures "are praised for virtues having nothing to do with economics or the realities of mercantile service" (269); it is as though they are enveloped within the values of the aristocracy and the medieval romance, their worth celebrated in terms of their similarity to knights and lords, rather than for merits unique to citizens and merchants.

Heywood's citizens fit comfortably into this category of "bourgeois-hero."⁷ Although their identities are explicitly tied to the City of London and to their trades, as the Recorder reports that "the whole companies / of Mercers, Grocers, Drapers, and the rest, / are drawn together for their best defence" (3.78-80), the rhetoric they use and the associations they make

⁶ Helgerson argues that Shakespeare's "mockery of Jack Cade, in particular, is open and unmistakable," and that Cade's rebellion is really a "war on gentlemen" more than anything else—precisely the social group of which many actors and playwrights were members. His theatrical death therefore becomes a kind of social victory ("Staging" 212-3). Greenblatt further points out that while the king's men are able to dissolve Cade's followers with little to no bloodshed, it comes down to Alexander Iden, esquire, to deal with their leader: "the aristocrat has given way to the man of property" (25). The effect in either case, whether the defeat of Cade is a theatrical or a social triumph (or more truly, both), is to assign a sense of nobility to the propertied citizenry, who would otherwise never be considered noble. Such an assignation is what is happening in Heywood's play as well.

⁷ O'Connell uses the term "bourgeois" throughout her essay with the connotation of, and often interchangeably with, the terms citizens, tradesmen, and middle-class. While I would argue that these terms have different, sometimes quite different meanings, her term "bourgeois-hero" is meant to refer to a specific type of character in the literature of the period, and can therefore still be useful. I will refer to this character or story type in quotation marks when necessary in order to denote my use of O'Connell's category while acknowledging that "bourgeois" is a problematic term for this period.

with figures like William Walworth, the Lord Mayor famous for killing the rebel Wat Tyler, emphasize an identification with hierarchal structures and a dissociation from the fellow tradesmen who are marching on their walls. John Crosby, the Lord Mayor, commands the apprentices with the cry, “God and our king against an arrant rebel!” (5.14) and encourages them to “stick to your officers, / for you may come to be as we are now,” (12-3), appeals which connect duty to king and country with the aspiration to become masters and free citizens, “as we are now.” While a respect for hierarchal office both in the City and the home was certainly an engrained part of the guild system, here social mobility is linked to heroic deeds and chivalric duty rather than mercantile success, good investment, and effective management of goods and household, the things which would typically have been valued among the middling sort. The apprentices jump at the opportunity to prove themselves in this way, offering “the ancient custom of our fathers” (5.22) and the desire that the “chronicles of England can report / what memorable actions we have done” (5.55-6) as their reasons for fighting; they hope that “ancient custom” and their bravery will induce later chroniclers to include their actions in the “remembrances of great matters” (More 66) which would typically have been reserved for the deeds of their masters or even just for the king and his nobles.⁸ Heywood, of course, chooses to include them in a prominent way, an interesting move not just because they were traditionally

⁸ Sadly, future chroniclers did not see fit to include the actions of the apprentices in their accounts of the Falconbridge rebellion, which can hardly mean that apprentices were not involved. Holinshed reports that Falconbridge came before London with “manie thousands” of men (689), and it must be remembered that he was attempting to bring a small army to his cousin’s aid in the north. In order for the City to have repelled such a force it seems impossible that journeymen and apprentices couldn’t have been among the defenders. “The maior, aldermen, and other worshipfull citizens were in good arraie, and each man appointed and bestowed where was thought néedfull” (Holinshed 690), and later the “worshipfull commoners” are knighted by Edward (690), but there is no explicit mention of apprentices either here or in Stow. Heywood’s portrayal of them is therefore entirely of his own making and serves to showcase the heroism that comes even from the lowliest members of the City, as well as bolstering the play’s vision of a more inclusive kind of history.

excluded from the historical narrative but because apprentices in Heywood's day were known for their tendency to create havoc in the city from time to time. Charles Whitney describes the riotous activities of apprentices and journeymen as "habitual and widespread" based on the number of City ordinances devoted to the issue (438), and the bad behavior of the apprentices who attended theatrical shows was cited many times by those who opposed the theatre as a reason for shutting down the institution. Whitney notes that in 1592 the theatres *were* closed for half a year due to rioting by Feltmakers' apprentices (437). Heywood's elevation of the apprentices during the rebellion is clearly calculated both to assign them firmly to the City, not the rebels, and to demonstrate that even among the lowest orders of the citizens, bravery and aristocratic values can be found.

In addition to the admirable behavior of the apprentices, the invocation of William Walworth by both Crosby and Matthew Shore serves to connect the City to its own history; in particular, a history of chivalrously defeating rebellious rabble. In his speech to the apprentices, Crosby draws a temporal connection between them and the men who defended London during the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. He induces them to "show yourselves as befits the time," that is, this present time of 1471, but he prays that they will "let this find a hundred Walworths now / dare stab a rebel" (5.9-10). The apprentices are encouraged to become Walworths reincarnate, linking them with those who put down Wat Tyler in the same way that Falconbridge's speech has already connected his own force with that of the historical rebels. The speech carries weight because it has been immediately preceded by Shore's reminding the audience of who Walworth is and likening Crosby, the current Lord Mayor, to this legendary one. In defiance of Falconbridge, Matthew Shore declares

My Lord Mayor bears his sword in his defence,
 That put the sword into the Arms of London,
 Made the lord mayors for ever after knights:
 Richard—deposed by Henry Bullingbrook—
 From whom the House of York doth claim their right. (4.31-6)

Here the connection to the historical defenders of London is made explicit, when Shore claims that Crosby “bears his sword” in defense of Richard, he who made the lord mayors knights forever. That he then reminds his audience that Edward actually claims his right to the throne from Richard II completes the image of history’s repeating.⁹ King, citizens, and rebels are all in the same roles that they were nearly a hundred years before, and this only increases the sense that the rebels are in the wrong and the citizens are backed by a chivalric code of honor that their predecessors also obeyed. When Edward finally arrives in London, he serves both to underscore the heroism of the citizens and to remind the audience of his own profligacy, lest they have forgotten the opening scene of the play in the excitement of the stage battle. Crosby assumes the proper humility of a king’s vassal: “I hold no lordship nor no dignity / in presence of my gracious lord the King, / but all I humble at your highness’ feet” (9.190-2). Edward then knights him and the rest of the City leaders—except Shore, who refuses it—because of “the honour you have merited in field” (9.220). This is the way that a proper feudal relationship was meant to work; a lord earned merit, title, and riches from his king and held them only by the king’s prerogative, which Crosby acknowledges. Crosby’s modesty and Edward’s appreciation would seem to be the perfect relationship under the dominant ideology.

But Edward’s greeting to the citizens also makes his absence from London during the battle rather conspicuous and reminds the audience of the first scene and the reason for this

⁹ Although Richard II had no children and therefore the House of York could not claim to be his descendants, he did name his heir as Edmund Mortimer, “from whom the House of York *doth* claim their right.”

absence. As he thanks Crosby, Edward also lies about the reason for his being late to the battle: “we assure you on our royal word, / so soon as we had gathered us a power / we dallied not, but made all haste we could” (9.205-7). Clearly, the “royal word” is not worth much, for Heywood’s audience will remember that Edward in fact waited a day before assembling his troops so that he could enjoy his marriage feast. He may not have dallied as soon as his power was gathered, but he certainly dallied in gathering it, which resulted in the citizens having to mount a defense unaided. Edward has, in fact, *not* upheld his side of the feudal contract, and in this failure he exposes the dominant ideology to critique. The appearance and falseness of this unworthy king shatters the romantic illusion of the battle scenes. Heywood may be drawing on an existing “bourgeois hero-tale” genre which he himself had used, but the effect in *Edward IV* is to debunk the idea of a shared ideology between monarch and citizens. Edward’s actions expose this shared ideology as a romantic myth meant to fabricate historical ties between City and Crown and to interpellate the citizens of London into a flawed aristocratic ideology.

Court and City and Conflicting Ideologies

The heroism of the London citizens, while something for which they can legitimately be praised because of its juxtaposition with the savagery of the rebels, also rings somewhat hollow because of the clear conflict between the dominant ideology which such heroism upholds and the emergent values by which the same citizens lived their lives. Heywood explores this conflict within *Edward IV*, not just by demonstrating how little Edward seems to deserve the citizens’ loyalty, but by dramatizing the way that loyalty begins to break down after the common cause of the defense of London is gone. Throughout the Falconbridge rebellion and during its aftermath, the citizens’ civic pride is figured in terms of their allegiance to Edward, a value that was clearly part of the dominant ideology under which they lived and with which the citizens of Heywood’s

day continued to live in Elizabethan London. For indeed, Heywood's "historical" citizens have much in common with Elizabethan ones, and placing them in a history play serves to trace the same connection between the past and his present as Crosby and Shore trace between themselves and Walworth. Heywood's play brings to manifestation within the characters and events of the play the Elizabethan historical consciousness represented by his variety of sources. Once the citizens have embraced, even vocalized their positions within the aristocratic and monarchal ideology, their articulated and earned place in history, Edward's actions remind both them and the audience of the biased and constructed nature of this historical and social narrative. Both through his arrogant and somewhat deceitful entrance after the fighting is done and especially through the predatory actions against Jane and Matthew that follow, Edward serves to dismantle the myth of a fully shared ideology, and citizen values begin to break through.

The City and the Crown were intricately linked in Elizabethan England, both politically and ideologically. The relationship between the institutions was essentially a reciprocal one. It is true that, as Ian W. Archer points out, "London's privileges depended ultimately on the support of the Crown" (41) and that legislation such as charters of incorporation for livery companies came from the monarchy. But this is evidence not of London's total subordination and dependence upon the Crown, but of the Crown's delegation of authority, of a "collaboration" between the two which ultimately benefitted both (Rappaport 185). The relationship ideally resembled a sort of feudal one, whereby London essentially managed its own affairs and the merchants and guilds were granted trade licensing that allowed them to profit economically, but when someone such as Falconbridge threatened the city or Crown, they were expected to fight. Rappaport cites, for example, Wyatt's rebellion against Mary's Spanish marriage in 1554. When the rebels reached London, they found it heavily defended by members of the various companies,

despite the fact that “many Londoners sympathised with Wyatt’s opposition” to a Catholic, Spanish consort (191). It was the duty of the City to stand for the Queen in such a situation, just as it is the duty of Crosby, Shore, Josselin and the others to stand for Edward in Heywood’s play.

The maintaining of order, both political and economic, was something which unequivocally benefitted both Crown and City, and historically any ideological difference that might have got in the way of their partnership at such times of instability or threat was generally suppressed, for “the concerns of the two environments were closer than the court in particular was likely to admit” (Dillon 17). While there were increasingly inconsistent values, there was no truly substantial ideological difference between the Crown and City. Theodora A. Jankowski argues that in *Edward IV* Heywood seeks to “validate capitalism” by obscuring the economic system which has allowed characters like Shore and Crosby especially to get ahead (315). She asserts that Heywood “visualizes...an internal empire of trade” and “modifies the genre of the history play to show the seamless connection between capitalists and hegemonic powerbrokers and the interconnectedness of capital and government” (308). She is correct in pointing to the connections between the Crown and the City as a vital theme of Heywood’s play, but she goes a bit far in assigning such an intentional sense of collusion to it, particularly on Heywood’s part. The problem is that Jankowski seems to suggest that the dominant economic and therefore ideological system at the turn of the seventeenth century was capitalism. Certainly, mercantilism was growing in scale and complexity and bringing new profits and trades to England, but capitalism as a developed system could not really get underway until modern industry and fully articulated classes, that is, wage labor, had become the norm. This really would not happen for at least a century. It seems a bit too much to suggest that the Crown was in fact molding itself to the City’s values, values which were not yet fully developed as an ideology.

As Steve Rappaport points out, “in our conceptualization of the sixteenth century as a period of transition...we tend to evaluate the process in terms of what was coming rather than what had been,” and this can be a problem (375). Like Rappaport, I find it more useful (and probably more correct) to consider the City in terms of the dominant monarchical ideology, rather than the other way around. As Raymond Williams articulates, every cultural system possesses “determinate dominant features” (120), and the dominant features of sixteenth-century society were certainly closer to the medieval in most ways than they were to those of our modern capitalist era, making the court, not the citizens, representative of the status quo. Lawrence Stone also asserts that in Elizabethan England, “the dominant value system remained that of the landed gentleman,” despite the generally transitional nature of the period (24).¹⁰ It is that transitional nature which would ultimately allow for emergent elements to develop, what Williams lists as “new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship” which are “substantially alternative or oppositional” to the dominant (123); in this case the values of “self-improvement, independence, thrift, hard work, chastity and sobriety, competition, equality of opportunity, and the association of poverty with moral weakness” (Stone 6). These are the values of the citizens in *Edward IV*, and it is only after Edward has revealed the inadequacy of the dominant ideology for the citizens’ interests that these new values come into play.

The Falconbridge rebellion and the citizens’ role in it do the work in the play of establishing the reciprocal relationship between Court and City that so many scholars have noted.

¹⁰ Stone also usefully lays out what that value system entailed, and it may be helpful to rearticulate it here. For Stone, “the aristocratic ethic is one of voluntary service to the State, generous hospitality, clear class distinctions, social stability, tolerant indifference to the sins of the flesh, inequality of opportunity based on the accident of inheritance, arrogant self-confidence, a paternalist and patronizing attitude towards economic dependants and inferiors, and an acceptance of the grinding poverty of the lower classes as part of the natural order of things” (6). Of course many of these features carried over into bourgeois ideology, but not all.

The Lord Mayor's authority and knighthood, the guilds' control over their profits and trading practices, all came from the Crown, and Heywood initially presents citizens who seem to have internalized this. As "bourgeois heroes" they seize a moment in service to their king which elevates them to the level of the nobility based upon dominant ideological values. But while the relationship between Crown and City was reciprocal, it was by no means perfectly harmonious. Heywood's *Edward IV* dramatizes the failure of reciprocity, the divisions between dominant and emergent that appear when one side, in this case the Crown, fails to uphold its end of the bargain and in fact actively attacks citizen values. When the status quo becomes less than static, the fluctuations and contingency of ideology become visible. As Laura Stevenson puts it, the Elizabethan period was characterized by "a peculiar state of consciousness that emerges when society has outgrown an old social ideology, but has not yet formulated a new one" (5). The failure of the "bourgeois hero-tale" motif in *Edward IV* is a result of the contradictions that assert themselves when a commercial, mercantile economy looks to keep "the language of feudal reciprocity and mutual obligation intact" (Crupi 232). The two outlooks cannot long coexist. Later plays such as Francis Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle* would come to satirize the idea of the "bourgeois hero" because of this clashing of terms; but a decade earlier, at the turn of the century, Heywood was using this character type to explore the as-yet unresolved contradiction between feudal obligations and emergent City values. After the scenes of the Falconbridge rebellion, his middle-class characters start to reveal the presence of new ideological elements, and Jane ultimately becomes the necessary sacrifice for the City and the middling sort to assert a position within the history play.

John Crosby, the Lord Mayor of London in *Edward IV*, is one such example of a citizen who clearly experiences and expresses a conflicted sense of duty and allegiance to both the king

and City. Interestingly, Crosby was not Lord Mayor during the Falconbridge rebellion, nor did he ever actually serve as a Lord Mayor of London. Heywood's choice of him as Lord Mayor for his play carries many implications for citizen virtues and civic pride which serve to further elevate the City. Crosby was an alderman in 1471, certainly involved in the city's defense, though not commanding it. He was well-known in London history for having left money for many charitable and civic projects in the city. Stow records that much of the city's wall was repaired with money from Crosby's estate (42), that he left one hundred pounds (a very large amount at the time) for the rebuilding of London Bridge (71), and that his will also stipulated funds for the renovation of the St. Peter's church library, which served a well-known local grammar school (203-4). He is also famous for building Crosby Place, a large house known to London citizens and owned by Sir Thomas More among others (Stow 186). In short, Crosby was a fixture of London memory, having served honorably during his life and having left an astounding amount of his estate to the City after his death. It is hardly surprising, then, that Heywood would use such a man to fill the role of Lord Mayor in his play, for Crosby's name would have marked him out immediately for Heywood's audience as a man who embodied the values and pride of the City, a solid foil for Edward.

At the beginning of Scene 16, long after the Falconbridge rebellion has ended, Heywood gives us Crosby's life story, delivered by him. As with the choice to make him Lord Mayor when he never served as one, Heywood manipulates Crosby's life story, inflecting it with the kind of rags-to-riches motif which was popular within legendary tales of the history of the City.¹¹ At the

¹¹ One such tale, for example, was the story of Dick Whittington, summarized by Rappaport. Dick was "a poor boy who arrived in London with nothing but his cat, having come to seek his fortune in a city whose streets, he was told, were paved with gold" (367). He was taken in by a rich merchant who forced him to sell his cat on a ship bound for Africa, which prompted Dick to run away; he returned when he heard church bells beckoning to him, promising that he "in time, shall be Lord Mayor of London." He did

beginning of the soliloquy Crosby is rather full of himself, admiring his new “gilded rapier” and enjoying the fact that “some will marvel” that he wears it with the scarlet gown of his office (16.3, 2). “Let them know,” he proclaims, seemingly to the mirror or perhaps to the audience, “I was knighted in the field / for my good service to my lord, the King,” and he is therefore welcome “in court, in city or at any royal banquet” (4-7). He is reiterating the kind of chivalric duty which he and the other citizens have both expressed and demonstrated in the battle against Falconbridge, reminding us of the “bourgeois hero” that he is. And yet, almost immediately, he checks himself: “But soft, John Crosby, thou forgetst thyself / and dost not mind thy birth and parentage: / where thou wast born, and whence thou art derived” (16.8-10). Far from self-denigration, these lines begin a speech in which Crosby is clearly proud of such a heritage. “I do not shame,” he asserts, “to say the Hospital / of London was my chiefest fost’ring place” (11-2); he goes on to tell of the “honest citizen” who found him by chance as an infant (13-5), how the Hospital, when he was old enough, apprenticed him to a Grocer (20-1), and how he now requites such generosity of spirit with yearly donations to the Hospital and the construction and funding of a poor house in Bishopsgate Street (25-9). The implication is that Crosby’s humble beginnings and charity to the City are more of a source of pride than the knighthood given by Edward. Crosby’s very existence, his life, upbringing, wealth, and sense of civic duty are due entirely to various aspects of the City and not at all to Edward or the institution of monarchy. Theodora Jankowski points out that the citizen who found him “probably had to pay for lodging his

return, his cat was bought from the ship captain by the King of the Moors, the captain brought back the money to give to Dick, and Dick was rewarded for his obedience and for his newfound wealth with marriage to his master’s daughter. He became very successful and did eventually serve as Lord Mayor three times (Rappaport 367). Of course, the real Whittington, like the real Crosby, was not a ragamuffin who achieved success based on luck and wit, but the story serves to demonstrate that it was not uncommon for such tales to become current in the City, revealing the sort of hard work and humble background that the citizens valued.

foundling” at the hospital, that the hospital, in turn, likely paid his apprentice fees out of charitable endowments made by other wealthy citizens for such purposes, and that the whole system of hospitals, apprenticeships, and mercantile success was dependent upon City authority (314-5). Crosby’s success and power are built upon a system of community and economics which never touched the monarchy apart from the initial granting of charters, and his speech makes it clear that he is proud of this system and his background.

But Crosby is preparing to host the king in his home, and upon Edward’s entrance, his demeanor changes completely. Far from remaining proud of his humble beginnings, he has prepared, with the help of the Shores, a lavish spread meant to impress the monarch and which participates in the tradition of aristocratic generosity and dutiful vassalage. From describing the self-sufficiency and charity of various aspects of the City, Crosby turns to almost total abjection: “My gracious lord, what then we did / we did account no more than was our duty, / thereto obliged by true subjects’ zeal” (16.69-71). He has gone to great expense and effort to prepare to host the king, and yet *he* thanks *Edward* for blessing “my poor roof with your royal presence” (75). When Edward springs from the table because he (yet again) cannot control his sexual appetites, Crosby is horrified, but not because the king has slighted his house and table by leaving before any food was even served. Crosby is worried that he or his household has done something wrong: “O, how the sudden sickness of my liege / afflicts my soul with many passions!” (190-1). He wishes that he might have seen the king enjoy the “poor entertainment of his Mayor / his humble vassal, whose lands, whose life and all / are, and in duty must be always his” (195-7). The language Crosby uses here—liege, vassal, duty—reminds the audience not so much of his own loyalty but of the aristocratic system which Edward has flouted as Crosby’s “master.” Crosby has done his duty, and once again, Edward has not, and is even plotting to

assault the chastity of Crosby's niece, Jane. But more importantly, this scene directly follows the speech in which Crosby has told the audience that his "lands," "life and all" are the result of the charitable actions and institutions of the City of London, not the Crown. The effusions of loyalty and duty to Edward which characterized the battle scenes of the Falconbridge rebellion and seemed to elevate the citizens to noble status here seem merely silly. Following on the heels of an outburst of civic pride which demonstrates his citizen values, Crosby's vocal adherence to monarchical ideology, especially in the face of Edward's flouting of all etiquette, is entirely inconsistent, and is among the first signs in the play of the developing ideological conflict.

But it is Matthew Shore who truly embodies and vocalizes the conflict felt between the citizen and monarchical ideologies in Heywood's play. Matthew is completely Heywood's invention, and as such, he allows the playwright more freedom to position him at several times as a kind of mouthpiece for citizen values. Of course, some historical citizen named Shore did exist, but throughout the sixteenth century his identity was completely tied to that of "Shore's Wife," the true heroine of the various narrative offshoots of Edward's story in the form of ballads, complaints, and More's historical account. "Shore" exists in these analogues only in passing, as the man that "Shore's Wife" must have been married to. He never speaks or plays any kind of narrative role. It is Heywood who gives him a name, Matthew, and Heywood who endows him with the conflicted sense of pride in the City and duty to the Crown which similarly troubles Crosby. Ultimately, Matthew's fidelity to Edward is tested even more than Crosby's ever would be when the king decides to claim his wife, Jane, for his concubine. Crosby's dilemma is worked out in rhetoric; Matthew's plays itself out in tragic ways which eventually lead to his own and his wife's death.

Matthew makes his debut in *Edward IV* long before Jane does: in Scene 3, with a starring role in the Falconbridge rebellion. Here is yet another way in which the rebellion sets up what is to come in the rest of the play and clearly redeems the story from scholarly charges of being “episodic.” Matthew is not only a hero, he is prominent among the “bourgeois heroes” of London, serving as Crosby’s right hand man and a commanding officer during the defense of the city, a role which makes Edward’s later seduction of Jane especially perfidious. In Scene 3, Crosby enters *in medias res* as he makes preparations for the defense of the city, asking whether anyone has “commanded that in every street / [the citizens] hang forth lights as soon as night comes on?” (3.3-4). It is Matthew who responds, “We have” (6). It is Matthew Shore who is by Crosby’s side, at the ready, in the thick of the fighting; Matthew who makes the speech in defiance of Falconbridge which initially likens Crosby to Walworth (4.30-6); Matthew whom Crosby sends for when the rebels resume their attack at Mile End, the Officer bringing him the orders that “You being captain of two companies, / in honour of your valour and your skill, / must lead the vaward” (8.39-41). In short, other than Crosby himself, it is Matthew Shore, a fictional character, who is the most heroic of the citizens during the city’s defense. In his first scene with Jane, he explains to her his motivations for fighting, a list which demonstrates the multiple loyalties he must negotiate:

First, to maintain King Edward’s royalty.
 Next, to defend the city’s liberty.
 But chiefly, Jane, to keep thee from the foil
 Of him that to my face did vow thy spoil. (8.15-8)

Fortunately, during the rebellion, these loyalties coincide and can all be honored by the same course of action. The reciprocal and intimate relationship between Crown and City is strong in such times of threat and it is vital for both that the citizens are victorious. Ironically, of course, in

maintaining Edward's royalty, Matthew does quite the opposite of keeping Jane from the man who would spoil her. It does not take long after the fighting has stopped for these loyalties to begin to conflict with one another, as Matthew's citizen values begin to emerge.

Matthew's refusal of a knighthood from Edward is the first time, even before Crosby's soliloquy on his origins, where a citizen betrays a specific set of values that might be at odds with, or at least different from, those of the monarchy. What is more, it is a difference which Edward notices. Edward specifically asks for Matthew Shore among all the other citizens of London (9.224). The rest of the men knighted are the mayor, aldermen, or other city officials, while Matthew would be the only plain citizen, a recognition, perhaps, of the exceptional role he has played in the battle. But Matthew refuses this honor:

Pardon me, gracious lord.
 I do not stand contemptuous, or despising
 Such royal favour of my sovereign,
 But to acknowledge mine unworthiness. (9.229-232)

These lines are more than a show of simple humility on Matthew's part. The refusal of such a royal honor, particularly when contrasted with the kind of chivalric rhetoric that has dominated the preceding scenes, has the effect of drawing an invisible line in the sand between the citizen and the nobility. Whether this stance is malicious or antagonistic toward the monarch is debatable; likely, it is not. But the notion that a citizen might refuse such a vital and visible part of the monarchal ideology does not sit well with Edward. Daryl Palmer similarly reads an awareness of social difference in Matthew Shore, arguing that Shore will "accept no transgression of rank owing to sudden familiarities" (304); rather, a citizen ought to rise through the proper channels of economic management and civic accomplishments. His refusal of a knighthood is not self-effacement, but an assertion of his recognition that defending the City

does not suddenly make the citizens into noblemen, that important ideological differences still exist. Edward's response that "Some other way / we will devise to quittance thy deserts" (9.240-1) is most often read as a moment of foreshadowing and dramatic irony, since the audience would of course have known who Mistress Shore was in history. But it is also possible that this is the moment where Edward and Matthew first come to see each other as possible competition, the moment to which Edward thinks back when he first sees Jane in Crosby's house. There are several instances where Edward makes comments which seem to suggest that he still has Matthew's refusal in mind and has taken it as a slight. When he first meets Jane he tells her of "the great wrong that [Shore] hath offered you; / for you had been a lady but for him. / He was in fault" (16.91-3). Later as Edward attempts to woo her, she praises the steadfastness of her husband: "He that guides my car / is an immoved, constant, fixed star" (19.94-5). Edward replies that he will "give that star a comet's name, / and shield both thee and him" (96-7), knowing full well that the last time he tried to give Matthew Shore a "comet's name," he was flatly refused.

The ideological conflicts between court and city thus ultimately play out in *Edward IV* through the competition for Jane between Edward and Matthew Shore. By making Matthew Shore a rounded character, Heywood shapes Jane's conflict into more than the moral lesson that many of the sources for her story try to make it; hers is a choice between men, between worlds, between ideologies. Edward's wooing scenes underscore this; his assault upon her in her husband's shop makes the conquest more than a sexual attack upon womanhood. It is an attack upon the City and its economic and social values. Jane sends Matthew's apprentices away "while I attend the shop myself" (17.11); she is specifically described in the stage directions, twice, as having "*her work in her hand*" and "*sewing in her shop*" (10, 18), an industrious, helpful citizeness doing her duty to her husband's business. Edward is disrupting the industry as much as

the marriage. His references to Jane as a “bright twinkling spark of precious diamond” (17.31) and “fairest jewel” (40) enhance this idea,¹² given that her husband is a Goldsmith. Jane is part of the property, the labor, the wares of Matthew’s shop, as well as being his loving wife.

The moment when Matthew enters and the two men come face to face is a tense one. Matthew almost immediately recognizes the disguised Edward as the king, and as Heywood’s direction tells us, “*he seemeth greatly discontented*” (17.115). Jane asks whether the man is her husband’s enemy, and Matthew’s enigmatic response, “I cannot tell,” (121) and “I pray God he came for nothing else” but jewels (124) are evidence that he perceives the full magnitude of the threat that Edward poses. He voices these misgivings to Crosby and the citizen Emersley in a later scene, and it is clear that it is not Jane’s chastity or modesty that he doubts, but the king’s intentions. Emersley tells him not to worry, the king often goes about in the city disguised, so there is nothing strange in his visit to the shop (20.6-11), and Crosby chides him for distrusting Jane (16-27). But Matthew’s response makes it clear that he knows there is more going on than a curious Edward and that he sees the threat for what it is: a duplicitous assault on a citizen’s wife by a seemingly likable monarch, a disrespectful though carefully concealed affront to the City. “I misdeem not her” he asserts, meaning he trusts in his wife’s good sense and love, “yet give me leave / to doubt what his sly walking may intend” (20.44-5). What’s more, there is a difference between this potential wooer and any other man who may come to his shop to talk to Jane. This

¹² It is possible Heywood took these descriptions of Jane from Drayton’s *Heroical Epistles*, where Drayton’s Edward calls Jane “an uncut diamond” “whose lips be rubies, and her teeth be pearl” (228, 230). Drayton also draws the opposition between Court and City directly into the conflict when Edward asks “why should Fortune make the City proud, / to give that more than is the Court allow’d?” (227). It is not entirely clear which author was inspired by the other, as both poem and play are thought to have been written in the same year. In any case, the appearance of similar imagery and themes in another literary work from the same period suggests that the contradictory ideologies between Court and City were becoming more prominent than they had been before.

one is “mighty” and his “greatness may gild over ugly sin” (48-9); the threat is in the difference in status as much as in gender, for as Matthew says,

But, say his coming is not to my wife:
Then hath he some sly aiming at my life,
By false compound metals, or light gold,
Or else some other trifle to be sold.
When kings themselves so narrowly do pry
Into the world, men fear; and why not I? (50-5)

Here Matthew makes absolutely clear what it is he is worried about with a disguised Edward in his shop, or any shop in the City for that matter. The mingling of such high and low is suspect and poses a threat to Matthew’s business as much as to his marriage, a threat he speaks in his metaphorical use of the terms of his trade to describe adulterated, impure alloys: “compound metals,” “light gold.” The presence of the king in the City is a threat to citizen values and autonomy, not just their wives.

And yet, when Edward does finally claim Jane for himself, Matthew does not speak out against him, but instead resigns himself and his wife to this fate, even to the point of exiling himself from England. He is obviously unhappy, but admits “I cannot help it” (20.77) and “what have subjects that is not their king’s?” (22.112). He ends *Part 1* by quietly boarding a ship to go abroad. Even in the face of such blatant wrongdoing, Citizen Shore cannot speak out against his king. What is more, when he does return to England in *Part 2* and is given a position at the Tower of London, he embraces it, swearing that “I pardon [Edward], though guilty of my fall” (12.86) and saying “God bless the King. A worse may wear the crown” (12.207) before going dutifully about his service. He is later grievously wounded trying to defend the young princes in the Tower when Tyrrell and his men arrive to murder them (16.33-8), that is, trying to defend the sons of the man who stole his wife. This sacrifice on behalf of the princes and the fact that he

never speaks out publicly against Edward demonstrate the complicated degree to which Matthew's loyalty to both City and Crown conflict with one another. Whatever civic pride or skepticism he may express toward the monarchy, these aspects of his consciousness have not completely usurped the place of the aristocratic and monarchical status quo in his mind. Helgerson argues that *Edward IV* "preaches loyalty and submission in the face of all but the most abusive royal transgression" ("Weeping" 467), and Edward's claim on one citizen's wife is apparently not transgressive enough to warrant rebellion, even in Matthew's mind. The fact that men like Crosby and Matthew Shore, clearly likable, valorous, and deserving of the audience's sympathies, do not speak out against a king who has been shown to be unworthy of their respect, is indicative of the ideological tension between dominant and emergent. These men are citizens who are also vassals of the king; they are not a fully-fledged bourgeoisie, and feel conflicted about their right to express displeasure with their monarch. They are truly loyal to both king and City and cannot reconcile this yet, neither in the fifteenth century nor the late sixteenth.

The Tanner of Tamworth

Other than Jane Shore, the most popular character associated with Edward IV in early modern literature was the Tanner of Tamworth, featured in a popular ballad of the same name. I want to turn briefly to his story in Heywood's play in order to look at his role in furthering the audience's awareness of the conflict between Edward and Matthew Shore. The Tanner, Hobs, and his subplot would at first appear to serve little structural purpose in *Edward IV* and to have been included because he had a broad appeal for Heywood's audience; he was something familiar, something they positively knew in an otherwise politically complicated story. He is often one of the most prominent pieces of evidence offered for the play's being "episodic," a kind of side-show that Heywood only included in order to pack as many disparate historical

sources as possible into his work. But both Heywood's embellishment of the Tanner's tale and the deliberate positioning of his scenes indicate that he is there to serve a more important purpose than mass appeal. The Tanner is a foil for Matthew Shore; Edward may be Matthew's rival, but it is Hobs who demonstrates the alternative kind of citizen that Matthew might have been. What separates Matthew from Hobs is his citizen value system, and the juxtaposition of the Tanner with the Shores serves to enhance the ideological tension in the Shores' scenes because of its noticeable absence from the Tanner's.

It is not simply a coincidence that the figure of Hobs which Heywood chooses to include in his play is from a popular ballad, for the ballad genre is as important to the dramatic juxtaposition of Hobs and Matthew as the content of the ballad itself. The ballad was associated with the pastoral, with an idyllic, merry England, even by the end of the sixteenth century. It was a traditionally conservative genre, concerned with "imagined great days in the past" where king and commoner could speak freely and frankly in mutual harmony and understanding (Woolf, "Common Voice" 37). Anne Barton links it, importantly, to a "wistful, naïve attitude toward history" (99), important because this is precisely why Heywood includes it in a play that is otherwise concerned with historical consciousness and its connection to the emerging conflict between king and commoner in early modern society. The inherent characteristics of the ballad genre itself contrast strikingly with City values and "derive from attitudes far removed from anything which the hard-headed citizens of Elizabeth's London actually believed" (Barton 97). They would likely have viewed this kind of simplistic, fairy tale vision of the history of kings interacting with commoners as clearly biased and no longer having any real bearing on their daily reality. The world of the Tanner ballad lacks all historical context; the most prominent aspect of Edward's reign was the Wars of the Roses, and yet there is nothing in the ballad to

indicate this. The king the Tanner meets might be any king at all. The false sense of stability in the ballad is completely ahistorical, but as Nora L. Corrigan points out: “the civil wars, never mentioned in the ballad, are always in the background” in Heywood’s play (31). Heywood’s Edward actually receives the news that Henry VI is dead whilst on his way to Hobs’ house (13.12). Further, the profession of the commoner in this particular ballad underscores the ideological differences between Court and City. The Tanners were not incorporated as a guild until 1703 (Clarkson 250), and most men who practiced the heavy leather crafts lived in rural areas so as to be closer to their raw materials—oak bark, cow hides, fresh water. This was a profession that was geographically removed from the City and which could be “conducted with very small amounts of capital” (Clarkson 248), a profession which needed almost no investment and which was not beholden to the mercantilism or incorporation of the City. This means that while tanning was a very important trade in sixteenth century England, John Hobs the Tanner would have had a cultural reality and political outlook very different from that of Matthew the Goldsmith or John Crosby the Grocer.

Hobs’ attitude toward the benevolences that Edward requests in order to fund his French campaign is one of the things which would have most obviously set him apart from the City for an Elizabethan audience. Benevolences were a sore spot between Court and City in the 1590s; the practice had been abolished in 1484, “but had nevertheless been declared periodically by needy sovereigns,” including Elizabeth (Crupi 225). They were essentially illegal taxes, a way for the monarch to raise money without having to go through Parliament by simply “asking” for “gifts” from wealthier subjects—which nearly always meant the citizens of London. Heywood conveys the kind of manipulation used by officials to collect these benevolences, along with the resentment with which such a request might have been met. In Scene 18, Aston shrewdly

reminds Hobs and his neighbors that “Our lawful sovereign, and most royal King, / might have exacted or imposed a tax,” but that “He doth not so; but mildly doth entreat / our kind benevolence” (18.21-2, 25-6). This phrasing obviously shifts any charge of greed or injustice onto the subjects rather than Edward; he is not wrong for “mildly entreating,” but they will be if they refuse to give. When Hadland tries to refuse because he “lately sold [his] land” due to economic hardship (18.41), Aston replies, “Then you have money; let the King have part” (42), wheedling Hadland’s last forty shillings out of him with the help of none other than Hobs the Tanner: “Ay, do, Master Hadland, do... / ...Let the King have some now, while you have it” (43-5). Hobs sees giving money to his king as his duty, a symbolic gesture of loyalty rather than an assault on his property or rights, as many in the City viewed it. He berates the rest of his neighbors into giving money to Edward’s cause in France when they are clearly reluctant, finally himself donating “twenty old angels, and a score of hides,” for “while I have it, my King shall spend of my store” (18.101-3). He is later rewarded for his generosity with a pardon for his son who is in prison, requital much better than that given to Matthew Shore for risking his life in defense of the king’s capital city.

Hobs’ loyalty and Edward’s more proper response to it than to Matthew’s actions are a product of the different ideological formations which the three men represent. Matthew’s bourgeois values make him necessarily oppositional to Edward’s dominant stance in many ways; Hobs, by contrast, embodies those elements of monarchal ideology which Williams describes as residual, “effectively formed in the past, but...still active in the cultural process...as an effective element of the present” (122). The ballad genre was one such element of Elizabethan and Jacobean culture, as is Hobs’ unquestioning loyalty to his King, any king, for Hobs “can grind which way so e’er the wind blow” (13.45-6) not because his loyalty is given indifferently but

because it is given *abstractly*. He has no idea what the king looks like—or even, it seems, who the king is, whether Henry or Edward—but that does not matter to him. He has fully internalized and naturalized the cultural assumption that the king has a divine right to rule and that his duty as a subject is simply to obey whoever God has chosen: this means giving of his own income, almost as a tithing, in service to the monarchy. Hobs' ideology would still have been current for much of the countryside in Elizabethan England, especially in the far northern and western regions, which were notably conservative as compared with the south-eastern counties around London. An affinity springs up easily between him and Edward because the residual, though formed in the past, is inescapably a part of the present, dominant ideology, still exerting cultural influence.

This kind of working harmony between the two men throws into stark relief the contrasting relationship between Edward and Matthew, and Heywood achieves this contrast by flipping repeatedly between the Shores' main plot and Hobs' brief subplot at the end of *Part 1*, embellishing the Tanner's story from the original ballad as necessary. In "King Edward the Fourth and the Tanner of Tamworth" the Tanner (who is not named) meets King Edward on a forest road, the two haggle over switching horses, which annoys the Tanner and greatly amuses the king, until Edward finally reveals his identity and makes the Tanner a squire, giving him "Plompton Park... / with tenements three beside" (38.1-2). There is no supper at the Tanner's house, no daughter Nell, no son in need of a pardon, and the Tanner never comes to London or gives a generous benevolence. All these are Heywood's expansions of the story to set it up as an alternative to that of the Shores and the citizenry. Hobs welcomes Edward "to beef and bacon, and perhaps a bagpudding" (13.90-1), just as Crosby invites the king to dine in his home after the battle for London. But whereas Edward eschews all etiquette and duty in London and slights

Crosby by jumping from the table and leaving in a rush with barely a thank you, Hobs is impressed that this “courtnole” has remembered him: “I like thy honesty, thou keepest promise” (14.31-2). Edward swears that he will “ever keep promise with thee” (33-4), and what is more, he does, not only staying and making merry with the Tanner and thanking him warmly, but later rewarding his hospitality with a pardon for his son (23.93-5). It is worth noting that later in *Part 2*, Jane’s “small benevolence” (9.1) is just barely enough, even when combined with the entreaty of the Queen (Scene 10), to save Matthew “Flood” and Stranguidge’s men from hanging for piracy mistakenly committed against the French because they did not know a truce had been reached (12.102-11). Further, Edward notices Hobs’ daughter Nell while he enjoys the Tanner’s feast, calling her “a pretty wench” and telling Hobs “I like her so well, I would ye would make me your son-in-law” (14.55, 57-8). The comments are meant more as a compliment to the girl’s father than anything else, and Edward and Sellinger make a sly joke to each other about her, but the pursuit goes no further. By contrast, Edward also notes the woman serving him at Crosby’s house: “Had ever citizen so fair a wife?” (16.114). This encounter, however, does not end so benignly.

Perhaps the most important parallel between the Shores’ interaction with Edward and Hobs’ encounter is the fact that Edward initially comes to both in disguise. For Hobs, the effect of Edward’s disguise is a positive one; it comes with a levelling aspect, by which he is able to converse freely and joke and make merry with “Ned” because he is unaware that it is the king. For example, when “Ned” asks whether Hobs has seen “his grace” thereabouts, Hobs answers, “Grace, quotha? Pray God he have any” (11.103-4), which he would of course never say if he knew to whom he was speaking. As Anne Barton explains, here in *Edward IV* and in other plays where the “disguised king” motif is used, “the meeting between subject and king in disguise has

generated harmony, good fellowship, and mutual understanding” (96). Barton uses the example of Hobs and Edward in order to make an argument for the way in which Shakespeare’s disguised Henry V is different from other disguised kings. For Barton, Shakespeare is challenging the traditional, idyllic ballad model of the king disguised in order to deflate the myth of Henry V and demonstrate the “false romanticism” of his reign as it relates to the false romanticism of the ballad (99). Heywood, I argue, is doing the same thing. Barton looks to use Heywood as a kind of control for how the disguised king motif is supposed to work in order to make her argument about Shakespeare, but in fact, Heywood only gives us the Hobs subplot in order to expose it as a fantasy. For as Barton herself notes but does not expand upon, “Edward conceals his identity when he goes into Lombard Street for the first time to lay amorous siege to Mistress Shore” (95). This action, combined with Matthew’s comments on it to Crosby and Emersley (already discussed), are the real reason that Heywood has included Hobs in his play at all. For Hobs, Edward’s disguise creates a kind of temporary social equality; for Jane, it makes him the wolf wrapped in sheepskin. Hobs is also aware of the danger of Edward’s disguise. When the truth is revealed to him at the end of *Part I*, he assumes he is a dead man, “for I have so defended [sic] ye, by calling ye plain ‘Ned’, mad rogue and rascal, that I know you’ll have me hanged” (23.85-7). But Hobs is forgiven—indeed, Edward was never offended at all—because of the hospitality and loyalty he has shown toward his king. The danger for Jane is much more real and has more dire consequences. Heywood uses the relationship between Hobs and Edward in order to establish an ideal that does not exist, thereby making the king-commoner relationship between Edward and the Shores all the more tragic and more true to political reality.

Mistress and Matthew Shore

The Falconbridge rebellion, the scenes concerning Crosby and Matthew which follow it, and the Tanner of Tamworth subplot are all required to fully set up the significance of Edward's conquest of Jane Shore in the second half of *Part 1* and throughout *Part 2*. While Hobs and Edward romanticize the king-commoner relationship and demonstrate an elusive ideal, Heywood's treatment of the Shore material clearly does the opposite, showing the audience what happens when a king has no regard for City values or the realities of everyday life. Hobs may embody the perfect royal subject, but Matthew and Jane have been made to represent the perfect citizens. Their economic stability, loyalty to the Crown, companionate marriage, and instincts for charity and forgiveness set them up as Heywood's challenge to Edward's merrymaking and expectations of feudal vassalage. This is not to say that they outwardly defy him, however. As subjects within the monarchical ideology, they do not oppose their king. But like her husband, Jane clearly holds proto-bourgeois values, and it is arguably this which makes her a sympathetic figure in Heywood's play. Far from ambition or vanity, it is obedience which ultimately makes her betray her husband, a conflicted obedience which has already been established as a central characteristic of Heywood's citizens by the time Jane's story takes prominence in the plot.

Just as he manipulated and embellished his source material for the Falconbridge and Hobs aspects of his plot, so Heywood shapes the story of Mistress Shore that he found in his sources to a specific end. Heywood's two most significant sources, More's *History of King Richard the Third* (via Holinshed) and the popular collection of complaint poetry, *The Mirror for Magistrates*, both assign a large portion of the blame for Jane's adultery to Jane herself. Throughout the sixteenth century, Mistress Shore was popularly known as a sort of real-life "warning for fair women," an example of how not to behave and a cautionary tale of the dangers

of ambition, courtly excess, and letting down one's guard. "Shore's Wife" tells the reader at the end of her tale in the *Mirror for Magistrates*, "Example take by me both maide and wyfe, / Beware, take heede, fall not to follie so, / A myrroure make of my great overthrowe" (388-90), an admonition in keeping with the theme of the collection overall. But Heywood's most important revision of these sources is to remove this sentiment altogether from Jane's story. Heywood's Jane is an entirely sympathetic figure who has been not merely coerced but forced into moral deficiency. By lifting all culpability, the focus of Jane's tale shifts from gender to class. Instead of an example of the dangers that await the unwary woman and the consequences of being loose with one's chastity, her story becomes a tale of how a king preyed upon his citizenry and disrupted a loving and productive domestic life. Jane's "choice" in *Edward IV* is not between chastity and fame but between the two ideologies which conflict with one another in her citizen's heart, and ultimately Edward makes the decision for her in an abuse of power which has tragic consequences.

Sir Thomas More's *History*, while taking a rather sympathetic attitude toward Mistress Shore¹³ and offering a rounded description of her as a person and an actor in his history, nonetheless lays the blame for her punishment and subsequent poverty squarely at her own door. More tells us that "many good folk...pitied they more her penance than rejoiced therein," for whatever her failings, she never abused Edward's love "to any man's hurt, but to many a man's comfort and relief" (64, 66), a feature of her character which Heywood makes much of. However, More also reports that she easily inclined "unto the king's appetite when he required her" because "the hope of gay apparel, ease, pleasure, and other wanton wealth was able soon to

¹³ She would not become "Jane" until the likes of Heywood and Drayton named her in the 1590s. Historically, as it turns out, her name was Elizabeth.

pierce a soft, tender heart” (65).¹⁴ Rather than Edward being in the wrong for having seduced a married woman in the first place, the fault is placed directly, if pityingly, upon Mistress Shore for not having resisted strongly enough.

This sentiment carries into Thomas Churchyard’s poetic version of the Shore story in the *Mirror for Magistrates*. Here Mistress Shore is at least allowed to voice her own complaint, but like More, Churchyard makes her admit her own mistakes and guilt. She confesses that her own “peacocks pryde” (99) induced her to follow the king and become his lover, and that “there is no cloke, can serve to hyde my fault, / for I agreed the fort he should assaulte” (83-4). Like More, Churchyard makes sure it is known that she “ever did vpholde the common weale” (199) and used her power with the king “to ryght the poore mans wrong” (204), though these facts are offered as a way of mitigating her guilt as much as this is possible to do, rather than forming the basis of her character, as they do in Heywood’s play. More’s and Churchyard’s Mistress Shore is wanton, ambitious, and seemingly unaware of the consequences of her actions until after they have happened; her use of her position to help the needy and act as an ambassador to Edward on their behalf is later offered in both cases as a way of evoking some pity from the reader only after she has been sufficiently shamed. For Heywood, it is the other way around. His Jane is a good, chaste, and loving wife from the start, voicing solid citizen values and love for her husband throughout the entire two-part play, especially in *Part I*. Matthew laments the loss of this Jane before he departs the kingdom, describing how she “was praised of matrons, so that citizens / when they would speak of aught unto their wives, / fetched their example still from Mistress Shore” (22.17-9). She who once went about in “seemly black” (22.21) was not so much

¹⁴ Holinshed, who copies More’s *History* almost verbatim, inserts here: “she became flexible and pliant to the kings appetite and will; being so blinded with the bright glorie of the present courtlie brauerie which shée inioied, that she vtterlie forgat how excellent a treasure good name and fame is” (724). Holinshed participates, like More and Churchyard, in the typical moralizing of her story.

seduced as forced to go with Edward against her will. Mistress Blage forms the foil to her in this, offering the kinds of sentiments which More and Churchyard attribute to Jane:

You know his greatness can dispense with ill,
 Making the sin seem lesser by his worth.
 And you yourself, your children and your friends,
 Be all advanced to worldly dignity
 And this world's pomp, you know is a goodly thing. (19.31-5)

Jane's dutiful response: "virtue lives, when pomp consumes to dust" (40). Heywood's Jane Shore cannot be said to serve the same moral purpose as her analogue in More and the *Mirror for Magistrates*. She is not a warning to women who might fall victim to the lure of fame and wealth, because she herself delivers the warning against these things at several points during the play *before* she is actually approached by Edward and repeatedly expresses that she has no desire for them. Samuel M. Pratt asserts that Heywood's "sentimental heart incredibly twisted the material" (1305), but Heywood's twisting is done to political ends, not sentimental ones: namely, to assign the blame to Edward, not the Shores, in the interest of promoting the worth of citizen values.

In addition to fully absolving Jane of any guilt in her betrayal of Matthew, Heywood also alters his sources by making theirs a loving, companionate marriage, again in order to uphold the ideological emphasis on the importance of domestic life among the citizenry. As I have already pointed out, in Scene 17 when Edward first attempts to woo Jane, he does so while she is hard at work in her husband's shop, thereby inserting himself into a domestic, economic space which clearly threatens the values and virtues of the City. This scene also establishes Jane as a dutiful wife, one who knows that one of her responsibilities as the partner of a Goldsmith is to help with the minding of the shop and the managing of the apprentices, and she carries out this responsibility without complaint, even contentedly. But Jane is more than just an obedient wife;

she is a truly loving one, as Matthew, significantly, is a loving husband. Pratt notes that in the sixteenth century the most commonly cited failings of forced marriages were “marriage before one or both parties were old enough to know what marriage meant, and the marriage of an attractive girl to an old, generally well-to-do man” (1297). In Heywood’s sources, both of these failings are associated with the Shores’ marriage. Not only is Matthew not named but he is assigned a small portion of the fault for his wife’s promiscuity. He and her parents are made complicit in the disintegration of their marriage because they forced her to marry at too young an age with a man she did not love. More relates that Mistress Shore was “very well married (saving somewhat too soon),” and that because of this “she not very fervently loved for whom she never longed” (64-5). Churchyard is even more explicit. His “Shore’s Wife” points the finger squarely at her own family and friends:

But cleare from blame my frendes can not be found,
 Before my time my youth they did abuse:
 In maryage, a prentyse was I bound,
 When that meere love I knewe not howe to vse. (106-9)

She not only protests that she was too young and did not love her new husband, but by identifying herself as a “prentyse” she links her marriage overtly with the concept of an economic transaction; she does not serve willingly and lovingly in her husband’s shop, but is apprenticed there. Later, she emphasizes the point by asking the reader to “note wel what stryfe this forced maryage makes” (120), making certain that the reader recognizes her as a victim even as she does admit her own guilt.

But like her guilt, Heywood removes any notion that her marriage was forced or unloving. The first time we meet Jane in the play is in a touching romantic scene with her husband as he gets a brief respite from the fighting during Falconbridge’s rebellion. She begs

him not to return to the battle, expressing both her love for him, for “My joy, my hope, my comfort, and my love, / my dear, dear husband, kindest Matthew Shore,” as well as the fear she felt as she awaited news of him from the fighting, for “How could [she] choose, sweetheart, but be afraid?” (8.7-8, 11). He tries to calm her, declaring that it is for her that he “fought so desperately” (14), for her safety and for the life that they have together. Before the messenger enters to call Matthew back to the battle, Jane vows ironically that “The greatest prince the sun did ever see / shall never make me prove untrue to thee” (27-8). Of course, Heywood’s audience would have been aware of the end of the Shores’ story and the irony of these lines, but at this point in the action of the play there is no reason to disbelieve Jane’s words. Here and in several of the scenes that follow it is clear that she means them, that her love for her husband is real and strong and that any hint of a forced marriage or mismatch has been removed by Heywood. Jane is a good wife, an ideal citizen’s wife; not only does she express proper love and affection for Matthew, but she performs her duties as a citizeness, a woman of the middling sort, without complaint, even with joy. She helps Matthew mind his shop, but she also serves as a stand-in “Lady Mayoress” for the widower Crosby when he hosts Edward in his home, creating the unfortunate situation in which Edward first falls in love (or lust) with her. It is in this banquet scene that she voices most clearly the ideological and moral stance that sets her so decidedly apart from her literary predecessors in *More* and *Churchyard*. When Edward jokes that Matthew might have made her a lady if only he’d accepted his knighthood, she backs up her husband’s choice and establishes the distance that Heywood wants to create from the source material:

And though some hold it as a maxim
 That women’s minds by nature do aspire,
 Yet how both God and Master Shore I thank
 For my continuance in this humble state...
 ...Heaven bear true record of my inward soul. (16.97-100, 103)

First, the “maxim” that women are by nature ambitious is clearly a nod to the way that Mistress Shore had been characterized for over a century, as a wanton, grasping woman without regard for her proper place. But second, and more importantly, her thankfulness for her “humble state” and reference to her “inward soul” are her articulation of the citizen values under which she lives even as she expresses her loyalty and love for her king. By the 1590s, Protestantism was intricately tied to middle-class identity. The “true record” of Jane’s “inward soul” puts one directly in mind of this even if Protestantism had yet to come about during Edward’s reign, and her expression of contentedness with her state establishes the same distance from Edward and the nobility as did Matthew’s refusal of a knighthood.

But tragically, and I use the word deliberately, Jane is not allowed to persist in her happy marriage and confident expression of values. Critics tend to talk about her as having a precarious choice to make between her reputation and a position at court, even in Heywood’s play. Esther Yael Beith-Halahmi asserts for example that Jane suffers her tragic end “as a result of her disloyalty and the successful courtship of the greatest prince in the land” (286) and that her choice to go with Edward “does not involve an agonized crisis of conscience” (290). It is true that More and Churchyard portray this scenario, where Mistress Shore acts without thinking, without a “crisis of conscience,” and then later comes to regret it. But Heywood’s Jane speaks at length with her friend Mistress Blage over the matter and even says explicitly that she is considering the issue “with a conscience free from all debate” (19.54). She does not have a “crisis” of conscience *per se* because her conscience is not the part of her that is conflicted: she knows that her duty and her own heart lie with her husband, Matthew. Her becoming Edward’s concubine has nothing to do with disloyalty on her part and everything to do with royal command. Like Matthew, Jane expresses her most prominent concerns with Edward’s courtship

in terms of the mixing of those of high and low social status. In Edward's final wooing scene, Jane refers to herself as "the foot" (19.81) of the state and says that it is a shame that "the sun" that should "guide the world with his most glorious light, / is muffled up himself in wilful night" (88-90). There is nothing to indicate that she is flirting with him here or in the previous wooing scene. Rather, she adopts a language of metaphor and evasion in order to avoid an outright refusal of her sovereign, with which Edward eventually becomes impatient. Leave "our enigmatic talk" he finally exclaims: "Thou must, sweet Jane, repair unto the court. / His tongue entreats, controls the greatest peer... / ...Which may not, must not, shall not be withstood" (102-4, 107). Jane is not asked or entreated, she does not ultimately make a choice to advance herself despite the pain it will cause her husband and family. She is forced, plain and simple, and forced by the only man in England who truly has the power and the ideological backing to do so. Jane's tragic error in *Edward IV* is not in succumbing to her own ambition; it is in conceding to Edward despite the conflictual influence of her own values and way of life. Her only error is to be a citizen in the history play genre.

Other scholars have discussed Jane's problem in terms of a conflict between the political and domestic spheres. Lena Orlin says that Jane "faces an apparently irreconcilable dilemma when domestic and political authorities conflict" (41), and Wendy Wall similarly argues that "[Heywood] establishes domesticity as a critical leverage point in limiting the sovereign's domain" (138), a leverage point which ultimately fails in the play. What I want to suggest is an extension of these arguments. The crucial moment for Jane is acted out in terms of space, when the king physically comes into Matthew's shop in disguise, but this spatial difference between political and domestic is the material manifestation of ideological conflict. It is true that Edward's assault on Jane is an assault upon the domestic world, but Jane and the domestic are

the embodiment of the City and the citizens' value system as it stands in contrast to that of Edward and the Court.¹⁵ Not her beauty, not her ambition, not even really Edward's sexual appetite is to blame in the tragic downfall of the Shores, as Heywood portrays it. It is Matthew's and Jane's conflict of values, their obedience and loyalty to both City and King, which Heywood sets up as their most important flaw, for such conflict has no place in a history play.

Jane and Matthew Shore, as citizens, have no place in either tragedy or history as the two genres are traditionally constructed. Part of the reason that Hobs gets along with Edward and works so well as a foil for the Shores is that he only ever has to act within the genre for which he was created. The ballad and the comedy were literally made for the antics of a rustical clown figure like Hobs the Tanner. He voices some harmless criticisms of the monarchy or upper classes, but ultimately poses no threat to Edward's authority because he is satisfactorily contained within purely comic scenes. By contrast the Shores do pose a threat, the threat that, as Helgerson puts it, "the nation will be taken over by the values of a newly promoted class" ("Weeping" 471). Traditional Tudor historiography, which saw the monarch as the obvious center of any historical narrative, could not abide figures like the Shores as heroes or heroines because they are representatives of an emerging ideology. This is why something like the "bourgeois hero-tale" as Heywood used it in terms of the Falconbridge rebellion was safe, while Matthew's refusal of a knighthood was not. In the "bourgeois hero-tale" as a genre, the citizen

¹⁵ Kavita Finn argues that this is why Jane so completely displaces Elizabeth Woodville as Edward's victim and as the heroine of the Edward IV story as compared with Shakespeare's first tetralogy. Heywood needs a woman who fully embodies citizen values in order to accommodate "the shift in audience interest from the actions of royalty to those of middle-class London citizens" (127). But it is also important to remember that Heywood fabricates an entire scene where Jane and Elizabeth Woodville express sisterhood and sympathy for one another, something found nowhere in any of his sources, and that Elizabeth was famous as England's first commoner queen. The daughter of a country squire who had only recently gained a knighthood for services to Edward, Elizabeth's affinity with Jane in the play highlights this shared citizen lineage and plight, rather than displacing the queen.

who has found a sense of pride and agency is reconciled with aristocratic values in the end. Matthew's refusal to participate in this generic ritual and Jane's resistance on the grounds of status directly challenge Edward's and history's attempt to re-consume them after the battle. In another genre, city comedy perhaps, their actions and refusal to fully conform would not have been so threatening, would even likely have added to the satire of the situation in some comical way. But history and tragedy depend upon the ideological cohesion of the monarch and nobility, and Heywood's choice to place a citizen couple in the tragic foreground of his history play throws this dependence into ironic relief.

Later, the satirical situation of the predatory aristocrat pursuing the humble citizeness would in fact play itself out in various city comedies. A common trope of the city comedy genre is the seduction of the wife or daughter of a wealthy citizen by a cash-poor noble who has overspent himself; usually, the woman is also ambitious and inclined to the attentions of such an aristocratic suitor because of the status he offers her. Money is the main reason for Falstaff's pursuit of Mistresses Page and Ford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; in *Eastward, Ho*, Sir Petronel Flash and Gertrude are perfectly matched on these satirical grounds; Sir Walter and Mistress Allwit have a similar though highly unconventional arrangement in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, which the Allwits end once Sir Walter loses his money. The point is, dramatists would later exploit the notion of an aristocrat pursuing a citizeness in order to poke fun at the cash-poor, economically inept nobility and to ridicule and caution women who might socially over-reach. In Jane Shore's case, neither of these characterizations is true. It is for this reason that Jane's story takes on the feeling of a domestic tragedy rather than conveying the satire of the

later city comedies, as many scholars have noted.¹⁶ In Heywood's *Edward IV* we have a citizen's wife who does not seek out nor even want wealth and fame forced to abandon her home and husband for the sake of indulging her king. The difference in outcome is clearly due to the difference in genre. Edward is the king, not some minor noble. He cannot be disobeyed: there is no actual choice for Jane. Further, Heywood is, of course, bound by history to some extent. He could not write a play in which Jane Shore successfully denies Edward's advances after a century of ballads and histories and complaint poetry had made her tragic downfall infamous for Elizabethans. But what he could and did do was lay part of the groundwork for the citizen-focused plays to come. By placing all blame for the Shores' demise with Edward, by establishing and exploring onstage the intense ideological conflict that plagued the early modern middling sort, and by creating a history play which focused upon the citizenry, Heywood asserted that the citizenry were worthy of such a distinction and that they, like the nobility, had a rich historical heritage and present social existence to explore.

Conclusion

It is Richard III who eventually and finally silences Jane and Matthew Shore. Although Edward certainly sets things in motion and is characterized by Heywood as a less than ideal king, Richard, true to his reputation in the sixteenth century, needs no help from Heywood to exaggerate his cruelty. Richard III would have been tyranny personified for the theatre audience. Sir Thomas More's description of him as "malicious, wrathful, envious, and, from afore his birth, ever froward" (10), with his evil inscribed on his body by his pointed teeth, humpback, and twisted arm, made him even more infamous than Mistress Shore. Associating the Shores' tragic death with Richard, making this most notorious of monarchs the ultimate opponent of citizen

¹⁶ Lena Orlin (27), Jean Howard (141), Wendy Wall (124), and Richard Helgerson ("Weeping" 463) all refer to the play explicitly as a form of domestic tragedy, or in Howard's case, a "generic hybrid."

values, has the effect of finally blasting apart any dream of a coherent, unchallenged monarchical authority. Of course Jane could only fall from grace after Edward's death, meaning that to some extent Richard's connection with her disgrace was predetermined for Heywood by history. But the real Mistress Shore did not die during Richard III's or even Henry VII's lifetime. More reports that "at this day she beggeth" (67), meaning around the year in which he was writing, 1512. Ending the play with her death is Heywood's choice, demonstrating the lengths to which his monarchs will go in order to silence the threat of citizen values.

Richard's proclamation that any who give food or succor to Jane will be guilty of treason is not, as he pretends, an attempt to stamp out and punish the excess and sensuousness of his brother's reign. His treatment of Matthew makes it clear that this is an act of simple cruelty, disguised as law. When Matthew hears of the proclamation and Jane's ensuing hardship, his enduring love for her drives him to seek an audience with Richard, at which he reveals himself to be her husband and claims the right to give her aid. "Shore, we confess that thou hast privilege," admits Richard, "and art excepted in our proclamation / because thou art her husband" (21. 127-9), a reasonable response to Matthew's request which quickly turns derisive. Richard will not allow Matthew simply to bring food or money to Jane to see that she is provided for. What he "allows" Matthew Shore to do is a final attack upon the domestic life and loving marriage that so characterized the Shores as upright citizens at the beginning of the play. Matthew will be exempt from Richard's decree only "upon condition thou forgive her fault, / take her again, and use her as before. / Hazard new horns!" (21.131-3), a statement which serves only to mock the Shores and to remind them and the audience that nothing can now be "as before," when their marriage was essentially perfect. While he loves and honors the person that she was and does not wish to see her harmed, Matthew cannot ever take that woman back to his home and bed, for she no

longer exists. Richard's joke that Matthew should risk being cuckolded again if he wishes to help his wife forges "the crucial link between Edward and Richard" in the monarchy's abuse of Jane Shore (Brown 414). For it is ultimately the monarchy, represented first by the problematic Edward and then the terrible Richard, not merely the two individual men, that has been Jane's downfall. The kings who have abused her do not necessarily need names, for in fact it is the monarchy which has suppressed her. Matthew's final speech seems to convey this: "A king had all my joy, that her enjoyed, / and by a king again she was destroyed. / All ages of my kingly woes shall tell" (22.111-3). The two kings represent separate affronts to citizen values—Edward to chastity and temperance, Richard to autonomy and neighborly charity—but together they constitute simply power that can brook no opposition.

By focusing the narrative predominantly upon the Shores, a good, loyal man of the City and his loving wife, Heywood's play raised important questions at the turn of the seventeenth century about whose history was most worthy of being told. Jane's prominence in the plot and the popularity of *Edward IV* suggest that for Heywood's audience and the middling sort more generally, the field of history was becoming more inclusive, less focused solely on the actions of the monarch and nobility, and perhaps more aware of the ideological conflict that was emerging. It has been suggested that "one of Heywood's characteristic traits is the absence of any perception of the problematic complexity of life," that in his plays the conflict is "mostly between a wrong and a true understanding of values, not between two values of equal worth" (Beith-Halahmi 301). But if his *Edward IV* is to be taken as any indication, this is patently not so. Despite the emphasis on Jane Shore and the deplorable actions of Edward, Heywood's citizens mount a strong defense on his behalf, and Matthew never openly defies his king. Heywood in fact seeks to open simplistic version of history to the complexities of real life, to

demonstrate that it was not adequate for fully expressing the social moment that was the 1590s in England. In doing so, he exposes the ideological schism that was widening between those who would prefer to keep the field of history closed, and those whose increasing economic and political power was beginning to demand their inclusion.

CHAPTER THREE

GENTLE CRAFT: THOMAS DEKKER'S *THE SHOEMAKER'S HOLIDAY* AND THE NATURALIZATION OF CITIZEN IDEOLOGY

Accompanying the sixteenth-century development of the great nationalist chronicle histories to which many 1590s playwrights were responding was the rise of the more localized, descriptive history known as chorography. Chorography, with its emphasis on particular towns or landmarks and its focus on events of a smaller scale than those of the nation or monarchy, shifted the focus of historiography to different kinds of narrative and narrative techniques which facilitated a critical interest in the history of the citizenry. While Holinshed's *Chronicles* were arguably still the best-known and most influential historical account in the 1590s, men like John Stow and William Harrison, whose *Description of England* (1577) formed a part of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, more closely centered their efforts upon cities and towns and the people who inhabited them. Stow's *Survey of London* (1598), perhaps the most famous example of a chorography of the city in the period, with its numerous chapters each devoted to a single aldermanic ward, contains a well-known passage celebrating "The Honour of Citizens, and Worthiness of Men in the Same." This passage lists the many good works and charitable causes to which citizens had contributed and in which they had participated for the past several centuries, ranging from how the Londoners "sending out a navy, took ninety-five ships of pirates and sea-robbers" (130), to a brief reminder of William Walworth and his arrest of Wat Tyler during the 1381 Peasants' Revolt, to an honorable mention of one Stephen Browne, grocer, who

lowered the price of wheat by importing corn from Prussia (134). As the middling sort began to rise in power and prestige, especially in London, such works and praises became more widespread, reflecting the beginning of a major shift in political and economic power.

But as scholars such as Edward T. Bonahue have pointed out, the same works that celebrated the city and contributed to the rise of citizen history were also fraught with a sense of conflict about the city's and the nation's rapid growth, "riddled with fears and doubts about the city's booming commercialism" (Bonahue 63). Stow's work, for example, even as it explicitly praises the works of worthy citizens, also betrays a tension between the social climbing and accumulation of wealth by these same citizens, and the potential threat they posed to the moral health of the nation. The "use of coaches," Stow complains, "is taken up, and made so common, as there is neither distinction of time nor difference of persons observed" (110). While he celebrates the accomplishments of citizens, there is a traditional streak in the *Survey* that demonstrates a skepticism toward social change. Harrison's *Description* is even more suspicious of citizen merchants who are only out to make money at the expense of their countrymen and neighbors. Harrison complains about the changing practices at fairs and markets, where "the relief and ease of the buyer is not so much intended in them as the benefit of the seller" (246), and describes how men will seek "some crooked construction" of trade laws for "the increase of their private gain" (281). Even as it seems to celebrate the emergence of the citizenry and middling sort as a rising social group, Harrison's *Description* reveals the same apprehension as Stow's *Survey* about the negative consequences of such changes for the economy and society. Although chorographic works such as these opened the way for a history more focused on the wealth and works of citizens, it is clear that a tension existed in early modern England around the growing influence and perhaps questionable morality of this emerging citizenry.

This tension makes itself felt in early modern drama as well. Once the chronicle history play focusing on the monarchy and nobility began to decline as a genre, a new strain of historical narrative began to make its way onto the stage, as evidenced by the Shores' complication of Heywood's *Edward IV*. But the problem with this new historical focus on the citizenry, and wealthy citizens in particular, is that where once they had been positioned as the unlikely heroes, as a hopeful alternative to the increasingly corrupt nobles and monarchs of the history plays, in the new, more wholly citizen-focused plays there was no such foil against which they could be positioned. As the focus shifts away from the monarchy, a vacuum opens wherein the critiques and anxieties that had formerly been directed against the representatives of political dominance by the citizenry, begin to be levelled at the citizenry itself. Around the turn of the seventeenth century, plays like city comedies began to invite the question: how could the citizenry maintain itself as a viable political and economic force now that the opposition against which it had defined itself was weakening? How would it cover over the ideological fissures and contradictions which were becoming more apparent?

Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599) can help provide an answer to such questions. As both a citizen history play and a social satire, the play and its bourgeois characters in particular reveal some of the tools which the citizenry used in order to legitimate themselves as a sustainable political alternative to the monarchy and aristocracy. It has been basically uncontested among scholars that *Shoemaker* is at least a *type* of history play, focusing upon the citizenry and a romanticized version of the rise of Simon Eyre in the fifteenth century, although Dekker has taken license with the actual facts. But classifying the play as a satire in the vein of city comedy needs comment. Brian Gibbons, in his seminal work on city comedy, refuses to consider *Shoemaker* as part of the genre; in fact, on the very first page of his work, he asserts that

city comedy was “notably hostile” to “non-satiric, Popular, often sentimental London comedies such as Thomas Dekker’s *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*” (Gibbons 15). Other critics, while admitting that the play depicts some social problems, generally argue that the romantic love plot centering upon Rose and Lacy, or the merriness of Eyre himself, end up covering over these troubles. Kathleen McLuskie argues that by the end of the play, “social conflict is resolved by comedy” (68). David Bevington similarly concludes that, “Social discontent is purged in the play’s closure... a bloodless battle to be fought out and reduced finally to forgiving laughter” (116). Simon Eyre and his bombastic mirth are often maintained as the site where social harmony is achieved: Joel H. Kaplan says that Eyre “reinforces the romantic and heroic ideals of his society” (117), Marta Straznicky that Eyre’s commercial success is inclusive and uplifting of all shoemakers (367), and Charles Whitney that he can “reconcile class divisions” through his “spirit of theatrical mirth” (182).

While I agree that the romantic or merry elements of the play distract from its socially satirical aspects, I cannot agree with these critics that the resolution, the smoothing over of these critical elements, is satisfactory. Rather, these elements are insufficiently contained. The play instead dramatizes the attempts of the proto-bourgeoisie to cover up the failings or consequences of citizen ideology, which becomes readily apparent when such moments of social conflict are read in light of the play’s status as a history play. Paul S. Seaver has argued that Dekker’s setting of the play in historical time is meant to safely distance any social critique it might contain from his direct contemporaries (89). I argue that the historical setting in fact *heightens* the social critique of 1590s London. More than merely a celebration of citizen history, Dekker’s choice to write a social satire using a historical plot necessarily opens the play and especially the powerful citizen characters within it to the same critiques and questions that plagued the kings and nobles

of traditional chronicle histories. Historicizing something is an attempt to naturalize it. This is why so many authors, not just playwrights, turned to writing national history at a time when England's national and international identity was in crisis. Establishing a history for the nation would, theoretically, smooth over any differences or social losses and unite all Englishmen under a single narrative. The genre of citizen history was no different, as the middling sort, especially in London, sought to establish themselves as a legitimate power beside the aristocracy. Dekker's play dramatizes this historicizing and naturalizing project.

This is why the play looks like a historical romance. Characters like Eyre, Oatley, or Rose represent the values of mercantilism and upward mobility that were seeking legitimacy in the early modern period. Eyre's rise to power and Rose and Lacy's marriage plot are familiar and pleasing narratives couched in the traditional forms of historical narrative and situated in the merry world of romance and medieval England. But because historicizing necessarily means narrativizing in a way that leaves some things out, just as the citizenry were left out of chronicle histories, so citizen history must exclude the lower classes and other subaltern groups in order to appear to be cohesive. Citizen history must grapple with the same issues that chronicle history did: the proliferation of narratives, the problem of inclusion of all people, and the contingency of institutions such as the guilds, which are both forward and backward looking at once. David Scott Kastan has argued that *Shoemaker* is "a fantasy of class fulfillment" (325), where by the end "History is turned into holiday, its tensions refused rather than refuted" (334). I argue that history's tensions are neither refused nor refuted. Dekker's play is indeed a "fantasy of class fulfillment," of "middle class dreams," but the tensions of historical narrative sit uncomfortably beside this fantasy such that it is never quite realized. It is a fantasy not of social cohesion, but of

those who would seek to craft the *semblance* of social cohesion for the purpose of solidifying their own power, justifying their own elite-ness.

Dekker's play dramatizes this process of justification. By claiming the field of "History" for themselves as the emerging power group, citizens now have also to contend with the problems of chronicle history. Dekker's *Eyre* seeks to legitimize himself and his social mobility as natural through acts of memorialization, such as creating a lasting holiday and building Leadenhall. But in doing so he must hurt, displace, and marginalize others, and this exclusivity and tension within citizen ideology is not satisfactorily resolved by the play. Dekker reveals a kind of anxious elitism at the heart of the proto-bourgeoisie. In this sense, the play can be considered an early city comedy, though perhaps not precisely in the way we might come to expect from the likes of Jonson or Middleton. Dekker's play does not satirize Puritans or other prominent figures of London life per se; instead, it reveals profound holes in the legitimating project of the rising citizenry by satirizing their self-crafted history.

History Play and Historicizing Project

The process of historicizing the power of the citizenry in order to legitimate that power was not confined to the chorographies of writers like Stow and Harrison. Their works are important representative texts of a cultural process that was happening across many facets of London life. This naturalizing project, like that of the fully fledged bourgeoisie that would follow in later centuries, was not necessarily a conscious one. In fact, it might more properly be understood as an *unconscious* process of giving socially constructed laws and institutions the appearance of timelessness and natural authority: namely, reification. Georg Lukacs describes the reified world of fully developed capitalism as "the only possible world, the only conceptually accessible, comprehensible world" (*History* 110). When the relations of all of society are

perceived to be independent of the system that they uphold, that system is “permitted to dwell inviolate and undisturbed in its irrationality (‘non-createdness’, ‘givenness’)” so that what results is a “methodically purified world” (*History* 120). Given facts are never in need of being examined. Reification is, essentially, the ideological process of turning examinable, perhaps irrational facts and institutions into “givens,” such that they are perceived as natural, as having always been, and therefore as the “only possible” truths.

Of course, we are not dealing with a reified bourgeois world in early modern England or in Dekker’s *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*. But I would suggest that we are dealing with a society and a citizen ideology that was beginning to need some kind of rationalization if it were ever to establish itself as the dominant one. As the perpetrators of so-called primitive accumulation, the middling sort and lower gentry were in need of a way to justify their accumulation of wealth and mercantile investment in the face of growing hierarchies within and between the guilds as well as increasing vagrancy and poverty in both the cities and countryside. The processes of bourgeois reification thus intensified during this period in response to such social contradictions, and crafting a historical narrative that included and celebrated the middling sort was one such process. In historiography, this meant the rise of works such as those by Stow and Harrison; on the stage, it meant the decline of the nationalist chronicle history play in favor of citizen-focused histories and eventually city comedy as dominant genres. In the City itself, historicization of the citizenry was especially facilitated by the Protestant Reformation, particularly the iconoclastic removal of saints’ images from city streets and guildhalls and the abolition of many feast days, either by ceasing their celebrations altogether or replacing them with secular celebrations of civic events or Elizabeth herself. This shift in emphasis to the guildhall or market as a site of community building and celebration of the Lord Mayor or monarch in lieu of saints is

demonstrated in drama by something like Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*, where both Elizabeth and Thomas Gresham are essentially mythologized as parts of civic ideology. It is also dramatized by Dekker in *Shoemaker*, where Eyre's fast, ambitious, and morally dubious rise to power is coupled with a deliberate sense of his historicity.

London's guild companies were perfectly positioned to facilitate this rationalization of citizen ideology based upon historical naturalness. As institutions with documented incorporation beginning as far back as the 12th century (Unwin 15), and a long development during the intervening centuries, guilds in the early modern period are an example a residual element in sixteenth-century culture. Formed long ago in the City's past, associated with the creation of London as an incorporated city itself, the guilds commanded an impressive history of their own. They were associated with such events as the quashing of the Peasants' Revolt and the heroic actions of William Walworth as well as the defense of the City in the name of Edward IV during the Falconbridge Rebellion. Every citizen named by Stow as worthy of some honor for his services to the City is also denoted by his guild membership (Stow 129-142). George Unwin has described the guilds as embodying "the social influence of the feudal ideal on city life" (157), and this element of medieval London was only gaining in power during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries despite being a thoroughly historical institution. The City, by virtue of the guild system, had made itself indispensable to the monarchy by thriving upon the kind of reciprocity described by Janette Dillon (17-8) and Steve Rappaport (184). Although they derived their incorporation and powers directly from charters granted by the Crown, guilds maintained such a large and strict control over economic life that this power, once granted, became quite strong, and the Crown came to depend upon them in turn for the organization and regulation of law and order and especially trade, both in the City and internationally, as ships came to and

from London. The guilds, though formed in the past, were still an “effective element of the present” (Williams 122) that had become indispensable to monarchical ideology.

But the guilds’ status as powerful residual institutions that maintained their effectiveness even within the booming world of 1590s London was not the reason for their ability to facilitate the rise of citizen ideology. They were also, essentially, the economic and social basis of that emerging ideology, and it was this, *coupled* with their residual nature, which enabled them to inhabit such a profound place in the social consciousness of the City. While the guilds were undoubtedly “formed in the past” and explicitly evocative of medieval London, they were also the source of economic power under the nascent capitalism of early modern London, the masters and aldermen of their ranks the harbingers of a new and rising middle class whose values would come to challenge those of the court. Essentially, their “pastness” allowed them intellectual space to confirm their new power in the present. Because they had existed “time out of mind,” as Stow puts it (130), it was exceptionally hard to challenge their right to the new powers of citizenship and mercantilism they were claiming under Elizabeth and the Stuarts.

The guilds were used to constructing hierarchies and crafting narratives in order to organize an efficient system. Although they might be viewed as somewhat merit-based institutions where men of common blood could learn a trade, make their living, and perhaps even gain citizenship or political power by virtue of their hard work and trading connections, the guilds actually encouraged anything but equality between members. Unwin asserts “how mistaken it would be to suppose that the members of the various crafts or misteries [sic] were upon anything like a footing of economic or social equality,” and that the rise of crafts must not be seen as the rise of one class over another, but rather as the ruling class having been “gradually transferred” from the nobility to the masters and aldermen of the City (75). Steve Rappaport

explains how the companies' powers were "rooted in the linkage between citizenship and company membership" (188). In order to participate in the political life of the City of London through either elections or public service, a man had to be "free of the City," that is, a member of a guild. Conversely, this meant that the only people who ever participated or voted were members of guilds, and that the guilds therefore held a monopoly on City positions and decision-making. The guilds thus controlled "virtually every aspect of life in sixteenth century London" (Rappaport 188) and were therefore becoming a threat even to certain powers of the Crown.

Most of the companies of the City actually possessed very little political power; the Lord Mayor was only ever chosen from among the Twelve Great companies (Unwin 76).¹ Within each guild, longstanding hierarchal practices ensured that an "immortal collective personality" connected members to each other emotionally, if not economically (Unwin 159). This kind of brotherhood mentality, whereby every member was ostensibly connected through social bonds of loyalty and symbolic kinship to every other member, actually covered up the reality wherein "each man's status in an organization defined the extent to which he exercised the full range of rights" (Rappaport 217). In essence, the guilds were able to use the rhetoric of social mobility and class cohesion in order to keep the lesser guilds and the lowest members of each guild in line. This meant that by the late sixteenth century, when they were in a position to seize power and, more importantly, to begin to take preeminence over the nobility, guild leaders were practiced in the tools and language of power consolidation. They were able to craft narratives and scenarios whereby the contradictions of their value system and the social inequality within the guilds and citizenry more generally could be effectively hidden. Through material, symbolic,

¹ Making it historically inaccurate but all the more mythologically powerful that Simon Eyre might attain the status of Lord Mayor in Dekker's play. In the play, Eyre is a Cordwainer, not one of the Twelve Companies; Eyre historically belonged to the Drapers, one of the Twelve.

and rhetorical means, the wealthy citizenry was able to distract from the contradictions of their own power system through processes of historicization.

As both history play and social satire, Dekker's work dramatizes both this project and the social tensions it sought to cover. Not only might the play itself be seen as one example of such a historicizing project in its celebration of past citizens, but the actions of Simon Eyre in particular point to the need to establish legitimacy by rooting emergent ideological elements firmly in a historical narrative. One method of instituting this historicity was by inscribing it literally and materially upon the City itself. Ian W. Archer describes the impact that the Reformation had upon "established patterns of collective memory" (90). Because community identity had for so long been linked to Catholic feast days and monuments to individual saints, some of whom may have been patron saints for a parish or cultural community, events such as the Dissolution of the Monasteries and iconoclasm more generally over the course of the sixteenth century did "irreparable damage to the fabric of civic life" (89). Into this void stepped wealthy citizens and corporations, who took on much of the charitable work that had been done by abbeys or monasteries by granting commemorative allowances in a citizen's name, building halls or monuments, or donating items to schools, churches, or the guilds themselves which literally bore the benefactor's name (99). For example, feasts held for members at guildhalls required the use of the company plate, which "would be engraved with coats of arms and name of donor" (98), and guildhalls were often decorated with hanging lists of past exemplary members and donors. These acts of memorialization can also be seen in Stow's list of the "Honour of Citizens," many of whom are lauded for the founding of hospitals, repairing or building of bridges, and granting of annual grammar school scholarships to be given to "poor men's children" (Stow 134). Archer

argues that these acts of charity and memorialization served to “justify the concentration of power in the hands of the ruling group” (112), and indeed, they were meant to do just that.²

Both the historical Eyre and Dekker’s character can be directly associated with this kind of naming and marking of civic monuments or items for the purposes of posterity. Stow relates that the historical Eyre gave over a large amount of property, which he had developed himself, “toward a brotherhood of our Lady in St. Mary Woolnoth’s church” (212). This was a common practice by guild members, which often formed subgroups as “brotherhoods” associated with particular churches. But most importantly, especially because Dekker’s audience would likely have been familiar with Eyre for this reason even if they had never read Stow’s *Survey*, Simon Eyre is explicitly and repeatedly credited with the renovation, expansion, and licensing of Leadenhall “of his own charges, for the common utility of the said city, to the amplifying and enlarging of the said granary” (Stow 171; also 102, 135). No one in Dekker’s audience was likely to have known anything about Eyre himself—where he was born, his trade practices, his children, perhaps not even the precise year in which he served as mayor—but all citizens of early modern London would have known Leadenhall, and would have known the name Simon Eyre because of it. In fact, “on the north wall” of the chapel attached to Leadenhall was an epitaph to “the honorable and famous merchant, Simon Eyre,” listing him as founder and preserver of the chapel through allowances left at his death (Stow 171-2). In choosing to dramatize Eyre’s rise to power, then, Dekker is participating in the man’s own project of historicization, ensuring that the

² Marx would later call a similar practice and mindset “bourgeois socialism,” a stance which is “desirous of redressing social grievances in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society” (“Communist Manifesto” 35). Essentially, wealthy philanthropists and humanitarians seek to reform but not revolutionize society in such a way that threats to their continued wealth and status are neutralized while that same status is strengthened. It is not precisely the same as the memorializing and charitable practices of the wealthy elite in early modern London, but might be viewed as a similar subconsciously reinforcing practice which has grown from it.

man named on the wall of the Leadenhall chapel is remembered for his story as well as his contributions to the City, which serve physical and lasting reminders. The play itself, then, works toward this historicizing project, even as it also depicts a fictional Eyre working toward that project himself.

Significant differences between Dekker's portrayal of the founding of Leadenhall and that found in his most prominent source, Thomas Deloney's *The Gentle Craft*, illustrate the more deliberately historicizing nature of the play. In Deloney's account, the last chapter of Eyre's story is mostly focused upon the feast that he offers to the apprentices of the City and upon the thanks Eyre himself gives to God for blessing him with the wealth and honor that he has attained. Simon admits that he never expected to be able to repay the apprentices who once bought him breakfast as a young man, but that "such was the great goodnesse of our God, who setteth up the humble and pulleth down the proud" that He "hath bestowed that upon me that I never looked for" (Deloney 95). This kind of rhetoric and quoting of Scripture is prevalent throughout Deloney's story; Simon and his wife repeatedly turn to their faith both for guidance and as a check on the unseemly ambition they sometimes perceive in themselves. There is only a small mention of the fact that, "Then, after this, Sir Simon Eyer [sic] builded Leadenhall" (96), thrown on almost haphazardly at the end.

Dekker's Eyre is such a departure from Deloney's that it is unsurprising that his treatment of the founding of Leadenhall should be so different as well. While Deloney's account emphasizes the blessings from God that have enabled the building of Leadenhall, Dekker's reminds us of the building's commercial and civic uses and of the connection between Court and City, not just in Eyre's time but in Dekker's own. The founding of Leadenhall happens offstage, but it is the King who reports to the audience on "that new building / which at thy cost in

Cornhill is erected,” and, significantly, it is the King who names it (21.130-4), when historically it had existed for quite some time and Eyre was only responsible for its renovation. But even more importantly, Dekker gives us not just the building of the hall but Simon Eyre’s role in its becoming a commercial center. He petitions the King to “vouchsafe some privilege to my new Leaden Hall, that it may be lawful for us to buy and sell leather there two days a week” (21.157-9). This petition is significant for two reasons. First, it establishes a clear connection between the legendary founding of Leadenhall, its historical association with the guilds and City, and its present use as a center of booming mercantilism. These are the two intellectual spaces which citizen ideology bridges: the early modern mercantile economy and wealth of present guild members, facilitated by places like Leadenhall, and this building’s status as a kind of City monument and its association with a merry historical narrative. Second, Eyre’s petition to the King explicitly demonstrates the reciprocity inherent in the relationship between City and Court. By extension, this reciprocity highlights the tension within citizen ideology, wherein it seeks to distance itself from the aristocratic notion of a hierarchy based on blood ties but then finds it must depend upon this system to some extent in order to further its own goals. The physical building of Leadenhall, while it comes at the very end of both *The Gentle Craft* and *Shoemaker*, was the most obvious and lasting way in which Simon Eyre, as a guild master, succeeded in memorializing himself, and Dekker’s play in particular invites a clear connection between that history and 1590s London.

In addition to the material ways in which citizens facilitated the making of their own history, important symbolic and performative acts such as civic pageantry and holiday making also played a critical role in forming City consciousness. History is always perceived in relation to one’s own present; indeed, the act of historicizing invokes at once both the actual historical

past and the way that it informs the present. The *re*-enacting of historical moments, therefore, becomes a way in which History may be negotiated and even re-written. Perhaps the most well-known example of the kind of civic pageantry where such historical enactment took place in early modern London was the Lord Mayor's show, with which Dekker would have been intimately familiar, as he participated in the writing and performance of several of them throughout his life. Janette Dillon has described the 1590s in particular as a time of "growing civic self-awareness," and especially, a time of "increasingly insistent self-representation" when many different forms of writing and performance sought to link representation to that awareness (31-2). But it was at this time that that project of self-representation also took a deliberately historical turn. Many of the kinds of representation that had existed for decades or even centuries suddenly erupted with a new civic pride and awareness of the City's past.

For example, it was during the 1590s that the Lord Mayor's show became more historical in the sense of including explicitly secular and political elements, rather than focusing primarily upon religious or moral allegory. The guilds had long been involved in city and town life, both in London and in provincial towns like Coventry and York, through their participation in and sponsorship of mystery plays and the kinds of charitable projects already mentioned. Now, they turned their sights upon a more civically and economically motivated self-awareness that sought to establish the place of the middling sort in the national political and historical narrative. James Knowles rightly argues that by using established rituals and institutions such as the Lord Mayor's show, the City "became naturalized through demonstrable relation to past communities, or accepted versions of history or mythology" (163). But it was more than the use of such rituals that contributed to a sense of the citizens' vital place within national history. The topics that came to be dramatized in pageants such as the Lord Mayor's shows reflected their role as tools

for increasing civic historical consciousness, especially when juxtaposed with the kinds of literary projects being produced at the same time. The early 1590s saw the publication of such works as Shakespeare's first tetralogy and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, both projects aimed at establishing the historical preeminence of the monarchy and Elizabeth in particular. The 1590 Lord Mayor's show written by Thomas Nelson was "an important first" as well, because of his choice to emphasize personages from actual English history, rather than the usual mythological or allegorical figures of virtues and vices (Bergeron 133-4). But Nelson's show, crucially, does not focus on royal or aristocratic historical figures. This, the first Lord Mayor's show to dramatize an important event in English history, depicted the defeat of Jack Straw by William Walworth and the knighting of Walworth by Richard II. This is fitting, given that Walworth was the first Lord Mayor to be knighted and the reason that all future Lord Mayors bore the title of "Sir." The actions by which he earned that title make sense as content for a pageant celebrating the title. However, the City's focus upon its own historical heroic actions at a time when other writers were focused on building a national historical consciousness demonstrates that a citizen ideology was indeed emerging during this period and, crucially, was being reinforced by acts of historical representation.

Reclaiming their role as part of, but importantly separate from, the growing national, aristocratic historical consciousness through acts of physical and symbolic memorialization was becoming a major part of the citizenry's self-legitimation. The very concept of monarchy involves what Jonathan Gil Harris has called a "fantasy of continuous time" (20), an ideological coherence wherein the past and present inform each other and therefore form the future. Past kings are invoked by the present queen both as important ideals to emulate in her decisions and actions, but also as the very authority from whom she derives her own power. Monarchy depends

upon the concept of lineage, of an unbroken bloodline chosen by God to rule. Citizen ideology, by deliberately historicizing itself in similar ways, was establishing its lineage and therefore its right to civic power and economic wealth in the present. Choosing the Peasants' Revolt as an event to dramatize in the Lord Mayor's show and, more broadly, as a reference point for citizen consciousness, has the effect of establishing this lineage in the sense that it is the origin story for the Mayor's knighthood. But it also demonstrates a point of tension between monarchal and citizen ideology—the monarchy might have fallen at that point in history if not for the citizenry. Richard II was forced to show his gratitude to Walworth for the actions of the citizens, and Elizabeth by extension is obliged to recognize the power of the City.

This tug of war for ideological preeminence between Court and City can be linked to Dekker's *Shoemaker* through the practice of holiday-naming. The 1590 Lord Mayor's show claimed the Peasants' Revolt as an event in citizen history more so than national, and Heywood's *Edward IV* took important victories like Barnet and Tewkesbury and subordinated them to the Falconbridge Rebellion; Dekker's play, it has been argued, goes for the proverbial jugular of monarchal, chronicle history and reclaims for the citizenry the Battle of Agincourt. The tension between Court and City exists not just within the world of historical fact, but between Dekker's play and other dramatic versions of the battle being performed almost contemporaneously with *Shoemaker*. Several critics have pointed out the many connections and cross-references between Dekker's play and Shakespeare's *Henry V*.³ Alison A. Chapman does this especially by noting

³ See Thomas Worden, "Idols in the Early Modern Material World (1599): Deloney's *The Gentle Craft*, Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, and Shakespeare's *Henry V*;" Christopher L. Morrow, "Corporate Nationalism in Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*;" and especially Alison A. Chapman, "Whose Saint Crispin's Day Is It?: Shoemaking, Holiday Making, and the Politics of Memory in Early Modern England." They point to such lines as Dodger's report to Lincoln that "Four thousand English, and *no man of name* / but Captain Haym and young Ardington" died in the unnamed battle (8.9-10, emphasis added), which echoes King Harry's comment that the English dead are "...Sir Richard Keighley, Davy

the calendrical relationship between St. Hugh's Day and Elizabeth's Accession Day. This is one specific example of the way in which civic, secular holidays took over the importance of formerly Catholic holy days after the Reformation; the Feast of St. Hugh was in fact replaced by an annual celebration of the queen. Because St. Hugh is patron saint of shoemakers, Chapman reads this coverture as a tacit insult to shoemakers and by extension the other guilds on the part of the monarchy (1479). She argues that holiday making, in this case literally, the naming of a holiday, was a politically charged act in the early modern period, and that Dekker's play dramatizes this. For Chapman, this act is part of what links *Shoemaker* with *Henry V*, another dramatization of a monarch appropriating a shoemaking hero. St. Crispin, one of two princely brothers whose story is told in Deloney's *The Gentle Craft*, was, like St. Hugh, an important figure for shoemakers. It is then significant in *Henry V*, especially in a play where, as Chapman points out (1483), all of the other military action is accompanied by prayers to St. *George*, that the Battle of Agincourt happens on St. Crispin's Day, and that King Harry emphasizes the name so heavily in what is arguably his most famous speech. Chapman argues that there is a conflict over naming rights being dramatized between Shakespeare's and Dekker's plays and that this parallels the tension between City and Crown in early modern England (1490). I discuss Chapman's argument at such length because I take her argument fully on board, and further suggest that examining this kind of political tension between two contemporary plays reveals a

Gam Esquire; / *None else of name*, and of all other men / but five-and-twenty" (*H5*, 4.8.98-100, emphasis added). In addition to such textual similarities, there are moments in the characterization of Dekker's king that suggest Henry V, and Shakespeare's Henry V in particular. The famous passage in *H5* 1.2 where King Harry is goaded to attack France by a mocking gift of tennis balls from the Dauphin is recalled in Eyre's proclamation of love for his king, where he vows to prove his loyalty by shaving his beard to "stuff tennis balls with it to please my bully King" (21.25). Moments such as these and the fact that the two plays were likely produced in the same year provide more than enough justification to at least discuss them in tandem, if not prove an intentional connection. They also provide reason enough to discuss the King in *Shoemaker* as Henry V, even though the king under which Eyre was Lord Mayor was Henry VI.

very important generic shift happening in early modern drama. Dekker's *Eyre* does not just challenge King Harry's naming rights to St. Crispin or Elizabeth's to St. Hugh when he claims Shrovetide for the apprentices; the play as a whole challenges Shakespeare's and other dramatists' choice to focus the history play so intently upon the monarch and other nobility, by offering a citizen history alternative.

Dekker's play, then, in reclaiming St. Hugh and St. Crispin and ending upon a definitive note of merriment is in fact dramatizing something which is more politically motivated than it might at first otherwise seem. Scholars tend to see the festivities at the close of the play as covering up the more troubling or unsavory aspects of the rest of the plot. Even those scholars who acknowledge that there are in fact some undesirable things to cover up, and that Simon Eyre's feast might be intentional in this way, seem satisfied that the resolution is complete. Joel H. Kaplan says Eyre's "holiday madness" is compelling enough to "replace the more calculating and somber regime of his predecessors" (110), seeming to dismiss the idea that Eyre's "madness" might itself be a calculation, and Marta Straznicky, though she calls the ending a "romantic mask" (368), seems content with the notion that this mask adequately includes "socially and politically disadvantaged groups within a newly expanded notion of nobility" (361). But both these kinds of characterizations of the celebration seem too innocent, and too neat. The feasting is, like the feasts, pageants, and holidays given by real-life guilds, an act of historicization, meant both to challenge the notion that the monarchy and aristocracy have a monopoly on such practices, and to solidify the power of the citizen elite of which Eyre has just become a part.

Evidence for the intentionally historicizing nature of Eyre's feast can be found both in the play itself and especially in its comparison with Deloney's *The Gentle Craft*. For one thing, the

energetic scenes of merriment do not begin with the feast, but before it, where the shoemakers help Ralph reclaim Jane from Hammon at the church door. This scene, though at first seeming simply to wrap up the Dampport plot so that the final scenes of the play can happen, is upon closer inspection charged with historical significance. Hodge calls the men to arms not in the name of Ralph the individual, but “as we are the brave bloods of the shoemakers, heirs apparent to Saint Hugh, and perpetual benefactors” (18.1-3). He calls upon a lineage, both a bloodline and a legal right, from which the shoemakers claim their authority. Importantly, Eyre has already claimed the authority of St. Hugh for their holiday making in the previous scene (17.42, 52-5). Hodge’s invocation then is not merely the trumped up rallying cry of rioting apprentices and journeymen, but a legitimate call to arms endorsed by the Lord Mayor himself; St. Hugh has been recognized as a historical authority. Further, the fact that this posse has been amassed for the cause of Ralph, who was in fact named among the dead of the battle which can reasonably be read as Agincourt (where “no man of name” was killed), connects the reclamation of Jane with the reclamation of Agincourt by the common men who fought it. While Dodger tells Lincoln that “no man of name” was killed (8.9), it should be noted that Hammon, in his attempts to woo Jane, produced a list of names in order to prove that Ralph was dead (12.83-6). Regardless of whether we believe that Hammon’s list was real (critics seem split), the return of Ralph from the battle, lame, sympathetic, and definitely named, and his repossession of his wife and rights in this scene serve as a challenge to the notion that the dead of Agincourt can simply be left unnamed,⁴ that the citizen heroes who fought and perhaps died there can be so easily written out of history by the

⁴ That is, that the non-aristocratic dead can be left unnamed. There is something particularly elitist in the lines around naming as spoken by both Dekker’s Dodger and Shakespeare’s King Harry (“none else of name,” *H5* 4.8.99) because the “name” referred to is, of course, family name. Dekker’s play challenges the notion that such family names are the only ones that matter by giving us a named, lower-class character to remind his audience of the real sacrifice of war.

monarchy. As Christopher L. Morrow points out, in 1590s London, at a moment when the conscription of young men for the Irish wars and the treatment of their deaths as trivial by the monarchy was a contentious issue (427), Ralph's role as a conscripted man and wounded veteran who returns to take back his life is more than a comic subplot. This is a claiming of national, military, and historical narratives by the citizenry who played such a vital role in them. The moment of Jane's rescue by the shoemakers should therefore be seen as the beginning of the final scenes of festival and historicity, rather than the simple tying up of a loose end. Indeed, after the shoemakers have driven off Hammon, Hodge immediately suggests that they celebrate by going to Eyre's feast (18.185-7).

Both Eyre's and the shoemakers' discussion of this feast emphasizes its role as a historicizing act, especially when compared with Deloney's treatment of it. As with the building of Leadenhall, Dekker's version seems to embellish the feast scenes with a heightened sense of both their historical importance and connection to early modern London, for the ending is not merely hedonistic revelry (though it is certainly that as well). Dekker's characters are very explicit about the perpetual nature of their celebration, about the notion that this is a holiday with legitimate roots and that it will continue as part of the natural order of society into the future. In Deloney this perpetuity is mentioned, but as with the founding of Leadenhall, it is almost an afterthought. Instead, Deloney emphasizes the offertory nature of the feast. His Eyre relates in detail the morning when, as a young lad, he had to depend upon the other apprentices to buy his breakfast, and therefore vowed that if ever he were in a position to reciprocate, he would do so for *all* apprentices (Deloney 94). This Eyre's notion of history is a personal one: "I shall never forget it," he says of their kindness (94), and his feast is given in the spirit of the holy day,

Shrove Tuesday, absolving him of his guilt and his debt to the other apprentices, rather than as a gesture of power and prestige.

Dekker's feast, by contrast, is explicitly about the celebration of the man Simon Eyre and of the shoemakers who rise with him by association, and this is achieved largely because he gives the characters a deliberate sense of the historical importance of what they are doing. When Eyre first establishes the day as a feast day for apprentices, he quips, "Let masters care, / and prentices shall pray for Simon Eyre" (17.57-8). Hodge later reinforces this idea that the day is more about the praising of Eyre than the shriving of him: "my Lord Mayor is a most brave man. How shall prentices be bound to pray for him and the honour of the Gentlemen Shoemakers!" (18.203-5). Firk and Hodge tell us three different times in the space of ten lines that this holiday marks a moment of historical significance. They will celebrate "every Shrove Tuesday" (18.221), and "this shall continue for ever" (227) to the "eternal credit" of the Gentle Craft (229). Finally, they rename Shrove Tuesday, an exceptionally important day in the Christian calendar marking the beginning of Lent, "Saint Hugh's Holiday" (18.226), which it has already been pointed out actually coincided with Elizabeth's Accession Day in November. As Chapman notes (1479), this simple moving of St. Hugh's Day to another day in the calendar is a tacit challenge to the monarchy's having sole rights to name holidays. Not only does such an act present an origin story in the play world for the revelry of Shrove Tuesdays, it also suggests an early modern challenge to Elizabeth's power to claim the shoemakers' traditional November holiday. Eyre's holiday in Dekker's play is therefore both a way of consolidating his new power as Lord Mayor as the day becomes associated with him as much as with St. Hugh, as well as an affront to both the medieval and early modern monarchy, as it posits a new history made by and for shoemakers. Ralph, not the unnamed King, is our hero of Agincourt, and Eyre, not Elizabeth, the

one celebrated on “St. Hugh’s Day.” Eyre’s holiday and the namesake of the play thus becomes part of the historicizing project of the citizenry, a way of inscribing Eyre and the shoemakers, and by extension the entire City and all guilds, upon the history of London in the same way that the real life Eyre had his name inscribed upon the wall in the Leadenhall chapel. The City’s rule is presented as not merely a challenge but as a vibrant and historically legitimate alternative to that of the traditional aristocracy.

The Failures of History

Even as the *Shoemaker* play world vies with that of *Henry V*, even as the citizen ideology it depicts vies with that of the early modern monarchy for political supremacy, Dekker’s play, particularly the wealthy characters such as Eyre and Oatley that it presents, also seeks to appropriate the King’s popularity and the authority of the monarchy in order to solidify its historicizing project. As has already been demonstrated in part by Eyre’s request for a license for Leadenhall, perhaps one of the most glaring contradictions within citizen ideology in the period was its dependence upon established aristocratic structures and rhetoric in order to establish its authority. The very act of seeking to historicize is in fact a tool taken from the feudal and the existing monarchical system; lineage, and the notion that your lineage had existed “time out of mind,” was a very powerful concept, and one which the City and its guilds were seeking to reappropriate. Laura Caroline Stevenson has discussed this paradoxical situation at length: she writes that the literature of the early modern period demonstrated “the limitations of Elizabethan social assumptions, while simultaneously revealing the power these assumptions had” (5). This was a world in which “society has outgrown an old social ideology, but has not yet formulated a new one” (5). This is precisely the predicament that Dekker’s characters find themselves in as they seek to establish the political and economic legitimacy of the citizenry through historical

representation. There was no coherent citizen class or citizen ideology as of yet; this is why we must speak of it as emergent, demonstrably and perceptibly different from the dominant one in which it was forming, but still dependent upon it. Citizen ideology was fraught with tensions that reveal it as very much a feature of early modern life, and yet not a fully fledged aspect of modernity.

Feasting was one of the many practices in which this tension made itself manifest. Eyre's feast for the apprentices at the end of the play certainly contributes to the historical authority he seeks to claim both for himself and for the guilds, linking them to a future in which their Shrove Tuesday celebration will continue to be held. But it also links them to a past—indeed, an aristocratic present—where feasting is a mark of gentility, of the nobility rather than the middling sort. It was a well-known and elaborately practiced aspect of aristocratic social performance that the nobility and Court would hold extravagant feasts, meant both to display wealth and to establish political superiority through hospitality. The aristocracy was marked, as Lawrence Stone writes, by “an attitude of mind which put generosity and display before thrift and economy” (*Crisis* 264), and which expected a nobleman to “live in a style commensurate with his dignity” (249). Such a system, as Stone's work demonstrates, was not sustainable in the end, but this did not stop the socially climbing City elite from emulating it, both in the early modern period and as far back as the guilds' documented founding in the 12th century. Unwin describes company feasts as “a survival from earlier feudal times, from the traditions of the great household,” and says that as the guilds built their own halls and grew in power and prestige, they began to “seek the honour of entertaining distinguished guests” such that they were “gradually assimilated in luxury, style, and expense to those of the greatest magnates in the land” (193-4). Such practices can be found in the literature of the period when Crosby hosts the king in

Heywood's *Edward IV*, and in *Shoemaker* when the King attends Eyre's feast. The feasting of nobles by wealthy citizens is also mentioned in the very first lines of Dekker's play, when Lincoln introduces himself to Oatley by recalling, "My Lord Mayor, you have sundry times / feasted myself and many courtiers more" (1.1-2). Feasts are just one example of the ways in which the citizenry sought to equate itself with the aristocracy and legitimate itself politically; but by virtue of their being inherently vestigial and associated with gentle hospitality, the feasts given by citizens also reveal the limitations of citizen ideology and its dependence upon existing norms.

Eyre's feast at the end of Dekker's play, then, is an example of the essential contradiction of citizen ideology. It is not merely a sort of "safety valve" for the apprentices, nor just part of a "fantasy of social cohesion" whereby master, journeymen, apprentices, and even nobility can exist harmoniously together—though it is, to an extent, these things. The feast and the shoemakers' insistence on its perpetuity are part of the project of legitimating the guilds and citizenry, but the presence of the King, especially a king as famous and nationally beloved as Henry V, is part of its power. Establishing an affinity with this particular king is an act of historical legitimation in and of itself, and perhaps the reason that Dekker left him unnamed. If it is Henry V, as much of the textual evidence suggests, then he increases Eyre's popularity by his own, and lends credence to the historical project; but even if it is not, association with "King" or "Court" more broadly also gives a certain amount of authority. The problem is that a citizenry that seeks to establish its authority through appropriating aristocratic traditions and associating itself with the monarchy is essentially defeating its own purpose, for such acts actually only reaffirm the supremacy of those institutions. And yet, there is an undeniable tension between Court and City in this period even as there is this affinity. Such a relationship and such practices

by the citizenry serve to reveal the growing pains of an emergent bourgeois ideology, one whose contradictions have yet to be fully smoothed by processes of reification.

Many critics, even those who ultimately describe *Shoemaker* as a romantic comedy, note an undercurrent of darkness in the play, especially around the character of Ralph. Stevenson describes Eyre as a “democratic figure” and the play as “celebrating the fellowship” of the various classes it represents (202). In the same paragraph, however, she mentions “the subplot,” which “touches upon slightly darker themes of social injustice.” This kind of assessment is fairly common: the play is not ignorant of social problems in the urban landscape, but it somehow manages to wrap them up nicely by the end. I argue that if the play presents such social issues, regardless of how happy the ending tries to be, then it has released something which cannot be satisfactorily re-contained.⁵ Ralph is still lame at the end; Simon is still wildly rude to Margery; Hodge and Firk are still just artisan laborers at the mercy of the guild elite. The problematic images and scenes that the audience has just witnessed are not simply forgotten because the pancake bell rings. Instead, they are allowed to hang in tension with the tableau of seeming social harmony at the end, a reminder that the closing feast and the success of characters like Eyre, Oatley, and Lacy is dependent upon a displacement of their failings and inconsistencies onto other, lesser characters: namely women, immigrants, and the working class. But the

⁵ This is essentially an extension of Jonathan Dollimore’s understanding of subversion and his cultural materialist critique of the New Historicist model. Stephen Greenblatt (“Invisible Bullets”) discusses subversive cultural elements as always ultimately contained by and indeed often produced from the outset by the dominant authoritative structures. Dollimore’s caveat, outlined in the introduction to *Political Shakespeare*, is that, “If we talk only of power producing the discourse of subversion we not only hypostatise power but also efface the cultural differences—and context—which the very process of containment presupposes. Resistance to that process may be there from the outset or itself produced by it. Further, although subversion may indeed be appropriated by authority for its own purposes, once installed it can be used against authority as well as used by it” (12). Once Dekker has introduced the social issues and injustices associated with citizen ideology, they are there to be either contained by it or used against it.

contradictions of citizen ideology cannot be allowed to sit with the likes of Oatley and Eyre.

Instead, these elites and their real-life City counterparts must find a way to shift the problems of society onto these other entities while simultaneously creating a historical narrative that claims to be more inclusive than the monarchical one.

This is the crux in which the satirical nature of Dekker's play can be detected, even as he gives us a "romantic" ending. We are given a play that celebrates the City, that praises the thrift and ingenuity of citizens and the social ambition of Simon Eyre, and ends upon a note of social harmony, and yet the social ills that the play also depicts reveal the positive characterizations and rhetoric to be just that—rhetorical. The historicizing project of both the fictional and the real-life Eyre and many other wealthy citizens besides does form much of the central premise of the play. Eyre builds and licenses Leadenhall, he establishes an annual holiday for apprentices, he ingratiates himself to posterity by feasting his King. But the darker moments that sit alongside these lighthearted ones reveal the historicization for the construct that it is. This is especially true when the characterization of Simon Eyre is examined more closely. Brian Walsh has argued that the performative nature of historicization is "mirrored by the actual performance" of the play onstage (339), and that the character of Eyre, because of his bombastic mirth, feels overacted and contrived. Walsh argues that Dekker has deliberately written Eyre in this way, that "Eyre's status as a historical figure" relies upon "a self-conscious sense of language" (331-2) because history is itself self-consciously constructed.

I agree with Walsh's assessment, and would further argue that Dekker has given Eyre not just a self-conscious way of speaking and acting but that his historicizing actions are revealed to be self-conscious as well in such a way that his entire historicizing project is exposed. Eyre's mirth is, by his own several admissions in the play, as much an act as his posing as an alderman

or his performance of gravitas in front of Oatley and Lincoln. Almost from the moment he enters the play, he makes us aware that he is “a man of the best presence” (1.125). Dekker gives us a man mindful of his own performance, with the ability to craft a persona and historical narrative that will legitimize his rise to power. But by also dramatizing the *process* by which Eyre does this, that legitimacy is undercut. The blatant way in which some characters and social groups are left out of the narrative-making, indeed even threatened by it over the course of the play, demonstrates that Eyre’s merriness and the project of representing citizen history are actually attempts to use the tools of the dominant ideology in order to lend legitimacy to an emergent one struggling with its own inherent contradictions. Eyre’s nearly overwhelming dramatic presence, Lacy’s deceptions, and the struggles and somewhat false inclusion of lower-class characters sit uncomfortably beside the insistence upon historical legitimacy, revealing it for the early reifying project that it is.

Merchants and Masters, Artisans and Laborers

One of the most prominent contradictions within citizen consciousness, central to Dekker’s play, is that existing at the heart of the guild system itself. Unwin describes the livery company or guild as having, through its charter, the “immortal collective personality of a corporation” (158). This “immortal” and “collective” aspect of guild identity was meant to unify all guild members in a community with a common goal: the promise of social mobility and economic security for all and the achievement of this through the preservation of the wealth and status of the guild masters, by whom others would rise. Christopher L. Morrow argues that *Shoemaker* champions this collective identity, that it challenges the nationalism of say, Shakespeare’s histories, by forming a “band of brothers’ based on occupation” (Morrow 440). However, as Unwin describes and as many other scholars point out in regard to *The Shoemaker’s*

Holiday, this collectivity was more often than not a sham, a form of coercion on the part of wealthier citizens meant to keep the true working classes in their place. The new middle class, Unwin argues, “while it attacked the position of the privileged few [the landed gentry and monarchy] was equally concerned in guarding its own status” (72). The “citizenry” or “middling sort” was by no means homogenous, and this must be remembered when talking about citizen ideology because it is this heterogeneity, the existence of various levels within the citizenry, codified by the guilds, which gives rise to contradictions within that ideology.

These differences are most clearly seen in both early modern society and in Dekker’s play when examining the relationship between masters and their journeymen and apprentices. For as much as Eyre claims to love and look out for his men, and as much as he demonstrates an expansive generosity towards them and the other apprentices of the City at the end of the play, he is, definitively, not one of them. Steven R. Smith describes the ideal relationship between master and apprentice in the sixteenth century as a familial one: the master was meant to take a youth into his home and treat him as his son, raise him in his trade, seat him at his table, and nurture him. The apprentice in return was to exercise loyalty and obedience to his master in the same way he would his own father. But as Smith also points out, “the ideal was not always realized” (457). In fact, Smith argues that this ideal was in fact a fantasy that was rarely the actual case. Instead the relationship was more often that of commercial employer and employee, the culture of the marketplace usurping that of the family. Unwin similarly describes how masters often viewed themselves as a separate class, and that this difference centered around whether one worked, or whether one traded. The “trading masters,” he says, had a “policy directed at controlling the market” (84), and this difference, that of controlling the market or producing the goods for it, was a fundamental conflict within guild membership which sought to portray itself

as familial or collective. Members were not “brothers” or “father and son,” but instead related based upon their various roles within the market of exchange.

Dekker’s play dramatizes both this rift and the processes by which the wealthy citizenry attempted to conceal it. Because it is the likes of Eyre, Oatley, and Lacy who have the power and the impetus to “make history,” so to speak, while characters like Ralph are left powerless, the citizen history the play celebrates is simultaneously revealed to be truly that of citizen *elites*, not all citizens. Crystal Bartolovich has made a similar argument, asserting that “Dekker’s play does not claim history for all commoners” and that there is a difference between merchant history and artisan history (21-2). However, significantly, Bartolovich contends that *Shoemaker* is deliberately “naturalizing a status hierarchy within the urban social order,” that it “does not so much counter [the notion that only elites are important to history] as confirm it” (18), and she later refers to Dekker as an “apologist” for the citizen elite (33). I cannot completely agree with this assessment. Instead, I argue that *Shoemaker* seeks to *denaturalize* the urban status hierarchy by exposing the elite project of naturalization for the construct that it is. Dekker’s treatment of the journeymen in the face of Eyre’s attempts to historicize himself demonstrates this.

Eyre’s journeymen are pointedly aware of the hierarchy in which they exist and upon which they depend for advancement. While Firk and Hodge are largely welcoming of the new shoemaker, Hans Meulter,⁶ Firk especially is very keen that his place not be usurped by the newcomer. Twice he reminds Hans of his place in the household: “Hodge and I have the vantage; we must drink first, because we are the eldest journeymen” (4.100-2) he says. Then later as Eyre invites them to breakfast, Firk stops Hans from going in ahead of him with “I am not so foolish to go behind you, I being the elder journeyman” (4.133-4). While they do often

⁶ Strangely so, given his status as a Dutch immigrant, a point which I will explore later.

have moments of seemingly pure solidarity, guarding each others' secrets and coming to Ralph's defense en masse as a "corporation," the laborers in Eyre's household are portrayed as aware that they are operating within a hierarchal guild, and that the cheery semblance of social harmony does not erase that fact. Smallwood and Wells, editors of the Revels *Shoemaker*, footnote Firk's lines with the observation that his "assertion of status makes a comically effective end to the scene" (111); but this is a bit dismissive of what Firk's remarks actually reveal. He, like Hodge, Ralph, and others, know that they are not equal with one another, nor certainly with Eyre himself. They are not so blinded by the rhetoric of their betters, which would seek to bring them all under one history, that they are able to forget this.

Consciousness of the urban hierarchy is reinforced not just between journeymen, and between journeymen and their masters, but between masters of various ranks as well. Eyre is not necessarily a member of the "merchant elite" simply by virtue of his being a master. He is "free of the City," with some marginal voting power, but it is not until he makes his deal with the Dutch merchant that he comes to be on a level with Oatley; importantly it is *wealth*, not merely hard work, which brings status. Oatley acknowledges this when Eyre comes to his house after being made sheriff. While Eyre was powerless to save Ralph or even to put up much of a fight when he was simply Master Cordwainer, as sheriff Oatley welcomes him as a brother: "It does me good, and all my brethren, / That such a madcap fellow as thyself / Is entered into our society" (11.7-9). *Our* society, where he was not before. There is a clear consciousness of difference here, although Eyre has done no work but investing a little money which was not even his own.

It is significant that the play shows Eyre rising in this way, through mercantile investment rather than labor, because it undercuts the myth that Oatley and the Eyres seek to propagate and

which Eyre's journeymen briefly internalize. One of Eyre's first comments when he enters after being named sheriff is to encourage his men to "Be as mad knaves as your master Sim Eyre hath been, and you shall live to be sheriffs of London" (10.155-7). He immediately seizes upon an opportunity to reinforce the notion of a meritocracy based on hard work rather than an oligarchy based upon wealth. Later, after having inherited Eyre's shop, Hodge pushes the others to work harder, "that we may live to be Lord Mayors, or Aldermen at least" (12.2-4). What we have here are various characters clearly exhibiting typifying elements of citizen ideology: "self-improvement, independence, thrift, hard work...equality of opportunity" (Stone 6). And yet, set beside both the fact that Eyre did not actually rise in this way, as well as the notion that all shoemakers are supposed to be members of one brotherhood, the audience is left with the feeling that something is too good to be true. The journeymen feel this as well. Despite Eyre's insistence that with hard work one day they might be like him, when Hodge breaks the news that many of the aldermen have fallen sick or died, Firk responds frivolously but pointedly, "I care not, I'll be none" (13.41).

Ralph's experience as one of Eyre's journeymen would seem to undercut the notion that all shoemakers are equal as well. The most obvious example of difference between himself and elites is, of course, the fact that he is pressed into service in France while Lacy, a gentleman with money and connections, is able to free himself. Interestingly, this is another point at which Eyre seeks to smooth conflict by historical narrativizing. When it becomes clear that nothing will spare Ralph from service, not even Simon's offer to "find ye boots these seven years" (1.136-7) for the army, Eyre resorts to mythologizing images in order to defuse the situation. He promises Lacy and Askew that Ralph is "a proper shot...Hector of Troy was an hackney to him, Hercules

and Termagant scoundrels. Prince Arthur's Round Table, by the Lord of Ludgate,⁷⁷ ne'er fed such a tall, such a dapper swordsman" (1.171-4). When his own powers fail to save his man, threatening to reveal one of the many limits in a system to which he is committed but which he cannot control, Eyre's move is, as ever, to turn to historical images. Eyre's bombast is not just verbosity meant to distract—it comes back to this very particular topic, the notion that linking his situation with history, proclaiming that Ralph comes from a long line of warriors and might win fame even in death, somehow covers over the fact that it is deep social inequity that forces Ralph to go in the first place.

The irony in this first scene is clear, but what is perhaps more significant is the way in which Dekker has taken and revised this scene from Deloney's work. While two of the play's plots are taken recognizably from the second and third stories in *The Gentle Craft*, it is not immediately clear where Ralph and Jane come from. Crispin and Ursula match nicely with Lacy and Rose, while the Eyre plot's connection speaks for itself; critics have tended to simply ascribe the Dampports to Dekker's imagination (Stevenson 202; Smallwood and Wells 20). But both Ralph and, I will argue, Jane, come either from Deloney or other points in the early modern literary imagination, and Dekker's inclusion of them in his play helps to demonstrate the conflicts within a citizen ideology that claims to embrace them.

It should be noted that Crispin, the prince-disguised-as-shoemaker who inspired the Rowland Lacy character, has a brother. In Deloney's second tale, while Crispin "on a bank of

⁷⁷ See Jonathan Gil Harris, "Ludgate Time: Simon Eyre's Oath and the Temporal Economies of *The Shoemaker's Holiday*" for the significance of Ludgate and Eyre's repeated use of the oath. It is, in itself, a historicizing gesture, as Ludgate linked the ancient image of King Lud with medieval Catholic iconography and early modern civic pageantry—Ludgate was an important point along coronation processions and the Lord Mayor's show and was graced with a statue of Elizabeth. It was also the site of a debtors' prison, effectively connecting "civic-minded antiquarian fantasies about London's historical origin and new mercantile anxieties about credit, debt, and bankruptcy" (Harris 13).

sweet primroses...pluckt the rose of amorous delight” (43), “his brother Crispianus, the same night, with many others, was prest to wars into the country of Gaul, now called France” (44). Here, I argue, is our Ralph. But, very significantly, Dekker’s impressed soldier is not a prince in disguise; he does not live up to Eyre’s claim that “Hector of Troy was an hackney to him” in the way that Deloney’s Crispianus does, “like a second Hector...hewing down his foes on every side” (Deloney 46). Ultimately, Crispianus is made a knight by the King of France, “after which there was a great feast ordained” (48), a far cry from the unnoticed return of Ralph, who is not even recognized by his fellow journeymen or, indeed, his own wife, and who, far from gaining a knighthood, loses a leg. Ralph’s ignominious return from the war, when compared with that of Crispianus, demonstrates the folly of reading Deloney’s account or any other which seeks to praise artisan shoemakers as an expression of a coherent citizen ideology. For importantly, Crispianus is not a commoner. His experience, as Christopher L. Morrow has described (426-8), would certainly not have been that of the common soldier impressed to the Netherlands or Ireland in the 1590s. Despite Deloney’s narrative and Eyre’s echoing of it in *Shoemaker* in his attempts to frame the war in heroic and historic terms, Ralph’s experience is one place where the naturalization of citizen ideology cannot stick. He, along with Firk and Hodge, represents a laboring sector of the London population which was rhetorically included but systematically exploited by the merchant elites who were in control of the legitimizing narrative.

Holiday, then, becomes a way of placating this lower class, of covering over the gaps in the hierarchy, and Dekker’s play demonstrates this for the audience. Firk and Hodge and the other shoemakers may seem to participate in Simon’s feast as though they, too, are important actors in the historical process. But as Brian Walsh argues (336), actually dramatizing the creation of such a holiday, showing its founding, necessarily means that it cannot have existed

since time immemorial; if the early modern holiday has an origin in the mid-fifteenth century, and the characters are shown verbally constructing it, then its naturalness, its given-ness, is undermined. The inclusion of the journeymen therefore emphasizes their status as tools of the elite, not agents in their own right. They repeat the vocal crafting which Eyre has initiated. Further, Eyre's feast at the end is undermined not only by this philosophical notion but again, by Dekker's portrayal of the apprentices and journeymen who attend it, and again especially when compared with his source. Deloney's version of the feast relates that the apprentices who attended "had no lack, nor excesse to cause them to be disordered," and that when they were finished they "all quietly departed" (96). Dekker's apprentices, by contrast, "have taken their liquor standing so long that they can stand no longer" (20.20-1) and "have drunk so much they can eat nothing" (31-2). Simon Eyre, the beneficent host in Deloney, calls for more and more wine for himself in Dekker's play (20.17-8). Dekker's version of the feast has the hallmarks of the traditional "safety valve," facilitating not a community ritual but the controlled semblance of inclusion and pointing to 1590s London's methods for dealing with unruly apprentices.

But in pointing to this hierarchy between merchant elites and their artisan laborers and the way it displayed tensions within citizen ideology, it should be noted that we are not discussing *opposing* ideologies. Although the historicizing project of the citizenry sought both to legitimate it to the Crown and nobility as well as to contend with differences between the citizens themselves, it is far too simple to suggest that Crown, City, and artisans represented three distinct and hostilely opposed ideological camps. All three of these groups existed in the same ideological moment, and while their different experiences may have given them varied perspectives and required different methods of interpellation, the emergent, in its various forms, was still a part of the dominant, monarchical, bureaucratic regime. I emphasize this in the face of

such arguments as that proposed by Crystal Bartolovich, who, though she rightly argues that citizen ideology was not homogenous, says that Dekker's play "proposes an *alliance* of old and new elites over and against labor" (22, emphasis hers), as if the three groups are distinct. Matthew Kendrick has posited a similar scenario. While he helpfully argues that the play demonstrates "a tension between three models of economic and social value," he, like Bartolovich, discusses these as three *distinct* models, and ultimately argues that the play "presents the artisanal community as the sole social agent capable of resisting the disruptive effects of emerging commercial forces and maintaining communal cohesion" (260). It should be clear by now that this cannot be the case, but rather that all three groups, Court, City, and labor, exist within one ideology, and represent only disparate elements of that ideology. Further, it is not the artisanal community (the journeymen, here) which maintains social cohesion. What Dekker's play in fact dramatizes is the efforts of the citizen elite to craft social cohesion to their own advantage. There may be moments when sympathy for Ralph or amusement at Firk's antics pricks us to identify with these lower-class workers, but it is Eyre who wins the day in the end. *Shoemaker* shows us not a class war, but the processes of class cohesion as they were beginning to be orchestrated by the citizenry. Dekker does not give us class antagonism, nor the kind of romantic fantasy of cohesion that many critics find, but instead the uncomfortable moment where both existed side by side. His artisans, therefore, do not topple the forces of mercantilism or monarchy, but they do, at key moments, undercut Eyre's natural historicity by reminding us that it is not natural.

A Tale of Two Janes

Eyre's artisan laborers are not the only group that the play world both distances and seeks to include for the appearance of social harmony. The treatment of women by male characters in

Shoemaker is, by and large, appalling, but this is not evidence of misogyny on Dekker's part. For it is not something which is unique to Dekker's play; nearly universal to the genre of city comedy is either the portrayal of women as boringly chaste—exemplars of femininity, not characters—or else as socially transgressive. The latter are ambitious, worldly, materialistic, foul-mouthed, intemperate, drunk, disingenuous—in short, Simon Eyre. And yet, what is praised in Eyre by both Dekker's characters and modern scholars alike as merriment, generosity, cleverness, and independence become negative attributes when expressed by his wife, Margery, or later by women in other city comedies. Ann C. Christensen has discussed this issue in depth, arguing that in Margery Eyre's case in particular, what is happening is that, like the journeymen who provide labor for the promise of advancement that may never come from a privileged system, citizens' wives absorb the negative connotations of their husbands' personalities and actions such that the contradictions of citizen ideology are split between the sexes, leaving the men as a coherent, unquestionable whole. Wives, she argues, "are made to bear the burden of the negative aspects of social ascent" (455). For example, when Simon offers seven years' worth of boots for the army in exchange for Ralph's release from service, Margery questions him, "Seven years, husband?" (1.138). Her query is taken as nagging miserliness, and Simon silences her, but in fact what she might also be said to be expressing is prudence—seven years' worth of boots for free is quite a lot in exchange for a single journeyman. But that businesslike thinking is put upon Eyre's wife, leaving Eyre himself the appearance of capacious generosity.

Margery Eyre stands as an example of how women were often treated in citizen comedies, but she is protected by her status and that of her husband. Negative attributes may be thrown upon her, for they will do no lasting damage to the Lady Mayoress. Dekker gives us this more typical portrayal of a materialistic but secure wife in order to highlight the damage that

such characters often conceal, for he also gives us a wife with none of these characteristics—and none of these protections: Jane Dampont. Jane and Ralph’s story is, of course, meant to heighten dramatic suspense and offer a sense of pathos for the lower-class citizens, but it may also have reminded the audience uncomfortably of another Jane they had recently witnessed on the stage. Separated from her husband, preyed upon by men of higher status and greater power than she, precariously torn between moral choice and self-preservation, Jane Dampont puts us eerily in mind of Thomas Heywood’s Jane Shore.

That Heywood and Dekker knew each other and often worked together, and that *Edward IV* and *Shoemaker* were written and first performed in the same year (1599, *Edward IV* first), is enough to at least suggest a deliberate allusion.⁸ Heywood’s Jane is discovered by King Edward as “*she sits sewing in her shop*” (*E4 Part 1*, 17.18); Dekker’s is observed by Hammon, “*in a sempster’s shop, working*” (12.1). Edward asks for Jane Shore’s “fairest jewel,” and when Jane interprets this to be her ring, he corrects her, “’tis set, indeed, upon the fairest hand / that e’er I saw...I meant the hand” (17.48-9, 52). She quips in response, “I see you come to cheap and not to buy” (17.53). This language is repeated almost exactly in *Shoemaker*: after a cursory discussion of the price of nearly everything in the shop as “Good cheap” (12.25), Hammon asks Jane Dampont, “All cheap. How sell you then this hand?...Nay, faith, I come to buy” (12.27-9). If these similarities were not enough, Hammon claims to be compelled “by a power / that controls kings” (12.40), and Jane, in professing her love for Ralph, asserts that she would “rather be his wife than a king’s whore” (12.79). The parallels are enough to invite discussion and to suggest

⁸ At least one critic has explicitly noted the similarities between the two women. Jeanne MacIntyre, in her aptly-named “Shore’s Wife and *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*,” argues that the similarities between the two Janes are too many and too obvious not to deserve comment.

any audience member watching *Shoemaker* who had also seen *Edward IV* would very likely have been reminded of it.

Of course, Dekker's Jane is saved and reunited with her husband in the end, but this does not completely dispel from the minds of the audience the danger she only very nearly escaped. This becomes clearer when Jane's experience is compared directly with that of Rose Oatley. Amy L. Smith has argued convincingly that Rose is able to "reshape courtship so that she is more than a pawn....capitalizing on the complex nexus of status, choice, and emotion inherent in marriage" (338). Because marriage is a performative ritual, it leaves room for variations in that performance, she argues, and *Shoemaker* depicts Rose as both wooer and wooed, negotiating power for herself in that performative space (334). This is true, to an extent. Rose does exhibit quite a lot of romantic agency in her courtship by both Lacy and Hammon, and in the end comes out the better for it. But Rose, like Margery Eyre, is of a protected status. Her father is quite wealthy and a former Lord Mayor, and she is literally protected outside the City at his country estate. Smith also argues, less convincingly, that Jane's near-marriage with Hammon and her real marriage with Ralph demonstrate that *Shoemaker* is "emphasizing the maneuverability [capitalism] allows women characters" and that both the Rose and Jane plots "include women who marry the men of their choosing" (347-8). It is not clear to me that Jane actually chose Hammon freely, as she believed herself to be a destitute widow with no other real options, and not clear that she then re-chooses Ralph. She is, after all, already married to him, and cannot very well choose not to be. We also do not know the circumstances surrounding her marriage to Ralph in the first place.

I argue, instead, that if anything Rose's freedom only serves to highlight Jane's comparative lack of it in the play, her protected status to highlight Jane's dangerous dilemma and

relative helplessness. Hammon, it must be pointed out, only pursues Jane as his second choice once Rose has rejected him, and then only because he sees Jane as easy prey. Nearly all of the exchanges between Hammon and Rose are in highly flowered language up to this point, mimicking that of the Petrarchan lover to his love, a courtly exchange proper to wooing. But when Rose finally decides against Hammon, it becomes clear that this has all been an act, a deliberate and strenuous performance. Oatley tries to push Hammon to continue, to change Rose's mind, but Hammon finally drops the pretense:

What, would you have me pule, and pine, and pray,
 With 'lovely lady', 'mistress of my heart',
 'Pardon your servant', and the rhymer play,
 Railing on Cupid and his tyrant's dart? (9.40-3)

Rose is too difficult to win, because, as Amy L. Smith argues, she has the freedom of choice. She is no longer worth Hammon's efforts. Instead, he tells us in an aside, "There is a wench keeps shop in the Old Change. / To her will I" (9.51-2). That is, he will turn his sights on the easier target. Kathleen McLuskie seems to suggest that Hammon's love for Jane is sincere, or at least that we have no reason to believe it is not (70). She says that "his passion is expressed in terms which are usually the marks of sympathetic devotion" (70), but as his immediately previous scene with Rose demonstrates, these terms of devotion are hardly genuine. Jane is caught in a situation where her marriage, because of her low status and lack of power or knowledge, is in question, and where her options for survival are rather limited.

Which brings us back to our two Janes. Positioning Jane Dampont between the historical Jane Shore and the elite Rose Oatley serves to bring out the complicated relationship between the Janes. Jane Dampont is never in quite the same danger as Jane Shore; she is pursued by a gallant, not her king, and the generic structure of the citizen history or city comedy, whichever generic

label we want to assign to *Shoemaker*, protects her from any kind of tragic death that would ruin the harmonious comedic ending. Also, crucially, any moral failing on Jane Dampport's part is removed by the fact that she believes Ralph to be dead when she agrees to marry Hammon. Hers is not a moral dilemma in the sense of Jane Shore's, who is caught between duty to husband and duty to king. Jane Dampport's is the social dilemma of a woman of her class, not to be left destitute, but not to seem grasping; to be true to her own choices and desires, but not to seem proud. Essentially, not to be Jane Shore, but not to be Margery Eyre.

The problem is that the same historicizing tendencies of the citizenry which sought to establish it as part of a long political narrative had also by this point thoroughly historicized and engrained the tale of Mistress Shore. As discussed in the previous chapter, there was by the end of the sixteenth century a very long tradition of the Shore story, preserved in More's *History of King Richard III*, ballads, complaint poetry, and finally, Heywood's play. This image, of what Lincoln refers to in the opening scene of *Shoemaker* as "a gay, wanton, painted citizen" (1.77) was a by-product of the naturalization of citizen ideology. The socially climbing wife, dressed in her finery, her sights aimed even upon the king himself, was a cultural staple. It should be remembered that Heywood's Jane Shore was perhaps the first to be portrayed in a sympathetic light, the rest of them presented as warnings for other women who would stray from their husbands in search of fame and fortune. This kind of materialistic, ambitious wife ultimately finds expression in the likes of Margery Eyre, Gertrude Touchstone, and Mistress Allwit. But Dekker's play draws attention to the fact that this characterization of female citizens is a product of the historicizing tendencies of their husbands, and an unfortunate one at that. They must take any negative characterizations upon themselves in order for their husbands' authority to be affirmed. This is why Jane and Ralph, as many critics have pointed out, are reunited and re-

consumed by the feast that marks the end of the Eyre plot and the happy ending for Lacy and Rose. They must be contained in order for the citizen history advocated by these wealthy characters to be a positive one. But the jeopardy from which Jane was barely rescued and the historical specter of Jane Shore which it recalls remind us that, like artisan workers, women bear some of the brunt of absorbing the contradictions of citizen ideology so that it might retain the semblance of continuity and homogeneity.

Immigrants, Investment, and Imitation

The issues faced by Eyre's journeymen and the several female characters help reveal some of the contradictions inherent in the process of legitimatizing the citizenry. But Simon Eyre's relationship with Rowland Lacy is important for examining just how this historicizing and legitimating project was facilitated. Lacy's role is two-fold: first, Lacy's disguise as the "immigrant" Hans Meulter draws attention to another marginalized group that was often suppressed by the same City forces that raised the citizen merchants to wealth. And second, as has already been discussed, one of the most glaring paradoxes of citizen ideology was its dependence upon that of the aristocracy to give itself definition and authority, and Lacy, as a gentleman with whom Eyre shares a close business and personal relationship in the play, helps highlight this particular conflict. If we were to choose a single group with whom the early modern citizenry most conflicted economically, it would be a hard choice between the gentry and the growing immigrant population—particularly the Dutch fleeing the Spanish-controlled Low Countries. Dekker gives us both groups in the single character of Rowland Lacy, and yet rather than being the hostile figure this should make him, Lacy draws the sympathy of both the audience and Simon Eyre, a fact which serves to demonstrate the ideological conflicts intrinsic to Eyre's social climbing.

None of Lacy's several introductions to the play are especially flattering ones. In the opening exchange between Lincoln and Oatley, Lincoln tells the audience, "A verier unthrift lives not in the world / than is my cousin" (1.17-8), and goes on to describe Lacy's various misbehaviors and frivolous expenditures on the continent. When Lacy himself enters, it is not to disprove his uncle's assessment of him. He lies directly to Lincoln's face, swearing that he will "for honour...add glory to the Lacys' name" in France (1.86-9), and then immediately takes his uncle's money and gives part of it to Askew to cover for him while he avoids his military service. If this deceit were not bad enough, the same scene also sees him force Ralph to go to the war he himself is avoiding. Lacy is precisely the stereotypical courtier that the citizens in Dekker's audience would have pictured when contrasting themselves with the aristocracy, and there is little to claim their sympathy for him from this opening scene. He is a dishonest spendthrift full of, at best, indifference, at worst, disdain for those he deems beneath him. The next scene shows us this even more ugly side, when Sybil describes her encounter with him for her mistress, Rose: "here 'a wore a scarf, and here a scarf, here a bunch of feathers, and here precious stones and jewels" (2.28-9) she says, reinforcing the foppish courtier image. Then she goes on to tell how she was standing in the doorway of the house and "looked at him, and he at me indeed; spake to him, but he not to me, not a word...He passed me by as proud—" (2.33-5). Rose defends him, but by this point in the play the audience is more inclined to agree with Sybil, that this is not a man who stands by his word or returns affections sincerely. Everything about him in these opening scenes seems to set him up as, if not a villain, at least the disingenuous aristocratic foil to the citizen hero Simon Eyre.

The next time we see Rowland Lacy he would seem to be living up to his reputation for dissembling, disguising himself as a Dutch shoemaker in order to take up a place in Eyre's shop

that will get him closer to Rose. And yet almost immediately this disguise seems permissible, as Eyre's journeymen take him in without question, talking up the merits of "Hans" and the good addition he will make to Eyre's household in Ralph's absence. The irony here goes almost unnoticed, even by the audience, as the merriness of Firk and Hodge and the Eyre shop in general encourages us to gloss over it, but it cannot be forgotten that Lacy is usurping the place of the man whom he has just sent to war, the same war which he himself has deserted. I stress this because the rest of the plot does not; the play world and the ways in which Simon seeks to climb the social ranks and subsequently historicize himself begin to take precedence at this point, covering over the social injustice of Lacy's good fortune.

The acceptance of Lacy into Eyre's home is uncharacteristic for the period, as several critics point out. John Michael Archer asserts that "rivalry with the Dutch evoked anxieties about identity and difference" in early modern London and was part of a strain of English nationalism that sought to define and protect English citizens' interests (44). Because of the wars in the Low Countries and England's contentious relationship with Catholic Spain, Elizabeth's government made the decision to accept many Dutch refugees, a political move that had significant economic and social consequences for the City, and particularly the City's shoemakers, a trade for which the Dutch were renowned and which many of them practiced illegally,⁹ and therefore more cheaply than English shoemakers. Andrew Fleck similarly states that "the impression that the Dutch were taking advantage of the religious haven provided by England as the protector of the Protestant faithful found its voice with ever greater regularity at the end of Elizabeth's reign,"

⁹ A man had to be "free of the City" and attain citizen status in order to set up shop and ply his trade independently in the City of London. This was a practice enforced by the guilds in order to keep both the number of artisans and prices more stable. Of course, there were and had always been many "illegal" artisans who worked and sold goods without the guilds' blessing, and they generally sold these goods at lower prices than "legal" guild masters. Dutch immigrants, indeed any immigrants, were not eligible to be citizens or members of guilds, and therefore any craft they practiced was technically illegal.

and that anti-immigrant feeling was on the rise (353). It is very strange, therefore, that Eyre's men literally beg him to hire Hans, even threatening to walk off the job themselves if he does not (4.48-71). Although Firk registers that part of his desire to work with Hans is to "learn some gibble-gabble" (4.51), to be entertained at the Dutchman's expense, he is also clear that he considers Hans "a brother of the Gentle Craft" (4.48), and Hodge backs this up, calling Hans "a proper man...a fine workman" (4.63). Firk and Hodge recognize and choose to emphasize not Hans' national difference, but his occupational kinship with them. They define their relationship based upon work rather than language or nationality, and therefore even though Hans is Dutch, and even though, for the audience, Rowland Lacy is living a lie and deceiving these good workers to escape France, he fits right into the plot and the workshop in such a way that we begin to forgive him, to forget his previous transgressions and unflattering descriptions as they are left behind for the wonderful tale of the historical Simon Eyre and the romantic love story of Lacy and his Rose.

The irony of Eyre's men's acceptance of Hans the "skomawker" is that while it may bolster an image of occupational solidarity amongst these artisan workers, it actually presents an opportunity for Eyre to show his true ambitiousness. For while the audience is aware that Hans is really Lacy in disguise, it is not until much later in the play that Eyre becomes aware of this; when Eyre chooses to take Hans' money, to use him as translator and messenger in the transaction of the ship laden with goods, he believes that he is taking advantage of an employee and an immigrant. While Firk's and Hodge's reaction to the foreign workman is therefore out of character for the time period, it would seem that Simon Eyre's is not. When the news of the ship's goods for sale is brought to him, Simon's reaction is closer to that of the elite merchant citizens than that of his men, highlighting yet again the division between high and low that

citizen ideology would look to cover up. Both Fleck and Archer make the point that hostility toward aliens was often encouraged in order to define an Englishness based on nationality rather than degree and to justify the sometimes morally questionable actions of merchant elites as being “for the good of England,” conflating trade and international political policy (Fleck 360).

Eyre’s benevolent offer of “my countenance in the City” (7.145-6) so that the non-native skipper might unload his ship takes on a more unsavory tinge when read in this context. To Eyre’s mind, he is taking advantage of two Dutch immigrants in order to perpetuate both a false kinship between himself and his lower-class workers and the image of himself as merry and generous, deftly obscuring the fact that it is really only he who will benefit from the transaction. This exploitation is another major departure from Deloney which would seem to indicate a deliberate characterization on Dekker’s part. First, in *The Gentle Craft* it is Margery who comes up with the scheme to disguise Eyre as an alderman and send him to bargain with the foreign ship captain (here, Greek). This is important for two reasons: it slightly distances Eyre from the deception by placing the blame with his wife’s ambition rather than his own, and it also removes the double-exploitation of both the skipper and the messenger. For in Deloney, while Eyre uses his French journeyman as a go-between as he does with Hans in the play, he does not take the loan from this journeyman in order to buy the ship’s cargo. Instead, the alderman disguise has a purpose (curiously lacking in Dekker’s play). When Simon protests to his wife that he does not have the money up front to buy the cargo, she responds, “[the captain] will no doubt be content to stay a moneth for his money, or three weeks at the least” (66). The disguise is necessary in order for Eyre to negotiate *credit* with the skipper, whom he will pay in installments of his *own* money as he is able to scrape it together.

Comparing Dekker's version of this transaction with Deloney's demonstrates the stage Eyre's more dubious nature and emphasizes the deceitful side of City business over the virtuous citizen type that Deloney seems to offer. Lacy's presence and role in the transaction in the play also serves to heighten the sense of duplicity and underhandedness, for the scene has the consequence not just of establishing the origin of Eyre's wealth but of emphasizing the connection between the two men. Eyre is exploiting his "Dutch" journeyman; Lacy is also exploiting a Dutch foreigner, although a real one, in the skipper. Further, perhaps the alderman's disguise which Eyre dons does have a dramatic purpose. For the fact that Eyre wears it means that both he and Lacy are in disguise when they go to meet the skipper, accentuating the negative similarities between the landed gentry and the upwardly mobile citizenry in the period.

The competition between these two groups is notable by the end of the sixteenth century in particular. Lawrence Stone discusses at length the ways in which it was not merely the overspending and complacency of the aristocracy which caused its decline over the early modern period, but its acute and sometimes direct competition with citizen wealth. Just as elite citizens were accumulating wealth through both mastery in the guilds and new investments in international trade, so the aristocracy were heavily involved in improvement and investment schemes. Even in their decline, "thrift and judicious investment" saved many of the gentry from total ruin (*Crisis* 88), and, importantly, joint ventures by both aristocrats and merchants "provided the economy with just that element of risk money without which it could not have moved ahead" (182), showing that there were both direct competition and intimate financial—and ideological—connections between the nobility and the middling sort. The tendency of wealthy citizens to reach upward for a gentleman's lifestyle was both a threat to and inextricably connected with the already existing wealth of the aristocratic gentleman. Dekker gives us the

more hostile side of this relationship in the interactions between Lincoln and Oatley, for these two men are not at odds simply over the possible marriage of Lacy and Rose. Lincoln mentions that Oatley has feasted “myself and many courtiers more” in the past, but that “seldom or never can we be so kind / to make requital of your courtesy” (1.2-4), alluding to the relative disparity in their incomes. Oatley’s would seem to be higher, and Lincoln is very touchy about the fact that Lacy has spent so much of his money on the continent, warning Oatley that if he “make him heir to all the wealth [he has], / one twelve-month’s rioting will waste it all” (1.34-5). Oatley reveals his own biases, suggesting that Lacy might finally “do well / now that he hath learned an occupation” (1.42-3), referring to the unfortunate combination of idleness and conspicuous spending that plagued the aristocracy. The scene is about far more than the impending marriage. It reveals many of the deep anxieties and prejudices that existed between these two social groups as the ideological fabric of the world was changing.

But in reality these two men have many of the same anxieties—the future of their families, the management of their estates, their relationship with the King and involvement in government—which reveal that the rivalry was based as much upon similarities as differences between the aristocracy and citizenry, similarities which highlight the inconsistencies within citizen ideology. While the relationship between Lincoln and Oatley seems to emphasize difference, Dekker uses the parallels between Eyre and Lacy to demonstrate connection. Much is made of the relative difference between inward character and outward appearance or action in the play, an idea introduced from the beginning by Lincoln’s “painted citizen” comment (1.77) and Sybil’s description of Lacy’s finery (2.27-37). Characters of all degrees are preoccupied with the notion that someone might be other than they seem, that appearances can deceive, or can be

used to enact actual material consequences. Eyre and Lacy, characters of two degrees, both exploit this to their advantage.

Lacy's use of disguise and deception is fairly obvious. He disguises himself as Hans the shoemaker in order to win his Rose and avoid military service. But Eyre's bears more comment, especially considering the way scholars have tended to discuss his merriness and sincerity as the means by which Dekker overcomes all the more unsavory and socially unjust aspects of the plot. This merriness is itself an act, meant to cultivate a self which *seems* to be the answer to others' problems and lends legitimacy to Eyre's social climbing. In any given scene where Lacy is there disguised as a shoemaker, Eyre himself is also in disguise as a jovial, madcap, fair-minded master. We are alerted to this throughout the play. Before he goes to meet with the Dutch skipper, he orders, loudly, "a dozen cans of beer for my journeymen," and as the men cheer, amends it threateningly in an aside, "An the knave fills any more than two, he pays for them—
[*Aloud*] A dozen cans of beer for my journeymen!" (7.77-82). The deception, then, is deliberate, the toggling between aloud and aside emphasizing Eyre's duplicity and miserliness for the audience while his journeymen see only generosity.

When the Eyres go to visit Oatley at Old Ford, Margery cautions that her husband "must learn to put on gravity," which Eyre dismisses: "a fig for gravity. When I go to Guildhall in my scarlet gown I'll look as demurely as a saint...here at Old Ford...let it go by" (11.10-5). Eyre's entire social being is a carefully crafted persona, where he may "put on gravity" one moment and merriness the next. This is underscored later by his interaction with the King, where he admonishes Margery for telling him how to act, asserting that "Sim Eyre knows how to speak to

a pope, to Sultan Soliman, to Tamburlaine an he were here” (20.58-60).¹⁰ We see this knowledge in action when the King enters, as Eyre adopts a far more staid manner of speaking than the audience has seen from him so far, calling the King “my dear liege” and vowing that he and his “brethren...shall set your sweet Majesty’s image cheek by jowl by Saint Hugh” (20.6-8). He swears that he is “a handicraftsman, yet [his] heart is without craft” (10-1). Yet, as in most cases when something needs to be so adamantly asserted, Eyre reveals that this is not quite the case, for as soon as the King commands him to be merry, Eyre launches into an exclamation that includes every one of the characteristics that we have seen from him in the play so far: “Sayst thou me so, my sweet Diocletian? Then, hump! Prince am I none, yet am I princely born! By the Lord of Ludgate, my liege, I’ll be as merry as a pie” (20.16-8). He immediately becomes the persona “Simon Eyre the merry shoemaker” that he has so carefully crafted. This ability to be a man for all occasions, coupled with Lacy’s similar disguise based on necessity, has the effect of showing metatheatrically that both the aristocracy and the citizenry seek to perform their social roles in such a way that the dramatic plot of the nation and City are not disturbed.

It is therefore the relationship between Eyre and Lacy and the deliberately constructed nature of both their characters which truly highlights the falseness of the proto-bourgeois history-making project. Eyre, like the real-life citizens of Dekker’s London, must craft the notion that he is expansive and egalitarian in his personality and actions. But as the play demonstrates, the irony of Eyre’s speech to Rose on the danger of courtiers, where he claims that “those silken

¹⁰ Interestingly, all three of these had the reputation in the period of being more pomp and circumstance than actual substance. The pope and the Catholic Church, naturally, were roundly accused of being more trappings than true worship, the Sultan renowned for his finery and the extravagance of his court, and Tamburlaine, especially because of Marlowe’s play of the same name, known for his heightened and almost bombastically eloquent dialogue, as well as his fits of unquenchable rage. Dekker’s choice of these three names at this particular moment emphasizes the idea that his Simon Eyre might easily fit into their “painted” company.

fellows are but painted images, outsides, outsides, Rose. Their inner linings are torn” (11.43-5), is that the same lines might just as easily be applied to himself. Dekker’s play shows that citizen ideology cannot claim to be too different from that of the aristocracy because both are dependent upon the same ruses and manipulations in order to perpetuate themselves, and crucially, that its claims to historical origin, the inclusiveness and naturalness of its values since “time out of mind” is one of the most important ruses of all. Simon Eyre works very hard in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* to establish the historicity of himself and the shoemakers, and, by extension, the guilds and citizenry, as a viably emergent ideology. But the entire naturalizing project, like that of the elite citizens of early modern London, is undermined by the conspicuous exclusion of certain social groups and the exposure of contradictions both amongst the elite and in their interactions with the aristocracy they claim to oppose.

Conclusion

In showing how wealthy citizens crafted a citizen history in order to legitimize citizen ideology, *Shoemaker* ends up dramatizing the way in which they appropriated the tools of narration and oppression from chronicle history. Women are marginalized or left out altogether in the same way that the Catherine of Valois are used merely for dramatic purposes, the Margarets of Anjou demonized to take pressure from the king. The laborers are left safely drunken and joking in the tavern, placated by Falstaffian merriness. Foreign immigrants are unapologetically exploited while supplying traditional comedy with their accents and their misunderstood idioms. These sorts of characters, the same ones marginalized by chronicle history, are similarly demeaned by citizen history, demonstrating that the same narrative craft employed by the monarchy in order to solidify Englishness was being appropriated in new ways by the citizenry in order to establish their own power. Later, crucially, these same characters of

comic immigrants, ambitious women, and lower-class clowns would become the stock figures of ridicule in city comedy.

Many critics deny *Shoemaker* classification as a city comedy because they view it as too romantic to be appropriately satirical. But the romantic aspects they point to, Eyre's rise and Rose and Lacy's love plot, are in fact the historicizing, legitimizing project of the middling sort which Dekker is seeking to satirize. Rose and Lacy hardly come off well when the rest of the social injustices in the play are put into perspective. Their relationship, the "main love plot," is a dramatically comfortable mask for the problems of the "subplot." They are not the main plot, so much as they are Dekker's version of a plot crafted by the elite citizenry, meant to dazzle and to appease. Simon Eyre's miraculous rise, similarly, is only at the expense of his wife and immigrant laborer, and the ignorant but loyal support of Firk and Hodge. The play feels like both a romantic comedy and a proto-city comedy and has so often been placed in a tug-of-war between these two genres because these romantic and satiric elements are themselves at the heart of the contradiction within proto-bourgeois consciousness in the period. Dekker presents a citizenry simultaneously attempting to hold onto a romantic notion of its own history and a nascent mercantilism, and struggling mightily with this project. For how does one define oneself against the chronicled past which glorifies the monarchy when in reality, one's own past is no less problematic?

The answer, presented and satirized by Dekker in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, is to deliberately romanticize that past. The play would seem to celebrate this, to celebrate citizen history and ideology, but it finally does so tongue-in-cheek, side by side with the human cost of this sort of naturalizing narrative, juxtaposing them in such a way that the narrative itself is undermined. The "celebration" of the Cordwainers and Simon Eyre, through its demonstration of

the “nobility” of the citizenry and their long and important history, reveals how an ideology that needs to reinforce itself too adamantly and obviously will inevitably fall apart. This is why, as Brian Gibbons argues, the quintessential city comedy will ultimately present “a keen analysis in moral terms first and last” (29). Historical context, material conditions, the proliferation of narratives, and the Truth as we wish it to be perceived, can too easily be argued with; history-making as an ideological project is too dependent upon the suppression of contradictions. But moralizing, and in the case of the city comedies to come, satirizing your own moral failings, acknowledging that you recognize them, deflects any meaningful criticism. *Shoemaker* depicts the early, failed attempts of the citizenry to narrate their right to power: ultimately, city comedy would allow them to gently craft a more stable path to dominance.

CHAPTER FOUR

“INQUYRE FOR THE OLDE WAY”: THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION AND IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS IN THOMAS MIDDLETON’S *HENGIST, KING OF KENT*; OR, *THE MAYOR OF QUEENBOROUGH*

In his 1567 publication of Aelfric’s sermons in the *Testimonie of Antiquitie*, Archbishop Matthew Parker sought to demonstrate that before the Conquest, ancient British Christians understood the Host not as the transubstantiated flesh of Christ, but as having instead “ghostlye” and “inuisible myghte” (34-5). Parker’s object in translating and publishing this Anglo-Saxon homily was to establish a link between the ancient British past and Elizabethan present that would substantiate and legitimize English Protestantism in the sixteenth century. It could be argued that he succeeded, for Aelfric’s sermon and other writings from the Anglo-Saxon period suggest certain teachings, like this understanding of the Host, which offered potential support for establishing such a link. However, like any good scholar, Parker is careful not to misrepresent the text. Although he seems to have proven his point, he admits that, “As the writynges of the fathers of the first age of the Churche bee not thought on all partes so perfect...so in this Sermon here published some thynges be spoken not consonant to sounde doctrine...” (76). Although he finds evidence for some kernels of Protestantism in medieval Britain, there are inconsistencies and ambiguities as well as statements simply contrary to Elizabethan doctrine to be found in the same text. For Parker, this does not negate what he has successfully shown. Instead, it demonstrates for him that there was in fact evidence that Protestantism, the true faith, had roots

before the Reformation, and that by wading through the inconsistencies in Aelfric's writings Parker can find the elements he needs to construct an origin narrative for Protestant authority.

Parker's attitude represents that of many antiquarians by the end of the sixteenth century. History, it had been shown, was not a settled collection of indisputable facts but a series of events ready for shaping by whoever wished to do so. This made historical study a valuable tool for the likes of Parker, John Bale, and John Foxe as they sought to write a new history for a Protestant England, and indeed, Protestantism more broadly. They found that there was power in the ambiguities of historical events because it allowed for the imposition of interpretations that could be made to both question existing narratives and install new ones. Literary writers such as the playwrights of the commercial theatres seized upon these gaps in similar ways by using the power of theatrical representation. Whereas even historians like Parker who were empowered by the possibilities of interpretation ultimately still had to choose between versions in order to construct a narrative, for playwrights like Thomas Middleton, history's ambiguities "provided narrative and aesthetic opportunities" (Munro, "Anachronistic Aesthetics" 736). For Middleton especially, writing in the seventeenth century during the fraught reign of James I, the unsettledness of historical events uncovered by antiquarian pursuits offered a means for challenging the purported absolutism of the monarchy.

Middleton's Anglo-Saxon history play, *Hengist, King of Kent; or, The Mayor of Queenborough*, exhibits by its very title the indistinct lines between which the playwright thrived: is this a history? A comedy? Something else? Suzanne Gossett has pointed out that across the theatres at the time, generic categories "were bleeding into each other," and that even Middleton's seemingly definable works "push against formal limits" (235-6). The genre of *Hengist*, like many of Middleton's works, has long been debated by scholars. Samuel

Schoenbaum first described it as a play which might have been a good historical tragedy drawing on Holinshed's moral instruction, but argued that it quickly devolves into "a melodrama of amorous intrigue" (190), and Julia Briggs refers to it simply as "Middleton's Forgotten Tragedy" (479). This is a fair categorization in the sense that it certainly has tragic elements which are almost as prominent as its historical ones, similar to Shakespeare's *Richard II* or *Henry VIII*. But many scholars definitively label it a history play for various reasons: that it comes from chronicle material, that it deals with issues of political power and right rule, that it is clearly invested in ancient aesthetics that comment upon the Jacobean court (Kistner and Kistner; Taylor; Munro "Speaking History," "Anachronistic Aesthetics"). While the play certainly depicts the tragic downfall of many of its main characters and also has comic elements in its subplot, calling it a history play rather than a tragicomedy or tragedy affords a much richer reading of how it functions in the context of Jacobean politics and economic and social life. As a history play, *Hengist* can be placed within a historiographical discourse that had already existed since at least the middle of the sixteenth century; that is, the Protestant project, spearheaded by scholars such as Parker, which also reached back to Anglo-Saxon history. We are therefore able to evaluate how the play both furthers and intervenes in this discourse. But of course, tragic and comic elements do remain, and their influence upon a historical reading must be taken into account. It is Middleton's use of a comic subplot comprised of many of the conventions of city comedy that particularly challenges the unity of the historical narrative.

In the story of Symon the Tanner, Middleton makes use of the conventions of the newly established genre of city comedy in order to give voice to the political and religiously-motivated critiques of a class that would ultimately take ideological precedence over the absolute monarchy of James I: the rising citizenry. *Hengist's* first performance was around 1620, approximately

twenty years after the other works examined so far.¹ Because of this, rather than depicting the growth of the city comedy out of citizen history, the play shows the extent to which the city comedy genre had become established in the theatres and the confidence the playwright could have that his audience was both familiar with the conventions of city comedy, and that they possessed a certain satirical sensibility linked to social awareness. By juxtaposing this newly established genre with the chronicle history play, Middleton manipulates theatrical categories in order to critique the seemingly authoritative religio-political narrative of monarchical power that James I espoused, but from the now far more powerful perspective of citizen ideology.

Hengist therefore demonstrates not so much the shift from history play to city comedy in the theatre as the way in which the relationship between the genres had come full-circle, allowing them to reinforce one another and to depict the ways in which religious, social, economic, and political identities complicated and often opposed each other in the Jacobean period in very different ways than they did in the Elizabethan. In the late sixteenth century, such identities existed in relation to a distinct English nationalism that possessed an affinity with the Virgin Queen herself and the monarchy as institutional head of the Church. But the further we progress into the age of the Stuarts, the more this ostensibly cohesive national identity breaks down and the more the middling sort especially begins to establish difference from and even opposition to the monarchy. As the citizenry's power grew and James' popularity waned, religious, social, economic, and political boundaries became even more fluid and unexpected. For instance, as Christopher Hill points out, many Catholic aristocrats actually opposed the

¹ See Grace Ioppolo, "Revision, Manuscript Transmission and Scribal Practice in Middleton's *Hengist, King of Kent, or, The Mayor of Queenborough*." *Critical Survey* 7.3, *Textual Shakespeare* (1995): 319-31, and R.V. Holdsworth, "The Date of *Hengist, King of Kent*." *Notes and Queries* (Dec 1991): 516-9, for evidence of the play's dating. The first extant printed version is from 1661, but two manuscripts can be confidently dated to c. 1620 and topical references in the play are from this period.

reinstitution of Catholicism in England, a stance contrary to what one might assume, because it might mean the reversion of their family lands, obtained after the Dissolution, to monastic use and thereby harm the family economically (43). Although James was at first welcomed with optimism, as the king who would continue to build on the Elizabethan Settlement and cultivate England's position as a powerful Protestant nation, by the second half of his reign there was significant dissatisfaction and discomfort with the nepotism and opulence of his court and his perceived intimacy with Catholic Spain.

Middleton's *Hengist*, then, highlights the corruption of James' court and its worrisome relationship with political and religious foreigners, particularly Catholic Spain, through the character of Vortiger and his relationship to the comic subplot. While Vortiger attempts to consolidate his rule by positioning himself as a true Christian king and seeking to control the various narrative threads of the play's plot, much in the way that James sought to capitalize upon the ideological work done by his predecessor, he fails in the face of persistent opposition from the citizenry. What could be, and should be according to Schoenbaum, a fairly straightforward history play is consistently interrupted by what is essentially a simplified city comedy happening in the background. *Hengist* thus challenges the Crown's claim to absolute religious or political power by disrupting the narrative of monarchical ideology through the injection of citizen voices. The parallel construction of the historical main plot and comic subplot mirrors the struggle between the monarchy and now far more powerful citizenry and demonstrates the power of historical and theatrical representation to both establish and to break down rigid ideologies.

The Protestant Historiographical Project

Middleton is working in a historiographical tradition that extended back at least to John Bale, and can be especially linked with the work of Matthew Parker during the early years of

Elizabeth's reign. It is important to establish the methods and goals of this scholarly tradition, particularly as it pertained to the Crown, because it was the narrative established by Parker and other Anglican writers and theologians which James sought to appropriate for the benefit of his own authority. This historiographical tradition and Parker's project sought to legitimize English Protestantism by establishing a historical precedent for it through antiquarian research, and particularly through study of the Anglo-Saxons, whose power and influence in England obviously predated the Reformation, and who might therefore offer evidence of Protestant doctrinal elements before Luther. The practice of conducting antiquarian research and constructing Protestant narrative histories was widespread, and also entered mainstream discourse through polemical writers like John Foxe and historians such as William Harrison, whose contributions to Holinshed's *Chronicles* provide much of Middleton's source material for *Hengist*.

But in England, the writer perhaps most influential and intimately connected with this narrative of a pre-Reformation Protestantism was Archbishop Matthew Parker. Parker's work sought to demonstrate, as he put it on the title page of his *Testimonie of Antiquitie* (1567), "the auncient fayth in the Church of England," that is, the existence of something resembling Protestant doctrine prior to Martin Luther. Even as Aelfric touts many of the teachings of Augustine of Canterbury, then, the fact that his works reveal glimmers of doctrine which resemble early modern Protestantism is highly significant for Parker. But, as Benedict Scott Robinson notes, the importance of this project was not so much in its accuracy as in its ability to establish a distinct narrative that would support the new English Church. So while Parker almost certainly uncovered contradictory material during his research, and while he allows for some problems with Aelfric's overall doctrine as demonstrated in the introduction to this chapter, his

work represents “a tendentious conflation of various texts” and places “less value on the integrity of the ancient texts than on their place in a restored and reconstructed history, a fantasy narrative of Englishness that could discover itself in Saxons and Britons” (Robinson 1079). Although Parker may have found inconsistencies, his goal was to explain or obscure them in service to the Anglican Church, of which he was an integral forefather.

Even before he became Archbishop of Canterbury under Elizabeth, Parker was known for his acute antiquarian impulse and his large collection of works gathered from former monasteries and remote parish churches. Having served as chaplain to Anne Boleyn and surviving Mary’s rule only through cunning deference, he was well aware of the kind of power old texts held if put to the right use. In addition to research assistants such as his secretary, John Joscelyn, who collaborated on most of Parker’s historical works, the archbishop had at his disposal an entire publishing team. As he described in a 1573 letter to Lord Burghley, “I have within my house in wages, drawers and cutters, painters, limners, writers, and bookbinders” (*Correspondence* 426), meaning that he had control over the entire editorial and publishing process of his works and therefore of the narrative they would tell. While his magnum opus would eventually be his *De antiquitate Britannicae ecclesiae* (1572), nearly all his works exhibit an interest in the history and religion of the Anglo-Saxons as they pertained to sixteenth-century English Protestantism; and the *Testimonie of Antiquitie* is of particular interest because of Parker’s commissioning of John Day, famous as the printer of Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments*, to cut and use the first-ever set of Anglo-Saxon movable type so that he could present the original text and his own English translation side by side.

Parker’s overall project was to establish an ancient precedent for English religious supremacy not through polemic or apocalyptic literature but through sound ecclesiastical

argument. Parker was more interested in rational debate than demonstrative emotional appeal, and his work therefore focused upon, as Robinson puts it, “the resistance of English ecclesiasts to foreign-imposed Catholic doctrine” especially where it was to be found in ancient authorities (1082). These “our predecessors” he wrote in a letter of 1560, “what [papal] tribunals did they ever own, when Augustine came hither from Rome, when they replied, they owed him [no loyalty], and would not be subject?” (*Correspondence* 111-2). Augustine therefore corrupted the Christianity of the ancient Britons, which accounts for the inconsistencies in Aelfric’s writings. Because of such inconsistencies, Parker is careful in the *Testimonie* to establish Aelfric’s authority before presenting his arguments, stating that he was “of such credite and estimation to the lyking of that age in which he liued, that all his writinges, and chiefly these his epistles, were then thought to contayne sounde doctrine” (11). Aelfric’s writings, Parker says, were “the common receaued doctrine,” both before his time, during his life, and after he lived, “even from him to the conquest” (17). Such writings were important historical markers to early modern theologians because they demonstrated, perhaps sometimes unconsciously, the conflict between the “receaued doctrine” of the Roman Augustine and the seeds of Protestantism.

The text printed and translated in the *Testimonie* by Parker was Aelfric’s “Sermon agaynst the bodely presence” (3) preached upon an Easter Sunday. As stated previously, the main argument of this sermon was for understanding the sacrament of Holy Communion as a symbolic gesture rather than as the literal presence of Christ’s body and blood. According to Aelfric, when Jesus bade the disciples to eat of his flesh and drink of his blood, “he bad them not eate that body which he was going about with,” but rather meant that through a spiritual understanding and acceptance of Christ, “he that tasteth it with beleaving hart, hath that eternall life” (45). Such a stance is of obvious importance to Parker, who points out in his introduction to

the translation that “wherof the Romanistes haue long made vaunte, to witte, their doctrine to haue continued many hundred yeares... Truely this their so great affirmation hath vttered vnto vs no truth,” as evidenced by Aelfric’s homily (18). In addition to the content of the sermon, Parker’s insistence on publishing it in both the original Anglo-Saxon and early modern English draws another important parallel between sixteenth-century Protestantism and early Anglo-Saxon Christianity. Parker’s translation does not merely adhere to the Protestant doctrine of providing the Gospel and other texts in the vernacular, but itself performs the position laid out by Aelfric himself, that “the priest shall say unto the people on Sondayes, and holydayes the sense of the Gospell in English [here, Anglo-Saxon]” and that they shall also teach them the Lord’s Prayer and Creed in their own tongue (79). The *Testimonie* thus ends with a full production and translation of both of these texts, underscoring that the Anglican Church resembles that of the Anglo-Saxons in not only doctrine, but practice.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of Parker’s work for the Elizabethan Settlement. His addition of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* (1563) to the *Book of Common Prayer* is perhaps the most obvious way in which he contributed to the firm establishment of the Anglican Church, but the historical works already mentioned had an important role in shoring up the legitimacy of that church. As Felicity Heal has argued, antiquarian research became the primary tool for legitimizing the various Protestant faiths—and monarchies—throughout the sixteenth century because one of the sharpest critiques came from “charges of novelty and subjectivism” (Heal 112). It was easy for Catholic writers to charge Protestants with creating scholarly convenience in claiming that Rome had usurped power from the “true church,” and because of this Protestant nations and their theologians had to find *proof* that their doctrine had in fact existed since before that of the Roman Catholic Church.

Middleton's *Hengist* certainly participates in this discourse, but it intervenes in that it also undercuts the connection which James sought to make between the Protestant origin narrative and the authority of the Crown. What writers like Foxe, Holinshed, and Parker shared was a desire to find a source and construct a narrative that was *unquestionable*, and by the seventeenth century both James and his parliament had begun to appropriate such a narrative in service to a particular ideology, monarchal or citizen. As Annabel Patterson points out, "[Holinshed's *Chronicles*] came from and were directed toward the already large and largely literate middle class," and were "conceived and executed by an alliance of bourgeois entrepreneurs, bookmen, and bookish persons, reform-minded clergymen of middling status" (Patterson xii). These are all examples of a very particular kind of citizen, one perhaps not representative of all facets of the citizenry, but certainly representative of those in power in the City. *Hengist* questions both this middle-class ideological stance and the monarchal one by interrogating the very idea of a "pure origin" for either religion or government. To be clear, by "questions" I do not mean "opposes." Certainly the vitriolic nature of Vortiger's abuses towards the citizenry and this citizenry's indirect critique of him in the subplot suggest that Middleton was more interested in advancing the voices of the middling sort in his play, but I would not go so far as to call him revolutionary. *Hengist* does not oppose the idea of monarchy, nor the theoretical connection of monarchy and Church; rather, it satirically challenges James' abuse of this connection in claiming absolute authority and manipulates theatrical genre in order to undermine the notion of any truly cohesive ideology or historical narrative. By choosing a moment in the deep Anglo-Saxon past, Middleton offers a historical narrative that complicates notions of original purity or absolute authority and their religio-political implications for the early seventeenth century.

The Ancient Faith and the Problem of Monarchy

Middleton's play presents the audience with several examples of early British kingship, each with its own strengths and problematic weaknesses, but none of Middleton's kings, not even the pious Constantius, offers an example of a perfect ruler. Kistner and Kistner identify *Hengist* as a history play on the grounds that the central theme is to set forth "a complete statement on kingship and its symbiotic relationship to the commonwealth" (148). They identify "lineal descent and goodwill to and from the people" as Middleton's "yardsticks" for good rule (149). Indeed, most political theorists in the early modern period would likely have agreed that it would be an ideal situation if both traits might be found in a single ruler. Constantius seems to represent this combination at the start of the play. He is the rightful heir to the throne by blood, being the eldest son of the late king Constantine. He is also, much to the ambitious Vortiger's dismay, the king that the commons want for themselves. Vortiger opens the first scene by complaining of "that wide throated Beast the Multitude" (1.1.1) who has "with their infectious acclamations / Poysoned my fortune," for they "will here haue none / As long as Constantins three sons Suruiue" (1.1.8-10).² When Vortiger then forces Constantius to take the crown, he tells him that it is both because he is "eldest son of Constantine" and "for the generall good" (44-5), emphasizing both Constantius' blood claim and what amounts to his popular election. What is more, Constantius is an overtly and unquestionably Christian king, having chosen a monastic life until duty forces him to return to the secular world of the court. Constantius would thus seem to

² Quotations are taken from R.C. Bald's 1938 edition of *Hengist*.

be the perfect king for the Britons, combining benevolence, bloodline, and piety in the ideal image of divine right; but as it turns out, his piety actually obstructs his good governance.³

Constantius' religious conviction makes him the most morally upstanding ruler the play offers, but it makes him a terrible king, a fact which Vortiger exploits. Constantius is unable to understand or to take seriously the very real complaints of his subjects. When a group of petitioners comes to court to offer suits which would improve their economic situations, Constantius is incredulous: "call yo^u these petitions / Why thers no forme of praier amongst em all" (1.2.94-5). The petitioners offer "a supplicacon for brass buttons" and complain of "a greate enormitie in woolle" and that "pastures rise to twopence an acre," (1.2.100-3), all pressing, worldly complaints which affect their trades and daily lives and with which Middleton's audience would have been sympathetic, perhaps even intimately familiar. But Constantius sends them to seek help from God, assuring them that He has a plan for everything and that "no violent storme lasts euer" (111). Even when they exclaim that "we are almost halfe vndone, the contry almost Beggerd" and express worries about their wives and children, Constantius sends them away so that he can return to his own prayers (114-25). But he is then immediately interrupted by Vortiger, who presents him with another problem that reveals the extent to which his piety is detrimental to the well-being of the kingdom. Constantius must wed and beget an heir, but he refuses even to entertain the notion, standing upon "a profest abstinence" that "hath sett a virgin sele vppon my Blood" (1.2.136-7): certainly not an attitude that bodes well for the future and security of the realm. While the play as a whole critiques Vortiger and his early modern

³ This was an idea that had been explored extensively by other early modern writers before Middleton. It was difficult to find a balanced monarch that could combine divine right, strict morality, *and* shrewd political knowledge and decisive action. Shakespeare's history plays had pretty thoroughly hashed out this issue without really coming to a conclusion; Middleton's Constantius puts us distinctly in mind of Shakespeare's Henry VI.

counterpart James far more harshly than Constantius, it is worth mentioning here that Constantius' celibacy links him firmly to another early modern ruler, Elizabeth. Constantius' failings are explicitly connected to his monasticism and religious conviction, and his failure to produce an heir, which, in the absence of his brothers creates a succession crisis that opens the door for a Christian but far from ideal ruler to succeed him, can certainly be read as a softer but direct criticism of Elizabeth, whose virginity enabled James to succeed to the throne.

Constantius' extreme piety thus complicates the perfect and intimate link between religion and the Crown that James sought to uphold. Elizabeth, whose reign became almost symbolic of the victory of Protestantism in England, was, like Constantius, ultimately a failure when it came to securing that victory. Further, Constantius presents a problem for the arguments of the sixteenth century historians such as Parker. Because the action of *Hengist* is definitively set before the coming of Augustine, the play would seem to suggest that Christianity had existed in Britain before Augustine's coming, and that he therefore corrupted it. Constantius' perfect faithfulness is a testament to the existence of the Christian religion in a "pure" form during the age of the Britons and Saxons, as is his association with Germanus and Lupus, whom Holinshed credits with ensuring the continued survival of Christianity in Britain (2:82). However, Constantius is a monk, in both Middleton's play and, interestingly, in both Foxe (2:135) and Holinshed (2:76); interestingly, given that both writers elsewhere accuse Augustine of introducing the monastic system in Britain, but then place his coming firmly after the life of Constantius, without seeming to notice the contradiction. If Constantius was indeed a monk before being forced to take the throne, then the nature of his Christianity is in question: is he evidence for an English Protestantism which can trace an origin back to the Saxons and even earlier, or does his piety contain Catholic elements that would disrupt the narrative for which the

likes of Foxe and Parker were advocating? I argue that it is the latter. Middleton's Constantius does not completely refute this story, but he troubles the idea of an alliance between Protestantism and monarchy, thereby upsetting both the Elizabethan authority established by Parker and the absolutism that James sought to appropriate from it.

The example which Middleton gives us of a more powerful and effective connection between early religion and the Crown also fails, but for different reasons. Vortiger presents a potent critique not just of the idea of a seemingly perfect Christianity in ancient Britain; he also represents Middleton's thinly (or perhaps not so thinly) veiled disapproval of James I and his court. Despite his obvious corruption and immorality, Vortiger is certainly still a Christian. His Christianity is insisted upon by the play, rather than simply assumed based upon his being a Briton and his association with Constantius' court. When Hengist first asks him for some land for he and his men to live upon in Britain, Vortiger refuses on the grounds that "y^e are strangers in religion Cheifly, / W^{ch} is y^e greatest alienation Can bee" (2.3.34-5). Even though we have seen his evil ambition, even though he has murdered Constantius by this point, he is redeemed here, if only momentarily, by his protection of Britain as a Christian land. Later, in the moment of his fall, even after they have confided in one another and committed truly heinous crimes together, Hersus' final insult as he kills Vortiger is to call him "Viper Christian" (5.2.161). Even in his final moments, even after all the terrible things he has done throughout the play, the audience is never allowed to forget that Vortiger is, in fact, a Christian Briton, no matter how closely he may seem to ally himself with the pagan Saxons.

The play makes it unclear whether this pagan alliance or his personal crimes contribute more to his eventual downfall, suggesting that corrupt rule and heathenism ultimately go hand in hand. When Vortiger is tricked and consequently defeated by Hengist, he demonstrates remorse

for the first time and admits that he has deserved “the noblest fruites & fairst requitalls” for the wrongs he has done, for “ambition, hell, mine owne vndooing Lust” (4.3.132, 141). He identifies this defeat as “of our owne raiseing,” and sees in it that “y^e murder of Constantius” and “y^e wrongs / of our late Queene” have come back to repay him (134-6). Here, Vortiger himself attributes this initial defeat to the sins that he has committed. Later, when he has been cornered upon his castle walls in the scene of his final destruction, Vortiger asks why his own people rise against him, to which a gentleman replies that they would have remained loyal, “If from that pagan woman, thoudst slept free / But when thou fledst from heauen we fled from thee” (5.2.71-2). Vortiger tries to shift the blame for this to Hersus and unburdens himself by confessing that it was he himself who raped his true wife Castiza, thereby saving her honor and freeing her to marry Aurelius at the end. This confession seems to be a last attempt to save himself from destruction and to assure his people that he remains a true Christian. Whatever his other crimes, this final act of confession seems meant to save himself, but of course it fails. Vortiger is designed to offer a warning to those who would use the pretense of religious conviction in order to strengthen personal power.

Vortiger’s connection to James I has been noted by several scholars. Samuel Schoenbaum has drawn a direct connection between the themes of Middleton’s play and the “sexual preoccupations” of the Jacobean court and society (182). Grace Ioppolo reads not just the themes but several of the actual events in the play as constructed upon “the more immediate political crises of the 1610s, including James’s conception of kingship” (“Sexual Treason” 90). Alastair Bellany, while not explicitly mentioning Vortiger, describes how by the 1610s, the Jacobean court had garnered a reputation as “a sink of corruption” that “worked upon the imaginations of dramatists, playgoers, and readers,” and identifies numerous ways in which court

politics ended up in Middleton's works (122-3). Bellany describes an image of the court where aristocrats and monarchs were "ruled by passion; where lust, greed, and ambition triumphed; where base men and unruly women slipped the bonds of patriarchal authority; where favorites dabbled in magic and demonic witchcraft, and succumbed to the lures of Antichristian Rome;...where poison...was king" (122): literally every one of the characteristics of the Jacobean court that he outlines shows up in *Hengist*. Ioppolo draws an explicit connection between *Hengist* and what was perhaps the most infamous political scandal of the 1610s, the Overbury affair and subsequent trial of Frances Howard. The affair was widely seen to be representative of the kind of lustfulness and immorality that the Jacobean court displayed, and perhaps, encouraged, and such a symbolically unscrupulous woman as Frances Howard might be likened to Roxena, daughter of Hengist and subsequent wife of Vortiger. "Roxena," Ioppolo says, "the whore masquerading as virgin who first emasculates her lover Hersus...and then cuckolds Hersus and eventually her husband, Vortiger, ruining her father in the process, represents Frances" ("Sexual Treason" 97), and Middleton's audience would have presumably recalled the spectacular scandal as they watched Roxena and many promiscuous female characters in other plays at the time. The wildly unpopular Spanish match is also invoked, as Vortiger's willingness to entertain foreigners of another, inferior religion awakens in his subjects the same fears as those called up by the idea of a Catholic queen. Foxe offers Vortiger as an example "to al ages & countreis, what it is, first to let in forreine nations into their dominion, but especially what it is for Princes to ioyne in mariage with infidels" (Foxe 136), and Holinshed similarly lists "this mariage and liberalitie of the king toward the strangers" and the consequent perceived decline of the Christian religion, "decaied by the enimies inuasion," as Vortiger's biggest mistake (2:78, 80). Middleton updates these warnings for a Jacobean audience. In

thrusting Vortiger's lust for and marriage to the pagan foreigner Roxena and his dismissal of the virtuous Castiza to the fore of the plot, he ensures that his audience cannot fail to make the connection.

Even if such overt parallels between Vortiger and James, or between Roxena and Frances Howard, cannot be definitively proven, it seems certain that Middleton's audience, aware of the generally corrupt, hedonistic, and factional reputation of the Stuart court and the king's uncomfortably tolerant stance toward Catholics, would have been likely to make certain comparisons on their own. The crooked but Christian Vortiger then, like Constantius, undercuts the notion of a Protestant origin narrative that can be positively identified with the monarchy. Elizabethan historians like Parker and Foxe had the advantage of a perfect figurehead for the new national identity, a persecuted princess whom they could fairly easily construct as the Protestant Queen who represented for them, and ultimately for the people, the glorious conclusion of many years of Protestant persecution. While Elizabeth's reign was by no means smooth, and her court was of course plagued by its own scandals (for instance, the death of Lady Amy Dudley), it became rather *difficult* for mainstream writers to portray the Virgin Queen, Gloriana herself, as anything but virtuous and true. Political and literary writers alike were more focused upon presenting her positively in the face of threats from both abroad and within, in shoring up the connection between the new Anglican Church and the monarchy; this is why even as Middleton characterizes Constantius in such a way that he might be connected with Elizabeth, he does not go so far as to condemn him, and in fact positions him as a martyr to Vortiger's ambition. James did not fare so well in the literary imagination. After starting out well, coming to the throne with a Protestant purpose that elicited works such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, which celebrated the descendants of Banquo, by the latter half of James' reign the Stuart court was

infamous for corruption, lust, overspending, and a suspect stance toward Catholicism, and so an English national identity built upon a foundation of staunch Protestantism and the rejection of the excesses and intrigues of other Catholic nations began to be dissociated from the Court. The Jacobean church, though Protestant, was, as Thomas Roebuck argues, “degraded and factionalized” in a way that the Elizabethan one had not been (120). Vortiger therefore represents this degradation, and his character suggests a negative commentary upon the king who would claim to stand as guarantor of the English Church whilst simultaneously entertaining connections with Catholic Spain. By the 1620s, commentary would become more than mere suggestion; Middleton’s own *A Game at Chess* would critique the Court’s ingratiating stance toward Catholic Spain so pointedly it would land him in jail. But *Hengist* makes the point more subtly; both Constantius and Vortiger present obstacles to Jacobean courtly attempts to uphold a dominant ideology that depended upon the king as the defender of the Protestant faith in England, when that king was so clearly flawed.

Ancient Authority and the Problem of Paganism

At the end of *Hengist*, we are left with a Christian king who would seem to fulfill the proper image of kingship associated with morality, action, and blood right, in the person of Constantius’ brother, Aurelius. Indeed, Kistner and Kistner argue that after Middleton has given his audience varied examples of improper rule, in the end Aurelius “represents the conventional restoration of order and also embodies the virtues which Middleton feels are necessary for good kingship” (156). Aurelius’ marriage to the wronged and redeemed Castiza also solidifies his rule through religious means, for Castiza’s intense piety and identification with “Truth, and by extension with the true Church” as demonstrated by Julia Briggs (“New Times” 119), makes her the allegorical opposite of Roxena, the pagan whore who corrupts Vortiger, as well as a sort of

bride of Christ (Vortiger even having dragged her from a nunnery to marry him). The final lines of the play, spoken by Aurelius himself, underscore the association of ancient Britain with Christian piety and his role as protector of that faith. He promises to devote himself to the “ffirmness [sic] / of Truths plantation in this Land for ever” (5.2.283-5). After condemning Hengist, he swears that having destroyed “this ambitious Pagan, so shall all / Wth his adulterate faith distaind, and soild, / either turne Christians, dye, or liue exild” (5.2.287-9). Aurelius is the final example of a proper Christian king, combining the faith of Constantius with the military prowess and political acumen of Vortiger, but presumably without Vortiger’s ambitions and imprudent trust of foreigners. He would seem, then, to mend the somewhat frayed tie between Crown and true Church.

But Aurelius presents a different problem, and undercuts not the ancient tie between Protestant Britain and monarchy set out by Parker and Foxe, but the foundations of the power of Parliament. The “perfect” Christian king cannot be perfect for every subject, and Aurelius, though good for the monarchy, represents an opposition to the old common law and parliamentary power, institutions that were strongly associated with the arguments and ideology of the Jacobean citizenry. By James’s reign, arguments for an Anglo-Saxon past that more closely resembled true “Englishness” than did present institutions had spread from theories of religion into theories of the law. Richard Helgerson has outlined some of the intense legal disputes taking place pretty nearly throughout the seventeenth century, especially the arguments presented during the first half of James’s reign by Francis Bacon, Edward Coke, and to some extent James himself.⁴ Essentially, Bacon, and King James in his *True Law of Free Monarchies*, argued that the king was above the law because the king in fact was the law, the one responsible

⁴ See Helgerson, “Writing the Law,” in *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. 63-104.

for writing it. They based this argument upon the codified laws of Justinian, who served as their example of a monarchical lawgiver in whom “absolute royal prerogative is expressed and confirmed” (Helgerson 75-77). This concept of civil law, established in writing by the government, was meant to overhaul England’s legal system in order to gain it the same respect as the more sophisticated systems of continental Europe. Coke, by contrast, argued that under such civil law “kings might easily degenerate into tyranny,” and that ancient English common law “provided a barrier against such degeneration and thus served to maintain the liberty of the subject” (Helgerson 69). Coke’s argument, that legal precedent for parliamentary representation and limited monarchy in Britain existed since long before William and the Domesday Book had established the authority of the present monarchy and aristocratic system, were met favorably by an educated and increasingly powerful citizenry that was becoming suspicious of James’s absolutist tendencies.

By the 1610s, opposition to absolutism had taken on another dimension and combined support for the Saxon law and representative political system with opposition to the high chivalry and supposed authority of King Arthur. Before the coming of the Anglo-Saxons, the Britons had much of their legal and political system handed down by the Romans who had first conquered the Celtic tribes of the British Isles, and since at least the beginning of the Tudor dynasty the monarchy had seized upon this fact. The Arthurian legend had long been the basis for aristocratic chivalry, and Henry VII, born in Wales, supposedly the ancient site of Camelot at Caerleon, played up this dynastic connection, even going so far as to name his first son Arthur. James, of course, claimed this same lineage. The legend of Arthur thus became closely tied to the monarchy, leaving the Anglo-Saxons as the originators of true English common law and the parliamentary system. In this way, then, Aurelius becomes as problematic for a seventeenth-

century bourgeois audience as Constantius or Vortiger. He is a decisive, Christian king with a strong sense of duty to his country, but his final words, so authoritatively delivered, are spoken as he stands before Vortiger's ruined castle in Wales. Both Foxe (136) and Holinshed (2:83) place Vortiger's castle in Wales, and so this is not a deliberate invention on Middleton's part. But his choice to write a play based upon this particular series of events in ancient British history *was* deliberate, and in light of popular views of civil law and the Arthurian legend at the time of his writing, the play raises important questions about monarchical authority and its supposed religious or legal basis. For not only do the final scenes of Vortiger's fall and Aurelius' ascension take place in Wales, romances portrayed Aurelius as the uncle of King Arthur; Constantius' and Aurelius' younger brother, Uther Pendragon, was Arthur's father.

In Middleton's play, the king who does bend to common law and supports the people's representation within a semi-limited monarchy is, in fact, Hengist himself. This is perhaps unsurprising, given that such ideas were intellectually located with the Anglo-Saxons and he is the only Saxon ruler we see in the play. Kistner and Kistner go so far as to call him "a democrat in a monarchical society" (154). His opening speeches support this idea: "The fame that a Man wins himselfe is best; / That he may Call his owne, hono^{rs} put to him / Make him noe more a man then his Cloathes doe" (2.3.20-2). "Mans true fame" he argues, "must strike from his owne deedes" (2.3.25), an argument for personal merit as superior to familial or purchased honors that would be at home in the mouth of any good citizen in the early seventeenth century. He further voices criticism of conspicuous expenditures. When his captain Hersus expresses excitement that Hengist's deeds in Britain will place him alongside many well-remembered "Emperours" who have "left there Carcasses as much in monument / as would erect a Colledge" (2.3.137-9), Hengist pointedly replies:

Theirs the fruite
 Of their religious shewes too, to lye rotting
 Vnder a Million spent in gold and marble
 When thousandes left behind dyes without shelter
 Haueing nor house nor food. (2.3.140-4)

Hengist is only introduced into the play at the very end of Act II Scene 2. These sorts of sentiments therefore constitute the audience's first impression of him and are clearly calculated to establish him as a man of the people.

Hengist's direct interactions with commoners in the play further emphasize his respect for the people and his limitations as a king. Once he is installed in Kent, he is informed that "a Company of townsmen" needs to speak with him in order to have him settle a disagreement between them (3.3.19-22). He invites them to enter immediately, declaring that "twere noe safe wisdom in a riseing Man / to slight of such as these, nay rather these / are y^e foundation of a Lofty worke" (3.3.26-8). No ruler can "build without them," for "he that ascends vp to a Mountaines topp / must first begin at foote" (3.3.29-31). This acknowledgment of the commons' power and awareness that the monarch derives his power from the assent of the people was not new to historical drama or indeed to early modern political theory, though Hengist's explicit articulation of this concept is important in light of Vortiger's clear disdain for his people. For Hengist, the people are not merely subjects; they are the foundation of his power in Kent. The speech is particularly poignant when compared with Constantius' refusal to hear petitions, already described, and Vortiger's obvious contempt for "that wide throated Beast the Multitude" (1.1.1). Later in the play when the same group of citizens who is attempting to see Hengist in this scene seeks an audience with Vortiger simply to bring him wedding gifts, he throws them out of Court almost before they have entered: "Forbeare yo^r tedious and ridiculous duties / I hate em as I doe y^e rotten rootes of you / you inconstant rabble" (4.1.15-7). Treatment of and respect for the

rights of the commons, then, becomes as much a part of Vortiger's downfall as his ambition and lust, even if it is not identified as such by him, and direct comparison with Hengist highlights both the fault in Vortiger and virtue in Hengist.

The issue about which the townsmen of Queenborough have come to speak with their new lord is the election of their mayor. There is such division in the town over the election that they have been unable to choose one and they present the problem and the reasons for it to Hengist, hoping that he will "being Earle of Kent...part y^e fraye" (3.3.96-7). Essentially the confused and frustrated townsmen have decided to succumb to noble prerogative rather than continue arguing over the issue. They present the various merits and faults of each man seeking to become mayor, but after listening for a while Hengist interrupts to ask "But why to me is this election offerd / The Chooseing of a Maior goes by most voices" (3.3.150). He then, rather than choosing a man, uses his status to order them to come to a consensus and leaves while they deliberate (162). Hengist's expression of such important aspects of citizen ideology and his respect for the commons' representative sovereignty directly associate constitutional ideals with the only Anglo-Saxon ruler that the play offers; in this way he is a better king than even Aurelius.

However, a problem arises with respect to religion. Just as the play insists upon even the terrible Vortiger's Christianity, so it keeps the audience ever conscious of the "democrat" Hengist's paganism. By no means was the parliamentary or citizen stance in the early modern period an atheistic or pagan one; indeed, as readings of Holinshed's *Chronicles* and scholars like Margot Heinemann and Swapan Chakravorty have shown, citizen ideology was associated intimately with an English Calvinist version of Protestantism. Hengist's paganism, then, significantly complicates the notion of him as champion of the people and parliamentary

representation. It is Vortiger's main reason for not wanting to give him land in Kent in exchange for his services to the Crown, and at the end it is Aurelius' main reason for condemning him. Even the commons who otherwise seem to love him are carefully aware of this fact, with Symon pointing out that Hengist was "neuer Kirsond" (5.1.46). Even though it is Hengist who has overthrown the tyrant Vortiger and driven him to a remote castle in Wales, his religion makes him unworthy to be the play's ultimate hero.

Once this major fault in Hengist is identified and allowed to color the audience's perception of him, several of his other faults come to the fore. He is, regardless of the popularity of the political sentiments he brings with him, an invader. This is a choice made by Middleton. Foxe says that Vortiger "did send ouer for the aide of the Saxons" in putting down rebellion (131), focusing on the wrong committed by Vortiger rather than Hengist. Holinshed similarly reports that he sent "into Germanie for the Saxons to come to their aid" (2:77). But Holinshed also offers an alternative story of passing interest: "Some haue written that the Saxons were not sent for, but came by chance into the Ile," for there was "an ancient custome among the English Saxons a people in Germanie...that when the multitude of them was so increased, that the countrie was not able to susteine and find them," the young men would draw lots and some would be sent to find new settlements. It merely chanced that around this time a group of Saxons was sent forth and landed in Britain, and took advantage of Vortiger's position to secure their own (Holinshed 2:77). Foxe and Holinshed both hold to the version where Vortiger summoned the Saxons, but Middleton chooses this alternative account for his play. In the first dumb show Hengist and Hersus "with others," "Draw Lotts and hang them vp / with Ioy, soe all depart" (D.S.1.3-4). This establishes the Saxons, even before Hengist's speech about a man's merit defining him more than empty conferred honors, as an invading force, one which has left their

homeland with the express purpose of conquering another. When the Saxons meet Vortiger, then, the audience should in fact *not* be swayed by Hengist's speeches; he is there to trick the Britons and colonize them from the start.

Hengist's and the Saxons' role as foreign tricksters is developed throughout the play. His famous swindling of Kent from Vortiger by asking for as much land "as yond poore hide will Compasse" (2.3.40) and then trimming the hide into fine ribbons to encircle a huge plot of ground makes for a wonderfully dramatic trick. But the ease with which an invading pagan outsmarts a Christian ruler should also be troubling. Roxena's fraud similarly draws a parallel between her dishonesty and her paganism. After Vortiger has raped his own blindfolded wife Castiza in a horribly twisted version of a bed trick, he stages a situation where she will have to confess publicly to being dishonored, thereby allowing Vortiger to set her aside and marry Roxena. He asks each of the women at court to say whether they have ever been with a man besides their respective husbands, and Roxena at first panics. In an aside to Hersus, her lover, she worries, "What if he should Cause me to swear too" (4.2.210). Hersus reminds her, "Why foole, they sweare by that we worship not / So yo^u may sweare yo^r heart out, and nere hurt yo^r selfe" (213-4). Roxena then, of course, confidently lies about her chastity while Castiza is forced by her own morality to admit to being raped, setting in motion the series of events that will ultimately lead to Vortiger's downfall. His ultimate end, then, is tied not just to his own ambition and lust but to the wily heathenism of the Saxons.

But there is a sense in which Middleton's audience would have had to experience conflicted feelings about the seemingly opposed British and Saxon characters onstage, for both groups had firm places in the English family tree by the early modern period. Lucy Munro has pointed this out with respect to language. Hengist's defeat of Vortiger on the Salisbury plain,

supposed in Middleton's time to be the event memorialized by Stonehenge, is of course yet another example of the dishonest Saxon methods. But it is also a moment where, as Munro puts it, "temporal distance is at once asserted and collapsed" ("Anachronistic Aesthetics" 735). Hengist's code word for the Saxons to draw their hidden daggers and slaughter the unarmed Britons, "Nemp yo^r sexes" (4.3.52), is the only example of the use of Old English on the early modern stage (Middleton found the phrase in Holinshed). Whereas playwrights commonly used foreign languages (or garbled versions thereof) to assert otherness or difference, this foreign language used by an invading force against the native Britons is actually English, and would create what Munro calls a moment of "aural dissonance" where the audience's sympathies are divided (748). It is the moment of Hengist's deepest treachery, shouted across the stage in a language the audience could not understand, marking him as foreign, pagan, and deceiver all at once. And yet, the Saxons themselves were by this time a prominent part of the early modern historical imagination, and the treachery is carried out against the deplorable usurper Vortiger.

The play thus leaves its audience deeply conflicted and ultimately refuses to offer a clean ending or hero that would uphold an origin narrative in support of any ideology. Even as it presents a thoroughly corrupt Vortiger with distinct parallels to James I, it offers little in the way of positive alternatives. Hengist, though loved by the commons, is also explicitly characterized by dishonesty and paganism, and Aurelius, though a Christian, seems to hold little respect for the voice of the people. None of these men is perfect, but Vortiger's central role and the depth of his corruption and brutality make him the primary target of the audience's scorn. By tracing his attempts to control political and religious narratives, what the play demonstrates is that a narrative's very constructedness is its weakness. Historians had been becoming more and more skeptical of the notion of historical truth throughout the sixteenth century because of the ease

with which the chronicles might be exposed or challenged with contradictory information. An ideology that depends upon its narrative being unquestioned and all opposing ones being disproven will always be susceptible to critique. Such was the situation of Anglo-Saxon origin myths of both Church and State in the early Jacobean period. As scholars such as Hill, Heinemann, and Chakravorty demonstrate, English Protestantism and parliamentarianism quite often went hand in hand in the early seventeenth century in contrast to a perceived opposing alliance of idolatry and absolute monarchy, but they did not *always* do so and certainly never in a single, precise way that can be definitively examined. Political sympathies could never be firmly aligned with religious ones, and even if they could, as Ian W. Archer rightly says, the “real fluidity of religious positions in Jacobean London” makes it impossible to pin down identity in a culture that was “in the process of redrawing the boundaries” (Archer 135, 143). *Hengist* does not speak to the truth of one origin narrative or another, but instead deconstructs the very notion of absolute narrative truth and monarchical dominance in a world as fluid and ambiguous as early modern England.

In the face of a dominant ideology which sought to uphold itself by controlling historical narrative, Middleton suggests the theatre as a potential site of opposition by effecting a citizen’s critique of an absolutist king in thoroughly theatrical terms. Unlike ideology, which must reify a particular narrative “truth” in order to maintain itself, the power of theatrical representations is their very refusal of a definite truth, for they work by positing relationships between mere observation and perception, between art and audience, and are meant to be interpreted rather than accepted. The commercial theatre was the ultimate site of historical and social representations and the critical power they held at the turn of the seventeenth century, as the monarchy itself acknowledged. Plays were constantly being censored for political content that hit too close to

home. When Elizabeth (perhaps) uttered the now famous question, “I am Richard the second, know ye not that?” in response to the production of Shakespeare’s play on the eve of the (unsuccessful) Essex rebellion, she was worried that the play would violate the “Tudor myth” and the carefully constructed narrative of Protestant England; the very construction of the question as a direct metaphorical parallel between herself and Richard demonstrates that the play was dangerous for the way it represented, materially and bodily upon the stage, *alternative* narratives, and by extension an alternative monarch. Playwrights are not bound by the linear constructions of history in the way that historians are. As Lucy Munro writes, “they draw on a variety of metatheatrical and presentational effects, producing a dramaturgy that is linguistically and aesthetically disjunctive, generically ambiguous, and remarkably fluid in its treatment of temporality” (“Anachronistic Aesthetics” 738). Middleton’s mixing and layering of genres in *Hengist, King of Kent* is therefore the source of the play’s real aesthetic power. The play is not a failure because it does not provide a neat ending or unified plot that perpetuates an ideological narrative; instead its power is in its deliberate refusal to do so and especially the way that this undermines the dominant narrative of the Crown.

The Clown Sets off the King: Middleton’s Theatrical Critique

Middleton’s play celebrates itself as a representation of reality from its very start. Before Vortiger enters complaining about the commons, the play opens with a chorus delivered by Raynolph, “Munck of Chester,” which amounts to a brief meditation on the relationship between history, truth, and theatre that prepares the audience to receive the performance in a kind of metahistorical and metatheatrical light. First, the person of Ranulf Higden himself represents this mindset. A medieval chronicler famous in the early modern period for his *Polychronicon*, the “character” of Raynolph immediately primes the audience to receive a history play, but to do so

from a position of temporal and aesthetic distance. Second, Raynulphe's words themselves draw both a connection and boundary between the past and present. He reminds the audience that "Fashions that are now Calld new / Haue been worne by more then yo^u, / Elder times haue vsd y^e same" (Chor. 1.11-3), emphasizing the cyclical nature of history and underscoring the idea that anything used at present in order to uphold a particular idea has probably been similarly used in the past to support the same, or perhaps even competing ideas. His words present the play's understanding of history as *story*, passed down and repeated and reimagined, so that Middleton's audience is prepared to view the play as historical, but effectively warned not to accept it as Truth. This is accentuated by the fact that Middleton's Raynulphe seems aware of himself as a historical representation. He says that he shall produce what "best may please this round faire ring" (Chor. 1.5) in the hopes that he can "wyn the grace of too poore howres" (8). This Raynulphe is not a chronicler but an actor, and not just in the sense that he is played by one but in the sense that the *character* has been written as self-aware of his stage presence.

Raynulphe the Munck features four more times throughout *Hengist*, three of which appearances are accompanied by a dumb show that he narrates. What is interesting about these dumb shows is that they do not merely move the plot or set up a kind of "argument" for the scenes to follow; they each, in fact, provide context or prior knowledge for the audience that is not otherwise offered by the play. In this way the dumb shows and Raynulphe consistently establish dramatic irony by giving the audience knowledge that the characters onstage do not all have. The audience is therefore induced to watch the subsequent scenes critically, knowing what they know, rather than allowed to passively enjoy the performance. The dumb shows include such information as the impending landing of the Saxons on Britain's shores two full scenes before they do so, as well as the already mentioned fact that the Saxons came of their own

volition, rather than being summoned by Vortiger (D.S. 1); the murder of Constantius by two of Vortiger's hirelings, a piece of information established nowhere else in the play's dialogue or action (D.S. 2); the deposition of Vortiger and installment on the throne of his son Vortiner, Vortiner's murder by Roxena, and the setup of Hengist's plan to trick Vortiger on Salisbury Plain (D.S. 3). The use of elements like Raynolph and the dumb shows is not just for aesthetic effect, but continually reinforces the audience's distance from the action with the result of disrupting any narrative unity that the play might otherwise have had. They remind the audience constantly that this is an artistic rendering of probable events, a theatrical representation, and not some kind of historical truth. The play makes no pretense about being historically accurate or straightforward, and instead actually uses its own unsettledness as a way to effect its critique of the dominant monarchal ideology.

But the use of such devices as Raynolph or the dumb shows is neither the only way nor the most powerful way in which Middleton's play presents its theatrical critique of the monarchy. The dramatic device most creatively used to break down the ideological narrative of the absolute monarch Vortiger is the comic subplot, the story of Symon the Tanner and the Queenborough elections. The importance of this subplot has been either missed or dismissed by some critics. Heinemann attempts to explain its presence by positing it as a topical allusion to the actual disputed parliamentary elections and appointments in Queenborough, Kent, around the composition of *Hengist* (146), but ultimately finds the connection with the main plot "tenuous" at best, and "too slight for the parody to be effective" (145). The comic scenes effectively become, for Heinemann, a failed attempt at tragicomedy on Middleton's part, a generic experiment that just didn't work. Samuel Schoenbaum gives the subplot even less critical attention, remarking almost in passing that "several scenes of comic buffoonery are devoted to

the amiable tanner” (188) before continuing his discussion of whether *Hengist* fits into the chronicle history play tradition. These kinds of readings miss the actual purpose of the Symon subplot. The subplot is meant to be jarring, is meant to be anachronistic, in order to, as Thomas Roebuck argues, “comment on and reinforce” the historical aspects of the main plot (Roebuck 120).

The subplot stands out so sharply and distinctly from the main plot not because Middleton has failed to adequately integrate them but because the subplot’s *purpose* is to disrupt the supposed historical authenticity of the main plot. It does this not merely by commenting upon the historical plot or drawing parallels with it, but by mixing theatrical genres in such a way that the socially critical aspects of city comedy bleed into and draw out the contingency of historical fact in the history play. Symon the Tanner and his plot are deliberately anachronistic, but not just for the purposes of “comic buffoonery.” In a particularly apt comparison, Gary Taylor remarks that “like Falstaff’s tavern, Simon’s Queenborough vividly and anachronistically yokes the audience’s living world to a lost historical past” (56). Like Shakespeare’s Eastcheap, Middleton’s Queenborough challenges, through both direct critique and suggestive juxtaposition, the posturing of kings who depend upon historical narrative for their ideological power. Much as Falstaff serves to undermine political and ideological power that depends upon controlling the official narrative in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* plays, the wildly anachronistic and structurally disruptive story of Symon the Tanner raises similar questions about the foundations of that power. But unlike Shakespeare in the 1590s, Middleton has a cache of new theatrical devices and a new socially aware genre upon which to draw for his critique. By 1620, city comedy was no longer an emergent genre but a widely popular one whose conventions had become established by the likes of Dekker, Marston, Jonson, and of course Middleton himself. The subplot is

Middleton's injection of city comedy elements into a purported tragical-history play. This has the effect not of producing a nicely unified tragicomedy, but of drawing in an audience made up of the middling sorts, who had already become used to the socially satirical conventions of city comedy by this point, and then using those familiar conventions to reinforce the critique of historical narrative that the main plot is already making. By using city comedy's familiar characteristics within the larger setting of a history play, Middleton is using theatrical genre itself to bring citizen consciousness to bear upon the monarchical use of history to construct the "origins" of religious and political authority.

In Act 5, as the newly-elected Symon is preparing to host Hengist for a feast in his home, a company of players passes by and is auditioned to potentially perform during the feast. The presence of a "fictional" company of players upon the stage, played by the actual company and surrounded by their fellow actors who represent Symon, his clerk, and followers, of course immediately sets up the scene as metatheatrical, built upon layering theatrical performances. One of the players introduces the troupe and their abilities: "We are anything sir: Comedians Tragedians / Tragicomedians, Come-tragedians, pastorallists / humorists, Clownists & saterists" (5.1.79-81). The list seems important in that it includes "tragicomedians" and "saterists," genres especially on trend in Middleton's moment, but also in that it celebrates the actors' and the theatre's ability to represent multiple types, events, and roles, emphasizing fluid variety over specialty or classical forms. For this is what *Hengist* is doing as well, and as the players are to Symon in this scene, so Symon's plot is to the historical one in the rest of the play. Simon remarks, as he works with the players to choose a suitable play for the feast, that while "som talke of things of state" is generally thought good for the stage, "theirs nothing in a play to a Clownes part" (5.1.134-5): "y^e King showes well But he sets of y^e King" (137). These lines

establish definitively what has been only hinted at or suggested through the action so far: the clown, of course, is Symon himself, and he “sets off” the king in the main plot of *Hengist*. As Julia Briggs puts it, the Symon subplot “parallels and comments on the struggle for power in the main plot” (“New times” 115). The question is, for which king does Symon provide the foil? Because of their affinity and the interconnectedness of their stories throughout the play, many critics have attempted to read parallels between Symon and Hengist. Heinemann refers to the “Hengist-Simon parallel” several times (147). Anne Lancashire draws an extended comparison between them and their similar mistakes, arguing that both ultimately meet their downfall because of their ambition and pride (235). It is true that the two are integral to each other’s success: Hengist establishes Thong Castle with a hide purchased from Symon, and Symon is elected mayor through proceedings facilitated by Hengist. But I would argue, as Briggs does, that his “initial success” and “subsequent humiliation” actually parallels “the initial success of Vortiger and his deception by the Saxons” (116). It is true that Symon parallels Hengist in some ways, but the overall likability of Hengist because of his overt democratic beliefs, despite his paganism, makes him an unlikely target for the main thrust of Middleton’s satire. Vortiger, whose person and court recall that of James I, is a far more powerful site of criticism. What is more, it is not simply their shared “initial success” and later humiliation that draws a line from Symon to Vortiger but the specific way in which Middleton portrays these events, for he offers an explicit critique of Vortiger through Symon using standard and recognizable elements of city comedy.

When we first meet Symon he is a journeyman tanner, working and living in the house of a master. But, as he notes, his master is recently deceased: “I serue my Mistris. I am a Masterlesse man s^r, shees now a widdow, and I am y^e foreman of her tannpitt” (2.3.68-70). This

initial description of his social situation becomes important later when it is revealed just how he is able to run for mayor in so short a time. When the Barber comes to Hengist to entreat him to intervene in the election, he informs both Hengist and the audience that Symon has “got his M^{rs} widdow...a rich tanners wife, she has sett him vpp, he was her foreman a long time in her other husbandes dayes” (3.3.108-100). The upstart journeyman profiting by his master’s house and work was by this point nothing new. Symon, having “shott vp in one night wth Lyeing wth thy M^{rs}” (3.3.169) recalls for us Quicksilver, Face, and Mosca, that category of ambitious underling ready to practice obsequious deference and sly cunning within the same scene.⁵ Vortiger similarly fits this description. From the first scene he is plotting both his own rise and the downfall of his “master,” Constantius. Faced with the reality that the commons will never accept any king other than the sons of Constantine, Vortiger resigns himself to “seeke the meanes / to grow as close to one as policye can” (1.1.15-6), and later after he realizes the extent of Constantius’ aversion to ruling, Vortiger vows he “will seeke all wayes / to vex authoritye from him, I will weary him / as lowe as the Condition of a hound...makeing my maske my zeale” (1.1.189-91, 194). While there is certainly no proof that Symon actually plotted his master’s death, the Barber’s noting that “he was her foreman a long time in her other husbandes dayes” does raise questions about the extent of his affair with his mistress. The familiar face of the upstart servant casts itself back upon Vortiger.

Symon’s rising by his mistress and her money similarly parallels Vortiger’s solidification of his power, if only temporarily, through his marriage to Roxena. Just as the tanner’s widow provided Symon with the material means and the public status to run for mayor, so Vortiger’s marriage seems to secure the Saxons’ loyalty. Additionally important is the moral character of

⁵ Chapman, George, Ben Jonson, and John Marston, *Eastward, Ho!* (1605); Jonson, Ben, *The Alchemist* (1610); Jonson, *Volpone* (1606).

these women. Like the minion who rises at his master's cost, the upwardly mobile, ambitious woman who is willing to rise by any means necessary, including sexual promiscuity, is a fixture of city comedies. Margery Eyre provides an early, more tame example, carried on by the likes of Mistress Touchstone and her daughter Gertrude; the type reaches a particularly comedic climax in Middleton's own *Dame Allwit*.⁶ Symon's new wife, it is reported, married him not for love but because he had gained the attention and favor of Hengist. When the Glover and Barber tell Hengist of Symon's marriage, the Glover clarifies that yes, it is the same Symon "that sold yo^r Lo^{pp}: the Hide" (3.3.106), to which the Barber adds "That's all his glory s^r, he gott his M^{rs} widdow by't presently after" (108-9). The marriage came *after* Symon had ingratiated himself with the new earl of Kent, clearly demonstrating that even if something had gone on between him and his mistress previously, her choice to actually marry him was motivated purely by what she could now gain from the match. Roxena is, of course, entirely unapologetic about her sexual and political scheming. In a confrontation with Hersus, who does not want to lose his lover to Vortiger, she reassures him, "I have Cast for this" (3.1.27), for "my ascension / to Dignitie is but to wafte y^e vpward" (68-9). She clearly has no remorse for her affair with Hersus or her ensnaring of Vortiger, vowing that "If lost virginitie Can wyne such a day / Ile haue noe daughter but shall learne my way" (86-7). While Roxena is quite an extreme case, there is no doubt of the connection the play draws between her and Symon's mistress and the string of ambitious women in city comedies.

The way in which Symon and Vortiger fall is as pertinent as the way they rise, for the oblivious idiot cozened of his money and standing is as much a type as the upstart subordinate: Jonson's Cokes is thoroughly humiliated, while Sir Walter Whorehound is blindsided at the end

⁶ Dekker, Thomas, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599); Chapman, Jonson, and Marston, *Eastward, Ho!*; Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613).

of *Chaste Maid* in a scene that makes the Allwits look almost as clever as Roxena.⁷ Vortiger, of course, is cheated repeatedly by Hengist, both in the erection of Thong Castle in Kent and upon Salisbury Plain. But it is Symon's humiliation that truly underscores the role of the theatre in dramatizing and thereby exposing the ideological construction of representations in real life, in the scene where the "players" turn out to be bandits in disguise, when "the difference between dramatic representation and reality is thus erected only to be collapsed" ("New times" 121). Here a purported troupe of players, actually robbers using the personae of actors as their criminal disguise (a profession whose business it is to portray alternative identities), performs a play within the *Hengist* play, as part of a comic subplot which is itself comparing the tricking of Symon to the tricking of Vortiger by Hengist in the main plot. The mental gymnastics Middleton performs here are astounding, but the layering of elements, the sequence of moments where the audience is repeatedly alerted that there are multiple examples of theatricality at play, has the ultimate effect of reminding them that the entire play is a representation of their own past and present. Symon here literally becomes the clown that sets off the king, as it is his *inability* to understand the processes of narrative construction and deconstruction through performance that helps facilitate the audience's awareness.

At first, Symon seems aware of the theatre as a fictional representation, even excited by it; it is only later in the scene that he becomes so engrossed that he forgets it is only a performance of real life. His followers express concern that the play the cheaters are going to perform may be too violent, both for themselves and for presentation to Hengist, but Symon dismisses their concerns by pointing out that the so-called violence is always an act: "he that's poysond, is allwayes made priuy too it" (5.1.152). He demonstrates knowledge of some

⁷ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair* (1614); Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*.

theatrical practices and names a few plays he has seen, and so he truly does at first seem to be just a mayor choosing a show to entertain his king. Further, he pokes fun at the puritan Oliver, using the theatre as his tool for teasing him, because while “for rebels there are many Deaths; but sure y^e only way / to execute a Puritan is seeing of a Playe” (5.1.184-5). This is an informed gesture on Symon’s part toward the puritan critique of the theatre as a dangerous representation of life which could only lead to lying, deceit, and idolatry. Here the action invokes yet another element of the city comedy genre, the taunting of a self-righteous Puritan.⁸ It should be noted here that Oliver represents the particular type of Puritan that Heinemann describes when she explains why the supposedly puritan Middleton would have joined in such theatrical mocking. After the writing of *Hengist*, “Puritan” came to mean a person who stood in religious and political opposition to the absolutist Stuarts as Charles became inextricably linked with High Anglicanism and tolerance of Catholics; but in the first two decades or so of the seventeenth century, the term “puritan” was often used by traditional English Protestants to denote hypocritical separatists who were merely sowing the seeds of dissent in much the way that Catholics were suspected of doing. Oliver fits this bill neatly, calling upon the authority of “all of the Bretheren” in admonishing Symon to release him and wailing about “tribulations” when the play is set before him (171-2, 183).

But Symon quickly loses himself in the cheaters’ show and seems to forget that all narratives are constructed on the basis of some kind of motivation; he receives the show as a pleasing fiction. Of course, this is precisely what Middleton’s audience must *not* do, and Symon here serves as a kind of defamiliarization tool, offering them a ridiculous character from whom they will seek to distance themselves, therefore ensuring they will not be taken in. The tricking

⁸ Middleton, *The Puritan* (1606); Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, in the characters of Busy and Overdo.

of Symon thus serves as instruction to Middleton's audience, warning them not to be deceived in the same way, encouraging critical awareness. In his excitement about the play, Symon misses the initial cue that the "players" are going to cozen him when the "Clown" remarks that "They say thers a foolish thing Cald Cheaters abroad, / that will gull any yeamons son of his purse" (5.1.217-8). Of course, the Clown is referring to himself and the other cheaters having come to gull Symon, but Symon is so entertained by the show that he is unable to perceive the motivation behind the so-called players' use of this particular representation. They drop further clues, discussing how the best cheats "show like naturall things & least suspected" (229); again, Symon perceives no threat. He finally goes so far as to criticize the idiot "Clown" who would fall for such tricks (again forgetting that the Clown is an actor who is, as he himself noted, "made priuy too it") and finally insists upon playing the Clown himself, which of course is precisely what the cheaters have been gulling him to do from the start, and the role in which Middleton needs to cast him in order to draw the parallel with the main plot. Even when Symon is *in* the role of Clown, he is blinded; he becomes enraged when people laugh at him, asking his clerk to take note of those who laugh, "that when I haue don I may Committ em, lett me see who dares doot now" (305-6). In performance, this would become an especially metatheatrical moment; while there is no stage direction, one can imagine Symon gesturing out toward the actual audience as he asks his clerk to take note, blending them with the "audience" of his followers and townspeople onstage.

The action of Symon's cozening scene prepares the audience to critically understand the next and final scene of the play in which Hengist, Vortiger, Hersus, and Roxena all meet their tragic ends. The abrupt flip from comic subplot to the tragic ending of the serious historical material of the main plot would seem at first to support the idea that Middleton was somehow

struggling to construct a dramatically unified play. However, it in fact achieves his goal perfectly, for the play's calling attention to itself as a construction in this way underscores the theatre's power to deconstruct real ideological narratives. The destruction of Vortiger becomes not simply his factual death as reported by Holinshed, an endpoint for the historical narrative, but a moral downfall, as described by the Gentleman: "see sin needes / Noe more distruction then it breedes / In it owne Bosome" (5.2.107-9). Vortiger's death is the result of his poor judgment and inability to perceive Hengist's performances as performances, in the same way that Symon is humiliated by his inability to understand the difference between the "players" and cheaters. The constant duplication of simple versions of the city comedy elements in the subplot by the main historical plot is essentially, then, the use of theatrical genre to implement the citizen's critique of a king. Both comedy and history are representations of reality that can serve a moral or ideological purpose, and by critically juxtaposing them *Hengist* discards the notion of historical narrative as presenting Truth.

Conclusion

Middleton's juxtaposition of city comedy and history play therefore highlights their respective correlation to ideological stances that were becoming increasingly oppositional to each other in Middleton's England. The hostility between Vortiger and the commons in the play is evocative of the early modern commons' increasingly suspicious stance toward James I. The James-like Vortiger attacks his citizens in highly anachronistic terms that position *Hengist's* commons from the outset as members of the early modern guilds and trades. "This forked rable / with their infectious acclamations" is cursed, according to Vortiger, with an inability to think for themselves; their obedience is as uncritically ingrained as "theire professions / that all there life time hamer out one way / Beaten into their pates with seauen yeares Bondage" (1.1.7-8, 12-4).

The dichotomy of crown and citizen is reinforced throughout the play by the tradesmen who are refused suit by Constantius (1.2.90-121), Symon's role in helping Hengist trick Vortiger, and Vortiger's spurning of the "inconstant rabble" who come to honor him at his own wedding (4.1.17). At every turn, the monarch Vortiger is made to feel his underestimation of and lack of respect for the commons painfully. Middleton does not do away with monarchy, installing Aurelius as king at the end of the play. But his treatment of Vortiger, so blinded by power that he forgets from whence it truly comes, might be read as an admonition to a similarly blinded king in Middleton's present.

But it is important to note that the commons themselves are not presented as a unified front. The event around which the entire subplot turns is a contested mayoral election, wherein the "corporation" has been torn asunder (3.3.57). The Barber laments to Hengist that in the problem of the election, he can do nothing to help, for he works upon the hair but "y^e buissnes s^f / Lyes all about y^e head" (54-5). The Taylor is similarly frustrated, for the town "tis peecd vp of two factions," "patchd" so that he cannot "stich" it back together (72-4). This is because the problem lies not in the trappings of hair or clothing, but in the "corporation" itself, the head and body beneath. It is of course significant that the word the two men choose to describe the town is not "body," but "corporation," for although the words might elsewhere be interchangeable, in this case the word "corporation" in the mouths of guild tradesmen demonstrates their understanding of the problem as not merely personal but economic, one that if not resolved will touch the trades and guild organizations upon which the entire citizenry stands. As Thomas Roebuck notes, "guilds are set against one another here, particularly on religious grounds" (129) as the "Rebel Oliver's" primary fault is his puritanism. This factionalism within the citizen characters of the comic subplot is vital to a full understanding of the play's critique of the use of

historical narrative in service to present ideology. It is not enough that the play critiques James' ideological construction of power based on a Protestantism that his policies seem to threaten; such a final position would suggest that narrative might still be used in support of other forms of power. Instead, *Hengist* also deconstructs the notion of unity within citizen ideology, the kind of homogenous power, opposed to the monarchy, which parliamentarians and middle-class Protestants would shortly seek to construct through ideological narratives such as the Norman Yoke. It is the very concept of ideological and narrative purity that is challenged in *Hengist*, and it is the theatre and metatheatricality that effect this challenge through theatrical representation.

Middleton would have been especially aware of the force that theatricality could have in cultural discourse due to his writing of Lord Mayor shows for the City. Such pageants were, like the theatre, performative representations which often employed special effects, allegorical characters, and scenes from local history in order to present a show for an audience, but in this case the audience was transitory. As the show passed through the streets of London, there was no guarantee (and very little probability) that any one spectator would actually see the entire thing. Cohesive narrativity therefore was an impossibility, and the goal became creating memorable moments or images, forceful tableaux or costumes that would impress themselves upon a passerby and leave at least a part of the civic message that was intended. Unlike the coronation processions and other pageants used by monarchs in order to establish their individual position within the historical narrative, power for City leaders and the playwright they hired to help them, was something not only shaped by but located within the very theatrical performance itself, for the power of the City and citizen ideology comes not from one person or narrative, but from their ability to encompass contradiction and difference. A pageant, a play, a painting, a poem, does not have to be historically accurate or to present a unified narrative in order to exert force or level

criticism. Instead, Middleton's generic experimentation points to a way forward for parliamentarians and citizens that embraced their differences so that they might be united in a future cause.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of this study, we have seen the ways in which the drama of the early modern English theatre responded to the cultural and material conditions in which it was situated. Generic developments, namely, the steady shift in dramatic production and popularity from chronicle history play to city comedy across the 1590s and 1610s, reveal the way that early modern literature and public institutions both reflected and influenced the social, political, and ultimately ideological developments of their time. Chapter one demonstrated how Shakespeare's Falstaff, a character who serves in the *Henry IV* plays as a critical voice satirically speaking the challenge to monarchical historiography, performs a similar function in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Here, Shakespeare's work depicts a proto-bourgeoisie that was still greatly interpellated by aristocratic ideology, but which was also beginning to develop a certain hostility toward it. As the character of Falstaff helps to reveal the contradictions within aristocratic ideology in the history plays, so he functions to point out the tensions in a burgeoning citizen ideology in *Merry Wives*. For, as has been shown, citizen ideology was by no means a fully-formed opposition to the monarchy in the early modern period, but must instead be understood as emergent, fraught with contradictory elements that had yet to be untangled.

This contradiction was further explored in chapter two through Heywood's *Edward IV Parts 1 and 2*, where monarch and citizen, examined separately in the first chapter, are placed in direct confrontation with one another. Undoubtedly a history play, *Edward IV* nonetheless invites the question: whose history? The play poses a challenge to aristocratic ideology and its ability to

control historical narrative for its own ends. Matthew Shore offers an extremely problematic opposition to Edward's ideological authority; however, he simultaneously upholds it, signifying that Edward's authority is still firmly dominant. The citizenry and its internal contradictions are more fully explored by Dekker in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, where in seeking to establish himself as a historical figure, Dekker's Eyre must simultaneously obscure the various questionable means and unfortunate people he uses to gain success. While the play celebrates Eyre and the citizenry, it is ultimately the King who has the last word, as the play, like *Edward IV*, troubles the idea of a coherent citizen ideology. The history plays and early citizen comedies of the 1590s therefore demonstrate both the beginnings of a truly oppositional citizen ideology alongside the first emergence of the city comedy genre, and while neither was fully established at this point, their simultaneous development shows that the theatre was indeed responding to and exploring the social tensions of its moment.

Twenty years after the performances of the works in chapters one through three, Middleton's *Hengist, King of Kent; or, The Mayor of Queenborough* dramatically criticizes the monarchy by deliberately juxtaposing the generic elements of city comedy with those of the chronicle history play. In the Jacobean era, when the king's popularity had steadily waned over the course of his reign, when the future of English Protestantism was often perceived to be in jeopardy, when the monarchy entertained marriages and alliances with the likes of Catholic Spain, the citizenry became a clear oppositional voice. In the theatres, the city comedy had become a mature dramatic genre. The two developments are not coincidental, and Middleton was able to use elements of city comedy in his subplot as a kind of substitute for the voice of the people against the actions of the king in his main plot. The progression of popularity and theatrical production from history plays to city comedies in the period was therefore revealing

and responding to the rising power of the early modern citizenry and the emergence of what would become bourgeois ideology.

As Marx has demonstrated, “The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part” (“Communist Manifesto” 247), and the seventeenth century in England was one such historically revolutionary moment. While the bourgeoisie and its ideology were certainly only emergent in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, a glimmer of opposition that spoke to the beginning of society’s changing values, by the mid-seventeenth century the wealthy landowning and city-dwelling gentry alike would come to oppose themselves quite directly and forcefully to the Crown. Ultimately—inevitably—the growth of citizen ideology led to a political revolution in which royal prerogative was checked and the personal and property rights of the wealthy middle classes were inscribed and guaranteed for future generations. But as this revolution led to the temporary abolition of the monarchy, so it led to the temporary closing of the theatres that had become such a prominent feature of early modern city life. While the theatres did return after the interregnum, they were, like the monarchy itself, quite changed in scope and character.

In light of the foregoing argument, such events beg the question: if the theatre had been so instrumental in reflecting and helping to facilitate the emergence of proto-bourgeois ideology in Elizabethan and Jacobean London, why did the parliamentarians, inheritors of this ideology, close an institution that would seem to have been one of their greatest supporters? The scholarly line on this for some time seems to have been that the Caroline theatre became far more courtly in tone than what had preceded it. Christopher Hill has argued, for example, that “the cheap popular theatre ceased to exist, and court and stage became more closely identified.... ‘the dramatists now tended to identify themselves with the dominant Cavalier section of their public.

The age of a national drama was over” (*Intellectual Origins* 13). But, as Martin Butler asserts, just because many courtiers began attending private theatre performances in larger numbers than before does not necessarily mean that the content of such performances was purely deferential to the Crown. “Both in terms of social differentiation and political leanings,” Butler argues, “the theatres embraced a collection of spectators much broader and more varied than [the view of those like Hill] allows” (129). He further demonstrates extensively in his *Theatre and Crisis 1632-1642* that, like the audiences, the plays that both the public and private theatres performed during this period were far more irreverent of the monarchy than scholarly criticism has given them credit for. During this decade, “each company without exception ran into trouble with the royal authorities for touching on sensitive issues” (Butler 135). By no means had the theatres, public or private, become Cavalier havens for monarchal ideology.

Then why close the theatres? Butler offers one practical reason for doing so: the theatres were often sites of riot and disorder, and closing them may have been “an act of public safety rather than of puritan reform” in such a volatile time of political upheaval (138). There may be a kernel of truth in this. But more likely, as Butler himself suggests, the theatres were closed because they were *not* in service to a particular ideology. As sites of free and public discourse between both stage content and spectators and amongst the spectators themselves, the theatres were “very unlikely to induce an unquestioning acceptance in their spectators of the authority and actions of their rulers, *divinely ordained or otherwise*” (Butler 140, emphasis mine). It was not as if the parliamentarians were a universally united front. Indeed, the notion that any ideology is ever thoroughly dominant or homogenous should be seen, by now, as a clear fallacy. As Lawrence Stone explains, when discussing the English Revolution it is important to understand that “none of the polarities of feudal-bourgeois, employer-employee, rich-poor,

rising-declining, county-parish gentry seem to have much relevance to what actually happened in the early 1640s” (*Causes* 56). The parliamentary bourgeois ideology that grew to oppose the monarchy by the middle of the seventeenth century cannot be neatly pinned down to a set of ideas upon which every member of that social group agreed. It is true that there were many values they shared, values that I have called “citizen ideology” in this study and which allowed them to find enough common ground to work productively together, but they were not without internal contradictions, and these points of tension might expose the parliamentarians to the same criticism which the theatre had leveled at the monarchy.

The central problem with trying to determine which particular ideology the early modern theatre espoused and sought to perpetuate—aristocratic, citizen, or something else entirely—is that it seems inaccurate and dismissive of the theatre’s real aesthetic force to assume that it ever existed in service to a singular ideology. Indeed, popular art quite rarely presents any kind of coherent aesthetic truth in service to an authority. The critical awareness that the theatre expressed toward official historiography and the dominant ideology it directed just as easily toward the citizenry. My reading of Dekker’s *Shoemaker* and the actions of Simon Eyre in chapter three gestures to this, in that the same theatre that produced Heywood’s *Edward IV* also ran *Shoemaker* later the same year, a play that clearly satirized the contradictions *within* the citizen ideology that posed a challenge to the monarchy in Heywood’s work. Such an exploratory and potentially subversive art form had to be at least temporarily silenced as the revolutionaries sought to consolidate their position. We might therefore speculate that the theatres were shut down in 1642 not because they were sympathetic to Charles I or because they offended Puritan religious sensibilities, but because they simply could not be controlled.

This understanding of the theatre's political power comes directly from the same Marxist and cultural materialist perspective that has driven the rest of this study. Jonathan Dollimore offers perhaps the most concise articulation of this perspective: "If we talk only of power producing the discourse of subversion," he writes, "we not only hypostatise power but also efface the cultural differences—and context—which the very process of containment presupposes....Further, although subversion may indeed be appropriated by authority for its own purposes, once installed it can be used against authority as well as used by it" (12). Essentially, subversion is not always contained, nor *can* it be if there is ever to be social change. The theatre was not engaged in bolstering the dominant ideology, whether directly or by offering a safe place for a subversive voice to be heard only to be reconciled with that dominant ideology in the end. By this same argument, it was not interested in upholding an emergent citizen ideology, or in containing that ideology's subversive elements. The theatre was interested in exploring and exposing the social issues and tensions of its moment. It "enacted ideological contestation" (*Social Struggle* 7). It engaged with topics "where ideology was under strain" (Sinfield 113). It was an early modern institution whose dramatic productions ridiculed and undermined, sometimes caustically, attempts by those in power to establish undisputed authority. As a public gathering place, moreover, it was especially problematic for monarchy and revolutionaries alike, for it was a place where the mingling of ideas and of people from many social groups was encouraged. Georg Lukacs has stated that "the essence of dramatic effect is immediate, direct impact upon a multitude" ("Historical Drama" 130). It is this impact, the theatre's capacity to critique and to impress such criticism upon its audience, which had to be tamed.

To what extent did the early modern theatre facilitate the rise of the bourgeoisie? To what extent did it cause the execution of Charles I? These questions are impossible to answer. What

we can say is that the theatre was acutely interested in the conflicts and events that shaped the lives and occupied the minds of its audience, in the same way that it is now. As I began by stating in the introduction to this project, a Marxist approach to the study of early modern culture has the benefit of allowing us to examine early modern class relations and institutions as the foundations of modern society. In tracing the ways in which the theatre responded to economic and ideological shifts, literature becomes a lens that can illuminate class relations not just in the period, but in our modern moment. The emergent citizenry of the early modern period steadily gained political and economic power from this point forward; theirs is, in fact, our current dominant ideology. But like the aristocratic ideology of early modern England, it was and is full of contradictions, and if the recent surge in productions of *Julius Caesar* in response to the 2016 American presidential election or the continuing popularity of shows such as *Hamilton* are any indication, they are contradictions that the theatre continues to help us negotiate.

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VITA

Dr. Anna Ullmann (née Cooperrider) was born and raised in Waterford, Michigan, and is a 2007 graduate of Waterford Mott High School. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in English, with distinction, from Kalamazoo College in 2011. In 2013, she earned a Master of Arts in English from Loyola University Chicago before continuing in the Ph.D. program.

While at Loyola, Dr. Ullmann served as a tutor in the Writing Center and the Bridge to Loyola Program. She was elected by fellow graduate students to serve the English Graduate Student Association as Secretary for 2014-15 and as President for 2015-16. From fall 2016 to spring 2018, she was the Graduate Instructors Representative for the Loyola chapter of the AAUP. She took second place in the English Department's Stanley Clayes Essay Competition for 2013, and was awarded a Pre-Doctoral Teaching Fellowship by the Graduate School for 2017-18.