"A neighbour, hedges haue eyes, and high-wayes haue eares"

Traveling Players, Traveling Spies in *1 Henry IV* and *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third*

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The Elizabethan government used companies of travelling players to serve a number of intelligence functions, which extended to the surveillance of audiences during performances. This surveillance was facilitated by the discursive instabilities of their plays and the architecture of the spaces in which they were performed. Surveillance by travelling players was part of an essentially colonial project in which the crown sought to extend its power and increase its visibility while attempting to fashion a nationalist, pro-Protestant, pro-Tudor identity in the provinces. To consider these dynamics, this article considers two conjectured performances. First, Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV *performed by the Chamberlain's Men at the New Hall in Norwich, which was the center of a socially, religiously, and economically divided region. Harry and his band's surveillance of commoners in order to exploit "their Saint the Common-wealth" exposes the status of these fissures to the view of the Chamberlain's Men. Second,* The True Tragedie of Richard the Third *performed by the Queen's Men at the Common Hall in York, a recusant bastion historically friendly to Richard. While the play represents Richard as a spying villain, it also offers a subversive counter-narrative of Richard through his Page that facilitates observation of the audience.*

Elizabethan England faced an ongoing crisis of faith. There was, of course, the crisis of religious faith: the tenuous Protestant establishment represented by the Elizabethan government was threatened by the Catholicism of living memory and an emergent radical Protestantism. But there was another, related crisis of faith concerning the Protestant, nationalist, and increasingly capitalist identity the Elizabethan government attempted to fashion in the provinces, which still remained largely autonomous and clung to their local memories and identities. Drama was a site of these conflicts over religion and identity. Puritans in London and around England gained traction by railing against the theatre in pamphlets and from the pulpit. Drama was one of the repositories of Catholic memory,

as local guilds and troupes of masterless, "vagabond" performers continued to perform popular, Catholic drama—the mystery and morality plays—throughout the provinces in the face of repeated efforts by the crown to criminalize and suppress it.[1] These plays, particularly the mysteries, resisted the state's efforts to cultivate a national Protestant present and future by presenting local histories in which a Catholic past was conjoined with the temporal present.[2] Meanwhile, the "vagabond" players who performed much of this drama were perceived by the state as threats due to fluid identities and the untraceability of their movements and their speech.[3]

In 1574, the Elizabethan government began using theatre as part of the solution to its problems in the provinces. For the first time, it mandated that *all* playing companies 'belong' to a noble household, and began issuing patents that created its own authorized players bound to its service through noble and royal patronage. Leicester's Men were awarded the first patent, and they established a model for other groups: they served their patron by carrying his name and livery throughout the country, favoring (and perhaps instructed to follow) routes where their patron's name would carry greater weight or where their patron sought to publicize his power.[4] Other companies followed, fanning across the countryside each year while bearing the names and wearing the livery of the Lord Admiral, the Lord Chamberlain, the Earl of Essex, and the Queen herself. The Queen's Men functioned as an extension of the royal progress, often dividing in two to spread their influence as far and wide as

1 Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function*, ed. and trans. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 98.

2 Weimann, 90.

3 Dermot Cavanagh, *Language and Politics in the Sixteenth-Century History Play* (Houndmills: Basingstoke, 2003), 82-91.

4 Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon University Press, 1996), 185 and 187, and Siobhan Keenan, *Travelling Players in Shakespeare's England* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 9, quoting Sally-Beth MacLean, "Tour Routes: 'Provincial Wanderings' or Traditional Circuits?" *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 6 (1993): 10.

possible.[5] These companies also served as the eyes and ears for their patrons in their travels. Traveling players were members of an itinerant class, which also included servants, merchants, priests, and minstrels, whose status and mobility made them useful as spies going back at least to the Wars of the Roses.[6] Walsingham, Leicester, Essex, and Salisbury helped form and patronized playing companies, and they possessed intelligence networks in which players could operate.[7] Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean have detailed intelligence functions performed by companies such as Leicester's and the Queen's Men: they could act as messengers, glean information about recusants or foreign visitors, and give the impression of a watchful monarch whose men 'ranged' over the land, attending to the nation through her travelers. Even if they passed along no information, these companies could mask the actual size and constitution of the spy networks by attracting attention to the "wrong" travelers, allowing the real spies to operate more easily.[8]

What has yet to be considered is the role of the actual performances of liveried companies in these intelligence activities. These companies were part of a broader, essentially colonial project. In order to expand its power in the far-flung provinces, the royal government used liveried companies to not only increase its visibility, but to perform important ideological functions as well. The history play was featured prominently in the repertory of these companies, and they used it to attempt to fashion a nationalist, pro-Protestant, pro-Tudor identity in the provinces. Liveried players performed these plays in the same spaces in which local, often Catholic, drama was once performed by popular and 'vagabond' players. But the reception of liveried players and their plays by different audiences

5 Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 44.

6 Ian Arthurson, "Espionage and Intelligence from the Wars of the Roses to the Reformation," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 35 (1991), 144.

7 Walsingham helped form the Queen's Men in consultation with Edmund Tilney, the Master of the Revels. See McMillin and MacLean, xiii-xv.

8 McMillin and MacLean, 27-9.

around the country would also be useful information for their patrons. The surveillance of audiences could hence be part of the intelligence activities of players. This surveillance was facilitated by the ambiguities of the plays these companies performed, and by the architecture of the places in which they performed them. A deeper understanding of the ideological and intelligence function of these traveling players will allow us to further explore the role of these companies in the formation of the nascent nation-state in England. It also adds to our understanding of why the plays of the period achieved the cultural importance that they maintain to this day, and how Shakespeare became "Shakespeare."

Liveried companies were part of the royal government's internal colonial project in the provinces. Walter D. Mignolo, writing of the role of Renaissance thought in European colonization of the Americas, argues that territorial colonization of the Americas was accomplished through the colonization of language, memory, and space, including by the imposition of discursive formations like history and maps.[9] While there are important differences between the colonial processes in England and in the Americas, Mignolo nonetheless provides a useful framework for considering the activities of liveried players in the provinces. In place of the mysteries and moralities, which threatened national unity by conjoining the Catholic past with the temporal present of the region in which they were performed, liveried companies performed history plays based on the royally-sponsored chronicles.[10] From stages and scaffolds in halls, churches, and marketplaces around the country they preached the truth of the nationalist, Protestant gospel, instructing their audiences to "sit and see, / Minding true things, by what their

9 Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003).

10 In the wake of the dynastic struggles of the Wars of the Roses the Tudors sponsored official histories (such as Hall's and Holinshed's) to portray those wars in a favorable light. See Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 3-4. History plays performed by liveried groups were hence part of an ongoing Tudor project of legitimizing their (questionable) claim to the throne through historical revisionism.

Mock'ries bee" (*Henry V* i2).[11] History plays, like the chronicles on which they were based, were imposed on audiences in an effort to replace the local histories contained in living memory, as well as in the chorographies.[12] History plays could also represent territory in ideologically useful ways. The Chorus for *Henry V*, for example, takes the audience to different localities around England and France, effectively turning the stage into a map; the play concludes with these territories united under Harry's rule. But liveried groups were also inserted into the physical and aural places once occupied by the popular players. Leicester's Men were apparently encouraged by their patron to perform in (formerly Catholic) churches and proselytize on behalf of the Reformed faith.[13] Other companies often played in the potentially subversive space of the marketplace, [14] often used for the Corpus Christi plays, and increasingly in town halls, which represented both whatever degree of autonomy and independence a town possessed from the crown and other authorities as well as the local civic oligarchy's power over the citizenry.[15]

Surveillance was part of this colonial project in the provinces, and theatrical performances presented perfect opportunities to conduct surveillance of populaces. The ambiguity of many history plays, as well as plays of other genres, could facilitate audience surveillance.

11 William Shakespeare, *The Life of Henry the Fift*, in *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies. Published according to the True Originall Copies* (London: Isaac Iaggard and Ed. Blount, 1623), gg8v-k2.

12 Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 105-47 and especially 131-3. Helgerson argues that while the chronicle is a genre that is almost by definition the story of kings, in chorography loyalty to England means loyalty not to the monarch or the state but to the land, its counties, towns, villages, manors, and wards.

13 Keenan, 46-7. Keenan notes that almost half of the clear records of professional players performing in churches are by Leicester's Men.

14 For the marketplace during a fair (or perhaps, a play) as a transgressive, carnivalesque, and potentially subversive space, see Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, "The Fair, the Pig, Authorship," in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 27-79.

15 Robert Tittler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community, c. 1500-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

While history plays attempted to present the 'truth' of history in ways ideologically useful to the Elizabethan government, in performance they could take on alternative or unintended meanings. One reason for this, as Walter Cohen notes, was the internal contradictions that resided within the material basis of the theatre:

> the public theaters constituted part of both the base and the superstructure, their function in one conflicting with their role in the other. However aristocratic the explicit message of a play, the conditions of its production introduced alternative effects. The total theatrical process meant more than, and something different from, what the dramatic text itself meant. The medium and the message were in contradiction, a contradiction that resulted above all from the popular contribution...any drama of state performed in the public theater automatically converted a heterogeneous and, it seems, largely popular audience into judges of national issues, a position from which most of its members were excluded in the world of political affairs.[16]

Liveried companies received little or no financial support from their patrons and depended on heterogeneous audiences of mixed class, religion, and ideology for their livelihoods. The temptation to "play to the audience" would always persist. Even if played "straight," however, the history plays performed by these companies could elicit varied responses from audiences because they were often ambiguous or ambivalent in their meaning and presentation. A large reason for this, as Andrew Hadfield argues, is that literature intended to fashion a national identity was an emergent and inchoate form: "no one in the Tudor period was sure how to write such a literature or confident as to what it was supposed to do;" hence, "It is not always necessary—or possible—to insist on a definitely clear and distinct reading, aligning the text with one specific range of meanings."[17] And yet, as Phyllis Rackin argues, the discursive instabilities that made the theatre, playwright, and player ambivalent sources of subversive behavior could be used in the history play as an unequaled instrument of social control.[18]

16 Walter Cohen, *Drama of a Nation: Public Theater in Renaissance England and Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 183.

17 Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Politics and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), esp. 19 and 10.

18 Rackin, 111.

Players could exploit these instabilities by scrutinizing audiences for signs that they were interpreting the performance in ways hostile to the nationalist, Protestant ideology being offered them, as a gauge of potential trouble in the region at a later date. Stagekeepers and players offstage could survey audience reactions from behind the scenes. But players onstage, like a preacher at a pulpit, also would be able to scan the audience to see the effect of their performance.

Furthermore, the very architecture in which these plays were staged facilitated surveillance of audiences. Montaigne recognized this in his essay "On educating children," when he advocated plays "acted and represented in open view of all, and in the presence of the magistrates themselves...as a diverting of worse inconveniences, and secret actions."[19] Likewise, in 1572, Elizabeth's Privy Council instructed the City of London to stage in "overt & open places, such playes... as maye tende to represse vyce & extoll vertwe, for the recreacion of the people, & thereby to drawe them from sundrye worser exercyses."[20] Theatres, wherever they were built, were useful for assembling a large portion of the populace of a town in an open architecture with excellent sightlines for surveillance by rulers (or in the case of liveried players, their surrogates), as well as for their ideological and educative functions. By the later Elizabethan era, plays by traveling players were most often staged in town halls in which a temporary theatre was erected, most likely along the lines of those constructed in college dining halls at Cambridge [Figure 1].[21] At one end of the hall was constructed a platform stage 5-6 feet in height, with stagehouses on either side for entrances and exits (and covert surveillance) during performances. Galleries

19 Michel de Montaigne, *The Essayes or Morall, Politike and Millitarie Discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne, Knight of the noble Order of St. Michaell, and one of the gentlemen in Ordinary of the French king, Henry the third his chamber,* trans. John Florio (London: Val. Sims for Edward Blount dwelling in Paules churchyard, 1603), I2.

20 E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 4:269.

21 The description that follows of the theatres constructed in college dining halls is largely taken from Alan H. Nelson, *Early Cambridge Theatres: College, University, and Town Stages, 1464-1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), esp. 5. While civic records pertaining to theatrical performances are fragmentary, the evidence we do possess along with the architectural similarity between town halls and college dining halls suggests that it is likely that similar theatres were constructed in town halls as well. Some of this evidence is collected in McMillin and MacLean, 67-83, and Keenan, 21 and 29.

were constructed surrounding the stage along the walls, allowing for elevated seating on forms or benches for the mayor, aldermen, and other dignitaries. The rest of the audience was comprised of commoners standing on the floor in front of the stage and under the galleries. Hence, players were well positioned to observe responses of the audience positioned above and below them, while commoners were well positioned to be scrutinized by all others in attendance.

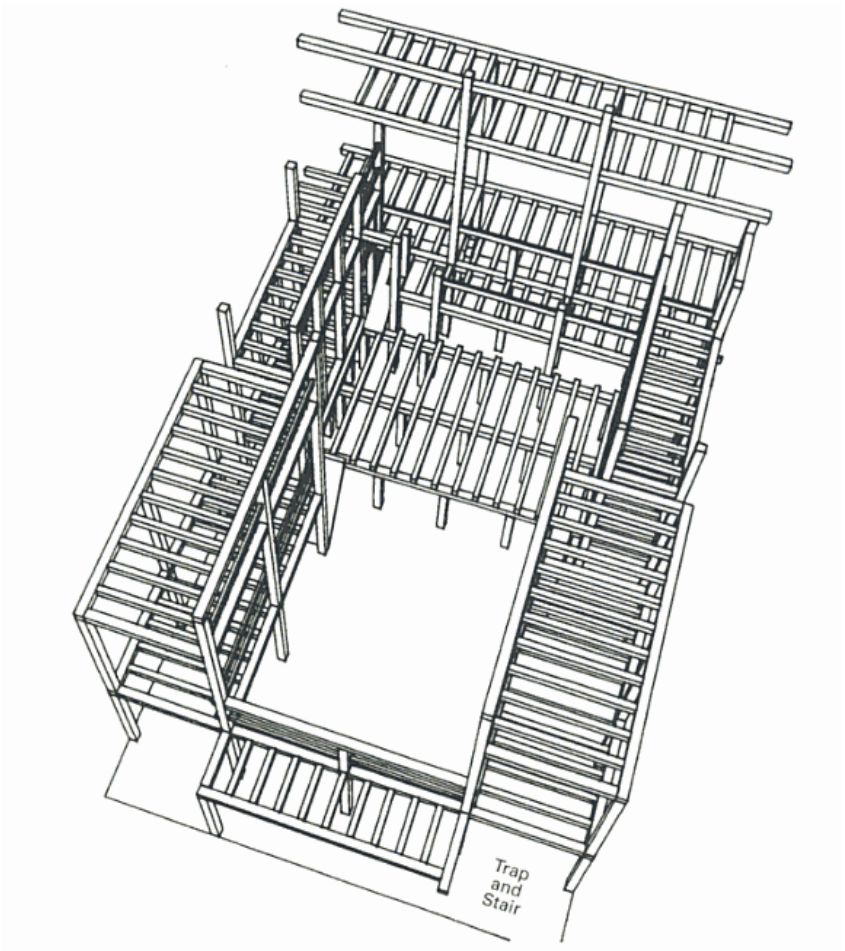

Figure 1: Design of the theatre built in the dining hall at Queens' College, Cambridge. From Alan Nelson, Early Cambridge Theatres, 31.

To explore how a performance and architecture could combine to facilitate the surveillance of a potentially resistant audience, I will briefly consider two examples: Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV*, performed by the Chamberlain's Men at the New Hall in Norwich, and the anonymous *True Tragedie of Richard the Third*, performed by the Queen's Men at the Common Hall in York. But first, a caveat to what follows. Civic records are fragmentary. An entry concerning a performance generally records a date, which may or may not correspond to the actual date of performance, as well as the name of the company, which occasionally may denote not the "real" company, but a company carrying a forged patent. Records only sporadically give the building used for performance, and rarely the play's title or subject matter. Hence, while we do know approximate dates of performances by these companies at these locations, we cannot know for certain that they ever staged these particular plays there. What follows, then, is a model that gives us one way of considering the plays staged by traveling players throughout England.

8 Mar 1600: *1 Henry IV* at Norwich New Hall

The Norwich New or Common Hall, now St. Andrew's Hall, was designed as a great, open preaching hall with excellent sight lines and acoustics [Figures 2 and 3]. It occupies the nave of the former Dominican Blackfriar's Church; the present-day Blackfriar's Hall occupies the chancel. The Blackfriar's Church was acquired by the Mayor Augustine Steward in 1540 for the sum of 81 pounds and has remained a public hall ever since.[22] The interior of the New Hall remains predominantly fifteenth-century and is grand and imposing in scale. It measures 126 feet long and nearly 35 feet across from pillar to pillar; seven arches on each side support a hammerbeam roof approximately 65 feet high. Aisles on the north and south sides each add an additional 15 ½ feet in width and have ceilings 45 feet high. It might have accommodated an audience of over 2000.[23]

22 *REED: Norwich*, ed. David Galloway (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), vii.

23 The description of the Norwich New Hall is based on personal inspection as well as McMillin and MacLean, 71-5, who cite Helen Sutermeister, *The Norwich Blackfriars: An Historical Guide to the Friary and its Buildings up to the Present Day* (Norwich: Norwich Survey, 1977), esp. 8-9, and Nikolaus Pevsner, *North-East Norfolk and Norwich* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962).

Figure 2: Exterior of Norwich New or Common Call, today called St. Andrew's Hall.

Figure 3: Interior of Norwich New Hall.

This audience was part of a population that the Elizabethan government was keen to keep its eye on. Norwich was the second-largest city in the realm and served as a provincial capital for the region.[24] It was at the center of a religiously-divided region: while surrounding East Anglia had a large recusant population, especially among the landed gentry, Norwich itself had become a Puritan stronghold in Elizabeth's reign. Norwich's religious nonconformism was due in part to a large influx of Dutch, Flemish, and Walloon "Strangers" that were initially recruited to revive the region's flagging cloth industry, and whose numbers grew both because of their success, and due to religious persecution in their homeland by the Duke of Alva, growing to 6000 by 1579. The region as a whole was, if anything, closer allied to Flanders than to London, but it prided itself on its regional identity and autonomy. This held for Norwich too: "Norwich was a world in itself: urban unrest was limited, the city was capable of handling its own affairs, and communications to and from either Westminster or Whitehall were infrequent."[25] In part because of this autonomy, the royal government was caught off guard when unrest did break out in 1549 in the form of Kett's Rebellion. Incensed by moves by the aristocracy to enclose commons and convert them into sheep pasture to supply the region's cloth industry, insurgents spent weeks tearing down enclosures, slaughtering sheep, and occupying Norwich. While the primarily Protestant revolt aimed at restoring commoners' feudal rights was ultimately suppressed by royal forces, the tensions stemming from the economic inequalities in the wealthy region remained in Elizabeth's reign.[26]

24 Tittler, 40.

25 Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 22, and *REED: Norwich*, xvi-xvii. The quotation comes from John T. Evans, *Seventeenth Century Norwich: Politics, Religion, and Government, 1620-1690* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1979), 63-4, qtd. in *REED: Norwich*, xvii.

26 For Kett's Rebellion, see *REED: Norwich*, xvi-xvii; Barrett L. Beer, *Rebellion and Riot: Popular Disorder in England during the Reign of Edward VI* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2005); Julian Cornwall, *Revolt of the Peasantry, 1549* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977); Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, rev. 5th ed (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008); and Stephen K. Land, *Kett's Rebellion: The Norfolk Rising of 1549* (Ipswich: The Boydell Press, 1977).

Due to its independence and its Puritan leanings, Norwich, like other cities in East Anglia, grew increasingly hostile to visiting players. In the fifteenth century, East Anglia had been one of most vibrant drama centers in England, and religious drama in Norwich persisted until 1564.[27] East Anglia was visited often by Leicester's Men from 1559-88, and was likely welcoming because of Dudley's strong associations in the region.[28] When the Chamberlain's Men came under royal patronage and were rechristened the King's Men in 1603, East Anglia joined the southeast and southwest as prominent destinations for the troupe. And yet, as early as 1584-5 Norwich began to pay players to leave without playing, and in 1588-9 it banned townspeople from attending performances, although it is unclear whether this was enforced. Norwich by no means closed its doors to outside players—over three quarters of players continued to be permitted to perform—but it did become among the most hostile cities to performers in England.[29] This hostility was not simply because of anti-theatricality amongst Puritans and civic authorities, but because of the threat to their regional identity and autonomy that these groups represented.

Against this backdrop, imagine the Chamberlain's Men coming to Norwich, as they are known to have on or about 8 March 1600, and performing in the New Hall *1 Henry IV*.[30] While a known crowd pleaser on the London stage, there is much in the tale of the truant Prince of Wales and his followers to which the Norwich audience would be resistant. One, as Phyllis Rackin notes, Hal

27 Gibson, 31-2, and Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 25.

28 Alan Somerset, "'How Chances it they Travel?': Provincial Touring, Playing Places, and the King's Men," *Shakespeare Survey* 47 (1994): 52, citing MacLean.

29 Somerset, 50-1 and 53. Somerset includes minstrels, bearwards, jugglers, and other performers along with players in his survey.

30 *1 Henry IV* is believed to have been written *c*. 1597. There are records for the Chamberlain's Men in 1600 and as the King's Men in 1615, 1621, 1622, 1622-3, 1633, 1634, and 1636. Records for the troupe's appearances in Norwich can be found in *REED: Norwich*; their traveling records can be found in Chambers and Gurr.

embodies the language of an emergent capitalist economy.[31] He sees his coming confrontation with Hotspur as an economic transaction in which he will "redeeme all...on Percies head" and "make this Northren youth exchange / His glorious deedes for my indignities" (G1^{v}). Hal's economic language is an attempt to claim—or perhaps, colonize—the mercantile class. But by using such language, Hal might also inadvertently evoke and associate himself with anxieties amongst the Norwich audience about the economic inequalities and dispossession of common land that marked emergent capitalism in their town. Furthermore, the play raises the specter of an aristocracy that has lost its sense of obligation to the commoners, and instead spies on them in order to co-opt and exploit them. Hal leads a band of thieves who are also a band of intelligencers. Their primary spy is Gadshill, who bribes, interrogates, and eavesdrops on chamberlains, pilgrims, traders, and travelers in order to find targets to rob. Gadshill brags about the explicitly classist nature of the band's enterprise:

> I am ioyned with no footlande rakers, no long-staffe pennie strikers, none of these mad mustachio purplehewd maltworms, but with nobilitie, and tranquilitie, Burgomasters and great Oneyers...they pray continuallie to their Saint the Common-wealth, or rather not pray to her, but pray on her, for they ride vp and downe on her, and make her their bootes. (C3)

Gadshill distinguishes his troupe from "footlande rakers," "long-staffe pennie strikers," and "purplehewd maltworms"—i.e., vagabonds, armed thieves, and drunkards, despite being themselves a band of, well, roving, drunken thieves. It is solely the group's social standing that distinguishes them and largely protects them from the force of the law. His boast also suggests a deeper truth about the idea of the commonwealth: it exists merely so that royalty and the aristocracy can exploit it. The Chamberlain's Men hence may expose class antagonisms not only between the commoners and the royal government they represent, but also between the commoners on the ground and the civic elites on the scaffolding above them.

The spy-thieves' leader, Hal, spends his time amongst the commoners performing surveillance on them. But not, as is often supposed, to become a prince of the people, but simply so he may

31 Rackin, 77-9 and 136.

better rule them. Outside the Boar's Head Inn, he boasts to Poins:

> I haue sounded the verie base string of humilitie. Sirrha, I am sworne brother to a leash of drawers, and can call them all by their christen names, as Tom, Dicke, and Francis, they take it already vpon their salvation, that though I be but prince of Wales, yet I am the king of Curtesie, and tel me flatly I am no proud Iacke like Falstalffe, but a Corinthian, a lad of metall, a good boy (by the Lord so they call me) and when I am king of England I shall command all the good lads in Eastcheape (D2).

Hal proceeds to exploit his superior position in the social system, first by drawing attention to the absurdity of the apprentice system to Francis, an apprentice tapster, and encouraging him to rebel against it: "Fiue yeare, berlady a long lease for the clinking of pewter; but Frances, darest thou be so valiant, as to play the cowarde with thy Indenture, and shewe it a faire paire of heeles, and run from it?" (D2^{v}). While many of the commoners in the Norwich audience may laugh, the joke turns dark later in the play. Should he heed Hal's advice, Francis later might be among the "discarded, vniust seruingmen, yonger sonnes to yonger brothers, reuolted tapsters, and Ostlers, tradefalne" that comprise the cannon fodder "good inongh to tosse" (H3) in Falstaff's army, fighting in Hal's and his father's war. But at this moment, Harry's exploitation of the social system takes the less sinister form of the prank in which he and Poins alternately call Francis, forcing him to bounce back and forth across the stage like a tennis ball saying, "anon," "my Lord," "sir." Hal draws the maliciously unfair conclusion that Francis' behavior is a product of his intelligence rather than his place in a social system that divides his obligations to his future sovereign and his master: "That euer this fellowe should haue fewer wordes then a Parrat, and yet the sonne of a woman" (D3). By degrading Francis as being of questionable humanity, Harry justifies their respective places in the social system, and their respective places later on the battlefield.

In comparison, Hotspur may emerge for many in the Norwich audience as a more sympathetic counterpart to Hal. Hotspur and his coconspirators feel themselves to be the targets of royal surveillance,

as may the Norwich audience. Hotspur charges that Henry has "Sought to intrap me by intelligence" (I1)—i.e., by intelligencers—while it is fear of Henry's spies that later leads Worcester to hide from Hotspur "The liberal and kind offer of the king" (I3^{v}), and hence commit them all to a losing cause:

> Supposition al our liues shall be stucke full of eyes,
> For treason is but trusted like the Foxe,
> Who neuer so tame, so cherisht and lockt vp,
> Will haue a wilde tricke of his ancesters,
> Looke how we can, or sad or merely, Interpretation will misquote our lookes,
> And we shall feed like oxen at a stall,
> The better cherisht still the nearer death. (I3^{v})

Worcester justifiably feels that if they surrender they will be subject to Henry's spies for the rest of their lives, which in his description take the form of disembodied eyes watching their every move, looking for the slightest pretence to eliminate them at a later date. But by hiding Henry's offer, Worcester allows Hotspur to go to war and die under somewhat false pretences, and prevents his possible redemption from rebellion. Hotspur may also be sympathetic to the audience in other ways. While Hal embodies an emergent capitalist discourse, Hotspur embodies a residual chivalric discourse of feudal society[32]—what Kett's rebels sought to restore. More importantly, Hotspur shows a concern for commoners that Hal and his followers often lack. Hotspur rails against "a certaine Lord" who feels so superior to commoners that he calls soldiers bearing dead bodies "vntaught knaues, vnmanerlie,/To bring a slouenly vnhandsome coarse/Betwixt the winde and his nobilitie" (B2^{v}).

All of which raises a question: in the final confrontation between Hotspur and Hal, where do the audience's sympathies lay, even if the outcome is not in doubt? There is good reason to believe that the sympathies of the Norwich audience would be mixed, even divided along social lines. Despite the comedic tone of Hal and his followers' exploits, the commoners on the floor of the New Hall

32 Rackin, 77-9 and 136.

have clear reasons for resenting Hal, and it is questionable whether Hal's effort to claim them is universally successful. The civic elites are placed in an even more isolated position: while they are suspicious of royal intrusions like the Chamberlain's Men, they have also been aligned with the royal figures onstage. What if, instead of the anticipated cheers and applause, Hotspur's death at Hal's hands initially meets with silence from the Norwich audience? What if this silence is pierced by an audible gasp from the commoners on the floor, which echoes through the cavernous interior of the New Hall? Such a moment would be telling for the Chamberlain's Men, and allow them to report back to their patron and the crown that the old social and economic anxieties were still present, and that if left unattended Norwich could one day rise up again.

24 July 1592: *The True Tragedie* at York Common Hall

I turn now to a performance of *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third* by the Queen's Men at York Common Hall. The Common Hall dates from the fifteenth century and still stands, located off of St. Helen's Square, on the east bank of the River Ouse [Figures 4 and 5].[33] The hall was bombed during an air raid in World War II, demolishing the roof and interior and blowing out the windows, but a faithful restoration was opened in 1960. The hall is on a slightly less grand scale than the hall in Norwich: it measures 93 feet long by 43 feet wide, with the roof rising just over 31 feet.[34] It is divided into six bays on each side. Unusual for halls from this period, the roof is supported by ten large wooden octagonal pillars with stones bases, creating in effect a nave with aisles. It once had a screens passage with an upper gallery above the east end, a dais enclosed by

33 The description of the York Guildhall is based on personal inspection as well McMillin and MacLean, 74-6; *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York. Volume 5: The Central Area* (London: Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 1981), 76-81; Herbert Cescinsky and Ernest R. Gribble, *Early English Furniture and Woodwork, Vol. 1* (London: The Waverly Book Company LTD, 1922), 61 and 64-5; and J. Halfpenny's portrait, "Inside of the Guild-Hall" (York Art Gallery, 1807).

34 The lower part of the hall's magnesian limestone walls survived the bombing, preserving the original dimensions. According to Cescinsky and Gribble, 61, the original roof's approximate height was 30 feet.

a wooden screen with doors at the west end, and an open fireplace in the middle. The hall had a central entrance through the east wall, entrances to the screens passage through corresponding doors at the east end of the north and south walls, doors on opposite ends of the west wall granting access to the medieval Committee Rooms, and a door on north wall on the second bay from the west end.[35] The hall has an additional intriguing feature: through the two-storey block at the west end of the hall is accessed Common Hall Lane, which opens to the staith on the Ouse at the west end of the hall, runs under the north aisle of the hall, and emerges at an entrance on the east face of the hall, the top of which is just visible above street level.[36]

Figure 4: Exterior of York Common Hall, today called the Guildhall.

35 The entrances to the hall have changed over time and are not the same as in the Elizabethan era. A description of the changes in the hall can be found in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York*.

36 Today Common Hall Lane continues underground east of the Guildhall and emerges through steps to the yard behind the Mansion House.

Figure 5: Interior of the York Guildhall published by J. Halfpenny in 1807, York Art Gallery.

York presented a potentially resistant audience because it had an active local dramatic tradition that had its roots in the popular Catholic drama suppressed by the Tudor government. It had a Corpus Christi play for almost two hundred years, one that survived the banning of the Corpus Christi festival in 1548 until its last performance in 1569. The town also put on a Creed Play, including before Richard himself in 1483.[37] There is possible evidence that in the time of Henry VIII, monks in York used mystery plays to advance a religious and political agenda contrary to Henry's own, drawing the attention of the monarch.[38] York also had an ambivalent relationship with liveried players. In 1582, the city limited performances by visiting players, at least those in the Common Hall, to two: "once before the Lord maior and aldermen

37 *REED: York*, 1.xv-xvi.

38 *REED: York*, 2.649-50, prints an apocryphal letter from Henry VIII to an to an unknown Justice of the Peace in York complaining of and seeking to suppress such practices. The letter, originally printed by James Orchard Halliwell, *Letters of the Kings of England* (London, H. Colburn, 1848), 1:354, is said to have been found in the MS collection of York Documents, Rawlinson's Collection in the Bodleian Library, although a search by the *REED: York* editors found no such manuscript.

&c. and thother before the commons."[39] York maintained an active local dramatic tradition even after the suppression of the Corpus Christi play, to the extent that during the reign of James it was one of the few towns in England outside of London that attempted to establish a permanent playhouse of its own, in an apparent effort to foster a local dramatic culture while simultaneously allowing the city to turn away outsider companies.[40] Yet, it should be noted that given the number of ventures the Queen's Men made to York, which were at least as lucrative as their stops elsewhere, the town as a whole was not *too* openly antagonist to their presence.

The True Tragedie follows the basic outline of Shakespeare's later telling of the story—indeed, Shakespeare clearly borrowed from it. If the Queen's Men performed *The True Tragedie* during one of their numerous visits to York and the Common Hall,[41] they would have found an audience resistant to the play's representation of Richard as a spying villain. Like Norwich, York had a large degree of autonomy from the royal government by virtue of its begin a large town and provincial capital with one of the most developed civic administrations in the country.[42] It was also a northern bastion of recusancy that was resistant to intrusions of royal power from far away London, such as they may have viewed the Queen's Men. York was historically friendly to Richard dating back to his days

39 *REED: York*, 1.399.

40 The records pertaining to the York playhouse, which may never have seen a play staged, can be found in *REED: York*, 1.530-1. The petitioners request permission "to erect A Theater or playhowse w*i*thin this Citty wherin such as have bene borne and brought vpp therin should imploye ther laborious expenses for the maintenance therof w*hi*ch might be A meanes to restrayne the frequent Co*m*minge thervnto of other Stage plaiers." The playhouse seems a clear effort to redevelop the local dramatic tradition and satisfy the town's appetite for drama while simultaneously allowing the city to turn away outsider companies.

41 The Queen's Men visited York at least nine times in their career, and performed in the common Hall at least five times, in 1584, 1587, 1596, 1599, and 1602; they were paid not to play in August 1598, perhaps because of plague. The performance records for the Queen's Men in York can be found in *REED: York*, 2 vols., eds. Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); their travel records can be found in Chambers and Gurr.

42 Tittler, 40.

as his brother Edward IV's lieutenant in the north. The town was subsequently associated with three rebellions against the Tudors: the Lambert Simnel rebellion against Henry VII (the Richmond in the play, who kills Richard), the 1537 Pilgrimage of Grace against Henry VIII's Reformation, and the 1569 Northern Rebellion aimed at replacing Elizabeth with the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots.[43] So, it may not have gone over well when a figure called Truth in the prologue to a play by the Queen's Men instructs the audience how to view Richard: "A man ill shaped, crooked backed, lame armed, withall,/Valiantly minded, but tyrannous in authoritie" (A3^{v}).[44]

While Truth in the prologue gives the audience an initial portrait of Richard, the character most responsible for shaping the audience's perception of him is a seemingly insignificant character at its outset: the Page of Richard's Chamber. In his first scene, the Page initially appears to be nothing more than ordinary servant played by a stage extra, until he returns to privately confer with Richard when everyone else has left the stage:

> *Richard*: What hearest thou about the Court?
> *Page*: Ioy my Lord of your Protectorship for the most part, Some murmure, but my Lord they be of the baser sort.
> *Richard*: A mightie arme wil sway the baser sort, authority doth terrifie. But what other newes hearest thou?
> *Page*: This my Lord, they say the yong king is comming vp to his coronation, attended on by his two vnkles, Earle Riuers & Lord Gray, and the rest of the Queenes kindred.
> *Richard*: A parlous bone to ground vpon, and a rush stifly knit, which if I could finde a knot, I would giue one halfe to the dogs and set fire on the other.
> *Page*: It is reported my Lord, but I know not whether it be true or no, that the Duke of Buckingham is vp in the Marches of *Wales* with a band of men, and as they say, hee aimes at the Crowne.

43 Paul Murray Kendall, *Richard the Third* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1956), 154-62, and *REED: York*, 1.ix-x.

44 All quotations from the play are from *The True Tragedie of Richard the third: Wherein is showne the death of Edward the fourth, with the smothering of the two yoong Princes in the Tower: With a lamentable ende of Shores wife, an example for all wicked women. And lastly, the coniunction and ioyning of the two noble Houses, Lancaster and Yorke. As it was playd by the Queenes Maiesties Players* (London: Thomas Creede, 1594).

> *Richard*: Tush a shadow without a substance, and a feare without a cause: but yet if my neighbours house bee on fire, let me seeke to saue mine owne, in trust is treason, time slippth, it is ill iesting with edge tooles, or dallying with Princes matters, Ile strike whillst the yron is hote, and Ile trust neuer a Duke of Buckingham, no neuer a Duke in the world, further then I see him. And sirrha, so follow me (C1^{v}).

Clearly, this is no ordinary page, but rather a capable spy. In a single briefing he has given Richard three vital pieces of intelligence which he uses to plot his rise to the throne. First, the Page tells Richard of possible dissent to his Protectorship amongst the "baser sort," which inspires his later efforts to impose order upon them by using surveillance to terrorize them. The audience will see the fruition of this later when the Page is amongst Richard's "priuie spies set in euerie corner of the Citie" watching every move of Shores' wife, the former mistress of the deceased Edward IV (E1). In the process he helps reduce the entire populace of London to a state of paranoia, causing them to warn one another, "A neighbour, hedges haue eyes, and high-wayes haue eares" (E1- E3^{v}). The second piece of intelligence the Page gives at this initial briefing is of the progress and composition of Edward's train as it moves towards London for the young king's coronation, which Richard uses to formulate his plot to intercept and usurp Edward. Third, the Page relates rumors of Buckingham's designs on the crown, from which comes Richard's resolution to remove Buckingham when his usefulness in helping him to the crown is up.

But the Page is not only a spy for Richard, but he is also a double agent who spies on Richard for the audience. He assumes this role too in his first scene, when he briefly defies Richard's order as he exits, "And sirrha, so follow me" (C1^{v}). Instead he lingers, watching Richard move offstage and out of eyesight and earshot before turning to the audience to privately confer with them. He marvels to them at the recent friendship between Richard and Buckingham, "who had wont to loue one another so well as the spider doth the flie," before giving the audience information they would not otherwise know:

"but this I haue noted, since he hath had the charge of Protector, how many noble men hath fled the realme, first the Lord Marcus sonne to the Queene, the Earle of *Westmorland* and *Northumberland*, are secretly fled: how this geare will cotten I know not" (C1^{v}). Earlier in the scene the Page gave Richard information that allows him to plot his rise to the throne; here he gives the audience the first inklings of the dissent and conspiracy that will eventually topple Richard. In a later report, he confirms to the audience the truth of rumors that others can only infer:

> all those of the Queens kinred that were committed to *Pomphret* Castle, hee hath caused them to be secretly put to death without iudgement: the like was neuer seen in England. He spares none whom he but mistrusteth to be a hinderer to his proceedings, he is straight chopt vp in prison. The valiant Earle of Oxford being but mistrusted, is kept close prisoner in *Hames* Castle ([D3^{v}]).

One function of the Page, then, is to help fill out the 'true' character of Richard promised in the play's title and prologue, revealing the full extent of Richard's tyranny that remains hidden from his rivals and the general populace. But the Page also builds up a rapport with the audience with his successive reports, particularly the commoners by employing slang phrases like "how this geare will cotten." This rapport is strengthened because the Page exposes himself to danger to communicate to them. He ends his first report to the audience, "But what do I medling in such matters, that should medle with the vntying of my Lordes points, faith do euen as a great many do beside, medle with Princes matters so long, til they proue themselues beggars in the end. Therfore I for feare I should be taken nipping with any words, Ile set a locke on my lips, for feare my tongue grow too wide for my mouth" (C1^{v}-C2).

Later in the play, however, this rapport turns subversive of the historical narrative the play offers the audience, as the Page's reports make Richard potentially sympathetic in the audience's eyes. Along with access to Richard's Privy or Secret Chamber, the Page has access to Richard's private thoughts and moments, which he shares with the audience in lines that anticipate *Doctor Faustus*:

> Where shall I finde a place to sigh my fill,
> And waile the griefe of our fore troubled King?
> For now he hath obtained the Diademe,
> But with such great discomfort to his minde,
> That he had better liued a priuate man, his lookes are gastly,
> Hidious to behold, and from the priuie sentire of his heart,
> There comes such deepe fetcht sighes and fearefull cries,
> That being with him in his chamber oft,
> He mooues me weepe and sigh for company (G4)

As David Riggs argues, Richard becomes a variation on Marlowe's prototype: "If only for a moment, the hero sees beyond human history into eternity and discovers that he must measure the sweet fruition of an earthly crown against the Christian absolutes of sin and damnation."[45] The Page's reports allow Richard to take on this resonance, as well as one with something quite older: the Everyman of the Catholic morality plays. Later, the Page assigns part of the blame for Richard's downfall to the commoners in the play (and on the floor of the New Hall) when he perceives their desertion of him for Richmond (and the Tudors):

> A Richard, now do my eyes witnesse that they end is at hand, For thy commons make no more account of thee then of a priuate man, yet will I as dutie bindes, giue thee aduertisements of their vniust proceedings. My maister hath lifted out many, and yet hath left one to lift him out of all, not onely of his Crowne, but also of his life (G4).

Particularly in York, a city already sympathetic to Richard, this image of ungrateful commoners turning against their benefactor undermines the rest of the play's portrait of Richard as a tyrant, and perhaps awakens suspicions that he is not only the victim of deserting commoners, but of his own play.

The rapport between the Page and the audience becomes most subversive in the Page's final scene, after the defeat of Richard at Bosworth Field. Richard enters into battle resolving to if necessary "keepe my Crowne and die a King," and vows to remain silent on his own behalf: "These are my last, what more I haue to say, ile make report among the damned soules" (H3). This move potentially

45 David Riggs, *Shakespeare's Heroical Histories* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 87-90.

relinquishes control his memory to the Tudors historians. However, after the battle the Page is approached by a character called Report, a personification of the historical record who asks for the "true report" of the battle (H3). Loyal to his master to the bitter end, the Page describes Richard not as the malformed tyrant that Truth promised in the Prologue, but rather describes him in heroic terms:

> knowe Report, that Richard came to fielde mounted on horsback, with as high resolue as fierce *Achillis* mongst the strudie Greekes, whom to encounter worthie Richmond, came accompanied with many followers... worthie Richard that did neuer flie, but followed honour to the gates of death, straight spurd his horse to encounter with the Earle, in which encountry Richmond did preuaile, & taking Richard at aduantage, then he threw his horse and him both to the ground, and there was woorthie Richard wounded, so that after that he nere recouered strength. But to be briefe, my maister would not yeeld, but with his losse of life he lost the field. Report farewell (H3-H3^{v}).

The Page's poignant discourse is clearly not the words of someone who is happy to have just escaped a tyrant. He represents Richard as a noble anachronism who is, like Achilles (and Hotspur), brave, honorable, and undaunted, not so much defeated as struck down by an adversary when caught at a disadvantage. He also perhaps hints that Richmond's victory was not entirely honorable. Not simply a spy and a double agent, the Page becomes the source of a subversive counter-narrative of Richard emerging out of Tudor historiography.

Because of the Page, an ambivalent air must fill the Common Hall as the play closes with the victorious Richmond proclaiming Richard a traitor and ordering his body be dragged naked through the streets of Leicester (I1-I1^{v}). The final scene turns into an epilogue, one that gives the subsequent history of the Tudor lineage inaugurated by Richmond, now Henry VII at play's close, and demands the audience's loyalty to his granddaughter Elizabeth. This appeal is based on her virtues, including her having "put proud Antichrist to flight" (I2)—specifically, Philip II of Spain and the Armada, but also Catholicism in general. In case it has been too subtle, the Epilogue concludes with a final warning to the audience:

if ere her life be tane away,
God grant her soule may liue in heauen for aye.
For if her Graces dayes be brought to end,
Your hope is gone, on whom did peace depend (I2).

With this direct address, the audience comes under the scrutinizing gaze of Elizabeth's own players, the Queen's Men. As the players scan the faces of the audience, they likely see glimmers of resistance to the reign of Elizabeth, whose legitimacy rests on the preceding narrative of Richard. This is particularly the case for the commoners, who have been in closest physical proximity to the Page throughout the play, and at times directly addressed by him. The players may see some of the commoners on the floor slink behind the hall pillars and scaffolding supports to evade the players' gaze. We might even imagine a lusty soul or two jeering, but that seems unlikely. The play and its concluding appeal might find a more favorable audience amongst the Protestants in the audience, who find themselves in a sea of recusants, both in the theatre and without, although they too may resent the intrusion from far-away London the performance represents. The town oligarchs on the scaffolding above the stage and surrounding the rest of the audience, particularly the mayor and aldermen, might also resent this appeal for national unity and loyalty to Elizabeth that undermines York's autonomy and their power, made as it is in the hall that symbolizes both. Most likely, the tense moment resolves, as most plays do, into applause. But this applause is thoroughly ambivalent: it is a public performance of assent to the play and to the reign of Elizabeth, an outward sign of conformity that conceals once more the secret thoughts of the audience, a moment after they have been tantalizingly glimpsed.

Or in all likelihood, this is how the performance concludes. But there is another possibility. The York civic records have an entry dated 24 July 1592 recording a payment to the Queen's Men for a performance.[46] The following, undated entry bans indefinitely future plays at the Common Hall:

46 *REED: York* 1.449. The record states "That the Quenes players shall haue iij li. vj s viij d given them forthe of the Co*m*mon Chamber."

> wheras the doores, lockes, keyes, wyndowes, bordes, benches & other building*es* of the Co*m*mon Hall are greatlye impared and hurte and diverse of the same broken, shakne, Lowse & Ryven vp by people reparinge thither to se and heare plays."[47]

We cannot know if the entries are connected. There is at least one thing to suggest that they are not: when the ban on playing in the Common Hall was lifted in July 1596, it was the Queen's Men who gave the first recorded performance. But we might like to think that they are connected, that *The True Tragedie* was performed on this occasion, and that rather than with ambivalent applause, the audience reacts rather differently: order dissolves into chaos, and doors broken, benches thrown, and windows smashed, sending the Queen's Men scurrying from the guildhall and the mayor and aldermen seeking the protective shelter of Common Hall Lane.

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47 *REED: York*, 1.449.

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