

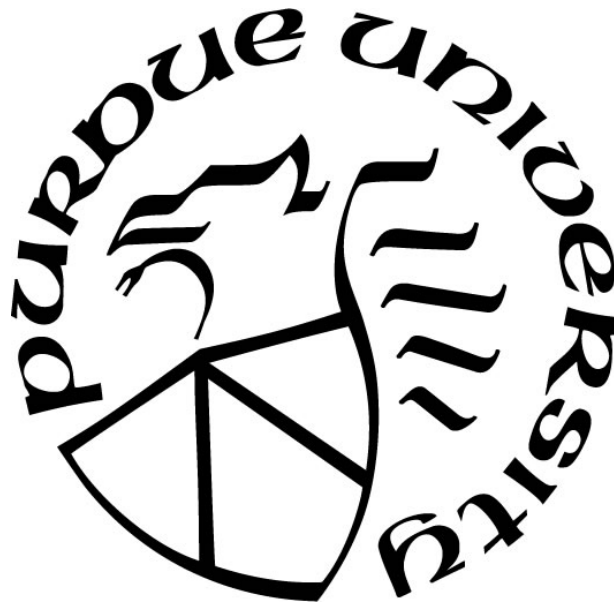
**THE KING, THE PRINCE, AND SHAKESPEARE: COMPETING FOR
CONTROL OF THE STUART COURT STAGE**

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A Dissertation

*Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of*

Doctor of Philosophy



Department of English
West Lafayette, Indiana
August 2020

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ABSTRACT

When, each holiday season, William Shakespeare's newest plays were presented for King James I and his court, they shared the stage with propagandistic performances and ceremonies intended to glorify the monarch and legitimate his political ideals. Between 1608 and 1613, however, the King's son, Prince Henry Frederick, sought to use the court stage to advance his own, oppositional ideology. By examining the entertainments through which James and Henry openly competed to control this crucial mythmaking mechanism, the present investigation recreates the increasingly unstable conditions surrounding and transforming each of Shakespeare's last plays as they were first performed at court. I demonstrate that, once read in their original courtly contexts, these plays speak directly to each stage of that escalating rivalry and interrogate the power of ceremonial display, the relationship between fiction and statecraft, and the destabilization of monarchically imposed meaning, just as they would have then.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

I

At a lull in the festive program arranged by King Simonides, William Shakespeare's (1564–1616) *Pericles* studies the perfect order of the court before him and laments that he has been disabused of everything he thought he understood about royal pageantry and power: “Yon king's to me like to my father's picture,” he observes,

Which tells me in that glory he once was:
Had princes sit like stars about his throne,
And he the sun for them to reverence.
None that beheld him but, like lesser lights,
Did vail their crowns to his supremacy;
Where now his son's a glowworm in the night,
The which hath fire in darkness, none in light.
Whereby I see that Time's the king of men:
He's both their parent and he is their grave,
And gives them what he will, not what they crave. (2.3.36–46)¹

Monarchs have less control over the course of events than their ceremonial displays would suggest, he seems to realize, and the hierarchical harmony showcased at such events is likewise just for show. One must wonder, then, how this scene would have been received when the King's Men first staged *Pericles* for King James I of England (1566–1624) and his identically arranged nobles. It might have appeared, for instance, that the Prince of Tyre was suddenly describing his real-world surroundings—perhaps the actor even earned a few laughs by gesturing toward the genuine monarch in the room when he said, “Yon king.” More importantly, the scene may have inadvertently called attention to the growing disparity—apparent by 1608, when this inaugural court performance most likely occurred—between the King's idealistic entertainments and the political realities of his divided and, at times, unruly court. Indeed, one would be hard-pressed to claim that Shakespeare, or, in this case, his probable collaborator George Wilkins, deliberately devised for such topical resonance, yet when played on the Stuart court stage, spectators could hardly fail to understand *Pericles* in the context of their present political moment, and the same can be said of every royally sponsored performance throughout the period. This investigation thus

¹ Quotations from Shakespeare are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., Third Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016).

seeks to reconstruct these specific circumstances, and to put each of Shakespeare's last plays back in dialogue with the festive program to which it once belonged.

Crucial to the task of reconstructing these circumstances is close analysis of the Stuart court masques. Every holiday season—typically beginning around Hallowmas (1 November) and concluding on Twelfth Night (6 January)—James's courtiers would reconvene at the Palace of Whitehall in Westminster and, along with various social elites, invited foreign dignitaries, and the royal family itself, would be treated to as many as two dozen King's Men plays and, usually, one extravagant masque. Early commentators tended to dismiss these masques as mere trifles: "These things are but toys, to come amongst such serious consideration," Francis Bacon famously balked, for instance, and the masques written by Ben Jonson (1572–1637) frequently acknowledge such criticism, as in *Neptune's Triumph* (1624), where a character named Poet humorously refers to himself as "the most unprofitable of [the King's] servants, [...] a kind of a Christmas ingine, one that is used at least once a year for a trifling instrument of wit, or so" (19–21).² It was not until the latter half of the twentieth century, in fact, that scholars began to recognize these court entertainments as central mechanisms of monarchical statecraft. Each masque offered commentary on pressing political issues and symbolically enacted the King's desired outcomes; they thus illuminate the topics dominating the conversations at court, these scholars observed, and can be interpreted as bridging the gap between ideal and reality in proselytizing the very people upon whom the monarch relied. Moreover, printed reports of these otherwise private events were deliberately circulated both at home and abroad.³ Far from sycophantic "toys," then, the court masques represent a primary means by which James legitimated his authority, cultivated his royal mythology, and managed the Crown's image on the world stage.

This critical reappraisal was in large part spearheaded by Stephen Orgel, who, in his seminal *The Illusion of Power* (1975), argues that "the form was an extension of the royal mind," demonstrating the King's godlike ability "to rule, to control and order the world, to change or subdue other men, to create, [...] to make images, to project the workings of the mind outward in

² Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath, vol. 6 (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1858), 467; Quotations from Jonson are from *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

³ Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 27.

a physical, active form, to actualize ideas, to conceive actions.”⁴ Orgel emphasizes the poetics of the masquing space: those in the gallery were carefully arranged according to hierarchy—“The closer one sat to the monarch the ‘better’ one’s place was,” he explains—thus mirroring the perfection on stage, but only from the King’s position did the illusionistic settings achieve their full effect.⁵ “The primary audience was the monarch,” then, and everyone else watched the King watching the masque; subdued by the royal gaze in this way—a state shared by the fictional characters—the stage and gallery merged, and “what the noble spectator watched he ultimately became.”⁶ Jonathan Goldberg, in his equally important *James I and the Politics of Literature* (1983), built on Orgel’s work and further embedded masque criticism in a New Historicist framework by emphasizing the containment of subversive forces in the antimasques: portraying the King’s absolute control of order and disorder alike, he argues, antimasques testify to the “sustaining contradictions” by which James sought to mystify royal power and function in much the same way as Stephen Greenblatt’s “Invisible Bullets,” whereby “subversiveness that is genuine and radical [...] is at the same time contained by the power it would appear to threaten. Indeed the subversiveness is the very product of that power and furthers its ends.”⁷ Jerzy Limon must also be acknowledged for later expanding on Orgel’s observations about the revels that concluded every show: the King was “the implied author of the ‘magic’ at court,” he writes, and when the masquers descended from the stage and invited everyone to dance in their ideal world, these spectators were involuntarily “incorporated into this fictitious reality, as is always the case in a ritual.”⁸

More recently, scholars of the Cultural Materialist variety have pushed back against such ritualistic and hegemonic perspectives. For Martin Butler, for instance, Orgel’s approach in *The Illusion of Power* is inadequate because “every masque ends up doing more or less the same thing—i.e. legitimating the monarch. Incidental features differ,” he continues,

but each testifies identically to the authority of the royal gaze, representing the court as reaffirming its unchanging sense of identity and purpose. In such a paradigm, the theatre of power is compellingly evoked but is strangely homogenized, immune

⁴ Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 43, 47.

⁵ Orgel, 11.

⁶ Orgel, 9, 39.

⁷ Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 116; Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 30.

⁸ Jerzy Limon, “The Masque of Stuart Culture,” in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 216.

to processes of history, and endlessly replaying the same symbolic functions. At the same time, the reification of kingly power promotes a symmetry between what the court sees and what it is.⁹

In contrast, Butler contends that James's power was never absolute but was "constantly in balance, constantly being renegotiated with figures [...] who exerted significant sovereign pressures of their own," and David Bevington and Peter Holbrook—editors of the tide-shifting *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque* (1998), to which Butler also contributes—likewise argue that the court masques should be reexamined in relation to these fluctuating power dynamics, and that each served as a distinct and necessary "site of negotiation" between rival personalities and competing interests.¹⁰ Their collection thus mines the masques for evidence of these alternative attitudes: Holbrook, for instance, interprets Samuel Daniel's *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* (1604)—among the very first Stuart masques—as precariously acknowledging Queen Anne's (1574–1619) Spanish sympathies, James's pacifist designs, and the militant Protestant faction's "nostalgic commitment to military honour" all at once; Leeds Barroll highlights how Anne utilized dancing in *The Twelve Goddesses* and *The Masque of Blackness* (1605) to grow the influence of herself and her noblewomen; and Leah S. Marcus—just briefly here but in more detail in later work—stresses Jonson's personal pursuit of political influence and artistic self-definition throughout his court career.¹¹

These efforts to dislodge the masques from the King's monolithic gaze and to associate each more closely with its specific contributors, participants, and political circumstances are invaluable; I largely wish to pursue the same course. Yet I believe that it would be a mistake to dispose entirely of the New Historicist view. Anne's involvement in the early masques, for instance, has frequently been overemphasized—even Butler concedes that the King bankrolled every show of which she was the listed sponsor, and the subordination she reliably enacted served as support for James's claims to a "kingship [...] cognate with his authority as husband and

⁹ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 14.

¹⁰ Martin Butler, "Courtly Negotiations," in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, ed. David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 27; David Bevington and Peter Holbrook, "Introduction," in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, ed. David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 7.

¹¹ Peter Holbrook, "Jacobean Masques and the Jacobean Peace," in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, ed. David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 73; Leeds Barroll, "Inventing the Stuart Masque," in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, ed. David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 121–43; Leah S. Marcus, "Jonson and the Court," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*, ed. Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 30–42.

father”—and while it is useful to remember that participating masquers were very likely motivated by self-advancement, the design of the masques ensured that such advancement was achieved only by playing at harmony and by bending to the King’s dominant vision.¹² So, in *The Masque of Blackness*, Anne and her ladies appear as African queens dissatisfied with their skin color and beseech the King, “Who forms all beauty with his sight,” to “blanch” them (170, 225); the miracle, finally effected in a sequel masque, *The Masque of Beauty* (1608), thus testifies to the supremacy of James’s perspective, as well as his exclusive ability to erase all cultural and political differences. And in *The Masque of Queens* (1609), in which the same masquers appeared as ancient warriors, Anne is depicted laying down her arms and “humbling all her worth / To him that gave it” (402–3). Admittedly, *The Twelve Goddesses* is less ideologically consistent—Anne portrays “war-like Pallas” and carries both a “lance of winning” and “target of defence: [...] / To get with glory, hold with providence”—but it is notable that, immediately after this mixed result, Daniel was sacked and replaced by Jonson, a playwright in “greater sympathy with the prevailing Jacobean ideology,” as Holbrook notes, or at least more willing to subordinate his own beliefs to those of his King.¹³

Indeed, elevating a yes-man like Jonson to the role of preferred masque-writer is just one of many moves from which we can discern James’s absolutist intentions for the masques.¹⁴ The primary mythmaking mechanism of his predecessor, the Accession Day tilt, was a popular event that allowed courtiers the opportunity to advance their personal agendas with both the monarch and the public by dramatizing themselves as knights battling on the tiltyard—a “chivalrous formula [that] suited the aristocratic structure of Elizabethan society,” as Frances A. Yates contends, because the Queen was able to harness the individual energies of aristocratic honor culture and put them into her service as the imagined object of her knights’ courtly affections.¹⁵ The inclusion of Paul E. J. Hammer’s essay on the Elizabethan tilts, “Upstaging the Queen: The Earl of Essex, Francis Bacon and the Accession Day Celebrations of 1595,” in Bevington and Holbrook’s

¹² Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 131.

¹³ Samuel Daniel, *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, in *A Book of Masques: In Honour of Allardyce Nicoll* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), ln. 294–7; Holbrook, “Jacobean Masques,” 78.

¹⁴ See Blair Worden, “Ben Jonson and the Monarchy,” in *Neo-Historicism: Studies in Renaissance Literature, History, and Politics*, ed. Robin Headlam Wells, Glenn Burgess, and Rowland Wymer (Rochester: D.S. Brewer, 2000), 71–90, for more on Jonson’s unwavering loyalty to James. Certainly Jonson was not entirely averse to criticism, and in fact likened his role as masque-writer to that of a royal advisor, but “in Jonson’s writing James profits from a double standard,” as Worden demonstrates, in which “the court’s abuses, far from being James’ fault, are figured as rebels against him” (87).

¹⁵ Frances A. Yates, “Elizabethan Chivalry: The Romance of the Accession Day Tilts,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 20, no. 1/2 (1957): 25.

collection seems to suggest that the Stuart masques had a similar function, but James's clear preference for private, scripted, and royally funded and supervised entertainments indicates an aversion toward this brand of open negotiation with the competing powerbrokers at court, and is consistent with his numerous attempts at centralizing state power and display. Among these, for instance, is his swift decision to monopolize London's major acting companies under the Crown's control, which, in combination with his exorbitant spending on the court masques, illuminates designs for theatrical power more propagandistic than collaborative.¹⁶ Indeed, James "continued to fund these shows well beyond [his] means," as Graham Parry observes, and it is inconceivable that he would not wield this invaluable weapon in his tireless quest to prove that "Kings are iustly called Gods," as he told Parliament in 1609, for "God hath power to create, or destroy, make, or vnmake at his pleasure, to giue life, or send death, to iudge all, and to be iudged nor accomptable to none."¹⁷

Such sentiments are echoed in every masque, as in *Oberon, the Fairy Prince* (1611), in which the masquers profess to owe "the honor of their being" to their King, by whose "sole power and magic [...] they live / Sustained in form, fame and felicity" (249–51), and in *The Masque of Queens*, in which the only hint of negotiation is in the masquers' request that James "embrace / A spectacle so full of love and grace / Unto your court" (414–6). James's power may not have been absolute in practice, then, but he certainly viewed it as such, and his ceremonial stage can best be understood as a singular space in which those absolutist fantasies were entirely uninhibited—no matter how often they failed to transcend the Banqueting House walls. And fail they often did: another gap in Cultural Materialist interpretations of the masques, in fact—and a central focus of the present discussion—is the noticeable destabilization of the masquing mechanism upon the emergence of a true challenger to the King's mythmaking hegemony in his ideologically adversarial son, Prince Henry Frederick (1594–1612). Frequently, the Prince's masques are cited as additional proof that the form was always transactional—Butler, for instance, argues that "for both Orgel and Goldberg, *Oberon* is a problem," as "both interpretations overlook the extent to which Henry was already coming to function as a significant competitor in the arena of power with

¹⁶ Alvin Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theater in the Stuart Court, 1603–1613* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 9–10.

¹⁷ Graham Parry, "The Politics of the Jacobean Masque," in *Theatre and Government Under the Early Stuarts*, ed. J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 115; James Stuart, *The Political Works of James I*, ed. Charles Howard McIlwain (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 307–8.

his father”—but this period is exceptional, as the following pages will demonstrate.¹⁸ Indeed, tracing James and Henry’s escalating rivalry across every entertainment season from 1608 to 1613 reveals an unprecedented, institutional crisis through which each masque and its accompanying King’s Men performances must be viewed.

II

James’s accession to the English throne in 1603 marked a substantial shift in the nation’s foreign policy and, thus, its identity in the eyes of international onlookers and English subjects alike. For nearly two decades, England had formally been at war with Catholic Spain, and—regardless of the Queen’s true ambivalence—was viewed as a leading defender of the Protestant faith in Europe’s continuous cycles of religious conflict.¹⁹ This ended abruptly in the summer of 1604, however, as Spain’s power was on the decline, and James seized upon the opportunity to negotiate a peace treaty that established his administration as the “*Arbiters of Europe*,” to quote from one tract the King commissioned, and ushered in a new era of arranging for religious reconciliation on the Continent by way of ecumenical alliances.²⁰ These moves were broadly unpopular: in 1607, for instance, Venetian ambassador Nicolo Molin reported that “His majesty [...] has no inclination to war, nay is opposed to it, a fact that little pleases many of his subjects,” and Sir Anthony Weldon later complained that the King

naturally loved not the sight of a soldier, nor of any valiant man. [...] His sending ambassadors were no less chargeable then dishonourable and unprofitable to him and his whole kingdom; for he was ever abused in all negotiations, yet he had rather spend 100,000 li. on embassies, to keep or procure peace with dishonour, then 10,000 li. on an army that would have forced peace with honour. [...] He was infinitely inclined to peace, but more out of fear than conscience.²¹

As a result, then, there arose a “bitter and organized” militant Protestant faction, as Holbrook describes it, which cloaked its dissent and interventionist ambitions in nostalgia for the chivalric

¹⁸ Butler, “Courtly Negotiations,” 30.

¹⁹ Holbrook, “Jacobean Masques,” 68.

²⁰ Sir Robert Cotton, *An Answer Made by Command of Prince Henry, to Certain Propositions of Warre and Peace, Delivered to His Highness by Some of His Military Servants* (London: Roger Daniel, 1655), 95; Maurice Lee, Jr., *James I and Henri IV: An Essay in English Foreign Policy, 1603–1610* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 12.

²¹ Horatio F. Brown, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, 1603–1607* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1900), 513; Robert Ashton, ed., *James I by His Contemporaries: An Account of His Career and Character as Seen by Some of His Contemporaries* (London: Hutchinson, 1969), 13–16.

and militarist ethos of Elizabeth's court.²² On one hand, this tension is characteristic of the period's wider conflict between humanist and martial values: the new humanists of the English Renaissance, among which James can be counted, considered militarism incompatible with state stability and viewed chivalry as encouraging "open mans slaughter," as Roger Ascham wrote, while those aligned with the old Elizabethan war party denounced humanist pacifism as complacency and appeasement in the face of the Habsburg menace.²³ On the other hand, the spasm of dissent early in the new King's reign was a specific and entirely predictable reaction to his centralizing reforms: ambitious courtiers like Weldon now lacked a battlefield or even a space on the ceremonial stage on which to distinguish themselves and advance their own ideals, which is precisely what their absolutist King must have wanted.

Prince Henry's name was the rallying cry of these dissatisfied subjects and nobles long before he could have possibly developed any personal feelings on the subject. In 1604, for instance—when Henry was just ten years old—Sir William Alexander declared that he would grow up to "restore the golden age" for a "state that to confusion seem'd betraid," and concluded,

I (*Henrie*) hope with this mine eyes to feed,
 Whilst, ere thou wearst a crowne, thou wear'st a shield,
 And when thou making thousands for to bleed,
 That dare behold thy count'nance and not yeeld,
 Sturres through the bloudie dust a foaming steed,
 An interested witsse in the field,
 I may amongst those bands thy Grace attend,
 And be thy *Homer*, when the warres do end.²⁴

By 1607, ambassador Molin would report that the Prince was "so beloved and of such promise that [James's] subjects place all their hopes in him," and by 1610, chaplain Daniel Price would simply sidestep the disappointing monarch altogether, dedicating his *Defence of Truth* to "the royall heire apparant" and writing, "The eies, and harts, and hopes of all the Protestant world, be fixed vpon your *Highnesse*, all expecting your *Gracious* faithfulness, & readines in the extirpation of that man of sinne [the Pope]."²⁵ James had effectively abdicated the role that Price describes,

²² Holbrook, "Jacobean Masques," 70.

²³ Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster*, in *English Works of Roger Ascham*, ed. William Aldis Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 231.

²⁴ William Alexander, *A Paraenesis to the Prince* (London: Printed by Richard Field for Edvvard Blovnt, 1604), sig. C^v, sig. D^v.

²⁵ CSPV, 1603–1607, 513; Daniel Price, *The Defence of Trvth Against a Booke Falsely Called the Trivmph of Trvth Sent over from Arras A. D. 1609. by Hvmfrey Leech Late Minister. Which Booke in All Particulars Is Answered, and the Adioning Motiues of His Revolt Confuted* (Oxford: Printed by Joseph Barnes, 1610), sig. Av.

and the cult that had once surrounded Queen Elizabeth thus attached itself to the magnetic young man. Moreover, the King's resentment toward his son was well known: Molin deduced that "the King was growing jealous," and Arthur Wilson, historian of the reign, later opined that "the Kings *fears*" would often "blind the *eye* of his *Reason*, when he saw [Henry] (as he thought) too high mounted in the people's *love*."²⁶ In these early years, it is admittedly difficult to separate the Prince from "his position as the focus of other men's aspirations," as Butler notes, but by 1610, when he began work on establishing his own household, it is clear that he was actively encouraging his Protestant supporters and consciously cultivating an image that contradicted that of his father: from his earliest English portraits, Henry had always dressed in the chivalric armor of an Elizabethan knight, but he now too began to commission poems and historical chronicles that associated him with the Tudor myths; in private correspondence, he voiced his support for military intervention, exclusively Protestant alliances, and colonization of the New World to compete with Spain; and, perhaps most boldly, he arranged and starred in numerous public shows and court masques in an obvious bid to appropriate the ceremonial stage's legitimizing power.²⁷

Indeed, the court stage was both site to James and Henry's most direct confrontations and a primary matter of their dispute. The first chapter of this study, centering on the 1608–09 season and Jonson's *The Masque of Queens*, sees the King leaning on the masques' coercive methods in seeking to undermine the chivalric values his son had only just begun to embrace. The next examines the 1609–10 and 1610–11 entertainment seasons, as well as the series of ceremonies and festivities in between, each of which celebrated Henry's investiture as the Prince of Wales. Here, Henry at last unveiled his unmitigated mythology for the people with public and private masques and tournaments that largely succeeded in sparking another "imaginative re-feudalisation of culture," as Yates writes of the court pageantry under Elizabeth, as well as a renewed enthusiasm for the Accession Day tradition, despite Jonson's best efforts, in *The Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers* and *Oberon*, to caution the Prince against military action and to fictionalize his chivalric ideals.²⁸ For the 1611–12 season, as chronicled in chapter three, James worked to regain control of the court stage and reasserted his sole authority over the masquing space with Jonson's *Love*

²⁶ CSPV, 1603–1607, 513; Arthur Wilson, *The History of Great Britain Being the Life and Reign of King James the First, Relating to What Passed from His First Access to the Crown, till His Death* (London: Printed for Richard Lownds, and are to be sold at the Sign of the White Lion near Saint Paul's little North dore, 1653), 52.

²⁷ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 177.

²⁸ Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1975), 108.

Restored, while Henry, in response, turned to alternative methods of advancing his adversarial cause like the aforementioned portraits, poems, and histories. Henry's death from typhoid fever late in 1612 brought this rivalry to a sudden close, but not before the 1612–13 season, in which shows planned by the Prince openly competed with those planned by the King to define the political significance of Princess Elizabeth's (1596–1662) marriage to Frederick V, Elector Palatine of the Rhine (1596–1632). Reading the masques of this fraught period chronologically thus reveals a pattern in which James and Henry took turns wresting the ceremonial stage from one another, while their shows, increasingly, made the right to courtly mythmaking a main subject. The consequence, explored in stages throughout the project, was the exposure of court spectacle as mere fantasy and an erosion of the faith upon which these rituals relied.

III

In his capacities as lead playwright and occasional actor for the King's Men, Shakespeare would have witnessed a majority of these court stage confrontations firsthand, for in addition to their own plays, his company was typically tasked with performing the speaking roles in the season's court masques.²⁹ Moreover, Shakespeare was evidently attentive to the dramatic innovations in these entertainments: his plays from the period between 1608 and 1613 incorporate masque elements with increasing regularity, including descending gods in *Pericles* (1608) and *Cymbeline* (1610), choreographed dances in *The Winter's Tale* (1611) and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613), and even fully developed masques within the play in *The Tempest* (1611) and *Henry VIII* (1613), the last of which, John D. Cox suggests, "goes beyond flirtation and actually weds the familiar conventions of popular drama with the spirit and principles of the refined court masque."³⁰ The reasons for this development are multiple: in 1608, for instance, the King's Men acquired the Blackfriars indoor theater, which "contributed to the ability to stage more masquelike dramas, or dramas that exploited masquelike elements," as Julie Sanders explains, and though Shakespeare may simply have taken note of the efficacy of these shows' music and visual effects, there would too have been immense public interest in such extravagant spectacles normally reserved for the elite.³¹ This could also explain the overt topicality of the late plays: adventuring knights like *Pericles*, *Palamon*, and

²⁹ Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright*, xvi.

³⁰ John D. Cox, "Henry VIII and the Masque," *ELH* 45, no. 3 (1978): 391.

³¹ Julie Sanders, "Mixed Messages: The Aesthetics of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume IV*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003), 446.

Arcite, at odds, in most cases, with absolutist rulers like Leontes and Prospero, might have provided popular audiences a desired glimpse at the rumored disfunctions of the royal family, while references to James's union project in *Cymbeline* and Princess Elizabeth's wedding in *The Tempest* and *Henry VIII*, for instance, made capital out of political issues and events already at the fore of public conversation.

A further explanation for the affinities between the King's Men plays and court masques of this period is the company's official role as servants of the King. James had monopolized the theater primarily to put "a powerful propaganda medium in [his] hands, while at the same time reducing the power of some of his grandees," as Alvin Kernan contends.³² Yet he and the King's Men enjoyed what Melissa D. Aaron identifies as a symbiotic relationship, in which the company helped to disseminate royal magnificence beyond the court stage and, in turn, gained status and even resources that all but ensured their play's popular success.³³ Aaron highlights evidence of borrowed props, costumes, and choreography: a bear costume from *Oberon*, for instance, may have been repurposed for use in *The Winter's Tale*; Ariel's and Caliban's costumes in *The Tempest* were very likely those gifted to the King's Men after their performance in Anthony Munday's *London's Love to the Royal Prince Henry* (1610); and the antimasque dances from *Oberon* and Francis Beaumont's *Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn* (1613) reappear essentially unmodified in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, respectively—all of which suggests that the King approved of such "leaks" to the public, and that the opportunity to showcase these coveted items "may well have dictated certain elements of the written text."³⁴ Conversely, the King's Men had, by this time, become so financially dependent on the holiday entertainment seasons—court performances accounted for fifteen percent of the company's income in 1609 and rose as high as twenty-five percent in 1613—that they are just as likely to have written with these occasions in mind, devising plays that resembled masques both aesthetically and politically in an effort to suit the tastes of their audiences at court.³⁵

As Kernan judiciously puts it, "Shakespeare may have originally produced his plays on the public stage, but he would have to have been remarkably dull—which he surely was not—not to

³² Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright*, 10.

³³ Melissa D. Aaron, *Global Economics: A History of the Theater Business, the Chamberlain's/King's Men, and Their Plays, 1599–1642* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 89.

³⁴ Aaron, 94–105, 90.

³⁵ Bernard Beckerman, *Shakespeare at the Globe, 1599–1609* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), 22; Aaron, *Global Economics*, 104.

have remembered after 1603 that his new plays would at Christmastime be acted before the king and his court, and that in those circumstances the courtiers and royal patrons would inevitably regard them not only as entertainments but as comments on the political and social concerns of the moment.”³⁶ The assertion is undeniable, but uncovering Shakespeare’s intended political commentary—or even his attempts to avoid controversy, as the case may be—is not the aim of this project. Rather, I wish to employ the approach that Leah S. Marcus helped pioneer in *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (1988), which posits that Shakespeare’s meanings were “inherently unstable,” “varying in ways that correlate with shifts in external circumstances and in the conditions of performance.”³⁷ Granting too, along with Kernan, that the King’s Men strove each season to deliver something new for their royal patron, and that “it is highly probable that all, or almost all, of the Shakespeare plays, and certainly all his plays written after 1602, were performed at court at least once, and many several times, during the years 1603–13,” the plays’ most likely dates of composition can be used to identify the specific entertainment seasons at which they would have been debuted for James’s court, and to study their inevitable politicization in that contentious environment.³⁸ Indeed, whether Shakespeare wanted to comment on the tensions between the King and the Prince or not, his polarized audience would have understood these plays as participating in an ideological conflict then playing out on the very same court stage, and by establishing those conditions of performance, they can be made to do so once again. After all, Shakespeare was not just “for all time,” to twist Jonson’s famous declaration, but “of an age,” too.³⁹

³⁶ Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King’s Playwright*, xviii–xix.

³⁷ Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 26, 45.

³⁸ Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King’s Playwright*, xvii.

³⁹ Ben Jonson, “To the Memory of My Beloued, The AVTHOR MR. VVILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: AND What He Hath Left Vs,” in *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies. Published According to the True Originall Copies*, by William Shakespeare (London: Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount, 1623).

CHAPTER 2. 1608–09: *CORIOLANUS*, *PERICLES*, AND THE RISE OF PRINCE HENRY

I

Disappointed by King James I's early peacekeeping rhetoric and immediate overtures to Spain, supporters of the militant Protestant movement in England wasted no time in casting the young Prince Henry as the future champion of their expansionist ambitions and the savior of a soldierly, chivalric ethos last embodied by Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex (1565–1601). As early as 1603, for instance, poet John Davies expressed reformist hopes that through "the high and mighty, Henry," "*Caerleon*, where king *Arthure* liv'd of yore, / Shall be rebuilt, and double gilt once more," and George Wither later recalled his own wishful thinking at the time, capturing the aggressive anti-Catholicism typical of this developing, popular cult: "Me thought er'e while I sawe Prince *Henries* armes, / Advanc't above the Capitoll of *Rome*," he writes, alluding to the militant Protestant dream of marching on the Vatican and killing the Pope, "And his keine blade, in spight of steele or charmes, / Give many mighty enemies their doome."¹ Not yet a teenager, the Prince's initial awareness of his position at the center of this reactionary wave of Elizabethan nostalgia is impossible to estimate, but in the years leading up to his 1610 investiture and emergence as an unequivocal, ideological adversary, Henry at least began to vitalize his cult and signal his identification with the militant Protestant cause by stepping into the role that had been prepared for him. The 1608–09 entertainment season thus represents the first occasion on which James and Henry's burgeoning conflict spilled over onto the ceremonial stage, for through Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Queens*, the King answered and denounced the Prince's challenge directly, and William Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and *Pericles*—most likely debuted for the court this same season—would inevitably have seemed to participate in the royal altercation.

We catch glimpses of Henry's budding, ideological sympathies and consequent friction with his father in letters from this period. In 1607, for instance, the thirteen-year-old asked England's ambassador to Venice to convey his regret that he was too young to assist in the

¹ John Davies, *Microcosmos: The Discovery of the Little World, with the Government Thereof* (Oxford: Printed by Ioseph Barnes, and Are to Bee Solde in Fleetestreete at the Signe of the Turkes Head by Iohn Barnes, 1603), 29, 35; George Wither, *Prince Henries Obsequies or Mournfull Elegies Vpon His Death Vvith a Supposed Inter-Locution Betweene the Ghost of Prince Henrie and Great Brittain* (London: Printed by Ed: Allde, for Arthur Iohnson, at the White Horse Neere Vnto the Great North Doore of Saint Paul, 1612), sig. D^v.

republic's ongoing resistance to papal intervention, and a report addressed to the Prince from that year's Virginia expedition likewise indicates new interest in Protestant projects abroad.² In this, Henry may have been inspired by Sir Walter Raleigh (c. 1552–1618), one hero of the old Elizabethan war party who, at this time, began writing a series of tracts advising the Prince on the importance of naval supremacy and colonial enterprise to the eventual defeat of Catholicism and the Habsburgs.³ Then confined to the Tower of London, Raleigh served as a perfect symbol of James's disregard for the militant and chivalric glories of the Elizabethan past, and Henry is reported to have complained that "No'other King but [my] father, would keep such a Man as Sir Walter in such a cage."⁴ Further tension of this kind was recorded by Venetian ambassador Nicolo Molin in 1607, who observed that the King often admonished his son for practicing martial sports instead of studying and on one occasion threatened to leave the crown to Henry's more bookish younger brother, Charles: "The Prince made no reply, out of respect for his father," Molin reports,

but when he went to his room and his tutor continued in the same vein, he said, "I know what becomes a Prince. It is not necessary for me to be a professor, but a soldier and a man of the world. If my brother is as learned as they say, we'll make him Archbishop of Canterbury." The King took this answer in no good part; nor is he overpleased to see his son so beloved and of such promise that his subjects place all their hopes in him; and it would almost seem, to speak quite frankly, that the King was growing jealous.⁵

Henry would shortly get his way: Charles Cornwallis, who became the treasurer of the Prince's household in 1610, later noted that he spent most of his time practicing "Tilting" and "Charging on Horseback with Pistol," as well as conferring with "great Captains, of all Manner of Wars, [...] and having now and then Battles of Head-men appointed on both Horse and Foot, in a long Table; whereby he might in a manner, View the right order of a Battle."⁶ In this early period, however, it would seem that Henry had already privately committed himself to an image of kingship that

² Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales, and England's Lost Renaissance* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 75, 61.

³ Strong, 51.

⁴ Roger Coke, *A Detection of the Court and State of England during the Four Last Reigns, and the Inter-Regnum. Consisting of Private Memoirs, &c. With Observations and Reflections. Also an Appendix Discovering the Present State of the Nation. In Two Volumes*, vol. 1 (London, 1694), 61.

⁵ Horatio F. Brown, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, 1603–1607* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1900), 514. See also a letter from the French ambassador, La Boderie, dated 31 October 1606, which describes Henry's daily routine: "He studies two hours a day, and employs the rest of his time in tossing the pike, or leaping, or shooting with the bow, or throwing the bar, or vaulting, or some other exercise of that kind" (qtd. in Birch 65).

⁶ Charles Cornwallis, *An Account of the Baptism, Life, Death and Funeral, of the Most Incomparable Prince Frederick Henry, Prince of Wales* (London: Printed for J. Freeman, in Fleet-Street, 1751), 26.

conformed to militant Protestant mythology and defied the wishes of his father.

If James felt threatened by the adversarial cult forming around his young son, as Molin inferred, he must have been even more concerned by Henry's first attempts to embrace his Essexian role and cultivate this image in the public imagination. On 5 August 1606, the Prince made his long-awaited debut on the neglected tiltyard and offered spectators their first glimpse of their future warrior-king, who "shewed himselfe in his armour, being gallantly mounted, and a hart as powerfull as any, though that his youth denyed strength."⁷ James would not allow Henry to participate in another martial spectacle until the events surrounding his investiture, but in the intervening years, this triumphant arrival on the tiltyard was evoked by chivalric portraiture that continued the Prince's work. From boyhood, Henry's portraits alluded to his youthful interests in chivalry and arms, but portraits from this period seem calculated to repudiate the pacifist and usually biblical or classical iconography of the King.⁸ In two miniatures from 1607, for instance, Henry poses in an extravagant suit of armor gifted to him by the Prince de Joinville, and in a remarkably foreboding portrait by the Prince's painter, Robert Peake the Elder, Henry draws his sword while standing defiantly on a shield inscribed with the motto, "I serve."⁹ Already, Henry was growing into the imposing figure he would soon become: contemporary biographer W. H. describes him as "tall and of an high stature, his body was strong and well proportioned, his shoulders were broad"; "his look grave," Francis Bacon adds, "in his countenance were some marks of severity."¹⁰

But another portrait, completed by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger in 1608, stands out as the most symbolically significant of this period. Under the patronage of Queen Elizabeth's Champion at Tilt and architect of the Accession Day tournaments, Sir Henry Lee (1533–1611), Gheeraerts became fashionable for his emblematic depictions of figures like Lee, Essex, and Elizabeth herself costumed in the chivalric regalia of the Accession Day tilts. By portraying Henry

⁷ John Nichols, *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First, His Royal Consort, Family, and Court*, vol. 2 (London: J. B. Nichols, 1828), 80.

⁸ See, for instance, Robert Peake's portrait of 1603, in which the nine-year-old Prince wears a small pendant in the shape of St. George slaying the dragon, as well as Peake's portrait from the following year, in which Henry wears the robes of the Order of the Garter and a jewel in the shape of a naval vessel.

⁹ This undated portrait is thought to have been completed sometime between 1604 and 1610 (Strong 255). To my eyes, Henry is visibly younger than he is in Peake's 1610 portraits, which fixes this painting somewhere in the pre-investiture period that I am discussing.

¹⁰ W. H., *The True Picture and Relation of Prince Henry* (Leyden: Printed by VVilliam Christian, 1634), 31; Francis Bacon, *The Moral and Historical Works of Lord Bacon*, ed. Joseph Devey (London: George Bell & Sons, 1890), 493.

in his Garter robes, then, Gheeraerts's painting explicitly ties the Prince to the recent lineage of English Protestant heroism, and as the portrait hung in the gallery of Lee's house at Ditchley, it would have shared the space with Gheeraerts's famed *Ditchley Portrait* of Elizabeth—perhaps the defining representation of the cult that Henry now inherited.¹¹ Indeed, Lee must have acquired Henry's portrait when he visited court in 1608 and presented the Prince with a suit of armor worth £200, thus entrusting him, from the perspective of Henry's militant Protestant supporters, with the revival and protection of the Elizabethan chivalric tradition.¹² And there is little doubt that Elizabeth's greatest pageant-master intended for such symbolism: the aging knight subsequently wrote to the Prince, offering "to bestowe the remnant of my tyme all I may to please you. Your Highnes aptenes to horsemanship, and matters of armes is such, that a meane dyrector may make you most perfect in that exercise, on whom my duty shall never fayle, when it shall please so greate, so devine, and so mightie a Prince to command me," and though seventy-five years old, reportedly vowed to "have one fling more [on the tiltyard] before he die."¹³

Beyond offering public confirmation of his ideological allegiances, Henry's attempts to align himself with the Elizabethan chivalric tradition and revitalize the visual language of the Accession Day tilts made the cultivation of a competing mythology possible. When James ascended the throne, he quickly set about monopolizing theatrical power and courtly display, first by royalizing London's major acting companies, which, in the words of Richard Badenhause, "might have otherwise given potential rivals a voice for discontent," and then by replacing, in terms of political importance, Elizabeth's unregulated public pageants with the private, scripted, and royally supervised Stuart masques.¹⁴ Indeed, the Accession Day tournaments were problematic for James because they allowed courtiers the opportunity to distinguish themselves on the tiltyard and proclaim their own ambitions before the Queen and her subjects in what Richard C. McCoy terms the Elizabethan "chivalric compromise"—a tacit agreement that members of the nobility could use the court stage to pursue individual chivalric honor as long as they applied their personal mythologies to the service of the Crown.¹⁵ As James must have understood, however, this

¹¹ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 67.

¹² Nichols, *Progresses*, 2:210.

¹³ Qtd. in E. K. Chambers, *Sir Henry Lee: An Elizabethan Portrait* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 212; Nichols, *Progresses*, 2:210.

¹⁴ Richard Badenhause, "Disarming the Infant Warrior: Prince Henry, King James, and the Chivalric Revival," *Papers on Language and Literature* 31, no. 1 (1995): 31 note.

¹⁵ Richard C. McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (University of California Press, 1989), 18–19.

precarious arrangement left the door open to factionalism and dissent.

Essex, for instance, would ultimately try to turn the public support he garnered on the tiltyard against the Queen, and the entertainment he staged for the Accession Day celebrations of 1595 best illustrates the dangerous power of the tradition that Henry was now trying to revive.¹⁶ Bookending the Earl's impressive performance at tilt were a pair of lavish set pieces, composed in collaboration with Francis Bacon, in which Essex, in the role of Erophilus, or Love, is first tempted by three "enchanted orators of Philautia," or Self-Love: a Philosopher, a Soldier, and a Statesman.¹⁷ Each praises the Earl's unmatched abilities in their respective fields and urges him to use his talents for self-advancement rather than thankless service. As if needing time to decide, Essex delayed the conclusion of his show until the end of the day's events, at last announcing, with the help of his Squire, that he would persist in all three pursuits but dedicate their rewards to the Queen:

For her recreation, he will confer with his muse: for her defence and honour, he will sacrifice his life in the wars, hoping to be embalmed in the sweet odours of her remembrance; to her service will he consecrate all his watchful endeavours; and will ever bear in his heart the picture of her beauty, in his actions of her will, and in his fortune of her grace and favour.¹⁸

Though surprisingly open about the central contradiction of Elizabethan chivalry, Essex's entertainment would appear to resolve the conflict in the usual way. In context, however, the performance amounted to a veiled threat: locked in a struggle with political rivals over the vacant secretary of state position and the extent of England's Protestant interventionism, Essex characterized himself as Elizabeth's most competent advisor and tried to force her public endorsement of this view.¹⁹ The temptations of Self-Love, in combination with dynamic displays of the Earl's charisma and martial prowess, all worked to suggest that the ambivalent Queen was at risk of losing her leading knight's support. Furthermore, Essex's self-aggrandizement seems

¹⁶ Mervyn James, *Society, Politics, and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 450.

¹⁷ Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath, vol. 8 (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862), 383. Though the printed text only uses these Latin names, the show may have been presented with an English title: observer Rowland Whyte refers to Essex's "*darling piece of love and self-love*," and scholars have tended to follow suit, dubbing the performance *Of Love and Self-Love* (qtd. in Bacon 8:386).

¹⁸ Bacon, 8:386.

¹⁹ Paul E. J. Hammer, "Upstaging the Queen: The Earl of Essex, Francis Bacon and the Accession Day Celebrations of 1595," in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, ed. David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 55.

equally aimed at the Accession Day audience, as Paul E. J. Hammer proposes, indicating that his “intention was less to sway the Queen herself [...] than to build up political momentum and put pressure on her to surrender to his views on policy.”²⁰ It is little wonder that Elizabeth was forced to rebuke the Earl for his manipulative appropriation of her event, saying “that if she had thought their had been so much said of her, she wold not have bene their that Night, and soe went to Bed.”²¹

For the faction that had transferred their hopes from Essex to Henry, then, Elizabethan nostalgia and chivalric and martial iconography were not just coded allusions to militant Protestant political objectives, but also reassertions of aristocratic autonomy in an increasingly centralized state. Seeking to curb their predilection for warfare and violence, Elizabeth provided her aggressive noblemen with a grand platform on which they could still win honor and renown, but James dissolved that chivalric compromise and assumed absolute control of the ceremonial stage in an effort to establish himself as “the sole fount of honour,” as Mervyn James contends.²² Henry’s revival of Elizabethan chivalry can therefore be understood as an Essexian challenge to his father’s hegemony over courtly mythmaking: the Earl’s confrontational entertainment in 1595 underlined in bold the courtier’s right to serve the kingdom by first honoring himself, and as the Crown Prince, Henry was in the unique position to reclaim that independence and influence policy by cultivating a competing mythology with the public—just as Essex had done a decade before. Moreover, the young heir’s enthusiastic adoption of militant Protestant iconography must have appeared to promise that, once King himself, Henry would reverse James’s pacifist program and empower his ambitious nobles to chase prestige on the battlefield.

Perhaps emboldened by this endorsement, a group of Henry’s military advisors published their “Arguments for Warre” sometime in 1608. The short pamphlet makes no mention of the evils of Catholicism or the Habsburg Empire but instead cites aristocratic mobility and contentment as the most essential benefits of wars of expansion, concluding, “Our *Honour*, as the Stile of our Kings, by confluence of so many Titles increased; and by accession of so many territories as we held in *France*, our dominions and liberties so far enlarged. The facilities to effect this being now more then ever by the addition of strength, and subtraction of diversions, in this happy union of the *Britain Empire*”—a somewhat dubious attempt at making interventionism fit with James’s

²⁰ Hammer, 54.

²¹ Whyte, Rowland to Robert Sidney, in *Letters and Memorials of State*, ed. Arthur Collins, vol. 1 (London: Printed for T. Osborne, 1746), 362.

²² James, *Society, Politics, and Culture*, 333.

vision of a peaceable and unified British isles.²³ Warfare is vital to a healthy empire, the authors argue, for it provides “our factious spirits” with a necessary outlet, and “when people have no enemies abroad, they’ll find some at home.”²⁴ This cautionary message is addressed to Prince Henry but reads more like a warning for the King on the Prince’s behalf. That James quickly commissioned a forceful refutation of the “Arguments” indicates that he interpreted it as such and viewed his son’s deepening association with this dissenting faction as a legitimate threat to court stability. Indeed, Sir Robert Cotton’s *An Answer* utilizes extensive historical evidence in exposing the dangers inherent to an unregulated culture of chivalric honor, including an allusion to Essex’s failed rebellion that could just as soon be directed at the increasingly popular Prince:

Our own times can afford some, whose spirit improved by *Military employment*, and made wanton with popular applause, might have given instance of these dangers, if good successe had been a relative to bad intentions. And every age breeds some exorbitant spirits, who turn the edge of their own sufficiency upon whatsoever they can devour in their ambitious apprehensions, seeking rather a great then a good Fame; and holding it the chiefest Honour to be thought the Wonder of their times.²⁵

In the end, the tract returns to this contrast between “great” and “good Fame” and attempts to refashion honor on the King’s pacifist terms, arguing that “it is the best for *Safety*, and the most for *Honour*, to remain as we were, *Arbiters* of *Europe*, and so by *Neutralitie* sway still the Ballance of our mightiest Neighbours. [...] By this way shall we gain the Seat of *Honour*, *Riches*, and *Safety*; and in all other but endlesse *Expence*, *Trouble*, and *Danger*.”²⁶

As this exchange makes clear, the larger matter of contention between James and his son’s supporters was the source from which honor could be derived. Echoing the message of Essex’s 1595 tilt, the authors of the “Arguments” stress the equal and complementary importance of “Self-Love,” or aristocratic self-determination, and “Love,” or willing glorification of the state. Formerly, the chivalric tournament helped strike this balance and served as the necessary outlet that the pamphlet describes, but the King’s response characterizes such independence as the root of rebellion and reaffirms his sole authority over courtly mythmaking by defining “good Fame” as

²³ “Propositions of Warre and Peace Delivered to His Highness Prince Henry by Some of His Military Servants: Arguments for Warre,” in *An Answer Made by Command of Prince Henry, to Certain Propositions of Warre and Peace, Delivered to His Highness by Some of His Military Servants*, by Sir Robert Cotton (London: Roger Daniel, 1655), 3–4.

²⁴ “Arguments for Warre,” 2.

²⁵ Sir Robert Cotton, *An Answer Made by Command of Prince Henry, to Certain Propositions of Warre and Peace, Delivered to His Highness by Some of His Military Servants* (London: Roger Daniel, 1655), 22.

²⁶ Cotton, 95–96.

that which is derived only through him and adherence to his political ideals. Ironically, this public debate reintroduced Elizabethan vulnerabilities to James's tightly controlled court stage. Though Henry had long been associated with militant Protestantism and had of late welcomed this affiliation, his position at the center of these feuding pamphlets would have offered many readers confirmation of his oppositional stance. This would be especially true for court audiences already privy to internal tensions and for whom the stakes of the conflict were highest, and indeed, the reenergized debate surrounding chivalric honor and aristocratic autonomy carried over into the 1608–09 entertainment season by way of Jonson's *The Masque of Queens*—performed in the Banqueting House at Whitehall on 2 February—which reiterates the *Answer's* assertions and thus evokes the Prince's adversarial presence.²⁷

Jonson describes the masque as “a celebration of honorable and true fame bred out of virtue” (5), but the scene opens on twelve witches representing the selfish passions that lead to insurrection and, thus, “the opposites to good Fame” (16): “stupid Ignorance,” “wild Suspicion,” “quick Credulity,” “Two-facèd Falsehood,” “Murmur,” “Malice,” “Impudence,” “Slander,” “black-mouthed Execration,” “Bitterness,” “Rage,” “Mischief,” and the Dame, who leads the rest in dances and incantations intended to spoil the season and sow discord throughout James's kingdom (105–19).²⁸ Before they can succeed, the witches are chased away by Heroic Virtue and his daughter, Good Fame, who reveal eleven warrior queens surrounding Queen Anne atop “a glorious and magnificent building figuring the House of Fame” (338–9). As Heroic Virtue explains, these ancient rulers earned this distinction by conferring their individual honors on the greatest queen of all, and Anne's honor is correspondingly virtuous because it is “Far from self-love, as humbling all her worth / To him that gave it” (402–3). “You, most royal and happy king,” Heroic Virtue concludes,

cannot but embrace
A spectacle so full of love and grace
Unto your court, where every princely dame
Contents to be as bounteous of her fame
To others as her life was good to her.
For by their lives they only did confer
Good on themselves, but by their fame, to yours,

²⁷ Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 361.

²⁸ Quotations from Jonson are from *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

And every age the benefit endures. (408–21)

Jonson notes that the Queen helped devise this show, and though some have seen her prominent role as subversive, she is held up here as the paragon of selflessness and a guiding example for the “exorbitant spirits” denounced in the *Answer* and now caricatured by the witches.²⁹ Like Cotton’s pamphlet, then, Jonson’s masque vilifies and invalidates aristocratic honor culture by redefining true fame as that which flows both to and from the King alone.

A similar tactic is employed in championing James’s pacifist values. If Henry and his supporters had failed to recognize themselves in the insubordinate witches, they could not have missed Jonson’s shrewd inversion of their heroic ideal. Like Raleigh, Essex, and the authors of the “Arguments,” the witches regard war as “an end in itself [and] a fundamental condition of social life,” to borrow Steven Marx’s characterization of the old Elizabethan war party, but their desire for glory leads only to chaos: “I hate to see these fruits of a soft peace,” the Dame complains, “Let us disturb it then, and blast the light; / Mix hell with heaven, and make Nature fight / Within herself” (132–6).³⁰ In contrast, Good Fame holds an olive branch and uses instruments of war to “blaze [the King’s] peace” (411). Her chariots carry the witches away, and the masque’s closing song announces James’s victory over the self-serving militarism that doomed warlike nations of the past:

Who, Virtue, can thy power forget
That sees these live and triumph yet?
Th’ Assyrian pomp, the Persian pride,
Greeks’ glory, and the Romans’, died;
And who yet imitate
Their noises, tarry the same fate.
Force greatness all the glorious ways
You can, it soon decays,
But so good Fame shall never:
Her triumphs, as their causes, are forever. (517–26)

On one hand, this appropriation of martial and chivalric rhetoric and iconography continues Jonson’s efforts to adapt honor and fame to what Marx calls “the dominant Stuart mode of expression, [...] a culture of pacifism,” but it has the added effect of relegating military heroism to the distant past.³¹ Even the warrior queens joining Anne in the House of Fame are “of times

²⁹ See, for instance, Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, “Anne of Denmark and the Subversions of Masquing” (1993), who argues that *The Masque of Queens* and others from this period “provided a site for contesting the gender ideology dominant in the King’s Court and on the public stage, as they insisted upon the Queen’s (and womankind’s) worth and power” (350).

³⁰ Steven Marx, “Shakespeare’s Pacifism,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (1992): 51.

³¹ Marx, 58.

long gone” (374), but they are exceptional because, like Good Fame, their shows of force helped pave the way for James’s everlasting peace; anyone still imitating the outdated and ineffectual “noises” of the vainglorious ancients must yield to the King’s modern conception of honor or fade into obscurity.

The full weight of this ultimatum cannot be understood without imagining its delivery in front of the House of Fame. Designed by Inigo Jones and derived, Jonson explains, from “*that noble description made by Chaucer of the place*” (458), the imposing structure was adorned with depictions of “*land battles, sea fights, triumphs, loves, sacrifices, and all magnificent subjects of honor*” in brass and silver (456–7), as well as golden statues, on the lower level, “*of the most excellent poets, as Homer, Virgil, Lucan, etc., as being the substantial supporters of Fame, [and] for the upper, Achilles, Aeneas, Caesar, and those great heroes which these poets had celebrated*” (452–4). The building’s architecture likewise synthesized “classic and romantic, heroic and chivalric,” as Stephen Orgel observes—“a continual ideal of James’s reign.”³² Jones’s stage machinery thus enhances every part of Jonson’s argument: its ornamental relics serve to antiquate warfare while simultaneously reclaiming martial and chivalric history for the King, and its privileging of “men-making poets,” to quote from Heroic Virtue’s description of the façade (362), furthers the masque’s assertion that fame cannot be individually won, but must be bestowed upon the deserving by James and his appointed mythmakers.

But the focal point of the House of Fame—and, by extension, *The Masque of Queens* itself—was Anne and her fellow masquers “*sitting upon a throne triumphal erected in form of a pyramid and circled with all store of light*” (340–1). Summarizing the purposes of the Stuart masques as a whole, Orgel argues that “they teach, they celebrate virtue, they persuade by example; they lead the court to its ideal self through wonder,” and indeed, just as the Queen exemplified selfless service for the ambitious nobles in the audience, her pyramidal throne would, in that moment, have mirrored James’s hierarchically arranged gallery, for “the closer one sat to the monarch,” Orgel explains, “the ‘better’ one’s place was, an index to one’s status, and more directly, to the degree of favor one enjoyed.”³³ In this way, *The Masque of Queens* not only depicts but imposes the King’s idealized vision of his court upon reality. Jonson continues describing Anne’s

³² Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 65.

³³ Orgel, 57, 11.

dazzling setting, writing, “*The friezes both below and above [the throne] were filled with several-colored lights like emeralds, rubies, sapphires, carbuncles, etc., the reflex of which, with other lights placed in the concave, upon the masquers’ habits, was full of glory*” (460–3), but spectators too used these prestigious occasions to flaunt their own finery, and, as Orgel notes, “No house lights were dimmed to begin the performance; the spectators’ own costumes and jewels were part of the show.”³⁴ When, at last, the masquers descended from the stage and, still in character, led James’s noblemen in emblematic dances, this ritual of incorporation was complete: the entire Banqueting House became what Orgel calls “an extension of the royal mind,” and even the militant Protestants advocating for the Prince’s ideologically adversarial cause were forced to participate in the masque’s celebration of pacifism and monarchical authority.³⁵

The last of these dances, however, was “*graphically disposed into letters, and honoring*” not Henry, but “*the name of the most sweet and ingenious prince, Charles, Duke of York*” (506–7). Following tributes for most of the royal family, this omission would have been notable and was almost certainly intended to underscore the masque’s implicit “threat of exclusion, [...] one of the mechanisms of coercion,” Martin Butler argues, “in which the masques so powerfully traded.”³⁶ Butler speaks of the Stuart masque in its established form, but it was *The Masque of Queens* that first employed an antimasque—“a foil or false masque,” as defined in Jonson’s preface (12)—to depict the symbolic expulsion of disruptive forces from James’s court stage.³⁷ As would be the case for the majority of Jonson’s antimasque figures from this point forward, the witches encroach on the sacred masquing space from the kingdom’s margins: “From the lakes and from the fens,” one chants, “From the rocks and from the dens, / From the woods and from the caves, / [...] here are we” (47–52). And in the end, they are bound to Good Fame’s chariots and carried back beyond these limits. Previous masques had centered on themes of access and inclusion, and the hierarchical seating arrangements and communal dances always worked to exploit “the audience’s need to belong,” as Butler contends.³⁸ Here, however, Jonson explicitly contrasts the exiled witches with the remaining festive community in order to illustrate the fate awaiting those unwilling to conform to the King’s mythology.

³⁴ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 45; Orgel, *Illusion of Power*, 30.

³⁵ Orgel, *Illusion of Power*, 43.

³⁶ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 60.

³⁷ Jonson credits the Queen with prompting this innovation, though, as he admits, he had previously experimented with antimasque elements in *The Haddington Masque*, staged during the 1607–08 entertainment season (8–14).

³⁸ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 60.

In both message and design, then, *The Masque of Queens* answers the challenge that Henry had recently come to represent, but while Cotton's pamphlet tried reasoning with the Prince's dissenting faction, Jonson's masque demands and ultimately compels compliance. Despite this redoubled effort to stall the growth of his son's competing mythology, however, James effectively exacerbated the controversy by quite literally giving it center stage. As Leah S. Marcus has shown, audiences in this period scrutinized every entertainment for hidden commentary on the "burning issues of the day," and in a season defined by Henry's adversarial presence, each play sharing the ceremonial stage would have resonated with the tensions on everyone's minds.³⁹ Orgel notes that "when the Lord Chamberlain's Men became the King's Men they became [...] part of the pageantry of Jacobean royal power," and their performances at previous entertainment seasons would, like the statuary adorning the House of Fame, have helped form a towering monument to the King's absolute authority.⁴⁰ With James now defending his mythmaking powers from a palpable, external threat, however, these plays speak more to the destabilization of the court stage than its impenetrability.

II

The Masque of Queens served as the centerpiece of the 1608–09 entertainment season, but the King's Men filled out the remaining Christmastime program by staging twelve plays for James and his court.⁴¹ Their titles are unknown, but it is likely that Shakespeare's newest compositions, *Coriolanus* and *Pericles*, were among them. Because of its references to the Midlands corn riots of 1607, *Coriolanus* is typically dated to 1608, and Marcus has reinforced that estimation by linking the play's themes to the debates surrounding London's 1608 charter, which, as with the riots, centered on civil liberties and monarchical overreach.⁴² In the context of its inaugural court performance, however, these themes map seamlessly onto the analogous conflict then playing out on the ceremonial stage, and indeed, for a court audience focused on the escalating tensions

³⁹ Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 33.

⁴⁰ Stephen Orgel, "Making Greatness Familiar," in *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theater*, ed. David M. Bergeron (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 22.

⁴¹ Alvin Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theater in the Stuart Court, 1603–1613* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 206.

⁴² Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare*, 208; for more on the 1608 composition date of *Coriolanus*, see the relevant entry in Gary Taylor's exhaustive "The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Plays," in *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 69–144.

between the King and the Prince, *Coriolanus* would seem to invite topical interpretation and pit pacifism and monarchical authority against chivalric honor and aristocratic autonomy. Marcus notes that, in performance, the play's sympathies "can tilt either way," and in less ambiguous circumstances, the plight of Caius Martius might work to validate one of these opposing ideals.⁴³ Under the strain of two competing mythologies, however, the meaning of *Coriolanus* remains dependent on the allegiances of the spectators, its instability mirroring the stage on which it was mounted.

The play presents a military society governed by the same values that Jonson's masque seeks to discredit. When Volumnia declares that a battle scar "more becomes a man / Than gilt his trophy" (1.3.36–7), and Cominius names "valor [...] the chiefest virtue" (2.2.81), a court audience could hardly fail to recognize the heroic ideals championed by Henry and the old Elizabethan war party.⁴⁴ Martius even echoes the "Arguments for Warre" in seeing an upcoming battle as a needed "means to vent / Our musty superfluity" (1.1.216–7), and Aufidius's servants likewise rehearse the pamphlet's claims that idleness leads inevitably to infighting:

SECOND SERVINGMAN: This peace is nothing but to rust iron, increase tailors,
and breed ballad-makers.

FIRST SERVINGMAN: Let me have war, say I. It exceeds peace as far as day does
night. It's sprightly walking, audible, and full of vent. Peace is a very
apoplexy, lethargy, mulled, deaf, sleepy, insensible, [...] and it makes men
hate one another. (4.5.219–29)

In this way, the play floats one possible explanation for the divisions that threaten to "sack great Rome with Romans" (3.2.307), and while tensions are certainly present from the opening scene, militant Protestant spectators would be quick to note that Martius and his fellow citizens only turn against each other once the Volscians have been subdued and the people of Rome lack a common enemy. By the same token, however, their rift can be read as evidence for James's view: from the perspective of Cotton's pamphlet and Jonson's masque, militarism is incompatible with social harmony, and Martius is simply unsuited for peacetime.

Indeed, Martius is the very embodiment of chivalric honor. His martial prowess is unmatched, his generals attest, for his "looks" and "sounds" alone make "enemies shake as if the world / Were feverous and did tremble" (1.4.59–62), and even in a society organized entirely

⁴³ Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare*, 207.

⁴⁴ Quotations from Shakespeare are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., Third Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016).

around heroism, his reputation “cannot in the world / Be singly counterpoised” (2.2.83–4). But some believe that Martius pursues the wrong kind of honor, and their complaints evoke Cotton’s criticisms of the “exorbitant spirits [...] seeking rather a great than a good Fame.”⁴⁵ “Consider you what services he has done for his country?” one citizen asks, questioning whether Martius is truly to blame for the imbalances dividing the populace: “Very well,” another responds, “and could be content to give him good report for’t, but that he pays himself with being proud. [...] I say unto you, what he hath done famously, he did it to that end. Though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it [...] to be partly proud, which he is, even to the altitude of his virtue” (1.1.25–34). The tribunes agree, alleging that Martius is “o’ercome with pride, ambitious past all thinking, / Self-loving” (4.6.32–3), and in the polarized setting of the play’s first court performance, these conflicting reports about Martius’s character and motivations would appear to reopen the debate that *The Masque of Queens* tries to silence. For his supporters, Martius’s tireless quest for individual honor ultimately enhances the entire state, but his detractors insist that those same ambitions are self-serving and dangerous. With the controversy surrounding Prince Henry and his chivalric revival pervading this holiday program, spectators would likely perceive themselves as divided along these same lines.

Moreover, the discernible correspondence between Martius and Henry would be all but confirmed by the play’s striking emphasis on Martius’s adolescent years. In a lengthy defense of her and her son’s shared priorities, Volumnia recalls that “when youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his way,” she “was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame” (1.3.5–12), and she practically quotes contemporary reports about Henry’s activities when comparing Martius to his own like-minded offspring, bragging, “He had rather see the swords and hear a drum than look upon his schoolmaster” (1.3.52–3). In the same manner, before citing any recent triumphs of leadership, Cominius dwells on Martius’s teenage military exploits in supporting his bid for consul:

At sixteen years,
When Tarquin made a head for Rome, he fought
Beyond the mark of others. Our then dictator,
Whom with all praise I point at, saw him fight
When with his Amazonian chin he drove
The bristled lips before him. He bestrid
An o’erpressed Roman and i’t’h’ consul’s view

⁴⁵ Cotton, *An Answer*, 22.

Slew three oppressors. Tarquin's self he met
 And struck him on his knee. In that day's feats,
 When he might act the woman in the scene,
 He proved the best man i'th' field, and for his meed
 Was brow-bound with the oak. His pupil age
 Man-entered thus, he waxèd like a sea,
 And in the brunt of seventeen battles since
 He lurched all swords of the garland. (2.2.84–98)

As Robin Headlam Wells observes, there is no obvious reason why Cominius should highlight this particular episode in affirming Martius's "suitability for political office," nor why Shakespeare should specify that Martius was close to Henry's age when he first stepped on the battlefield, other than "to remind his audience that, half a dozen or so years after Essex's death, and the apparent demise of the neo-chivalric values he stood for, support was growing once more for the old heroic ideal, this time embodied in a charismatic young warrior-hero in the making."⁴⁶ The assertion is compelling, but we do not need to guess at Shakespeare's intentions to acknowledge that a court audience attuned to Henry's Essexian aims would understand Martius in much the same way, even if their opinions of him would vary as much as their feelings toward Essex and the Prince himself.

For the King, then, Martius's revolt against Rome would simply bolster Cotton's previous claims, providing the Prince with additional historical proof that "heads of dangerous Rebellions have been onely such as by Command in Warre have forgot to obey in Peace."⁴⁷ Early on, Martius seems appropriately motivated by patriotic duty, modestly telling Lartius that "I have done / As you have done, [...] that's what I can [...] for my country" (1.9.15–7). Yet at the prospect of vanquishing his greatest rival, he expresses an alarming willingness to sacrifice this loyalty for personal glory:

Were half to half the world by th'ears and he
 Upon my party, I'd revolt to make
 Only my wars with him. He is a lion
 That I am proud to hunt. (1.1.224–7)

And indeed, once peace has been achieved and Martius must adjust to a political reality in which honor is not self-produced but contingent on the people's approval, he finds himself unable to "beg their stinking breaths" (2.1.224). "I will not do't," he asserts, clinging to the personal autonomy that military life affords, "Lest I surcease to honor mine own truth / And by my body's actions

⁴⁶ Robin Headlam Wells, "'Manhood and Chevalrie': *Coriolanus*, Prince Henry, and the Chivalric Revival," *The Review of English Studies* 51, no. 203 (2000): 405.

⁴⁷ Cotton, *An Answer*, 21.

teach my mind / A most inherent baseness” (3.2.120–3). Like the witches in Jonson’s masque, he is consequently banished from the city, but still he is unwilling to relinquish control over his sense of self: “I banish you,” he retorts, “thus I turn my back. / There is a world elsewhere” (3.3.120–32).

As Wells argues, this other world that Martius seeks is “an idealized world of heroic combat in which the mundane realities of class and politics are refined out of existence,” and while his chivalric code dictates revenge for the slight he has suffered, Martius’s warring on Rome is further motivated by a need to reimpose this ideal upon the world to which he once belonged.⁴⁸ As early as the play’s first scene, Martius fantasizes about freeing himself from the plebeians’ demands—“Would the nobility lay aside their ruth / And let me use my sword,” he pines, “I’d make a quarry / With thousands of these quartered slaves as high / As I could pitch my lance” (1.1.188–91)—and his treasonous alliance with the Volscians at last provides him with this opportunity. Cotton recounts similar historical insurgencies in arguing that such turmoil is the inevitable result of an unregulated culture of chivalric honor, and if we continue reading *Coriolanus* from this perspective, we will recognize that Volumnia averts disaster by redefining honor in accordance with *The Masque of Queens*: “If it were so that our request did tend / To save the Romans, thereby to destroy / The Volscies whom you serve,” she explains,

you might condemn us
As poisonous of your honor. No, our suit
Is that you reconcile them, while the Volscies
May say, “This mercy we have showed,” the Romans,
“This we received,” and each in either side
Give all hail to thee and cry, “Be blessed
For making up this peace!” (5.3.132–40)

Over the course of the play, Volumnia has come to realize that she and Martius do not understand honor in the same way: “I had rather had eleven [children] die nobly for their country,” she says earlier, defending her son’s warlike disposition, “than one voluptuously surfeit out of action” (1.3.20–2). She is thus forced to correct his misconception: to destroy Rome for personal gain, she informs him, is to ensure that “his name remains / To th’ensuing age abhorred” (5.3.147–8), but to subordinate individual honor to the peace and prosperity of the realm is to achieve what she, like Jonson, might term “good Fame.”

Unlike the many “exorbitant spirits” described in Cotton’s pamphlet, then, Martius is

⁴⁸ Wells, ““Manhood and Chevalrie,”” 419.

persuaded to abandon his outmoded values, but as he admits, he will not survive the change: “For your son,” he tells his mother, “Most dangerously you have with him prevailed, / If not most mortal to him” (5.3.187–9). At the embittered Volscians’ provocations, he briefly relapses into his former habits, boasting, “I / Fluttered your Volscians in Corioles. / Alone I did it” (5.6.113–5), and they “tear him to pieces” in a multifaceted metaphor for the disintegration of his chivalric sense of self and the destabilizing factionalism wrought by such misguided principles (5.6.119). Indeed, the image serves as a foil to what Wells calls “the play’s ruling image of community—the body/state analogy,” which James was fond of employing himself.⁴⁹ Here, Menenius relates the allegory in ascribing the restless citizens their proper role in the social hierarchy:

The senators of Rome are this good belly,
And you the mutinous members. For examine
Their counsels and their cares, digest things rightly
Touching the weal o’th’ common, you shall find
No public benefit which you receive
But it proceeds or comes from them to you
And no way from yourselves. (1.1.139–45)

As the rest of the play makes clear, it is in fact the populace that nourishes the body politic in *Coriolanus*, and Martius the mutinous member that threatens its health. But while he is ultimately incapable of reform, Martius’s final act is one of self-sacrifice and truly honorable acceptance of his communal obligations, and for this, he is rewarded with “a noble memory” (5.6.152), just as Jonson’s closing song promises.

For the Prince and his dissenting faction, however, Martius’s demise could just as easily appear tragic and unjust, a reflection of their own diminished autonomy in James’s increasingly centralized state. Though he lives for military glory, Martius’s underlying motivation is simply to “stand / As if a man were author of himself” (5.3.35–6), and for this independence, he, like Essex in the 1595 tilt, is content to apply his talents to the service of his country: “I had rather be their servant in my way,” he explains, “Than sway with them in theirs” (2.1.191–2). Indeed, Martius resists the political realm precisely because his status will depend on an external authority, and when the consulship is nevertheless thrust upon him by an initially adoring public, he resents being made to perform in their trivial ceremonies: “Why in this wolvisish toge should I stand here,” he asks, “To beg of Hob and Dick that does appear / Their needless vouches? Custom calls me to’t”

⁴⁹ Wells, 415. See James’s 1603 speech to Parliament, for instance, in which he defends his divine right over “all the whole Isle,” declaring, “I am the Head, and it is my Body; [...] I hope therefore no man will be so unreasonable as to thinke that I [...] should have a divided and monstrous Body” (272).

(2.3.108–10). He even seems to mock the pacifist pageants in which James’s court was forced to participate each holiday season, sneering, “plant love among’s; / Throng our large temples with the shows of peace / And not our streets with war!” (3.3.35–7), and in a mirror image of the antimasque through which Jonson threatens the uncooperative with exclusion, Martius is expelled from the city for refusing to play along. In this way, the play can be read as an indictment of the King’s authoritarian control of the ceremonial stage and its mythmaking powers, and Martius’s insurrection a courageous reassertion of the aristocracy’s customary rights.

At the same time, some interpreters of *Coriolanus* have persuasively linked Martius not with the warrior Prince, but with his absolutist father, and this reading must have seemed equally plausible in the unstable circumstances of 1608–09.⁵⁰ Throughout the play, Martius’s political opponents repeatedly echo the rhetoric of militant Protestant dissent: the tribunes charge him with “contriv[ing] to take / From Rome all seasoned office and to wind / Yourself into a power tyrannical” (3.3.61–3), as well as “affecting one sole throne / Without assistance” (4.6.33–4), and even Volumnia claims that he is “too absolute” (3.2.39). In the same manner, Martius’s belligerent answers are often couched in “the language of Stuart absolutism,” as Leah Marcus contends.⁵¹ By entertaining “the multitudinous tongue,” Martius insists, “We nourish gainst our Senate the cockle / Of rebellion, insolence, sedition” and “debase / The nature of our seats” (3.1.67–153), and he effectively repeats James’s own well-worn arguments in associating ruinous factionalism with a lack of centralized power: “when two authorities are up— / Neither supreme,” he warns, “how soon confusion / May enter twixt the gap of both and take / The one by th’other” (3.1.106–9).

This is not to suggest that each of the above-mentioned perspectives is proportionally sound. One must read quite selectively, for instance, in order to conflate James’s monarchical authority with that of the citizens of the Roman Republic, and James might even have viewed the impressionable plebeians with the same suspicion that he held for Henry’s popular following. But to read *Coriolanus* selectively is to reenact the approach of a partisan court audience then navigating an exceptionally politicized entertainment season. In this context, one could not hear a character declare that “valor is the chiefest virtue” without considering the controversy at hand, and the play can reasonably be made to uphold or subvert that consequential claim. Indeed,

⁵⁰ See, for instance, Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries* (1983), who argues that “it is on such absolutist models as the king [...] that *Coriolanus* is imagined” (193).

⁵¹ Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare*, 205.

regardless of Shakespeare's original intentions, each of these readings would have been imposed upon the play by spectators juxtaposing peace with war, "Love" with "Self-Love," and James with Henry in their own minds, and the ease with which its themes conform to the contours of these debates is a direct result of the new instability of the ceremonial stage itself. Like *The Masque of Queens* and the surrounding holiday program to which it belonged, then, the first court performance of *Coriolanus* provided a space for the confrontation of two conflicting ideals, and in this, the once invulnerable Banqueting House must have resembled the imperiled city of Rome, and Henry the disgruntled warrior outside its gates.

III

Though less overtly political than *Coriolanus*, contemporary interpretations of *Pericles* would have been similarly shaped by these contentious conditions. Significant uncertainty surrounds the play's authorship and origins, but we know that it was performed at least once before being registered with the Stationers' Company on 20 May 1608, and it is reasonable to assume, along with Thomas Roebuck and Laurie Maguire, that "Shakespeare was collaborating on *Pericles* around the same time he wrote *Coriolanus*."⁵² By all accounts an instant success and "one of the most popular plays of its time," *Pericles* was almost certainly among the other King's Men plays that shared the court stage with *Coriolanus* and *The Masque of Queens* at the end of the year, and as such, it can likewise be made to speak to the escalating tensions between the King and the Prince, just as it would have then.⁵³ Unlike *Coriolanus*, however, *Pericles* appears in this context to join *The Masque of Queens* in leading Henry and his fractious circle toward James's unifying ideals; yet, as in the masque, the very acknowledgement of Henry's competing mythology seems to cast doubt over the entire enterprise.

From the perspective of the 1608–09 court audience, *Pericles* would nearly pass for a second Jonsonian masque. Its tragicomic arc, in which Pericles moves roughly from misfortune to felicity and the world he inhabits from chaos to order, parallels the antimasque/masque structure

⁵² Thomas Roebuck and Laurie Maguire, "Pericles and the Language of National Origins," in *This England, That Shakespeare: New Angles on Englishness and the Bard*, ed. Willy Maley and Margaret Tudeau-Clayton (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 40; see Taylor, "Canon and Chronology" for more justification for a late 1607 or early 1608 composition date for *Pericles*, as well as a detailed overview of the play's probable collaborative authorship. For the purposes of the current argument, however, Shakespeare's precise role in writing *Pericles* is irrelevant.

⁵³ Walter Cohen, "Introduction to *Pericles*," in *The Norton Shakespeare*, by William Shakespeare, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., Third Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016), 2685.

introduced in *The Masque of Queens*, and just as Jonson contrasts the twelve witches in “*an ugly hell*” with the twelve queens atop the House of Fame (21), so too does *Pericles* present a host of diametrical images: the “foul incest” between Antiochus and his daughter, for instance, is eventually succeeded by Pericles’ and Marina’s natural embrace (1.1.127); the wicked king’s riddle returns in the form of Diana’s divine instruction; Pericles’ ship is first a site of bereavement and later of reunion; and even the severed heads adorning Antiochus’s palace find their foil in the temple’s sacrificial altar. But *Pericles* would have most resembled Jonson’s masque in its presentation: like Heroic Virtue and Good Fame, who lend unambiguous meaning to every symbol in *The Masque of Queens*, Gower serves as the play’s chorus, recounting and interpreting events as they unfold. “What’s dumb in show, I’ll plain with speech,” he repeatedly promises (3.0.14), and in the many dumb shows and moralizing narrations that punctuate the play’s action, Gower seems intent on reminding his audience that they are watching an instructive allegory devised precisely for occasions like the present entertainment season: “It hath been sung at festivals, / On ember eves and holy ales,” he says of his song, “And lords and ladies in their lives / Have read it for restoratives. The purchase is to make men glorious” (1.0.5–9).

Moreover, the play is brimming with pageants and ceremonies that would, in this setting, have resonated with the royal family’s mythmaking war. Most remarkably, given Henry’s ongoing revival and politicization of the Accession Day tradition, Pericles competes against several knights in a “joust and tourney” for Princess Thaisa’s favor (2.1.107), and if their chivalric attire and *impreses* were not enough to evoke the Elizabethan nostalgia associated with Henry’s popular cult, Pericles presents the very shield that Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586), another hero of the old Elizabethan war party, bore at the 1577 Accession Day tilts:

SIMONIDES: And what’s the sixth and last, the which the knight

Himself with such a graceful courtesy delivered?

THAISA: He seems to be a stranger, but his present is

A withered branch that’s only green at top,

The motto: *In hac spe vivo*.

SIMONIDES: A pretty moral!

From the dejected state wherein he is,

He hopes by you his fortunes yet may flourish. (2.2.39–45)

As Alan R. Young has shown, this *impresa* was then widely known, and the appearance of such an artifact would, in this political climate, have been as startling as the re-creation of an Elizabethan

tournament on James's court stage.⁵⁴ Following the tilts, however, Simonides compels his knights to participate in a series of dances, demanding, "Even in your armors, as you are addressed, / Will well become a soldiers' dance. / I will not have excuse" (2.3.91–3), and the scene is thus transformed from a chivalric contest into a courtly celebration more akin to a Stuart masque. In the end, this alteration proves meaningful, for it establishes a pattern that the play repeats as a whole.

Indeed, Pericles spends the first half of his arc firmly entrenched in the world of chivalric romance. At Antiochus's palace, he plays the role of the traditional "knight errant," as Walter Cohen observes, "risking death to win the beautiful maiden," and his heroic declarations resemble those of an Accession Day speech: "with a soul / Emboldened with the glory of her praise / [I] think death no hazard," he says, "Like a bold champion I assume the lists" (1.1.3–5, 1.1.62).⁵⁵ After a narrow escape, he resumes "looking for adventures in the world" (2.3.80), and a shipwreck leads him to the chivalric tournament in Pentapolis, where he continues in the same vein, proclaiming, "I'll show the virtue I have borne in arms. [...] Honor, be but equal to my will" (2.1.143–61). But the play's third act initiates a transition to a tragicomic world of piety, redemption, and divine intervention, and it is here that the audience would likely begin to relate *Pericles* with a masque. Gods descend and miraculously resolve the conflict in nearly all of Jonson's masques—Heroic Virtue, for instance, is dressed "*in the furniture of Perseus*" (341–2)—so Diana's appearance at the play's end would be a familiar sight on the court stage, and just as her visit is preceded by "the music of the spheres" (5.1.217), it is "*the sound of loud music*" that summons Heroic Virtue in *The Masque of Queens* (334). Furthermore, the "pageantry," "feats," "shows," "minstrelsy," and "pretty din" that coincide with this wondrous resolution would seem intertwined with the spectacle of the court in that moment (5.2.6–7), and this convergence on reality—cemented by Gower's final address to the spectators—would produce the same assimilative effect as the conclusion of the masque, in which the audience is made to join in a celebration, as Gower puts it, "of truth, of faith, of loyalty" (Epilogue 8).

Both visually and thematically, then, *Pericles* converts from an Elizabethan impresa to a Stuart masque, and in the context of the 1608–09 entertainment season, this contrast would suggest a disavowal of the individualist ideals associated with that earlier mode. Pericles' knightly

⁵⁴ Alan R. Young, *The English Tournament Imprese* (New York: AMS Press, 1988), 72.

⁵⁵ Cohen, "Introduction," 2865.

adventures are shown to breed factionalism and disorder in the nation he neglects to rule—“kingdoms without a head,” one mutinous lord warns in his sovereign’s absence, “Like goodly buildings left without a roof, / Soon fall to ruin” (2.4.36–8)—and while some have linked this aspect of the play to contemporary perceptions of James’s own absenteeism, it can just as easily be construed as support for James’s centralization of authority and an illustration, aimed at the heir to the throne, of the incompatibility between chivalric values and effective governance.⁵⁶ The theme is further developed by the storm that fractures the royal family—itsself a potential allegory for the tensions dividing James from his son—but, now humbled by forces beyond his control, Pericles abandons his knightly ambitions in favor of devout subservience: “We cannot but obey / The powers above us,” he says, in stark contrast with his earlier heroics, “Could I rage and roar / As doth the sea [Thaisa] lies in, yet the end / Must be as ’tis” (3.3.9–12). These revised declarations are often religious in nature, but next to *The Masque of Queens*, which similarly asserts, “Force greatness all the glorious ways / You can, it soon decays, / But so good Fame shall never” (523–5), Pericles’ newfound selflessness would resemble the obedience that James demanded of his own ambitious knights. And, as Gower makes clear, it is Pericles’ adoption of these deferential values that reunites his family and restores order in his kingdom: “Although assailed with fortune fierce and keen,” he summarizes, “Virtue preserved from fell destruction’s blast, / Led on by heaven and crowned with joy at last” (Epilogue 4–6).

But if *Pericles* seemed to espouse the King’s ideals in perfect harmony with *The Masque of Queens*, its meaning would nevertheless remain susceptible to the Prince’s adversarial presence, which, at points, threatens to overwhelm the entire play. After Pericles’ ship sinks in Pentapolis, for instance, a group of fishermen help him recover his “rusty armor” from the water (2.1.116–7), and he delivers a lengthy monologue on its significance:

Thanks, Fortune, yet, that after all thy crosses
 Thou givest me somewhat to repair myself!
 It was mine own, part of my heritage,
 Which my dead father did bequeath to me.
 [.....]
 It kept where I kept, I so dearly loved it,
 Till the rough seas that spares not any man
 Took it in rage, though, calmed, have given’t again.

⁵⁶ See, for instance, Stuart M. Kurland, “Shakespeare and James I: Personal Rule and Public Responsibility” (2012), who observes, “in his apparent inattention to government arising from his peripatetic lifestyle, James could seem to be abdicating the authority he claimed and leaving power to the caprices or ill will of ministers and favourites” (211).

I thank thee for't—my shipwreck now's no ill,
Since I have here my father gave in his will. (2.1.119–32)

Interpretations of this passage would differ wildly depending on the sympathies of the spectators: from the King's perspective, Pericles' fixation on heritage would number among his many early errors—the armor's rust signifying the obsolescence of his chivalric values; but for Henry and his supporters, this scene might have recalled the recent occasion at which Sir Henry Lee gifted the Prince a similarly meaningful suit of armor, and the rust would thus symbolize James's disregard for the chivalric tradition that Henry was entrusted to revive. More broadly, the prevalence of the kinds of artifacts treasured by Henry's cult, including this military heirloom, Sidney's Accession Day shield, and even Gower, whose manuscripts, as Roebuck and Maguire demonstrate, were contested "subjects of antiquarian research and recovery" in this period, would seem to underscore James's naked attempts at appropriating England's military heritage for his own ideological purposes, to which the historical relics adorning the House of Fame also attest.⁵⁷ And if one views the play's visual language as critical of the King, its central message will follow.

Indeed, several of the play's episodes can be understood as disparaging portrayals of James's absolutism. Antiochus, for instance, is repeatedly described as "tyrannous" (1.3.84), and Pericles recognizes that he can escape that wicked king's wrath by massaging his inflated ego: "Kings are earth's gods," he says, sounding very much like James himself, "in vice, their law's their will, / And, if Jove stray, who dares say Jove doth ill?" (1.1.104–5). Cleon and Dionyza are no better, leading their subjects to poverty and starvation, and, apropos of James's envy for his own son's popularity, attempting to murder their adopted daughter because she "gets / All praises" (4.0.33–4). In fact, the only worthy rulers in the play are those who share the values of Henry and his dissenting faction. "The good Simonides," for instance, who "deserves so to be called for his peaceable reign and good government" (2.1.98–100), holds his chivalric tournament because "princes are / A model which heaven makes like to itself. / As jewels lose their glory if neglected," he continues, "So princes their renowns if not respected" (2.2.10–3). Helicanus, who governs Tyre in Pericles' stead, likewise professes the value of "reproof, obedient and in order" (1.2.42), and, in placating his discontented lords, appears to hold the same beliefs about aristocratic autonomy and individual honor as the authors of the "Arguments for Warre": "Go, search like nobles, like noble subjects," he says, "And in your search, spend your adventurous worth, / Whom if you find and

⁵⁷ Roebuck and Maguire, "*Pericles and the Language*," 35.

win unto return, / You shall like diamonds sit about [Pericles'] crown (2.4.51–4).

From this perspective, Pericles' selflessness in the latter half of the play is so extreme as to seem exaggerated: "Sir, our vessel is of Tyre, in it the King," Helicanus explains, "A man who for this three months hath not spoken / To anyone, nor taken sustenance / But to prorogue his grief" (5.1.19–22). And, as Cohen observes, "Pericles does not even get to act out significant portions of his destiny," as they are either narrated by Gower or pantomimed in dumb show.⁵⁸ For those in the audience who resented being made to act out James's ideals in the masques' concluding dances, then, Pericles' total impotence might seem a reflection of their own dwindling sense of self-determination, and yet, the obvious artifice with which the story is presented would come dangerously close to exposing James's ideals as the stuff of fantasy. Orgel argues that, by the time of the English Civil War (1642–1651), "Parliament at last declared its authority by virtue of the realities of its power, and the absolute rule of the Stuart monarchy was revealed as a royal charade, a theatrical illusion."⁵⁹ No one could have predicted such an outcome from the vantagepoint of the 1608–09 entertainment season, but the emergence of Henry as a formidable competitor in the arena of courtly mythmaking introduced an unmistakable and precarious instability that would have been evident even in the masques and plays intended, ironically, to celebrate the King's uncontested supremacy.

⁵⁸ Cohen, "Introduction," 2865.

⁵⁹ Orgel, *Illusion of Power*, 89.

CHAPTER 3. 1609–11: *CYMBELINE* AND PRINCE HENRY'S INVESTITURE ON THE SPLINTERED COURT STAGE

I

The inaugural court performance of William Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* likely occurred during the 1610–11 entertainment season, which brought Prince Henry's year-long usurpation of his father's ceremonial stage to a close.¹ Formerly, the young Prince had limited means of growing his competing mythology and advancing his ideologically adversarial aims, as King James I had monopolized most mechanisms of courtly mythmaking and sought to suppress the neo-chivalric, militant Protestant faction with which his son had aligned. By 1609, however, Henry was busy lobbying for the financial and political independence that investiture would afford: in February, Venetian ambassador Marc' Antonio Correr reported that the Prince "shows a wish to enter on his estates," and when asked to wait an additional two years, the industrious teenager commissioned a survey of the ages at which previous princes had received their revenues, along with "certain REASONS alledged," as Richard Connock's title page explains, "which moved the KINGS in former Times [...] to create their Sons Princes of *Wales*. [...] Which COLLECTIONS may serve as an Inducement for the more speedy creating of Prince *HENRY*."² By October, James had relented, as the need to provide for the popular Prince represented a valuable bargaining tool in the Crown's ongoing struggle to secure a sufficient annual income from Parliament.³ The investiture itself was scheduled for the following June, but a masque at the upcoming holiday entertainment season was elected to serve as Henry's official introduction on the world stage. This show, Ben Jonson's *The Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers*, would radically alter the power dynamics at court, and a series of festivities the following summer—including Anthony Munday's (c. 1560–1633) *London's Love to the Royal Prince Henry* and Samuel Daniel's (1562–1619) *Tethys' Festival*—would tilt James and Henry's mythmaking war even further in the Prince's favor.

¹ For the 1610 dating of *Cymbeline*, see the relevant entry in Gary's Taylor's exhaustive "The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Plays," in *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 69–144. For more on this dating, see pp. 61–62 below.

² Horatio F. Brown, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, 1607–1610* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1904), 227; Richard Connock, *A Collection of the Names of All the Princes of This Kingdom of England* (London, 1747).

³ Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales, and England's Lost Renaissance* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 25–26.

With the 1610–11 entertainment season and Jonson's *Oberon, the Fairy Prince*, then, the King would work to reestablish his supremacy over the court stage, but the past year had done irreparable damage to the institution, as the coinciding *Cymbeline* would seem to attest.

The 1609–10 season was the subject of significant scrutiny both at home and abroad, for the March 1609 death of the Duke of Julich-Cleves had triggered a succession dispute that threatened to draw the major powers of Europe into religious conflict, and England faced mounting pressure to join the Protestant military alliance then forming under Henri IV of France (1533–1610).⁴ Predictably, James equivocated in the hope that diplomacy would prevail, but Henry's support for the interventionist cause was widely assumed: "From all sides one hears about the great *virtù* of the Prince, son to the King of England," Venetian statesman Paolo Sarpi vented that year, "but the world must wait a great while to reap benefit therefrom; for the King of England, however accomplished in the reformed religion, appears for the rest not to be worth much: *he* would like to do everything with words."⁵ Another, more optimistic ambassador reported hearing that Henry had "resolved to fight under his Most Christian Majesty [Henri IV] whenever he marched on Cleves," and all of Europe must have eagerly awaited confirmation of these rumors from the Prince's first show at court.⁶ For his part, Henry seems to have understood the magnitude of the moment: his eventual treasurer, Charles Cornwallis, wrote that Henry planned his performance such "that the World might know, what a brave Prince they were likely to enjoy," and in a pointed contemporary portrait by the Prince's painter, Robert Peake the Elder, Henry is depicted on horseback, in full knightly regalia, seizing the figure of Opportunity by the forelock as he marches toward the tiltyard.⁷

This image may in fact provide the clearest insight into the Prince's original intentions for his event, which in all likelihood did not include a masque at all. Roy Strong has proposed that the King, who was always apprehensive about his son's popularity, could have vetoed plans for a public tournament in favor of a scripted entertainment confined to the Banqueting House, and Correr's report from December suggests that this was indeed a matter of some contention: "The

⁴ Strong, 151.

⁵ Qtd. in John L. Lievsay, "Paolo Sarpi's Appraisal of James I," in *Essays in History and Literature: Presented by Fellows of The Newberry Library to Stanley Pargellis*, ed. Heinz Bluhm (Chicago: The Newberry Library, 1965), 115.

⁶ *CSPV, 1607–1610*, 506.

⁷ Charles Cornwallis, *An Account of the Baptism, Life, Death and Funeral, of the Most Incomparable Prince Frederick Henry, Prince of Wales* (London: Printed for J. Freeman, in Fleet-Street, 1751), 23; Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 174.

Prince of Wales has arrived in London to arrange for a tourney, which he intends to give in February,” the ambassador writes, “It will be the first time he has appeared in public in the lists. He found some difficulty in obtaining the King’s consent, but his Majesty did not wish to cross him.”⁸ At some point, James must have reconsidered, for in lieu of jousting on the tiltyard, Henry would perform in a private masquing ceremony devised by Jonson, the King’s preferred poet. Yet significant concessions to the Prince’s vision remained: like Peake’s painting, the masque would portray Henry as a chivalric hero in the mold of Queen Elizabeth’s Protestant knights, and, perhaps more importantly, the masque’s customary dances would be replaced by foot combats at barriers—safer and more carefully staged than jousting, but a potent display of the Prince’s martial prowess all the same. When, at Christmas, Henry issued “a Challenge to all the Knights of *Great Britain*” under the pseudonym of Meliadus—an anagram, poet William Drummond explains, for “MILES A DEO,” or “Soldier of God”—it must have been exceedingly clear that no attempt to limit Henry’s reach could prevent him from seizing upon this opportunity to signal his support for the French king’s anti-Habsburg crusade and launch himself into the vanguard of the militant Protestant movement.⁹

On the surface, Jonson’s *Barriers* appears sympathetic to these aspirations. Its elaborate backdrops, conceived by Jonson’s usual collaborator, Inigo Jones, recreate the neo-Arthurian world of Elizabeth’s Accession Day pageants, though the first of these imagines ancient Britain and its chivalric values in a state of decline: “The house of chivalry,” The Lady of the Lake laments,

decayed
Or rather ruined seems, her buildings laid
Flat with the earth that were the pride of time,
And did the barbarous Memphian heaps outclimb;
Those obelisks and columns broke and down
That struck the stars, and raised the British crown
To be a constellation; shields and swords
Cobwebbed and rusty; not a helm affords
A spark of luster, which were wont to give
Light to the world, and made the nation live. (32–43)¹⁰

Fortunately, as Arthur himself assures, Henry will “restore / These ruined seats of virtue, and build

⁸ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 141; Brown, *CSPV, 1607–1610*, 401.

⁹ Cornwallis, *An Account*, 23; William Drummond, *The Poetical Works of William Drummond of Hawthornden*, ed. William B. Turnbull (London: J. R. Smith, 1856), 72.

¹⁰ Quotations from Jonson are from *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

more” (84–5), and indeed, the Prince’s arrival on the stage initiates a magical revitalization of the entire scene: “What place is this so bright,” Merlin then wonders, “that doth remain / Yet undemolished? or but late built?” (130–1). In this, Jonson and Jones effectively dramatize the reformist rhetoric of the so-called Elizabethan war party, which viewed James’s non-interventionism as an affront to Britain’s heroic past, and, much like Sarpi, now took heart in Henry’s revival of the militant Protestant chivalry associated with Elizabeth’s reign. If Henry’s loyalty to this dissenting faction was still in question, however, Merlin’s ensuing prophecies append the future King to a noble lineage that stretches from “warlike Edward” to “great Eliza, [...] fear of all the nations nigh” (179, 200–2), and he uses “the name / Of our Meliadus” to reawaken the figure of Chivalry herself (373–4). “Were it from death, that name would wake me,” Chivalry proclaims,

O, I could gaze a day
Upon his armor that hath so revived
My spirits, and tells me that I am long-lived
In his appearance. Break, you rusty doors
That have so long been shut, and from the shores
Of all the world come knighthood like a flood
Upon these lists to make the field here good,
And your own honors that are now called forth
Against the wish of men to prove your worth! (381–90)

With that, fifty-six combatants streamed through the doors of the newly restored House of Chivalry and met Henry at barriers in the center of the Banqueting House. The tournament lasted all night, observer Edmund Howes records in his continuation of John Stow’s *Annales*, and “the Prince performed this challenge with wonderous skill, and courage, to the great joy and admiration of all the beholders.”¹¹

Despite repeated nods to the King’s supremacy—“Fair fall his virtue that doth fill that throne,” Arthur hastens to add, for instance, “In which I joy to find myself so outshone” (78–9)—as well as all the usual commendations for his pet political project, “the union of this isle” (76), those in the audience were likely surprised to see a spectacle of this kind on James’s court stage. A year prior, James had commissioned a lengthy tract from Sir Robert Cotton that identified chivalric honor as the “plot and pursuit” behind all “Civil troubles of this State,” and the centerpiece of the

¹¹ John Stow and Edmund Howes, *The Annales, or a Generall Chronicle of England, Begun First by Maister Iohn Stow, and after Him Continued and Augmented with Matters Forreyne, and Domestique, Auncient and Moderne, Vnto the Ende of This Present Yeere 1614.* by Edmond Howes, *Gentleman* (Londini: Impensis Thomae Adams, 1615), 897.

court's previous entertainment season, Jonson's *The Masque of Queens* (1609), was even more emphatic in its condemnation of the militarist culture that Henry was now openly promoting.¹² Indeed, Jonson apparently shared his patron's aversion to the violent chivalric ethos, once claiming that "the whole summe / Of errant Knight-hood" was fit for burning, and though the *Barriers* betrays some evidence of these inclinations, as when Arthur gently reminds Henry that "Defensive arms th' offensive should forego" (99), critics have commonly viewed the masque as an awkward attempt to satisfy both parties simultaneously. Strong, for instance, calls Jonson's dual aims "irreconcilable" and finds each tribute to James's policies so incongruous as to resemble "an afterthought added to appease the King," while Martin Butler more charitably supposes that Jonson knowingly provided a space where "conflict was not so much transcended as uncovered."¹³ Taken as a whole, the *Barriers* undeniably makes this mixed impression, but close reading of Jonson's text alone reveals a consistent and remarkably sophisticated effort to undermine Henry's interventionist message and, more specifically, to blunt the impact of the show's concluding combats.

Where, for instance, audience members might have expected to see "the conventional Excalibur," as J. W. Williamson contends, Arthur and The Lady of the Lake instead present Henry with a shield "wherein is wrought / The truth that he must follow" (94–5).¹⁴ This brief transaction is highlighted frequently in discussions of Jonson's divided loyalties, leading Richard Badenhause to allege that "perhaps too much critical emphasis has been placed on the shield as a central image of defensive behavior as opposed to offensive action."¹⁵ In fact, its significance has likely not been emphasized enough, as the shield remains on display throughout the entertainment, including the barriers themselves, and Merlin spends the bulk of the masque interpreting the British origin story it depicts. Moreover, Jonson uses its ekphrastic imagery to subvert the militarist conception of British history and rewrite the national myth in accordance with the King's pacifist values. Skipping over the "bold stories of Arthur's age" and the ancients who "made Caesar fly" (163, 174), Merlin instead credits Edward I (1239–1307) and Edward III

¹² Sir Robert Cotton, *An Answer Made by Command of Prince Henry, to Certain Propositions of Warre and Peace, Delivered to His Highness by Some of His Military Servants* (London: Roger Daniel, 1655), 21.

¹³ C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson, Vol. 8: The Poems; The Prose Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), 205; Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 143; Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 179.

¹⁴ J. W. Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror: Prince Henry Stuart: A Study of 17th Century Personation* (New York: AMS Press, 1978), 92.

¹⁵ Richard Badenhause, "Disarming the Infant Warrior: Prince Henry, King James, and the Chivalric Revival," *Papers on Language and Literature* 31, no. 1 (1995): 26.

(1312–1377) with industrial and agricultural innovations that established the present-day empire: “To your first speculation, you may view [...] first and warlike Edward,” he instructs the Prince,

then th’ increase
Of trades and tillage, under laws and peace,
Begun by him, but settled and promoved
By the third hero of his name, who loved
To set his own a-work, and not to see
The fatness of his land a portion be
For strangers. This was he erected first
The trade of clothing, by which art were nursed
Whole millions to his service, and relieved
So many poor, as since they have believed
The golden fleece, and need no foreign mine,
If industry at home do not decline. (176–90)

In a cunning reversal characteristic of Jonson’s masques in this period, “warlike Edward” is recast as an early hero of domestic policy and even non-interventionism—the epithet thus employed to ironic effect. Like exchanging Excalibur for a shield and King Arthur for two exemplars of modern statecraft, then, this passage can be understood as subtly sabotaging Henry’s chivalric revival by reclaiming the past for the King and valorizing his antithetical political priorities.

The pattern is repeated as Merlin continues making his way through the shield. Henry VII (1457–1509), a conqueror much-admired in the Prince’s circles, is praised instead for his fiscal responsibility, and though he “joined the roses that ensigned / Particular families” at the Battle of Bosworth, James is superior for uniting England, Scotland, and Wales through diplomacy (335–6). Protestant icons like Henry VIII (1491–1547) and Queen Elizabeth (1533–1603) are likewise recognized primarily for their investments in the nation’s defenses, and Elizabeth’s subsequent victory over the Spanish Armada only confirms that “civil arts the martial must precede,” as Merlin explains, sounding very much like James himself, “That laws and trade bring honors in and gain, / And arms defensive a safe peace maintain” (204–6). Indeed, when warrior monarchs do earn mention, their accomplishments are either undercut or reconfigured in this same way: Richard I (1157–1199), for instance, whose expansionist ambitions are contrasted with Edward I’s “tempered zeal” (237), was inevitably captured by his enemies and now represents “a mark of fortune’s spite, / When princes tempt their stars beyond their light” (227–8). And though Richard was right to spill “the blood / Of infidels,” he crossed a line when “the Austrian colors he [did] deject / With too much scorn” (224–32)—in other words, when he took up arms against his fellow

Christians, as Butler observes.¹⁶ If Henry had planned to align himself with Henri IV's anti-Habsburg coalition, then, he instead found himself enduring a public lecture from his father that urged the opposite course: "Royal and mighty James," Merlin concludes, "This is the height at which your thoughts must fly. / He knows [...] what can be done by power and what by love" (345–51).

Another instructive figure on the shield illuminates this additional method by which the text works against its lead performer. Edward the Black Prince (1330–1376), who, Merlin emphasizes, "had no more years than you" when he first triumphed on the battlefield, most honored himself by dedicating his rewards "to his father's use with this fit word: *I Serve*" (249, 258). James was fond of framing his monarchical authority in patriarchal terms, telling Parliament on 21 March 1609 that "Kings are also compared to Fathers of families: for a King is trewly *Parens patriae*, the politique father of his people," and Jean E. Graham has argued that every masque featured "the willing subordination of heir to monarch" so the audience "would, in theory, be able and motivated to go and do likewise, bearing themselves toward their king as his good and beloved children."¹⁷ With Henry now approaching open defiance, however, that lesson had to be directed toward the heir himself, and indeed, the masque's didactic tone reverts the ambitious Prince back into a dutiful son: "This is he, Meliadus, whom you / Must only serve and give yourself unto," The Lady of the Lake instructs, alluding to James, "And by your diligent practice to obey / So wise a master, learn the art of sway" (359–62). In this, the *Barriers* evokes the *Basilikon Doron* (1599), James's widely read "*Booke of instructions*" aimed at "*trayning vp*" his eventual successor "*in all the points of a Kings Office*," which in turn implies that Henry is still a child with much to learn about kingship.¹⁸ "Nay, stay your valor," Merlin later counsels, having cut the combats short,

'tis a wisdom high
In princes to use fortune reverently.
He that in deeds of arms obeys his blood
Doth often tempt his destiny beyond good.
Look on this throne, and in his temper view
The light of all that must have grace in you:
His equal justice, upright fortitude
And settled prudence with that peace endued

¹⁶ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 182.

¹⁷ James Stuart, *The Political Works of James I*, ed. Charles Howard McIlwain (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 307; Jean E. Graham, "The Performing Heir in Jonson's Jacobean Masques," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 41, no. 2 (2001): 384–85.

¹⁸ Stuart, *Political Works*, 3.

Of face, as mind, always himself and even. (393–401)

The proud aggression exhibited at the masque's conclusion is thus characterized as a vulnerability the young Prince will need to outgrow. Have your fun, Jonson seems to tell his subject, but take note of how a real king carries himself.

Indeed, the *Barriers* calls attention to its own artificiality by continually contrasting Henry's chivalric role-playing with the real business of governance: "this shield / Let down from heaven," Merlin declares upon the device's introduction,

that to his youth will yield
Such copy of incitement: not the deeds
Of antique knights, to catch their fellows' steeds,
Or ladies' palfries rescue from the force
Of a fell giant, or some score to unhorse.
These were bold stories of our Arthur's age;
But here are other acts; another stage
And scene appears; it is not since as then:
No giants, dwarfs or monsters here, but men.
His arts must be to govern and give laws
To peace no less than arms. (157–68)

At first glance, these lines resemble those in *The Masque of Queens* that worked to antiquate chivalric values by likening them to the "Assyrian pomp" and "Persian pride" of yore (519), but Jonson goes further here—owing, perhaps, to the raised stakes of the occasion—to cast doubt on the veracity of such "bold stories." As Norman Council has demonstrated, the historicity of Britain's Arthurian origins became tied up in the factional disputes of this period, and by "subject[ing] the exaggerated feats of the chivalric heroes to faint ridicule," Merlin clarifies that the world he inhabits, along with the ideals that world represents, belong in romantic fiction rather than the historical chronicles that responsible heads of state must study.¹⁹ Moreover, seventeenth century scholars debated the practical value of chivalric exercise with increasing regularity: for many of the militant Protestants rallying around the Prince, the tournament was still viewed as an essential "preparation for war," as J. R. Mulryne summarizes, but those who shared the anti-chivalric attitude of the Crown dismissed such spectacles as "adolescent game playing" far divorced from reality.²⁰ And Jonson stresses this gap at every opportunity: when, for instance,

¹⁹ Norman Council, "Ben Jonson, Inigo Jones, and the Transformation of Tudor Chivalry," *ELH* 47, no. 2 (1980): 272.

²⁰ J. R. Mulryne, "'Here's Unfortunate Revels': War and Chivalry in Plays and Shows at the Time of Prince Henry Stuart," in *War, Literature and the Arts in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, ed. J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (London: Macmillan, 1989), 168–69.

Merlin teases that “another stage / And scene appears; [...] No giants, dwarfs or monsters here, but men” (164–5), we can imagine the actor directing Henry’s attention toward the actual court in which they both stood, and the effect would have been to make the chivalric stage-world more quixotic and even juvenile in comparison. At various points, each of the masque’s central characters commands the young Prince to look upon his father (78, 359, 397), and indeed, in contrast with the authentic king at the opposite end of the hall, the fifteen-year-old running at barriers in Arthurian costume must have looked a bit like a child at play.

In this, the *Barriers* runs counter to the typical Stuart masque ritual, which transformed the Banqueting House into “an extension of the royal mind,” to quote from Stephen Orgel’s seminal work on the form, thus instantiating the King’s godlike ability “to rule, to control and order the world, [...] to project the workings of the mind outward in a physical, active form.”²¹ Opposing perspectives are always made to seem less real than the ideals represented on stage, which offered, Jerzy Limon notes, “a glimpse of an absolute reality” normally reserved for the King: in *The Masque of Queens*, for instance, a series of exemplary figures prove that military honor is fleeting and illusory compared to the “true fame” they achieved in support of the King’s peace (5).²² The *Barriers* trades in many of the same subversive tactics, as the preceding discussion illustrates, but on the whole, Jonson reverses his usual course, ceding the stage to a competing mythology in an effort to expose its conceits. Badenhausen contends that “despite his role as spectator in the masques danced by Henry, [James] still remained the center of attention and final arbiter of disputes concerning questions of textual symbolism,” and indeed, the *Barriers* reaffirms this authority over courtly mythmaking by magnifying the King’s disapproving presence.²³ Moreover, Jonson touts James’s real political accomplishments—most prominently, maintaining “a safe peace” and establishing “a union that shall never be declined” (206, 338)—as a means of persuading the King’s fellow spectators not to be taken in by the reformist fantasies depicted before them.

Weaponizing fictionalization in this way may have only succeeded in revealing James’s own vulnerabilities, however, for his long-desired legal unification of the British isles was, at this

²¹ Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 43, 47.

²² Jerzy Limon, “The Masque of Stuart Culture,” in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 211.

²³ Badenhausen, “Disarming,” 27.

point, politically dead, and a court audience undoubtedly attuned to such developments would have recognized this supposed accomplishment as little more than a fantasy itself.²⁴ Likewise, Henry's interventionist message "offered some corrective to James," as Mulryne observes, "whose diplomacy stressed unduly, some Protestants thought, the virtues of peace, at a time when the politics of European Protestantism required a more militant leader."²⁵ With the Julich-Cleves crisis nearing its breaking point, then, the masque's casual dismissal of a conceivable military solution must have elicited some of the same skepticism that Sarpi conveyed in complaining that "the King of England [...] would like to do everything with words."²⁶ And indeed, in spite of Jonson's best attempts to infantilize Henry and fictionalize his aims, the speeches preceding the barriers were simply words in comparison to the very real action that occupied the rest of the evening: the only contemporary descriptive account of the event, from Edmund Howes, makes no mention of Jonson's masque and elaborates instead on all the "wonderous [...] feates of armes" that evidently stole the show.²⁷ Furthermore, the exceptionally extravagant and distinctly Elizabethan tournament held in honor of the King's Accession Day on 24 March 1610 attests to the unmitigated success of Henry's chivalric revival, and James's apparent decision to prohibit his son's participation indicates that he regretted making similar concessions for the *Barriers*.²⁸

But more concessions were to come, for the desperate financial state of the Crown continued to force the King's hand in matters relating to the Prince's investiture. The *Barriers* had largely failed to contain Henry's vaunting ambitions, but it nevertheless served as a powerful demonstration of the young Prince's popularity and promise, and Lord Treasurer Robert Cecil quickly took to Parliament to remind reticent MPs that a new fiscal agreement would have to be reached if the Crown was to support the establishment of an additional household.²⁹ This was Cecil's opening gambit in the lengthy and ultimately ill-fated negotiations around the Great Contract, which aimed to provide the King with a sorely needed fixed income not dependent on resources or susceptible to inflation, and when Parliament prevaricated, James presented his son in person, saying "he desired to advance him for the service of the nation but could not do so

²⁴ Martin Butler, "Introduction," in *Cymbeline*, by William Shakespeare, ed. Martin Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 38–39.

²⁵ Mulryne, "War and Chivalry," 169.

²⁶ Qtd. in Lievsay, "Paolo Sarpi's Appraisal," 115.

²⁷ Stow and Howes, *The Annales*, 897.

²⁸ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 152.

²⁹ Eric Lindquist, "The Failure of the Great Contract," *The Journal of Modern History* 57, no. 4 (1985): 625.

without aids.”³⁰ As with the *Barriers*, then, it was hoped that an array of public and private spectacles celebrating the Prince’s investiture would help convince Parliament of the Great Contract’s necessity, and James raised the missing cash by granting the Lord Mayor and City Aldermen control over the bulk of these festivities—a valuable opportunity, Nancy E. Wright explains, for the City to exert its own influence and “negotiate its relationship to the court.”³¹ Thus freed from his father’s interpretive presence, Henry too would capitalize on this splintering of the ceremonial stage, and the King’s mythmaking hegemony would collapse at last.

II

The festivities commenced on Thursday, 31 May with a water pageant on the Thames, which followed Prince Henry as he made his way from Richmond to Whitehall by barge. The next few days saw feasts, worship, and the installation of twenty-four Knights of the Bath, who then joined the Prince for an investiture ceremony so magnificent that one MP later remarked, “The whole howse beinge thus furnished with sumptous and shininge apparrell I thought my selfe to be like a crowe in the middes of a great manie of golden feathered doves.”³² On Tuesday evening, the court was treated to a private masque, Daniel’s *Tethys’ Festival*, which picked up where the nautically-themed river pageant had left off, and the celebrations concluded the following day with tilting, a mock sea battle back on the Thames, and fireworks. The King’s domestic troubles may have had the greatest impact on the nature of these events—in the end, the City financed everything except for the masque, including the investiture ceremony itself—but international affairs loomed large once again.³³ The death of Henri IV just a month prior had dealt a crushing blow to the militant Protestant movement—the Prince, for instance, is said to have spent several days in his bed, repeating, “My second father is dead”—and though the subsequent dissolution of the anti-Habsburg alliance had mostly diffused the immediate crisis, there remained “a vacant place in the leadership,” as Frances A. Yates observes, “into which it seemed possible that Prince Henry might

³⁰ Melissa D. Aaron, *Global Economics: A History of the Theater Business, the Chamberlain’s/King’s Men, and Their Plays, 1599–1642* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 84; *CSPV, 1607–1610*, 451.

³¹ Nancy E. Wright, “‘Rival Traditions’: Civic and Courtly Ceremonies in Jacobean London,” in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, ed. David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 200.

³² Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, vol. 3 (London: Mackie & Co. Ltd., 1904), 260.

³³ Wright, “Rival Traditions,” 200.

step.”³⁴

The chivalric and martial elements at the fore of each of these spectacles suggests Henry’s determination to do exactly that, and indeed, the Prince rose to the occasion, triumphantly unveiling his rival mythology for crowds as large as 500,000.³⁵ Chaplain Daniel Price, in attendance throughout, captured what must have been the prevailing popular response:

Such occasions of ioy to vs, of happinesse for vs, such triumphes, applauses, Iubilees as these, do draw from vs gratulation and acclamation, in that *God hath not onely giuen his iudgements vnto the King, but his righteousness to the Kings sonne*, leauing such a hope for the young, such a comfort for the old, such happiness for all; such a young *Ptolomey* for studies and Libraries; such a young *Alexander* for affecting martialisme and chiuallrie, such a young *Iosiah* for religion & piety.³⁶

That James was less enthused can be surmised from his now-familiar obstructive efforts. As opposed to the barge on which he ended up, Henry desired an equestrian entry more fitting of a soldier, Correr reported, but “the King would not allow him on this occasion, nor yet on his going to Parliament, to be seen on horseback. The reason is the question of expense or, as some say, because they did not desire to exalt him too high.”³⁷ Similarly revealing are the instructions, delivered to the City only eight days before the pageant, that the Prince should be met “upon the water at Chelsey, accompanied in such sort as is used when the Lord Maior goeth to Westminster to take his oath,” ensuring both that the procession would not be too royal, as Strong infers, and that it would have to be “rushed together,” approximating “the river *fête* of a Lord Mayor’s Show in diminished form.”³⁸ Certainly the published account of the entertainment, authored by Munday and titled *London’s Love to the Royal Prince Henry*, takes pains to apologize for the City’s “very shorte and sudden intelligence,” assuring its royal subject that “the shortnes of time hath bin no meane bridle to their zealous forwardnes, which (else) would haue appeared in more flowing and abundant manner.”³⁹

³⁴ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 76; Frances A. Yates, *Majesty and Magic in Shakespeare’s Last Plays: A New Approach to Cymbeline, Henry VIII, and the Tempest* (Boulder: Shambala, 1978), 21.

³⁵ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 184.

³⁶ Daniel Price, *The Creation of the Prince: A Sermon Preached in the Colledge of Westminster, on Trinity Sunday, the Day before the Creation of the Most Illustrious Prince of Wales* (London: Printed by G. Eld, for Roger Jackson, dwelling neere Fleete Conduict, 1610), sigs. D 2–D 2^v.

³⁷ *CSPV, 1607–1610*, 507.

³⁸ John Nichols, *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First, His Royal Consort, Family, and Court*, vol. 2 (London: J. B. Nichols, 1828), 317 note 2; Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 153.

³⁹ Anthony Munday, *Londons Love, to the Royal Prince Henrie, Meeting Him on the River of Thames, at His Returne from Richmonde, with a Worthie Fleete of Her Cittizens, on Thursday the Last of May, 1610. With a Breife Reporte of the Water Fight, and Fire Workes* (London: Printed by Edw. Allde, for Nathaniell Fosbrooke, and are to

As an established writer of Lord Mayor's Shows, Munday nevertheless excelled in his late assignment, and though a water pageant was not the first choice of either the City or the Prince, the form proved well-suited to the larger aims of both parties: the City flaunted its commercial power by covering "two or three miles" of river with "Pinnacles, Barges, Boates, and Oares," to quote from Cornwallis's first-hand account, but the same parade could conjure the nation's naval capabilities simultaneously, and the coming sea battle would reinforce this secondary meaning.⁴⁰ Moreover, Henry's advance on Whitehall was imbued with mythic significance. Munday devised adulatory speeches for "two of [Neptune's] choycest Trytons," each reflecting the Prince's titles: the "fayre and beautifull Nymph" Corinea, Queen of Cornwall, and Amphion, the "Prophet" and "Genius of Wales" (11–9). Corinea introduces herself as "Queene to Brutes noble Companion *Corineus*, the first of fayre Britaynes Regions, and your owne worthie Dukedome," thus framing the festivities within the very national myth—the descent from Brutus of Troy to Arthur and, now, to Henry himself—that the *Barriers* had tried to dispel (15). She leads Henry to the palace, the seat of royal power, and Amphion welcomes him inside, concluding, "Home againe then fayre Fleete, you haue brought a Royall freight to landing, such a burdé as hath made the Riuer not meanelly proude to beare. And since we must needs parte, in our lowdest voice of Drommes, Trompets and Ordenaunce, be this our last accent: Long liue our Prince of Wales, the Royall Henrie" (21). The symbolic sense, then, is that destiny has delivered the Prince from Richmond, "a place long identified with his ancestor Henry VII," as David M. Bergeron notes, to succeed his chivalric forebears and seize royal power like the conquerors he so admired.⁴¹ That Daniel too set his masque at Milford Haven, "The happy port of union, which gave way / To that great hero Henry and his fleet," confirms that the Prince's voyage was intended to evoke previous pilgrimages and invasions that brought about regime change and reform: "This day gives birth / Unto new types of state," Daniel's opening song proclaims, "So let it bliss create."⁴²

And indeed, despite the five days that separated these entertainments, *London's Love*

be solde at the west-end of Paules, neere to the Bishop of Londons gate, 1610), 8, 16. Hereafter referenced by page number in parentheses.

⁴⁰ Charles Cornwallis, *The Life and Death of Ovr Late Most Incomparable and Heroique Prince, Henry Prince of Wales. A Prince (for Valour and Vertue) Fit to Be Imitated in Succeeding Times* (London: Printed by Iohn Dawson for Nathanael Butter, 1641), 17.

⁴¹ David M. Bergeron, "Creating Entertainments for Prince Henry's Creation (1610)," *Comparative Drama* 42, no. 4 (2008): 443.

⁴² Samuel Daniel, *Tethys' Festival*, in *Court Masques: Jacobean and Caroline Entertainments 1605–1640*, ed. David Lindley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), lines 185–6, 139–40. Hereafter referenced by line number in parentheses.

would have appeared to flow seamlessly into *Tethys' Festival*, as if the waters that had carried Henry's fleet were now flooding into the Banqueting House. Daniel draws from the same aquatic mythology as Munday, suggesting collaboration between the authors: as before, nymphs representing the rivers of Great Britain have learned "of the investiture at hand," a Triton announces, and wish to pay tribute to "their new prince, whose rites, with acts renowned, / Were here to be solèmnized" (162–4). In the background was "*a castle commanding a fortified town*," along with "*many ships, small and great, seeming to lie at anchor*" within the port (106), both recalling the parade and foreshadowing the sea battle, in which "two Merchants Shippes" besieged and "blewe vp" a Turkish castle, Munday recounts, "ending the whole batterie with verie rare and admirable Fire-workes" (24–5). On behalf of Zephyrus, played by Prince Charles, Triton gifts "*a trident to the King, and a rich sword and scarf to the Prince of Wales*," and the scene is then altered to reveal Queen Anne as Tethys, "*Queen of the Ocean and wife of Neptune*," and her thirteen river nymphs, headed by Princess Elizabeth as the Thames, all occupying a spectacular grotto (59). The ladies "*descended out of their caverns one after another*," Daniel writes, "*and so marched up with winding meanders like a river, till they came to the Tree of Victory, which was a bay erected at the right side of the state, upon a little mount there raised, where they offer their several flowers in golden urns*" (303–7). The masque appears to conclude with the traditional dances, but Mercury descends for a final "transformation of far more delight," revealing all of the royal performers in their true forms (386). "Fair branch of power," he says, suddenly addressing Prince Charles as himself, "bring back those in whose fair shapes were shown / The late-seen nymphs in figures of their own" (401–2).

As Strong contends, the likely source for both Munday and Daniel was Michael Drayton's then-unpublished *Poly-Olbion* (1612), subtitled *A Chorographicall Description of Tracts, Riwers, Mountaines, Forests, and other Parts of this renowned Isle of Great Britaine*, which similarly casts Henry as the descendent of Brutus and Arthur, as well as the inheritor of Elizabeth's ocean empire.⁴³ Prefacing the work is an engraving of the Prince in a warlike stance and a poem that summarizes his expansionist vision:

Britaine, behold here portray'd, to thy sight,
Henry, thy best hope, and the world's delight;
Ordain'd to make thy Great Henries, nine:
Who, by that vertue in the trebble Trine,

⁴³ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 157–58.

*To his owne goodnesse (in his Being) brings
 These severall Glories of th'eight English Kings;
 Deep Knowledge, Greatness, long Life, Policy,
 Courage, Zeale, Fortune, awfull Maiestie.
 He like great Neptune on three Seas shall roue,
 And rule three Realms, with triple power, like Ioue;
 Thus in soft Peace, thus in tempestuous Warres,
 Till from his foote, his Fame shall strike the stares.⁴⁴*

Tethys' Festival too characterizes Henry as ruler of the seas and successor to Henry VII, whose landing at Milford Haven led to the establishment of the Tudor dynasty. And if these associations were not transparent enough, Daniel has Zephyrus present the Prince with the sword that "Astraea sacred found," quite literally passing Elizabeth's imperial mythology to the future Henry IX (197). The bay tree on a mount was likewise borrowed from Elizabethan iconography, Strong notes, and "the theme of rivers paying tribute recalls yet another image of Gloriana, the Ditchley Portrait, in which she stands on her island kingdom, on which the rivers are delineated, amidst the encircling ocean."⁴⁵ Never before had a show on the Stuart court stage so candidly contradicted the approved royal mythology, and yet Daniel repeatedly hedges, as if anticipating the King's displeasure: Astraea's sword might symbolize Tudor conquest, Triton admits, but it is "not to be unsheathed but on just ground" (198), and the scarf, which is embroidered with a map of Henry's "spacious empery," should actually dissuade him from wars of further expansion, for that "will be world enough to yield / All works of glory ever can be wrought" (202–5). The result is an inconsistent patchwork of irreconcilable ideals, but while *Tethys' Festival* may therefore be more deserving of the criticisms commonly levied against the *Barriers*, the masque inadvertently encapsulates the end of James's mythmaking hegemony, for the floodgates had finally opened, and the King, the Prince, the City, and even the remaining members of the royal family were now openly competing for space at the center of ceremonial power.

Daniel's own political interests are also apparent. During the previous reign, the author had attached himself to the circle of scholars, dramatists, and poets who saw Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex "as destined to lead the chivalry of Europe in a renewed crusade against the infidel"

⁴⁴ Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion. or A Chorographicall Description of Tracts, Riwers, Mountaines, Forests, and Other Parts of This Renowned Isle of Great Britaine with Intermixture of the Most Remarquable Stories, Antiquities, Wonders, Rarityes, Pleasures, and Commodities of the Same: Digested in a Poem by Michael Drayton, Esq. With a Table Added, for Direction to Those Occurrences of Story and Antiquitie, Whereunto the Course of the Volume Easily Leades Not* (London: Printed by H. L. for Mathew Lowne: I. Browne: I. Helme, and I. Busbie, 1613).

⁴⁵ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 156–57.

and worked at “building up Essex into the image of the baroque charismatic hero,” as Mervyn James explains, “heightening the hopes and expectations which centered on him.”⁴⁶ These hopes would eventually be transferred onto Prince Henry, but when Daniel was tapped to compose the very first Stuart masque, *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* (1604), he used the opportunity to counsel the pacifist King on the importance of military preparedness, arguing that peace is only attainable through “armed policy,” “true zeal,” and “might / And power by sea.”⁴⁷ This helps explain Jonson’s immediate ascendancy to the role of preferred masque-writer, as Peter Holbrook suggests, and it is not clear why Daniel was suddenly asked to return to the court stage on this occasion, though Henry’s dissatisfaction with the *Barriers* may have led him to seek out an alternative author more sympathetic to his aims.⁴⁸ In fact, in his preface to the published edition of *Tethys’ Festival*, Daniel appears to castigate Jonson for his despotic attempts at fictionalizing the Prince’s chivalric ideals, writing, “And shall we who are the poor engineers for shadows and frame only images of no result, think to oppress the rough censures of those who, notwithstanding all our labour, will like according to their taste?” (31–4). On one hand, Daniel is mocking the pretensions of Jonson’s own published prefaces, which typically defend the instructive value of his masques—before *The Masque of Queens*, for instance, Jonson boasts that he is “observing that rule of the best artist, to suffer no object of delight to pass without his mixture of profit and example” (7–8)—but he simultaneously betrays a skepticism toward the entire enterprise of ceremonial display: “shows and spectacles of this nature,” he explains, are merely “complements of state” meant “to show magnificence and to celebrate the feasts,” and their authors should not presume to determine truth or dictate the audience’s beliefs (1–3).

This skepticism permeates the masque as well. When Daniel reveals the royal performers as themselves, he deliberately sabotages his own show, exposing its ephemerality with aplomb. “Are they shadows that we see?” the masque’s final song asks,

And can shadows pleasure give?
Pleasures only shadows be
Cast by bodies we conceive,
And are made the things we deem,

⁴⁶ Mervyn James, *Society, Politics, and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 437.

⁴⁷ Samuel Daniel, *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, ed. Joan Rees, in *A Book of Masques: In Honour of Allardyce Nicoll* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), lines 378, 379, 381–2.

⁴⁸ Peter Holbrook, “Jacobean Masques and the Jacobean Peace,” in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, ed. David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 78.

In those figures which they seem.
 [.....]
 Feed apace then, greedy eyes,
 On the wonder you behold.
 Take it sudden as it flies,
 Though you take it not to hold.
 When your eyes have done their part,
 Thought must length it in the heart. (343–60)

With yet another dig at his rival, Daniel clarifies that he hoped “*to avoid the confusion which usually attendeth the dissolve of these shows*” (364–5), by which he means the Jonsonian practice of forcefully incorporating audiences into the King’s fictitious reality.⁴⁹ And yet his strategy is almost identical to that employed in the *Barriers*: Jonson had emphasized the artificiality of the Prince’s masque in order to reassert the King’s sole authority over courtly mythmaking, and in response, Daniel fictionalized the court stage altogether, demonstrating that royal power is not derived from such fleeting spectacles but from the thoughts and hearts of onlookers like those that had lined the Thames to greet their new Prince of Wales. Arthur Wilson, historian of the reign, later summarized the tensions between James and Henry, writing, “But how far the Kings *fears* (like thick cloud) might afterwards blind the *eye* of his *Reason*, when he saw [the Prince] (as he thought) too high mounted in the people’s *love*, and of an alluring *spirit*,” and each of James’s obstructive efforts evinces this essential desire to contain and control the public’s response.⁵⁰ Convoluted as *Tethys’ Festival* was, then, Daniel rightly perceived and exploited the ceremonial stage’s greatest vulnerability. He would not write another masque.

Indeed, Jonson’s *Oberon*, which served as the centerpiece of the 1610–11 entertainment season and celebrated the Prince’s investiture for the final time, can be understood as a second attempt at the *Barriers* and a corrective to the mistakes of the preceding year. By November, Henry had begun “arranging his household and appointing his officers and gentlemen,” as Correr reports, and the masque would stage this moment of financial independence in allegorical terms, demonstrating the Crown’s need for increased revenues once again.⁵¹ This time, however, the King was taking no chances: as with the *Barriers*, Henry requested that his masque end with chivalrous

⁴⁹ Limon, “The Masque of Stuart Culture,” 216.

⁵⁰ Arthur Wilson, *The History of Great Britain Being the Life and Reign of King James the First, Relating to What Passed from His First Access to the Crown, till His Death* (London: Printed for Richard Lownds, and are to be sold at the Sign of the White Lion near Saint Paul’s little North dore, 1653), 52.

⁵¹ Horatio F. Brown, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, 1610–1613* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1905), 79.

combat, “but the king vetoed this proposal,” Orgel explains, “and insisted that *Oberon* conclude instead with the dances and songs of courtly society.”⁵² Correr also records that the Prince “would have liked to present this Masque on horseback,” but he was unable to obtain his father’s consent; as a substitute, Henry would arrive “*in a chariot [...] drawn by two white bears*” (216–7), and the nature of these animals has been the subject of considerable debate, though Melissa D. Aaron is persuasive in asserting that “the bears [...] were probably humans in an animal suit because of the bears’ proximity to royalty. It strikes me as both unlikely and foolhardy intentionally to endanger the Prince of Wales’s life for a mere masque.”⁵³ This sight would no doubt have bordered on the ridiculous, and sketches of Henry’s costume indicate that his muscular definition was also exaggerated to what must have been an almost comic degree, as Barbara Ravelhofer observes.⁵⁴

The result is a masque that decisively divorces the Prince’s chivalric precepts from reality and more successfully confines his rival mythology to the world of romantic fiction. Instead of dismissing the fantastical creatures that often populated Arthurian literature, Jonson gives them center stage: *Oberon* opens on a group of satyrs, nymphs, and sylvans, who engage in a night of characteristic foolishness and debauchery before discovering the Prince’s “*bright and glorious palace*” (98). “Yonder with him live the knights / Once noblest of the earth,” Silenus, their leader, explains, and they have been “quickened by a second birth” (103–5). In this, Jonson alludes to the chivalric revival depicted in the *Barriers*, but rather than returning chivalry to England, Henry and his knights now occupy “seats of bliss in fairyland” (109). Moreover, the warlike attributes advertised in that previous masque have been entirely inverted: the Prince “doth fill with grace / Every season, every place,” Silenus declares, “He is lovelier than in May / Is the spring” (45–55). As the satyrs anxiously await the opening of the palace gates, they sing a song and fall into dancing and brawling, and it would seem that, as before, the Prince’s arrival will restore order to the chaotic scene. But in a final twist, Henry and his knights have only come “to pay / Their annual vows” to “yond’ high throne” (245–6), and every character dutifully joins in praising King James: “For this indeed is he, / My boys, whom you must quake at when you see,” Silenus instructs, ignoring Oberon,

⁵² Stephen Orgel, “Jonson and the Amazons,” in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 134.

⁵³ *CSPV, 1610–1613*, 79; Aaron, *Global Economics*, 94.

⁵⁴ Barbara Ravelhofer, *The Early Stuart Masque: Dance, Costume, and Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 201.

He is the matter of virtue, and placed high.
 His meditations to his height are even,
 And all their issue is akin to heaven.
 He is a god o'er kings, yet stoops he then
 Nearest a man when he doth govern men,
 To teach them by the sweetness of his sway,
 And not by force. He's such a king as they
 Who're tyrans' subjects, or ne'er tasted peace,
 Would, in their wishes, form for their release. (253–66)

Henry's masque is thus transformed into a celebration of the King and a lesson in unconditional obedience: it is James who holds "Arthur's crowns and chair," one Sylvan realizes, and when "all that shall tonight behold the rites / Performed by princely Oberon and his knights," they will understand why he deserves to be "the proper heir" (281–4).

In light of the Prince's newly established household, scholars have tended to view *Oberon* as critical of the King's leadership: Butler, for instance, associates the unruly satyrs with the corruption thought to be running rampant in James's court, and argues that the masque "aimed not only to signal Henry as James's successor but to express the climate of reform with which he was increasingly identified."⁵⁵ Such aims would be atypical of Jonson, however, and the satyrs' prompt obedience in the face of the King undeniably encourages Henry to model his estate after that of his father. When Silenus proposes entering into Oberon's service, his satyrs fixate on the material benefits: "Will he give us pretty toys / To beguile the girls withal?" they ask, "Will he build us larger caves" and "hang upon our stubbèd horns / Garlands, ribands and fine posies?" (62–81). In this, Jonson must have intended to parody the free-for-all then surrounding the Prince: of his new household, Correr adds, "there are infinite offers from gentlemen who vie with one another in desiring admission," and many of those admitted would be as young and ambitious as Henry himself.⁵⁶ Indeed, nearly every mention of Prince Oberon elicits a reminder of his youth and inexperience: "Shall we see young Oberon?" one satyr asks (42); "he still be young," Silenus says, and his knights are likewise "crowned with lasting youth" (50, 107); another satyr refers to the nearly seventeen-year-old Henry as "the boy" (188). In contrast, James has mastered the art of management: "Seek you majesty, to strike?" two fairies sing, addressing the Prince directly,

1ST FAY: Bid the world produce his like.
 2ND FAY: Seek you glory, to amaze?
 Here let all eyes stand at gaze.

⁵⁵ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 188.

⁵⁶ *CSPV, 1610–1613*, 79; Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 42.

BOTH: Seek you wisdom, to inspire?
 Touch then at no other's fire.
 1ST FAY: Seek you knowledge, to direct?
 Trust to his without suspect.
 2ND FAY: Seek you piety, to lead?
 In his footsteps only tread. (286–95)

Oberon illustrates the necessity of reform, then, but reform for Jonson means the maturation of the Prince and his cohorts.

Finally, the songs that accompany the masque's concluding dances appear to answer Daniel's earlier attacks on ceremonial display and reestablish James's interpretive authority over all aspects of courtly mythmaking. Throughout the masque, moonlight is associated with deception and trickery: "Be your eyes yet moon-proof?" one satyr asks, questioning his companion's ability to see things as they really are (168), and the group's first song addresses "my cunning lady, moon," demanding that she "confess then what you are" (186, 198). In the end, Jonson elucidates the meaning of this central symbol, linking moonlight to the Prince and his shows:

The solemn rites are well begun,
 And though but lighted by the moon,
 They show as rich as if the sun
 Had made this night his noon.
 But may none wonder that they are so bright;
 The moon now borrows from a greater light.
 Then, princely Oberon,
 Go on,
 This is not every night. (301–9)

As the moon derives its light from the sun, so too does Henry derive his power from James. The Prince's masque has been magnificent, Jonson grants, but only by virtue of the King's presence, and the illusion will recede at his command. As in *Tethys' Festival*, the "forms so bright and airy" begin to dissolve before the spectators' eyes (344), but instead of being released from the fiction, they are incorporated into one far greater—an ideal that reveals the King's absolute truth. "The moon is pale and spent," Phosphorus announces, descending from above to usher in the morning (350), and the masque's final dance takes place in this clarifying "light" (368). As had been the case before Henry's usurpation of the court stage, then, all in the Banqueting House were united in a ritualistic affirmation of "this only great / True majesty," as the sylvans declare, "To whose sole power and magic they do give / The honor of their being" (247–50).

The Prince could not have been happy with this compulsory display of subservience, though it would also be difficult to declare *Oberon* an unqualified victory for the King. For an

entire year, court audiences had observed a masquing stage at war with itself, and this open struggle between competing mythologies must have done considerable damage to the institution's credibility. Indeed, James's own confidence had clearly been shaken, for Jonson's *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly*, staged just one month later in honor of a visit from the French ambassador, was a shockingly modest affair—costing just over £600 compared with the £2500 and £1087 that had been spent on the *Barriers* and *Oberon*, for example—and its plot, in which Queen Anne and her ladies escape a sphinx and pay homage to the King, was essentially apolitical.⁵⁷ This trend would continue the following holiday season with Jonson's *Love Restored*, which cost just £280 and featured no royal personages whatsoever, evincing a desire on the part of the King to limit access to and regain control over court-sanctioned spectacle.⁵⁸ For his part, Henry would never again be permitted to dance in a masque, and the next few years would see him resorting to mythmaking mechanisms outside of his father's immediate sphere of influence, including portraiture, historical chronicles, and, eventually, his own masque-writers and sponsors. The experiment of ceding the ceremonial stage to a rival mythology had been a failure, then, and though James and Henry had both scored major victories over the course of the past year, their war of fictionalization had only succeeded in establishing an unbridgeable gap between courtly display and absolute truth.

III

The date at which *Cymbeline* was composed and first performed is far from certain, though astrologer Simon Forman recorded an eyewitness account of the play not long before his death on 8 September 1611. Probable allusions to *Cymbeline* in Thomas Heywood's *The Golden Age* (1610) have helped narrow this window, leading Roger Warren to conclude that "*Cymbeline* must have been written and performed by autumn of 1610 at the latest," and he in fact reinforces this assertion by highlighting aspects of the play that appear directly informed by the summer's investiture festivities.⁵⁹ Indeed, Shakespeare was likely close at hand for each of Henry's entertainments, as the King's Men assumed the speaking roles in most Stuart masques, and it is known that they

⁵⁷ Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 229, 159, 205.

⁵⁸ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 174.

⁵⁹ Roger Warren, "Introduction," in *Cymbeline*, by William Shakespeare, ed. Roger Warren (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 63–67.

performed as the satyrs in *Oberon*, as well as Corinea and Amphion in *London's Love*—costumes from these shows may even have been repurposed for use in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, as Aaron has shown.⁶⁰ Moreover, the King's Men staged thirteen unidentified plays during the 1609–10 entertainment season and fifteen more for 1610–11; if *Cymbeline* was complete by late 1610, then, its inaugural court performance would have been among the latter, coinciding with *Oberon* and following hard upon a year of open ideological conflict no doubt lingering in spectators' minds.⁶¹ The play's topicality gives the impression that Shakespeare intended to comment on these events, and this has been a prevailing assumption among critics baffled by its notorious inscrutability: Emrys Jones, for instance, calls the political concerns of 1610 “a body of knowledge, shared by the audience, which doubtless provided a kind of interpretive key to events on the stage which, without such a key, appear insufficiently motivated, almost incoherent.”⁶² Authorial intent of this kind cannot be ruled out, but it is enough for the purposes of the present argument to suggest that an audience now accustomed to competing signification on the ceremonial stage might have tried to make sense of the play in precisely this way.

Indeed, in the context of the 1610–11 entertainment season, *Cymbeline* would have seemed of a piece with the preceding year's public and private spectacles. Its ancient British setting mirrors that of the *Barriers* and *Oberon*, particularly in its mixture of historical personages and events with romantic literary elements like wicked stepmothers, deadly potions, and even “fairies [that] haunt this ground” (5.4.103), and with the late introduction of Rome's civilizing influence on the otherwise Arthurian scene, the play's visual language effects a transformation reminiscent of Inigo Jones's metamorphic backdrops, in which “England becomes great through the imposition of classical order upon British nature,” as Orgel says of the *Barriers* and *Oberon* specifically.⁶³ The play's plot would likewise have resembled a Jonsonian masque in that the disorder engendered by the Queen, Cloten, and Giacomo is in a way set right by the intervention of Jupiter, who descends from above with the same imposing pageantry as Phosphorus at the end of *Oberon*. An early song almost appears to allude to that climactic display:

Hark, hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings,

⁶⁰ Aaron, *Global Economics*, 94, 105.

⁶¹ Alvin Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theater in the Stuart Court, 1603–1613* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 206–7.

⁶² Emrys Jones, “Stuart *Cymbeline*,” *Essays in Criticism* 11, no. 1 (1961): 98.

⁶³ Quotations from Shakespeare are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., Third Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016); Orgel, *Illusion of Power*, 70.

And Phoebus gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs
On chaliced flowers that lies,
And winking Mary-buds begin to ope their golden eyes;
With everything that pretty is, my lady sweet arise,
Arise, arise! (2.3.17–23)

At this, the audience might also have recalled the personified springs that laid flowers at the Tree of Victory in *Tethys' Festival*, and more explicit evocations of Daniel's masque soon follow: like Triton, the Queen refers to the British isles as "Neptune's park, ribbed and paled in / With oaks unscalable and roaring waters" (3.1.19–20); Guiderius and Arviragus are described as "zephyrs," just as Prince Charles had been (4.2.171); and, most significantly, every character arc concludes "at Milford Haven" (3.2.43). Leah S. Marcus has rightly claimed that *Cymbeline* was assembled from "the same political material" as *Tethys' Festival*, and to the court audience of 1610–11, the play would therefore have seemed to enter into the ongoing dialogue between the Prince and the King, as well as Daniel and Jonson, then playing out on the ceremonial stage.⁶⁴

It is likely, then, that these spectators approached this play as they would a masque, interpreting its topical correspondences in an effort to unlock the underlying political allegory. Once again, recent critical trends are instructive: Glynne Wickham, for instance, has linked *Cymbeline* to James, Imogen to Princess Elizabeth, Guiderius to Henry, and Arviragus to Prince Charles, and it is reasonable to assume that contemporary audiences would have done the same.⁶⁵ Yet Imogen is imbued with even greater significance, as Yates observes: her name, derived from Innogen, wife of Brutus, invokes the British-Trojan legend so contested in the Prince's shows, and when the would-be ravisher Giacomo describes her as "th'Arabian bird" (1.6.17), sleeping "in a chapel" adorned with images of "Chaste Dian" (2.2.33, 2.4.82), spectators sympathetic to Henry's cause undoubtedly recalled the Virgin Queen and her reformed church, threatened as ever by the menace in Rome.⁶⁶ Imogen is further associated with the integrity of the nation itself—"Britain, I have killed thy mistress," Posthumus mistakenly laments (5.1.20)—and she even gives voice to the Prince's interventionist rhetoric, complaining that "plenty and peace breeds cowards" and rejecting the cautionary pacifism most recently symbolized by Daniel's scarf, asking, discontentedly, "Hath Britain all the sun that shines?" (3.6.21, 3.4.136). When, at Milford,

⁶⁴ Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 135.

⁶⁵ Glynne Wickham, "From Tragedy to Tragi-Comedy: *King Lear* as Prologue," *Shakespeare Survey* 26 (1973): 44.

⁶⁶ Yates, *Majesty and Magic*, 55–56.

Guiderius and Arviragus later expel the Roman invaders from “a narrow lane” steeped in the same sexual imagery as the bedroom scene, then, the play appears to realize the militant Protestant fantasies first intimated in the *Barriers* and *Tethys’ Festival*, in which the Prince would one day revive Elizabethan chivalric values and eliminate the Catholic threat once and for all (5.3.52).

Yet each of these masques had simultaneously evinced the King’s efforts to appropriate such symbols for his own political purposes, and some viewers must have tried to interpret *Cymbeline* in the same manner as conflicting scholars who “have seen the play as allegorizing James’s new state,” as Butler summarizes, “harking back to a mythical time when the island had been unified, a unity now remade in the Jacobean present.”⁶⁷ In this, James contested Henry’s claim to the mantle of “second Brutus,” as Peter A. Parolin explains, characterizing *himself* as the “leader who would fulfill ancient prophecies and revive the former unity of Great Britain,” and both of Jonson’s masques had tried to make this case: in the *Barriers*, for instance, The Lady of the Lake argues that “the island hath regained her fame / Entire and perfect in the ancient name” now that “a monarch equal good and great, / Wise, temperate, just and stout *claims Arthur’s seat*” (18–21).⁶⁸ The *Barriers* and *Tethys’ Festival* likewise engaged in a struggle over the significance of Milford Haven: for Daniel, this site of Tudor conquest lent reformist energy to the Prince’s investiture, but for Jonson, Henry VII’s minor victory had merely presaged a greater “union that shall never be declined” (338). And indeed, much of *Cymbeline* can be read within this unionist framework: the name Posthumus Leonatus, for example, seems to allude to the 1608 legal decision that granted Scots born after James’s ascension (known as the *post nati*) the rights of subjects, if not citizens, and his tribulations are intended to evoke sympathy for those similarly “wedded” to the kingdom, as Marcus contends, “yet kept in isolation and suspension, deprived of [...] natural rights.”⁶⁹

It is notable too that Henry’s aggressive isolationism is primarily articulated by evil characters like Cloten and the Queen. When the Queen urges Cymbeline to defy Rome’s demands, for instance, she touts “the natural bravery of your isle,” and her description of the nation as “Neptune’s park” recalls, like *Tethys’ Festival*, the separatist iconography of the Armada years (3.1.18–9). Furthermore, it is only after these characters have died that Cymbeline is able to

⁶⁷ Butler, “Introduction,” 38.

⁶⁸ Peter A. Parolin, “Anachronistic Italy: Cultural Alliances and National Identity in *Cymbeline*,” *Shakespeare Studies*, 2002, 191.

⁶⁹ Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare*, 125.

establish an internationalist foreign policy plainly modeled on James's harmonious aims: "Publish we this peace / To all our subjects," Cymbeline proclaims, echoing the conclusions of countless Stuart masques and pageants,

Set we forward. Let
A Roman and a British ensign wave
Friendly together. So through Lud's Town march,
And in the temple of great Jupiter
Our peace we'll ratify, seal it with feasts.
Set on there. Never was a war did cease,
Ere bloody hands were washed, with such a peace. (5.5.476–83)

Yet this is where allegorical interpretation inevitably breaks down. For those like Sarpi who saw the King as stifling the Prince's potential, the enforced hermeticism of Guiderius and Arviragus would seem a biting parallel: "We have seen nothing," Arviragus complains, "Our valour is to chase what flies" (3.3.39–42). Barred, as Henry, from the battlefield, "the brothers are excluded from the processes that permit individuals and nations to assert their power and relevance on an international stage," as Parolin notes, and it is ultimately their long-denied military debut that makes peace possible.⁷⁰ As in each of the masques and spectacles of the preceding year, then, the play appears poised to address pressing questions of Britain's origins, identity, and role in world affairs—"Our countrymen [...] are people such / That mend upon the world," Posthumus says, as vaguely as possible (2.4.20–6)—but by continually oscillating between the King's and the Prince's conflicting ideals, *Cymbeline* refuses to answer. For spectators of this inaugural court performance, the play would thus present as a perfect reflection of a ceremonial stage at war with itself, inviting allegorical interpretation but frustrating readings from any single perspective.

And the play exhibits an awareness of this inscrutability that would almost have appeared to mock inquiring audiences for their explanatory efforts. Again and again characters are confronted with signs and symbols that they cannot help but misread: Posthumus's bracelet, once "a manacle of love," becomes "the cognizance of [Imogen's] incontinency" through Giacomo's misrepresentation (1.1.122, 2.4.127), and his subsequent love letters "senseless bauble," as Pisanio laments, deceiving Imogen and leading her to death (3.2.20). When Pisanio tries momentarily to maintain the charade, Imogen is confused by the contradictory message on his face: "One but painted thus," she remarks, "Would be interpreted a thing perplexed / Beyond self-explication" (3.4.6–8), and she too loses faith in the possibility of reading, conceding, "All good seeming, / [is]

⁷⁰ Parolin, "Anachronistic Italy," 188.

Put on for villainy” (3.4.53–5). A counterfeited “bloody cloth” convinces Posthumus of Imogen’s death (5.1.1), and he keeps it as a token of his earlier misunderstanding, while “the garments of Posthumus” likewise lead Imogen to believe that Cloten’s headless body is that of her husband (4.2.307). Unstable signs of this kind continue piling up until the play begins to resemble Jupiter’s riddling tablet, which Posthumus can only describe as

a dream, or else such stuff as madmen
Tongue and brain not; either both, or nothing,
Or senseless speaking, or a speaking such
As sense cannot untie. (5.4.115–8)

When, at last, the Soothsayer makes sense of everything, explaining, “Thou, Leonatus, art the lion’s whelp,” “The piece of tender air, [...] Is this most constant wife,” “The lofty cedar, royal Cymbeline,” and “thy lopped branches point / Thy two sons forth” (5.5.441–53), he represents anyone who would apply a neat allegory to *Cymbeline* itself. Readers are forced to remember that the Soothsayer has been wrong before—“Unless my sins abuse my divination,” he mentions earlier, qualifying his prophetic abilities (4.2.350)—and those in the audience of 1610–11 must similarly have wondered if they were misled in their own interpretations of the play’s politics.

In this, *Cymbeline* would have reflected the audience’s late disillusionment with the court stage, for the play stresses the gap between fiction and reality and, much like *Tethys’ Festival*, casts doubt on the mythmaking power of spectacle and display. As was the case even before the *Barriers*, James’s vision of union was, as everyone knew, a mere dream, and the figures in Posthumus’s own dream attempt to impose unambiguous meaning on viewers as if they were in the final scene of *Oberon*, declaring, “The crystal window ope, look out” (5.4.57). This scene is so artificial and unconvincing that many scholars maintain it is not Shakespearean, and yet these qualities may have been telling, for James was often associated with Jupiter, and his interpretive authority was now, more than ever, up for debate. The play also fails to clarify whether Jupiter’s prophecy has had any causal effect: he declares that “he has been controlling events all along,” as Marcus observes, but “as often as not in *Cymbeline*, the riddling follows upon events instead of inspiring them.”⁷¹ In contrast to *Tethys’ Festival*, then, *Cymbeline* seems to question whether there is anything more to royal power than show: Belarius believes that the truth will invariably “fly out and show [Guiderius and Arviragus] princes born” (4.4.54), yet the wicked Cloten passes for the virtuous Posthumus simply by donning “his meanest garment” (2.3.128), and Posthumus is

⁷¹ Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare*, 141.

likewise able to change nationalities and loyalties by switching between “Italian weeds” and the habit of “a Briton peasant” several times over (5.1.23–4). As was the case for the King in the *Barriers* and *Oberon*, and for the Prince in *London’s Love* and *Tethys’ Festival*, King Cymbeline never doubts his ability to “winnow the truth from falsehood” (5.5.134), but his play remains as skeptical of this pursuit as the court audience for which it was staged.

CHAPTER 4. 1611–12: *THE TEMPEST*, *THE WINTER'S TALE*, AND DRAMATIC ABSOLUTISM ON THE STUART COURT STAGE

I

The year between Prince Henry's first court masque, *The Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers* (1610), and his last, *Oberon, the Fairy Prince* (1611), saw King James relaxing his hegemonic grip on ceremonial display for the first time in his reign, and the result was evidently disastrous. Together with a series of summer festivities that celebrated the Prince's investiture in mythmaking ways, these shows helped popularize the subversive image of Henry as a warrior-prince who would one day reverse his father's pacifist policies and restore the vanished glories of chivalric England by leading a renewed crusade against Catholicism in Europe. James's plan to leverage political capital from his son's popularity had backfired, then, and Ben Jonson's *Love Restored*, the central masque of the 1611–12 entertainment season, can be understood as an attempt to reel back in a mythmaking mechanism that had so visibly escaped the King's control. With a budget of just £280, *Love Restored* would have contrasted sharply with the shows of the preceding year, which had reached costs in the thousands of pounds, and its aims would likewise have registered as much more modest: instead of balancing the irreconcilable interests of oppositional authorities, as Jonson had tried to accomplish in the *Barriers* and *Oberon*, *Love Restored* would exclude royal performers entirely, reverting the masquing ritual to its roots of unambiguous panegyric on the King.¹ As a consequence, however, the King and the Prince would take their rivalry beyond the confines of the ceremonial stage, and this escalating conflict would no doubt continue to weigh on spectators' minds. Moreover, after a year in which Henry was a near-constant presence in courtly display, his absence would almost certainly have been felt and, perhaps, resented. It is within these fraught circumstances that William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* were debuted at court.² As the ensuing discussion will demonstrate, their interrogations of spectacle, absolutism, and access would have seemed to speak directly to the crisis at hand.

¹ Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales, and England's Lost Renaissance* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 174.

² Though the titles of performed plays are rarely provided in court records, the 1611–12 entertainment season is a notable exception. See the exhaustively researched "Appendix A: A Court Calendar," in E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923) for evidence that *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* were performed at Whitehall on 1 November and 5 November, respectively.

Immediately following his ascension, as Richard Badenhausem explains, James royalized London's major acting companies and subordinated public pageantry to private court performance in an effort to "preempt subversive messages."³ Because the King had so swiftly seized control of these mechanisms of courtly mythmaking, Henry's earliest moves to embrace his dissenting cult were limited to chivalric portraits and private correspondences that evaded his father's censure, and, as his year in the spotlight of the court stage drew to a begrudging close, he resumed these clandestine pursuits with greater autonomy and renewed vigor. On 25 November 1610, Venetian ambassador Marc' Antonio Correr reported that the newly invested Prince was "now arranging his household and appointing his officers and gentlemen," and this sphere of influence would come to include painters, poets, and historians who would advance Henry's adversarial image while he remained on the outside looking in.⁴ One such poet, Sir Arthur Gorges (c. 1569–1625), secured employment primarily on the basis of his relationship with militant Protestant icon Sir Walter Raleigh, and his writing in this period epitomizes the work performed by those in the Prince's circles: "Here in combination are practically all the themes of laudation of Henry living and lament for him dead," H. E. Sandison summarizes, "the Ars-Mars pattern of symbol and wording; the sponsorship of Bellona and Pallas; [...] the Prince's place among the nine English Henries, and his identification with other worthies, like Hector; his menace to 'Turcisme'; his courteous consideration of his household; above all, his prowess in the lists."⁵ In this way, Henry's heroic mythology would continue to flourish in 1611–12, despite the absence of Henry himself.

Another poet, Michael Drayton (1563–1631), may have been patronized by the Prince specifically because he was disliked by James, as Roy Strong suggests.⁶ Certainly his chivalric and nationalistic odes to England's military history, such as *The Barrons Wars* (1603) and *The Ballad of Agincourt* (1605), aligned him with the dissenting attitudes then beginning to coalesce around Prince Henry, and his *Poly-Olbion*, the first half of which was published in 1612, was among the clearest and most widely disseminated presentations of Henry's interventionist ideal. A topographical epic in, ultimately, thirty parts, the *Poly-Olbion* links Britain's landscapes to its

³ Richard Badenhausem, "Disarming the Infant Warrior: Prince Henry, King James, and the Chivalric Revival," *Papers on Language and Literature* 31, no. 1 (1995): 31 note.

⁴ Horatio F. Brown, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, 1610–1613* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1905), 79.

⁵ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 41; Sir Arthur Gorges, *The Poems of Sir Arthur Gorges*, ed. H. E. Sandison (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), lv–lvi.

⁶ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 157.

proud, imperial legacy, and by identifying Prince Henry as the fated successor to Brutus of Troy and King Arthur, Drayton announces the imminent revival of this neglected tradition of conquest. The poem's preface is accompanied by a confrontational portrait of the Prince in a martial stance and the habit of a Protestant knight:

Britaine, behold here portray'd, to thy sight,
Henry, thy best hope, and the world's delight;
Ordain'd to make thy Great Henries, nine:
Who, by that vertue in the trebble Trine,
To his owne goodnesse (in his Being) brings
These severall Glories of th'eight English Kings;
Deep Knowledge, Greatness, long Life, Policy,
Courage, Zeale, Fortune, awfull Maiestie.
He like great Neptune on three Seas shall roue,
And rule three Realms, with triple power, like Ioue;
Thus in soft Peace, thus in tempestuous Warres,
Till from his foote, his Fame shall strike the stares.⁷

Plainly aware of his patron's interest in naval enlargement and colonial enterprise, which Protestants viewed as proxy battles in the cold war with the Catholic powers, Drayton dedicated an additional poem to the Prince that celebrated England's recent expeditions to Virginia: "You brave Heroique Minds, / Worthy your countries name," the poet writes, as if relaying Henry's commands directly to the public, "Goe, and subdue, / Whilst loy'tring Hinds / Lurke here at home, with shame."⁸ Indeed, Henry's involvement in the colonial project represents yet another means by which he promoted his oppositional interests throughout this period. In early December 1611, Henry was named Supreme Protector of the Company of Merchant Discoverers of the North-West Passage, and a remark from ambassador Antonio Foscarini captures his relish for this role: "The Prince as Patron of the North-West passage intends to send out four ships to explore," he notes, "Hopes are very high, and it is thought that it will be a blow to Spain. There are those who tell the Prince of the discovery of a continent much more handy and much richer than Virginia. The Prince listens graciously and guides all his actions towards lofty aims."⁹

⁷ Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion. or A Chorographical Description of Tracts, Riuers, Mountaines, Forests, and Other Parts of This Renowned Isle of Great Britaine with Intermixture of the Most Remarquable Stories, Antiquities, Wonders, Rarities, Pleasures, and Commodities of the Same: Digested in a Poem by Michael Drayton, Esq. With a Table Added, for Direction to Those Occurrences of Story and Antiquitie, Whereunto the Course of the Volume Easily Leades Not* (London: Printed by H. L. for Mathew Lowne: I. Browne: I. Helme, and I. Busbie, 1613).

⁸ Michael Drayton, "To the Virginian Voyage," in *The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. J. W. Hebel, vol. 2 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1932), 363.

⁹ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 63; *CSPV, 1610–1613*, 265.

Henry Peacham (1578–c. 1644) too can be singled out as one of the most impactful poets in Henry’s household. His *Minerva Britanna, or a Garden of Heroical Devices*, completed in 1612, combines emblem and verse in recounting the history of chivalry in Britain and lamenting its decline. In the poem’s conclusion, the speaker briefly dreams that he has returned to this heroic era, when the nation was not shirking its responsibility to fight for the Protestant cause:

Here saw I many a shiuer’d launce,
Swordes, Battle-axes, Cannons Slingses,
With th’Armes of *PORTVGAL*, and *FRAVNCE*,
And Crownets of her pettie Kinges:
High-feathered Helmets for the Tilt,
Bowes, Steelie Targets cleft in twaine:
Coates, cornets, Armouris richly guilt,
With tatter’d Ensignes out of *SPAINE*.¹⁰

Yet his vision only confirms how far Britain has fallen in the current age: “With grief awak’d, I gaz’d around,” the speaker explains, “Oh GOD I said! where may be found, / These Patrones now of Chivalry[?]”¹¹ In dedicating the poem to Prince Henry, Peacham affirms, like Drayton, that it is he who will set things right, and one passage even appears to chastise the King for restricting his son’s access to the public and delaying the rebirth of this vital mythology: “THVS, thus young HENRY, like Macedo’s sonne, / Ought’st thou in armes before thy people shine,” Peacham asserts beneath an image of the Prince on horseback and dressed in his finest armor, “A prodigie for foes to gaze vpon, [...] / Or second PHOEBVS whose all piercing ray, / Shall cheare our heartes, and chase our feares away”; “Whether TVRKE, SPAINE, FRAVNCE, or ITALIE, / The RED-SHANKE, or the IRISH Rebell bold / Shall rouze thee vp,” he goes on to promise, “thy Trophees may be more, / Then all the HENRIES ever liu’d before.”¹²

That the iconography is so consistent across these works attests to the concerted efforts of the Prince’s poets, and the same view of Britain’s chivalric history and destiny would find its way into historical chronicles that Henry began to commission at this time. In his preface to *The Lives of the III. Normans, Kings of England* (1613), historian John Hayward (c. 1564–1627) describes a meeting with the Prince that must have occurred early in 1612, and it is easy to imagine Gorges, Drayton, and Peacham receiving similar instructions: “he desired nothing more then to know the

¹⁰ Henry Peacham, *Minerua Britanna, or a Garden of Heroical Deuises Furnished, and Adorned with Emblemes and Impresa’s of Sundry Natures, Newly Devised, Moralized, and Published* (London: Printed in Shoe-lane at the signe of the Faulcon by Wa: Dight, 1612), 210.

¹¹ Peacham, 212.

¹² Peacham, 17.

actions of his Auncestours,” Hayward writes, “because hee did so farre esteeme his descent from them, as he approached neere them in honourable endeauours.”¹³ Henry openly requested a didactic chronicle written in his own image, then, and he was also remarkably transparent about this desire to control both history and the arts alike:

And is not this (said he) an errour in vs, to permit euery man to be a writer of Historie? Is it not an errour to be so curious in other matters, and so carelesse in this? We make choise of the most skilfull workemen to draw or carue the portraiture of our faces, and shall euery artlesse Pensell delineate the disposition of our minds? [...] Shall our actions, shall our conditions be described by euery bungling hand? Shall euery filthie finger defile our reputation? Shall our Honour be basely buried in the drosse of rude and absurd writings? Wee are carefull to prouide costly Sepulchers, to preserue our dead liues, to preserue some memorie what we haue bene: but there is no monument, either so durable, or so largely extending, or so liuely and faire, as that which is framed by a fortunate penne.¹⁴

Owing to his association with Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, Hayward spent the last years of Elizabeth’s tenure in prison; his *First Part of the Life and Raigne of King Henrie III* (1599), which was dedicated to the Earl and details Henry of Lancaster’s revolt against an incompetent monarch, was declared a seditious pamphlet following Essex’s analogous rebellion.¹⁵ Such a résumé was likely appealing to the Prince, however, for he consciously modeled himself after that notorious knight, and Hayward’s employment can thus be counted among Henry’s many moves toward drumming up his own wave of popular dissent in 1611–12. Moreover, Henry’s indignation at the “artlesse Pensells” then determining historical truth may have alluded to prominent and royally approved chroniclers like William Camden, who characterized the wars of religion as a scourge on history and James’s pacifism as the providential solution.¹⁶ Henry clearly understood that if he was to continue cultivating his rival mythology and advancing the militant Protestant cause from the sidelines, he would not only need his own poets and painters, but his own historians as well.

Not to be outdone, James followed suit in extending his suppressive tactics to mechanisms outside of the ceremonial stage. Apparent in James’s monopolization of the public theater was a firm “belief in the power of representation” and a need “to control writing and to control by writing,”

¹³ John Hayward, *The Lives of the III. Normans, Kings of England: William the First. William the Second. Henrie the First* (London: R. B., 1613), sig. A 3.

¹⁴ Hayward, sig. A 2^v.

¹⁵ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 146.

¹⁶ Strong, 148.

as Jonathan Goldberg has famously observed, and Badenhausem builds on this assertion in demonstrating that, in the contentious years between 1610 and 1612, “the monarch began offering tacit approval of popular plays which subverted the most attractive images of the chivalric revival.”¹⁷ Central to his argument are King’s Men plays such as *The Maid’s Tragedy* (c. 1611), *A King and No King* (1611), and *The Captain* (c. 1612), all of which depict chivalric honor and martial combat in “starkly realistic terms,” suggesting a directive—either explicit or implied—to counteract the idealism of the Prince’s poets.¹⁸ In *The Captain*, for instance, a character called Father contends that his experiences at war have resulted in more suffering than glory:

and twenty winters
I wore the Christian Cause upon my sword.
[.....]
Full many a cold night have I lodg’d in amour
When all was frozen in me but mine honour:
And many a day, when both the Sun and Canon
Strove, who should most destroy us: have I stood
Malld up in steele, when my tough sinew shrunke,
And this parch’d body ready to consume
As soone to ashes, as the Pike I bore:
[.....]
Thrice was I made a slave, and thrice redeem’d
At price of all I had; The miseries
Of which times, if I had a heart to tell,
Would make ye weep like children.¹⁹

Each of these works was staged at Whitehall in 1611, 1612, or, in the case of *A King and No King*, both, and in this context, they would play as lessons from the King to the Prince—the relevance of a figure named “Father” expounding on the true horrors of warfare, for example, would be lost on no one.²⁰ Yet the target audience of such dramas was a populace growing more enamored with the Prince’s heroic persona by the day, and the primary objective dispelling that dangerous myth from the vantage of the public playhouses.

At the same time, however, James was exploring a more severe and more decisive means of disarming Henry and demoralizing his supporters. Dynastic marriage with one of the Catholic

¹⁷ Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), xii; Badenhausem, “Disarming,” 20.

¹⁸ Badenhausem, “Disarming,” 33.

¹⁹ Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Captain*, in *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. Fredson Bowers, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 2.1.177–98.

²⁰ The dates and location of these performances are taken from Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4:125–27; Badenhausem, “Disarming,” 33.

states had been considered as early as 1605, but it was not until 1611, when the Prince's influence was nearing its height, that these negotiations began in earnest, and, following offers from Spain, Florence, and Savoy, all evidence suggests that James intended to accept the Savoy match and reveal both Henry's marriage and Princess Elizabeth's union with the Protestant prince of the Palatine simultaneously, thus reaffirming his commitment to consolidating peace in Europe.²¹ As Strong clarifies, "Overnight what seemed to herald [the militant Protestant movement's] triumph would have been as dust when it was announced that the future leader of Protestant Europe was literally to be sold by his father to a Catholic bride," but news of the negotiations spread quickly, and a host of treatises illuminate what must have been the prevailing popular response.²² Raleigh, for instance, echoed the apocalyptic tone of the *Poly-Olbion* and *Minerva Britannia* in cautioning the Prince to postpone marriage indefinitely, insisting that "the world is yet in a slumber, and that this long calm will shortly break out in some terrible tempest; I would advise the prince to keep his own ground for a while, and no way to engage or entangle himself," while Charles Cornwallis, treasurer of Henry's household, begged that he seek a match with Protestant Germany instead:

Your conjunction with those of your own Religion will demonstrate your clear, and undoubted resolution not to decline in the cause of GOD. This will fasten unto you throughout all *Christendom* the professors of the reformation, and will make you dear to the subjects of this kingdom; out of whose loves you may expect a permanent and continual treasure, not to be equalled by the portion of *Florence*, were it by many degrees greater than can be hoped; and whose contrary conceits upon a marriage in so high a degree distasteful unto them is likely to breed, and increase those obstructions, which have lately been shewed upon the demands of supply in Parliament by the King your father.²³

Indeed, objections were raised to the King's ideological and financial motivations in equal measure, as it was widely assumed that the failure of the Great Contract in 1610 had led the virtually insolvent Crown to auction Henry off for the largest dowry possible. For his part, Henry is reported to have complained that "he did not desire to be either bought or sold," and as his sister's wedding drew near in 1612, rumors abounded that he would defy his father after all, following her into

²¹ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 80–83.

²² Strong, 83.

²³ Sir Walter Raleigh, "On a Marriage Between Prince Henry and a Daughter of Savoy," in *The Works of Sir Walter Raleigh*, vol. 8 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1829), 250; Charles Cornwallis, "A Discourse Concerning the Marriage Propounded to Prince Henry with a Daughter of Florence," in *Collectanea Curiosa; or Miscellaneous Tracts, Relating to the History and Antiquities of England and Ireland, the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and a Variety of Other Subjects*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1781), 159–60.

Germany and returning with a Protestant bride.²⁴

Despite James's best efforts to scale back the masquing ritual and regain control over the ceremonial stage, then, these mounting tensions and external clashes would inevitably have pervaded the 1611–12 entertainment season, for *Love Restored* took the crisis head-on, addressing both Henry's latest challenges to his father's mythmaking hegemony and the controversial marriage negotiations then threatening to turn the people against their King. Jonson even begins by acknowledging the season's budgetary limitations, feigning that the underfunded masque has been cancelled: "You are here in expectation of a device tonight, and I am afraid you can do little else but expect it," Masquerado, the presenter of the show, admits; "Unless we should come in like a morris-dance, and whistle our ballad ourselves, I know not what we should do" (2–13).²⁵ Plutus, disguised as Cupid, then emerges to denounce the "superfluous excesses" of "masquing and revelling" outright, calling them "the ruin of states" (137–52), but Robin Goodfellow, spirit of festivity and mirth, has fortuitously sneaked into court for the occasion, and, in a pleasing twist, exposes the true intruder: "'Tis that imposter Plutus, the god of money," he declares, "who has stol'n Love's ensigns, and in his belied figure reigns i' the world, making friendships, contracts, marriages and almost religion; [...] usurping all those offices in this age of gold which Love himself performed in the Golden Age" (162–8). At this, the real Cupid appears at last, banishing "tyran money" and initiating dances that will renew the bonds of love between the King and his court (198). "Here are ten, [...] To figure the ten ornaments / That do each courtly presence grace," Cupid says of the show's aristocratic participants,

Nor will they rudely strive for place,
One to precede the other, but
As music them in form shall put,
So will they keep their measures true,
And make still their proportions new,
Till all become one harmony
Of honor and courtesy,
True valor and urbanity,
Of confidence, alacrity,
Of promptness and of industry,
Hability, reality. (238–53)

Though the opening antimasque had appeared to accept the end of James's mythmaking hegemony,

²⁴ *CSPV*, 1610–1613, 328, 450.

²⁵ Quotations from Jonson are from *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

then, *Love Restored* ultimately becomes an emphatic demonstration of the form's undiminished power and a reassertion of the King's uncontested authority over the space in which it was performed.

Indeed, the bulk of Jonson's masque is centered on issues of access and exclusion. Because Plutus has usurped the court stage, Robin Goodfellow must elude "many thorny difficulties" in his quest for admittance (59). Turned away by porters at the front gate, the upper terrace, and even "the carpenters' way," as he explains in the masque's longest passage, he tried presenting himself as an engineer, a tirewoman, a musician, a feather-maker, and "forty other devices" to no avail (73–116). Noticing a "citizen's wife or two let in," he next donned the costume of a lady, but abandoned this strategy after learning that the price of admission was a groping from the guard, and when a similar plan to blend into a group of foreign diplomats was thwarted by his obvious Englishness, he finally succeeded by pretending he was a character in the show (108). On one hand, this speech makes light of the real challenges facing all who vied for a place at these restricted events—a common theme in Stuart and Caroline masques alike, as Martin Butler has observed.²⁶ Yet in dwelling on the strictly controlled boundaries surrounding the center of ceremonial power, Jonson deliberately emphasizes what Butler recognizes as "the masques' defining condition: the legitimation of those taking part in the festival" and "the delegitimation of others who failed to meet the criteria for inclusion."²⁷ Inside the Banqueting House, James's court was always arranged according to status, but masques like *Love Restored* went further in partitioning three larger spheres, as Jerzy Limon contends: "the divine or metaphysical," revealed to the audience by dint of the monarch's exclusive authority, "the sphere of the court, and the non-court world."²⁸ As it turns out, the spirit of festive mirth belongs inside, but the expulsion of the usurper Plutus serves to purify the space and reestablish this essential hierarchy. With the Prince now claiming his own access to that highest of spheres, it would seem that the King was symbolically forcing him back beyond the boundaries and delegitimizing his rival mythology in just the same way.

Jonson is similarly resourceful in managing the political narrative of the unpopular Catholic match. Interpreting the Stuart masques as a whole, Butler argues that "the crown's

²⁶ Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 56–58.

²⁷ Butler, 39.

²⁸ Jerzy Limon, "The Masque of Stuart Culture," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 212.

political authority [...] was conjured out of the audience's need to belong," and in the case of *Love Restored*, this threat of exclusion compelled approval of both the King's mythmaking supremacy and his use of ecumenical marriage as statecraft.²⁹ Plutus certainly "pretends to tie kingdoms," Robin Goodfellow explains, but he derives this power from those who believe that such decisions are motivated by money: "'Tis you, mortals, that are fools, and worthy to be such, that worship him; for if you had wisdom, he had no godhead. He should stink in the grave with those wretches whose slaves he was. Contemn him and he is one" (168–80). Cupid agrees, insisting that Plutus is powerless to deceive "good men," who all know that James will "never crave / His aids, but force him as a slave" (222, 234–5). Jonson does not mention Henry or the marriage negotiations directly, then, but his message is clear enough: far from money or jealousy, James's every motivation is "secured by love" (233), and the masque's closing songs ask the audience to dance in recognition of this fact:

This motion was of love begot,
 It was so airy, light and good,
 His wings into their feet he shot,
 Or else himself into their blood.
 But ask not how. The end will prove
 That love's in them, or they're in love. (258–3)

In this, Jonson flips the very accusations levied against the King back at his accusers—a stratagem so brazen that scholars such as Graham Parry have mistakenly viewed *Love Restored* as "the first occasion on which Jonson was willing to shoot a few critical darts in James's direction," objecting to "the sacrifice of love to pecuniary advantage" and encouraging the Prince "to marry where it pleased him, not where pragmatism directed."³⁰ Though a few likeminded courtiers may have misinterpreted the masque in this manner, such aims would not only contradict Jonson's entire court oeuvre, as Parry freely admits, but the rest of *Love Restored* as well. More plausibly, these passages work to correct the attitudes of the Prince and his supporters simultaneously: in response to the growing factionalism in James's court, Jonson commands these fractious nobles to love their King by loving each other, and in answer to Henry, who maintained until the end that the occasion "to be in love with any of [his prospective brides] is not yet at hand," Jonson recommends that he quickly learn to love whomever he is told to love.³¹

²⁹ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 60.

³⁰ Graham Parry, "The Politics of the Jacobean Masque," in *Theatre and Government Under the Early Stuarts*, ed. J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 100.

³¹ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 82.

The success of each masquing ritual hinged on the audience's acquiescence to the presented political ideals, an involuntary affirmation of obedience signified by the group dances that concluded the show, and while *Love Restored* makes use of all the coercive methods for which Jonson is known, it is unusual in acknowledging the spectator's role in the efficacy of courtly display. As opposed to an unequivocal demand, Robin Goodfellow and Cupid merely appeal to the good men in the audience, asking that they condemn Plutus and strip him of his authority, and Plutus himself remains obstinate throughout: "attempt it!" he dares them, "I feel it not. I cherish and make much of myself, flow forth in ease and delicacy" (188–92). Indeed, Plutus gives voice to the resentment some must have felt for these despotic spectacles, grandiose instantiations of the King's absolutism as they were, stating, "I will endure thy prodigality nor riots no more, [...] Nor shall the tyranny of these nights hereafter impose a necessity upon me of entertaining thee" (137–40). And these protestations may have been more persuasive than Jonson anticipated, for in a letter addressed to Sir Dudley Carleton, observer John Chamberlain reported that *Love Restored* ended in disaster: "when they came to take out the ladies," he writes, "beginning [with my ladies] of Essex and Cranborne, they were refused, [and this gave] example to the rest, so that they were fain [to dance] alone and make court one to another."³² One can only imagine Jonson's embarrassment as his ten male masquers danced unattended to songs that describe every "male heart" meeting "female eyes," the entire court "put on by love" (286–74).

The precise impetus for this act of insubordination cannot be known, though it is reasonable to assume that the tensions of the 1611–12 entertainment season were simply too great to ignore. Butler notes that both of the inciting women named by Chamberlain, Frances Howard, Lady Essex, and Catherine Howard, Lady Cranborne, were married to close associates of the Prince, so perhaps they objected to the messages they were being asked to endorse—either the suppression of Henry's rival mythology, the King's right to disarm his son with dynastic marriage, or both.³³ Whatever their reasons, this refusal to dance at once belied the supposed unity of James's court and brought to light the masquing ritual's fatal flaw—that if "all the morning dreams are true," as Jonson triumphantly declares in the final line of *Love Restored*, it is only because the spectators have been convinced that they are so (285). Henry understood this well, and, once barred from the court stage,

³² John Chamberlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1939), 327–28. This letter is heavily damaged, and I have borrowed the conjectural emendations provided in Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 205.

³³ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 206.

continued to transform his ideals into reality by waging a war for hearts and minds from the margins. The failure of this masque might attest to his success, but at the very least, the incident illuminates the uneasy atmosphere at court when *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* were first performed, for although these plays were staged in early November—two months before the 6 January performance of Jonson's masque—they effectively opened the entertainment season that *Love Restored* concluded, and would thus have been viewed and interpreted by the same unruly audience.³⁴

II

When James's court saw *The Tempest* at Whitehall on Hallowmas (1 November) 1611, they could not have helped but consider their present political moment and physical surroundings, for in Prospero, Shakespeare conceived of a monarch who relies on the mechanisms of ceremonial display in exercising absolute authority over his island—a restricted and carefully controlled space not unlike the King's court stage. The play even climaxes with an extravagant wedding masque meant to secure a dynastic union between Milan and Naples, “a contract of true love to celebrate,” as the goddess Iris pronounces (4.1.84), and while the court audience would almost certainly have thought of the real-life marriage negotiations then at the fore of public conversation, they might too have recalled this masquing scene upon seeing its precise language and themes, as well as “Dove-drawn” Cupid, reappear in Jonson's *Love Restored* (4.1.94).³⁵ Moreover, as with Plutus in that masque, Prospero neutralizes an array of accomplished and aspiring usurpers with spectacles that “work mine end upon their senses” (5.1.53), evoking both the Prince's recent challenges to his father's mythmaking hegemony and the King's suppressive response. Henry's rival iconography would likewise have seemed to pervade the play: its nautical, New World setting mirrors much of the Prince's expansionist propaganda, including the river pageant, mock sea battle, and oceanic masque that coincided with his investiture ceremony in the summer of 1610—the last occasions on which he was permitted to appear on the ceremonial stage—and costumes from that river pageant were in fact repurposed for Ariel and Caliban, as Michael Baird Saenger and Gabriel

³⁴ Alvin Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theater in the Stuart Court, 1603–1613* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 207.

³⁵ Quotations from Shakespeare are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., Third Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016).

Egan have shown.³⁶ Whether Shakespeare intended to comment on the contemporary crisis or not, then, the impression would be all but unavoidable.

And from this perspective, *The Tempest* provides a window into James's lofty conception of ceremonial display, for Prospero "enacts a fantasy of near-total authorial power," as Leah S. Marcus explains, "in which What the Author Intends comes closest to infallible execution."³⁷ With the help of Ariel and his attendant "Spirits, which by mine art [...] enact / My present fancies" (4.1.120–2)—a description James could have easily used for Jonson, Inigo Jones, and the King's Men—Prospero oversees and orchestrates every spectacle from "*on the top, invisible*" (3.3.19. SD), and his meanings are, miraculously, never misconstrued: "Their understanding / Begins to swell," he declares in the play's final act, "and the approaching tide / Will shortly fill the reasonable shore / That now lies foul and muddy" (5.1.79–82). As with James's court stage, then, Prospero substitutes his ideals for reality and imposes moral order on the island "by creating and presenting fictive images of that moral order," as Robert Egan interprets, and just as the masques "lead the court to its ideal self through wonder," to quote from Stephen Orgel's work on the form, Prospero slowly primes his captive audience to accept his vision as truth.³⁸ "Now I will believe / That there are unicorns," Sebastian says, having witnessed an enchanted banquet designed expressly to make Alonso's court more compliant at the final confrontation,

that in Arabia
There is one tree, the phoenix' throne, one phoenix
At this hour reigning there.
ANTONIO: I'll believe both;
And what does else want credit, come to me,
And I'll be sworn 'tis true. Travellers ne're did lie,
Though fools at home condemn 'em. (3.3.22–8)

Next to *Love Restored*, the play would thus seem a similar defense of the court stage's undiminished power, and these coercive methods are more than justified by the "foul conspiracy / Of the beast Caliban and his confederates," who, much like Plutus, represent "the lawless impulse

³⁶ Michael Baird Saenger, "The Costumes of Caliban and Ariel *qua* Sea-Nymph," *Notes and Queries* 42 (1995): 334–36; Gabriel Egan, "Ariel's Costume in the Original Staging of *The Tempest*," *Theatre Notebook: A Journal of the History and Technique of the British Theatre* 51, no. 2 (1997): 62–72.

³⁷ Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 49.

³⁸ Robert Egan, *Drama within Drama: Shakespeare's Sense of His Art in King Lear, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 96; Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 57.

that makes a repressive regime necessary,” as Hugh Craig contends (4.1.139–40).³⁹ Ariel even borrows the despotic language of a Jonsonian masque when comparing his master to “destiny— / That hath to instrument this lower world / And what is in’t” (3.3.54–6), and indeed, because these lower-sphere characters seek to appropriate Prospero’s mythmaking authority by “seiz[ing] his books,” their insubordination may very well have been understood in relation to the Prince and the court stage itself (3.2.83).

Yet there are aspects of *The Tempest* that incite sympathy for the low characters and subvert this absolutist message, and while Henry and his dissenting faction were likely predisposed to latch onto such elements, the wholesale rebellion to come suggests that a growing percentage of James’s court would have identified with Caliban, who complains that “I am subject to a tyrant [...] that by his cunning hath / Cheated me of the island” (3.2.39–41). Indeed, Prospero is remarkably cruel to Caliban, the “poisonous slave” he confines to barren rocks (1.2.319), but he rules the rest of his makeshift court with the same iron fist. When Ariel requests the liberty he has been promised, for instance, Prospero cows him back into submission—“Dost thou forget / From what a torment I did free thee?” he demands, “Thou liest, malignant thing! [...] my slave” (1.2.250–70)—and the moment he tires of Miranda’s questions about his designs, he simply overpowers her senses, saying, “Thou art inclined to sleep. ’Tis a good dullness, / And give it way. I know thou canst not choose” (1.2.185–6). From this viewpoint, Ferdinand’s determination to “resist such entertainment” foreshadows Plutus’s righteous defiance in *Love Restored* (1.2.464), and though he is promptly subdued, other characters share this spirit in emphasizing the limits of monarchical power: the Boatswain, for example, insists that storms care nothing “for the name of king” (1.1.16), and Caliban tells his fellow conspirators that without his books, Prospero is “but a sot as I am” (3.2.87). At times, the play even seems to take direct aim at Jonson’s masque, as when Alonso regrets arranging his daughter’s dynastic marriage, for she is now “so far from Italy removed / I ne’er again shall see her” (2.1.105–6), and when Gonzalo imagines a new “golden age” with no money, “no sovereignty,” and “no marrying” at all (2.1.151–63).

More subversive still is the interruption of Prospero’s own nuptial masque, which both cuts short the “*graceful dance*” that should complete the ritual and mangles the grand, masque-like scheme Prospero has devised for the play as a whole (4.1.138. SD). “I had forgot that foul

³⁹ Hugh Craig, “Jonson, the Antimasque and the ‘Rules of Flattery,’” in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, ed. David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 185.

conspiracy,” Prospero abruptly announces, “Our revels now are ended” (4.1.139–48). Typically, the disruptive threat of the antimasque would be eradicated to make way for the revels proper, but in turning from dances back to disruption, “Shakespeare engineers an exact reversal of the order of events in a Jacobean masque,” as Ernest B. Gilman observes.⁴⁰ Caliban’s plot to “batter [Prospero’s] skull” and violate “the beauty of his daughter” is, after all, a total inversion of the masque’s “contract of true love,” and Stephano and Trinculo’s imbecilic dances in the Duke’s clothes makes a mockery of the form much like Plutus’s dissembling in Jonson’s antimasque (3.2.84–93, 4.1.84). The aborted spectacle thus serves to question the efficacy of ceremonial display, for in his narcissistic celebration of his own ideals, Prospero has forgotten the “harsher world” outside of the court “that cannot quite be exorcised,” to quote from Gilman once again, and this reading is reinforced by the failure of the final confrontation.⁴¹ Across a series of lengthy monologues, Prospero assigns blame and presumes contrition from all involved in the loss of his dukedom—“Most cruelly / Didst thou, Alonso, use me and my daughter,” he says, “Thy brother was a furtherer in the act: [but] I do forgive thee” (5.1.71–8)—and though the already guiltless Alonso quickly concedes, the true traitors, Sebastian and Antonio, remain unaffected: “The devil speaks in him” is Sebastian’s only response, while Antonio says nothing at all, and they “exit bragging wildly and essentially unchanged,” as Egan summarizes, “rejecting the end of a clear life toward which Prospero’s art has directed them” (5.1.129).⁴²

When Prospero reveals the young lovers, then, as if to parade his crowning achievement, it becomes clear that their pairing is less the result of Prospero’s persuasive powers than Miranda and Ferdinand’s voluntary acceptance of his vision. Certainly the project unfolds “as [Prospero’s] soul prompts it” (1.2.419), but Prospero orchestrated a meeting that would trick Miranda into seeing “a thing divine” and Ferdinand a “goddess” (1.2.417–20), and by the end, they have seen through the façade: “she is mortal,” Ferdinand clarifies for a mystified Alonso, but still “I chose her” (5.1.188–90). The play’s metatheatrical epilogue too emphasizes this necessity of belief, as Prospero addresses the audience directly, explaining that his “charms are all o’erthrown,” and only “the help of your good hands” can complete his “project, [...] Which was to please” (1–13). In this, “the spells are now ours,” as Orgel interprets, “we have become the enabling factor in the

⁴⁰ Ernest B. Gilman, “‘All Eyes’: Prospero’s Inverted Masque,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (1980): 215.

⁴¹ Gilman, 224.

⁴² Egan, *Drama within Drama*, 104.

fiction.”⁴³ Prospero’s power over spectacle is thus transferred to the spectators, and this might have played as an innocuous gesture in any other setting than a court polarized by two competing mythologies—by two Prosperos, if you will. Indeed, as Jonson worked to compel this same audience to dance in approval of the King’s ideals—both his sole authority over courtly mythmaking and his prerogative to marry Prince Henry off to a Catholic princess—perhaps they thought back to *The Tempest* in gathering the courage to refuse.

III

The King’s Men staged *The Winter’s Tale* before James at Whitehall just four days later, on 5 November 1611, and if *The Tempest* had helped introduce unrest to the 1611–12 entertainment season by invoking and interrogating the King’s rigid rule over the center of ceremonial power, *The Winter’s Tale* would have amplified these tensions considerably, for ascribing megalomania to Prospero may have required some preexisting sympathy for the Prince and his dissenting faction—regardless of how prevalent such attitudes likely were—but Leontes is an unequivocal “tyrant,” as the Oracle affirms (3.2.131), and his court the very manifestation of this oppositional view. Indeed, in defending his irrational jealousy, Leontes leans on the same absolutist assertions as James in the court masques: “Our prerogative / Calls not your counsels,” he tells his ineffectual advisors, “but our natural goodness / Imparts this” (2.1.164–6). He attempts to isolate himself from all criticism and “needful conference” (2.3.40), and when Paulina at last presents him with the evidence of his error—the infant Perdita, Hermione’s “sacred honor” (2.3.84), Mamillius’s “eye, nose, lip” (2.3.99), each of which easily invalidates his “weak-hinged fancy” (2.3.118)—he calls her “a mankind witch” and expels these figures from his sight (2.3.67). “Leontes’s excesses stem from the most personal of causes,” then, as Stuart M. Kurland explains, “but they lead directly to profound harm to the realm,” as foreign relations are damaged beyond repair and “Sicilia remains imperiled by an uncertain succession” following the evident death of the entire royal family.⁴⁴ Even the Oracle’s proclamation is dismissed as “falsehood” when it contradicts monarchical truth (3.2.138), and at this, some spectators would undoubtedly have drawn comparisons to the reckless suppression of Henry’s chivalric mythology, which devotees like Peacham and Raleigh

⁴³ Stephen Orgel, “Introduction,” in *The Tempest*, by William Shakespeare, ed. Stephen Orgel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 55.

⁴⁴ Stuart M. Kurland, “Shakespeare and James I: Personal Rule and Public Responsibility,” in *Late Shakespeare, 1608–1613*, ed. Andrew J. Power and Rory Loughnane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 216.

characterized as not only legitimate, but vital to the nation's survival.

Equally relevant to the political concerns of 1611–12 is Bohemia's despotic king, Polixenes, who threatens to "bar [Florizel] from succession" and have Perdita's "beauty scratched with briars" for pursuing a marriage of which he does not approve (4.4.416–20). Yet on the whole, Bohemia serves as a foil to Leontes's ruined court, a pastoral paradise in which love and festivity are free to flourish. In retrospect, this portion *The Winter's Tale* might even have seemed an ironic commentary on *Love Restored*, for Shakespeare introduces his own Robin Goodfellow—Autolycus, a roguish hustler who "haunts wakes [country festivals], fairs, and bearbaitings" (4.3.93–4)—and stages yet another nuptial masque within the play, only this time, with a clear defense of the child's right to marry as he pleases: "It cannot fail but by / The violation of my faith," Florizel righteously declares, as if speaking on Prince Henry's behalf, "From my succession wipe me, father: I / Am heir to my affection (4.4.467–72). Indeed, recollections of the Prince's plight would be inevitable, as the play's "*dance of twelve satyrs*" was likely lifted from Henry's *Oberon*, a chivalric masque performed by the King's Men at the previous entertainment season, and the same may have been true of the bear costume famously used to chase Antigonus from the stage (4.4.334. SD).⁴⁵ In this light, then, Bohemia can be compared to Peacham's *Garden of Heroical Devices*, an idyllic world beyond James's influence in which Henry's mythology is finally reborn, and though Ferdinand and Miranda's masque is once again interrupted, the tyrannical monarch is now the disruptive force, and the Prince's defiance what restores order to both courts.

Likewise, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* overlap in their emphases on the interdependence between spectacle and belief, but in this case, it is the kings who need convincing. With the first of two climactic works of fictive art in the play, Camillo orchestrates a "dramatic image" of the married couple, as Egan argues, preparing costumes and even speeches that, if properly received, will allow the pairing to "graduate from illusion to reality."⁴⁶ "Make for Sicilia," he instructs Ferdinand,

And there present yourself and your fair princess,
For so I see she must be, fore Leontes;
She shall be habited as it becomes
The partner of your bed. Methinks I see

⁴⁵ Melissa D. Aaron, *Global Economics: A History of the Theater Business, the Chamberlain's/King's Men, and Their Plays, 1599–1642* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 94.

⁴⁶ Egan, *Drama within Drama*, 71.

Leontes opening his free arms and weeping
His welcome forth; asks thee there, "Son, forgiveness,"
As 'twere i'th' father's person.

[.....]

I'll write you down,
The which shall point you forth at every sitting
What you must say. (4.4.535–54)

The performance goes off without a hitch, achieving not only the legitimization of the relationship, but the reunion of Leontes and his daughter, as well as Leontes and Polixenes, which the onlookers describe in appropriately aesthetic terms: "Such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour that ballad-makers cannot be able to express it," one gentleman says (5.2.22–4); "Like an old tale still," another (5.2.58); and "the dignity of this act was worth the audience of kings and princes," a third, "for by such was it acted" (5.2.74–5). The passages double as descriptions of the ceremonial stage's power, then, and when Paulina undertakes to revive Hermione with her own ritualistic performance, she too prepares her audience to accept her show as truth: "If you can behold it, / I'll make the statue move indeed," she tells Leontes, having drawn out the big reveal until the wait is unbearable,

PAULINA: But then you'll think—
Which I protest against—I am assisted
By wicked powers.

LEONTES: What you can make her do,
I am content to look on; what to speak,
I am content to hear; for 'tis as easy
To make her speak as move.

PAULINA: It is required
You do awake your faith. Then all stand still.
On! Those that think it is unlawful business
I am about, let them depart. (5.3.87–97)

"Proceed. / No foot shall stir," Leontes says, utterly enrapt, and it is this consent that explains why Paulina and Camillo succeed where Prospero—and indeed, Jonson—failed (5.3.97–8). "That she is living, / Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale," Paulina triumphantly declares, "but it appears she lives" (5.3.115–7).

The Winter's Tale and *The Tempest* thus end on similar notes, for Paulina can be understood as demanding and assuring the belief of Leontes and the audience alike, and when Leontes asks that "each one demand and answer to his part / Performed in this wide gap of time" (5.3.153–4), "the theatrical metaphor reminds us [...] that all the events we have witnessed have ultimately been a mimetic performance by actors," Egan observes, while challenging us to

continue believing all the same.⁴⁷ In the context of the 1611–12 entertainment season, then, the play would once again have reminded the discontented audience of its own power over the spectacles before them—the request from Time to “imagine me, / Gentle spectators” recalls not only Prospero’s metatheatrical epilogue but the gods and allegorical figures that addressed the gallery at the masques’ conclusions (4.1.19–20)—but *The Winter’s Tale* goes further than *The Tempest* by including monarchs in its lessons on the necessity of belief. “Here’s ado, / To lock up honesty and honor from / Th’access of gentle visitors,” Paulina chides early on (2.2.9–10), and to a court audience then deprived of its Prince, it might have seemed that she was speaking directly to the King. Indeed, as Henry sat sidelined from the center of ceremonial power, growing his rival mythology through alternative channels but staring down the devastating prospect of marriage to a Catholic bride, there would be those who viewed the play as chastising James for his suppressive efforts and suggesting that, if granted the necessary access, the Prince could make everyone a believer—perhaps even the King.

⁴⁷ Egan, 87–89.

CHAPTER 5. 1612–14: *HENRY VIII, THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN, A FUNERAL, AND A WEDDING AT COURT*

I

On 6 November 1612, just three months shy of his nineteenth birthday, Prince Henry succumbed to a sudden case of typhoid fever, and the outpouring of grief was immense: “I must confess never to have seen such a sight of mortification in my life,” Isaac Wake wrote of the later funeral procession, “nor neuer so iust a sorrowe so well expressed as in all the spectators whose streaming eyes made knowen howe much inwardly their harts did bleed.”¹ Beyond the Prince himself, hundreds of elegies mourned the loss of a chivalric and militant Protestant ideal that he had come to represent: “These were the Subjects of our PRINCES Aime,” Christopher Brooke recalled with regret for what might have been, “A plumed Caske, a Speare, a Sword, a Shield; / Kingdomes his hope; *Olympicke* wreathes his Chaine; / Barriers his practise, and the course of Field,” and Joshua Sylvester penned a somber farewell to his late patron, “*the Churches Tower, the Terroure of the Pope, / Herôick HENRY, Atlas of our Hope.*”² In private correspondence, John Holles lamented that “all brave undertakings by sea or land for the honour and benefit of this nation, the reformation and care of a sick, diseased, home state by upholding religion, bettering the policy, moderating the ‘oligarcal’ greatness of Court, of council, opening the passage to virtue with reward of merit to whosoever, in what sphere soever, is gone,” while Venetian ambassador Antonio Foscarini more impartially reported that “this death will certainly cause great changes in the course of the world. The foes of this kingdom are freed from a grave apprehension, the friends are deprived of a high hope.”³ In this way, however, the factionalism that had plagued the Stuart court throughout Henry’s meteoric rise to prominence only escalated in the aftermath of his passing, and the Prince’s

¹ Public Record Office, London, *The Complete State Papers Domestic: Series One, 1547–1625*, vol. 8 (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1977), SP 14/71, f. 128.

² Christopher Brooke, *Two Elegies, Consecrated to the Never-Dying Memorie of the Most Worthily Admyred; Most Hartily Loued; and Generally Bewayled Prince; Henry Prince of Wales*. (London: Printed by T. S. for Richard More, and are to be souled at his shoppe in Saint Dunstones Church-yard, 1613), sig. C; Josuah Sylvester, *Lacrymae Lacrymarum*, in *The Complete Works of Joshua Sylvester*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1880), 277.

³ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland, K. G., Preserved at Welbeck Abbey*, vol. 9 (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1928), 35; Horatio F. Brown, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, 1610–1613* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1905), 450.

militant Protestant supporters promptly accused King James of poisoning his ideologically adversarial son, while those sympathetic to James's pacifist cause and absolutist convictions spread rumors of Henry's ambition to "snatch the sceptre out of his father's fist," as Holles complained.⁴

Indeed, Henry's death marked not the end of this polarizing conflict but its climax, as the Prince had been heavily involved in planning the festivities meant to celebrate his sister Elizabeth's marriage to Frederick V, Elector Palatine of the Rhine, and the 1612–13 entertainment season would see his shows competing with those of the King to define the union's political significance.⁵ Originally, James had intended to counterbalance this Protestant match with a Catholic pairing for Henry, thus reaffirming his commitment to bridging the religious divisions of Europe, but it now seemed that circumstances had forced him to choose a side, and Protestants grief-stricken for Prince Henry remained hopeful that Elizabeth and Frederick would establish an English-German alliance capable of carrying out his promised anti-Habsburg crusade.⁶ With all eyes on the ceremonial stage, then, the King and, in spirit, the Prince engaged in their last mythmaking war by way of "the most magnificent public shows that England had ever seen," as Martin Butler observes, including fireworks, a mock sea-battle, three court masques, and twenty King's Men plays.⁷ *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, William Shakespeare and John Fletcher's (1579–1625) collaborative dramas from the period, have long been associated with this event, but neither is listed in the atypically detailed financial accounts, and it is more likely that they were debuted at court the following entertainment season, when fourteen unknown works were performed.⁸ From this distance, however, the clashing spectacles and ceremonies in these plays would seem a reflection on the mixed moods and competing iconographies of the previous year, as well as a final judgment on James and Henry's entire rivalry, which, in retrospect, had achieved little more than discord and despair.

⁴ Alvin Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theater in the Stuart Court, 1603–1613* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 152; *HMC Portland*, 9:11.

⁵ Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 194–95.

⁶ Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales, and England's Lost Renaissance* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 77–85.

⁷ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 194.

⁸ Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright*, 208; for more on the 1613 dating and collaborative authorship of these plays, see the relevant entries in Gary Taylor's "The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Plays," in *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 69–144, as well as pp. 95, 100 below.

By alternating between opposing perspectives on Elizabeth's marriage, the festivities of the 1612–13 season effectively recreated this years-long conflict in miniature, and the cumulative effect was an ideological incoherence best exemplified by Francis Beaumont's (1584–1616) *Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn*. Arranged by these Inns of Court "in obedience to the Prince's orders," as Foscarini remarked, the masque thus evinces Henry's desire to secure external funding and like-minded authors not employed by his father, and appears, at first glance, to advance his militant Protestant view.⁹ The setting is a mountain adorned by two pavilions "trimmed on the inside with Armour and Miltarie furniture hanged up as upon the walles," as well as "divers other Tents, as if it had been a Campe" (248–51).¹⁰ "Olympian Knights" descend to dance in tribute to the new couple (252), and while it is implied that they are briefly breaking from some ongoing military campaign—they "put on their Swords and Belts" and return to camp before the last song is complete (332–3)—there is too a religious dimension to their unnamed quest: the knights are accompanied by "Jupiters Priests" and dress "as consecrated persons" themselves, "all in vailes, like to Coapes" (254–63). Yet Beaumont mentions preparing a tournament for the Prince in letters from this period, leading Roy Strong to speculate that the masque would have culminated with the martial sports that were at the center of Henry's mythology if not for some posthumous modification—possibly from the King.¹¹ And without these climactic tilts, the show feels underdeveloped and even "anodyne," as Graham Parry contends: in its antimasque, Mercurie and Iris debate how best to celebrate the wedding by staging dances that comically underwhelm, and that tension is hardly resolved by one more "tame round of choreographed dances."¹² It is fitting, then, that this masque, which was meant to bring the festivities to a triumphant close, was abruptly halted and resumed several days later because "the King was so wearied and sleepeie," as John Chamberlain reported; Sir Francis Bacon, a sponsor of the entertainment, complained that "the grace of theyre maske is quite gon when theyre apparell hath ben alreedy shewed and theyre devises vented," and one has to wonder if James was deliberately blunting its impact.¹³

⁹ CSPV, 1610–1613, 447.

¹⁰ Quotations from Beaumont are from *The Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn*, in *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. Fredson Bowers, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 111–44.

¹¹ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 180.

¹² Graham Parry, "The Politics of the Jacobean Masque," in *Theatre and Government Under the Early Stuarts*, ed. J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 106; Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 180.

¹³ John Chamberlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1939), 426.

More “barriers, tourneys, and jousts” must have been cancelled sometime after 9 November, when Foscarini last reported on their preparation, but enough evidence of Henry’s hand survives in the final event that his original vision can largely be reassembled.¹⁴ In the fireworks show that opened the festivities, for instance, “the imperiall and beautious Lady Lucida, [...] one of Vesta’s votaries,” is captured by a “hell-commanding magitian [...] assured to enjoy her” but rescued by Saint George, who “mounts uppon his steede” and slays the “Dragon and Giant” guarding her cell.¹⁵ The scene is lifted directly from Spenserian romance, thus tying the marriage to the chivalric and militant Protestant cultural ethos that Henry had worked to revive, and the sea-battle that took place on the Thames two days later only amplified this Elizabethan nostalgia: spectators watched a “Christian fleet” destroy a “Turkish or Barbarian Castle of Tunis, Algiers, or some other Mahometan fortification,” John Taylor explained in his published account of the entertainment, but in this they were reminded of “the memorable battaile betwixt us and the invincible (as it was thought) Spanish Armada in the yeare 1588.”¹⁶ As with Beaumont’s masque, James had the show stopped because he “tooke so litle delight to see no other activitie but shooting and potting of gunnes,” but the Prince had already taken precautions to ensure that the association would stick: the Banqueting House, venue for all three masques as well as the wedding banquet, was decorated with tapestries depicting “the defeat of the Spanish in ’88,” as Foscarini related, “which may be was a miracle as is expressed in the legend that surrounds it.”¹⁷ That anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic sentiments prevailed is further evinced by the Spanish ambassador’s decision to skip the festivities altogether.¹⁸

The peak of Henry’s influence over 1612–13, however, came in the form of *The Memorable Masque of the Middle Temple and Lincoln’s Inn*—perhaps the season’s most elaborate spectacle. Written by George Chapman (1559–1634), who was just beginning to emerge as the Prince’s preferred poet owing to his talent for promoting the militant Protestant cause, and funded by the remaining two Inns of Court, whose financial ties to the Virginia Company complemented Henry’s own interest in colonizing the New World before the Spanish, the masque presents

¹⁴ CSPV, 1610–1613, 446.

¹⁵ John Taylor, *Heaven’s Blessing and Earth’s Joy; or, a True Relation of the Supposed Sea-Fights and Fire-Workes as Were Accomplished Before the Royall Celebration of the All-Beloved Marriage of the Two Peerlesse Paragons of Christendome, Fredericke and Elizabeth*, in *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*, vol. 2 (London: J. B. Nichols, 1828), 530, 532.

¹⁶ Taylor, 528–29.

¹⁷ Chamberlain, *Letters*, 1:423; CSPV, 1610–1613, 499.

¹⁸ Chamberlain, *Letters*, 1:424.

colonial enterprise as a solution to the King's foreign and domestic problems alike.¹⁹ It began on the streets of London with a massive procession of "*fifty gentlemen*" on horseback, each accompanied by "*two Moors, attired like Indian slaves*"; antimasque figures as "*baboons [...]* *horsed with asses and dwarf palfreys*"; chariots carrying the main masquers, some "*attired like Virginian priests*" and others "*in Indian habits*," each followed by torchbearers and heralds; and additional chariots "*attended with a full guard of two hundred halberdiers*" for those performing the speaking roles (1–91).²⁰ As if to evoke the Prince's memory, the procession "*made one turn about the [tiltyard]*" before heading inside (104), where the first of several antimasques saw the miserly Plutus reformed through marriage to "the lovely goddess Honour" (406–7). Plutus had appeared in Ben Jonson's *Love Restored* the previous entertainment season, where he was demonized in an effort to distance the King from accusations of auctioning off titles and even the hand of his own son to ease the Crown's mounting debts, and his antithetical characterization here seems to suggest that James could have both riches and honor if only he invested more in the Virginia Company.²¹

Indeed, once Honour introduces the masquers, "Whom I made cross the Briton ocean [...]" to do due homage to the sacred nuptials / Of Love and Beauty, celebrated here" (480–3), a mountain on stage "*opened and spread like a sky*," as Chapman narrates, revealing "*a sun setting*" behind "*a mine of gold*" (509–11), and the opulence is astonishing enough to convert the colony's inhabitants to the one true faith: "Virginian princes," Honour's priestess proclaims,

you must now renounce
Your superstitious worship of these suns,
Subject to cloudy dark'nings and descents;
And of your fit devotions turn the events
To this our Briton Phoebus, whose bright sky
(Enlightened with a Christian piety)
Is never subject to black Error's night,
And hath already offered heaven's true light
To your dark region, which acknowledge now;
Descend, and to him all your homage vow. (597–604)

The civilizing influence of royal authority is a constant theme of the Stuart masques, but this was

¹⁹ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 180; David Lindley, "Courtly Play: The Politics of Chapman's *The Memorable Masque*," in *The Stuart Courts*, ed. Eveline Cruickshanks (Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2000), 46.

²⁰ Quotations from Chapman are from *The Memorable Masque of the Two Honourable Houses, or Inns of Court, the Middle Temple and Lincoln's Inn*, in *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, by Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 256–62.

²¹ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 200–201.

the first occasion on which the coercive power of the masquing ritual was directed toward the monarch himself: from a prophetic perspective, Honour credits the King for endorsing the company's project and enabling the spread of Protestantism across the globe, while marking the marriage of Frederick and Elizabeth as the transformative event that inaugurated this "golden age" (656). Had Henry lived to see these festivities to completion, then, spectators both public and private would have witnessed the fullest and most persuasive expression of his mythology yet, for his vision of the New World was meant to coincide with militaristic tournaments and Elizabethan-era spectacles that announced his interventionist ambitions in Europe as well as his plans for reform at home, and still another, even bolder show may have been missing from the final program: the anonymous *Masque of Truth*.

So titled by David Norbrook, *The Masque of Truth* exists only in a 1613 pamphlet published in Heidelberg by one D. Jocquet, who provides a full account of the Elector's wedding and surrounding festivities, including a detailed description of a masque that was never actually performed.²² Onstage, in Jocquet's telling, was an enormous statue of Aletheia, or Truth, who held a Bible and a globe; the globe cracked open, and figures representing Europe, Asia, Africa, and the oceans emerged to pay their respects to the newlyweds and embrace Protestantism. The argument, as translated by Strong, was as follows:

That Religion had united the world with England, for although the poets say, *divisus ab orbe Britannus*; yet the marriage, made in heaven, and consummated on earth, of the only daughter of this wise King of Great Britain with the Serene Prince Frederick V, Elector Palatine [...] had given occasion to contradict the poet, and to believe, that one day, if it pleased God, the world (quitting its errors) would come to give recognition to Truth which resides solely in England and the Palatinate.²³

This is precisely the anti-Habsburg alliance that the Prince's supporters hoped the marriage would portend, and "it is quite conceivable," as Norbrook demonstrates, that the passages reproduced by Jocquet were drawn from "an early draft of a masque planned by Henry as his personal contribution to the festivities."²⁴ Moreover, *The Masque of Truth* purportedly concluded with a spectacular visual effect that saw a skull appear in place of the globe and every nation welcomed into paradise, thus symbolizing the apocalyptic holy war that would soon conquer Catholicism and redeem the entire world by force. It is difficult to imagine the King permitting this performance with or without

²² David Norbrook, "'The Masque of Truth': Court Entertainments and International Protestant Politics in the Early Stuart Period," *The Seventeenth Century* 1, no. 2 (1986): 81.

²³ Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, 181.

²⁴ Norbrook, "The Masque of Truth," 92.

the sway of his son, but even in cancellation the masque achieved some of its desired effect: laying claim to the truth at the very center of ceremonial power would have gone a long way toward legitimizing the Prince's view of the festivities, and "as far as the continental readers of Jocquet's account were concerned," Kevin Curran explains, "this masque *was* performed and *was* a monarchically sanctioned statement on the religious significance of the marriage."²⁵ James had worked to invest the court stage with this kind of authority from the start of his reign, and *The Masque of Truth* reveals just how close Henry came to appropriating its mythmaking power for his own ends.

In addition to cancellations and various alterations aimed at neutralizing the Prince's planned program, the King sponsored his own entertainment for the occasion, Thomas Campion's (1567–1620) *The Lords' Masque*, as a means of reasserting his supremacy over the ceremonial stage and defining the marriage in dynastic terms more suitable to his pacifist project. Jonson, the King's usual masque-writer, had been in France throughout 1612, and James may have sought out Campion due to his success with a previous wedding masque, *Lord Hay's Masque* (1607), which praised the King for orchestrating a peaceable union between two great houses of Scotland and England—the very characterization he hoped would prevail this season.²⁶ Indeed, James took steps to ensure that *The Lords' Masque* would be viewed as the centerpiece of the festivities: not only was it first on the masquing schedule, but the performance occurred on the actual wedding night, 14 February, and its costumes and stage designs were exorbitantly extravagant, "the rychest I have seene" according to diplomat and future Master of the Ceremonies John Finett.²⁷ Furthermore, the masque depicts James as Jove silencing the "vulgar censure" of competing voices to make way for a single, monarchically approved tribute to Frederick and Elizabeth (37).²⁸ In the antimasque, Orpheus, Jove's messenger, has been instructed to release Entheus, whose poetic invention "is all divine" (37), from wrongful imprisonment at the hands of Mania, "*goddess of madness*" (18). Mania warns that opening her cell will allow Frantics to "fly out, and through the world disturb / The peace of Jove" (43–4), but Orpheus is unphased: "For Jove into our music will inspire / The power of passion," he declares, "that their thoughts shall bend to any form or motion we intend"

²⁵ Kevin Curran, "James I and Fictional Authority at the Palatine Wedding Celebrations," *Renaissance Studies* 20, no. 1 (2006): 58.

²⁶ Parry, "Politics," 101.

²⁷ *PRO*, 8:SP 14/72, f. 64.

²⁸ Quotations from Campion are from *The Lords' Masque*, in *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, by Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 243–46.

(49–51).

This is the fantasy of authorial control typical of the King's masques in this period, but such absolutist assertions took on new urgency in the immediate context of this contested entertainment season. Having disposed of the Frantics, Orpheus welcomes Entheus to the stage with a speech that links the cacophonous antimasque to the present occasion and surrounding festivities, thus claiming legitimacy for this entertainment alone: "Too, too long, / Alas, good Entheus, hast thou brooked this wrong," he says,

What? number thee with madmen? O mad age,
Senseless of thee and thy celestial rage.
For thy excelling rapture, ev'n through things
That seem most light, is borne with sacred wings:
[.....]
Jove therefore lets thy prisoned sprite obtain
Her liberty and fiery scope again,
And here by me commands thee to create
Inventions rare this night to celebrate,
Such as become a nuptial by his will
Begun and ended. (79–94)

This masque is not like the preceding public shows or the other spectacles that will soon appear on this court stage, Orpheus seems to warn, and the marriage, "Begun and ended" by James, is strictly his to define. What follows is a symbolic representation of this privilege: across numerous songs and dances, female masquers "by Jove transformed to statues" are reanimated once paired with men in the form of Promethean fire (251), demonstrating the court's utter dependence on the mythmaking powers of their King. "Jove's wrath [...] by degrees relents," as Entheus summarizes, "and he hath placed / These statues that we might his aid implore, / First for the life of these, and then for more" (254–7). The pattern is repeated for "*statues of the bridegroom and bride*" (345), but in lieu of restoration, prophecies outline the couple's destiny: Elizabeth is "the future parent of male offspring," an oracle proclaims, "the parent of / Kings, generals: British strength is added / To German strength: could anything be the equal of this?" (362–5).²⁹ In this, Campion introduces a fertility myth to replace the militant mythology espoused by Prince Henry, and Prometheus and Entheus chime in to drive the point home: "So be it ever, joy and peace / And mutual love give you increase," Prometheus says, while Entheus foresees a long line of "fair nymphs and princely

²⁹ These passages are spoken in Latin, the oracle's "native tongue" (412), and I have borrowed the Latin translation provided in Curran, "Fictional Authority," 66.

boys, / Breeding like the garden flowers” (425–31).

With *The Lords’ Masque*, then, James powerfully exerted his authority over the newlyweds—objectified, like the dancers, and determined by monarchically imposed symbolism—as well as the mythmaking power of the masquing space itself, and though this single masque would likely have paled in comparison to Henry’s planned program, only a fraction of that vision survived the King’s suppressive measures. Nevertheless, it would be hard to declare the 1612–13 season anything but a draw: spectators seeking clarification on England’s revised role in the world would almost certainly have left the Banqueting House unsatisfied, more aware of the contest that had played out before them than which ideology had gained the slight upper hand. And even as the factional tensions that had plagued this period began necessarily to fade in the absence of an oppositional figurehead, this unease apparently lingered: by the 1613–14 season, the Stuart court “had become dominated by the peace lobby,” as Butler observes, and its masques—comparatively modest celebrations of another courtly wedding that initiated a trend of innocuous explorations of “James’s domestic rule and his relationship with his courtiers”—were still boycotted by a number of invited participants.³⁰ Certainly that event, which saw Frances Howard married to the Earl of Somerset following her acrimonious split from Essex, inspired new tensions all its own, but the bitterness surrounding Henry’s death and Elizabeth’s wedding festivities would not have faded so soon, and it would have looked increasingly doubtful, from the perspective of this court audience, that the divisions opened by the Prince would ever be healed.³¹ These are the fraught circumstances in which Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Henry VIII* were debuted.

II

Indeed, if *The Two Noble Kinsmen* was among the fourteen unknown works performed at the 1613–14 entertainment season—as it very likely was, owing to its direct allusions to the 1612–13 masques and the impossibility, as Alvin Kernan asserts, that the King’s Men would withhold the newest offerings of their lead playwright from the court—Prince Henry would, once again, have

³⁰ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 203, 214.

³¹ It is important to remember, as noted in Butler, 214–15, that “although the arguments at the annulment (summer 1613) focused on sensitive sexual matters, the accusations of murder, witchcraft, and adultery were still in the future, and it was only when the Overbury affair was uncovered in 1615 that the divorce came to seem the beginning of a history of moral decay.”

seemed a prominent presence in spirit, for its chivalric iconography and romance precepts mirror the Prince's mythology exactly, and Glynne Wickham has gone so far as to suggest that this dramatization of Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" was originally planned for the Palatine wedding and devised specifically to appeal to Henry's tastes.³² Moreover, the play could hardly fail to remind a court audience of both Henry's tragic death and the simultaneously somber yet celebratory festivities of the previous year: tributes to the briefly condemned Palamon—"as brave a knight as e'er / Did spur a noble steed," Theseus laments, taken in his youth "lest his race / Should show i'th' world too godlike (5.3.115–8)—as well as Palamon's own comfort at living on in "the love o'th' people" (5.4.2), borrow the language of eulogies for the Prince that were then continuing to flood the marketplace, and the juxtaposition of marriages and funerals at the start and end of the play—the former delayed, as Princess Elizabeth's had been, by inconsolable queens mourning their "slain lords" (1.1.47)—seems deliberately to recreate the uneasy atmosphere of 1612–13.³³ Next to Hippolyta's white dress, these queens' black veils might even have recalled the "striking colour contrast" of the Princess's wedding gown, as Sandra Clark notes, which "trailed twenty yards of black satin behind a plume of white feathers," and if some spectators needed additional provocation to link *The Two Noble Kinsmen* with recent events, the morris dance in 3.5 was lifted from Beaumont's *Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn*.³⁴

Once this relevance to the present political moment has been established, more connections will inevitably follow, and modern scholars have occasionally pursued such topicality to an excessive degree: Wickham, for instance, draws straight lines between Palamon and the Palatine Prince, Arcite and Prince Henry, and Emilia and Princess Elizabeth, viewing the entire play as an allegory for the Princess's painful obligation to give up a brother for a husband.³⁵ As always, Shakespeare's—and, in this case, Fletcher's—intentions are unknowable, but it is not a stretch to

³² Robert Kean Turner and Patricia Tatzpaugh, "Introduction," in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, by William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, ed. Robert Kean Turner and Patricia Tatzpaugh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6; Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright*, xvii; Glynne Wickham, "The Two Noble Kinsmen or A Midsummer Night's Dream, Part II?" in *The Elizabethan Theatre VII: Papers given at the Seventh International Conference on Elizabethan Theatre Held at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, in July 1977*, ed. G. R. Hubbard (Archon Books, 1980), 176–79.

³³ Quotations from Shakespeare are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., Third Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016).

³⁴ Sandra Clark, "The Two Noble Kinsmen: Shakespeare's Final Phase: *The Two Noble Kinsmen* in Its Context," in *Late Shakespeare, 1608–1613*, ed. Andrew J. Power and Rory Loughnane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 131.

³⁵ Wickham, "Two Noble," 167–96.

expect that the audience of 1613–14 would approach *The Two Noble Kinsmen* in much the same way, and from this angle, the play would almost seem a contribution from the late Prince to this year's festivities. Indeed, Palamon and Arcite are the very embodiment of the militant Protestant ideal—the chivalric ethos that Henry and his supporters hoped the Elector would come to champion. “They are famed to be a pair of absolute men,” the Jailer reports early on (2.1.25), and the characterization is reinforced at every opportunity: “I saw them in the war,” Theseus says, “they were a mark / Worth a god’s view” (1.5.17–21); “Mark how his virtue, like a hidden sun, / Breaks through his baser garments,” Pirithous says of a disguised Arcite (2.5.23–4), later adding, “[Palamon] is a prince too, / And, if it may be, greater; for his show / Has all the ornaments of honor in’t” (4.2.91–3); and the two spend ample time complimenting each other’s martial prowess themselves, as when Arcite remembers a battle in which “you outdid me, cousin; / I never saw such valor (3.6.73–4). They even crib lines from the war party’s interventionist rhetoric, as when Palamon blames the “peace for whom [us soldiers] fought” for the moral decay of Thebes (1.2.19), and though each despises the corrupt Creon, they agree that they “must / With him stand” once war breaks out, for “to be neutral [...] were dishonor” (1.2.100–2).

That the values of these soldiers would dictate fighting for an unjust cause is unquestionably troubling, however, and it is at this point that spectators may have begun to recognize the pessimism that pervades this play and makes any unambiguously Henrician reading untenable. Even earlier, in fact, the mourning queens capture the true brutality of war with graphic descriptions that fly in the face of the Prince’s idealized heroics: “He will not suffer us to burn their bones,” one says of Creon, “but infects the winds / With stench of our slain lords” (1.1.43–7), while another begs Hippolyta to “Tell [Theseus], if he i’t’h blood-sized field lay swollen, / Showing the sun his teeth, grinning at the moon, / What you would do” (1.1.99–101). Palamon and Arcite’s violent feud over Emilia, itself an extension of their tireless quest for “fair-eyed honor” (2.5.29), likewise costs them their once-strong friendly and familial bonds—an indictment of chivalry more scathing in the aftermath of James and Henry’s own unresolved rivalry. To Arcite’s warm greeting of “Dear cousin Palamon—” at their first reunion, for instance, Palamon cannot but rebuff him with knightly resolve, saying, “Cozener Arcite, give me language such / As thou hast showed me feat” (3.1.43–5), and the scene “sets the pattern for the rest of their encounter,” Peter C. Herman argues, “Arcite will fight Palamon in the name of love and honor, but he always hesitates, always reminds Palamon of the unity they have lost on account of courtly love and

honor.”³⁶ As these noble kinsmen transform into savage enemies, then—“you are a beast now,” Arcite rightly observes (3.3.48)—the play’s convivial title attains ironic connotation, and the tournament that should settle their dispute “by fair and knightly strength” is ultimately exposed for the brutish fight to the death that it really is: “Ev’ry blow that falls / Threats a brave life,” Emilia clarifies, “each stroke laments / The place whereon it falls and sounds more like / A bell than blade” (4.1.296, 5.3.3–6).

In this way, the play goes beyond critiquing the Prince’s militaristic values to interrogate the mythmaking mechanisms by which those values were propagated. At Emilia’s protestation, Theseus inadvertently betrays the artificiality of chivalric combat by insisting that her attendance is necessary to legitimize the ritual: “Oh, she must,” he pleads,

She shall see deeds of honor in their kind
Which sometimes show well penciled. Nature now
Shall make and act the story, the belief
Both sealed with eye and ear. —You must be present:
You are the victor’s meed, the prize and garland,
To crown the question’s title. (5.3.11–7)

But Emilia gets her way, and while the real contest is occurring offstage, she enacts her own version by “*comparing the kinsmen’s portraits*”—idealized representations of their “manly courage” and “mirth” that stand in contrast to the blood and gore she so despises (5.3.40–50). These passages establish an unbridgeable gap between myth and reality, and that gap is stretched to its breaking point by Arcite’s remarkably undignified death, in which he is thrown from his horse following his triumphant return from the tiltyard, as Pirithous reports, and his legs,

being higher than his head,
Seemed with strange art to hang. His victor’s wreath
Even then fell off his head, and presently
Backwards the jade comes o’er, and his full poise
Becomes the rider’s load. (5.4.78–82)

Horsemanship was “the essential chivalric activity,” J. R. Mulryne explains, “and the defining idiom of Henry’s image-making.”³⁷ The scene would thus seem to subvert an ideal made ubiquitous by the Prince’s painters and poets, as well as his public and private shows of the last

³⁶ Peter C. Herman, “‘Is This Winning?’: Prince Henry’s Death and the Problem of Chivalry in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*,” *South Atlantic Review* 62, no. 1 (1997): 10.

³⁷ J. R. Mulryne, “‘Here’s Unfortunate Revels’: War and Chivalry in Plays and Shows at the Time of Prince Henry Stuart,” in *War, Literature and the Arts in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, ed. J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (London: Macmillan, 1989), 184.

few years, taking all of that heroic grandeur down to earth along with Arcite and his horse. It is significant too that Arcite's death, so surprising because the combats have already concluded, is where Shakespeare and Fletcher depart most from their source: "in Chaucer," Paula S. Berggren summarizes, "the gods provoke the errant horse and the rider is pierced through as a consequence of the disruption. Shakespeare offers no explanation for the sudden unruly turn, [...] a terrible image of fundamental chaos."³⁸ Spectators familiar with the tale were likely shocked to see this climactic act of divine intervention thus reduced to a meaningless, albeit tragic accident not unlike Prince Henry's fatal illness.

The high chivalry of this main plot is similarly undermined by parallel subplots involving the Jailer's Daughter and the Countrymen's rustic revels, which lampoon both courtly love—"love [...] beyond love and beyond reason, / Or wit, or safety," as the Jailer's Daughter terms it (2.6.11–12)—and the Henrician pageantry from which the play itself is constructed. The rustics' performance is, after all, borrowed from *The Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn*, one of the Prince's final shows, and as "each of Beaumont's dancers [...] receives a downgraded counterpart in the parts played by the morris dancers, carnivalized by the Schoolmaster's appalling half-rhymes," as Gordon McMullan observes, "Fletcher seems to have mocked his own involvement as well as that of his friends in the political consensus of 1613," by which he means the Protestant ascendancy that Elizabeth's marriage was thought to constitute.³⁹ Through these subplots, then, the audience is invited to view the rest of the play's many ceremonies and spectacles with the same skepticism, and the result is that Arcite and Palamon's final confrontation, which is preceded by ostentatious prayers and sacrifices to Mars and Venus, respectively, ends up feeling contrived and even arbitrary—particularly once the contest has been decided by a rogue horse. Yet by framing the tournament as a competition between opposing ideals—"military skill" for Arcite and "true love's merit" for Palamon (5.1.58, 5.1.128)—the scene replicates the precise dynamic of 1612–13, in which the King and the Prince competed to define the marriage in martial and dynastic terms. And by complicating the conclusion such that no character is truly happy, the play captures the disillusionment that must have set in by 1613–14: "The victor has the loss," Theseus reflects, as if he was describing James's analogous situation (5.4.114), and Emilia must have spoken for

³⁸ Paula S. Berggren, "'For What We Lack, / We Laugh': Incompletion and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," *Modern Language Studies* 14, no. 4 (1984): 12–13.

³⁹ Gordon McMullan, *The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 106.

many in the audience when she asks, bitterly, “Is this winning?” (5.3.138).

In this, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* would seem less concerned with criticizing Henry’s disruptive cult than with weighing the costs of James and Henry’s entire rivalry. Each kinsman, in fact, spends what he believes to be the other’s final moments balancing what has been gained with what has been lost, and both regret “that nought could buy / Dear love, but loss of dear love!” (5.4.112). Moreover, the King does not escape criticism of his own, as Emilia remains vocally opposed to marriage for the duration of the play, claiming, for instance, that “I am bride-habited, / But maiden-hearted,” and pleading with Diana that she be allowed to “continue [a virgin] in thy band” (5.1.150); that Theseus nevertheless compels her to be “the prize and garland” of Arcite and Palamon’s dispute could be interpreted as an objection to James’s callous use of arranged marriage in advancing his pacifist principles, and her monologues might even have seemed to provide insight into Princess Elizabeth’s own feelings about the 1612–13 season, in which she became the unhappy subject of her father and brother’s mythmaking war. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* might also have been understood in relation to the other new King’s Men play that was likely debuted for the court in 1613–14, *Henry VIII*, which sets its sights more squarely on James’s role in the conflict and thus finds blame on all sides.

III

Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *Henry VIII* is typically dated to 1613, but its themes are “so suitable for the occasion” of Frederick and Elizabeth’s wedding, as Kernan suggests, that the play may have been prepared in advance of the 1612–13 season and postponed for unknown reasons.⁴⁰ This would fix its inaugural court performance in 1613–14, and in that context, the play would unquestionably raise the memory of the previous year’s events, for its prologue tells the audience that “if you can be merry” after seeing “how soon this mightiness meets misery,” “I’ll say / A man may weep upon his wedding day” (30–2), and its conclusion, which depicts the christening of the Queen after whom the Princess was named, borrows much of its prophetic language from Campion’s *The Lords’ Masque*. Indeed, the plot of *Henry VIII* effectively mirrors that of Campion’s masque: Cardinal Wolsey, as if playing the role of Mania, unleashes factionalism and polarization on Henry’s court by vying for power with the King’s councilors, but Henry, who was

⁴⁰ Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King’s Playwright*, 156.

first seen “*leaning on the Cardinal’s shoulder*” (1.2.1. SD), slowly assumes the center of authority and reveals that he has been orchestrating everything all along. “Thy truth and thy integrity is rooted / In us,” he warns Cranmer, Wolsey’s eventual replacement (5.1.114–5), and he goes on to lecture his new advisor on the Machiavellian dealings of which he once seemed unaware: “Know you not / How your state stands i’t’h’ world, with the whole world?” Henry asks,

Your enemies are many, and not small; their practices
Must bear the same proportion, and not ever
The justice and the truth o’t’h’ question carries
The due o’t’h’ verdict with it. At what ease
Might corrupt minds procure knaves as corrupt
To swear against you? Such things have been done. (5.1.126–33)

In this way, discord is replaced by rightful hierarchies—“As I have made ye one, lords, one remain,” Henry later declares, “So I grow stronger, you more honor gain” (5.2.213–4)—and a multiplicity of illegitimate voices gives way to a single, monarchical vision in the form of Cranmer’s christening of the future Queen Elizabeth, a royally approved spectacle that stands in contrast to Wolsey’s feeble imitation of court pageantry in the Field of the Cloth of Gold: “What did this vanity,” Buckingham had asked of that earlier show, “But minister communication of / A most poor issue?” (1.1.85–7).

Had *Henry VIII* shared the court stage with *The Lords’ Masque*, then, it might have seemed a similar defense of the King’s unrivalled authority and privilege over ceremonial display, but as with *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the pessimism that pervaded the 1613–14 season would likely have brought critical interpretations to the fore. Indeed, Henry can reasonably be blamed for the divisions in his court as well as the general unrest that makes “tongues spit their duties out, and cold hearts freeze / Allegiance in them” (1.2.61–2), for “the unprecedented freedom he allows Wolsey with the day-to-day business of government makes it appear that the King is disengaged or uninterested,” as Stuart M. Kurland observes, “that in delegating so much he has abdicated his responsibility.”⁴¹ James faced similar accusations throughout his reign, and even after Henry has revealed his godlike control over the course of events—the very assertion made in all of James’s masques—one is forced to wonder why he allowed such chaos to ensue in the first place. Moreover, it is the corrupt Wolsey who most loudly gives voice to James’s absolutist rhetoric: “We must not stint / Our necessary actions in the fear / To cope malicious censurers,” he reminds the King, for

⁴¹ Stuart M. Kurland, “Shakespeare and James I: Personal Rule and Public Responsibility,” in *Late Shakespeare, 1608–1613*, ed. Andrew J. Power and Rory Loughnane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 218.

instance,

What we oft do best,
By sick interpreters, or weak ones, is
Not ours, or not allowed; what worst, as oft,
Hitting a grosser quality, is cried up
For our best act. If we shall stand still
In fear our motion will be mocked or carped at,
Or sit state-statues only. (1.2.76–88)

Compare this with James's many writings and speeches on the same subject, such as the notorious 1609 address to Parliament in which he claimed that "Kings are iustly called Gods, [for] God hath power to create, or destroy, make, or vnmake at his pleasure, to giue life, or send death, to iudge all, and to be iudged nor accomptable to none: To raise low things, and to make high things low at his pleasure."⁴² The passage could almost serve as plot summary for *Henry VIII*, and if *The Two Noble Kinsmen* had seemed to reject chivalry as the ideal best suited to "cur'st the world / O'th' pleurisy of people" (5.1.64–6), spectators now watching a king elevate questionable characters like Wolsey and Anne while condemning sympathetic figures like Buckingham and Catherine "at his pleasure" may well have wondered if James's ideals were any better.

Henry VIII can also be understood as undermining Campion's attempted reclamation of the ceremonial stage and questioning the relationship between spectacle and monarchical power. On the whole, the play so resembles a court entertainment that Samuel Taylor Coleridge viewed it as "a sort of historical mask or shew play," but it is stuffed with royal pageantry of nearly every kind, including processions, fireworks, coronations, and more than a few masques.⁴³ Sir Henry Wotton, who was in attendance when the aforementioned fireworks set fire to the Globe, remarked on the play's "many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty," but went on to complain that it was enough to "make greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous."⁴⁴ He may have been responding to scenes like the "masque at the Cardinal Wolsey's house," in which Anne's bawdy humor lends an air of carnality to what should be a courtship befitting a king, yet the preceding Field of the Cloth of Gold goes much further in giving this impression: Buckingham insists that the show was ineffectual, and this must be so because the Cardinal, "ever ranking / Himself with

⁴² James Stuart, *The Political Works of James I*, ed. Charles Howard McIlwain (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 307–8.

⁴³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. Thomas Middleton Raysor, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), 241.

⁴⁴ Henry Wotton, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 32–33.

princes” (4.2.34–5), has unjustly appropriated his authority from a higher source. In practice, however, Wolsey’s masque is indistinguishable from any other: it was a “view of earthly glory,” as Norfolk relates, “All was royal: / To the disposing of it naught rebelled; / Order gave each thing view” (1.1.14–44). That he could so successfully fabricate a royally approved spectacle calls into question all the rest of the play’s pageantry, and, as with *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the play’s alternative title, *All Is True*, comes to feel profoundly ironic. In retrospect, in fact, the prologue had cautioned its audience to be skeptical: “Such as give / Their money out of hope they may believe / May here find truth too,” it had joked, “*Think* ye see / The very persons of our noble story / As they were living; *think* you see them great” (7–27, emphasis added).

The result is that uncertainty looms even over Cranmer's conclusive prophecy, despite—or perhaps owing to—his insistence that “heaven now bids me; and the words I utter / Let none think flattery, for they'll find 'em truth” (5.4.15–6). As a simultaneous celebration of Queen Elizabeth and her namesake, the speech would seem to endorse the militant Protestant view of Princess Elizabeth's wedding, announcing, as Frances A. Yates contends, “the rebirth of the Elizabethan tradition in her successor.”⁴⁵ Yet Cranmer spends ample time praising King James as well, and in the context of the 1613–14 season, the consequent clash of ideologies would seem a deliberate evocation of last year's open conflict: in almost the same breath, for instance, Cranmer foresees Elizabeth's “foes shak[ing] like a field of beaten corn” and predicts that “God shall be truly known,” but he also declares that “every man shall [...] sing / The merry songs of peace,” and “by those claim their greatness, not by blood” (5.4.31–8). He continues:

Nor shall this peace sleep with her, but as when
The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix,
Her ashes new create another heir
As great in admiration as herself,
So shall she leave her blessedness to one—
[.....]

He shall flourish
And, like a mountain cedar, reach his branches
To all the plains about him. (5.4.39–54)

Nowhere is the confusion of this passage more apparent: the phoenix is clearly James, inheriting, however implausibly, the warlike symbols of his predecessor and incorporating them into his own dynastic iconography, but the Princess too was compared to a phoenix by Protestants such as John

⁴⁵ Frances A. Yates, *Majesty and Magic in Shakespeare's Last Plays: A New Approach to Cymbeline, Henry VIII, and the Tempest* (Boulder: Shambala, 1978), 74.

Donne (1572–1631), who, in his “Marriage Song on the Lady Elizabeth and Count Palatine,” explicitly linked the two Elizabeths, writing, “Up then faire Phoenix Bride, [...] signifie, / That a Great Princess falls, but doth not die.”⁴⁶ The signification of Frederick and Elizabeth’s marriage had been the central issue of 1612–13, and by posing competing interpretations of this similarly momentous historical event, the play reintroduces those tensions to a setting in which they had lost all urgency.

The same could be said of Henry VIII himself. Almost immediately following James’s ascent to the throne, his son had been characterized as the true heir to that Tudor king, and the association remained a constant feature of Protestant writing throughout this period: “Henry the 8. pulld down Abbeyes and Cells,” London preacher John Harington wrote in 1607, for instance, “But Henry the 9. Shall pull down Bishops and bells.”⁴⁷ Indeed, Samuel Rowley’s 1605 play *When You See Me, You Know Me*, which “exploits Henry VIII as a prototype for James’s heir apparent” and “helps to fashion the prince’s emerging reputation for zeal by representing Henry VIII anachronistically as an evangelical Protestant prince,” as Mark Rankin summarizes, was enjoying renewed interest after Henry’s death, and Susan Frye has argued that “any discussion of the collaboration of Shakespeare and Fletcher in producing *Henry VIII* should include interrelations between Rowley’s play and their own.”⁴⁸ Key to the present analysis is the playwrights’ decision to remodel the Tudor king in James’s image, and to remove almost all doctrinal matters from this well-known story—as Walter Cohen notes, “little is made of the central event of Henry’s reign: the break with Rome. The characters are judged not by their religion but by their integrity. Accordingly, the outstanding figures are an English Protestant, Cranmer, and a Spanish Catholic, Catharine.”⁴⁹ Such naked appropriation of the Prince’s mythology could not have gone unnoticed in the circumstances of 1613–14, and, as with Cranmer’s prophecy, the audience is thus forced to consider both the validity of events as depicted and the real stakes of mythmaking war. For years, these same spectators had watched James and Henry fight over history, iconography, and even

⁴⁶ John Donne, *The Poems of John Donne*, ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), 128.

⁴⁷ Sir John Harington, *A Supplie or Addicion to the Catalogue of Bishops to the Yeare 1608*, ed. R. H. Miller (Potomac: José Porrúa Turanzas, 1979), 191.

⁴⁸ Mark Rankin, “Henry VIII, Shakespeare, and the Jacobean Royal Court,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 51, no. 2 (2011): 350; Susan Frye, “Queens and the Structure of History in *Henry VIII*,” in *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works, Volume IV*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003), 428.

⁴⁹ Walter Cohen, “Introduction to *Henry the Eighth*,” in *The Norton Shakespeare*, by William Shakespeare, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., Third Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016), 3272.

family members, and, now that those fights no longer mattered, *Henry VIII* would seem to lay such tactics bare and hold them up for scrutiny.

At the same time, however, the play frustrates any attempt to choose a side. Over and over again, the audience is asked to pass judgment on events to which they have no direct access, and the task proves impossible: the Field of the Cloth of Gold, for instance, does not occur onstage, but is instead recounted from Norfolk's and Buckingham's oppositional perspectives, and the same is true of Buckingham's trial, which a group of gentlemen describe as both conclusive and a "trick of state" (2.1.44). Reporting on her coronation, these same gentlemen call Anne "saint-like" (4.1.83), but the characterization is at odds with the sexualized banter around which each of her previous scenes had revolved, and, as Rory Loughnane asserts, "the playhouse audience must work hard to reconcile the evident contrast between the King's perception of the silent Anne, and the protesting-yet-knowing Anne they have encountered earlier."⁵⁰ Even when such ceremonials do occur onstage, the audience is made to feel the weight of judicial responsibility: in arranging Catherine's trial, for instance, Henry decides that "the most convenient place [...] / For such a receipt of learning is Blackfriars," the very location from which most spectators would be arbitrating the case themselves (2.2.136–7), and while this metatheatrical effect is more pronounced in a public setting, the play goes out of its way to note that Wolsey's former palace is "now the King's, and called Whitehall" (4.2.97)—the site of all of the court masques and, in 1613–14, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Henry VIII*.

And yet, as was the case for *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the audience is powerless to intervene—powerless to avert the further tragedies they know lie ahead for these historical figures. Indeed, the audience's knowledge of Tudor history would almost certainly have undercut the celebratory mood of the play's conclusion, and may explain why the prologue insists that the coming tale is "sad, high and working, full of state and woe, / Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow," despite what should be a happy ending (3–4). In the context of 1613–14, these courtly spectators may even have viewed their own situation in an analogous way: no one, of course, could have foreseen the crises that would befall Frederick and Elizabeth in just a few years' time, triggering, as Butler summarizes, "a sequence of events that plunged the continent into thirty years

⁵⁰ Rory Loughnane, "King Henry VIII (*All Is True*): Semi-Choric Devices and the Framework for Playgoer Response in *King Henry VIII*," in *Late Shakespeare, 1608–1613*, ed. Andrew J. Power and Rory Loughnane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 120.

of war,” nor that another England had another civil war of its own in store, but with Prince Henry dead, the Princess sent off to a foreign land, and only the unassuming Charles left to lead the nation into the next era, a pessimistic outlook would be hard to avoid.⁵¹ By recreating the mythmaking war that had recently driven James and Henry—and, by extension, the entire Stuart court—apart, then, *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* forced the audience of 1613–14 to reflect on the damage that rivalry had done, and to wonder if such divisions could ever be overcome.

⁵¹ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 240.

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